

# **Social Justice and Regeneration Committee**

**SJR(2) –11-06(p6)**

**Date:Thursday 6 July 2006**

**Time:9.30am – 12.30pm**

**Venue:White Rose Information and Resource Centre, New Tredegar**

**Title: CAFCASS Cymru Annual Report**

## **Purpose**

1. To provide the Committee with a comprehensive update on the progress of CAFCASS CYMRU during 2005-06.

## **Summary / Recommendations**

2. On the 20th of October 2005, the Committee were presented with a six month update Report highlighting CAFCASS CYMRU's progress following its transfer into the Welsh Assembly Government.

3. As part of the Framework of Accountability that was agreed by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration during 2005-06 the Committee is asked to consider and note the progress made since the last Report.

## **Background**

4. CAFCASS CYMRU has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children and young people are put first in Family Proceedings, their voices are properly heard, the decisions made about them by Courts are in their best interests and they and their families are supported throughout the process, no matter what form their family takes in the modern world.

5. The primary duties of CAFCASS, as set out in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, in respect of Family Proceedings in which the welfare of the child(ren) is or may be in question, are to:

Safeguard and promote the welfare of the children.

Give advice to any Court about any application made to it in such proceedings.

Make provision for children to be represented.

Provide information, advice and support for children and their families.

## **Consideration**

6. CAFCASS CYMRU staff are accountable to the Family Courts including the Family Proceedings Courts, the County Court and the High Courts for the intervention in the cases of children. The powers and duties of CAFCASS CYMRU are set out in the Children Act 2004, Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Courts Act 1978, the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985, the Children Act 1989, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and various regulations and Court Rules made there under.

7. The important difference between Welsh Family Proceedings Officers and other Assembly officers is that Welsh Family Proceedings Officers have separate statutory functions, which are independent of the Assembly. The Assembly cannot interfere with the exercise of these functions.

## **The Annual Report**

8. The CAFCASS CYMRU Annual Report is encompassed in the attached document.

9. The Report provides a comprehensive overview on issues that have had an impact on CAFCASS CYMRU during 2005-06. In summary the document provides information on:

CAFCASS CYMRU's role and responsibilities

The organisation's structure and staff

Service delivery and the demand on services during 2005-06

Overall Performance during 2005-06

Improving the quality of services

Involving Children and Young People

Developing the delivery of services

Supporting the delivery of services

Relationships with partners and stakeholders

Progress on the 2005-06 work –plan

The future direction of CAFCASS CYMRU

### **Compliance**

10. Responsibility for the functions of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) in Wales transferred to the National Assembly for Wales from 1 April 2005 under Part 4 of the Children Act 2004, and section 35(1) imposes identical duties on the Assembly in respect of Family Proceedings in which the welfare of the child(ren) ordinarily resident in Wales is or may be in question.

### **Financial Implications**

11. None arising from this paper.

### **Cross Cutting Themes**

12. These are covered in the report.

### **Action for Subject Committee**

13. To consider and note the progress and future direction of CAFCASS CYMRU.

**Edwina Hart**

**Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration**

**Contact Point:** Dafydd Ifans, Chief Executive, CAFCASS CYMRU, Social Justice and Regeneration Department.

Tel. no: 01978 368468