

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 14 July 2022

Meeting time: 10.45

For further information contact:

Naomi Stocks

Committee Clerk

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Private pre-meeting

(10.30 – 10.45)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(10.45)

2 Implementation of education reforms – evidence session 1

(10.45 – 12.00)

(Pages 1 – 29)

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Georgina Haarhoff, Deputy Director Curriculum, Welsh Government

Hannah Wharf, Deputy Director Support for Learners Division, Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Annual Report on Curriculum Implementation – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Paper 1

Implementation of ALN Reforms – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Paper 2

3 Papers to note

(12.00)

3.1 Forward work programme

(Pages 30 – 35)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Paper to note 1



3.2 Forward work programme

(Pages 36 – 38)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language – CYPE(6)–16–
22 – Paper to note 2

3.3 Forward work programme

(Pages 39 – 40)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee to the Chief Executive of the WJEC – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Paper to
note 3

3.4 Forward work programme

(Pages 41 – 42)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee to the Chief Executive of Qualifications Wales – CYPE(6)–16–22 –
Paper to note 4

3.5 Pupil absence

(Pages 43 – 46)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales –
CYPE(6)–16–22 – Paper to note 5

3.6 Pupil absence

(Pages 47 – 65)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language – CYPE(6)–16–
22 – Paper to note 6

3.7 Pupil absence

(Page 66)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from the Association of School and College Leaders –
CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 7

3.8 Pupil absence

(Pages 67 – 69)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from the National Association of Head Teachers –
CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 8

3.9 P-06-1161 Routine collection and publication of data of how many babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement

(Pages 70 – 71)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of Petitions Committee to the Deputy Minister for Social Services – CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 9

3.10 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

(Pages 72 – 74)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of Finance Committee – CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 10

3.11 General scrutiny of the Minister for Health and Social Services

(Pages 75 – 77)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee to the Minister for Health and Social Services – CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 11

4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and for the meeting on 21 September

(12.00)

5 Pupil absence – consideration of the key issues

(12.00 – 12.35)

(Pages 78 – 86)

Attached Documents:

Pupil Absence – Key issues – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Private paper 1

6 Looked after children and care leavers – consideration of the scope and approach

(12.35 – 12.45)

(Pages 87 – 102)

Attached Documents:

Care experienced children – Scoping paper – CYPE(6)–16–22 – Private paper 2

7 Autumn forward work programme – oral update on approach to annual scrutiny

(12.45 – 12.50)

8 Committee activities – oral update

(12.50 – 13.00)

Document is Restricted

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper 1

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/JMEWL/2095/22

Jayne Bryant MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

1 July 2022

Dear Jayne,

Here is my [Annual Report on Curriculum Implementation](#) which I plan to publish on 1 July.

This report outlines our appraisal of the current position of reform; the actions we are taking to support schools and a forward look towards rollout. This report was a government commitment made during the passage of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 in the last Senedd. This process of annual reporting will now be the principal means through which we update the Senedd on curriculum implementation. I propose this report also forms the evidence paper in advance of my attendance at the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 14 July.

I would welcome the views of the Committee in due course regarding aspects of the reforms you would wish to see covered in detail in subsequent annual reports, particularly in the light of the Committee's ongoing scrutiny of curriculum implementation.

I am also sending copies of this letter to the Chairs of the Finance Committee and the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee given their interest in ongoing resourcing for curriculum reform.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

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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.

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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.

Implementation of ALN Reforms

Introduction

The additional learning needs (ALN) system is central to creating an inclusive education system and reforming the special educational needs (SEN) system in Wales. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 (ALN Act) is a core component of these reforms.

The ALN Code was published in March 2021 and went live from September 2021. September 2022 is the next key milestone in the legislative timetable, when orders will provide for children to move from the SEN system to the ALN system by August 2024.

Commencing the ALN Act is just the start of the journey of reform, which aims to create a system that better meets the needs of all children and young people. Alongside the roll out of the new curriculum, we will drive forward our cross-government ambitions to narrow inequalities and attainment gaps and transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN).

Children are moving from the old SEN system to the new ALN system between September 2021 and August 2024 and young people will enter post-16 education already on the ALN system from September 2023. The approach to implementation was informed by the views of stakeholders responding to the public consultation¹ on how the ALN Act should be implemented. The consultation found strong support for mandating a phased approach to implementing the ALN system, and that national timeframes for transferring specific groups of children to the ALN system would be the most manageable and consistent approach.

To prepare for the implementation of the ALN system, there has been a transformation programme focused on developing policy, workforce development, awareness-raising, and stakeholder engagement. Regional Transformation Leads worked with delivery partners and education establishments to support services to prepare for the changes and to develop closer multi-agency and cross-sector working practices. This was in parallel with the creation of new statutory roles in local authorities, schools and the health service, a programme of awareness raising, and professional learning and development.

What is the ALN Act and what is it expected to achieve?

The ALN Act² creates:

- a) a unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with ALN, and young people with ALN in school or further education (FE);
- b) an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and

¹ [Options for implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Bill](#)

² [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act](#)

Implementation of ALN Reforms

c) a fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.

In order to achieve these three overarching objectives, eleven core aims were established, within which the provisions within the ALN Act have been developed.

- The introduction of the term additional learning needs (ALN)
- A 0 to 25 age range
- A single legislative system
- A unified plan
- Increased participation of children and young people
- High aspirations and improved outcomes
- A simpler and less adversarial system
- Increased collaboration
- Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution
- Clear and consistent rights of appeal
- A mandatory code
- A bilingual system.

Key implementation milestones

- On 4 January 2021: the duties commenced under the Act to designate staff to the statutory roles which included Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCOs), the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officers (the Early Years ALNLOs) and the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officers (DECLCOs). Having statutory roles in post ahead of the new system provided statutory bodies with additional expertise and strategic oversight to support the roll out of the ALN reforms.
- On 1 September 2021: the ALN system commenced for all children up to, and including, Year 10 who were newly thought to have, or were newly identified as having ALN on, or after, 1 September 2021. It also commenced for children up to, and including, Year 11 who were detained.
- On 1 January 2022: the ALN Act commenced for another group of children - those up to, and including, Year 10 who have special educational provision (SEP) via school action/school action plus and who attend a maintained school or a PRU. Between January 2022 and August 2022, schools and local authorities were required to move children who fell into the following years: Nursery Years 1 or 2, Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 10.
- March 2022: we decided³ to extend the first year of implementation by one year. This means the end point for moving children in Nursery Years 1 or 2, Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 10 onto the ALN system becomes August 2023 rather than August 2022 (this does not affect the duties placed on schools and local

³ <https://gov.wales/written-statement-additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-act-2018-implementation>

Implementation of ALN Reforms

authorities to move children onto the ALN system in response to a specific request from a child, or their parent, to move the child onto the ALN system in the meantime). This was in response to the continued disruptive impact of covid on bodies responsible for moving children from the SEN to the ALN system and the need for more time in order to ensure an orderly transition.

- From September 2022: the ALN Act will come into force for children up to, and including, Year 11 in the 2202/23 school year who were not included in the groups above. These children will move to the new ALN system over the course of the 2022/23 school year and 2023/24 school year. The details are set out in the Practitioners Guide⁴.
- From September 2023: the oldest year group who will have been moved to the ALN system (which is those in Year 10 during the 2021/22 school year) will flow through to post-16 education.

Progress so far

Commencement

Children have started to receive their first individual development plan (IDP), along with all the associate rights created by the ALN Act. This is a considerable achievement for the sector in light of the delays and demands placed on them as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic.

Supporting the sector

Guidance has been published to support the implementation of the ALN system. This includes a technical guide⁵ and practitioner guide⁶ to implementing the ALN Act. Further guides for parents and children to explain how the ALN Act will be implemented will be published in the coming months.

Between 2018 and 2022, the Welsh Government funded five ALN Transformation Leads to provide advice, support and challenge to local authorities, further education institutions (FEIs) and other delivery partners in preparing for and managing the transition to the new ALN system. School readiness surveys were undertaken to aid whole school improvement planning.

The ALN Transformation Leads delivered a wide range of awareness-raising information and activity to support effective transition.

Workforce development

⁴ [Implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018: practitioner guide](#)

⁵ [A technical guide to implementing the Act during the first year of implementation \(2021 to 2022\)](#)

⁶ [Implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018: practitioner guide](#)

Implementation of ALN Reforms

Transformation Leads delivered a shared workforce development and professional learning agenda for key delivery partners. Extensive professional learning opportunities were provided to schools across regions, and learning modules targeted at specific leadership roles within relevant sectors.

