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Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-505  
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/02919/13

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Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 23 October on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the petition from Keira Marlow calling on the Welsh Government to provide a specialist eating disorder unit in Wales.

It is not clear from the petition wording whether the call is for an adult or children's specialist unit. Nevertheless, the Welsh Government has made good progress in relation to the provision of Eating Disorder services for both groups, and tackling this issue remains a priority in our Together for Mental Health Strategy.

The vast majority of people with an eating disorder can be cared for either in the community or local mental health inpatient facilities in Wales. Those in need of highly specialised care are supported by specialist staff concentrated in a small number of centres across the UK until they are well enough to return home, with the support of the aforementioned services, or to their local mental health unit.

*Eating Disorders: A Framework for Wales* was published in 2009. Issued to all Health Boards, it established that services should be developed according to clinical need and as locally as is practicable, and it sets out roles and responsibilities relating to the investigation, treatment and monitoring of those with eating disorders.

To support implementation of the Framework, we provide annual funding of £1 million to sustain the two specialist community eating disorder teams, serving north and south Wales which were established in 2010. The teams support both secondary and primary care services, and assist with the delivery of care to those with more complex requirements. The services support those over the age of 18 and close links have been established with child and adolescent mental health teams across Wales.

Some individuals with an eating disorder might require hospitalisation, ordinarily in a mental health in patient facility in Wales or, should circumstances warrant, a specialist eating disorders facility in England. Few Welsh patients require the services of facilities in England, and equally England-based patients might themselves have to travel long distances to access specialist services depending on where they live. Given this issue of critical mass, and the ongoing pressures on the public finances, it is not viable to establish a specialist eating disorders unit in Wales at this time.

The importance we assign to the needs of young people with mental ill-health such as eating disorders is reflected in the investment of £42m that was used to establish young people's mental health in-patient units in north (Abergele) and south Wales (Bridgend). Providing a total of 34 beds for those requiring the highest levels of care, these invaluable facilities provide safe environments where young people can receive treatment for a range of complex mental health problems, including eating disorders.

Your letter refers to my evidence to the Committee on 8 October regarding the provision of Eating Disorder services to children and young people and my comments remain extant in relation to this petition. I particularly refer you to paragraph 308 of the meeting transcript, where I indicated that the treatment of Eating Disorders in young people is regarded as very much a part of CAMHS core business. I further stated that, whilst treatment in the community is our approach, between one third and 40% of admissions to the tier 4 CAMHS residential units are for those with an Eating Disorder. My evidence also referred to the additional investment in treating Eating Disorders within CAMHS, which I announced on 7 October. This recurrent £250,000 investment will provide additional skilled staff; improve the skills of the existing workforce; enable more frequent out-patient clinics to be run; and, crucially, enable better use to be made of the CAMHS inpatient units, ensuring more young people can be treated in Wales rather than be sent out of area.

I hope this information is helpful.

Best wishes  
Mark

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