

CYPE(5)-02-20 - Paper to note 2

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*Yr ydym yn croesawu gohebiath yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg
We welcome correspondence in either Welsh or English*

Lynne Neagle A.M.

Chair of the Children and Young People and Education Committee

73 Upper Troisant Street,

Pontypool,

NP4 8AU

2nd January 2020

Dear Lynne,

First of all let me wish you and your family all the best for 2020.

I am writing to ask that the CYPE Committee inquire into the impact of recent funding decisions on support services for adopted young people and their families in Wales, several of which are under threat following decisions about the Sustainable Social Services 3rd Sector grant round which will be announced publicly any day now.

As you know, Adoption UK Cymru delivers support, advice and training for adoptive parents and more recently direct services for adopted young people across Wales. Over the last 4 years we have benefited from government support in the form of the Sustainable Social Services Grant to develop these services, in recognition of the acute vulnerability of many of these families. We have been proud to work alongside our partner voluntary organisations and the National Adoption Service in support of Welsh Government's goals for the adoption sector.

We have just learned that our funding will not be renewed from April 2020. While recognising that difficult funding decisions need to be made, we are deeply concerned about the outcomes for adopted young people in Wales going forward. We suspect that one of the reasons for the decision is that Welsh Government have recently begun to fund local authorities directly to deliver adoption services with an investment of £2.3M a year. Whilst we very much welcome this decision it should not be seen as a replacement for supporting third sector organizations like Adoption UK. The sector overall is in need of investment to ensure young people leave care and remain in successful adoptive homes, and the recent local authority grant for 2019/21 has been committed within regional and local adoption teams. It is not available to backfill central post-adoption services provided by Adoption UK Cymru.

Llinell gymorth 029 2023 0319

Dydd Llun i ddydd Gwener 10.00am-2.30pm

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On the current funding timeline, support for our youth, community and training support services will stop in March 2020, with limited time to plan alternative ways to support adopters and their families. This will have three major impacts which I would like to draw to your attention.

Commitment to adopted young people and their families

Last year, when After Adoption withdrew from Wales, Welsh Government welcomed our initiative to work with the National Adoption Service to rescue Talk Adoption, the support service for adopted young people. Over the last year we have re-launched the service as 'Connected' (we have a launch event planned for the 16th January), and grown it to provide support and a peer group for 70 extremely vulnerable young people. The feedback we received from the families involved was overwhelming gratitude that the service had been saved. The effect of the recent grant funding decision will be to end the youth service a year after we worked to secure its future. This is at best inconsistent and at worst deeply undermining for the most vulnerable adoptive families in Wales.

Erosion of service quality and reach for the adoptive community

Adoption UK Cymru brings the voice of the adopter and increasingly the adoptee into service development and delivery, working with our members and the wider community of adopters to inform decision-making with the lived experience of adoption. The grant decision means we must cut our community work, and will not be able to maintain our adopters and adoptee groups, free training for adopters and helpline going forward. The opportunities to hear the voice of adopted young people and adults which were just opening up, will effectively be closed down again.

Failure to reduce care population

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, adoption will always be an essential tool in the reduction of the care population. A proportion of children will never be able to return to their birth families, and depend on a route out of care via adoption. At a time when we are facing a shortfall in adopter recruitment, knowing that that support is a key element of growing the prospective adopter pool, and recognising that partnership working is crucial to ensuring the third sector remain a vibrant part of the children's care economy, we are at a loss to understand the logic of ceasing support in this priority area.

Adoption UK is committed to supporting adoptive families in Wales and will maintain an office and a reduced range of services. I would be most grateful for any action your committee can take to encourage Welsh Government to work with Adoption UK to provide at least some interim funding for the community services and ideally ongoing funding to support the direct work with young people. If that is lost and the very experienced staff who currently deliver it leave the organization, it will be very hard to set it up again.

Yours sincerely

Ann Bell,
Director for Wales Adoption UK Cymru.