A National ALN Professional Learning Pathway, including recognised and/or accredited learning was made available in the Autumn of 2021. This was developed by a Welsh Government Steering Group, Transformation Leads, local authorities, school improvement consortia, schools, further education (FE) and higher education institutions (HEIs). All training and resources are available through the medium of Welsh.

Workforce development focussed on three levels of skill development for education practitioners: core skills for all practitioners to deliver the new ALN system; advanced skills through the role of ALNCoS and; specialist skills development through post-graduate training for local authority-provided specialist support services available to education settings/schools, such as visually or hearing impaired sensory grant.

Most ALNCoS have engaged in a raft of cluster led activities to share good practice, in addition to an ALN learning session aimed at those with statutory roles⁷. Local authorities have been supported to provide training to schools on developing effective IDPs.

An interactive ALN training course on Hwb⁸ is helping those involved in delivery to understand the new legislative duties, and the rights it provides to children, their parents/carers, and young people.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has been designed to prepare student teachers to foster inclusive classrooms, and supporting learners with ALN is part of a student teacher's core studies.

Welsh Government funds Cardiff University to train and provide bursaries for 10 new trainee Educational Psychologist students per year on the three year Doctorate. A new contractual agreement from September 2023 will ensure students stay in Wales after graduation, to help to retain expertise and improve the talent pipeline.

Transformation Funding

Welsh Government has invested £35m core funding to date in preparing the infrastructure with a yearly budget of £21m until 2025 to support system reform and increase additional learning provision. An additional £20 million was provided to

⁷ [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) principles: online training for practitioners in statutory roles](#)

⁸ [e-learning course: An introduction to the new additional learning needs system in Wales](#)

Implementation of ALN Reforms

schools and colleges in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to support ALN learners disadvantaged by the pandemic.

Welsh Government funding has been deployed to support schools and local authorities to prepare for, and move, children to the new ALN system. This is in recognition of transition costs associated with the movement of children from the existing SEN system to the new one. It is also supporting the skills development of the education workforce to help build capacity and ensure learners' needs can be met in a range of education settings.

Looking ahead

ALN Reform National Steering Group: my officials continue to engage with the sector and have established an ALN Reform National Steering Group to bring together key delivery partners and sector stakeholders. This will include representatives from local authorities, schools and the third sector, to provide strategic direction information, and advice to support ongoing implementation of reforms. The group will play a critical role in the development of robust implementation arrangements, identifying risks and opportunities and encouraging interagency working and collaboration.

National Implementation Leads: three new Implementation Leads are being recruited to provide national, FE and Welsh language implementation strategic support to the sector. They will act as vital links between Welsh Government and delivery partners to listen to the experiences of practitioners, parents and children and young people to understand the impact of the ALN reforms. These roles build on the significant work undertaken by Transformation Leads and will operate on a national footprint.

Post--16 specialist placements guidance: local authorities will be responsible for making decisions and securing placements at independent specialist post-16 institutions (ISPIs) for those who have moved to the ALN system. Guidance for local authorities on funding arrangements for these placements is currently being developed and further support will be provided as they begin to undertake their duties. The first group of young people under the ALN system will transfer to post-compulsory education in September 2023.

Engagement with parents, children and young people: a third sector grant will deliver communication and engagement sessions to strengthen learner participation, improve understanding and awareness of ongoing implementation and ensure the voice of learners and parents directly influence ALN policy.

Challenges

We are still at the early stages of our journey of implementation of ALN reform and issues and challenges are being worked through in conjunction with partners. Amongst the key areas of work are:

Implementation of ALN Reforms

Consistency of Interpretation: as with any major reform, bodies responsible for implementing the ALN Act are still getting up to speed with understanding the detail of their new legal responsibilities. We continue to publish clear information and liaise with our delivery partners to mitigate risks of misinterpretation and support implementation.

Funding: the Regulatory Impact Assessment⁹ set out expectations for the ALN system to result in a reduction in ongoing costs due to supporting early intervention, increased participation of children, their families, and young people, and early dispute resolution to reduce disputes and legal challenges which add significant cost and burden within the existing SEN system.

Additional funding has supported the period of transition from the SEN to ALN system. The ALN Reform National Steering Group will include consideration of the potential impact of the reforms on funding.

Welsh Language: we recognise there is a shortage of Welsh language resources for ALN and ALN teachers able to work through the medium of Welsh. The recruitment of a dedicated Welsh Language ALN Implementation Lead will work with delivery partners to map Welsh language additional learning provision. An additional lead is managing a co-ordinated regional and local approach to deliver the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. Work is also underway to secure a licensing agreement for Welsh language versions of ALN resources, such as a dyslexia test and speech and language therapy resources.

ALN Numbers in Wales: this year's Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) collection has seen a 20% fall in the number of pupils identified as having an SEN or ALN in mainstream maintained schools in Wales since last year. We are working with partners to understand the reasons behind this fall, provide challenge if relevant and to seek assurances that pupils with ALN are identified and their needs are met.

We currently understand this change is due to schools reviewing their SEN registers to accurately reflect the number of children who have SEN/ALN, in addition to reidentifying those classified with General Learning Difficulties. Local authorities tell us that more pupils are being supported through routine teaching, instead of via a School Action Plan (School Action and School Action plus learners were previously defined as SEN).

Research and Evaluation

A four year research programme is currently in development, to evaluate the new ALN system against the intended outcomes for learners in Wales. This will include assessing effectiveness, identifying any barriers and facilitators to implementation and benefit realisation. Engaging parents and learners will be central to the research to gauge their experiences of the reform on their education and support needs to date.

⁹ [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act Explanatory Memorandum](#)

Implementation of ALN Reforms

Agenda Item 3.1

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 1

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant, Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Seneddchildren@senedd.wales

24 June 2022

Dear Jayne,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April requesting an update for the Committee on eating disorder services in Wales. Thank you also for allowing the additional time to complete the exercise that we had already commenced with health boards so that the information could also be used to inform this response.

We asked all health boards to provide information on how additional funding for eating disorders services had been utilised as part of our programme of work to 'reset' our eating disorders improvement programme as we emerge from Covid-19. This information is being considered alongside health board bids for the additional funding that I have made available for eating disorder services from 2022/23 onwards.

Prior to the pandemic, the Welsh Government provided significant and recurrent investment to support health boards to improve eating disorder services. The funding aimed to support improvement plans that were informed by the independent review commissioned by the Welsh Government which reported in 2018. The independent review set out a broad range of recommendations and our approach has been to focus services on the key, underpinning elements of the review to bring about sustainable changes to services. These are to:

- Reconfigure services towards earlier intervention.
- Achieve the NICE standards on eating disorders.
- Achieve a maximum 4 week wait for routine access to eating disorder services.

Like many other services however, our eating disorder services were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with an increase in demand of over 20% in some areas, alongside a reported increase in the acuity and complexity of patients' needs. Despite these pressures, health boards have made progress to transform services and improve access to support; and all health boards are actively working towards achieving the NICE standards for eating disorders services.

In terms of waiting times, routine reporting against mental health performance times does not currently disaggregate by condition (e.g. eating disorders) and we are committed to improve reporting against the 4 week wait target. In the interim, we continue to request operational

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information from services to demonstrate progress towards reduced wait times. Health boards are currently reporting informal aggregated data that, on average, 3 out of 4 adults and children are seen within 4 weeks. Urgent referrals will be seen earlier, and we are informed that most people who are waiting, are offered support whilst they wait.

I have recently visited some services to see first-hand the progress that is being made. On recent visits to Betsi Cadwaladr and Aneurin Bevan University Health Boards, I had the opportunity to speak to members of their eating disorder teams and to learn more about what they are doing to improve services in their areas; the challenges they have faced in continuing to provide services during the pandemic; and what more can be done to support services. We are now seeing tangible and innovative progress to improve services across the whole of Wales and a summary of this activity is set in **Annex A**.

A key challenge across mental health services, including eating disorders, is the workforce and the ability to recruit into specialist posts. The Mental Health Workforce Plan, which has been developed by Health Education and Improvement in Wales and Social Care Wales, will provide a long-term solution to a sustainable mental health workforce. Currently, there are a number of specialist roles that Health Boards have found it difficult to recruit into and they are continuing to review and consider alternative interim solutions in order to provide adequate services. The NHS Collaborative has also worked with the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the last year to identify gaps in psychiatry roles in eating disorder services across Wales and to highlight what has worked well in health boards in recruiting into these specialist areas.

Notwithstanding the challenges faced by health boards, I am committed to drive progress in this area. I have allocated an additional £2.5 million from 2022/23 to improve eating disorders services – this in addition to the wider £10 million Service Improvement Funding, some of which may also be used to support eating disorder services. This is significant and recurrent investment to support services, and officials are currently considering bids from health boards to utilise this funding. A condition of this funding will be to reset trajectories and milestones to achieve the 4 week waiting time and to meet the NICE guidance.

