

Draft Adoption Regulations and Guidance for Consultation - Access to Information

(Pre and post-Commencement Adoptions)
The Registrar General's Functions

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 31 July 2004
Your comments must reach us by that date.

Note when completing electronically h **mouse** to access hyperlink. And to access input boxes;
h **scroll** bar to navigate the form

The information you send to us may need to be passed to colleagues within the Department for Education and Skills and/or published in a summary of responses received in response to this consultation. We will assume that you are content for us to do this, and that if you are replying by e-mail, your consent overrides any confidentiality disclaimer that is generated by your organisation's IT system, unless you specifically include a request to the contrary in the main text of your submission to us.

The Department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available on public request, individual consultation responses. This will extend to your comments unless you inform us that you wish them to remain confidential.

Please insert 'X' if you want us to keep your response confidential

Name

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Paul Jeff , DfES, Looked After Children Division, Room 121, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG.

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If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit at

Telephone: **01928 794888**
Email: consultation.unit@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Please identify below whether you are responding:

As an individual On behalf of an organisation

Please insert 'X' in **one** of the following boxes that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Representative group
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker
<input type="checkbox"/> Carer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support services provider

Other (Please specify)

A. ACCESS TO INFORMATION (POST-COMMENCEMENT ADOPTIONS) REGULATIONS

Question 1 Information to be kept about a person's adoption (draft regulation 3(3)).

(a) Draft Regulation 3(3)(a) requires the adoption agency to keep information on the adoption case record that has been supplied by a birth parent or other birth relative. Should specific provision be made for others, such as an adopted child's former foster carer, to be able to deposit information on the case record?

Yes

No

No View

(b) If yes, who else might be covered by this provision?

Comments:

Having been in foster care before being adopted I would very much have liked to have information about my foster parents and the other children with them. I am having to fight very hard with Barnardos to get access to what little information there is. I hope future generations will have a right to such information, it is very important sometimes as important as information about natural parents.

(c) Should the regulations place an adoption agency under a duty to keep any information supplied by a birth relative or other person involved in an adoption?

Yes

No

No View

Comments:

Of course they should this seems an odd question to be asking, surely past adoption practice has taught how important this is.

Question 2 – Preservation of section 56 information

(a) Draft regulation 5 requires adoption agencies to preserve any section 56 information for at least 75 years. Is this the right length of time?

Yes

No

No View

(b) If no, what would be a more appropriate length of time?

Comments:

This should be kept without limit of time, it should be treated as genealogical information that will be of interest to the adoptee's descendants

Question 3 – Transfer of section 56 information

(a) Regulation 6 provides that where a voluntary adoption agency ceases to act or exist, it is required to transfer its section 56 information either by agreement to another adoption agency or to the local authority in whose area the agency's principal office is situated. Should this regulation require that section 56 information only be transferred to a local authority adoption agency, as the body best placed to safeguard this information and to provide an ongoing services to former clients of the defunct VAA?

Yes

No

No View

Comments:

There must be a strong legal requirement for this information to be kept and be kept safely again this is something that I would hope has been learned from past adoption practice.

(b) Where a VAA intends to transfer section 56 information to a local authority adoption agency, should the regulations require the relevant local authority to take this information?

Yes

No

No View

Comments:

If not the local authority, some other responsible agency, perhaps after a number of years such records could be passed to the National Archive, but they must be kept for the decedents of adopted people

Question 4 – Impact on adoption agencies

(a) In relation to adoptions made after the relevant sections of the 2002 have come into force, adoption agencies are required by the Act to take "all reasonable steps" to obtain the views of any person identified by the disclosure of information. Will this new burden have a significant impact on the work of adoption agencies?

Yes

No

No View

(b) If yes, what will the impact be?

Comments:

Yes eventually it will, if agencies do their job properly, and there needs to be legislation to ensure that they do do this properly and not just give up and refuse to pass on information because the people that it is about, are difficult to find.

Question 5 – Overall Detail

(a) Overall, is the level of detail provided by this set of regulations and accompanying guidance:

Too much

Too little

About right

(b) What, if any, additional issues need to be covered?

