

VAA input into CVAA care review consultation response – notes from meeting 20/04/2023

Consultation documents

- [Main consultation page](#)
- [Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation](#)
- [Children's Social Care National Framework consultation](#)
- [Child and Family Social Worker Workforce consultation](#)

Feedback on the gov't's care review response 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' – general consultation

VAs fed back the following to consider in our response:

- **RCC implementation:** VAs have a strong voice to share on the RAA experience. Need to ensure the DfE has a full and real overview of the actual experience and impact on the market, both in its length of time and process/procedure. History and memory has been lost
- Reference fracturing of the market, experience of how long children still wait, question of whether outcomes have been achieved.
- How do we frame this in the right way? Need to think about how we blend and balance what might be good vs. the issues from RAA implementation. Pilots/trial and error period – that's when children are worst affected
- Regionalisation needs to be looked at from the end users' perspective and not the just to deal with commissioner/provider issues, which are primarily about cost. RAAs were set up on the premise that they would save money, with unrealistic business models from the start and the result is that both adopters and priority children are waiting longer and adopter choice is being lost
- We need to feed our views into other stakeholders too e.g. NAFF, ADCS, LGA. Hopefully they will echo what we say
- Regarding commissioning placements, there is value in highlighting the new challenges in getting agreement on when external placements are needed from VAs. There are lessons about how the whole system has impacted both RAAs and VAs including the contentious process and barriers of LAs finding budget for interagency fee.
- Reference specific issues about commissioning services when statutory authorities deliver the same service. Refer to LA knowledge of external vs. internal unit costs, differences across LAs inc. different views on what constitutes suitable management charges.
- There is a problem when it comes down to cost rather than what placement is best for a child.
- Should highlight the need to invest in services to support every bit of children's relationships, and all the people involved to make it work. Want to chime with what other organisations are saying on that.

Children's social care national framework and dashboard consultation

Regarding the expectation: "Leaders direct services so that where adoption is the right permanence option, children are found permanent loving families as quickly as possible."

Feedback included:

- Shock expressed at the over-simplification of very complex challenges in the framework. Of course leaders want to provide children with permanent loving homes but it is much more complicated than that.
- We've had lists like this for years. We need to convey a level of scepticism, explaining why this approach is not going to work
- This is not new, it is basic. Needs to be more specific. How is DfE going to ensure how expectations are met and how systemic challenges are overcome?
- Metrics – these could be more important than the expectations. Could we highlight very specific metrics which are needed to make expectations a reality. E.g. all children who have adoption as their plan are placed on Linkmaker within 6 weeks.
- Wording 'as quickly as possible' – why is quickly as possible good? Need to be more child focused, have whole-system approach. Needs to consider delays in court etc. too which are beyond control of LAs/RAAs/VAs
- Needs to address which leaders have the power to actually implement these expectations. Some expectations are out of the hands of VAA leaders.

Re the expectation: "Leaders actively remove barriers to children being adopted, including addressing unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring adopters are recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds."

- Question of whether we need to state the judiciary's role in this.
- We need to reflect the present context – we are not starting from a level playing field or clean slate in trying to address these issues
- Comment on the decision making process – LAs are looking in house first, delay before looking externally. This brings unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Ministers have the idea that adopters are being turned down for spurious reasons. They are not being upfront about the support there for children. Can we refer to ASF assessment process and the speed of that, or financial support to self employed adopters/ adoption allowances. All of this can cause delay.

Re the expectations: "Practitioners provide support to foster carers and adopters, to help children and young people to maintain relationships with family and their networks."

"Practitioners support adopted children to bond with their adopted parents from the first time they meet and get the support they need, when they need it."

- Issues raised about resourcing. This is an area of work which is under resourced across the board so practitioners can't make it happen in the way they would want it to happen
- We could add something on the need for an early help package for every single adopter here
- Preparation and on-going support – both need resourcing
- Long term we must be looking at outcomes for children. Would be good to know how many adopted children end up homeless/in prison/psychiatric hospitals.

Child and Family Social Worker Workforce consultation

- View shared that this is positive if it decreases LA churn and creates more stability
- However to only look at workforce issues through one lens (LA perspective) is unhelpful – there is a crisis in the SW workforce overall. We could flag the challenges we face in recruitment as well. There is a need to look at the SW career pathway overall.
- The lens of this consultation is about trying to improve the statutory sector, rather than through the lens of what is best for children. These are managerial solutions to managerial problems. Will these changes actually benefit children and can the govt be clear how and why they will benefit children?

AOB

- IAC will be feeding back that when children arrive into the country on orders which are not recognised, nobody has PR for them. This is wrong and needs to be something in place
- There is an issue about children leaving the country to be placed with kinship carers abroad – this happens to hundreds of children each year but no data on this.

Next steps

- CVAA to circulate notes and powerpoint – invite further feedback from anyone unable to attend the meeting
- CVAA to draft response and share prior to the consultation deadline.
- VAAs encouraged to submit their own responses as well.