



Facebook Live Questions and Answers

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2:38

Meryl Klimczak: Can you give any specifics to timelines for implementations in areas highlighted by the Nyland Commission (e.g Foster Liaison Officers employed in June)

Deb: Meryl's asked when we can give some specifics around when the foster carer liaison positions will be ready. There's been a bit of – they're not actually foster carer liaison roles, they're carer manager roles and carer worker roles, and they'll be, we hope, they're out there for consultation at the moment with you guys out in the community, so we're really keen to get as much feedback as we can from carers about what they want from those roles. So at the moment they're out there, you can provide feedback through YourSAy Website, or you can contact myself which I will provide the details later on. But basically we're hoping that those positions will be ready to be advertised by the end of May. So please, we'd like as much feedback as we can. So Meryl, if you've got feedback on what you'd like those positions to do, please let us know.

So as Kathryn said, we've been out and about consulting with carers and some of the questions that we've asked carers are along the lines of, you know, "How would you like to provide compliments and complaints to the Department for Child Protection?" That's one of the areas that we're hoping that the carer relationship roles will take up, but we're really keen to hear more about that.

4:10

Julie Corfield: Will it be easier for grandparents to get OPG if they are already kinship carers?

Kathryn: So Julie's asked us a question about grandparents, and about grandparents who currently have kinship care and want to be considered for OPG. Deb, I'm going to ask you to respond to that one.

Deb: Sure. Absolutely, we've currently amended a lot of policies and procedures around this and we're really keen to grow this area of work within the Department. So we've got an



independent assessment panel that is being set up. Like I said, there are new policies and procedures in place that are going to speed this process up, particularly for grandparents, etc. and for people who are eligible to go on to be an Other Person Guardian. So it should be easier, that's the short answer to your question.

Kathryn: One piece of information that's been coming out of our focus groups is about the need as I said in the introduction to make sure that we're supporting foster carers more and making some of our current processes like OPG easier for people to use is really important. And other areas about how the Department actually supports you in that role and in terms of how carers interact with us. So questions that we've been asking at the focus group have been about the best way to do that, and Deb's talked about the relationship manager positions that are going to come on stream. What's really important is that we have really appropriate and effective avenues for you to make complaints, but also that we do more than just manage complaints but that we actually have a mechanism for developing the relationship, keeping the pathways open, keeping communication frequent, effective and strong, and also two way. So if you have any thoughts about what some of those channels could be, we'd be interested in hearing about that as well.

Of course, there's a number of recommendations in the out of Home care space. So Deb, I think you're dealing with 59.

Deb: Yes, that's right, 59.

Kathryn: What I was going to say is, it's really important that we link all these recommendations together. So rather than trying to deal with 59 recommendations for Out of Home Care in isolation, how we integrate them and pull them together is really important. Do you just want to talk for a minute about how you do that?

Deb: Absolutely, so we are really wanting to hear back from the community on those recommendations and how they intersect. So as Kathryn said, we've been out in the community having forums and having carer forums, but we are wanting to develop a whole strategy that brings all of those 59 recommendations together. So we'll be going out and asking our non-government partners, again, the carers as we are doing now, and we'll be



wanting to strengthen that strategy as we are moving forward. We certainly don't want to address the 59 recommendations in isolation.

There was something, Kathryn, that I did want to add to the OPG base on Julie's comment earlier: we have actually got a resource that we're appointing to help develop that research across the Department. So that's a real win, I think, them coming on board. And hopefully they'll be on board in May as well.

7:32

Janet West:

When will the new OPG Guidelines be available?

Kathryn: So we can see we've got quite a few people watching us, really keen to take your questions. Janet's just asked one about the OPG Guidelines and the Timeline for those.

Deb: Yep, so the timeline is May, the end of May. So those guidelines they've all been approved, they've gone through the Departmental process, so they will be available in May. And if you don't hear back or see them in May, please get in touch with me; at the end of this, I'll give you my email address so you can contact me on an ongoing basis if needed.

Kathryn: Thanks, Deb. So another area that there's ongoing recommendations about is transitioning out of out of home care and how we support young people into independent living or transitioning into their adult life. And Commissioner Nyland made a number of recommendations about the age that we provide those supports to, which historically it has been 18 but about extending those supports out to 25. Meryl's asked us a question about what's in place to improve those transitional arrangements.

Deb: So, there'll be a significant injection of funds that will be put out for agencies to develop further programs so you'll know as the recommendations are public that we'll be building on, and the Relationships Australia South Australia service will be building up their program, and we're looking for other services to do that. Just building on what Kathryn said, we're definitely wanting to build those services out to age 25. In addition to that, as there is, we will continue to support and build the funding for those leavers who engage in tertiary education or apprenticeships or some other kind of training so that that they can stay with their carer and we can support the carer with their funding and the young person. So they're some of the strategies that we're putting in place to improve that support for care leavers.



