

Agenda – Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 27 June 2017

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Graeme Francis – Committee Clerk

Kath Thomas – Deputy Clerk

0300 200 6565

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1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 30)

2 New petitions

2.1 P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious
Worship

(Pages 31 – 42)

2.2 P-05-765 Keeping Current Guidelines for Religious Assemblies

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2.3 P-05-761 Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism
Spectrum Connections Cymru

(Pages 52 – 61)

2.4 P-05-762 Move the Welsh Assembly out of Cardiff

(Pages 62 – 69)

2.5 P-05-764 Better Mental Health Services for Adults

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3 Updates to previous petitions

Environment and Rural Affairs

The following two items will be grouped together for consideration

3.1 P-04-472 Make the MTAN law

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3.2 P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications

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3.3 P-05-743 End the Exotic Pet Trade in Wales

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Education

The following two items will be grouped together for consideration

3.4 P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time

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3.5 P-04-606 Ensure schools exercise their statutory powers under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 without interference or bias.

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3.6 P-04-679 Remove the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

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3.7 P-05-707 Teachers' Training Must Include Statutory Training in Autism

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3.8 P-05-748 School Buses for School Children

(Pages 97 – 101)

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3.9 P-04-505 Eating Disorder Unit in Wales

(Pages 102 – 104)

3.10 P-04-532 Improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales

(Pages 105 – 106)

Economy and Infrastructure

3.11 P-05-720 Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council Petition for the Installation of Fibre Optic Broadband

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3.12 P-05-725 Widen the A470 from Pontypridd to Coryton to 3 Lanes

(Pages 109 – 110)

Communities and Children

3.13 P-05-742 Stop Forsythia Closing

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4 Papers to note

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5 Evidence session – P-04-628 To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language

(10.15 – 10.45)

(Pages 124 – 138)

Alun Davies AM, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language

Ruth Conway, Welsh Government

Claire Rowlands, Welsh Government

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Agenda Item 2.1

P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship

This petition was submitted by Rhiannon Shipton & Lily McAllister-Sutton having collected 1,333 signatures.

Petition text:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a law that removes the obligation on Schools to hold acts of religious worship.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South Wales Central

Acts of religious worship in schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 Mehefin 2017
Petitions Committee | 27 June 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-757

Petition title: [Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship](#)

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a law that removes the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship.

1. Legal position

The statutory duty for schools to have daily acts of collective worship in Wales (and England and Northern Ireland) was introduced in the *Education Act 1944*. Subsequently, the *School Standards and Framework Act 1998* set out that each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship. It includes an exception that parents may withdraw their child from such acts. The Act sets out that **most** collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

Schools have the right to a 'determination' – that is, to be released from the requirements for acts of worship to be wholly, mainly of a broadly Christian character, if the school composition might require this. Schools with a religious character do not have the right to a determination.

The provisions of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* allow sixth form pupils in maintained community, community special, voluntary, foundation and foundation special schools the right to withdraw themselves from collective worship.

In her response to the Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Education sets out the current legal position and her view that collective worship should be sensitive to the range of beliefs and non-beliefs held by pupils in the school.

While there are similar provisions in England and Northern Ireland, the [*Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986*](#) does not specify that worship must be Christian.

In Scotland, there is no legal requirement for schools to hold acts of collective worship; instead the terms ‘religious observance’ or ‘time for reflection’ are used. The [*Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980*](#), sets out that in all state-funded schools, the practice of **religious observance** should be made available, unless a resolution to discontinue this has been passed by the local education authority and approved by the electors in that local authority area. The Scottish Government’s [*Curriculum for Excellence: Provision of Religious Observance in Schools*](#) (March 2017) states that schools may feel that a different name for the events that meet their religious observance requirements will be more appropriate to their individual context and culture. For example, in a non-denominational school, the use of the term ‘Time for Reflection’ might be considered more appropriate by the school community. It also states that every school should provide opportunities for religious observance several times in a school year.

Welsh Government guidance

The former Welsh Office published non-statutory guidance, [*Religious Education and Collective Worship*](#) in September 1994. The Wales Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (WASACRE) published [*Guidance on Collective Worship*](#) in June 2012. The aim was to strengthen and clarify the expectations set out in the 1994 Welsh Office Circular. The WASACRE guidance sets out the benefits of collective worship as:

- Promoting spiritual development;
- Contributing to personal development;
- Benefitting the whole school community;
- Linking the school community to the wider community;
- Enhancing awareness of global citizenship.

While ‘worship’ is not defined in legislation, the 1994 Welsh Office guidance includes the following definition:

“It must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.”

Worship in schools is different from worship amongst a group of people with beliefs in common. This is acknowledged in legislation through the reference to ‘collective’ worship rather than ‘corporate’ worship.

Estyn inspects acts of collective worship in all schools that do not provide denominational education. In all other schools, acts of collective worship are examined by inspectors appointed by the school’s governing body.

2. UK Parliament

In answer to a [House of Lords Written Question](#) on 26 January 2016, Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, stated:

“The Government does not plan to change the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. It is for schools to tailor their provision to suit the needs of their pupils, and parents can choose to withdraw their children from all or any part of collective worship.”

