

**Westminster Legal Policy Forum Keynote Seminar:
Family justice - implementing the single Family Court and assessing the impact of the
Children and Families Act**

Timing: Morning, Thursday, 26th June 2014

Venue: Sixty One Whitehall, London SW1A 2ET



**WESTMINSTER
LEGAL POLICY
FORUM**

Agenda subject to change

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Baroness Howarth of Breckland, former Chair, Cafcass
- 9.05 - 9.20 **The modernisation of family justice - assessing the programme of reform**
Dr Julia Brophy, former Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Family Law and Policy, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Oxford
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.20 - 9.50 **The future of the single Family Court - challenges ahead following implementation**
Greg Watkins, Family Business Improvement, HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Paul Stewart, Family Modernisation, HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.50 - 10.40 **The new court structure and next steps for public law**
Perspectives on the introduction of the single Family Court and its impact on public law family proceedings. What indications are there so far that the single Family Court will address case management concerns raised by the Family Justice Review - such as delays in case progression? What key findings have emerged from the Public Law Outline (PLO) pilot - which trialed time limits on care proceedings - and what challenges do they present to the operation of the single Family Court and the pre-proceedings stage? What further issues has the PLO faced in moving cases towards resolution within 26 weeks, and how warranted are concerns that such time-limits prevent the best available evidence being heard? How will new standards for expert witnesses in children proceedings affect the quality and timeliness of expert reports and what are the next steps for embedding the new standards into local practice? What more can be done to raise the standards of social care practice in family court proceedings, especially in relation to improving the confidence and expertise of social workers?
Sarah Wellard, Director of Policy, Research and Communications, Grandparents Plus
Andrew Pack, Care Lawyer, Brighton and Hove City Council
Stephan Hays, Vice-Chair, Family Courts Committee, Magistrates' Association
Sue Kent, Professional Officer, The British Association of Social Workers
Professor Penny Cooper, Law School, Kingston University London and Founder, The Advocate's Gateway
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.40 - 10.45 **Chairman's closing remarks**
Baroness Howarth of Breckland, former Chair, Cafcass
- 10.45 - 11.10 Coffee
- 11.10 - 11.15 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Magistracy
- 11.15 - 11.40 **Challenges ahead for a child-centred and child-inclusive system - a frontline perspective**
Neville Hall, Assistant Director, Cafcass
Rebecca Manning, Member, Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB), Cafcass
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.40 - 12.25 **What next for private law? Mediation, shared parenting and Family legal aid**
How effective will the introduction of compulsory Mediation and Information Assessment meetings (MIAMs) be, as outlined in the Children and Families Act, and what more can be done to raise awareness of the benefits of dispute resolution outside of court? What is the potential of wider dispute resolution initiatives such as collaborative family law, family arbitration and child inclusive mediation? How adequately are current provisions to safeguard legal aid for cases involving domestic abuse and child protection ensuring access to justice for vulnerable groups? Was Government right to opt for the presumption of parental involvement (rather than the presumption of shared parenting) and how is this likely to impact on litigation among separated or separating families in practice?
Glynnie Davies, Family Mediator, Oliver Fisher and Member, Professional Standards Committee, College of Mediators
Nadia Salam, Solicitor-Advocate, Family Law, GT Stewart Solicitors and Committee Member, Young Legal Aid Lawyers
Ray Barry, Party Leader, Equal Parenting Alliance
Polly Neate, Chief Executive, Women's Aid
Susan Jacklin QC, Chairman, Family Law Bar Association
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.25 - 12.55 **Implementing the Children and Families Act**
Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties, Ministry of Justice
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Legal Policy Forum closing remarks**
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Magistracy
Marc Gammon, Senior Producer, Westminster Legal Policy Forum