

# Appointment of 2 new members to Cafcass Board

News story

Peter Fish and Catharine Seddon appointed as members of the Board of the Children's and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass).



The Rt Hon Dominic Raab – Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice – has approved the appointments of Peter Fish and Catharine Seddon as members of the Board of the Children's and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) for 4 years from 19 April 2022.

## **Biographies**

Catharine Seddon has 14 years of public service as a non-executive director, principally for national regulators. Catharine is currently Deputy Chair of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and Senior Independent Director for The Gambling Commission and the Legal Services Board, where she also chairs the Audit and Risk Assurance committee.

Previously, she has held non-executive and committee roles with the Human Tissue Authority and The Pensions Regulator. She also sits on tribunals in mental health and employment, as a lay assessor on civil cases in the county courts and she is a presiding magistrate in Central London. Catharine tutors for the Civil Service College and is a member of the Health Service Products Appeal Tribunal and a trustee for CPotential, a special needs charity.

Catharine spent twenty years as a high-end film documentary maker, at first at the BBC and latterly for C4, eventually setting up her own independent production company.

Catharine has not declared any political activity.

Peter Fish CB has extensive experience within government. His previous roles include Home Office Legal Adviser and Director General, Government Legal Department, Director General and Head of the Attorney General's Office, and

Deputy Treasury Solicitor at the Treasury Solicitor's Department. He is currently an Assistant Boundary Commissioner at the Boundary Commission.

Peter has not declared any political activity.

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## **British Sign Language Bill set to clear final stage before becoming law**

The British Sign Language Bill, a Private Member's Bill introduced by Rosie Cooper MP last year and backed by the government, will receive its third reading in the House of Lords today before it passes into law following Royal Assent.

The BSL Act will recognise BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right. It is also supported by a duty on the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to regularly report on what each relevant government department has done to promote or facilitate the use of British Sign Language in its communications with the public.

The Act further places a requirement on the DWP Secretary of State to issue guidance to departments on the promotion and facilitation of BSL. The guidance will be developed together with D/deaf BSL signers.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Chloe Smith MP said:

Today is a momentous day and I truly hope it will transform the lives of D/deaf people across the country.

The BSL Bill will help remove barriers faced by the D/deaf community in daily life and is a further welcome step towards a more inclusive and accessible society.

I am so grateful to the efforts of Rosie Cooper MP and the wonderful campaigners who have brought the BSL Bill to the point of passing into law and I'm proud to have played a small part in its

journey.

Rosie Cooper MP said:

At long last, the Deaf community will be able to say that their language is legally recognised.

Working across party lines and with the Deaf community, I really believe we have made history by creating a mechanism for Deaf people to achieve equal access to public services. Their voices will be heard loud and clear and there will be no excuse for failing to respect BSL as a language.

The hard work doesn't stop here however, but the door is now open for the Deaf community make real progress fixing the injustices that they continue to face.

David Buxton, Chair of the British Deaf Association, said:

We are extremely pleased to see the UK Parliament finally vote to recognise British Sign Language as a language of Great Britain in law today, after 19 long years of campaigning.

Today is a historic day for the Deaf community in the UK, and an inspiration for other countries around the world where the national sign language has not yet been recognised in law.

The British Deaf Association looks forward to working hand in hand with the government and civil servants to implement and monitor the progress of the BSL Act 2022.

While today is a day to celebrate, we are aware that this marks the first step on a long path towards providing truly equal access to public services, information and opportunities for Deaf BSL users in Great Britain.

Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive at RNID, said:

RNID and our supporters join with the Deaf community today to

celebrate this historic moment as British Sign Language passes the final hurdle before it is legally recognised in England, Wales and Scotland.

We're immensely proud to have worked alongside other deaf organisations and parliamentarians to support this campaign. We look forward to the BSL Bill getting Royal Assent soon and to working with the government to make sure the BSL Act makes a real difference to the lives of Deaf people in the UK.

The Third Reading of the BSL Bill takes place today in the House of Lords and following this it will receive Royal Assent.

The BSL Bill was first introduced on 16 June 2021 and passed through the House of Commons on 17 March 2022, receiving unanimous cross-party support.

The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has worked closely with Labour MP Rosie Cooper and D/deaf people's charities and organisations, such as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and the British Deaf Association (BDA), to ensure the Bill effectively meets the needs of those who will benefit most.

## **Additional information**

- Figures from the British Deaf Association suggest that 151,000 people use BSL in the UK, 87,000 of whom are D/deaf.
- The BSL Bill recognises BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right supported by a duty on the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to regularly report on what each relevant government department has done to promote or facilitate the use of British Sign Language in its communications with the public.
- The Bill also places a requirement on the DWP Secretary of State to issue guidance on the promotion and facilitation of BSL, which will be developed together with D/deaf BSL signers as part of the advisory board.
- As equality law is devolved in Northern Ireland, the Bill does not extend to Northern Ireland, in recognition of the existence of both British and Irish Sign Language among the Northern Irish deaf community. The UK government would encourage similar legal provisions to be adopted in Northern Ireland in due course. Both BSL and ISL (Irish Sign Language) were officially recognised as minority languages in Northern Ireland in March 2004.
- The BSL Bill does not impose additional duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- The Bill is supported by a package of non-legislative measures, including:
  - establishing a non-statutory advisory board of BSL signers to advise DWP SoS on matters related to BSL;
  - examining how the government might increase the number of BSL

- interpreters;
- reviewing how the DWP might work to ensure the Access to Work fund helps BSL signers;
- and consider how the government can further facilitate and promote BSL.
- The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has also announced the launch of an advisory board of BSL signers to offer guidance to the government on matters relating to BSL; examine how the number of BSL interpreters could be increased; and make sure the Access to Work scheme better meets the needs of BSL signers to support them in employment.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

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## **Hostilities have driven record levels of need in Syria: UK Statement at the UN Security Council**

I'd like to start by thanking Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Ms Nirvana Shawky for their valuable briefings.

The Syrian conflict continues to have a profound impact on the Syrian population.

Hostilities have driven record levels of need, with 14.6 million Syrians, 80% of the population, requiring humanitarian assistance.

The monthly cost of food has reached an all-time high, exacerbated by the impact of Russia's premeditated and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

The Council needs to support the UN in its efforts to assist millions of Syrians.

The Secretary-General has highlighted the continued life-saving importance of the UN's cross-border mandate, due for renewal in July.

In the past few years, when this Council has, regrettably, closed border crossings, needs have increased.

Without the mandate, another generation of women and girls, as outlined powerfully by Nirvana Shawky today, will face increased suffering.

Access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services would be severely hit and survivors of gender-based violence will not get the support

they need.

The UK therefore supports both the renewal and expansion of the UN's cross-border mandate.

For our part, we have worked to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 2585.

UK support for early recovery over the past six months has provided agricultural training and inputs for livestock and vegetable production, and provided apprenticeships and small business grants to help create jobs and address market gaps.

We urge all Council Members to support the UN's cross-border mandate in July.

Indeed, as the Secretary-General clearly states, the Council has a 'moral and humanitarian imperative' to do so.

But we should also be clear that cross-border assistance alone is not enough.

The UK continues to support the UN-facilitated, Syrian-led process outlined within UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

UN Special Envoy Pedersen has the UK's full support in for his continued efforts to facilitate a sustainable resolution to the conflict.

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## [PM call with President of Chile: 26 April 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the Chilean President Gabriel Boric today.



The Prime Minister spoke to the Chilean President Gabriel Boric today.

The Prime Minister congratulated President Boric on his election last month, and the leaders agreed to cooperate further on shared priorities including our strong trade relations, action on climate change and long-standing defence relationship.

The leaders shared their deep concerns at the devastation and human rights violations inflicted on Ukraine by Russia. The Prime Minister reiterated that the difference between right and wrong had rarely been so clear.

The Prime Minister welcomed Chile's support on the UK's accession to the CPTPP trading partnership and committed to boost UK-Chile bilateral trade and investment.

They also discussed the importance of maintaining momentum on COP26 commitments, and President Boric updated on the country's efforts to transition to renewable energy.

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## [Veto initiative adopted by the UN General Assembly](#)

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

The founding members of the United Nations vowed to save generations that followed them from the scourge of war.

They conferred the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security on the Security Council.

The UN Charter, in giving that solemn duty, gives the permanent members the power of veto. This is a heavy responsibility, to be used in the interests of securing the peace and security that people around the world seek, and the UN was established to provide.

It is not to be used lightly. And should not, we believe, be used without accountability. It should not prevent the Council from fulfilling its mandate – which is why we have supported this resolution today.

Russia used its veto 17 times since 2011 to block the Council's efforts to protect the Syrian people. Russia used its veto to prevent the Council from taking action in response to their illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine. Russia has done this in isolation from other Council members, reflecting the lack of international support.

Therefore, the United Kingdom welcomes the call for Member States, who hold a

permanent seat on the Security Council, to explain their use of veto to the General Assembly.

For our part, the United Kingdom has not exercised our veto since 1989. We listen carefully and negotiate on the Security Council to try and find agreement.

We prefer to win votes rather than use our veto to block Council action. The UK is a signatory to the Accountability, Coherency and Transparency Group Code of Conduct, where we have pledged not to vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities.

By adopting this resolution today we take a step in pursuit of upholding international peace and security, which is what the UN is here to do.

And I thank you Mr President.