In terms of the need for an eating disorders inpatient unit in Wales, the Wales Health Specialised Services Committee is currently consulting on its strategy which includes the recommendation to scope the feasibility for a specialist unit in Wales. We will keep the Committee updated on progress following the consultation, but we can provide assurance that we are currently treating over 90% of children and young people who need this level of care in Wales.

I recognise that improving specialist services is only one element of the much broader approach that is required to tackle the wider social and environmental factors that may increase the risk of eating disorders. That is why we are taking a multi-faceted approach with partners to do this.

This includes additional investment in tier 0/1 support to provide easy access to mental health support, without the need for referral from a health professional. This support includes an investment of £100,000 for BEAT to expand the support available in Wales. The online support and remote peer support provided by BEAT has been invaluable to many people in need of this support, and the funding will help them to continue to meet the high levels of demand currently being experienced. Whilst awaiting NHS treatment, clinicians can also refer their patients for more focussed support through BEAT and individuals may also self-refer. Within the Service Improvement Funding, we have made available almost £5 million for Primary care liaison and additional support for tier 0/1 services. This investment aims to support earlier intervention for mental health issues and to prevent escalation to specialist

services. It will support services delivered by the health board and those provided by the third sector.

On 15 March 2021 we published our framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing. The statutory guidance for maintained schools and local authorities supports the development of consistent and equitable approaches to the wellbeing of learners and the wider school community. We made available £9 million during 2021-22 to support the implementation of the framework. Our budget for 2022-23 to 2024-25 demonstrates our commitment with increases year on year. This equates to total funding of over £43 million over the three years, £12.2 million during 2022-23; £14.4 million 2023-24; and £16.6 million 2024-25. Funding for 2022-23 includes £4.15 million for local authorities to:

- extend and improve school counselling provision in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic (£2.3 million);
- deliver universal and targeted interventions for learners in schools (£800,000);
- support the training of teachers and other school staff on their own and children's wellbeing (£650,000); and
- £400,000 to support the wellbeing needs of vulnerable children and young people in Pupil Referral Units.

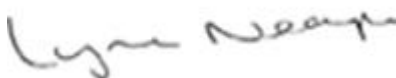
We are also providing over £5.3 million during 2022-23 to local health boards to support the establishment of national CAMHS school in-reach services. These see dedicated mental health practitioners provide consultation, liaison, advice and training in schools. As part of Our Healthy Weight Strategy, we are also working with schools on healthy eating, including workshops on body image.

Progress to implement the new, strengthened arrangements with the NHS Collaborative to further drive improvements in eating disorder services is taking longer than anticipated due to a number of staff moves. This work is now on track however and the NHS Collaborative is working with clinicians from health boards to establish a new clinical group to work alongside the eating disorder sub-group. Once established, a priority for this group will be to support health boards to provide more robust and timely data on waiting times and to review progress against the NICE standards. The new arrangements for the Clinical Lead role have also been agreed and will be progressed this month.

I will receive regular updates and will challenge progress in this area via the Ministerial Together for Mental Health Delivery and Oversight Board, which I chair. I hope this reassures the Committee that despite the challenges faced, progress is being made and additional recurrent investment, together with the health boards innovations in services and work being done with schools, will support sustainable improvements.

The focus on specialist services is only one element of our broader approach and it is important to recognise that we all have role to play in the wider environmental and social issues that can increase the risk of eating disorders.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Annex A – Progress across Health Boards

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

- Additional funding has supported resources for the implementation of the SPEED team (early intervention team designed specifically for children and young people).
- Through re-organisation within the CAMHS workforce and an increase in referrals inclusive of low/medium/high risk presentations they have had the opportunity to address their referral pathway and patient clinical pathway.
- The funding has supported the recruitment of specialist therapists to support the eating disorders team to provide specific therapies and treatments as recommended by the NICE guidelines.
- Within adult, referrals for patients presenting with an eating disorder are now forwarded to the specialist eating disorder service who will carry out the initial assessment.
- An eating disorders duty desk has also been introduced providing screening and telephone assessments on the day a referral is received as well as daily urgent assessment slots. This has enabled them to meet the target of urgent assessment within 48 hours.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

- Additional funding has been utilised on existing staff training for the Maudsley model, CBT-T training for normal weight in eating disorders and an avoidant restrictive food intake disorder conference.
- Additional support has been provided to the local Paediatric wards to support young people with eating disorders who have had long stays.
- CAMHS services have invested significant management and project management time into eating disorder service improvements, with the inclusion of the eating disorder pathway as a distinct work stream within the CAMHS Targeted Improvement (TI) programme.
- Eating disorder services have been expanded across North Wales with the enhancement of existing service provision, allowing significant gaps in service provision (specifically Tier 2 and inpatient treatment) to be addressed.
- As a result of transformation and SIF funding, progress has been made in recruitment, allowing some referrals for Tier 2 being accepted.

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

- Funding has been used to recruit into a number of positions in both children and adult eating disorder services including psychological therapists, and a dietician.
- A range of training and short-term contracts have been used to increase provisions.
- Capacity of the Specialist CAMHS eating disorder service has been increased by 3 whole-time equivalent staff.
- Staffing and skill mix has increased in line with the 2018 review and it has supported a further increase in the capacity for assessment and intervention for under 18's.
- The health board has piloted the Beat Synergy programme, an early intervention model for those not yet meeting diagnostic criteria.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

- Funding has been used for the development of a specialist eating disorder pathway within CAMHS.
- A dedicated multidisciplinary team has been created to deliver interventions in the community based on the Maudsley model.
- Enhanced services have also aimed to develop stronger links with other services including Primary Care, AMHS, paediatrics and external agencies, and development of key pathways.
- The health board has continued with a service level agreement with Swansea Bay University Health Board for provision of a Tier 3 Service (Bridgend residents/adults) and on a Clinical Lead and Dietitian.

Hywel Dda University Health Board

- The health board is developing an S-CAMHS specialist eating disorder team to compliment the multidisciplinary teams which were already providing assessment and clinical interventions.
- The latest SCAMHS ED service proposals intend to strengthen the multidisciplinary team of medical and non-medical staff in the assessment, risk management and treatment.
- In adult services proposals have been put forward to build on the expertise of the team to support primary care, non-eating disorder specialist services, education, social care, public health and other agencies to work in partnership.

Powys Teaching Health Board

- Powys have further developed their services to provide early identification, specialist assessment and treatment as per NICE 2017 guidance in Primary or Secondary Care.
- The health board are providing additional access to appropriate and timely evidence-based treatment interventions through provision of additional dietetics practitioner time and specialist eating disorder occupational therapy capacity.
- Focus has been on helping to ensure seamless transitions for young people requiring adult services, improve access to clinical expertise at the point of entry and more locally to the patient's home, and provide good quality information to patients and carers.
- New Band 6 practitioner roles work to strengthen and support existing specialist CAMHS provision by providing extra therapeutic support to children, young people and their families and carers.
- Physical health clinics have been established to support specialist CAMHS provision.

Swansea Bay University Health Board

- Two Band 6 posts have been recruited to work across Tier 1 & 2 and to offer direct input and support to young people aged 16 years and above, explicitly focusing on the cohort of patients managed by primary care who are below the threshold for secondary care.
- Further funding has been used to create a more complete MDT which would improve clinical and patient outcomes.
- Key posts recruited into have included a dietician, therapist and a data analyst.
- Plans are in place to recruit into all outstanding posts and place them within the Local Primary Mental Health Support Service to provide early assessment and intervention.

Agenda Item 3.2

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 2

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Minister for Education and Welsh Language
Jeremy Miles MS

30 June 2022

Service children

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your [letter dated 24 May 2022](#) about Welsh Government support for Service children in Wales. We considered the letter during our Committee meeting on 16 June 2022.

Data collection

We welcome that you and your officials are considering the possible methods by which education-related data on Service children could be collected from schools. I am sure that you will agree that accurate and reliable data is a crucial starting point in gathering evidence about the experiences of children who are part of an Armed Forces family, and is therefore critical to determining what – if any – action needs to be taken by policy makers and educators to support them.

In 2018, the then Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote that “Work is continuing in Wales to enable the collection of data on Service children in schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census.”¹ We hope that, given that this work had already begun in 2018, it can progress with pace during the 6th Senedd, despite the challenges presented by Brexit and COVID.

We would therefore appreciate more clarity over the timescales associated with this body of work. Please can you set out:

- when you expect your scoping work to be completed;
- when do you expect an approach to data collection to be agreed; and

¹ Welsh Government, ‘[The Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018](#)’, page 26

- when you expect schools and other agencies to begin implementing whatever changes are required?

