**Napo Health & Safety Officer’s Report to Napo Family Court Section AGM held 23 September 2024 – highlights from the last 12 months.**

1.The National Health Safety and Wellbeing group has met 3 times this year – October 2023, April 2024 and July 2024. (July meeting was inquorate as not UNISON reps present) Napo reps attending are Nicki Kenney Paul Walker and Steve Hornby and Ian Richards who is employed by GFTU (General Federation of Trade Unions).

2.Terry Johnson, the Cafcass National Health & Safety Officer retired part way through the year after a long absence and Napo reps wished him well for his retirement. We had a temporary appointment for a few weeks before a permanent replacement started and attended the July meeting. Napo has offered to support him in his induction.

3.Steve Kerr, Head of Business Services has chaired the meeting for several years and he too retired after the July meeting.

4.Ian Richards from General Federation of Trade Unions has been attending the meetings with Napo reps. Napo is affiliated to GFTU and Ian’s support is valued. GFTU provide training for H&S reps and if anyone is interested in being a Napo H&S rep please speak up. We have a small number of reps who seek to attend office inspections and there are approximately 39 sites (33 offices and 6 touch down spaces) inspected per year.

5.**Cafcass sickness absence rates** were reported in April as at a ten year high. The Health & Wellbeing officer confirmed to our July meeting that sickness absence has increased but that this is not exclusive to Cafcass. A recent health and well-being conference she attended confirmed almost all absence related workshops were highlighting that particularly mental health (both work and non-work related) is predicted to continue to rise as the reason for the number of sickness absences and that sickness absence rates are at a 10 year high.

Cafacss sickness absences rates: 12.6 days in the 12 months up to March 2024 for social work staff and 8.3 days for BS and corporate services staff.

In July 2024 meeting the rates were reported as 12.8 days for Social work staff and 8.2 for BS And corporate services staff.

The top reason for sickness absence remains mental health – (stress, anxiety depression). In Napo’s experience staff who are absent with mental health reasons are highly likely to be called to a stage one sickness absence meeting withing 2 to 3 weeks and Napo reps have accompanied members and given advice and guidance.

6. The Cafcass **BHSF claims** were reported in April 2024 and over the previous 3 months there had been a 60% increase in the total number of claims to BHSF with 1490 claims this quarter compared with 927 in the previous quarter. This was the highest number of claims in any quarter this financial year.

7. M**anaging unacceptable behaviour and lone working guidance** to be re-issued during Practice Week September 2024.

**8.Supporting colleagues with disability needs** The new national H&S advisor reported to have started to form closer working relationship with the Cafcass network leads starting with forging links with the Ability Matters chair Emma Peasgood. The H&S team intend to build upon this and attend all future meetings to offer support and advice and link in with other network leads on this basis going forward.

**9. Cafcass Mandatory H&S Training Programme** With the support of the IT trainers, the first two training activities developing training tutorial videos for completing incident reports and DSE risk assessments. These training tutorials will be released shortly via the CEO in a personal letter to be sent to all staff which will also cover some key health and safety messages. Work is ongoing with the IT trainers to review and develop further the Health and Safety training packages for delivery by the end of March 2025 which will be mandatory for staff and those new to Cafcass as part of induction. These courses will cover:

* Using AssessNET and completing incident reports,
* Fire safety,
* general office H&S and security awareness,
* completion of DSE assessments
* managing unacceptable behaviour and
* completing risk assessments.

**10. Review of policies and procedures**

Initially agree on all H&S policies, procedures and guidance that come under the scope of the Estates H&S Team. We can then prioritise the order of review by risk and business need. A simple programme will be produced for approval by the HSWSG and should be brought to the October 2024 meeting.

**11.Security within the courts**

Meetings were held in April and May 2024 by National H&S advisor to discuss security and court procedures with the Head of Security and Safety, Matthew Braham. Going forward there will be scheduled in regular 6 weekly calls.

The key points from the recent meetings:

* + HMCTS are currently developing conflict management training that may be helpful to share the content of this and/or other Government security training available that we can link our staff into.
  + They are currently working through a detailed action plan following the recent judge assault this will include a review of their Potential Violent Persons policy.
  + They have advised that going forward when a potential violent person is due to attend court, they wish to reintroduce a briefing meeting ahead of the court date. This would include all those attending court including the judge and would run through risks and security measures to be implemented should an incident occur. Further discussion around how this will be progressed will be covered at the next meeting in July.
  + HMCTS will be reintroducing security premises drills which when in place will include Cafcass staff. This will run through the security procedures in place within the court building ensuring that they work and are effective.
  + In terms of staff having any issues whilst at court we have been advised that they should raise any concerns with the Senior Person on Site (SPOS) at any given site. The reception desk or security team will know who this person is. The Estates and H&S team will make sure this process is advised to all our staff within the training and guidance we are producing.
  + We have shared with HMCTS for their review the last years court incident data with redacted to maintain confidentially of all parties so that they can review and advise of action taken against each.
  + A further meeting was held with Nick Goodwin from HMCTS on the 5th June which Jacky chaired. The meeting covered the following agenda items:
    - * Court security arrangements procedures and policies.
      * Fast pass system
      * Risk assessments of known violent persons
      * Reporting of incidents (internally, across agencies and with the police)
      * Use of cease-and-desist letters.
      * Thoughts on right to stop working with a family if violent or threatening behaviour is displayed.

Cafcass had a high level response to a survey of staff using the PAU passes for fast entry to courts and some issues raised including staff still needing to queue despite showing a pass so info can be used to pursue resolution difficulties