



SPRING 2020 Edition of the AFA Cymru Legal Newsletter

Welcome to the spring edition of our newsletter, where we aim to provide up to date and relevant information to practitioners across the permanency sector in Wales.

We write this at a particularly difficult time for practitioners, who are having to adapt their practice to meet an unprecedented public health crisis, in our time at least.

We want to reassure everyone that AFA continues to operate as before. Our advice line is open five days a week and we will usually be able to get back to you on the same day. The number to contact us is the same: 02920 761155 and the e-mail at first instance is: cardiff-afacymru@stdavidscs.gov.uk

AFA Training

So far as our training and workshops are concerned, we will be unable to provide our usual training and workshops for the next few months while we can't meet you face to face. We have already started to plan to provide training and workshops online, through webinars, e-learning and podcasts. We will provide some more detail of these in the next newsletter which will be published shortly after Easter.

We are working on being back in action with face to face training and workshops in the autumn.

Special Interest Groups

Our special interest groups (Legal, Panel Chairs, SGO and connected persons, Medical and IROs,) will be going ahead on the planned dates, but will be held remotely. If you would like to join any of these meetings please e mail Cardiff-afacymru@stdavidscs.org or rhyl-afacymru@stdavidscs.org

5/5/20	LEGAL
14/5/20	PANEL CHAIRS
21/5/20	SGO
12/6/20	MEDICAL
17/6/20	IRO

Adoption

The Adoption Agencies (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force on 1st April. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2020/163/made> These regulations bring in the two-stage process for assessment.

Those of you who have been involved in the consultation on the regulations and the subsequent training AFA has provided, will be pleased to know that the final regulations provide a welcome amendment to the draft. The amended regulation 28(3) allows for the adoption agency to determine, where there has been a pause of over 6 months from the completion of Stage 1, how many of the Stage 1 checks should be repeated before they can determine that the prospective adoptive parent 'may be suitable to adopt'. The original reg 28(3) allowed for less discretion by the AA. Apart from this amendment, there are no other changes to the final regulations.

NAS commissioned AFA to compile a good practice guide to accompany the regulations. This has been distributed to the regions and VAA's and they can be accessed by contacting NAS or by e-mailing: contact@adoptcymru.com. The final version makes reference to 2020 on the front page. Anyone with the old draft with 2019 on the front page should discard the old copy.

Welsh Government has agreed to a legal device whereby, without changing the new regulations, they can be interpreted differently for the period of the Covid-19 crisis. A guide to how the regulations may be used over the period of crisis will be circulated shortly but, in brief, Stages 1 and 2 may be undertaken concurrently (at the same time) rather than consecutively (one after the other). This is to take account of the fact that Stage 1 checks are taking much longer to obtain.

These are difficult times to be starting a new process and we want to help in any way we can. Sarah Coldrick is happy to discuss any queries on the new regulations and good practice guide and you can contact her on sarah-afacymru@stdavidscs.org.

Fostering

AFA and the National Fostering Framework (NFF), endorsed by Welsh Government, have produced a guide to supporting effective functioning during Covid -19. The guide covers all aspects of fostering and the principles are applicable to all fostering service providers [Supporting effective functioning during covid-19](#)

Medical assessments and reports for both fostering and adoption assessments

AFA (for fostering) and NAS (for adoption) have made Welsh Government aware that both fostering and adoption assessments will be delayed for very long periods (beyond

the crisis) as GP's are currently not available to undertake assessments and FSP / agency medical advisers are unlikely to have the time to provide a report on the assessment. We await Welsh Government's response and hope to provide more information with the next newsletter.

We wish you all well in the coming weeks

AFA team

April 2020

AFA Cymru contact details:

Telephone:

Cardiff office 02920 761155

Rhyl office 01745 336336

Email:

cardiff-afacymru@stdavidscs.org / rhyl-afacymru@stdavidscs.org

Website www.afacymru.org.uk