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Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref SF/GT/5661/11

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

8 August 2011

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your letter of 18 July following my appearance at the Children and Young People Committee on 14 July.

During the course of the meeting, I agreed to provide the Committee with further information related to my portfolio and responsibilities in respect of:

- The number of cases currently being handled by CAF/CASS Cymru;
- The implications that changes to legal aid might have in relation to child protection issues;
- The number of court cases being referred by local authorities;
- The proposed expansion of the Flying Start programme.

In response to your first, third points and fourth points, I have attached two documents. The first, Annex 1, is a table setting out the number of cases currently being handled by CAF/CASS Cymru together with the number of court cases being referred by local authorities. The second, Annex 2, provides an overview of the evaluation programme underpinning the delivery of Flying Start.

During my evidence to the Committee, I also mentioned the work of the Welsh Safeguarding Children Forum, which I established with an independent Chair, to advise me on arrangements that might further strengthen children's safeguarding arrangements in Wales. The Forum comprises senior representation from key statutory agencies which have safeguarding responsibilities, the third sector, Welsh Government officials and the Children's Commissioner. The work of the Forum is coming to a close and I expect to receive its report quite soon. I will ensure that members of the Committee receive a copy in due course.

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With regard to the implications that changes to legal aid might have in relation to child protection issues, Carl Sargeant AM has written in his capacity as lead Minister for the Welsh Government to the Ministry of Justice expressing concerns about their proposals. In addition our officials have specifically highlighted to the MoJ the potentially adverse impact on advice services in relation to domestic abuse; children and families; debt and welfare benefits and housing. I understand that the Local Government & Communities Minister reiterated those concerns during a recent discussion with Jonathan Djanogly MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill was published on 20 June which I understand will make provision to retain public law children cases, private family law cases involving domestic violence and for the protective party in private law children cases involving child abuse within the scope of legal aid.

I do hope that you will find this helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Gwenda Thomas AC / AM

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CAFCASS Cymru ongoing workload and requests from LA's - Year Ending June 2011



Commissioner of the Children's Services
Wales and Northern Ireland

CAFCASS Cymru Area	Local Authority	Requests / Referrals Year Ending June 2011				Closures Year Ending June 2011				Current workload at the end of June 2011			
		Public Law	Of the Total Public Law Referrals received, Number of s31 Referrals	Private Law	WTFH	Public Law	Private Law	WTFH	WTFH	Public Law	Of the Total Public Law Referrals received, Number of s31 cases ongoing	Private Law	WTFH
North Wales	Ynys Môn	11	10	71		10	53		12	9	51		
	Gwynedd	16	12	92		20	63		18	13	58		
	Conwy	17	12	106		16	74		16	15	71		
	Danblythshire	25	17	103	300	20	109	267	27	23	45	31	
	Flintshire	18	11	160		17	166		20	15	33		
	Wrexham	32	19	116		21	137		35	28	32		
	Area Total	119	81	647	300	104	604	237	128	103	290	31	
	Mid & West Wales	Powys	30	23	95		27	72		21	34	47	
		Ceredigion	15	9	75		6	78		38	18	30	
		Pembrokeshire	16	11	139	202	18	159	151	17	15	48	22
Cardiganshire		59	28	277		65	303		37	23	67		
Area Total		120	71	586	202	116	612	151	113	90	192	22	
South West Wales	Swansea	106	58	187		71	191		117	98	49		
	Neath Port Talbot	107	68	125	355	64	105	288	101	77	25	22	
	Bridgend	72	47	162		74	160		89	72	59		
	Area Total	285	173	474	355	209	456	286	307	247	133	22	
	Gwent	Caerphilly	43	33	181		45	190		41	30	73	
Blaenau Gwent		28	21	78		23	81		13	9	18		
Monmouthshire		10	6	53	276	5	49	266	22	11	20	46	
Torfaen		51	27	137		45	128		48	33	45		
Newport		61	29	207		55	208		84	50	41		
Area Total		193	116	656	276	174	665	286	208	133	197	46	
RCT		137	75	151		108	212		92	68	74		
South Wales	Merthyr Tydfil	44	27	27	288	35	66	215	47	35	41	27	
	Vale of Glamorgan	43	24	80		36	89		40	30	14		
	Cardiff	118	75	196		84	211		91	80	29		
	Area Total	342	201	454	288	313	578	215	270	213	188	27	
Wales	1059	642	2817	4238	916	2915	1175	1028	786	970	148		
2009/10	1155	666	4090	4398	847	3674	3798	1109	771	1577	1118		
% variance	-8.3%	-3.6%	3.62%	3.38%	3.1%	-7.5%	1.9%	-2.8%	1.9%	-2.8%	-2.8%		

Notes: Work to First Hearing (WTFH) requests are not matched to a Local Authority so cases referred, closed and those still open are shown against our current Areas and on an all Wales basis. It is important to note that the WTFH process only came into operation in October 2010. It should be noted that there has been a 3.6% increase in the private law referral rate (including WTFH). In Public Law the overall referral rate is down 8.3% but this trend is not replicated in Section 31 referrals which, although being down 3.6% still remains high in comparison to previous years. In total there has been a 1% increase in referral rates. Although most requests under Public Law will emanate from Local Authorities, all Section 31 cases will be made by a Local Authority. An example of applications not initiated by a Local Authority would be an application for the Discharge of a Care Order (made by the parents), contact (parents or other family member) or certain adoption proceedings. Private Law referrals are matched against the Local Authority where the child is resident.

Response to the Children and Young People Committee (14th July 2011)

Evaluation of Flying Start

Background

A long term evaluation was commissioned to cover the Flying Start programme in 2007. The evaluation has utilised a range of research methodologies to assess the effectiveness of the programme in terms of process, implementation and outcomes. The evaluation methods included:

- baseline studies to set the scene and track relevant secondary data sources,
- assessment of monitoring data, reviews and evaluation studies,
- thematic case studies that explore specific issues or areas of delivery,
- census of the Partnerships to assess capacity building,
- area case studies to cover all the Partnerships over two years,
- qualitative research among Flying Start families, and:
- a longitudinal survey of families in Flying Start delivery areas and in selected comparison areas.

Findings from the Interim Evaluation

The interim evaluation report for Flying Start was published on 16 July 2010: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/researchandevaluation/evaluation/interimevaluation/?lang=en>

This report concluded that, broadly speaking, Flying Start is on track to improve the life chances of the children in the areas in which it runs. The emerging evidence suggested that Flying Start is demonstrating many of the critical success factors associated with the delivery of effective interventions in the early years. There is consistent qualitative evidence from professionals and parents that suggests improvements in the following outcomes:

- emotional and social development;
- parental confidence and engagement;
- language and cognitive development; and
- health outcomes including increased rates of breastfeeding, increased immunisation rates and reduced referral to A&E.

The evaluation identified that the programme is operationally effective and it has built on local capacity and expertise to address local needs within a national framework of delivery. After three years, Flying Start had just reached 'steady state' delivery stage. The report concluded that Flying Start has addressed early needs, provided better quality support and increased engagement and reach.

However, in considering the findings of the interim evaluation, it must be noted that improving the life chances of young children can only be fully

tested as they grow up. Therefore, the interim evaluation provides an assessment of whether Flying Start is on the right trajectory to achieve its outcomes. The impact of the programme is to be identified through the longitudinal survey – details of which are below.

Forthcoming evaluation work

In order to measure the impact of the programme, a longitudinal design was used, comprising two waves of surveys with the same families in Flying Start and comparison areas. Wave 1 took place during 2010 and involved in-home interviews with the main carer of children under two years of age.

The main purpose of the first wave was to establish the needs of Flying Start families, service usage and to collect data to enable an assessment of impact at Wave 2. The report from this first survey will be available towards the end of the autumn. It should be noted that, as this survey was conducted early on in the implementation of Flying Start, whilst it may be possible to look at potential impacts in a small number of areas, it is too early to expect impacts on the majority of the indicators. The young age of the children in the sample means that they will not have experienced the full range of Flying Start interventions at the time of the first wave.

The Wave 2 survey is scheduled for 2012 and this will involve returning to as many families as possible when the children are approximately 31-44 months old. This survey will collect data on the cognitive, social and language development of children in the sample.