



CACH

Children Adopted From China

Policy Guidance - Media Relations

From time to time issues relating to ICA generally and ICA from China in particular make their way into the media with varying degrees of accuracy and generally being addressed in ways that tend more to the sensationalist rather than the objective.

CACH is also periodically approached by journalists requesting views on specific topics and/or interviews with adoptive parents about their experiences

This policy guidance is issued to provide general guidance to CACH Officers in the event of media attention or a perceived need to engage with policymakers in government.

It has been the consistent view of the Officers' Committee over the years that whilst we are prepared to offer requests for interviews to the membership for them to respond as individuals, we do not directly respond to the press as an organisation. This has been for several reasons:

- We need to recognise the historical background and understand that even now within the social worker scene there is still a significant fundamental opposition to the concept of ICA despite government guidance. This extends to representatives of some UK Adoption organisations who are more specifically focussed on UK Domestic issues.
- We need to be mindful of the power of the press to distort messages and direct confrontation of the media can be counter-productive, there are any number of people who can be wheeled out to condemn us for colonialism etc. It is seen to be far more productive to invest in good news stories through the soft media which work very well in terms of public opinion.
- In a 24 hour news cycle environment media issues unless they are huge tend to be here today and gone tomorrow as long as they are not prolonged by argument, the real issue is the extent (if any) to which policy is affected by the particular event.
- Finally, it has long been the view of the committee that there is nothing in our remit that gives us a mandate to speak for our members in this way. Addressing the issues to our members and informing through policy meetings is however different and within our remit.

In summary, if we wish to influence policy (which on occasions we of course do) then we won't do it by responding directly to sensationalist and/or shoddy journalism which is recognised by government for what it is, but by engaging with the appropriate authorities in the development of the policies. This is what in practice we do and a member of the Officers' Committee (usually Chair or Vice-Chair) attends meetings at the Department for Education two or three times a year as part of their consultative network. It is clear that Government officials understand the issues very well and obtain data and information from a variety of sources including CACH and we should endeavour to ensure that we have an appropriate share of voice.