

Rebecca Evans AC/AM  
Gweinidog Iechyd y Cyhoedd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Social Services and Public Health



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00569/17

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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[government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

9 June 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter addressed to Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport, about the petition received from Aled Thomas about support for Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru. I am responding as this falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

The Welsh Government is fully committed to working to improve the lives of children, young people and adults with autism and their families and carers. We are aware of the challenges people with autism face every day and it is crucial that support services are in place where and when they are needed.

Last November, we published our Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan. This sets out a number of key actions, some of which will be delivered through a new National Integrated Autism Service. The integrated service is designed to provide extra support for children, adults and families to help them avoid crisis and the need for more intensive support. This innovative service will be all age, bringing together health, social care, education and other services to provide a single point of contact, preventing people from being passed between services unnecessarily. It will support a team of specialists including psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and support workers from across health and social care. As we develop and roll out the service, we will be seeking the views of people with autism to ensure the services are meeting identified needs.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

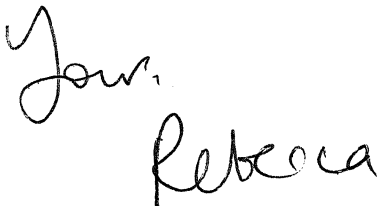
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I initially allocated £6 million over the three years to 2019 to support the development and roll-out of the National Integrated Autism Service across Cardiff and the Vale, Cwm Taf, Gwent and Powys. In March, I announced further funding of £7 million to enable all regions in Wales to develop an integrated service by 2018 and for all to be funded up to 2021.

Funding has been allocated to regional partnership boards through our Intermediate Care Fund. Each region is developing their local services to enhance, not replace, current provision and they will be working in partnership with existing services including third sector providers. I am pleased that the integrated service in Powys is now live and services in Cardiff and the Vale, Cwm Taf and Gwent will all be in place over the next few months. The remaining regions are beginning the development of their integrated services this year.

The Welsh Government values the vital work undertaken by the third sector but is not able to provide permanent funding to any organisation. Therefore I am not able to commit to the petition submitted by Aled Thomas about support for Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

We do though currently operate a grant scheme for third sector organisations working in the health and social care sector on an all-Wales basis. The Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant Scheme was introduced in 2016 and nearly £22 million of funding was awarded to 32 projects supporting a wide range of people with support needs. These include vulnerable children, young people and their families, looked after children and care leavers, older people, people with learning disabilities, physical and/or sensory disabilities and carers ensuring that every part of the community can benefit from the funding available. This grant scheme runs for three years until 2018-19. Should a follow-on grant scheme be agreed, then Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru would be able to submit an application should they meet the criteria for the grant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaw.' on the top line and 'Rebecca' on the bottom line.

**Rebecca Evans AC/AM**

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