

P-05-842 Give young people a voice when commissioning local services in Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 05.12.18

Dear David,

Thank you for forwarding us the letter from Vaughan Gething, dated 21 November 2018.

We'd like to start by acknowledging what Mr Gething has highlighted and thank him for his response. In particular, we note his comments regarding the consultation of young people through the creation of the National Youth Stakeholder Group. The Campaign Group would like to comment that this is a positive step in the right direction.

However, we would like to draw your attention to the main argument of the Petition which is the lack of a mandatory participation – especially with reference to marginalised groups – within the commissioning of services for young people across Wales. Mr Gething has stated in his response, that the participation of children and young people in the commissioning of services for young people is the responsibility of health boards and local authorities. This is correct, however there is no legal requirements for Health Boards and Local Authorities to ensure young people are involved in the commissioning of services for them and no real consequences when young people are not included or excluded from the commissioning process.

Although Mr Gething makes a valid point, our aim is to ensure that engagement of young people in the commissioning process is mandatory throughout Wales. This will ensure that young people have an equal level of participation within the commissioning process.

Regarding the marginalised groups, the Petition highlights the diverse needs of this demographic, which require local authorities and health boards to provide accessible methods of engagement, for example an interactive online platform for participation that extends the aims of youth forums and councils. Making it a requirement that young people have a meaningful role in the commissioning for services for them will ensure that the Welsh Government, Health Boards and Local Authorities consider a range of engagement methods are provided and will hold to account agencies that do not abide by this.

The Campaign Group is confident in its suggestions. They are based upon the experiences of thousands of people, including those belonging to marginalised groups, across Wales. These views have been gathered by the Group over the course of several months. We have used a variety of engagement methods including: resources, such as dedicated participation workers and accessible meeting spaces; alternative communication methods like dedicated social media pages, phone/text messages and bespoke face-to-face inductions at a convenient location; and broad grass roots canvassing e.g. community outreach events.

Through the course of our Campaign, the Group noted that the use of these diverse methods is not widespread throughout Wales. However, it is through these methods that the Campaign has garnered the significant level of support it has and we can be sure that the methods we are putting forward for consideration work.

We appreciate the action that the Welsh Government is taking in its attempts to provide young people with a greater opportunity to voice their opinions; however we believe it should be a legal requirement with consequences for failure and not an optional extra. As we mentioned in our last letter, we just wish to help guide the Senedd's effort to provide policies and legislation that have a meaningful impact for young people.

Thank you again for your time.

Kindest regards,

The #Changeit Campaign Group