

WALES COMMITTEE FOR THE CLS

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 6th June 2008 in Studio 2, Galeri, Caernarfon

Present: Tom Jones - Commissioner for Wales, LSC (Chair)
Lynne Schofield – Welsh Assembly Government
Fran Targett – Citizens Advice Cymru (Chair CLS National Forum)
Catrin Williams, CAFCASS Cymru
Paul Newell - Head of Civil Policy, Legal Services Commission
Gareth Moss – SOLACE Wales
Howard Lloyd – The Court Service
Derek Griffin – CAFCASS Cymru
Graham Benfield – Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Legal Services Commission Wales Staff:

Tiana Williams - Wales Policy Manager
Emma Rouse – Policy Developer
Tracy Scott – Secretariat
Nic Johanson – Wales Contracting Manager, Legal Services Commission

Apologies for Absence: Maria Battle – Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales
Paul Davies - Legal Services Commission
Dr Caroline Turner – Welsh Assembly Government
Clare Pillman - HMCS
Teresa Shackell – Tribunals Service
Alexy Buck – Legal Services Research Centre
Rhys Evans – Wales Consumer Council
Dr Neil Wooding – Equalities and Human Rights Commission
Yvonne Thomas – NOMS Cymru

1.	<p>Introductions, Apologies and Welcome</p> <p>Tom welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted on behalf of the above. A special welcome was extended to new attendees Derek Griffin of CAFCASS Cymru and Howard Lloyd, the Court Service.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2008</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>Fran Targett informed the committee that the report for the research being undertaken by Bangor University on behalf of Citizens Advice Cymru was not yet in its published form, but it was hoped that it would be available shortly.</p>	

	<p>Paul Newell reported that following the completion of negotiation with the Law Society an agreement had been reached regarding the judgement on the unified contract. As a result of this it had been decided that civil contracts would no longer be terminated but would continue until 31 March 2010 when they were due to expire. It was agreed that this was welcome news and would offer many providers a much-needed period of stability and certainty in which to plan their futures. Full details of the settlement were available on both the Law Society and LSC websites.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Wales Committee Annual Report</p> <p>Tiana Williams had previously circulated the report that had been produced following the framework agreed at the meeting in March. It reflected the past year of the Committee and captured the meetings and events that had taken place. The Committee was asked for comments before the report would be published on the LSC website and to consider how it could be used to communicate within their organisations. It was noted that the document did not require the approval of the Legal Services Commission's Commissioners.</p> <p>Fran Targett commented that the title 'Independent Advice Providers Forum' is the correct one, and that it had changed several times in the report. The report would be amended to reflect the correct title.</p> <p>Graham Benfield suggested that paragraph five on page two should be amended from 'Increased joint working across services will enable our shared objectives to be met' to 'Increased joint working across services <i>could</i> enable our shared objectives to be met.'. This was agreed.</p> <p>It was noted that bullet point three on page nine was not the same wording as item five on the Terms of Reference document. It was agreed that page nine would be amended. Subject to the agreed amendments the report was endorsed by the Committee.</p> <p>Tom Jones encouraged the committee members to draw attention to the document now that the Committee had endorsed its first annual report. It was agreed that there should be a press release to support the publication of the report.</p> <p>Graham Benfield suggested that clients should be involved in the designing, evaluating and commissioning of services. It would help the LSC and Local Authorities to ensure that there was broader based support for the process. Fran Targett agreed that the citizen should have a voice at every stage. Tiana Williams confirmed that both across Wales generally and specifically for the Network being developed for Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan it had not been decided how the tender panels would be constituted. Paul Newell and Gareth Moss agreed to meet separately to discuss the matter and to prepare a paper for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting. Paul Newell suggested that he and Graham Benfield should also meet before September to</p>	

	<p>inform the paper on the practicalities of any suggested process. Paul Newell commented that it was important to strike the right balance between the responsibilities of funders to procure services in line with their priorities and allowing citizens a voice in shaping those services. It was agreed that it was important that citizens were provided with enough information to make an informed decision about service provision.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that in procuring Community Legal Advice services, it did not want to lose the impact of the non advice services that were also being provided by organisations, , particularly in the Third Sector. Fran Targett pointed out that small providers and CABx could potentially be at risk in the process and they would need to be reassured. Graham Benfield was in agreement and suggested that organisations such as Age Concern could also potentially be affected, even though only a small element of their funding is in respect of advice. Graham Benfield suggested that assurance would be given if it were stressed to the sector that they would be engaged in the design of the process.</p>	<p>PN/GM</p> <p>PN/GB</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Review Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Committee was asked to review the terms of reference and provide any comments. It was agreed that the schedule of meetings each year would remain unchanged and the committee was happy with the focus meetings allocated to providers and citizens. It was noted however that as the committee now has extended membership much wider than funders, the document should be amended to reflect this.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Work programme – consider items for future focus</p> <p>The Committee was asked to identify key work strands that could be taken forward at the next meeting. The work would have to be costed and input was sought from all committee members and should be provided to Tiana in advance of the next meeting.</p> <p>Tom Jones commented on how people tell him that the justice system is fractured and suggested that the Committee periodically discuss where those fractures are and consider its ability to take appropriate action. Howard Lloyd agreed that the justice system was disjointed and a lot more resource within the Court Service was being attributed to community engagement. Funding was currently being given to each of its three regions with a view to supporting community engagement initiatives. There would be a more cohesive court policy and Alan Davies from the Court Service had been tasked with taking this forward, which would take effect within the next few months.</p> <p>Catrin Williams agreed to deliver a presentation at the next meeting on behalf of CAF/CASS Cymru to provide information on issues such as child adoption, activities and regulations.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>CW</p>

	<p>Paul Newell suggested that the Committee consider whether all the right people were represented on the Committee or whether other organisations should be present, including government departments from England that deal with non-devolved issues. Committee members generally felt that the make up of the Committee was correct but agreed that there may be occasions where it would be useful to invite others to attend to discuss specific topics.</p> <p>Lynne Schofield agreed to forward any announcements and policies from the Welsh Assembly Government. It was noted that at present, the Committee would not be aware of initiatives until the last minute.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Close of Meeting</p> <p>Tom thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and looked forward to welcoming them at the next meeting in Cardiff on 12th September. A meeting then followed with service providers and provider representative bodies.</p>	