



Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair, Finance Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

23rd November 2021

Dear Peredur Owen Griffiths MS,

RE: Welsh Government Draft Budget

Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the opportunity to feed into this consultation ahead of the budget, which comes at an urgent time for many children and young people in Wales.

We have outlined some key priorities below.

Mental health support for children and young people in Wales

Like all of us, children and young people in Wales have been through an incredibly traumatic period since the pandemic began.

We are only beginning to understand what the longer-term physical and mental health impacts of this will be, but data from Barnardo's UK-wide Quarterly Practitioner Survey suggests that mental health and emotional wellbeing has been – and continues to be – significantly affected.

In July 2021, 95% of 275 respondents said that they thought 'there has been an increase in the number of children and young people experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic.'

It is not just children and young people's mental health which has been impacted upon, as our family support services are seeing increasing levels of inter-parental conflict too. By tackling this at the earliest possible stage, we

can reduce mental health problems in children and young people, lower the numbers of looked after children, reduce demand on family courts, as well as combat its escalation into domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse related crime constitutes 1 in 6 of all crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales and over a third of all recorded violence against the person crimes, while the National Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that 5.5% of adults aged 16 to 74 years (2.3 million) experienced domestic abuse in 2019-2020.² Research has found that 12% of under 11s, 17.5% of 11–17s and 23.7% of 18–24s had been exposed to domestic abuse between adults in their homes during childhood.³

Barnardo's Cymru would make the following recommendations:

- Increase community-based, non-clinical therapeutic support for children and their families. Examples of this include Barnardo's Cardiff Family Wellbeing Service, and Golau, providing mental health support to young people on Anglesey who are pre-Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

These services provide critical support to those children and young people who are pre-CAMHS but are still in need of support. This area is both incredibly important and significantly underdeveloped, as evidenced in the Children, Young People and Education Committee's report *Mind Over Matter*.¹

- Ensure that there is a sufficiently resourced, genuine 'no wrong door'² approach with tie-in between services across the board which include where appropriate a whole-family approach.
- Introduce a specific fund aimed at providing training on evidence-based approaches to dealing with inter-parental conflict for children's social care staff statutory and voluntary sector.

Supporting vital services for children and families in Wales

Vital services are provided to children and families across Wales, including family support, dealing with the impact of child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and many other issues.

¹ *Mind Over Matter: A report on the step change needed in emotional and mental health support for children and young people in Wales* <https://www.exchangewales.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/06/cr-ld11522-e.pdf>

² https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NoWrongDoor_FINAL_EN230620.pdf

These services are often funded year-to-year with little clarity about the funding situation in the coming financial year, often until very close to the date at which a service would either need to renew or close.

This creates issues such as retention and recruitment of staff under such uncertain circumstances, and the ability of services to offer support to children and families in the longer term.

To mitigate this, we would urge Welsh Government to consider either to extend the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) beyond its anticipated end date, or to provide an uplift to children's services budgets to replace it. The ICF has funded innovative work that has reduced numbers of looked after children and helped strengthen families across Wales. Examples of this include the Barnardo's Cymru Rapid Response Service in Newport and Monmouthshire Families Together.

A longer-term solution in relation to this issue is potentially for multi-year funding arrangements. This would provide organisations with the assurance that they need to deliver in a way that creates certainty for staff, supports families and helps continually build expertise and excellence.

Opening Closed Doors, a Barnardo's Cymru whole-family domestic abuse service in Gwent, is a key example of these challenges. Opening Closed Doors has provided a lifeline to many families throughout the pandemic and has achieved outstanding results. The service has supported over 450 families since its inception in 2019 but faces an uncertain future after March 2022.

Opening Closed Doors was independently evaluated by the Institute for Public Care (IPC), which found that there was positive evidence that children participating in Opening Closed Doors were living in a safer and more stable home environment by the end of an intervention and had improvements in their mental health and emotional wellbeing. This included examples of children being able to communicate their feelings rather than keeping them hidden, having better understanding that the abuse was not their fault and appearing to be more resilient with a reduction in angry outbursts, self-harm and other manifestations of trauma.

To take action on these issues we would urge Welsh Government to:

- Consider allocating local authorities longer term funding across the flexible funding portfolio, and to consider what will replace the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF)

- Invest in a whole family approach to tackling DA such as Opening Closed Doors in Gwent. (To provide fuller information about the service, including costings, I have attached our Opening Closed Doors proposal to this letter.)

We appreciate the opportunity to feed into this consultation ahead of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget and would be happy to provide more information if that would be of use.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Crawley

Director of Barnardo's Cymru and South West

About Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities. We currently run more than 60 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with local authorities. Each year we regularly support more than 10,000 children, young people and families. We aim to secure better outcomes for more children by providing the support needed to ensure stronger families, safer childhoods and positive futures. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work to campaign to improve the lives of children, young people and families by promoting positive change in policy and practice. We believe that with the right help, committed support and belief all children can fulfil their potential.