



November 2007

Statement on Catholic adoption agencies

The excellent work of Catholic adoption agencies in England and Wales is at the service of many of the most vulnerable children in our society. This work is a manifestation of the Gospel in action, founded on the Church's moral and social teaching including the Catholic understanding of the vocation of marriage. The threat that now hangs over the future work of our agencies is entirely the result of the Government's decision to include adoption work within the scope of the sexual orientation regulations, and then to refuse a reasonable exemption. It is a problem not of our making.

We want the Catholic adoption agencies to continue as Catholic agencies, and we reaffirm our commitment to do everything we can to seek a workable solution to this very difficult problem.

We welcome the government's offer of limited financial assistance to agencies to pay for further work to be done to explore whether within the law there might yet be ways found which will enable the adoption work to carry on and for our agencies to continue to be Catholic agencies. We note that the Government has also made clear that joint applications for this funding will be considered much more favourably than individual ones.

We therefore ask the Directors and Trustees of the Catholic adoption agencies in England and Wales to come together and make a joint application for funding before 30th November 2007:

1. to explore all feasible ways in which the moral and doctrinal requirements of the Church and the practical requirements of the law can be met, including the legal, practical and financial implications of any recommendations and
2. in the event of an irreconcilable position, to recommend the most appropriate ways forward in the interests of the children and adoptive parents, of the staff and future work of the agencies, and to set out the employment, financial and other implications of such recommendations

We believe that it would be helpful for there to be a moral theologian on the group conducting this work for the agencies.

Any report commissioned as a result of a joint application made by, or on behalf of, the agencies will naturally be addressed to the agencies themselves, and in the end it will be for the Trustees of each agency, in conjunction with the local Bishop, to decide the future of their agency's adoption work.

It will also, however, be important that, before such final decisions are made, the Bishops' Conference has the opportunity to consider the recommendations.

Ends