Comments:

The guidance needs to be much clearer and in plain English

Question 6 – Overall view of the guidance

Overall, in assisting you in interpreting the requirements set out in the Act and the draft regulations, do you find the guidance:

Very helpful

Helpful

Not very helpful

Not at all helpful

Comments:

This legislation and the guidance is going to have to be interpreted by social workers who will not have the language skills of lawyers, it needs to be made more concise and simple to understand.

B. ACCESS TO INFORMATION (PRE-COMMENCEMENT ADOPTIONS) REGULATIONS

Question 7 – Consent of subject to disclosure

(a) Draft regulation 5 prohibits a registered Adoption Support Agency from disclosing any identifying information about the subject of an application without having first obtained his informed consent.. Where consent cannot be obtained because the subject has died or cannot be traced, is this requirement:

Too restrictive

About right

No view

(b) What is your view on what may be disclosed by a registered ASA in these circumstances?

Comments:

Consent should be waived if the subject is dead or if all attempts to trace have failed. Any information that the subject would have been required to consent to if he or she had been alive or traceable, should be disclosed at the agency's discretion. To do otherwise will cause extreme disadvantage in some cases and in some cases may infringe the applicant's human rights,

Information should also be passed on at the agencies discretion where the subject withholds consent unreasonably.

The agency surely has a greater duty of care to someone who needs information for the good of their physical or mental health than it does to someone who refuses consent simply to avoid embarrassment.

Question 8 – Fees

(a) Draft regulation 14 provides registered ASAs with the discretion to charge a fee to any person in connection with the provision of counselling services. Where counselling is provided to the subject of an application, who should bear the cost?

The subject

The applicant

No view

Cost shared between subject and applicant

(b) Please explain your reasons.

Comments:

There should be a structured schedule of fees governed by regulations. The currently proposed arrangement appears to be a free for all cash cow for adoption agencies, the government departments involved and for anyone with a dodgy social work diploma or certificate alleging that they are capable of offering counselling, who wants to set up shop as an adoption support agency.

I am particularly concerned that people are going to be forced have and pay for counselling that they neither want nor need in order to do something as natural as meet their mother or father, brother or sister, or son or daughter. Some people, a few, will find this an emotional experience it should be possible for them to have counselling. It should also be possible for them to have that counselling from a source of their own choice and desire not be required to pay a counsellor of someone else's choice, before being provided with the search service that is the primary function of an ASA.

Question 9 – No wish for contact or an approach from a registered Adoption Support Agency

(a) The 2002 Act recognises that not everybody wishes to be traced or reunited with a birth relative. Some people will have no wish even to be approached by an Adoption Support Agency. Therefore, section 80 of the Act extends the Adoption Contact Register so that a person can formally register their wish for no contact with a specified person. It is also proposed in the guidance that where an adopted person (or their adoptive parents) knows the adoption agency that was involved in the adoption, they will be able to register their wish not to be approached by an ASA or the adoption agency.

Where the notification or entry is from the adopted person, should the guidance say that on obtaining this information from the adoption agency or from the Registrar General (the entry on the Contact Register) the ASA should:

- Inform the applicant of this and stop all further work on the application; or
- Inform the applicant and carefully consider the case before deciding whether or not to proceed with the application; or
- Take other steps in such cases. If so, please suggest what these might be.

(b) Where the notification of no wish for contact is from the adoptive parents, should the guidance say:

- Inform the applicant and carefully consider the merits of the case before deciding whether or not to proceed with the application; or
- Take other steps in such cases. If so, please suggest what these might be.

Comments:

There is no provision made in the primary legislation (the Adoption and Children Act 2002) for the adoptive parents of adult adoptees to be able to place any form of veto on file (it will inevitably be used as a veto when ASA or adoption agencies are deciding whether to proceed even if that is not the intention of the Guidance that it should be) with an adoption agency. The only person who should be able place such a veto or opinion either with the Adoption Contact Register or with the adoption agency is the adult adoptee him or her self.

