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napo

Napo Newsletter for Family Court Section Members

Family Court

JOIN NAPO

Napo is a specialist union and Professional Association that represents staff working in Family Courts and Probation.

Let your colleagues know about the work we do to promote and protect members interests and let's build an even stronger union. The easiest way for new members to join is to sign up on the Napo website

www.napo.org.uk/content/join-us

Don't forget to look at the Napo member benefits when you log onto the website.

Contact your FCS co-chairs by email

(Nicola.Kenney@Cafcass.gov.uk) and

(Steve.Hornby@cafcass.gov.uk)

and National vice-chairs

(Jay.Barlow@cafcass.gov.uk)

and (Nicola.Taylor-Ebong@cafcass.gov.uk)

Coronavirus outbreak

Working from home allowance granted!

"After Napo's continued pressure to recognise the cost to members of working from home, management has agreed to make payments towards the extra costs with a weekly payment to staff to cover their increase in utility bills whilst home working. This is to be backdated to 23.03.20 and payments are to start from the May payroll. (£4 per week in March and £6 from April.) There is no requirement to provide receipts. HMCR allow payments of up to £6 a week to be paid without taxation and we have been arguing for this amount to be paid to all staff."

We are currently in week six of working from home due to Covid-19. Napo reps meet with management reps every Monday to discuss issues raised by our membership. We discuss absence rates and impact on work, changes in workload and difficulties raised by members in working from home. We have been assured that we will be consulted on the plans to recover from the current restrictions as our concern is to protect members from overload. Nicola Taylor-Ebong our new National Vice Chair for FCS has met Jackie Tiotto to share our priorities for the coming year including our concerns that we are no longer a competitive employer in the job market. Please discuss with your manager any difficulties you are experiencing and you are welcome to seek Napo advice.

Continued >>>

We encourage all staff to make use of the £100 displacement money which can be used for equipment. Some members have put the money towards the cost of a chair or a laptop stand, also monitors, standing desk, keyboards and wireless mice. There is no expectation that the kit is to be surrendered, it is yours to keep. You order the items, save the receipt, and claim on T&S form selecting the new category "Covid-19". We have raised the savings made on travel budget and asked if the amount can be increased and paid to all staff.

The Cafcass Health & Safety Adviser is to use Napo reps to test a webinar on completing home Display Screen Equipment assessments. These are crucial to ensuring correct posture to avoid potential musculo skeletal difficulties arising and we encourage you to complete this when it is rolled out and seek advice from Napo if needed.

Many members are concerned about how we recover when the restrictions are reduced. From next week we should receive data on demand for reports by area. Management has consistently given the message that the after effect will not be dropped on frontline staff and that a strategy will be devised to prioritise which work needs attending to first to safeguard staff from overwork.

We first need to identify what work is being held back by courts in various areas. Most, but not all courts are holding FHDRAs. For those which are not there is likely to be an increase in private law applications and these need managing to protect staff.



Drugs and alcohol policy

This has been shared in draft form and we are responding to ensure that members are treated fairly and supported to seek advice and support and have time to recover where they are in difficulty.

Members should remember that they are free to discuss any employment-related issue with Napo at any time.

Workloads

We are in talks about a draft guidance/statement on the use of TOIL and overtime. We had asked for clarity in the interface of policies on use of flexible working, TOIL, unsocial hours payments and overtime as practice differs across areas.

Many members will recall that as a resolution to the dispute Napo raised in 2008 about workloads, the workload measurement scheme was devised and Napo withdrew its dispute. The points in the system have been varied and increased over recent years to the point that the measure cannot be updated any further. We are acutely aware that many members have been working consistently in high amber and high red and members tell us that managers talk about numbers of cases and ignore the points, all of which are attributed to the stage of the case and the number of hours it has been assessed are needed to complete this. We have agreed to reconvene the sub group of partnership committee to look at the workload measure and look forward to furthering talks about the measure. The joint union/employer statement on workloads is to be revised to ensure it is up to date.

Health and Safety



Napo is represented at the quarterly Cafcass national Health & Safety committee which operates under legislation set up to protect workers. At each meeting we review data relating to sickness, staff diversity, office inspections and accidents and incidents. There has been an increase in the number of accidents/ incidents reported in the last year with 112 incidents overall and between 6 and 14 incidents reported each month. As with previous years, threats of violence (48), verbal abuse(21) and actual violence(5) from male and female service users are the most highly reported incident by type. We are not sure whether the increased number is accounted for by an increase in reporting or an actual increase in incidents. The new Assessnet software on the intranet from January 2020 allows for easier reporting. A colleague or manager can report on your behalf. Napo would encourage the reporting of all accidents and incidents. Do not write it off in your mind as a hazard of the job which we have to quietly put up with.



Sickness

Mental health remains the leading reason for sickness absence (at 35% for social work grades and 24% for non-social work grades and impacting on 220 staff). Colds, flu, infections was second highest (at 14% for social work grades and 16% for non-social work grades). The current rate is between 9 and 10 days per employee.

Members will know that the contract with Medicash has ended and a new contract with the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund has commenced with similar financial and welfare package. Membership for all staff was transferred over unless they opted out by 30th April.