

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/GT/3462/12

Christine Chapman AM
Chair of the Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

5th December 2012

Dear Christine,

Please find below and attached the additional information I agreed to provide in relation to the three action points identified following my attendance at the Children and Young People Committee meeting on November 22nd.

Children's Information Pack

During my attendance I advised the Committee that I have been impressed with the work CAF/CASS Cymru has undertaken in ensuring it is able to provide important information to the children and young people with whom they work in a way that is easy for them to understand. This is a key part of the vision of the organisation as set out in their Strategic Plan. I am very happy therefore to share with you the children's pack, as well as the children's version of the Strategic Plan.

Child Contact Centres

You may recall I suggested it may assist the Committee if I provide more information on the role of the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) as the Network Manager for the programme, which will be operational from April 2013. This is provided within Annex A of this letter. I am aware of the particular interest of Committee members in this subject so I have also included within Annex A further detail on funding arrangements, accreditation processes and waiting times. I hope this will assist the Committee in its deliberations.

Clarity regarding Annex B of the Association of Judges paper

I am pleased to inform the Committee that Mr Justice Moor, the Family Division Liaison Judge for Wales has written to me to confirm that he has an excellent working relationship with CAF/CASS Cymru and Gillian Baranski. I am also pleased to advise you that a very constructive meeting took place between Mr Justice Moor, members of the District Bench, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and CAF/CASS Cymru on 27 November to discuss issues of mutual concern regarding private law cases. Appropriate mechanisms were agreed at that meeting to ensure current challenges, as well as the demands of the reforms to the family justice system are addressed by effective arrangements for working together.

*Yours ever,
Gwenda*

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Annex A

Funding arrangements for Child Contact Service Providers (CCSPs)

Current funding arrangements have been in place for many years. The role of Network Manager is to review these funding arrangements on the basis of levels of demand / need and of actual work undertaken by the Contact Service providers. This will ensure much more transparent funding arrangements which will support a quality service provision across Wales. Inevitably this will lead to funding being reduced to some providers while others will have funding increased. NACCC and CAFCASS Cymru are looking at ways to minimise the impact of any reduced funding for those affected providers. Linked with this, CAFCASS Cymru organised two consultation sessions with existing providers in February and October 2012 to explain, clarify and discuss the changes to the funding arrangements and consider any potential impacts.

What was apparent from the 2011 review of Contact Services in Wales was the fragility of the economy within which they work. Currently, Contact Service Providers in Wales derive much of their financial support from Welsh Government and a variety of locally-based fund raising initiatives. However the Network Manager will be able to support and encourage Child Contact Service Providers (CCSPs) to reduce their dependency on Welsh Government funding, develop independent income streams and facilitate increased collaboration towards bids for funding from other relevant sources such as Big Lottery. Collectively, this approach will help to safeguard the future operation of CCSPs and look towards future sustainability.

Waiting times for Contact Services

The set of waiting time figures that were compiled for CCSPs in August 2012 show that there are no capacity related delays in the provision of contact within CCSPs. The next set of figures is due for release in January 2013 in line with the quarterly billing cycle.

As NACCC became the Network Manager from 3 September these figures were prepared early to form part of the handover process and to assist with the development of the network management process. CAFCASS Cymru will continue to provide this information until March 2013 and NACCC will do so from April 2013.

Management of the All-Wales Network of Child Contact Service Providers

The Committee sought clarification on how the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) will manage the network of Child Contact Service Providers from April 2013. In brief NACCC will:

- Ensure that all providers have the necessary accreditation in order to provide the service and be eligible for financial support from Welsh Government.
- Ensure that Contact Services provision will be available on a regional basis. Linked with this NACCC will encourage services to be delivered peripatetically where necessary e.g. promoting the use of 'temporary' venues to facilitate contact in 'harder to reach' locations
- Facilitate safe Child Contact Services in both Supervised and Supported Child Contact centres.
- Make recommendations for funding of specific centres/services on an indicative three year basis to ensure increased stability of CCSPs
- Implement clear and transparent decision making processes to ensure consistency with regard to the recommendation of grant funding, evidencing the process and decision making by which that recommendation has been made.
- Ensure that any recommended funding decisions take into account location, levels of demand and any other relevant performance data including levels of referral activity, number of children involved, service user feedback, waiting times and complaints.

- Provide reports to Welsh Government regarding delivery of service which is required to ensure consistent service delivery across Wales.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Once a grant award has been agreed, the spending will require monitoring to ensure that the agreed funds are spent in accordance with the plan put forward. Variance of plans and spending would have to be agreed between the Service Provider, the Network Manager and CAFCASS Cymru. The final arbiter will be CAFCASS Cymru.

Monitoring

This will take the form of regular visits to centres and / or peripatetic locations for physical monitoring which will need to be supported by quarterly progress reports submitted to the Network Manager. Reports will require evidence of spending, detail of progress on projects and expected completion dates.

Outcomes

Providers will have to demonstrate what impact the grant has made through the following outputs and outcomes:

Outcomes

- The project has led to an increase in the number of contact options for referrers;
- The project has led to a decrease in the local waiting list;
- The project has led to an increase in the number of centres providing quality child contact provision;
- The project has led to an improvement in standards of child contact provision.

Outputs

- Number of contacts;
- Number of families referred to contact;
- Number of centres;
- Number of centres accredited and re-accredited.

CAFCASS Cymru will hold quarterly meetings where the NACCC will present a report detailing the activity of Child Contact provision across all providers. NACCC will provide CAFCASS Cymru with an Annual Report detailing the service provision over the previous 12 months.

NACCC Accreditation

A *Supervised Contact Service* is used when it has been determined that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering harm during contact. *Supervised Contact* ensures the physical safety and emotional well being of a child; it also assists in building and sustaining positive relationships between a child and members of their non-resident family. This service requires supervisors who are skilled and confident enough to intervene immediately and firmly if necessary and can work professionally in a planned way with vulnerable children and distressed adults.

Supervised contact centres are accredited with an enhanced protocol which is far more stringent than for supported contact because of the greater risks that exist in the families they work with. Examples of the increased robustness are HR and recruitment files and processes are examined to ensure the correct calibre of staff and the selection process. Case files are a requirement for each family and are sampled. Supervised centre staff are also expected to perform a reflective exercise and case scenario development and a strong scheme of supervision is required.

Supported Contact takes place in a variety of neutral community venues where there are facilities to enable children to develop and maintain positive relationships with non-resident parents and other family members. Staff operating within *Supported Contact Services* simply facilitate or set up the arrangement. *Supported Contact Services* are suitable for families where no significant risk to the child or those around the child has been identified, but a neutral venue is desirable.

Supported contact centres are accredited on the submission of a portfolio which contains the documentation and policies required to open a contact centre. These range from centre communications to parents, children and referrers, to practical operating policies covering safeguarding, health and safety, complaints, confidentiality, domestic violence, equal opportunities, rehabilitation of offenders, CRB disclosures and volunteers. Once this has been assembled and has passed examination the centre is then visited to ensure that the centre is operating safely and that the environment is safe, neutral and suitable for children.

The NACCC accreditation is supported by on-going training for centre staff. All NACCC centres should be capable of, and offer the full range of contact options with the ultimate aim of moving child contact out of the centre and into a home environment. The accreditation and the standards which centres operate too, ensure that centres are able to know when it is safe to progress the contact conditions. As a recent development, NACCC are allowing accredited centres to utilise 'temporary' venues in order to encourage more flexible service provision particularly in rural areas or areas where there is currently scant provision.