For the government to try to squeeze in such a provision at this stage of legislation is surely illegal. A law (or a government department's practice guidance to such legislation) which would allow the adoptive parents of an adult in the UK to sanction who can contact that adult, is surely against the European Convention on Human Rights. This should have been in the Bill where it would have been properly debated by both houses of Parliament it can not be allowed to be introduced in this underhand way at this stage of legislation.

This must be removed from the Guidance. The DfES needs to look at what has happened in other jurisdictions where there have been contact vetoes included in adoption legislation. In many cases adoptive parents have made fraudulent vetoes, against the wishes of adult adoptees which have only been discovered later as a result of the adult adoptee undertaking their own search for birth relatives.

Question 10 – Phased implementation of the provisions in the Access to Information (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations

To help registered ASAs, adoption agencies and the Registrar General to manage the new demand for services under section 98 of the 2002 Act, it is proposed to implement the scheme in two phases. The first phase would apply to all adoptions made prior to 12 November 1975, and the second phase to all adoptions made between 13 November 1975 and full commencement of the 2002 Act. When should the second phase be introduced?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> After one year | <input type="checkbox"/> After eighteen months | <input type="checkbox"/> After two years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depends on initial demand for services | <input type="checkbox"/> No view | |

Comments:

After one year at the very most, there appears to be a myth in circulation that suddenly after 1975 only children who had been taken away from their parents as the result of some dreadful cruelty or neglect were adopted and that therefore they will not want to be found by their natural relatives. I know from working in the field that this simply not true. Children were removed from mothers pointless and unnecessary adopted well into the 1980s and occasionally in the early 1990s sibling groups were often split up. I see no reason why these people should be made to suffer any longer, particularly where siblings were split up, some left with a natural mother others adopted, I have recently dealt with a case where this happened in the mid 1980s

Question 11– Overall Detail

(a) Overall is the level of detail provided by the regulations and guidance:

Too much

About right

Too little

(b) What, if any, additional issues need to be covered?

Comments:

It is not possible to put an X in one of the multiple choice boxes above, it is not the quantity that is a problem it is the quality. I have spoken many people about this document many say they have found it unhelpful and confusing as a guide to the Regulations and I am not finding it as helpful as it could be, my self.

I have corresponded with many people who would have participated in the consultation but for difficulty in comprehending the Guidance.

As such I feel it fails to meet the requirements of part 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice on written consultation as stated on the final page of the Feedback form.

C. THE ADOPTED CHILDREN AND ADOPTION CONTACT REGISTERS REGULATIONS 2004

Question 12 – Manner of application for a registrable foreign adoption to be registered in the Adopted Children Register (Regulation 7)

Is the Registrar General asking for appropriate particulars from the applicant as to what should make up the application?

Yes

No

No view

Comments:

Question 13 – Applications for certificates from the Adopted Children Register (Regulation 11)

Has the Registrar General done enough in the regulations to restrict applications for certificates where the adopted person is under the age of 18?

Yes

No

No view

Comments:

The Registrar General has done too much to restrict applications for certificates where the adopted person is under 18, there should be provisions for certificates to be obtained where the adoptee is 16 or rarely younger. There should be an element of discretion on a "need to know" basis.

There probably will rarely be circumstances where it is vitally necessary to trace an adopted person under the age of 18 there should be provision for such circumstances, particularly important if siblings are adopted separately as still occasional seems to happen.

It is important that siblings or cousins be able to discover their relationship to each other at whatever age, and before they form such an intimate relationship that may consider marriage. Few people in the general population wait until marriage to form intimate relationships, the current law requiring people under 18 contemplating marriage to apply to the Registrar General for information as to whether they are of a prohibited degree of consanguinity is obsolete in its underlying thinking, it surprising to see it in the latest Act and its inclusion demonstrates that little notice has been taken of comments made in previous rounds of consultation on Adoption and Children legislation.

Question 14 – Notification of fact of death on the Adoption Contact Register

(a) Is the Registrar General right to offer fact of death of the adopted person to a birth relative of that person when he cannot offer the same service to adopted persons themselves regarding the death of a relative?

Yes

No

No view

(b) Would the Registrar General be wiser not to offer the service at all?

