

Report by The Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

Transfer of (CAFCASS) Functions In Wales to The National Assembly for Wales

1. The Committee considered the above Regulations at its 23 February 2005 meeting. The item had been remitted to Committee following the addition to the Minister's portfolio as a result of the recent Cabinet changes.
2. The Regulations will enable the functions of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to be transferred into the National Assembly for Wales with effect from 1 April 2005.
3. There were no proposals for amending the regulations but Members raised the following points:

Implications of staffing and resources within the SJR Department

Response: The Minister advised that she was in discussion about the implications.

Would the existing inspection arrangements still apply?

Response: The Minister advised that the existing inspection arrangements enshrined in The Children's Act 2004 would still apply ie: Her Majesty's Magistrates Courts Services Inspectorate (MCSI), which is an independent statutory office of the Department of Constitutional Affairs.

Members requested details of the geographical spread of CAFCASS offices in Wales.

Response: The CAFCASS Cymru estate currently comprises locations at Llandudno Junction, Wrexham, Newtown, Aberystwyth, Tredegar, Newport, Cardiff, Haverfordwest, Carmarthen, Swansea, Bridgend and Pontypridd. The Minister promised to update Committee in due course about future locations of offices.

It was suggested that responsibility for this service must be co-ordinated.

Response: The Minister was receptive to this point adding that it was important that the Children's Sub-

Committee of the Cabinet drew the various strands together but that she was the Minister responsible for the service.

4. Members welcomed the suggestion from the Minister that CAFCASS be invited to Committee early in the summer term to explain how they plan to take forward what they regard as the core principles in Wales and noted that her suggestion to establish family centres for contact meetings would be most beneficial.

Janice Gregory AM

Chair, Social Justice and Regeneration Committee