Support for Service children

We note that the Welsh Government's approach in Wales is different to the UK Government's approach in England, which is that Wales provides tailored support to Service children via the direct links between Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru, Regional Schools Liaison Officers, local authorities, schools and the children themselves.

We do not currently have a view on the merits of either approach.

However, we have compared the funding that the Welsh Government has committed to support Service children in Wales with the amount that the UK Government provides to support Service children in England via the Service Pupil Premium.

Your letter sets out that the Welsh Government has committed £270,000 for 2022-23 to support Service children in Wales. Schools in England receive £310 per year for each Service child on the school roll. Based on the data in your letter, it appears that if the Welsh Government adopted the UK Government's approach, we estimate that it would cost the Welsh Government around £830,000 per year,² around £560,000 more than the Welsh Government has provided for support for Service children in 2022-23.

Please can you:

- clarify whether, and why, the Welsh Government provides less money to support the education of Service children in Wales per head compared to the funding levels for Service children in England; and
- provide the Committee with a copy of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) that informed the Welsh Government's approach to providing support for Service children in Wales in respect of funding levels and the decision to fund the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru and Regional Schools Liaison Officer model as opposed to the approach of providing funding directly to schools.

We would be grateful for this information no later than Friday 9 September 2022.

Yours sincerely,

² The data collected by SSCE Cymru alongside local authorities and schools set out in your letter indicated that there are 2,677 Service children in Wales. Therefore, adopting the UK Government's approach to support for Service children would cost the Welsh Government £310 x 2,677 children = £826,770 per year.

Jayne Bryant

Jayne Bryant MS

Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 3

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ian Morgan
WJEC

6 July 2022

Summer Exams

Dear Ian,

You will be aware of press reports during the recent examination period about some issues with certain exam papers. These include [missing parts of questions in an English Language and Literature exam](#); and [concerns about A and AS Level maths and chemistry papers and practical exams](#). In particular, these reports highlighted the impact this had on students taking these exams, particularly on their mental health and well-being.

We have also been contacted by a parent raising similar concerns about the maths and chemistry papers. This parent placed the issue in the broader context of the impact of Covid-19 on students over the past two years, and the fact that this examination period was the first time that many students had sat an external exam. They described the significant impact this has had on their child, even before the above concerns about issues with specific exam papers are taken into account.

How do you respond to the above concerns raised in the media and by individual parents to us directly? Could you outline how you plan to mitigate for the potential impact that these issues will have had on students and to ensure that the grades awarded are fair? How did these issues arise, and what steps will you be taking in the future to ensure it doesn't happen again? Can you also outline why there appears to have been some discrepancy between what schools were expecting to be covered in the examinations and what was tested in the papers?

We are also writing to Qualifications Wales on these issues, and will copy you into this correspondence. We are copying in the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and Qualifications Wales into this letter.

We would appreciate a response by 7 September.

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Yours sincerely,

Jayne Bryant

Jayne Bryant MS

Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 4

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Philip Blaker

Qualifications Wales

06 July 2022

Summer Exams

Dear Philip,

You will be aware of press reports during the recent examination period about some issues with certain exam papers. These include [missing parts of questions in an English language and literature exam](#); and [concerns about A and AS Level maths and chemistry papers and practical exams](#). In particular, these reports highlighted the impact this had on students taking these exams, particularly on their mental health and well-being.

We have also been contacted by a parent raising similar concerns about the maths and chemistry papers. This parent placed the issue in the broader context of the impact of Covid-19 on students over the past two years, and the fact that this examination period was the first time that many students had sat an external exam. They described the significant impact this has had on their child, even before the above concerns about issues with specific exam papers are taken into account.

During our recent briefing with you in May 2021, we discussed the broad issue of the transition from centre assessed grades to examinations, and the impact of the disruption of the pandemic on students and schools. We also raised the issue about questions in the Maths paper. In discussing this, you outlined that there were two ways to solve the question in the exam paper. Schools had been told that learners would not be tested on one of those ways. However, schools could have expected the other way to appear in the examination.

More generally, you provided us with broad reassurances that students would not be disadvantaged as they sat this first round of public examinations for two years and that grading would take account of the whole range of issues faced by those sitting these exams.

How do you respond to the above concerns raised in the media and by individual parents to us directly? In relation to the issues raised about specific exams, could you outline how you plan to

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mitigate for the potential impact that these issues will have had on students and to ensure that the grades awarded are fair? What discussions have you had with WJEC to ensure that such issues do not arise again? Why does there appear to have been some discrepancy between what schools were expecting to be covered in the examinations and what was tested in the papers?

We are also writing to WJEC on these issues (we will copy you into this correspondence.) We are copying in the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and WJEC into this letter.

We would appreciate a response by 7 September.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Ymateb i :

Ion Response

Date / Dyddiad: 27th June 2022

Subject / Pwnc: Inquiry of the Children, Young People and Education Committee into absenteeism of pupils registered at maintained schools and pupil referral units

Background information about the Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales' principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children. In exercising their functions, the Commissioner must have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Commissioner's remit covers all areas of the devolved powers of the Senedd that affect children's rights and welfare.

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18. The Welsh Government has adopted the UNCRC as the basis of all policy making for children and young people and the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on Welsh Ministers, in exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC.

This response is not confidential.

Additional evidence to Children Young People and Education Committee Inquiry into pupil absence 27th June 2022

Background:

At the request of Committee members during the oral evidence session on the 16th June, the Children's Commissioner is sending some additional written evidence in relation to two areas:

- Anonymised evidence from participatory programme and case work around flexi-schooling
- Evidence in relation to groups of learners who are most at risk of pupil absence

Flexi-schooling

- Case work and our programme of participatory engagement indicates that for some children flexi-schooling can help keep them engaged with their school and prevent deregistration.

- Some families report that a flexi-schooling approach, where the child spends some of the timetable in school, and some at home, means their child can cope far better in the school environment, have more positive experiences, and are more likely to want to attend. Families have explained a number of reasons for why this is, including neuro-divergence, the child's emotional or social needs, anxiety about school, or medical needs.
- As an office we are aware of examples where this has been supported for individual children on short term or longer term arrangements, and in these instances learning in school been blended with the child taking activities home and engaging in a home learning, or with the child being supported at home with learning or pastoral activities provided by the family. Sometimes it can be provided as a temporary measure with a view to incrementally increasing attendance at a setting to return to full time attendance.
- A small number of families have reported to us that this has meant their child has continued to be registered at a school setting, and if this flexibility was not on offer they would deregister. Anecdotal evidence from officers in local authorities shared with our office supports the position that for some families this enables children to stay engaged with a setting.
- This type of a blended approach was enabled by settings even pre-pandemic. Professional developments during the pandemic about supporting effective home learning suggest that there would be a wider range of tools, resources and experience that settings could draw on in order to do this.
- Previously barriers to doing this have included professional workload for teachers, the way that attendance is monitored and reported, and also concerns around safeguarding responsibilities, specifically, the need to ensure safeguarding arrangements for a flexi-schooled child or young person when they are being educated off-site but registered as a pupil at the setting. In relation to safeguarding, there are different considerations for young children at home with a parent, and older young people who may not have the same level of family supervision. The current redevelopment of attendance guidance offers an opportunity to work some of this through so that there is clarity around how safeguarding is ensured.
- Where flexi-schooling is in place, this should be regularly reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of the child and is in their best interests.

What different groups of children are most affected? What more needs to be done?

- More of a problem for **older ages**: In secondary schools, attendance decreases steadily by year from 88.8% in Year 7 to 84.5% for Year 11. Needs a different approach for older young people – youth work offers a very good resource and model. Participatory models will really help; young people need to be part of identifying their priorities and the best approach to support them.
- **Children that are eligible for free school meals** have been considerably more likely to be absent. Data shows this is true now as well as before the pandemic. Week by week data shows that there is a correlation between those from low income families and lower attendance - in the week ending 20th May 2022, 81.6% of children eligible for

free school meals attended school compared to 88.7 % of children who are not eligible – a difference of over 7%. This picture is consistent across every week of the last year: there is not a single week when children eligible for free school meals are more likely than their peers to be in school. These data suggest that we need to understand persistent absence as a problem that can be related to poverty. Action to prevent and tackle child poverty needs to be a key driver in reducing absence from school.

