

NAGALRO PRESS RELEASE

‘A GOVERNMENT WHICH KNOWS THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND THE VALUE OF NOTHING’

Nagalro Joins Voices Condemning FDAC National Unit Closure

Following the announcement that the FDAC National Unit is to close at the end of September and a recent urgent meeting in the House of Lords attended by, amongst others, Tim Loughton, Emma Lewell-Buck, the Earl of Listowel, Professor Karen Broadhurst, Cathy Ashley and retired District Judge Nicholas Crichton, Nagalro has joined with others condemning this move as short-sighted and financially illiterate.

Whilst acknowledging that the closure will not *directly* lead to the closure of any of the 10 current FDACs, Nagalro is concerned that, without the National Unit to support, train and promote those bodies and to maintain consistency, they will simply be left to wither on the vine. One by one, cash-strapped local authorities, encouraged by the withdrawal of central government support, will find that funds can be directed elsewhere. Without the co-ordination, training and promotional activities of the National Unit, it is unlikely that new FDACs will be set up.

This is a tragedy for the families who are helped by the FDAC, a severe blow to the children and, in the medium to long-term will mean increased costs to the public.

The astonishing thing about this decision is that it comes without explanation and in the face of consistent research showing the benefits of the FDAC system and the dividends it provides to public finances. Parents who are assisted to come off drugs do not need to commit offences to fund their habit; the costs of prosecuting them and imprisoning them is saved. Some will get jobs and pay taxes. Children who can, at the end of the process, be safely rehabilitated to their parents' care do not cost the taxpayers foster care allowances.

In December 2016, Professor Judith Harwin and others prepared a report for the Department for Education's Social Care Innovation Programme which, after a five-year study, showed that:

- 46 per cent of FDAC mothers had ceased to misuse by the end of the proceedings, compared to 30 per cent in the comparison group;
- 37 per cent of the FDAC families were reunited or continued to live together, compared to 25 per cent of families in conventional proceedings;
- 35 per cent of children in FDAC cases were returned to mothers who were no longer misusing, against 21 per cent from ordinary care proceedings;
- 58 per cent of FDAC reunification mothers sustained their abstinence over the five-year study, compared to 24 per cent of the comparison families;

- 51 per cent of the FDAC mothers who were reunited with their children at the end of the proceedings experienced no disruption during the follow-up three years, compared to 22 per cent of the others.

Whilst acknowledging that the FDAC is not a panacea, the authors stated that the evidence showed 'that FDAC is more successful than ordinary services in minimising risk, keeping families together and helping parents to sustain substance misuse recovery'.

The report recommended 'that FDAC is a helpful model that should be made available more widely and sustained in the longer term.' Where, Nagalro asks, is the evidence to justify the Government's rejection of this?

The concept of spending a pound to save spending ten later is well enough known; but seems sadly lost on the present administration.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

1. Nagalro is the professional association for Family Court Advisers, Children's Guardians and Independent Social Workers. Its members represent the interests of children in a range of public and private law proceedings. Nagalro members are senior, highly experienced children and family social workers who work in a variety of roles. Many work as independent social workers and risk assessors providing expert witness reports in a wide range of complex cases coming before the family courts; in fostering and adoption agencies; in independent practice providing therapeutic services; as academics; as supervisors, mentors and consultants. Members have significant experience as managers, chairs of Adoption Panels and other specialist social work practitioner roles.

The Nagalro website is at www.nagalro.com