

# Adoption and Fostering: tackling delay

## Consultation Response Form

The closing date is: 7 December 2012

Your comments must reach us by that date.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

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The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

**Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.**

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	<b>Sue Kent (collator of members views – some highlighted in italics)</b>
Organisation (if applicable)	<b>British Association of Social Workers</b>
Address:	<b>16 Kent Street, Birmingham 5 6RD</b>

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation, you can contact the Department's national enquiry line on 0370 000 2288 or email [AdoptionandFostering.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:AdoptionandFostering.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the CYPFD Team by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please mark the category which best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Birth parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospective adopter/adopter	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospective foster carer/foster carer
<input type="checkbox"/> Local authority adoption/fostering team	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary Adoption Agency/Independent Fostering Agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Judiciary/lawyer
<input type="checkbox"/> Sector organisation (e.g. ADCS, Adoption Support Agency)	X Other	

Please Specify:

BASW is the UK professional association for social work, led by and accountable to a growing population of approximately 14,500 social worker members, over 11,000 in England. Our members work in frontline, management, research and academic positions in all social work settings across the UK. BASW members share a collective commitment to those values and principles that will secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, adults, families and communities.

## Adoption

### Approval process for prospective adopters - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.1 - 7.12.3

1 Are there any circumstances in which more than 10 working days would be needed for an initial approach by him/her to an agency or the National Gateway for Adoption for general information)? If yes, please explain what those circumstances would be.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Recognising the importance of tracking and ensuring the adoption process is timely and efficient, we accept the need for given timescales. However, there is some question about what this stage entails – if both national and local information packs are available (both electronically and in hard copy), would this be simply a matter of sending information out? An administrative task? Or will there be a need to answer any questions the applicant may have as this suggests different resource levels? Or is there an automatic move to Stage One without further discussion? Guidance would have to clearly stipulate to ensure time measurement is correct and consistent across the country. Furthermore, “quite simply some people take longer than others to process and act upon information sought and received” a factor which must not be forgotten when discussing such fixed timescales and guidance relating to measurement.

2 *Are there any circumstances in which an agency may need more than five working days to decide whether to accept a registration of interest from a potential prospective adopter? If yes, please explain what those circumstances would be.*

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Recognising the importance of monitoring and measurement BASW suggests that five working days may not be adequate at times of peak demand such as during recruitment campaigns, particularly in large agencies. Additionally the paper refers to agencies rejecting applicants where there is clear evidence that the applicant would be unsuitable. Five days is enough to note that this may be the case but is not enough to gather “clear evidence” that the applicant is “highly likely” to be suitable. Ten working days would be more realistic.

BASW suggests that any time frame should be used as guidance only and variations from it that are argued (reasons given) should not be viewed as a negative measurement by Ofsted inspectors / internal auditors and other

stakeholders. Recognition of daily practice must not be ignored, for instance, the process of allocation may not be possible daily as with other services and an enquiry may come in on day 4 of a 5 day filter cycle leading to a delay in response.

3 Should adoption agencies be required to visit or have a meeting or pre-planned telephone call with prospective adopters during Stage One of the process to ensure that they have the opportunity to ask for more information or training based on their particular needs?

Visit                       Meeting                       Pre-planned telephone call  
 All of the above                       None of the above                       Not sure

Comments:

It is agreed that this is a crucial stage of the process. Progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2 assumes that the applicant has taken advantage of, and has understood and considered the implications of, the training materials made available. One way to assess this is through a conversation, either face to face or by telephone. However there are other ways, such as by using a standard self-assessment format. This could be used to decide whether a further conversation was needed to clarify issues and may help with the use of limited resources.  
Perhaps consideration should be made to making some form of two way conversation / dialogue a mandatory part of stage 1.

4 Should adoption agencies be required to agree with prospective adopters an 'agreement' to set out the responsibilities of the prospective adopter and the agency during Stage One of the process? If no, please explain why not.

Yes                       No                       Not Sure

Comments:

Stage 1 is primarily led by the applicant. Transparency and partnership are essential. It is important that the agency provides some guidance and sets down some expectations relating to the training material on offer, and ensures that the applicant is aware of the implications of the various checks to be carried out.