Yes

No

No view

(c) Please state your reasons:

Comments:

I despair that it is necessary to state the reasons why this service should be offered. I believe the the Registrar General should have statutory obligation to provide such a service and that the Registrar General should be required to state the cause of death of the adoptee. Such information may be a matter of life or death for a member of the natural family where death was caused by an inherited condition such as Long QT Syndrome

Question 15 – Future of the Adoption Contact Register

Given that the scheme set out in the Access to Information (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations duplicates much of the service previously provided solely by the Adoption Contact Register, is the Register still viable in the longer term?

Yes

No

No view

Comments:

The Adoption Contact Register has never really been effective. Given that there have been over 875,000 adoptions and it estimated that at least 500,000 of those adoptees and at least some of their birth relatives are still alive, The Adoption Contact Register has a potential customer base of over 2 million yet by 30th June 2001 only 19,683 adopted people and 8,492 birth relatives had registered and at that date it had achieved only 539 matches one in 40 adoptees and one in 16 birth relatives matched (figures from 'Adoptees and relatives who wish to contact one another using the Adoption Contact Register: trends, relationships and proportions of records matched' by John Haskey Population and Demography Division, Office for National Statistics. Published in Population Trends 106 Winter 2001). Probably the main impediment to the success of the Adoption Contact Register if the complete failure of the Office of National Statistics to publicise it in any way, no budget apparently ever having been provided for publicity.

The Adoption Contact Register is expensive, particularly for birth relatives, and NORCAP the adoption charity runs a register which has many more participants and is offered as part of a package of services likely to be needed by an adoptee or birth relative undertaking a search.

As more and more people put their details on internet adoption registries so contact registers such as the Adoption Contact Register will become obsolete. Most such registries are run from outside of the UK and EU and there will be little that government can do to control their operation other than to offer an effective and inexpensive alternative and that is not going to be the Adoption Contact Register as it presently functions.

Looking at my own situation where my mother gave up seven of us for adoption, for me to register my wishes to contact all of them and my mother's kept children would have cost £195 at today's fees, not very good value for money given that it turns out that none of them had ever heard of the

Adoption Contact Register.

Question 16 – Overall Detail

(a) Overall, is the level of detail provided by the RG's regulations and guidance:

Too much

About right

Too little

(b) What, if any, additional issues need to be covered?

Comments:

Again it is not a matter of quantity so much as of quality.

As this consultation was supposed to be a public consultation, as with guidance to the Access to Information Regulations, the guidance ought to have been in made comprehensible to the average tabloid reader.

However, it is, that much appears to be missing from the Regulations, rather than from the Guidance, that is most worrying, again one wonders if the DoH/DfES/ONS has bothered to look at past rounds of consultation on the Adoption and Children Bills. This could have been an opportunity to improve the services that the RG provides to the adoption community in line with suggestions made at earlier stages instead we have changes that probably few people wanted.

D. PARTIAL REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (RIA)

Question 17 – Impact of the Regulations

do you agree with the assessment made on the likely impact of the regulations?

Yes

No, assessment too high

No, assessment too low

No view

Comments:

I would dispute that the impact on small business will be cost neutral, Many small business now provide "people searching services" to adoptees and birth relatives who wish to search. If these businesses wish to continue to undertake such work they will be required register as Adoption Support Agencies and will in order to do so be obliged to employ relevantly qualified staff.

I am finding it difficult to form an informed opinion on this as the DfES has still not been able to provide me with a copy of the consultation documents on regulations for registration of Adoption Support Agencies even though that consultation began in early May and ends in August.

It does seem that little has ever been done to inform small businesses and sole traders who undertake searches on behalf of the adoption community, of what impact either this or legislation requiring registration as an ASA will have on them, or to consult them on their views. Such private enterprises have in the past provided a very useful service. Though some degree of regulation was obviously needed most of these enterprises acted responsibly and ethically. Some will no doubt be unable to afford to meet the requirements for registration as ASAs and will be forced out of business.

Question 18 – Benefits

is the assessment of the benefits of the regulations:

Too positive

About right

Too negative

Comments:

[See my answer to Question 17](#)

Question 19 General Comments

Finally, please use this space for any general comments that you may have, comments on the layout of this consultation document would also be welcome.