11:27

Meryl Klimczak: Care concerns terrify Foster Carers.

What is the Department planning for: (a) better support for Carers and (b) better management/processing of care concerns?

But I noticed that Meryl's asked another question Kathryn.

Meryl's particularly interested around care concerns so excuse me Meryl while I try and read it from here.

Care concerns terrify foster carers. What is the Department planning for (a) better support for Carers and (b) better management/processing of Care Concerns?

Deb: Ok, so unfortunately I'm not a topic expert on this. But what I will do Meryl is take that question away and I'll get back to you. And whilst I keep mentioning this, I'll give you my details now. It's deborah.ogden@sa.gov.au. If you haven't heard back from me in the next 24 hours, please email me. But I'll get back to you on that question.

14:59

Amanda Porter: Connecting Foster Carers SA Inc. is concerned at the number of foster and kinship carers who experience removals of children and young people in their care. This often happens abruptly and with a lack of communication with Carers – and does not always seem to be based on the safety of the child or young person. At times the placement has been ongoing for long period of time and from a young age and therefore it is not likely to be in the best interests of the child or young person to be removed from their secure home. Carers have not been provided with information or communication of concerns ahead of time. Given the stability and security of children in family-based home environments is in their best interests, and recruitment

Deb: So I noticed that we've got another question.

Kathryn: Yes and sorry, it's a long question. Amanda, thank you. Amanda's question is about when a foster carer or kinship carer has the care of a child and that child is removed from them and talking about how at times that happens in a very abrupt way and with a lack of communication with carers. Sorry Amanda, I'm just reading through to the bottom. The question I think is about the need to recruit more foster carers and making sure that we have more family based care environments for children and young people, and making sure that we retain the carers that we've got as a priority.

So what can we do on a range of levels, from legislation through to the family home to provide that support to the child or young person?

Deb: So I think Amanda, if you've been tuned in from the beginning, we've got carer relationship manager positions that are coming online, and at the moment we're consulting with our carers about what they'd like those positions to undertake. I think, you know, they'd need to take a strong advocacy role in supporting carers if those situations do arise. Obviously we don't want them to arise and we'd like to put strategies in place to ensure that doesn't happen, but there's an opportunity for those positions to work really closely I think Kathryn, to work on those issues if they do come up. We're also putting in place, and this is



and retention of Carers is a priority, what is intended to address this issue – on a range of levels: from legislation through to the family home and the child or young person?

through the office of the CEO, a central complaints process. So complaints can be managed in a timely manner, it's sitting with the CEO so it's taken very seriously. As Kathryn mentioned, there will obviously be legislative changes that will support carers to have more say in caring for their kids, we have the OPG process happening so that it is about transferring stronger guardianship to carers. So there are a number of strategies being put in place to support those carers. I don't know if you wanted to add anything else?

Kathryn: Just to add, that one of the reason that we came out to foster and kinship carers for the relationship manager positions is to make sure that as we build that role, it's actually meeting the needs of carers. So, we really appreciate your taking any time that you can to give us that feedback. As I said earlier, if the roles were just about complaints, I think that would be a missed opportunity. If they could be a key facilitator in maintaining a productive working relationship, then I think we've got the opportunity to address some of our past communication issues so that we can really improve those.

18:03

Meryl Klimczak: How will the Department ensure autonomy for the role of the 'Relationship Manager' being hired by the Department? Given they will be dealing with complaints about the Department ... who are also their employers.

Deb: And Meryl's raised a very good point, Meryl, thank you, you've raised the question for our other viewers. About how would the Department ensure autonomy for the role of the relationship manager positions. I think that's a very good question and it's certainly been raised in other forums, and we've been having information come through YourSAy about the same thing, that we will definitely need to think about that and that will definitely need to be a key deliverable I think around those positions, Kathryn.

Kathryn: Yes, and you'd already referred to the fact that our Department's complaint mechanism sits in the Office of the Chief Executive. So we need to make sure that for complaints, that they are channelled through the right mechanism, otherwise there is a risk that these positions could get overwhelmed with complaints and we don't want to double that up. The emphasis is on that relationship and support. But I agree that that issue of independence is one that needed to be considered.

Deb: Yes, so we will definitely take that on, Meryl, thank you for that.



19:07

Christy Hodgson: Good social work practice is central to the wellbeing of children – I am wondering what is being done to improve practice across the board and also to ensuring parity between offices and workers. At present different offices work very differently meaning when a case transitions a different approach can be taken which is very disruptive for all children.