- **Need for timely disaggregated data:** whilst data is disaggregated by eFSM it is not possible to access publicly available week-on-week data by all protected characteristics. This is perhaps understandable due to the speed at which this data is being shared, however I recommend that the attendance data for the last academic year is disaggregated and shared with education settings and other public services at a local and regional level well in advance of the return to settings in September 2022. This will enable national and local services to plan according to the demographic characteristics indicated, and it will also enable approaches to be taken at a local level that are sensitive to the particular needs of certain groups: for example, very different approaches are needed for young children compared with older young people. Local authorities can also work with particular community groups where appropriate.
- **High absolute levels of persistent absence for some groups of children.** Meilyr Rowlands' report¹ shows that absences for Gypsy and Traveller learners have increased substantially, though not disproportionately more than for other learners, and similar increases are seen for eFSM learners and those with special educational needs. Increased absence for all these groups of pupils remains a considerable concern because of their high absolute level, both before and after the pandemic. This highlights a need for community based approaches with learners and families. The community school model may offer potential to develop specific outreach work with community groups. My office is aware of approaches to support Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children offered in several settings across Wales which children and young people themselves have valued and described as important in ensuring their attendance.
- **Disproportionate impacts of the pandemic and need for tailored and sensitive approaches.** The disproportionate impacts of the pandemic have been shown in reports of my office into the experiences of disabled children and children from Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups. Young carers have also been particularly affected by the pandemic, as disruption to health and social care services has often impacted their family life and caring responsibilities – as shown by the work of the predecessor committee.² Care experienced young people have also had specific impacts, with disruption to family contact arrangements. Children from each of

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-04/attendance-review-implications-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-for-school-attendance.pdf>

² <https://senedd.wales/media/ixzpwqr5/cr-ld14286-e.pdf>

these groups may need tailored and sensitive support with attendance, which offers wellbeing support that is bespoke for their individual needs.

- **Children involved with Youth Offending Teams.** There is also a high level of absenteeism in children that are involved with youth offending teams – this has been shown in the recent joint inspection report by HMI Probation, Estyn and Ofsted.³ This report recommends that Welsh Government Education Directorate should work with the Ministry of Justice to ‘address how the unidentified and unmet needs of YOT children can be prevented by earlier specialist assessment, intervention and support of vulnerable children.’ Government should take forward this work bring forward research and policy action in this area.

Submitted by:



Rocio Cifuentes
Children’s Commissioner for Wales

³ [A joint inspection of education, training and employment services in youth offending teams in England and Wales \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 6

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Jeremy Miles MS

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

6 July 2022

Pupil absence

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your attendance at our Committee meeting on 29 June 2022 for our pupil absence inquiry. During the meeting you committed to provide further information on:

- Whether, and how school absence data is used to support early identification for mental health support?
- When the data on elective home education will be available.
- Once available the evaluation of the funding provided to local authorities to provide additional emotional, mental health and well-being support to young people.

During discussion of the evidence, we also agreed to follow up on some additional issues:

- Whether the funding for Family Liaison Officers is ring-fenced at both local authority and school level? If not, what steps are being taken to ensure that this funding is being used for Family Liaison Officers, and not being absorbed into more general school spending?
- Whether the funding for counselling services, discussed during the Committee, goes directly to counselling services?
- We are aware, anecdotally, of pressures being placed on some children and young people as a result of sustained specialist teacher absence in secondary schools. For example, where a subject specialist has been away for a long period, and no adequate specialist cover is available. During these lessons, children are being asked to provide support to their peers which is causing stress and anxiety. Are you aware of this issue, and what do you feel can be done to address the issue?

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We also agreed to share with you the summary report of our engagement findings with parents and young people. Alongside this, we are also sharing recent correspondence from Wrexham Council to parents and carers following your recent announcement about fixed penalty notices. We note that there is no reference to issues around mental health.

To help inform the drafting of our report, we would appreciate a response by **Thursday 8 September**.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Pupil absence

Engagement findings

June 2022

As part of the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into pupil absence, the Citizen Engagement Team proposed a series of focus groups and interviews to gather the views of parents and young people on the reasons behind pupil absence and the support available to them.

1. Engagement

1. The Citizen Engagement Team held 5 focus groups and 7 interviews between 24th May and 9th June with a range of parents, young people and some staff in different areas of Wales. One individual and one group also provided comments via email.
2. Given the subject matter could be sensitive for some, interviews were offered to those who preferred to speak about their situation outside of a group environment, or to those who were unable to attend the focus groups due to timings.

Participants

3. Participants were sourced through organisations supporting families with school attendance.
 4. 34 people took part in total. The majority were parents, covering a range of ages from infant to secondary. A group of 7 young people also participated, along with two members of staff from a school.
 5. Participants contributed from 7 local authority areas across north and south Wales.
 6. The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank all those who contributed to the programme of engagement.
-



Methodology

7. The Citizen Engagement Team's work touched on the following terms of reference for the inquiry:

- *Reasons for and levels of persistent absenteeism*
- *Whether and if so, why, non-covid related absenteeism is higher than prior to the COVID 19 pandemic*
- *The short term and longer-term risks and consequences for learners for example in terms of mental health and well-being*
- *The impact on pupils' learning and attainment*
- *Level and effectiveness of action and support from schools, local government and the Welsh Government*
- *How effectively parents are engaged and supported*

Parent participants were asked the following questions:

1. Has your child's school attendance changed since before the pandemic and if so why do you think this is?
2. Are anxieties around school work or catching Covid contributing to the change in attendance?
3. Do you have any concerns about the impact that absenteeism is having on your child, in terms of mental health and well-being and attainment?
4. How do you feel the school and local authority has supported or helped you and what more could they have done?
5. What are your views on the reintroduction of a fixed penalty notice as a last resort?

For the young people who participated, we asked the following questions:

6. How did you feel about going to school/college before the pandemic and how do you feel about it now? If you feel differently, why is that?

7. How did you feel about going back into school/college when they opened again for everyone? Were you anxious, and if so, what were you anxious about (about school- work or about catching and passing on COVID)? How did the school/college help with any anxieties you had?
 8. Why do you think that some children and young people may not be attending school regularly?
 9. Do you think that some children and young people have a different attitude to going to school after all the disruption?
 10. What impact do you think that not attending school/college regularly has, on learning and on health and well-being?
 11. Is there anything that the school/college could do to help you attend (those who aren't attending regularly)?
 12. In the most serious cases of regular non-attendance, what do you think about parents being fined?
-
- 8.** The format of engagement was largely comparable across the interviews and focus groups, but varied slightly to respond to the views, experiences and ideas shared by contributors.

2. Engagement findings: impact of Covid-19 pandemic on absenteeism

Participants were asked if school attendance had changed since before the pandemic and if so, why they thought this was.

The majority of participants felt there had been a significant change and the reasons discussed are detailed below. However, there were a number of participants who explained attendance had already been poor before the pandemic. In these cases, the closure of schools had not helped circumstances, and for the majority, had made things worse.

Disruption

9. A number of the participants talked about the disruption experienced with the closure of schools as one of the reasons attendance had changed since before the pandemic. Many felt that learners had struggled to settle back into school following the periods of lockdown, which had caused increased levels of absenteeism.
10. Many of the participants talked about problems with **online learning** and falling behind as a trigger and the start of their child disengaging from learning, which had then continued once the schools opened again.
11. Others talked about **missed transitions** between primary and secondary schools and the difficulty many learners had experienced in adapting to a new environment.

"He's been in school maybe twice since September, He's transitioned to a secondary school. It's a really big school. And he just can't manage it. He can't even get into the school transport. He's so anxious. He's crying. He's having meltdowns. Some days he can't leave his bedroom."

12. Changes to **friendship groups** also caused problems for many learners, following the periods of lockdown and young people not being able to socialise. This had resulted in increased anxiety in returning to social settings or a change in behaviour amongst friends and an increase in bullying.

"The Covid break was hard. He really didn't want to go back. He didn't feel his friends were his friends."

Bullying

- 13.** Bullying was one of the main factors raised by the group of young people who participated. One participant said they had no friends when they were in school so they were being bullied. Another had been bullied and felt they were being punished by the school for being the victim, and one member of the group said she would skip as many classes as she could as she *"hated the people, the teachers, everything."*

"Before lockdown, she was in primary school, and afterwards she had to go to secondary. Her friends changed and she has struggled with bullying. She now doesn't want to go to school and suffers with anxiety, panic attacks and feelings that she isn't good enough."

Sickness

- 14.** A number of the parents of younger children talked about an increase in illnesses and the need to keep their children at home as a result. The majority felt this was due to the extended periods of younger children not mixing and picking up routine illnesses. Parents were frustrated by this but difficulties accessing GP appointments and school policies around sickness meant they had no choice but to keep their children at home during these periods of sickness.

Caring responsibilities

- 15.** The young people who participated talked about the number of learners they knew who were also young carers, which was having an impact on their attendance. They said much of the time they were too tired to attend school.
- 16.** Staff members also mentioned an increase in the number of young carers following the pandemic, as a result of an increase in parental mental health concerns. They had also found this was having an impact on attendance in some cases.

