



Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms. Saunders,

We are writing in response to Mr Gething’s letter to the Petitions Committee dated 22 March 2019.

Firstly, we’d like to thank Mr Gething for his response, and would like to note the excellent initiatives and legislation that Mr Gething has mentioned, including the Gender Equality Review. We believe that this is an important issue that must be addressed.

Regrettably, Mr Gething seems to have not acknowledged the main purpose of the petition, which was to recommend a mandatory consultation process with young people when commissioning services that affect them.

Additionally, Mr Gething refers to Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010. While undoubtedly well-meaning legislation, the socio-economic duty in Part 1 is of little relevance to the outcomes of this Petition. Section 1(1) of Part 1 states:

“An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.”

Our Petition does not relate to socio-economic disadvantage. Whilst poverty is a proven contributor to poor mental health, our Petition looks at the broader scope of mental health rather on its specific facets or contributors.

We do note the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), however this is considered merely in order to “scope options.” This is alongside “potentially” looking at further treaty integration and stronger “regulation, guidance and monitoring.” Again, there is no firm commitment here, a point our Petition seeks to address.

Further, there is still no commitment to include young people in the consultation or commissioning process. The only named members of any mentioned working group are officials from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales’s offices, academics and Welsh Government officials. While key components of any working group, one important demographic has been left out – the young people who are personally affected by any initiatives or legislation put in place. In effect, Mr Gething has, in this sentence, demonstrated the reason our Petition was presented in the first place. This is to include young people in the entire lifecycle of services which affect them – from conception, through to consultation and implementation.

Finally, Mr Gething's undertaking to writing to public bodies to remind them to abide by guidance of children's participation is problematic in two respects. The first is that he is only referring to the guidance for children. Our Petition looks at young people up to the age of 25, not just children. Secondly, in our view, only writing a reminder to public bodies is tokenistic. More needs to be done than issuance of a simple reminder.

We would like to thank the Petitions Committee for their work on this issue, and would ask that they continue their analysis and debate of our Petition and the information provided.

Once again if we can provide any further assistance please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

The #Changeit Campaign Group