In considering the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* (at Bill stage), the UK Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights set out that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [Twenty-eighth Report](#) (October 2006) said:

“Children enjoy the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion under both Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 14(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UK is also under an obligation to assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, and to give those views due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

The Committee recommended that:

“In our view the current legal framework is incompatible with these obligations in so far as it fails to guarantee a child of sufficient maturity, intelligence and understanding the right to withdraw from both compulsory religious education and collective worship. An amendment to the Bill which gave pupils over the age of 16 the right to withdraw from collective worship would therefore reduce the extent of the incompatibility of the present law with the UK’s human rights obligations, but it would not remove that incompatibility altogether.

To remove the incompatibility, in our view, it would be necessary to go further in two respects: first, by granting a right to withdraw from religious education as well as collective worship; and, second, by affording the right to withdraw from both religious education and collective worship to any pupil of sufficient maturity, understanding and intelligence to make an informed decision about whether or not to withdraw.”

3. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The [Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) embeds consideration of the UNCRC and the Optional Protocols into Welsh law. The Measure places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have ‘due regard’ to:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In June 2016, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child published its [Concluding Observations](#) on what progress has been made to deliver on children’s rights.

Following a UK-wide review, it made more than 150 recommendations. The UN Committee expressed concern about collective worship for pupils in Wales and England. They recommended that:

“The State party repeal legal provisions for compulsory attendance at collective worship in publicly funded schools and ensure that children can independently exercise the right to withdraw from religious worship at school.”

4. Research on collective worship

In November 2015, the Arts and Humanities Research Council published a report, [*Collective Worship and Religious Observance in Schools: An Evaluation of Law and Policy in the UK.*](#)

This stated:

“The statutory duty to provide an act of collective worship/religious observance in schools has been controversial for decades. Issues include: disagreement about the appropriateness of such acts in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural UK; the degree to which the current system properly affords respect for the rights of individuals and minority groups, including those with no religious faith; and concerns that the present arrangements do not adequately develop the spiritual/moral education of pupils, or promote a community spirit and shared values in schools.”

The report highlighted some common concerns about collective worship. These include:

- A lack of a coherent rationale for schools collective worship and non-compliance;
- A failure to protect Human Rights standards; and
- A lack of clarity and ambiguity which means that headteachers may exercise undue or inappropriate influence over the content of the worship or be unwilling or unprepared to make decisions about the content of collective worship.

The report suggests that, if the duty were to be abolished, schools may wish to continue to hold collective gatherings. There would need to be a mechanism to ensure that such gatherings are inclusive and respectful of the integrity of pupils, parents and teachers. It also suggests that the abolition of the duty could be a missed opportunity for pupil development and social cohesion.

The report identified potential approaches for reform:

- Remove the requirement that acts of collective worship be of a broadly Christian character;
- Replace the duty with a duty for a ‘time for reflection’.

It included specific recommendations for Wales:

- Circular 10/94, *Religious Education and Collective Worship* should be urgently revised to reflect the contemporary needs of the Welsh education system, particularly in light of the Donaldson recommendations;

- The non-statutory status of the circular should be made widely known to schools, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Estyn;
- Estyn should review its inspection guidance and place an increased emphasis on the collective aspect of the activity;
- In reviewing and making decisions in this area, Welsh Ministers should pay due regard to the rights of children and young people as required by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure.

Review of the National Curriculum in Wales

Professor Graham Donaldson’s review of the National Curriculum in Wales, *Successful Futures* (February 2015) referred to **religious education**, rather than collective worship. He recommended that religious education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception. The Welsh Government accepted all of Professor Donaldson’s recommendations in full. On [15 July 2015, in responding to a question in Plenary](#), Huw Lewis, the then Minister for Education and Skills said, in relation to religious education:

“I’d like to take the opportunity to announce this afternoon that I believe we need to transform our current religious education curriculum. My contention would be that we rename the RE curriculum and transform it into the religion, philosophy and ethics element of the curriculum, where there is an explicit commitment to allowing children to ponder ideas around ethics and citizenship and what it means to be a citizen of a free country.”

The Welsh Government is working with ‘Pioneer Schools’ and regional consortia on the design of the six Areas of Learning and Experience in the new curriculum. More information on curriculum content is expected to be available later in the year.

5. Previous petitions

In 2012, the Petitions Committee considered a petition which called for the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to [protect collective worship as a legal right](#) and a petition to [abolish collective worship](#). On 15 May 2012, the then [Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews](#) wrote to the Committee:

“I recognise that collective worship is an important part of school life. In our multicultural country, it can be used as a way of supporting pupils’ spiritual development and providing all pupils, irrespective of their family background, aged and aptitudes, with opportunities to explore and express what is of value in life in an open reflective way. With this in mind, I am not considering a change to the status of collective worship within schools in Wales.”

Due to the then Minister’s unequivocal response, both petitions were closed.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-757
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00682/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

2 May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 24 April about Petition P-05-757, to remove the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship.