Dislike of school

- 17.** One group felt there hadn't been much difference since before the pandemic. They felt that those who didn't like going to school still didn't like going.
- 18.** One parent said that if the children don't like a certain teacher, that would be the main reason they didn't want to go into school. She said with her own daughter, if she was

worked up about going in, it was easier to keep her at home and calm her down, than deal with the stress of sending her in to a teacher she doesn't like.

"If the teacher has got a bit of an attitude with you, it's easier just to let them have a day off, it's less stress."

"Lots of parents give up if it's a fight to get them in."

19. Another group also talked about those children who hadn't liked school anyway and so following the time off, they had found it more difficult to go back.

"Some children don't want to go in now, they just want to be home with their parents."

Complacency

20. One group of participants felt that taking children out of school for different reasons had increased massively since the pandemic, with many not as concerned since Covid as they felt they'd already had so much time off anyway.

21. They felt there was more complacency since the pandemic where parents were happier to take children out of school for day trips or holidays.

"It's easier for them not to bring them in. They may have given up their car, it's a long walk in bad weather on a busy road."

"They're doing it for an easy life in a lot of cases."

22. However, other parents viewed the time off during Covid as a reason to make sure their children attended as much as possible now, to ensure they were given the opportunity to catch up on what they had missed.

"Lots of families are worried they need to catch up, but others feel like it's an excuse they can use."

Additional learning needs

23. Parents of children with additional learning needs felt strongly that the pandemic had resulted in lower attendance for their children. Although some said there were problems

with support beforehand, the majority felt that online learning, returning to the school setting and a disruption in teaching and support staff had further contributed to their child's attendance levels.

- 24.** One parent said her child disengaged from online learning and wasn't offered the support needed during lockdown. She said there were problems before the pandemic but these were sub-threshold at the time, so assessments were refused. The changes during the pandemic meant that these problems worsened given the lack of support.

Anxieties and mental health

- 25.** One of the main points raised by participants was anxiety around returning to school following the lockdowns. Although some talked about problems before the pandemic, the majority of participants felt the extended period of being away from school had affected their children negatively, and when expected to return, they had struggled with anxiety.
- 26.** A number of parents of younger children talked about separation anxiety and that this was affecting both the child and the parent in some cases following such a long period of being at home together.
- 27.** Social anxiety was also affecting many of the older learners, with a number of parents talking about their child not wanting to leave their room, let alone the house, and the prospect of going into school being '*terrifying*' and '*traumatic*' for some.

"She lost her social skills while she was not in school and now she doesn't like spending time with her friends."

"She feels she has missed out on chunks of work while her friends are all ok so she now feels isolated. She will have panic attacks in the car outside of the school and says she is scared of the older pupils."

- 28.** For a number of participants, this anxiety had escalated into more severe problems with their mental health and parents had sought support for assessments, diagnoses and temporary arrangements for learning.
- 29.** This will be discussed further in the next section.

3. Engagement findings: impact of absenteeism on mental health, well-being and attainment

Mental health and well-being

30. For a number of participants, mental health was a primary reason for the absenteeism, however, most felt that the lack of support available and the waiting times since the pandemic meant that this was making the situation worse.

"The missing middle learners who would normally have been in school surfaced during lockdown and their issues exacerbated due to isolation, no school support, no positive interaction with key people in education and mental health symptoms is the tip of the iceberg."

31. For those who talked about poor mental health, accessing support through CAMHS or the GP was not straight-forward and waiting lists were suggesting no support would be offered until next year for many. This was leaving many parents feeling hopeless and that their children were likely to miss a lot more school before anything was resolved or improved for them.

"I have never felt as desperate as I do now, I feel hopeless."

32. For those where mental health concerns were not the primary cause of absence, there were still concerns about the emotional distress their children were experiencing as a result of absences and the efforts of getting back to school.

"The constant pressure felt by parents of ASC children to attend only makes it worse/intensifies everything and only adds to the anxiety and stress between the parent and child. You then add to their emotional distress and anxiety."

Attainment

33. The majority of the parents were worried about their child's attainment as a result of absenteeism. Some were happy with the support offered to maintain a level of learning despite being absent, but others were frustrated that their schools were not engaging.

- 34.** As mentioned above, many had struggled with online learning and found they had fallen behind with schoolwork during the pandemic. This had contributed to concerns about returning to the classroom.

"I feel like her future is being taken away from her."

"I'm worried about his future. How is he going to do in school? It's going to be such a shame if a boy like him can't get an education. It's really hard to see him struggling and not getting what he's entitled to."

"If you don't get any support from the school, how are you going to support them to keep learning and to make sure that they don't get to a certain point where you just think...they're really so far behind now, how on earth can they expect to catch up?"

Home educating

- 35.** Two of the participants were now home educating their children. One parent had ultimately made this decision based on her children's medical conditions and a concern about the spread of Covid. However, she explained this had been a consideration before the pandemic already as she was finding the school were not meeting the needs of her son.
- 36.** Although no other participants were currently home educating, the option was mentioned by a number of participants struggling with absences and feeling unsupported by the school or local authority. Increased anxieties or deteriorating mental health were the main reasons for this consideration, and a feeling that nothing was changing for their child. These participants were therefore feeling they needed to take control of their child's learning, before more education was missed.

"My daughter is doing no formal learning at the moment and if she isn't able to go back to school in September, I feel I will have to do something at home with her."

- 37.** The group of young participants also mentioned an increase in home educating amongst their peers, suggesting learners preferred to be at home. They thought these students preferred not having to wear a uniform, maybe had a better bond with their parents and were more comfortable at home rather than in school.

4. Engagement findings: school and local authority support

Participants were asked about the support they received from the school and local authority, and whether there was more that could be done.

Mixed experiences

- 38.** Participants described very mixed experiences when it came to the support received from their schools and local authorities.
- 39.** Some were really happy with the involvement and communication they had experienced from their school. For example, one participant talked about her daughter's school putting a reduced timetable in place, referrals to different wellbeing programmes and additional suggestions such as working with her daughter's primary school in case she felt more comfortable attending a smaller, more familiar setting.
- 40.** However, other participants were frustrated with the lack of support put in place for their children, despite numerous requests on their part. One parent talked to the school about getting some resources to help her daughter continue her learning at home during a period of anxiety, but was given nothing. She felt they wouldn't engage in supporting this.

"When parents have to manage their child's mental health and keep them at home it's a reflection of the lack of support and knowledge in education."

- 41.** Participants also described mixed views of their experience with the **local authority**. Some were pleased with the support received from their Inclusion Officer for example, and felt some progress was being made to build a positive relationship with their child. Another parent mentioned other options had been suggested such as a youth wellbeing officer / mentor who would take her daughter out to build her social skills. This participant felt this would be really beneficial for her daughter but with a 4 month waiting list she felt this clearly needs more resources and needs to be accessed in a more timely way.
- 42.** However, others felt they didn't know how to approach the local authority, or had received no response when they had tried to escalate issues.
- 43.** One participant said her experience with the local authority had been '*disastrous*'. She said she felt the people she was speaking with weren't as informed as her on neurodivergence

and mental health but dismissed everything she said. She said they were '*speaking over me and treating me like I was an absolute idiot....they weren't hearing anything I was saying about the children.*'

"I don't think they (the LEA) exist. I think they're just these people up in the clouds. They didn't even answer me. They just pinged it back to the school."

Referrals

44. Depending on the reason for absences, some participants were frustrated with the referral process for assessments. Many of the participants felt absences were related to additional learning needs or mental health concerns, however, were unable to get timely referrals to services which led to prolonged periods of absences regardless of the support on offer from the school or local authority.

45. A lack of diagnosis also meant they were reliant on the school's understanding and patience as they could provide no medical evidence for the absences.

"There is a clear gap once you are out of the school and getting the support you need, in terms of both medical and educational support. The low level interventions were really good but once my daughter was unable to go to school at all, there is nothing happening until she can be seen by the other services. The waiting lists for everything are just huge and in the meantime she is spiralling."

"Everything seems very fragmented at the moment. I've been left feeling that I have to try and work out what the problem is, ask for an assessment but am then refused. I received 3 rejections in one day from CAMHS, Educational psychology and the paediatrician. I had built my hopes up to get answers but was then turned down."

"It just feels like a constant fight."

46. There were particular frustrations amongst parents of children with additional learning needs, where many felt their school had not listened to their concerns about neurodivergence and had not supported assessments or referrals. Similar to the waiting lists for mental health services, parents felt this was causing unnecessary, prolonged periods of absence as the problems were not being addressed.

"Schools are the gatekeepers of referring to neurodivergent services, neurodevelopmental services, but how can someone look for something when they don't know what they're looking for?"

"You just feel really disempowered going into a lot of things with the schools."