Comments:

1.

I am adoptee, I find it difficult to see how this legislation will help me. My mother gave up seven children six were adopted one was brought up in long term foster care (a de facto adoption). I have traced and met all of my surviving siblings a long time, despite the best efforts of England's appalling adoption laws to prevent me from doing what I should have had a natural right to do.

I also of course had a natural father, he died a long time ago. He did not get his name put on my birth certificate, the child's father column on my birth certificate remains blank, but my mother was very adamant that he was my father.

My adoption agency file says that my father had "fathered three other illegitimate children by a Romford woman". I know that my father married yet another woman about a month after my birth and his wife gave birth to son shortly thereafter, all this happened over 50 years ago.

So I have at least another four siblings probably more. Some of my paternal sibling, those first three were probably adopted. I want to know how they would be able to find me through an Adoption Support Agency without any way of proving their relationship?

The only person who should be deciding whether or not their search for me is appropriate is ME. But I seem to be cut out of the process by this new law. It is overly restrictive. What I would dread most is that the adoption agency, Barnardos, which has acted so unprofessionally in the past should have the right to decide if their search for me is appropriate or not.

2.

The vast majority of the 875000 adoptions in England & Wales took place between 1948 and the late 1970s prior to that era adoption was far more open in any case. Up until 1952 most birth mothers would have seen paperwork naming the adoptive parents, yet there have been very few instances of birthmothers of that era tracing and harassing the adoptee or adoptive family and neither the institution of adoption never collapsed as a result.

The following is a letter from A.E.A Napier (one of those who drafted the Adoption of Infants Act 1926) to a Mrs. Hubback of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, 11/1/1927.

'... It is not intended that the name of the proposed adopter should be concealed from the natural parent. It is essential... that before a legal adoption takes place, the natural parent should have sufficient knowledge with regard to the proposed adopter to give a real consent... and it would not be possible for the Rules made under the Act to prescribe that the natural parent might purport to consent to the adoption without knowing who the proposed adopter is ...'

Quote taken from, Struggle for Identity: Issues Underlying the Enactment of the 1926 Adoption of Children Act by Dr Jenny Keating

For mothers who relinquished a child in that era, another layer of secrecy to which they did not agree at the time of adoption, has been added with each new Adoption Act. Surely the law should do more to help birth relatives, particularly siblings from that era when the 1926 Act was the primary legislation and no promise of such severe secrecy could ever have legitimately been made under that legislation.

3.

Adoption in the 1950s 60s and 70s had many parallels with the Child Migration Scheme. Instead of being separated by oceans children were separated from parents siblings were separated from siblings by the secrecy of adoption

The following is an excerpt from 'Empty Cradles' the book by Margaret Humphreys, who championed the cause of the people sent away to far of countries as small children, in the infamous 'Child Migration Scheme'

<quote>

".... Five weeks later, I finally sat down at a table with the major organizations involved in child migration and asked for their help.

The charities represented included the Salvation, Army, Barnardo's, the National Children's Home and representatives from the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church. An observer from the Dept. of Health also attended.

After an interminable silence Mr. Jarmen [Director of Child Care at Barnardo's] began the meeting by telling me that there were people around the table who felt very hurt. I said nothing.

David ended the silence. He began to give a report on the enormity of the problems we had discovered. Afterwards, I tried to give them a sense of the desperation and isolation that the former child migrants were feeling. They needed help to find their families; they needed a professional post migration service. But, and it was a very big but, this service had to be neutral and totally independent of the charities and agencies that had sent them away. I felt a shudder go around the table. Yet those present who were professionals should have fully understood and endorsed the position of neutrality. They knew, just as I did, that you do not send abused children back to their abusers for help"

<end of quote>

I feel much the same way about having the adoption agency involved in deciding whether a search is appropriate. Having experienced both Barnardos and Local Authority incompetence in own search. I am really sickened to think that if someone searches for me as an adoptee, Barnardos will be able to say if their search is appropriate. I mention Barnardo's simply because it is the agency I have personal dealing with, I would not want any other agency making that decision for me. Many birth mothers do see the agency that took their child from them as abusers, I can't disagree with them. As an adoptee I look at what Barnardos did at that time and I see Barnardos as my abuser. It is simply wrong to give adoption agencies that power. Though a birth relative who is refused a service by one ASA can go to another ASA, only one adoption agency holds the records, a refusal by the adoption agency to help is final. There should be a right of appeal to the court when such a refusal is received.

