

FJR offers opportunity to reduce delays for children in care

3rd November 2011

Responding to the release today of the final report of the Family Justice Review, **Matt Dunkley, President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services**, said:

"ADCS welcomes this report and believes its full implementation will make a major difference to the lives of children and families who find themselves in the family justice system. The critique is fair, including of local authority practice, and we also believe the recommendations are the right ones. We need to give such a complex report careful consideration but for our part we are determined to assist fully with implementation.

"We have heard much recently about the delays faced by children requiring adoption and this report provides a clear and thorough explanation of some of the reasons for delays in making these decisions. Many of the proposed changes require primary legislation and we urge government to continue its commitment to improving services for children in care by bringing this legislation into being as soon as possible.

"In order to reduce delays it is necessary that all parts of the Family Justice System have a clear and consistent understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. The system must make the best use of the different expertise available to it in a culture of trust and mutual respect - that means judges deciding, based on principles of law and standards of evidence, who should have responsibility for a child's care and social workers, who know the individual child and have expertise in child development, deciding the more detailed arrangements for a child's care.

The respective roles of local authority social workers, the court appointed guardian and any expert witness must be clarified to prevent duplicated or contradictory assessments from introducing further delay. We acknowledge that there is significant work to do to increase the judiciary's trust in local authority social work and vice versa and are committed to working with leaders of the judiciary locally and nationally to find ways of increasing our mutual understanding and improved partnership working. We agree that this must include improved training and professional development for all those involved in making the system work, and should build on the ongoing work of the Social Work Reform Board with local authorities to improve the quality of social work training, supervision and management. A change in culture does not require legislation and can and must begin immediately - it is the duty of all those involved in the system to make it work in the interests of children and young people."

Notes to Editors

- 1) The Association of Directors of Children's Services is the professional leadership association for Directors of Children's Services and their senior management teams in local authorities.
- 2) Further information and ADCS statements on adoption and care proceedings can be found on our website – <http://www.adcs.org.uk/press-office/index.html>



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