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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/03600/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 31 October on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-05-842 – Give young people a voice when commissioning local services in Wales.

I note the comments from the petitioners, particularly those in relation to the inclusion and participation of children and young people. Regarding your first point around the notion of enhanced participation of children and young people within the commissioning process of mental health and youth services, the commissioning of services is the responsibility of the individual health boards and I expect children and young people to be represented appropriately when developing or enhancing services.

We work closely with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, whose key role is ensuring that children and young people have their voices heard, their concerns raised and have someone to safeguard their rights at a national level. We share the vision that children and young people should be at the heart of everything we do.

As outlined in my previous letter, the Together for Children and Young People (T4CYP) Programme already has mechanisms in place to engage young people in its work, through broad roots engagement that captures the well being of all children and not just those who use CAMHS. This includes working closely with Children in Wales, which in turn liaise with Young Wales, the Children's Commissioner's office and the third sector. An example of this is the T4CYP transition guidance from CAMHS to adult mental health services, which was launched in 2017. This was informed by the views of young people themselves and includes a young person's passport designed to empower and support the individual to take ownership of the process. There is also a commitment to review the specialist CAMHS Framework for Improvement which recommends an active patient voice and children participation in service development and feedback.

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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.

Whilst the work as a programme in the last few years has been focused specifically on access to specialist CAMHS we recognise there is more to be done. Officials are working with the T4CYP Programme on the delivery of the current work programme and to ensure legacy arrangements are put in place.

By way of governance arrangements, the T4CYP Project Board reports to the Welsh Government through the Children and Young People's Delivery Assurance Group, which ensures that the children and young people's actions in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2016-2019 are achieved. The Group includes representation from a wide variety of organisations including children and young people specific third sector organisations, heads of children's social services, youth justice board and heads of services in the health boards, so that the voices of children and young people are appropriately represented.

In addition, an all Wales, all ages Mental Health Network has been established, led by the NHS and overseen by an NHS Wales Mental Health Network Board. The purpose of the Network Board is to advise NHS Wales on issues regarding the development of mental health services in Wales, and, on behalf of NHS Wales, to oversee and guide the work of the Mental Health Network.

As you note, it is with regret that during late 2017 and early 2018, there was a hiatus in T4CYP central administrative activity due to a number of vacancies within the T4CYP programme and the wider network. The T4CYP programme now has a new Programme Lead and a Business Support Officer recently in post. These changes did not affect the programme of meetings, but did affect the record being uploaded to the website and we have now received assurance that the site will be updated with a copy of the minutes and products retrospectively. In the interim, minutes are available on request. The T4CYP twitter account was inactive for a period, however, the account has been active since October 2018.

Now the programme is at full capacity, I would expect regular updates, notes from quarterly board meetings and T4CYP twitter feeds to be readily available and circulated to a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that both children and young people and partner organisations involved in the delivery of services are kept up to date with current thinking and are able to influence developing proposals. We thank you for your comments on the sometimes inaccessible wording of some of this information and will be monitoring this communication channel for regular updates and their accessibility.

You have also noted the lack of reliable data and data collection methods (included in the T4CYP Board minutes, September 2017). There has been significant work in this area since September 2017. Following an audit of children and young people data collection, the mental health core data set will address improved consistency and quality of data and outcome measures across Wales, in line with the rollout of the Welsh Clinical Care Information System (WCCIS). There is also a joint workshop planned in March 2019 to discuss the current data with all relevant parties being invited to attend, which will feed into the development of WCCIS.

Regarding your comments about the suggestions in Hafal's *Making Sense* report, there will always be a need for young people who need to access CAMHS as well as those who are expressing the need for services under a non-medical model. It is not in anyone's interest to refer young people to a service which cannot meet their needs. Whilst we recognise the need to provide a range of support that meets specific needs of children and young people, there will always be a requirement for more specialist services.

As well as providing additional CAMHS funding, we have also invested additional funding since 2015 specifically to improve primary care children's provision, and expand the provision of talking therapies and work has already commenced on the development of a Matrics Cymru for children and young people. In addition, we have commissioned the NHS delivery unit to understand how local primary mental health support services are accessed and delivered to children and young people across Wales. This will be an opportunity for health boards to consider what actions need to be taken with local partners and community resource to ensure clear pathways for children and young people to access the right support to develop resilience.

With regards to the £1.4 million for the CAMHS In Reach pilots in schools, a key focus is supporting teachers to better understand childhood distress and emotional and mental health problems, as well as upskilling them to recognise and deal with low level problems within their competence. This work will now be taken forward in the broader context of our commitment to develop the whole school approach to the mental health and wellbeing in Wales. This work aims to ensure that mental health and wellbeing becomes central to the way schools work and will touch on many different aspects of school life.

This work is being driven forward by the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and I chair. I can also confirm that young people will be participating in this work through a newly established national youth stakeholder group. This will ensure they have the opportunity to provide in-depth feedback and work with Welsh Government officials to co-produce this important area of work. It will be made up of young people from all over Wales and invitations to apply for the group will be published shortly. We will be promoting this in particular to young people from disadvantaged groups and expect the first meeting to be held early in the new year. The group will also be used by T4CYP programme to consult on their work.

The youth stakeholder group is only one part of our efforts to engage with children and young people and we also intend to run a series of consultation exercises in schools and youth groups to gather a wider range of opinions. The work of the Task and Finish Group is still at an early stage, but we aim to improve our digital presence in the new year and explore how we could use digital engagement to share information with more children and young people and receive feedback in return.

Finally, I appreciate the comments you make about the effort the Welsh Government is making in improving the standard of young people's mental health. I am particularly interested in the soon to be formed Welsh Youth Parliament and how we will work with it to ensure the voices of children and young people in Wales are heard by those with the power to make change.

I hope this provides some reassurance that engagement of children and young people is a priority in the development of our work.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services