*“Good practice ensures that everyone knows what is expected of them and what the time frames are, keeps everyone focused and if any delay is inevitable all parties know why this situation has occurred.”*

5 How might we make Stage One of the process even more adopter-led?

Comments:

It is important to be clear that e-learning is only one option for delivery of these materials. It is not suitable for all applicants. Material may also be needed in a variety of languages – even if an adoption agency makes a requirement that one partner of a couple is fluent in English it is important to ensure that the other partner can respond independently to the learning materials. Interpretation of the learning and of the self-assessment responses may cause delay at this stage.

There is a question about whether personal references should be taken in Stage One or in Stage Two. The consultation paper appears to be written in the assumption that a written reference is requested and accepted. In fact the reference process is part of the assessment and will not be rigorous without knowledge of the applicant. It is not uncommon for applicants to change their referees or for an adoption service to declare referees unsuitable.

Should Stage one be portable? If an applicant needs a pause between Stage and Stage Two, but when they return the agency no longer has capacity to assess them within the deadline, should they be able to transfer directly to another agency’s Stage Two? This may not be appropriate as an understanding of the reasons leading to the delay/gap would be necessary.

6 Should a prospective adopter who wants to take a break during Stage One of the process be required to restart this stage when he/she is ready to pursue his/her interest in becoming an adoptive parent? If no, please explain why not.

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments:

If there are major issues in the applicant's life, sufficient to suspend the process of Stage One, then they need to step back and consider their plan to adopt afresh. With a two month deadline on completion of Stage One it would be difficult to establish a process of suspending and re-starting, but when the applicant is ready to return the agency could make allowance for the work already done, as appropriate in their circumstances. As suggested such a break may relate to significant family changes and despite the wish to continue with the adoption process an applicant may not be ready within the six month timescale. Therefore there needs discretion regarding time and a revisit as suggested to work completed.

7 a) Should prospective adopters be able to request an extension of longer than two months to Stage Two of the process?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Two months seems about right for the maximum period of extension to cover eventualities. Whether a further extension would be provided following another request would have to be something for the adoption agency to consider carefully. Also, although this addresses the adopters request to extend we ask that there should also be scope for the agency to extend the period by the same period (that is two months extension in total, instigated by the applicant, the agency or both) where there have been delays due to worker illness or court commitments and a change of worker would be undesirable, or due to the need to translate information.

Also, even though all else in stage one may be concluded many of the checks required in this stage can be notoriously time consuming and involve delays which are outside the control of the applicants or the Adoption Agency.

7 b) If yes, in what circumstances and by how much should they be able to extend Stage Two before having to restart the approval process from scratch?

Comments:

As the consultation document suggests, a family bereavement or unforeseen family situation such as an accident could be a legitimate reason for an extension but an agreement has to be reached regarding the time frame and the return to stage two at the earliest opportunity.

8 In order to facilitate completion of Stage Two of the process within the required four month timescale, should the time prospective adopters have to consider their papers before submission to the adoption panel (currently 10 working days) be reduced? If yes, to how many working days should it be reduced?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Note that the deadline for completion of this stage is measured to the making of the decision, so 10 working days is a significant portion of this period, particularly if the assessment period includes bank holidays. Time which could be spent on the assessment process itself. At the time of completion the papers should hold no surprises for the applicant, so it should be reasonable to reduce it to 3 – 4 days. The applicants should be prepared and ready for the arrival of these important papers and therefore will have allotted the necessary time to consider them appropriately within the given time scale:

*"I always send my applicants a draft PAR...which they first read alone and then we meet to go through each line with a toothcomb to check for accuracy and fairness. By planning this into the assessment schedule at the start one can reduce any delay."*

**Fast track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.13.1 - 7.13.2**

9 a) Should the fast-track procedure for previous adopters and approved foster carers be extended to include adopters who were approved in England or Wales prior to the coming into force of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (this would mean that those who have been approved for more than seven years ago would be included ?)