Communication

47. A number of the groups talked about wanting better communication between either the school and parents or the local authority and parents. Some felt there was less understanding for absences since the pandemic from schools in particular and the usual answer machine process of reporting absences did not encourage a dialogue between the parent and the school when there were concerns.

"They are constantly ringing me to see where my daughter is, but when I call back, I have to talk to an answering machine. I'm still waiting for a response on an issue from last year."

Additional expectations

48. The staff members who participated in the focus groups said they had seen a huge increase in both the number of families needing support since the pandemic, and the type of support they were in need of.

49. The Family Liaison Officer's role had been supporting two families when she started the job before the pandemic. She was now supporting 49 families.

50. The support on offer ranged from referrals to a nearby family centre who can provide guidance on anything from finances to domestic abuse, to in-school programmes such as breakfast clubs, vulnerable children groups and a newly set up father's group. These were all being put in place to support families with getting the children into school.

51. However, although the school was able to refer families for support, they were finding that all agencies were oversubscribed. They also found they relied heavily on the parents engaging with what was on offer.

"The education offer has widened to family support. Not just for the children, for the parents too."

5. Engagement findings: views on the use of fixed penalties

Unfair

- 52.** The majority of participants felt that the use of fines for parents was unfair. Many felt they were trying to work with the school and the child to improve attendance, and that a fine would not help.
- 53.** None of the participants had been fined, and in many cases, the threat of a fine had not been discussed either. Participants felt this was due to a recognition that their child was absent for reasons needing further support, rather than simple lack of engagement.
- 54.** However, those who had been threatened with fines, felt it had been unnecessary given that their children were under ALN or CAMHS services at the time, or parents were requesting assessments for support to be put in place. They had found the experience very stressful, and felt it was unjust given the efforts made to either get their children into school, or find solutions themselves to the support needed.

"So it was the stress of thinking 'I'm going to be fined. Am I going to jail? Who's going to have my children when I go to jail?'"

"We're already under so much pressure trying to get our children into school. It's not that we don't want them in school, we do. And they want to be there."

"I'm a single parent and have already had to cut my hours in work to support my daughter. To be fined would be the last straw and feel like I was being punished, as if I had done something wrong."

"It is certainly not the case that I or other parents of ASC children just cannot be bothered to send our children to school but when they are in such emotional distress every morning, despair and anxiety through the roof because a school environment is traumatic to them, what can we do...!? We cannot literally drag them there by their hair...that would then be abuse...I cannot emphasise enough us parents of ASC children absolutely do care and are absolutely aware of the amount of school they miss and worried sick about their future."

In some cases

55. In certain cases, participants felt that a fine could be effective. For example, for those families who persistently took their children out of school for holidays. However, they also recognised that the fine was likely to be worrying the wrong people, especially as the fine was often less than the increased cost of a holiday out of term-time.

Cost of living

56. A number of the groups discussed the cost of living and the expense of school for most parents already, as a reason not to use fixed penalties.

"Fines tend to impact poorer families more and they are a blunt tool."

"School is already expensive for families with the uniforms and the schools trips. And parents are already struggling with the cost of food and bills, not to have to worry about fines too."

Not the answer

57. A number of participants said financial penalties were not the answer to the problem. They would prefer to see better communication between schools and parents and better understanding of the support needed to improve attendance.

"You can't have a seat at the table and have a constructive co- produced plan while receiving warning letters, threatening letters and fines."

58. There was some discussion in a few of the groups about awarding attendance in general and a feeling that this is discriminatory against children with disabilities or medical conditions that impacts their attendance. Additionally, they felt that it encourages sick children to attend which is unfair on the sick child and puts others at risk.

Annex 1

The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank the following organisations for their support with this inquiry:

Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team, Swansea Council

GISDA Caernarfon

Inclusion Team, Vale of Glamorgan Council

Parents Voices in Wales CIC

Save the Children

Ysgol y Foryd, Kinmel Bay

Eich Cyf/Your Ref	
Ein Cyf/Our ref	KE/LD/JH/SR - FPN
Dyddiad/Date	28 th June 2022
Gofynner am/Ask for	John Hodgson
Rhif Cyswllt/Contact No	01978 295570
E-bost/E-mail	ESW@wrexham.gov.uk

Dear Parent/ Carer,

Update on school attendance guidance

Parents and carers in Wrexham are being informed that the Welsh Government has reverted back to the use of Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance at school.

Following an announcement from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Wrexham County Council will follow the guidance to ensure that young people are accessing their education.

From September 2022, Fixed Penalty Notices will be reintroduced as part of a range of options to improve attendance at school. Fixed Penalty Notices will only be issued where it is evident that there are no underlying reasons preventing regular school attendance, in line with the local code of conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance at school. Any legal action is only taken when all efforts to engage parents and bring about a positive improvement in attendance have been tried and failed.

We ask that parents and carers work with schools, closely communicating any difficulties and issues that are impacting on their child attending school regularly. Where there are genuine reasons for absences, these must be discussed with your child's school to ensure collaborative working between parents, schools and Local Authority staff to maintain good school attendance of all pupils in the county.

Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance had been available to local authorities during the pandemic; however, the Welsh Government had recommended against their use.

For more information visit <https://gov.wales/oral-statement-school-attendance>.

Further advice on school attendance can be sought from your child's school or the Education Social Work Team on 01978 295570. Information on well-being support for young people is available at www.youngwrexham.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



John Hodgson
Education Support Manager

Agenda Item 3.7

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 7

Additional information from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru following the meeting on 16 June 2022

<https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2022/07/pupil-absence-in-welsh-secondary-schools-this-year/>

Agenda Item 3.8

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 8

Learner absence snap poll

On 9th June 2022 NAHT Cymru asked members to respond to a survey on levels of learner absence in schools.

By type, 59% of respondents were from LA maintained schools, 1% from Special schools, 23% from community schools and 11% from voluntary aided schools.

By phase, 91% of respondents were from primary schools and 6% were from secondary schools.

Key points:

- The top three reasons for persistent absenteeism were reported as illness (47%), mental health concerns (35%) and anxiety about coming to school because of coronavirus (24%)
- Non-covid related absenteeism had increased for a majority of respondents (60%)
- An increase in absenteeism has increased school leader workload, with 85% of respondents reporting this (61% increased, 24% greatly increased)
- The main reasons for an increase in workload as a result of pupil absence were a lack of external support (61%) and lack of capacity (54%)
- Persistent absenteeism was reported as more prevalent among students eligible for free school meals (48%)
- The majority of respondents had not experienced an increase in either levels of pupil deregistration or elective home education. However, 22% had experienced higher levels of pupil deregistration and 29% had experienced higher levels of elective home education.

Breakdown of questions:

Q1: Which of the following, if any, are the main reasons for persistent absenteeism in your school?

- Nearly half, 47%, of respondents said illness
- 35% of respondents said Mental health concerns
- 24% of respondents said anxiety about coming to school because of coronavirus
- 13% said pupil concern about being in school due to living with someone who is at greater risk from coronavirus
- 7% said family bereavement
- 4% said long covid
- 1% said exam pressure
- 39% of respondents said 'other' issues were causing persistent absenteeism in their schools. Happy to provide a list of responses.
 - Themes covered in these responses include (not verbatim answers):
 - Children and parents have got out of the habit of going in to school, with the assumption that children can learn from home
 - Children do not want to come back to school after having been accustomed to learning at home.
 - The pandemic has exacerbated poor attendance of those with previously poor attendance

- Parents booking family holidays either since lockdown or going on holidays that were booked pre-lockdown

Q2: To what extent, if any, has non-covid related absenteeism for pupils changed in your school since the covid-19 pandemic?

- The majority of respondents said that non-covid related absenteeism had either increased, or greatly increased. 60% of respondents said that it had increased, 22% said that it had greatly increased.
- 16% said that it had neither increased nor decreased
- Just 2% of respondents said that non-covid related absenteeism had decreased (0.7%) or greatly decreased (1.4%)

Q3: Why do you think non-covid related absenteeism has increased in your school since the covid-19 pandemic?

- 97 respondents answered this question, I can give a full list of responses on request
- Some common answers included::
 - Parents being used to children being at home, less worry about keeping them off school
 - The lockdowns have left a legacy of understanding in parents that a child can just be set online work
 - No repercussions for absence
 - Holiday requests have increased
 - Absence for minor illnesses has increased
 - Mental health issues, increased anxiety and increased behaviours associated with ASD

Q4: [those who reported that absenteeism has increased] What impact, if any, has increased pupil absence in your school had on your workload?

- 85% of respondents said that their workload had either increased (61%) or greatly increased (24%)
- 15% of respondents said that their workload had neither increased nor decreased
- No respondents said that their workload had decreased

Q5: Which, if any, are the main reasons for an increased workload in relation to pupil absence?

