

## News

### Child development agency comes on-stream today

Observer Reporter  
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An animated Alison Anderson talks about her role as chief executive officer of the Child Development Agency (CDA), which is scheduled to come on-stream as an executive agency today.

THE Child Development Agency (CDA), an amalgamation of the adoption board, the children's services division and the child support unit, comes on-stream today and is expected to tackle tough issues including child labour and the general protection of the nation's children.

It is estimated that there are 6,500 children working on the nation's streets and there is an ongoing review of the island's places of safety, following reports of the prolonged abuse of a child while in the custody of the state.

"We are doing the ... legislative reform with the Child Care and Protection Act, and there is also work on standards and regulations," CDA's chief executive officer, Alison Anderson, told JIS News recently, adding that the three-year implementation process has been slow.

According to her, during the implementation phase, there had been mixed reviews and a bit of frustration from staff and stakeholders because of the length of time it was taking.

"When you're working on so many different fronts and using the same resources, it's very difficult. Obviously money has been a problem. That goes without saying, given the exigencies of the economic situation in Jamaica," she said.

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She added, however, there was equally a great deal of support for the project.

"I am not a social worker but I am being led by a number of social workers and they have been extremely supportive," Anderson said.

One of the short-term goals, she added, is for the CDA to take on the status of an executive agency and the organisation will be moving to standardise all its operating procedures and policies in the form of a manual. This is aimed at ensuring that both CDA employees and the public are fully aware of the organisation's role and can adequately assess its performance.

"By then we would also have established our organisational structure, and up to about 25 per cent of our division (should be) staffed. Thirdly, we would have strengthened our array of services by bringing in a few more children's officers and reorganising the work flow processes involved in service delivery," Anderson explained.

The mother of two is a former lecturer at the University of the West Indies (UWI) who has been involved in negotiations on the Child Rights Convention, worked on the special Summit on Children in 2002; and on legislation for child labour. She was appointed CDA project manager at the children's division in 2001.

In addition, she brings to the job a wealth of knowledge from her involvement in the development of public policy and the modernisation of the public sector.

"I feel humbled by the thought of being allowed the opportunity to try. I am also enabled, strengthened and affirmed by the fact that in spite of the problems, I have seen a commitment (in the organisation) through the care and help provided for the children," she said.

Anderson, who gained her Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations at UWI, and did postgraduate work in England, is a St Andrew High School graduate.

She said she is heartened by the ongoing public discussion on children's issues, "as it gives us an excellent opportunity to work together, to discuss what the nature of it should be, the social cost of our child protection system and our child welfare system,

and to discuss how the agency can become a leader and a centre of excellence in the field."

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