Deb: So looks like another question has come through from Christy: Good social work practice is central to the wellbeing of children – I am wondering what is being done to improve practice across the board and also to ensuring parity between offices and workers. At present different offices work very differently meaning when a case transitions a different approach can be taken which is very disruptive for all children.

So it looks like the question is about: there's different approaches across DCP, across different offices and what you're saying is that that inconsistency is disruptive for children.

Definitely policies and procedures are a key part of the Nyland recommendations, there is going to be a key focus on work force training and development. I know certainly for the out of home care area there's training that needs to be undertaken to support kids around therapeutic care, etc. I'm not sure if you wanted to add anything to that.

Kathryn: So back in February, the Government announced an extra \$10 million to staff training and development; it's a really important commitment and investment. We know that the outcomes for children and young people and the quality of care they receive is very much connected to the quality and training and practice development of our staff. That's about much more than just going to a course, but it's about making sure that we have a really strong policy and procedural environment. Which goes to that important point that Christy has raised about consistency, so that we get consistency in our approaches; practice approaches, therapeutic approaches, and that carers can have some expectation and understanding of the kind of methodology and approaches that we use. And that we have some engagement and connection with our other providers, so that children experience consistency regardless of who they may be interacting with.

Deb: Yes, definitely.

21:06

Julie Lythgoe: When will we be able to self refer to OPG?

Deb: Another question's come through from Julie: When will we be able to self-refer to OPG?

My understanding is that that process is being streamlined, so that referral ability should be online by the end of May. But again,



Julie, I've given my details out. If you don't hear anything or if you aren't aware of anything or procedures haven't come out, then make sure that you contact me and I'll make sure I get on top of that.

Kathryn: Thanks Deb, and another thing that we've been talking about in our focus groups as a feature of the Nyland report is about information sharing. And while we have got new legislation which has been based around information sharing at a state government level, I think there is still, you know, some practice and some history to how we've been good sharers of information, or otherwise. So as we work out the implications of new legislation and what that means in terms of how we work, I think there's an important conversation for us to have directly with carers about how we might enact that. One of those is just about the very basic information we might provide to you about a child in your care, and about how you can inform decisions about that child's care and how the information and knowledge that you share as a carer about the child, about how we can all benefit from that. So we're interested in your thoughts about that information sharing. While legislation is supportive and enabling, what will matter the most is the way we actually implement that.

Deb: Yes, exactly, and just to build on what Kathryn was saying, part of the recommendations were about us engaging with our advocacy services to develop material for our carers so that you are aware of your rights, etc. and what you can have access to or should have access to, so that will be a critical point. So that's consistent information that will be out there, it will be out in the hubs and it will be out in the offices. So this is something that you will all have access to, and we're hoping that that will be a great start.

23:26

Colleen Hanlon: It is my understanding the that Department of Child Protection is to protect children at risk, then why are children not given to Grandparents first, instead of being put into residential and community care?

We've got quite a few questions that have come in, one from Colleen, who's stating

It is my understanding that the Department of Child Protection is to protect children at risk, then why are children not given to grandparents first, instead of being put into residential and community care?

I think that we've picked up on that before, and that's a really good question, Colleen. We're looking at more strategies around



family scoping. So we're developing a family scoping unit so that we can actually scope family members in the first instance so that kids don't hit the door of residential and commercial care. We're looking at building our kinship strategies as well so again, that's that supporting and making sure that grandparents and other kin are looked at in the first instance.

24:17

Peter Biber: Will grandparents who have been granted carers responsibilities by DCP or the courts, for their grandchildren at risk, be afforded the same financial assistance and other support services as foster carers? At present they do not.

Kathryn: And we've got another question from Peter about grandparents as well, which is about whether grandparents will in the future get access to the same financial support that foster carers get because presently they don't. Now I don't know about that, Deb.

Deb: I can't answer in any detail, I can't say yes or no, but all I can say Peter is that that's definitely being looked at across the Department. And it is acknowledged that that is a gap. Again, I can go back and provide you with more detail, but all I can say is that at the moment it is a priority to look at.

28:53

Eliza Kay Shiell: Country sessions?

Kathryn: Yes, there was a comment about country sessions. So we have done country sessions in Port Augusta and Mount Gambier, plus we did do a dedicated session for all carers in Mount Gambier last week. We're happy to keep talking with foster and kinship carers, so while the one we're doing on Monday is the last formal one on our calendar, we're very happy to come and talk to groups and in fact that's how the Monday one came about. So if you'd like us to come and talk to your community, we're happy to do that too.

Deb: Yes, so please get in contact.