

**Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc
Children and Young People Committee**

Lesley Griffiths AM
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

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1 November 2011

Dear Lesley

We wish to thank you and the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services for attending the Children and Young People Committee meeting on 19 October as part of our scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2012-13.

The Committee would like to make a number of comments for your consideration. We are also writing to the Minister for Education and Skills and the contents of both these letters are being copied to the Finance Committee to inform its overarching strategic scrutiny of the Draft Budget and will appear on the Committee's website.

Transparency and Accountability

The Committee had serious concerns about the presentation of the budget and the lack of transparency and accountability. Members felt this compromised their ability to fulfil their role in scrutinising the Department's budget and in holding Ministers to account. It was particularly difficult to track funding allocations for children's services due to the lack of detail in the budget. This was compounded by the split of responsibilities between a number of delivery organisations. Furthermore, the bulk of spending on health is provided to Local Health Boards through the NHS Delivery SPA, which the Committee lacked sufficient information to scrutinise. Members were also concerned at the apparent lack of accountability at Local Health Board level, given your belief that it was inappropriate for you to intervene in local decision making. The Committee believe it is essential to enhance clarity in this area to allow for more effective monitoring and scrutiny in the future.

Members felt that you were reliant upon Local Health Boards allocating expenditure appropriately to meet your policy commitments but were unable to demonstrate any clear mechanism for measuring outcomes. Members were also concerned that you did not appear to have a contingency plan if Local Health Boards were unable to deliver these commitments.

The Committee welcomed your commitment to annually review ringfenced budgets but were concerned that there appeared to be no clear principles about when ringfencing was used.

Autism

The Committee expressed concern that funding for children with autism was being moved to the Adult and Older People Action budget line from the Children's Social Service budget line, as this may result in a diminished service for children and be difficult to track and monitor in the future.

Flying Start

Despite the additional allocation to Flying Start in the draft budget, Members questioned whether this would be sufficient to achieve the policy intention of doubling the amount of children being included in the programme. This appeared to be in conflict with previous information provided to the Committee. Furthermore, Members were concerned that local authorities were being asked to formulate plans for the expansion of Flying Start before the Welsh Government had published the evaluation of the effectiveness of the current programme.

CAFCASS Cymru

The Committee noted that it was anticipated that further funding would be allocated to CAFCASS Cymru in 2012-13, over that which was in the draft budget proposals, and that this would come from central funds. Members were concerned about the potential impact this would have on funding for other programmes and asked for regular updates on the programmes affected.

Additional Information

You agreed to provide the following information:

- The total expenditure on the provision of wheelchairs for children;
- The changes made to the funding arrangements for third sector organisations that provide child and family services across Wales.

Thank you for assisting the Committee in its work, and we look forward to receiving your response to the points raised in this letter as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Chapman".

**Christine Chapman AM
Committee Chair**