

Open letter to potential providers of Contact Activities

Children and Adoption Act 2006

The Welsh Assembly Government firmly believes that when parents separate, both parents should continue to have a meaningful relationship with their children, as long as it is safe and in the child's best interests.

Most parents are able to make arrangements between themselves for the care of and contact with their children. However, those who do seek resolution through the court often find the system adversarial or slow and further, many are unhappy with the contact arrangements and conditions that are ordered by the court. The Welsh Assembly Government and senior judiciary have acknowledged these concerns and we are working together to ensure that the resolutions reached are those which best promote the welfare of the affected children.

The provision for contact activities within the Children and Adoption Act 2006 is aimed at helping separating parents to make arrangements in the best interests of the child. The new provisions are intended to provide improved access to information and advice at the time of separation to help parents reach agreement more effectively.

For those parents who do ask the court to decide on contact arrangements for their children, new powers will provide more flexible services for separating parents, to minimise the harmful effects on all those involved and particularly children, as it is now recognised that children can suffer significant harm from prolonged or very acrimonious parental conflict.

Phase 2 of the Children and Adoption Act 2006 comes into force on 28th November 2008. It will enable courts to order parties to undertake

“programmes, classes and counselling or guidance sessions of a kind that may assist a person as regards establishing, maintaining, or improving contact with a child”

or

“sessions in which information or advice is given as regards making or operating arrangements for contact with a child, including making arrangements by means of mediation”.

CAFCASS CYMRU (the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service in Wales) has the responsibility for advising courts about the services which could be used to meet these new requirements for contact activities. We are seeking expressions of interest from organisations or individuals who may be interested in tendering for the provision of suitable programmes.

I would like to draw your attention to CAF/CASS CYMRU's current advertisement on the Sell2Wales website inviting expressions of interest in the provision of contact activity services. We are planning to hold an open meeting of interested parties in August prior to the commencement of the formal tendering process, and would be pleased to know whether you might wish to attend.

Please address any enquiries to Paul Critchley, Contracts Manager, CAF/CASS CYMRU, on 02920 647920.

E. Rhian Davies.
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