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Seven years is a long time and although recognition that the applicant was approved to adopt previously and has probably cared for children meantime, there has to be awareness of the changes to legislation and guidance and therefore a fresh assessment would be beneficial to children they are likely to adopt. The omission of stage one is acceptable (although one needs to ensure that the checks required in stage one are complete) and it is likely that stage two would be completed quicker due to the applicants awareness of the process but it is important to not to skip elements of this important assessment. Professional discretion around fast tracking would be necessary because it may not be appropriate in all cases.

“This is an attractive idea in principle, but not as a 'right' or 'entitlement'...professional judgement has got to be paramount and children have to be safe.”

9 b) If yes, what should the criteria for inclusion be?

Comments:

A willingness on applicants part to be engaged and open and honest about all aspects to speed up any assessment process.

9 c) Which, if any, other groups should be included?

Comments:

No comment

10 *What would be a reasonable timescale for completion of the fast track process? How could this process be made to work well and efficiently for all involved?*

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

This is a difficult to comment on but suggestions have been made from experience of current situation that it may be possible to consider perhaps a month shorter on stage one, could possibly be 0-50% shorter on stage two.

The speed will depend on issues at hand, needs of child (if specific), accessibility to old files, view of references, skills of SW assessor, etc.

**Matching/Adoption Register - Chapter 1 paragraphs 7.14.1**

11 *Should adoption agencies be required to refer children and prospective adopters to the Adoption Register immediately providing the referral does not 'go live' for three months, where they are actively seeking a local match?*

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments:

There are concerns about this proposal. If the entry does not "go live", why put it on the register? This will cause more work especially if there are unforeseen circumstances and processes do not go as planned as well as the possibility of causing emotional distress to prospective adopters and children. Difficult to understand why this additional bureaucracy is suggested. Emphasis on good practice and immediate referrals following completion and approval should be the focus.

### **"Fostering for Adoption" – Chapter 2**

12 Do you agree that the "Fostering for Adoption" practice will enable children to be placed with their likely adoptive families more easily, and has potential to secure better adoption outcomes for more children than at present? If no, please explain why not.

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

There is recognition of the two very different roles of a foster carer and adopter and that the recruitment and training processes are different as is the legal position. This proposal provides a promising arrangement for the subsequent siblings of children who have already been adopted or placed for adoption, and for some others. However it will only ever be suitable for a small proportion of placements – not all prospective adopters will want to deal with the uncertainty. Prospective adopters who agree to take this option will need added support.

In respect of the legal situation there is concern. The move of children to foster carers who are in fact prospective adopters questions the purpose of the placement order as surely the permanency decision for a child has been made pre placement order. Is this not an issue of human rights in respect of both the parents and the children?

Although this is presented in terms of approved prospective adopters who would be willing to foster, it raises the question of whether local authorities should specifically recruit foster carers who would be willing, in the right circumstances, to adopt. Will this be a different pool of foster carers than those recruited at present and how would this be achieved?

In conclusion this can be seen as a great idea in principle. Research is very limited and confined to a small number of relatively well resourced projects. Without further research it has the potential to create unachievable expectations on behalf of applicants, social workers and children.

13 Do you consider that there are any barriers to "Fostering for Adoption" working successfully, and if so what are they?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

As previously stated this will only be appropriate for a small number of adoptions.

Note that if the placement is made as fostering, the prospective adopter will not have a right to adoption leave etc at the time of placement.

Serious consideration about the delivery of an amalgamated fostering and adoption service would have to be made which may lead to major changes within service provision – not a barrier but a consideration.

*“Will additional funding be provided?”*

## **Adoption and Fostering**

Sharing of case records between fostering services and adoption agencies - Chapter 4

Allowing a foster carer's case records to be shared with a new fostering service before the carer's approval with their old service is terminated - Chapter 4 paragraphs 10.1.1 – 10.2.1

Allowing fostering and adoption services to share case records for assessment purposes - Chapter 4 paragraphs 10.3.1 – 10.3.6

To facilitate a streamlined assessment process for applicants who have fostered or adopted before, it is proposed that legislation should be amended to remove barriers to fostering services and adoption agencies giving access to a foster carer's/adopter's case records for the purpose of another service/agency assessing their suitability to foster or adopt. The proposed amendments will (a) allow a fostering service to whom a foster carer is moving to have access to the carer's records before the carer's approval with their current service is terminated (though, as now, the foster carer's approval with their first fostering service must have been terminated before they can be approved by the second fostering service - a person cannot be approved as a foster carer by two fostering services at the same time); and (b) allow fostering services and adoption agencies to provide each other with access to an approved foster carer's/prospective foster carer's or adopter's/prospective adopter's records for the purpose of assessing suitability to foster/adopt.