4.

I feel that this Consultation does not meet the the guidelines in the 'Code of Practice on written consultation out lined at the end of this form.

Specifically

1/ Consultation widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of policy

Few of the general public or the majority of people who might want to respond have been made aware of this Consultation.

2/ Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses

There are a number of instances where in my opinion it is not clear about what the proposals are

and who will be affected.

3/ Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.

It has been poorly accessible, the website has moved is difficult to find and does not always work properly. Printed versions of the Consultation documents were not sent out until after halfway through the consultation period.

The following is quote from an e-mail sent to me by the DfES, I believe it shows clearly that there has been little interest at the DfES in what those who are affected by this legislation thin or have to say at this stage.

<quote>

"... I am sorry that I was unable to give you advance notification of the publication of the consultation documents. In the lead-up to publication, the date of publication changed several times in order that we could generate media interest. Margaret Hodge was also keen to publicise the consultation through TV and radio so we had to delay publication to accommodate her availability for interviews etc. The week in which we published the consultation document was particularly frenetic.

The consultation document is available on-line at www.children.doh.gov.uk/adoption. It is also available on the DfES' e-consultation system. This allows users to view the document on screen and to provide written comments/feedback on-line. This site can be accessed at www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations

Turning to the consultation process, I hope you will understand that we do not have the capacity to convene consultation events for the public and service-users as well as practitioners. As you know, this consultation exercise is part of a much wider work programme to implement the 2002 Act and we have therefore had to limit the number of consultation events so that all the consultation packages could be accommodated. We have invited a range of stakeholder representatives, including those representing birth relatives, adoptive parents and adopted persons and we believe that these organisations will effectively communicate the views of those people whom they represent. Finally, I should point out that the consultation workshops are primarily technical, designed to help refine the secondary legislation and supporting guidance in collaboration with those practitioners who will be using the documents on a daily basis. Of course we value the view of service users too but I think it is right that practitioners are given priority for the consultation events. Of course, as the consultation document makes clear, we welcome the written comments of any person with an interest in adoption and guarantee that all written responses will be carefully considered before the regulations and guidance are finalised. We are also looking at developing more detailed good practice guidance before the regulations come into force in September 2005 and this may present further opportunities for service users to contribute...."

<end quote>

At the time of the Adoption and Children Bill's passage through Parliament, much criticism was made of the fact that so much of what would finally become law was being left to secondary legislation, which would not have the benefit of debate on the floors of Parliament. We were all assured at the time that there would be full consultations where everyone affected by the new regulations could have their say. NORCAP the NPN and similar organisations represent so few of those likely to be affected by the legislation. NORCAP's total membership ever, represents less than 10 percent of adopted people its current membership at any given time less than 1 percent. NORCAP has done nothing to poll its members views

There are numerous small organisation and interested individuals that have never been consulted. Some of the small organisation now feel that they are about to be told their existence will be illegal unless they jump through all manner of hoops to register as ASAs.

I hope that when the final draft of the Access to Information (Pre-Commencement) Regulations 2004 are laid before Parliament, it is made clear to the Committee on Delegated Legislation that some of us who are affected by it do not feel that there has been adequate consultation with us, it is after all

our lives that are affected by this not the social workers at the Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

The Department for Education and Skills carries out research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be acceptable if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send consultation documents?

Yes

No

Code of Practice on Consultation

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 31 July 2004

Send by post to: Access to Information Consultation, Looked After Children Division, Room 121 Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG.

Send consultation responses by e-mail:

Once you have completed the questionnaire, save it on your hard drive and then open an email to accesstoinformation.consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk, and then attach the completed questionnaire file and send the email