

Deidre Mulkerin
Deputy Secretary, Commissioning
Department of Family and Community Services
19.01.18

Dear Ms Mulkerin,

I am writing on behalf of the ACWA Board, who has noted a current service issue that is impacting on a specific cohort of children in out of home care. The issue invites an analysis of the current service system's capacity to meet the needs of this group of children during the current interim period.

This issue relates to children who are currently in NGO foster care and who do not meet the criteria for residential care because they are under the age of 12, but require an intensive level of support and supervision. (These children may have a CAT equivalent to IRC but be in foster care). There appears to be no mechanism in place to cater for their permanency needs in the current service array.

I am specifically referring to children who are in need of an intensive 24 hour residential service with 'stand up' shifts and for whom permanent carers cannot be found – due to the difficulty and high stress experienced by carers in providing care to them.

Previously, the criteria of entry to residential care has been more flexible, and these children have been placed in residential care, resulting in the needs of this cohort being masked. If I understand the Department's intention correctly, in order to protect the fidelity of the Therapeutic Care model, there will now be no such flexibility. If this is so, what is the plan for these children?

Two member organisations in different regions have raised this with us: so I assume this is a systems issue and not a localised aberration. ACWA is also aware that agencies are directed to work collaboratively with the Central Access Unit and Child and Family District Unit, however, working with these units has been unsuccessful in finding a permanent option for these children.

The ACWA board would appreciate your views on this issue.
Yours truly,

Wendy Foote D/CEO
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