- 61% of respondents said lack of external support (e.g. from social and health services)
- 54% of respondents said lack of capacity
- 43% said there is nobody else to help tackle this issue
- 41% said lack of resources
- 17% of respondents gave 'other' reasons for an increase in workload, available on request.

Q6: Please add any further comments below:

- Comments listed on Excel sheet. A lot of comments focused on the impact of coronavirus lockdowns and school closures on parents and pupil attitudes to school

Q7: Are levels of persistent absenteeism more prevalent in your school among any of the following groups of pupils?

- 48% of respondents said that persistent absenteeism was more prevalent among pupils eligible for free school meals
- 43% said that there are no groups of pupils where persistent absenteeism is more prevalent
- 23% said pupils with additional learning needs
- 7% said Pupils with English as an additional language

Q8: Compared to before the pandemic, what change, if any, has your school experienced in levels of pupil de-registration?

- The majority of respondents (69%) had not experienced any change in the levels of pupil de-registration
- 22% of respondents had experienced higher levels of pupil de-registration. This was 19% higher and 3% much higher.
- No respondents had experienced lower levels of pupil-de-registration, the remaining 8% were unsure

Q9: Compared to before the pandemic, what change, if any, has your school experienced in levels of elective home education?

- 69% had not experienced any change in rates of elective home education
- 29% of pupils had experienced higher levels of elective home education. This was 26.45% higher and 2.48% much higher.
- No respondents had experienced lower levels of elective home education, the remaining 2% were unsure.

Agenda Item 3.9

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 9

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Julie Morgan MS
Deputy Minister for Social Services Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

4 July 2022

Dear Deputy Minister

Petition P-06-1161 Routine collection and publication of data of how many babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement

Thank you for coming before the Petitions Committee on 13 June 2022. Your evidence will be considered together with the range of other evidence heard as part of this work.

As part of our scrutiny of this issue we have noted the range of relevant commitments in the Programme for Government, including those to:

- Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.
- Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.
- Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.
- Strengthen public bodies in their role as 'corporate parent'.

We also note the recent reviews of services for care experienced children in England and Scotland and have followed their findings and next steps with interest.

To ensure that we have a fuller understanding of the radical reforms being taken forward in relation to children's social care, you agreed that your officials would provide further detail of the practical steps in taking forward each of these commitments and the actions being taken forward as part of this reform. We have a particular interest in the 'radical reform' and details of next steps and timings on this issue would be particularly welcome.

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales by 18 July 2022 to enable us to progress with this work.

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Welsh Parliament

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senedd.wales/SeneddPetitions
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Yours sincerely

Jack Sargeant

Jack Sargeant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 3.10

CYPE(6)-16-22 – Paper to note 10

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Cyllid

—
Welsh Parliament
Finance Committee

Chair, Children, Young People, and Education
Committee
Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure
Committee
Chair, Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee
Chair, Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
Chair, Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Chair, Local Government and Housing Committee

6 July 2022

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

Dear Committee Chairs

Budget Engagement

On 11 April 2022, I wrote to notify you of the Finance Committee's programme of engagement for its scrutiny of the forthcoming Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24. The Committee has now completed its three engagement strands:

- a stakeholder event in Llanhilleth Miners' Institute;
- a workshop with member of the Welsh Youth Parliament; and
- focus groups with the Welsh public.

An engagement report has been published which summarises the responses we received during our engagement work.



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✉ SeneddCyllid@senedd.cymru

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Welsh Parliament
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✉ SeneddFinance@senedd.wales

☎ 0300 200 6565

Plenary Debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities

On 13 July, the Committee will hold a Plenary debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities and the engagement report referred to above will be included as a supporting document for the debate.

We believe this debate allows the best opportunity for Members to influence the Welsh Government's spending priorities prior to the formulation of the draft budget in the autumn and I would encourage Committees to contribute to this important debate and press for action in their areas of interest.

Timetable and approach to budget scrutiny

Following the announcement by the UK Government last year of a multi-year settlement, the Committee had hoped that we would return to a 'normal budget' process this year, after several years of curtailed scrutiny. However, the Minister for Finance and Local Government has written to me to explain that the lack of certainty over the significant pressures facing the Welsh Government's spending plans will not be resolved until the Welsh Government knows whether its settlement will change in any UK Autumn Fiscal event.

The Minister sought the Committee's view on a preferred timetable for publishing of the draft budget, with our preferred option being that it is published in October to enable eight weeks for scrutiny with the final budget being published in December.

The Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd has now written to the Business Committee to notify it that the Welsh Government intends to publish the outline and detailed draft budgets together by 13 December at the latest or within four weeks of the UK Government's autumn budget. The Trefnydd also confirmed that she will provide an updated budget timetable in the autumn term, as soon as details of the UK fiscal event is known..

Given that the publication of the draft budget will be delayed again this year, the Committee's call for evidence will take place in September. I will write to you again with further information on the consultation, and any revisions to the budget timetable, in due course.

Budget Process Protocol

The Budget Process Protocol between the Senedd and the Welsh Government has been in place since 2017. The protocol sets out an understanding between the Finance Committee and the Welsh Government on the administrative arrangements for the scrutiny of the annual draft budget and other related budgetary matters.



This is the fourth consecutive year where the two-stage budget process has not been used and scrutiny has been curtailed due to “exceptional circumstances”. Whilst we acknowledge that delays have been due to the uncertainty of funding from the UK Government, a curtailed budget processes is becoming commonplace and, as Chair, I do not wish to have similar discussions around timetabling issues year upon year.

For this reason, I have asked the Minister to commit to a review of the budget process protocol ahead of the budget round for 2024-25 to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.

If you have any comments on your experience of your Committee’s budget scrutiny, I would be grateful to hear from you.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the draft budget process, please feel free to contact me or the Clerk to the Finance Committee, Owain Roberts, 0300 200 6388, seneddfinance@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely



Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



CYPE(6)-16-22 - Paper to note 11

**Y Pwyllgor Iechyd a
Gofal Cymdeithasol**

**Health and Social
Care Committee**

Eluned Morgan
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government

8 July 2022

Dear Eluned

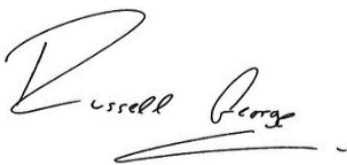
Follow up on Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee recommendations: Physical activity of children and young people

In March 2019, the Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee published the report of its [inquiry into the physical activity of children and young people](#). At our meeting on 4 May 2022, the current Health and Social Care Committee agreed to follow up on key recommendations made by our predecessor Committee.

We would be grateful if you could respond to the issues raised in the annex by **1 September 2022**.

A copy of this letter has also been sent to the Children, Young People and Education Committee, given the cross-over in Committee portfolios.

Yours sincerely



Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

cc Jayne Bryant, Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

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Annex: Recommendations made by the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Fifth Senedd as part of its inquiry into the physical activity of children and young people

Background

The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Fifth Senedd published its report on [physical activity of children and young people](#) in March 2019, one year before the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on how physically active children and young people have been since lockdown when schools and sports clubs were forced to close.

The previous Committee was very concerned that figures from the Public Health Wales Child Measurement Programme were showing an increase in the number of obese four to five year olds. More than one in four children aged four to five are overweight or obese in Wales.

We would be grateful if you could respond to the issues below by **1 September 2022**.

Update on recommendations

The report recognised that physical activity for children and young people is as important for children's social and mental development, as it is for their health. The Committee made 20 recommendations covering: national measurement frameworks for physical activity and obesity; the role of schools and infrastructure; the importance of female role models in sport; sustainable funding for sports clubs; and use of community green spaces. Two recommendations (6 and 8) were rejected by the [Welsh Government](#). The other 18 recommendations were accepted, either fully or in principle.

1. Please provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations which were accepted by the Welsh Government (recommendations 1-5, 7 and 9-20). The update should include information about actions that have been taken, any planned actions, and, where appropriate, details of associated resourcing, planned timescales, and how the impact and outcomes of actions and spend have been (or will be) evaluated and measured.

Other issues

The previous Committee concluded that physical activity levels among some children and young people were too low. We have seen that decline further during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Please set out what the Welsh Government is doing to address concerns at the number of young people who are inactive as result of COVID-19 and the lockdowns and other restrictions adopted to respond to the pandemic.

3. Please set out how any actions being taken by the Welsh Government are being targeted to take account of/tackle inequalities experienced by people on the basis of their protected characteristics or the groups or communities to which they belong.
4. Please confirm whether the rising costs of living present any risks to physical activity levels for children and young people, and if so, what the Welsh Government is doing to mitigate those risks.

Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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