I would like to thank you for welcoming my views before the Petitions Committee gives the petition its formal consideration.

My view on collective worship is that it should be sensitive to the range of beliefs and non-beliefs held by pupils in the school and should give pupils the opportunity to worship, without encouraging them to do something that is against the teachings of their own religion or beliefs. For example, times of prayer may be left open-ended for pupils to say their own prayers silently or to reflect on moral or philosophical issues.

The specific legislative requirements for acts of collective worship in schools are set out in Section 70 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which says there must be a daily act of collective worship, and Schedule 20 of the Education Act 1996, which sets out the nature of collective worship.

The responsibility for the planning and delivery of acts of collective worship rests with individual schools. The law states that most acts of collective worship in each term should be '*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature*' and therefore, it is acceptable if occasionally an act of collective worship is not clearly linked to the Christian faith.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

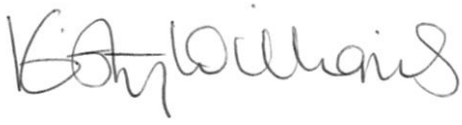
Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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

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

Parents can request for their child to be withdrawn from collective worship and schools must agree to such requests in all circumstances.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 19.06.17

TO MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES' PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Dear Committee Members,

We are the organisers of the petition which reads: “We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to pass a law that removes the obligation on schools to hold acts of religious worship”.

We are both Year 10 students at Ysgol Glantaf in Cardiff, and neither of us believe in God. As time went on, we became increasingly annoyed at being expected to say the Lord's Prayer in the regular school assemblies. It didn't seem right that we were expected to pray, and to say the words of the prayer, even though we are not Christian.

We mentioned this at home, and Rhiannon's Dad said that instead of just complaining, we should do something about it. He explained that the school was forced by law to hold religious assemblies and that there had to be acts of worship, which included praying.

He also explained that while it was possible for parents to withdraw their children from religious assemblies, he did not think this was a good idea because it is a good thing for there to be meetings where the whole school comes together.

He told us that the National Assembly has the power to change the law, and suggested we organise an online petition that could go to the Petitions Committee.

We met the Clerk to the Committee and he explained how the petitions system works.

We got the petition online and at first told our friends about it and asked them to sign. We put the petition on Facebook and it got more support.

Rhiannon's Dad also tweeted about it.

We also contacted the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association, and they asked their members in Wales to sign the petition.

We got some news coverage in Golwg, BBC Radio Wales, the South Wales Echo, and WalesOnline.

We would like to make it clear that our petition is not an attack on any religion. We respect people's right to believe what they like, and we are not saying that religion should not be taught in schools. Obviously it has played a big part in history and it is important to learn about it.

But learning about religion is different to being forced to pray or take part in an "act of worship". Religious worship has nothing to do with education, and we think schools should no longer be forced to organise it. People can pray at home, if they want to, or in church. We believe that acts of religious worship in state schools like ours go against the idea of secular education.

After there was some publicity about our petition, we were contacted by Dr Alison Mawhinney of Bangor University, who has done a lot of research on the subject. She told us that the Welsh Government should seriously consider changing the law.

One important point Dr Mawhinney made is that, in her opinion, forcing us to say a prayer against our will is a violation of our right to freedom of belief under Article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998. Yet that is what is happening under the current guidelines. We hope the Committee will take on board our concern over this point in particular.

We would like there to be a thorough review of the current law and guidelines. We would rather not have acts of worship in schools, but another solution could be that young people like us should ourselves have the right to withdraw from the religious worship part of assemblies. At present parents have to ask for children to be withdrawn. It would also be possible to have a system where prayers, for those who want to say them, could take place either at the very beginning or the very end of assemblies, so those who wanted to opt out could do so without missing the rest. But we don't think the current guidelines should continue.

We are aware that since we launched our petition, another one has been organised in favour of keeping the existing guidelines. Those signing the other petition have a right to their view, but we do not believe they have a right to impose their beliefs on others through forced praying.

We are disappointed by the response to our petition of Ms Kirsty Williams, the Cabinet Secretary for Education. We don't believe she has considered the human rights aspect of the issue at all.

We are very grateful to all who signed our petition and supported us, and hope members of the Committee will support our cause and suggest a way forward.

We are also grateful to the Committee Clerk for his advice.

Thank you and best wishes,

Rhiannon Shipton and Lily McAllister-Sutton

Agenda Item 2.2

P-05-765 Keeping Current Guidelines for Religious Assemblies

This petition was submitted by Iraj Irfan, having collected a total of 2,231 signatures – 2,209 signatures online and 22 paper signatures in an alternative petition.

Petition text:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to keep religious assemblies in state schools in Wales as ‘opt-out’ and ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, while considering ways to ensure that they continue to be relevant to people of different faiths and no faith.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Cardiff West
- South Wales Central

Acts of religious worship in schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 Mehefin 2017
Petitions Committee | 27 June 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-765

Petition title: [Keeping current guidelines for religious assemblies](#)

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to keep religious assemblies in state schools in Wales as 'opt-out' and 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', while considering ways to ensure that they continue to be relevant to people of different faiths and no faith.

