

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/MD/1451/15

Ann Jones AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

4 January 2016

Dear Ann,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December regarding future funding for Child Contact Centres in Wales.

CAFCASS Cymru funds child contact services in Wales in respect of CAFCASS Cymru referrals made within the family court system.

Changes to legal aid introduced by the UK Government in April 2013, combined with the introduction of the Child Arrangements Programme in April 2014, has seen a reduction of more than 60% in the number of CAFCASS Cymru referrals to child contact centres in Wales during 2014-15 compared to 2013-14. There was also a 26% reduction in the number of private law applications heard by the family court in 2014-15.

In view of this significant reduction, in March 2015 CAFCASS Cymru met with the National Association of Child Contact Centres, in its role as the network manager for child contact services in Wales, and all current providers to discuss a proposed review of funding arrangements. It was explained funding levels would not be continued at the same level unless workloads resulting from CAFCASS Cymru referrals increased significantly. All providers were strongly encouraged to consider sustainability options beyond a reliance on Government funding.

There has been a very limited recovery in CAFCASS Cymru referrals to child contact providers in the first half of 2015-16, but the numbers are still very low compared to previous years.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0300 0603300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0300 0604400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I recently approved recommendations for future funding arrangements for referrals made by CAF/CASS Cymru to child contact services in Wales which enable CAF/CASS Cymru to continue to support existing providers in the work they do, but is more equitable in its distribution and more reflective of work undertaken.

I recognise the impact the original funding proposals CAF/CASS Cymru discussed with providers would have had on child contact services as a result of the significant drop in CAF/CASS Cymru referrals, reflective of wider family justice changes. To ameliorate this, providers currently in receipt of funding who will receive less under the new funding formula will receive an additional one-off transitional arrangement fee of £2,000 in 2016-17. CAF/CASS Cymru has written to contact service providers to outline the details.

I trust this additional transitional arrangement fee will minimise the impact of reduced funding on providers and will allow for a smoother transition. It will also give providers extra time to consider sustainability options beyond a reliance on government funding, which will be crucial if CAF/CASS Cymru referral numbers continue to be low.

In response to the issues raised about financial funding to support contact centres for work with families outside the Family Court system, I understand there is currently no funding provided to contact centres other than that from CAF/CASS Cymru. As you will be aware, Welsh Ministers have to operate within the restrictions of the funding provided to the Welsh Government by the UK Government which has reduced funding to Wales by 10% over the lifetime of the fourth Assembly.

Thank you for writing to me about this matter.

Best wishes,

Mark

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services