

Independent provider alliance calls for level playing field in fostering sector

For immediate release – Wednesday 1st March

The Children's Services Development Group (CSDG), represented by Iain Anderson, Group Chief Executive, NFA Group, welcomed the opportunity to appear today before the House of Commons Education Select Committee as part of its fostering inquiry. CSDG used the opportunity to highlight how Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) make a valuable contribution to children's social care, providing a large number of quality placements, often for children with particularly specialist and complex needs.

CSDG is concerned that local authorities commission placements based on short-term affordability rather than identifying the right service to best meet the child's needs. This can lead to multiple failed placements and further emotional upheaval for vulnerable children. CSDG would like to see multi-faceted reform in order to prevent children from slipping through the cracks, and ensure the foster system remains sustainable in the long term. These reforms must include a formal review of local authority costing in order to ensure a level playing field in judging value for money in provision.

The Education Committee launched its fostering inquiry in October 2016, with the final report currently planned for publication in June 2017.

Speaking after the evidence session, CSDG Chair Andrew Isaac said:

"Over the last five years, local authorities have been under significant financial pressure, whilst demand for essential services has continued to increase. IFAs play an important role in children's social care, providing a large number of quality placements and supporting local authorities to meet service demand. In particular, IFAs offer a significant number of placements for children and young people with the most complex needs."

"CSDG very much appreciated the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee and we look forward to seeing their final recommendations in due course."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information, please contact Nicholas Charalambides on 0203 102 3628 or nicholascharalambides@wacomms.co.uk.
2. CSDG's full written submission to the Education Select Committee's inquiry is available [online](#).
3. The Children's Services Development Group ([CSDG](#)) is a coalition of leading independent providers of specialist fostering, special education and residential care services for children and young people with complex needs. Members include Acorn Care & Education, Foster Care Associates, National Fostering Agency, Outcomes First Group, SENAD Group and Witherslack Group.