Where case records include information about a fostered child or a person mentioned in the records who has not given consent to their information being shared, the case records would need to be redacted in line with data

protection requirements prior to them being seen by another fostering service/adoption agency.

It is proposed that the fostering service or adoption agency holding the records should be required to provide access to these within:

- - 10 working days if the information is being provided to a fostering service;
- - five working days if the information is being provided to an adoption agency.

The shorter timeframe for providing access to an adoption agency is to accommodate the proposed fast track assessment process for previous adopters or approved foster carers.

14 Do you agree with the revised point (i.e. prior to termination of approval) at which fostering services would be required to comply with a request for access to a foster carer's case records by a service the carer is moving to? If no, please explain why.

Yes       No       Not Sure

Comments:

This is a supported proposal as it will allow a foster carer who wishes to change their approving service while one or more children in placement to speed up the process and will help cause minimal disruption and stress to the foster carers and subsequently the children in placement.

15 Do you agree with the revised timeframe of 10 working days for providing the access? If no, please explain why.

Yes       No       Not Sure

Comments:

Although the importance of timeliness and timescales is recognised there are a number of issues arising from this proposal. The potential difficulty with setting a timescale is the process of seeking consent and redaction. A foster carer may have been approved by one agency for many years. There may have been changes in the makeup of the household – particularly if the foster home has offered a “staying put” facility to former foster children. There may be personal information relating to numerous foster children on the record. These are just a few examples of issues which may lead to exceeding this timescale.

Transitional arrangements - record sharing - Chapter 4 paragraph 10.2.1

It is proposed that the amendments to record sharing should be implemented immediately upon the coming into force of the amending Regulations.

16 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

See previous question.

17 Do you agree that provision should be made for a fostering service to have access to an adopter's/prospective adopter's records, and for an adoption agency to have access to a foster carer's/prospective foster carer's/adopter's/prospective adopter's case records in order to inform an assessment of their suitability to adopt or foster? If no, please explain why.

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

In principle there is no problem. In practice, as the response to question 15 indicates there could be problems particularly as the proposed deadline for a fostering service to respond to a request from an adoption service is 5 working days (See Reg. 11(b) of the draft Care Planning etc. (Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations)).

Will the agency holding the record be able to charge for access? Note that the same access is available under the Data Protection Act with a maximum charge of £10 – but with a significantly longer timeframe. More resources will be required to ensure this task is completed correctly and efficiently.

## Fostering

### Approval process for foster carers - Chapter 5 paragraphs 11.1 - 11.4.3

It is proposed that a fostering service should be able to collect certain information specified in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (including CRB checks, health check and references), before deciding whether to proceed to a formal assessment of an applicant's suitability to foster.

18 Do you agree with the proposed start point of the assessment?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

There is a question about whether personal references should be taken prior to the start of the formal assessment process. The consultation paper appears to be written in the assumption that a written reference is requested and accepted. In practice the reference process is part of the assessment and will not be rigorous without knowledge of the applicant. It is not uncommon for applicants to change their referees or for a fostering service to declare referees unsuitable during the assessment.

19 Do you think that applicants deemed unsuitable to foster before the start of the assessment who are unhappy with this decision should have the option of:

19 a) making representations to the fostering service (which would be considered by the service's fostering panel, whose recommendation would be taken into account by the decision maker in coming to a final decision about whether to start an assessment)

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

[Note – this question is not asked in relation to adoption but the same reasoning applies] Para 11.4.3 states that the applicant may complain via the local complaints procedure. If the fostering service is a local authority, presumably this means the complaints service operated under the Representations Procedure Regulations 2006 – in Para 7.8 this is clearly stated in relation to adoption. In these situations a significant proportion of the complaints received will be that the wrong decision was made or that too much or too little consideration was given to particular factors and would be unlikely to be about the process or procedures. If the complaint is not resolved locally, the procedure set up under the 2006 Regulations is not competent to rule on these questions. It would therefore be more practical to refer these complaints to the fostering or adoption panel. As a side note, it may be possible for them to have a sub-committee to look specifically at dissatisfaction and complaints from rejected applicants.

