

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref LF/GT/0141/13

Mark Drakeford AM  
Chair of Health and Social Services Committee

Christine Chapman AM  
Chair of the Children and Young People Committee

National Assembly for Wales

5 March 2013

Dear Mark and Christine,

Thank you both for your letters of 28 February to the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) for the Department for Education Children and Families Bill.

The areas that your respective Committees require clarification on are set out below.

**Point 1:**

You have asked why the provisions were not included in the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Bill 'as they relate to provisions contained in that Bill'. There are two such areas – care plans and adoption.

*Care Plans*

The provision in relation to care plans (section 31A plans) is contained within Part 5 of the Children Act 1989 that relate to matters of court proceedings. This rests outside of the competence of the Assembly. The section 31A plan is a distinct element of the social services overall care plan for the child and is provided to the Court as part of the care proceedings process. The social services plan is provided for within the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Bill.

In practice the plan may be exactly the same document but it does not have to be and it may be that the social services plan for the child is much broader in its scope than that produced for the purposes of section 31A. This situation is provided for at Section 67(5) of the Social Services and Well Being (SS&WB) Bill:

The local authority may-

- (a) prepare or review a plan under this section at the same time as it or another body is preparing or reviewing another document in the case of the child concerned and
- (b) include the other document in the plan.

## *Adoption Register*

Members will know from their recent inquiry into Adoption in Wales my plans for a National Adoption Service for Wales. Adoption is primarily a devolved matter and increasingly we are continuing to develop distinct policy approaches that are best suited to the priorities and circumstances of the people in Wales. The removal of Wales from the England and Wales Register as currently provided for in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (section 125 to 131 refer) is the natural next step in taking forward our Welsh agenda. There is nothing currently in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill covering a stand alone adoption register for Wales. However, it is my intention, if necessary, to bring forward a government amendment at stage 2 of the Bill scrutiny to achieve this. A Wales only Register will form an integral part of the National Adoption Service allowing the new Service to take a tailored approach to creating a Register which will fit the needs of both children and prospective adopters in Wales.

I can however assure you that I will keep you informed of progress in establishing a register along with wider changes in the area of adoption.

### **Point 2 (i) – (iii) and Point 3**

In relation to your specific points about transitional arrangements:

(i) & (3) The existing arrangements will remain in place until the law changes and our new register has been established. On current plans we envisage that a new National Adoption Register for Wales will be in place ready for the dis-application of the Adoption and Children's Act to Wales in April 2014.

(ii) My officials have already had talks with counterparts in Department for Education to ensure "plumbing" arrangements between the two Registers are established; as such no children will be dis-advantaged as a result of a Wales only Register

(iii) I can confirm that the existing joint funding arrangements will continue in practice & remain in place until separate England and Wales registers are established.

I am grateful to both the Health and Social Services and Child and Young Persons Committee's in their consideration on these matters and their support to the LCM. There will also be opportunity to discuss these matters when I lead on the plenary debate in April (16).

I also remain committed to keeping members regularly informed of progress made in advancing my plans for a Sustainable Social Service in Wales. The Assembly's scrutiny of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill will provide the platform for a full consideration of all matters of social wellbeing for the people of Wales, including those areas where there is an overlap with the LCM.

Yours Sincerely



**Gwenda Thomas AC / AM**

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