

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref : SF/IGT/3460/12

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24th October 2012

Dear Chris,

Thank you for copying me in to your letter regarding the forthcoming enquiry by the Children and Young People Committee into the work of CAFCASS Cymru. I welcome this enquiry, and thought it might help aid your initial considerations to be aware of some of the changes which have taken place within CAFCASS Cymru over the last two years.

In November 2010, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) published its report following a full inspection of CAFCASS Cymru. The organisation received a satisfactory rating overall. However, the CSSIW recommended that the leadership capability of the organisation required strengthening and improving, and the then newly appointed Chief Executive undertook an immediate review of CAFCASS Cymru's structure. Operational delivery areas have been reconfigured on the local Health Board model, and a new Senior Management Team has been established. Staff were consulted throughout, and kept informed of progress regularly. The whole process of restructuring was completed quickly in order to bring certainty to the organisation's staff.

Significant progress has also been achieved in relation to the provision of Contact Services. The organisation has undertaken a review of contact services across Wales, and an Independent Contract Manager has been identified to manage and support the all Wales network of Child Contact Centres on behalf of the Welsh Government.

CAFCASS Cymru has developed a three year Strategic Plan, which I launched at Y Senedd in January 2012. This is an ambitious plan, with a very clear focus on achieving the changes required to continuously improve services and meet the challenges faced by the Family Justice system in Wales. I was particularly pleased to see a children's version of this plan, which was developed following a series of child participation events held across Wales. These events also contributed to the development of a Children's Information Pack, which provides information about services provided in an age appropriate format to children involved with CAFCASS Cymru. I understand that this pack will be launched at the beginning of November.

I am also pleased to see the leadership role CAF/CASS Cymru has taken to help drive forward the Family Justice Modernisation Programme. In particular, I am aware of the very constructive working relationship which has been developed with the Local Authority Heads of Children's Services across Wales and the important role that CAF/CASS Cymru is playing at an England and Wales level through their engagement with the Family Justice Board and implementation of the Family Justice Review.

Finally, I am sure the committee will appreciate sight of the CAF/CASS Cymru Strategic Plan 2012 – 15, the children's version of this plan as well as a copy of the organisation's Annual Report for 2011-12, which I have recently approved. I attach a link to the CAF/CASS Cymru website page that contains these documents.

<http://wales.gov.uk/cafcasscymru/home/publications/?lang=en>

I understand that the timescales for your review are short and I look forward to seeing your recommendations in due course.

*Yours sincerely,
Gwenda.*

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