

PRESS RELEASE

NAGALRO AGM RESOLUTION

The following resolution was agreed by the Annual General Meeting of Nagalro Members at 10 Carlton House Terrace in London on 25th September 2013.

This AGM calls upon the Secretary of State for Justice to review upwards the Legal Aid Agency benchmark for prior authority on the hours allowed for Independent Social Work Assessments, in the light of Dr Brophy's Oxford University research.

Nagalro is very concerned that many of the most experienced social workers will no longer be available when their services are required in more complex matters to assist a Court's timely decision making in family proceedings. This growing loss of some of the most experienced child care practitioners is due to the heavy restriction of the hours now allowed for their independent assessments combined with the severe cut in their fees for court work. The time restrictions being imposed by the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) are not evidenced based, and will lead to poorer quality and incomplete assessments at the very time when the government is seeking to conclude family proceedings more quickly.

Nagalro fully supports the government's aim to significantly reduce the time that children and their families are involved in proceedings, and would ask the Secretary of State for Justice to review the decisions taken in relation to independent social work assessments, particularly in the light of the outcome of the research undertaken by Dr Brophy at Oxford University. The research highlights the fact that independent social workers are not duplicating previous court assessments, and that they are often able to help the Court to resolve matters more quickly and effectively, rather than delaying proceedings.

Both stages of this research and also the executive summary can be found on our website: www.nagalro.com

About Nagalro

Nagalro is the professional association for Children's Guardians, Family Court Advisers and Independent Social Workers.

It has approximately 630 full members in England and Wales and many run their own businesses. About 300 self-employed members are independent social workers who have been providing expert witness reports in a wide range of family cases before the Courts. Many of these independent social workers have 25-40 years post qualification experience. About 150 members currently work for Cafcass and other members work with fostering and adoption agencies, or work as trainers, educators, or therapists.

NAGALRO CONTACT DETAILS BELOW