19 b) complaining via the fostering service's complaints procedure which would consider whether there had been maladministration in coming to the decision not to proceed to assessment

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Complaints procedures need to be robust and transparent to enable dissatisfied applicants to challenge processes but it is likely that, as referred to above, there will be a small percentage of these type of complaints compared with those who believe the conclusion is wrong. Some form of redress should be available to those who are not accepting of rejection and the fostering panel may be the most appropriate body to deal with this.

19 c) neither of the above (please provide comments).

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: the summary above relates to all q19

Introducing brief reports for prospective foster carers - Chapter 5, paragraphs 11.5.1 - 11.5.3

Once an assessment has been started, it is proposed that the fostering service should be able to terminate it via a brief report if their decision maker considers there is sufficient evidence that the prospective foster carer is unsuitable to foster. A prospective foster carer who disagrees can make representations to either the fostering service or seek an independent review from the Independent Review Mechanism.

20 Do you agree with the proposal to introduce brief reports for prospective foster carers?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

This provision was made available in the case of adoption some time ago and therefore it seems reasonable to apply it to fostering as well. When the assessment has identified major issues, such that it is unlikely that the applicant could be approved, it is sensible to seek the opinion of panel and a decision on the matter immediately rather than use resources on completing the assessment first.

Removing the requirement to interview two personal referees if there is a reference from a service the applicant has fostered for in the last year - Chapter 5, paragraphs 11.6.1 - 11.6.3

21 Do you agree that the requirement to interview two personal referees should be removed where (a) the applicant has been an approved foster carer in the last year (whether or not a child was placed); and (b) there is a written reference from their current or previous fostering service?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

If the applicant has already been approved by a fostering or adoption agency then references have already been taken up, albeit that may have been some time ago. Any changes in the intervening period should be covered by the reference from the previous approving agency.

Changing a foster carer's terms of approval - Chapter 5, paragraphs 11.7.1 - 11.7.6

There is currently a requirement to wait 28 calendar days before implementing a change to a foster carer's terms of approval, regardless of whether the change has the foster carer's agreement or was requested by the foster carer. It is proposed to remove this requirement where the carer agrees to the change and there is a statement of how any additional support needs will be met.

22 Do you agree that the requirement to wait 28 calendar days to change a foster carer's terms of approval should be removed if the foster carer has given written agreement to the change and there is a written statement on whether the foster family has any additional support needs as a result of the change and if so how these will be met?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

This is a welcomed proposal. The time delay is an unintended consequence of the previous regulations and has caused difficulties – although those difficulties have raised useful questions about what should and should not be included in a foster carer's terms of approval.

Transitional arrangements - fostering assessment - Chapter 5 paragraph 11.8.1

It is proposed that the amendments proposed above to the fostering assessment process should be implemented immediately upon the coming into force of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.

23 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The changes are welcomed if comments above are heeded but recognition of the resources needed to ensure such change is positive must be made.

Alignment of the fostering and adoption approval process - Chapter 5 paragraph 11.9.1

Changes being consulted on in this document align the fostering and adoption approval processes in a number of respects, e.g. aligning the start of the fostering assessment stage with the start of Stage Two of the adoption process and introducing a brief report for fostering. However, there remain elements of the two processes which are not aligned.

24 Are there any elements of the adoption approval process described in Chapter 1 (paragraphs 7.1 - 7.12.3) that we should consider applying to the fostering assessment and approval process? If yes, please state which elements we should consider applying to the fostering assessment and approval process.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

No comment

### **Delegated authority – Chapter 6**

#### **Requiring the placement plan to cover specified areas of decision making**

It is proposed that legislation should require a placement plan to specify who has authority to take decisions in the following areas of decision making:

- medical or dental treatment
- education
- leisure and home life
- faith and religious observance,
- use of social media,
- any other matters considered relevant.

