

**Date:** Wednesday, 26 February 2003

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

**Title:** Fostering Capacity and Variations in Practice Across Wales

## **Purpose**

1. At the Health & Social Services Committee on 20 November, Members asked that a paper to note be provided on fostering capacity and variations in practice across Wales.
2. A review of fostering services in Wales is currently being undertaken and this paper provides the background to the review.

## **Background**

3. The objectives of the review are to:
  - consider the purpose and effectiveness of foster care services in:
    - delivering better outcomes for children – secure attachments; inclusion in society; emotional health and physical health; education achievements and career prospects; capacity for independence;
    - the provision of services - enabling children to live with their families; parallel family provision; protection from harm; managing and changing harmful behaviour; supporting education and training; encouraging healthy living; reducing offending; preparing for or providing permanence
    - interface with other arrangements that support children in need – family support services, universal health and education provision, residential care, residential special schools and inpatient CAHMS – and with services for young offenders, including the secure estate;
  - identify best practice and acknowledge evidence of improvement actions
  - promote the development and effective management of foster care services in Wales; and
  - outline the service development agenda and propose actions to be taken to continually improve

## foster care services in Wales

4. It should use and build on existing knowledge and research in this area of work and give specific attention to issues particular to Wales including the impact of deprivation, rurality and language.
5. The review of fostering services is managed by a team consisting of representatives of the Children and Families Division and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales and the independent chair of the reference group.
6. A reference group with a membership consisting of representatives of the Placement Framework Implementation Group and other co-opted practitioners/academics will support the work of the project management team, assist in developing the scope, terms of reference and specifications of the reviews and provide advice on policy and practice issues.
7. The review management team will engage a partner, which may be an individual, a partnership or an organisation, to undertake elements of the review. The role of the partner is to review and collate the available information, consult with the reference group and produce the draft report of the review
8. The review management team will report the progress of the review to the Placement Framework Implementation Group. It is intended that the final draft of the review will be completed by September 2003.
9. The review will draw upon:
  - literature reviews;
  - policy and practice developments in Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and other countries as appropriate;
  - analysis of existing data supported by local research and additional data gathering; and
  - consultation events involving service users, carers, commissioners and providers
10. The review will develop an agenda for action to improve the availability and quality and the future development of foster care services in Wales
11. The commissioned work will be a report based on literature and policy reviews and analysis of available data / information. It will be delivered in two stages.

### **Stage One**

12. To consider and describe:
  - the role of foster care for children and young people within the broad context of the Welsh

Assembly Government's policies for children and their families;

- different models of foster care (established and proposed), including purpose, descriptions, costs and effectiveness (where evaluated), which will include models used in other countries;
- the current profile of foster care provision deployed by local authorities in Wales to meet the needs of children they look after (this will include a range of placements, support systems, costs, identification of barriers to good practice)
  
- the profile of need for foster care amongst children and young people from Wales, including the needs of disabled children and those from black and ethnic minorities
- the profile of foster carers, including qualifications, experience and training
- how the delivery of fostering services can be improved and supported Including different models of service
- how the application of standards for fostering agencies and foster carers is affecting the availability and quality of placements
- the impact of the introduction of private fostering agencies and the placement of children placed across the border.

## **Stage Two**

13. Taking account the findings in stage one to produce a report that develops an outline service development agenda and proposals for actions to be taken, including strategic planning and commissioning arrangements, in order to continually improve foster care services in Wales

## **Action**

14. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Jane Hutt**  
**Minister for Health and Social Services**

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