**Cafcass Pay- Freedom from the Civil Service Pay Guidance Remit**

Cafcass is an arm's length body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and subject to the Civil Service Pay Guidance Remit.  Cafcass works with some of the most vulnerable children and young people in England, who are subject to family law proceedings and who are experiencing parental separation and/or dispute about the arrangements for them or have or are at risk of experiencing significant harm from those that care for them. It is the largest employer of Social Workers in England.

In common with many public sector workers, prior to the 2022/2023 pay year, our members have endured over the last 12 years minimal pay rises (if any) which has represented a real terms pay cut each year. There is a 2 point pay scale at Cafcass with employees reaching Target point after 18 months' service in a role, which the majority of our members are on, and therefore they entirely rely on the national pay rise in April of each year to increase their pay.

Some recent research concluded that social workers have experienced the worst pay growth in the UK in the past decade with the median salary having grown by only 4.1% once adjusted for inflation. For comparison, the median or typical worker saw pay grow by 15% over the same period (Public First analysis of Understanding Society data 2010/2011 to 2020/2021). This is scandalous and essentially means that if you stayed the course as a social worker over that decade, your real pay would not have increased significantly, which would go a long way to explain the current crisis in the general recruitment and retention of social workers.

To compound this further, the pay rises for social workers within Cafcass, who are subject to the Civil Service Pay Guidance Remit, have fallen below those social workers who work in Local Government by 6% in the last 6 years up until 2021/2022. This gap has been further widened his year when Local Government social workers were awarded a £1,925 pay award which was worth between 4% - 6% to Local Authority social workers. The full and final offer imposed on Cafcass social workers for 2022/2023 was 2.51% (far below the claim made 10.8%) which will be backdated and paid in February 2023 pay packets. The Trade Unions remain in dispute with the Employer about this pay offer and are considering next steps.

This is all against a cost of living crisis so that the pay rises for all social workers this year yet again constituted a sharp real-terms pay cut, with inflation having averaged at 9.1% (CPI) and 11.6% (RPI) in 2022.

Cafcass pay is becoming, and in some areas is uncompetitive and this is having an impact upon the recruitment and retention of experienced and highly trained social workers who are needed to undertake this vital work. Cafcass' turnover rates have increased from c8% two years ago to 13%, In some areas it is over 20%.

Cafcass needs to be given the freedom and autonomy to compete with Local Governments on pay. Cafcass' appropriate pay benchmarks are not with the civil service. It is essential that Cafcass is removed from having to adhere to the Civil Service Pay Guidance remit. This would be a positive and necessary first step. However this is not going to be enough. Urgent action is needed to improve the terms, conditions and workloads of all social workers and we wait with interest for the Government's response to the final report of  'The Independent review of children's social care May 2022'.

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