

Buffy Williams MS
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Welsh Parliament
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17th March 2025

Plenary Debate 'Children on the Margins' Inquiry

Dear Buffy Williams MS,

On behalf of NYAS Cymru, I would like to sincerely thank you and the Children, Young People and Education's Committee for the Plenary debate which took place on Wednesday 12th March 2025 regarding the Committee's 'Children on the Margins' inquiry. During the debate, we were pleased to hear you discuss the inquiry's recommendation 3 regarding return interviews, and we would like to thank you for emphasising the call for **the offer** of a return interview to be mandatory, rather than the interview itself.

When the Minister for Children and Social Care spoke about Welsh Government's response to this recommendation, it was stated children and young people 'already have a statutory right to a return interview under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014'. NYAS Cymru's understanding is that they are not statutory, and we are concerned that the active offer of advocacy may be being conflated with return interview services. We noted that in Welsh Government's written response to the recommendation 3, the active offer of advocacy was also referenced. As you and the Committee are aware, advocacy delivered through the active offer is fundamentally different to a return interview.

The active offer of advocacy is only available for children and young people in Wales who become subject to child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference or taken into local authority care. While these children and young people are at higher risk of missing incidents, any child or young person in Wales can experience missing and the majority will not be eligible for the active offer and therefore would not be able to access it after a missing incident. If advocacy is likened to a return interview, this will likely result in children and young people not receiving or being able to access the right support services. The active offer of advocacy cannot and must not be perceived as an alternative to a return interview and we believe Welsh Government must be clearer on this, to prevent any confusion in legislation and practice. We would strongly welcome the Committee writing to the Minister for Children and Social Care to clarify this, to ensure there is a clear understanding of the differences and individual importance of return interview services and the active offer of advocacy.

Once again, we would like to thank you and the Committee for truly listening to our calls, the day-to-day experiences of our frontline workers and most importantly, the children and young people we support. Please do not hesitate to reach out if there is anything we can do to continue supporting this work.

Best regards,



Sharon Lovell MBE, Chief Executive, NYAS Cymru

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