25 Do you agree that these are the right areas of decision making to specify in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013? If no, please explain why not.

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The issue of delegated authority has been an on-going problem for many years and reference to it in the new Care Planning Regulations has been welcomed. It refers to the correct areas and it is hoped that good practice will ensure that foster carers are clear about those areas where they have free reign to make decisions.

Since the problem is that local authorities seem to be excessively wary about delegating authority to foster carers it might be helpful to change the wording of this provision, either in the regulations or in the guidance, to state that a foster carer (or the staff of a children's home) will have full authority to make day to day decisions in the specified areas *unless* specific limits are set by the local authority or, where the child is accommodated under s20, by the parents.

26 Do you agree that statutory guidance should be amended to provide additional detail about what is covered by these areas of decision making, who might be expected to make particular decisions and what factors might lead to a decision to depart from that expectation?

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments:

As stated previously it is sad that successful delegation is not associated to good practice rather than the proposal to strengthen guidance.

As noted in the previous response, if the wording was changed as suggested then rather than exhorting local authorities to delegate some of their authority, the guidance would place emphasis on discussing when it might be appropriate to withhold some delegated authority. Clear statements relating to delegated (or non-delegated) authority should be visible in all care plans with continued reviews to ensure changes are not necessary.

Note that in the proposed change to Schedule 2 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 (Reg. 4 of the amending Regs) there is mention of identifying the areas in which the child is competent to make their own decisions. The guidance should draw attention to this and stress the importance of reviewing the pattern of authority delegated to foster carers regularly.

We propose that the amendments relating to requiring the placement plan to cover specified areas of decision making should be implemented at the next review of the child's care plan following the amending Regulations coming into force.

27 Do you foresee any problems with the proposed implementation? If yes, please explain why.

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments

Requiring each local authority to publish a policy on delegation of authority - Chapter 6, paragraph 12.7.1

28 Do you agree that there should be a requirement in statutory guidance for local authorities to publish a policy on delegation of authority to foster carers and residential workers?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Each Local Authority should produce a simple and transparent policy document indicating the possible areas and times when delegation of authority can be applied and what these would actually be. There is evidence that some LAs have this in place today.

The suggested change under Q.25 would amount to a national policy that full authority is delegated in the specified areas unless the child's particular circumstances require a limit to be set. This would obviate the need for local policies

29 We are concerned that some adoption agencies have large adoption panels and that this may be leading to delay and be intimidating to prospective adopters. We consider that these issues may also apply to fostering panels. We are therefore minded to restrict the size of adoption and fostering panels to a maximum of five members with a quorum of three (or four for joint panels). We are also minded to limit participating non-panel members to two. We would appreciate your views on this.

Comments:

The reduction in size of the adoption panels is an acceptable way forward. However, if there are reduced members they need to be efficient and skilled in analysing presented information and assisting in providing care for children who need it.

Members have suggested size of seven with a quorum of five to ensure that those present on panel are skilled, balanced and independently minded.

### **General - any other comments**

30 There may be other areas for revision that you think should be considered; we would be interested in hearing your views on what these might be and how these might reduce delay and bureaucracy whilst continuing to help ensure the welfare and safety of looked after children. Please use the box below to make your comments.

Comments:

Although we welcome many of the proposals in this consultation document BASW must raise the issue of change and the successful continuation of the delivery of services within the present economic situation faced by the UK. As less money is available we have seen more pressure be placed on social workers who are trying hard to deliver a good quality service. Our recent State of Social Work Survey indicated that 77% social workers had unmanageable caseloads. To ensure the proposed changes to regulations and guidance are successfully implemented Local Authorities must make sure they can resource the change and sustain the services (whether through their own provision or commissioning). In many ways the proposals will benefit not only children, adopters and foster carers but social workers too but there must be resources in place to enable this change.

31 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply X**

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

XYes  No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE

consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 7 December 2012

Send by post to: CYPFD Team, Department for Education, Area 1C, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: [adoptionandfostering.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionandfostering.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk)