

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Gwaith dilynol ar Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru | Follow-up to Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales

AS 14

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Sir y Fflint

Response from : Flintshire County Council

Overview Question

What are your views in the Welsh Government's progress in respect of the 16 recommendations and the 25 'detailed actions' set out on pages 5-11 of the [Committee's report](#).

Recommendation 1

It is still relatively early to indicate the long-term impacts of the N.A.S. Whilst indicators (noted in the First Annual Report (July 12/01/15) are positive we need to establish value and outcomes over the next 3-5 years.

Recommendation 2

Permanency planning remains a key to successful outcomes. These are effected by court/legal determinations (case law challenge), available adopters and the needs of children impact upon the timelines. The funding of external adoptions (both to L.A. and Voluntary Consortiums) will remain a challenge in relation to budget allocation of the Local Authority.

Recommendation 3

We need to ensure both a regional and national approach to marketing and advertisement. Local demographics can play a key role in establishing local choice (particularly in identifying localized adopters). National campaigns can assist in the production and promotion of a national narrative for Welsh children.

Recommendation 4 (see question 1)

Recommendation 5 (see question 1)

Recommendation 6 (see question 2)

Recommendation 7

This recognises the age of the child at the point of adoption. Age appropriate and sensitive engagement needs to actively engage with children; this will provide key information in the matching of children and their views being built into this process for children who are adopted, capturing their views and feelings, can be key into how we develop a more "child centered" adoption service.

Recommendation 8 (see question 3)

Recommendation 9 (see question 4)

Recommendation 10

As with any child, we have a duty to offer an appropriate, assessed and delivered programme of support and care.

We need to be minded that adopted children/families will also be competing at a point of reducing service provision, do we have to establish a legal mandate of prioritization over children requiring care and support?

Recommendation 11

This links to recommendation 10 Feedback. The balance between access to services, the availability of CAMHS/therapeutic service and the need to prioritise different cohorts of children and families (LAC, Post LAC, Adoption/General population)?

Recommendation 12

Yes, this seems sensible.

Recommendation 13

The general tone of this section provides a balanced and thoughtful response to this sensitive set of matters.

Recommendation 14

- Parenting Support (see answer in Recommendation 10).
- Adoption Disruption – at a localized level we operate disruption meetings, this establishes base-line facts, key observations from all involved in any disruption and significantly a lessons learnt process.

Financial Support

Agree with the narrative to establish a national model of “means testing” and “allowance payments”.

Recommendation 15

In agreement with the narrative and updates recorded.

Recommendation 16

See responses note in Recommendation 1 and 2.

Question 1

What are your views on the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopter parents?

Recruitment, as noted, we need to establish both a Local, Regional and National approach to capture different socio-economic, gender and ethnic choice.

Assessment and preparation needs to be less reflective, should challenge the personal testimony of the applicants and seek more corrobative evidence.

How could this be improved?

Assessment, as noted above, we should concentrate more assessment capacity on the reality of adoption (both prep and assessment), challenge adopters own value base, establish evidence of their competencies and Social Work assessors should be more analytical, critical and evaluative in their professional judgements.

Question 2

What is your experience of and view of the matching process and support for the transition?

The matching system can be “slow”, a pseudo-scientific process attempts to establish ‘feelings/emotions’ into account. This is difficult to measure and does reflect the assessors own “personal” views of potential adopters.

How could this be improved?

With more evidence/analysis/evaluation of competencies these should provide key determinations when the known needs of the child have been identified. This should reduce “feelings” (not eliminate it) but can be measured more effectively.

Question 3

Do you think there is sufficient information and support for children and young people including access to quality life–story work?

No.

How could this be improved?

This needs to recognise the specific issues (well known) of the child who is adopted. Life Story work needs to reflect these known issues with appropriately trained staff who can work within a sensitive framework, but provide meaningful and productive lifestyle work outcomes.

Question 4

What post-adoption support for children, young people and families (including from social services, education, health and mental health services) is available and what more could be done in this area?

This is a mixed picture: The North Wales Adoption Service provides a good range of post adoption service provision via commissioned (Voluntary Sector) adoption agencies.

How could this be improved?

As with life story work, there needs to be some element of “sensitivity” but also services which demonstrate meaningful outcomes, productive relationships and a sense of purposefulness.

Question 5

Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee’s attention?

We are currently faced with a reduction in Financial allocations to meet the range and needs of children/young people and families. The Act (2016) may impact in a reduction of service demand with greater preventative and targeted services.

However, adoption is not a cost neutral outcome for children. Agency costs, allowances and the provision (of both internal/external) services are also being “squeezed”. There needs to be a recognition of the pragmatics of support, its availability and the provisions associated with these.