1. Legal position

The statutory duty for schools to have daily acts of collective worship in Wales (and England and Northern Ireland) was introduced in the *Education Act 1944*. Subsequently, the *School Standards and Framework Act 1998* set out that each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship. It includes an exception that parents may withdraw their child from such acts. The Act sets out that **most** collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

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The provisions of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* allow sixth form pupils in maintained community, community special, voluntary, foundation and foundation special schools the right to withdraw themselves from collective worship.

In her response to the Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Education sets out the current legal position and her view that collective worship should be sensitive to the range of beliefs and non-beliefs held by pupils in the school.

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Welsh Government guidance

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While ‘worship’ is not defined in legislation, the 1994 Welsh Office guidance includes the following definition:

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The Committee recommended that:

“In our view the current legal framework is incompatible with these obligations in so far as it fails to guarantee a child of sufficient maturity, intelligence and understanding the right to withdraw from both compulsory religious education and collective worship. An amendment to the Bill which gave pupils over the age of 16 the right to withdraw from collective worship would therefore reduce the extent of the incompatibility of the present law with the UK's human rights obligations, but it would not remove that incompatibility altogether.

To remove the incompatibility, in our view, it would be necessary to go further in two respects: first, by granting a right to withdraw from religious education as well as collective worship; and, second, by affording the right to withdraw from both religious education and collective worship to any pupil of sufficient maturity, understanding and intelligence to make an informed decision about whether or not to withdraw.”

3. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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“The State party repeal legal provisions for compulsory attendance at collective worship in publicly funded schools and ensure that children can independently exercise the right to withdraw from religious worship at school.”

4. Research on collective worship

In November 2015, the Arts and Humanities Research Council published a report, *Collective Worship and Religious Observance in Schools: An Evaluation of Law and Policy in the UK*.

This stated:

“The statutory duty to provide an act of collective worship/religious observance in schools has been controversial for decades. Issues include: disagreement about the appropriateness of such acts in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural UK; the degree to which the current system properly affords respect for the rights of individuals and minority groups, including those with no religious faith; and concerns that the present arrangements do not adequately develop the spiritual/moral education of pupils, or promote a community spirit and shared values in schools.”

The report highlighted some common concerns about collective worship. These include:

- A lack of a coherent rationale for schools collective worship and non-compliance;
- A failure to protect Human Rights standards; and
- A lack of clarity and ambiguity which means that headteachers may exercise undue or inappropriate influence over the content of the worship or be unwilling or unprepared to make decisions about the content of collective worship.

The report suggests that, if the duty were to be abolished, schools may wish to continue to hold collective gatherings. There would need to be a mechanism to ensure that such gatherings are inclusive and respectful of the integrity of pupils, parents and teachers. It also suggests that the abolition of the duty could be a missed opportunity for pupil development and social cohesion.

The report identified potential approaches for reform:

- Remove the requirement that acts of collective worship be of a broadly Christian character;
- Replace the duty with a duty for a 'time for reflection'.

It included specific recommendations for Wales:

- Circular 10/94, *Religious Education and Collective Worship* should be urgently revised to reflect the contemporary needs of the Welsh education system, particularly in light of the Donaldson recommendations;
- The non-statutory status of the circular should be made widely known to schools, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Estyn;
- Estyn should review its inspection guidance and place an increased emphasis on the collective aspect of the activity;
- In reviewing and making decisions in this area, Welsh Ministers should pay due regard to the rights of children and young people as required by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure.

Review of the National Curriculum in Wales

Professor Graham Donaldson’s review of the National Curriculum in Wales, *Successful Futures* (February 2015) referred to **religious education**, rather than collective worship. He recommended that religious education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception. The Welsh Government accepted all of Professor Donaldson’s recommendations in full. On [15 July 2015, in responding to a question in Plenary](#), Huw Lewis, the then Minister for Education and Skills said, in relation to religious education:

“I’d like to take the opportunity to announce this afternoon that I believe we need to transform our current religious education curriculum. My contention would be that we rename the RE curriculum and transform it into the religion, philosophy and ethics element of the curriculum, where there is an explicit commitment to allowing children to ponder ideas around ethics and citizenship and what it means to be a citizen of a free country.”

The Welsh Government is working with ‘Pioneer Schools’ and regional consortia on the design of the six Areas of Learning and Experience in the new curriculum. More information on curriculum content is expected to be available later in the year.

5. Previous petitions

In 2012, the Petitions Committee considered a petition which called for the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to [protect collective worship as a legal right](#) and a petition to [abolish collective worship](#). On 15 May 2012, the then [Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews](#) wrote to the Committee:

“I recognise that collective worship is an important part of school life. In our multicultural country, it can be used as a way of supporting pupils’ spiritual development and providing all pupils, irrespective of their family background, aged and aptitudes, with opportunities to explore and express what is of value in life in an open reflective way. With this in mind, I am not considering a change to the status of collective worship within schools in Wales.”

Due to the then Minister’s unequivocal response, both petitions were closed.

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Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-765
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00836/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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25 May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 23 May about Petition P-05-765, to keep the current guidelines for religious assemblies/ collective worship.

I would like to thank you for welcoming my views before the Petitions Committee gives the petition its formal consideration.

My view on collective worship is that it should be sensitive to the range of beliefs and non-beliefs held by pupils in the school and should give pupils the opportunity to worship, without encouraging them to do something that is against the teachings of their own religion or beliefs. For example, times of prayer may be left open-ended for pupils to say their own prayers silently or to reflect on moral or philosophical issues.

The specific legislative requirements for acts of collective worship in schools are set out in Section 70 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which says there must be a daily act of collective worship, and Schedule 20 of the Education Act 1996, which sets out the nature of collective worship.

The responsibility for the planning and delivery of acts of collective worship rests with individual schools. The law states that most acts of collective worship in each term should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature' and therefore, it is acceptable if occasionally an act of collective worship is not clearly linked to the Christian faith.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

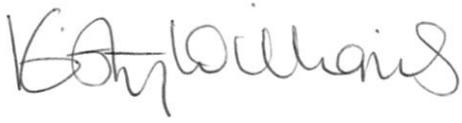
Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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

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

Parents can request for their child to be withdrawn from collective worship and schools must agree to such requests in all circumstances.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Agenda Item 2.3

P-05-761 Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru

This petition was submitted by Aled Thomas, having collected 148 signatures on an alternative e-petitions website.

Petition text:

We call for the Welsh Assembly Government to give funding to support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

This charity is unique in Wales. Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru currently receives no government funding. It depends entirely on funding from sources that aren't necessarily able to permanently support it.

This unique open drop-in centre plays an important role in improving the lives of people living with autism in Wales.

We would like to seek reassurance from the Welsh Assembly Government that this charity will always remain open and fully funded.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Cardiff South and Penarth
- South West Wales

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Petition number: [P-05-0761](#)

Petition title: **Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru**

We call for the Welsh Assembly Government to give funding to support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

This charity is unique in Wales. Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru currently receives no government funding. It depends entirely on funding from sources that aren't necessarily able to permanently support it.

This unique open drop-in centre plays an important role in improving the lives of people living with autism in Wales.

We would like to seek reassurance from the Welsh Assembly Government that this charity will always remain open and fully funded.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru and autism policy in Wales

Introduction

Autism is a developmental condition which affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with other people. It is a spectrum condition, and therefore affects people in different ways; a person with autism may also have other related characteristics, such as sensory sensitivity or a learning disability.

The National Autistic Society Cymru estimates that around 34,000 people in Wales are autistic, and that there around 136,000 people for whom autism is a part of their daily lives.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru

The [Autism Initiatives website](#) has information about Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru is part of the Autism Initiatives group of charities. It provides a service for people with Autism Spectrum Conditions, their families and carers in Wales. It runs a One Stop Shop in Cardiff for people with autism at which adults with an autism spectrum condition can access a range of advice and support and take part in various social activities. The service is primarily delivered for people who have a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome or high functioning autism who are over 16yrs of age.

The service is free and open to anyone with a diagnosis of autism who lives in Cardiff, Newport, Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr Tydfil, Vale of Glamorgan, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Bridgend.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru states that it aims to work in real partnerships with people with an Autism Spectrum Condition, their families and other people important to them. It takes an individualist and person-centred approach, enabling people to do what is important to them and supports them to become successful people with autism.

Autism in Wales: a summary of the key Welsh Government policy and legislative initiatives

Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan

The [Autistic Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) Strategic Action Plan](#) was launched by the Welsh Government in April 2008, the first of its kind in the UK. The plan introduced guidelines on autism for local agencies, including local authorities and Local Health Boards. The Welsh Government provided funding for local authorities to develop support focused on autism. This funding was initially ring-fenced, up until April 2015, after which it was transferred to local authorities' general budgets via the Revenue Support Grant.

Key actions set out in the action plan included:

- appointing an autism lead in each local authority;
- establishing a local stakeholder group that should include parents, carers and people with autism in each council area; and
- developing local autism action plans.

The Welsh Government published an [updated ASD Strategic Action Plan](#) on 30 November 2016. It has three key priority areas:

- Awareness raising, information and training;
- Assessment and diagnosis –including the introduction of a 26-week waiting time target from referral to first appointment for children with autism; and
- Meeting support needs – including efforts to improve support for children and young people in education through 'Learning with Autism' programmes.

The plan will be supported by a new [all-age National Integrated Autism Service](#), which is to be rolled out to all health boards across Wales by 2019. Specialist teams in each region will provide adult diagnosis, support in the community and advice and information for adults with autism, parents and carers and professionals.

The service was originally backed by [£6 million of Welsh Government investment over three years](#), but this was supplemented with an [extra £7 million over four years, announced in March 2017](#).

The funding is also intended to help develop improved autism resources, such as the “[Can you see me?](#)” scheme developed by the Welsh Local Government Association. This initiative is intended to promote understanding and acceptance of autism within communities in Wales, through the production of leaflets and posters for shops, banks, and other businesses, as well as for dentists and GPs. It will also be offering people with autism the choice of wearing a wristband or showing a card as a way of letting others know that they have autism.

In addition to the new integrated autism service the Welsh Government has announced improvements to neurodevelopmental diagnosis and support for children through the [Together for Children and Young People](#) (T4CYP) improvement programme with £2m annual funding.

The Strategic Action Plan is underpinned by an [Autistic Spectrum Disorder Delivery Plan 2016–2020](#) which details actions to be taken and the arrangements for monitoring and measuring them.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) came into force for most purposes in April 2016. The Act provides a new framework for the provision of social services for children and adults in Wales, and sets out the duties on local authorities in relation to adults who need care and support, looked after children, care leavers, and accommodated children, including children with autism.

The Welsh Government views the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 as providing both [the framework and some of the tools](#) for developing autism services. These include:

- the requirement in the Act on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance services;
- the creation of Regional Partnership Boards to ensure health boards, local authorities and the third sector work together;
- the power for Welsh Ministers to issue codes (including on autism) on the exercise of social services functions;
- the duty on local authorities and health boards to assess the care and support needs of their populations and identify preventative services to meet them, including services for people with autism;
- the requirement on local authorities to draw up voluntary registers of disabled children and, if they wish, disabled adults.

- provisions in the Act for transition from children's to adults' services.

Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Bill

The [Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal \(Wales\) Bill](#) was introduced by the Welsh Government on 12 December 2016, and is currently at Stage 2 of its scrutiny by the Assembly. This Bill seeks to reform the arrangements for meeting the needs of children and young people with additional learning needs, including autism.

There are currently separate arrangements and legislation for Special Educational Needs (SEN) up to age 16 and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) post-16. The Bill would replace these with a single legislative framework for all children and young people up to the age of 25 identified as having Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

Further information about the Bill can be found in a [Research Service publication](#).

The Autism (Wales) Bill

Paul Davies AM won the Members' Bill Ballot on 28 March 2017, and is seeking to introduce a Bill entitled the [Autism \(Wales\) Bill](#).

The main policy objective of the Autism (Wales) Bill is "to make provision for meeting the needs of children and adults with autism spectrum conditions in Wales with the aim of protecting and promoting the rights of autistic children and adults in Wales". In addition, the Bill would "give autism its own statutory identity, recognising that autism is a condition in its own right".

The Explanatory Memorandum to the proposed Bill states that it seeks to supplement, not replace, the measures introduced by the WG in recent years, and to complement the provisions in the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Bill.

The proposed Bill has been [welcomed by The National Autistic Society](#).

A Leave to Proceed Debate took place on Wednesday 14 June 2017 at which the Assembly agreed that the Bill should proceed. Paul Davies AM therefore now has 13 months in which to introduce the Bill.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00569/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

9 June 2017

Dear Mike,

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

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

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

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0300 0604400
Correspondence.Rebecca.Evans@gov.wales
Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru

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.

Pack Page 58

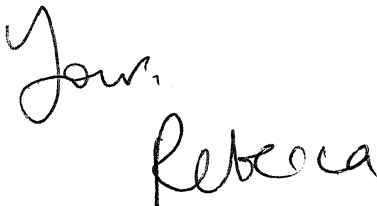
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

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

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaw. Rebecca'.

Rebecca Evans AC/AM

Gweinidog Iechyd y Cyhoedd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Services and Public Health

P-05-761 Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 16.06.17

Dear Senedd Petitions.

Reference: RE/00569/17

Thank you for your recent correspondence.

I am writing to you with a statement that consists of my views in light of the new correspondence from the Welsh Government regarding my petition: P-05-761.

The statement begins in the next paragraph:

Having read the Strategic Action Plan for autism and the proposed method of delivery, I do not see evidence that third sector providers have been sufficiently or effectively utilised.

In recent correspondence with Rebecca Evans AM, she had indicated that £13million of public money is to be spent on a National Integrated Autism Service. Rebecca Evans AM had previously intimated that the IAS would replace existing services, however, she now says that it will enhance existing local services including those provided by the third sector.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru provide a one stop shop service which provides support for over 500 adults and young people in South East Wales. I and many others have benefitted from this service greatly. I have accessed a whole range of services; 1:1 support, drop-ins, supported social groups, post-diagnostic sessions, employment workshops, employment support and tailored support for me as an individual with autism. If I may say, the other autism support providers have been sub-standard compared to Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru, or at least, they haven't been as specialised or effective on a day to day basis as any of the other autism support providers. I have previously struggled to access appropriate service and I value the work of this charity along with many others who have signed this petition.

From what I understand of the social services and well-being act, there is statutory responsibility for the Welsh Government and local authorities to engage in partnership with the third sector. I have asked Rebecca Evans AM to provide details of how the £13million allocated to the National Integrated Autism Service will fulfil this duty.

As a person living with autism and from speaking to many other autistic adults, I have not felt or been asked my opinion on what services we feel we need.

Rebecca Evans AM has stated that a scoping exercise was undertaken in 2015 to design new services for adults with autism in Wales. Nobody who I have been in contact with was consulted or have any knowledge of this scoping exercise.

It is unclear how the NIAS is going to enhance and support the existing service provided by Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

Rebecca Evans AM has made the point that Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru could apply for Sustainable Social Services Grant, however, if successful funding from them would not be forthcoming for at least two years. I feel it is unjust and wrong that funding cannot and will not be given to the invaluable service when there is £13million available specifically for Autism.

As such I and many others request that the Welsh Government effectively engage with and financially support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru rather than replicate many of the services they already provide.

Yours Sincerely,

Aled Thomas.

Agenda Item 2.4

P-05-762 Move the Welsh Assembly out of Cardiff

This petition was submitted by Royston Jones, having collected 53 signatures online.

Petition text:

We the undersigned call for the National Assembly be moved from Cardiff to Aberystwyth to begin 'rebalancing' the national life and economy of Wales.

Additional information:

Cardiff is prospering, and growing at an exponential rate, while most parts of Wales stagnate, which makes it clear that the current Cardiff/Wales model of economic development does not work for eighty per cent of the country.

Cardiff getting the lion's share of investment and jobs impacts adversely on the rest of the country, and while this trend was observable in earlier decades it has gained greater momentum and become even more damaging for the national good since the National Assembly for Wales first sat in 1999.

Worse, there is growing evidence of corruption; the kind of corruption that is inevitable when those with political influence and control of the public purse regularly meet, in social and other contexts, those seeking to take advantage of such contacts.

We believe that in the short term the easiest way to remedy this unsustainable and growing imbalance, and the increasing threat of corruption, is to move the Welsh Assembly and its assorted departments and agencies out of Cardiff.

Aberystwyth would be an ideal and central location for the Assembly and its support staff, other agencies could be located around the country, for in the era of the internet and video conferencing civil servants and others do not need to work next door to each other.

The benefits accruing to some of the more neglected parts of Wales would soon make up for the initial costs involved in the relocations. To continue with the current arrangement is to condemn Wales to a future as a city state,

with all benefits accruing to Cardiff. This is not the future we want for our country.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionnydd
- Mid and West Wales

Move the Welsh Assembly out of Cardiff

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 Mehefin 2017
Petitions Committee | 27 June 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-762

Petition title: **Move the Welsh Assembly out of Cardiff**

Text of petition: We the undersigned call for the National Assembly be moved from Cardiff to Aberystwyth to begin 'rebalancing' the national life and economy of Wales.

Cardiff is prospering, and growing at an exponential rate, while most parts of Wales stagnate, which makes it clear that the current Cardiff/Wales model of economic development does not work for eighty per cent of the country.

Cardiff getting the lion's share of investment and jobs impacts adversely on the rest of the country, and while this trend was observable in earlier decades it has gained greater momentum and become even more damaging for the national good since the National Assembly for Wales first sat in 1999.

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The benefits accruing to some of the more neglected parts of Wales would soon make up for the initial costs involved in the relocations. To continue with the current arrangement is to condemn Wales to a future as a city state, with all benefits accruing to Cardiff. This is not

the future we want for our country.

Background

Following the referendum which gave the green light for devolution in September 1997 it was assumed the new Assembly would occupy Cardiff City Hall, given its proximity to the Crown Buildings which housed the Welsh Office.

Negotiations commenced on 9 October 1997 between Cardiff Council and the Welsh Office but broke down on 24 November, when the UK Government rejected the deal offered by Cardiff. In December 1997 the Welsh Office issued a consultation document suggesting alternative sites and inviting applications. 24 applications from around Wales were received by the Welsh Office by 31 January 1998. In February 1998 the Secretary of State, Ron Davies, announced a shortlist of four locations – three in Cardiff and Swansea Guildhall. In April the final announcement of Cardiff Bay was made. There was to be a new building but Crickhowell House (now Ty Hywel) would be used as a temporary location. The Pierhead also became part of the Assembly estate. The new building – the [Senedd](#) – opened its doors in 2006.

The Assembly also has a [North Wales information centre](#) in Colwyn Bay.

Since 2007 there has been a distinction between staff who work for the Assembly who are employed by the **Assembly Commission** and civil servants who work for the **Welsh Government**.

The Welsh Office in Cathays Park became the headquarters of the Welsh Government but subsequently the Welsh Government has opened [offices across Wales](#). There are Welsh Government Offices in Holyhead, Caernarfon, Dolgellau, Llandudno Junction, Wrexham, Llandrindod Wells, Newtown, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, Swansea, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Nantgarw, Newport, Treforest, Bedwas and Caerphilly. There is also an office located in [Aberystwyth](#) where most of the staff dealing with agriculture are located.

Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government publishes an [annual State of the Estate Report](#). This contains information about the numbers of staff employed in different parts of Wales. For 2015/16 it was:

North Wales 522

Mid Wales 470

South West Wales 452

South East Wales 1,279

Cardiff 2,647

In 2014 the Wales Audit Office published [a report](#) on the Welsh Government's Location Strategy. This report examined whether the Location Strategy Programme has delivered its objectives in a way that provides value for money. The report concluded that the Welsh Government has delivered the objectives of the Location Strategy, but the overall value for money of the Programme is uncertain. This is because, although the Welsh Government delivered the new office buildings to the expected quality and within contracted costs, limited consideration was given to alternative accommodation options, robust estimates of programme costs were lacking, and realisation of all the Programme's continuing benefits is no longer being monitored.

The report stated:

The Welsh Government had a clear objective to increase the proportion of staff working outside Cardiff, but workforce planning was hampered by limitations in the information on staff numbers, limited consideration was given to accommodation options, and the costs of the Programme were underestimated.

And

The Programme has increased the percentage of staff working outside Cardiff, but the Welsh Government has not relocated as many employees as planned.

National Assembly for Wales action

The Public Accounts Committee in the fourth Assembly discussed the Wales Audit Office's report on [the Welsh Government's Location Strategy in 2014](#). The Committee received a briefing from the Wales Audit Office and resolved to write to the Welsh Government. The Permanent Secretary provided a [detailed response](#) to the WAO's recommendations. The Committee decided not to hold an inquiry into the Location Strategy.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Your ref:
Our ref: PO184/EJ/RR

14 June 2017

Dear Mike

Petition P-05-762 Move the Welsh Assembly Out of Cardiff

Thank you for your letter dated 15 May 2017. The Llywydd has asked the Assembly Commission to consider the content of the letter and to provide the Petitions Committee with its views on this matter.

As a Commission, we recognise the importance of having national institutions based in locations across Wales and that economic prosperity and employment opportunities are spread across the nation.

This is a principle shared by all Assembly Commissioners. We accept that we must always seek new ways to reach out to the people of Wales and we will consider options to undertake more of the Assembly's business in other parts of Wales.

The National Assembly for Wales has an office in Colwyn Bay as well as Cardiff Bay. The petitioner may also be aware that the institution undertakes extensive outreach work in order to engage with communities across the nation and we employ officers in both the West and the North to this end. In addition, we have developed a new youth engagement strategy to complement our existing education provision that has widened the reach of this work and we have established a community engagement programme, Senedd@, which is in the process of being adopted by the UK parliament too.



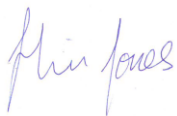
The Welsh Government, whose responsibilities include economic development, also has offices in Holyhead, Caernarfon, Llandudno Junction, Wrexham, Aberystwyth, Llandrindod Wales, Newtown, Carmarthen, Milford Haven, Swansea, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Nantgarw, Newport, Treforest, Bedwas and Cardiff.

It is the view of the Commission that it is right that the primary location of the Welsh parliament should however be our capital city, Cardiff, and that the Senedd building is now growing in its recognition as the home of our Welsh democracy – both among the people of Wales and further afield. We would therefore not choose to move our parliament elsewhere.

In reference to some of the concerns raised by Mr Jones, the National Assembly is responsible of course for scrutinising decisions made by the Welsh Government in relation to its policies and their implementation, its responsibility to represent *all* citizens and communities in Wales, and indeed the way it spends its money. Members have the opportunity to scrutinise Ministers on a regular basis with regards to their decisions on investment and job creation, as well as in relation to their general conduct.

Furthermore, the petitioner’s claim that there “is growing evidence of corruption” is unsubstantiated within the text of the petition, although the Assembly Commission has procedures in place to consider any specific allegations should anyone wish to make a complaint.

Yours sincerely



Elin Jones AM, Llywydd and Chair of the Commission
Suzy Davies AM, Assembly Commissioner
Caroline Jones AM, Assembly Commissioner
Adam Price AM, Assembly Commissioner
Joyce Watson AM, Assembly Commissioner





Eich cyf/Your ref: P-05-762

David Rowlands AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

22 June 2017

Dear David,

I am writing in response to the previous Chair's letter of 15th May which asked for my views in relation to a petition received by the Petitions Committee calling for the National Assembly to be moved from Cardiff to Aberystwyth.

As the petition concerns the National Assembly for Wales, this is a matter for the Commission and I understand that the Presiding Officer has responded to you on this.

As for the Welsh Government, we are guided by our Location Strategy which has transformed the Government from a predominantly Cardiff based organisation to one distributed across Wales, including offices in Aberystwyth, Holyhead, Caernarfon, Llandudno Junction, Wrexham, Llandrindod Wales, Newtown, Carmarthen, Milford Haven, Swansea, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Nantgarw, Newport, Treforest, Bedwas and Cardiff.

Yours sincerely

CARWYN JONES

Agenda Item 2.5

P-05-764 Better Mental Health Services for Adults

This petition was submitted by Megan Tudor, having collected 84 signatures online.

Petition text:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve the treatment of adults in mental health services with particular focus on improving services in the community such as CMHT, inpatient, A&E and ambulance services.

Too often the mental health services have failed adults. It is appalling to think that everyday thousands of adults are being turned away when begging for help. To be admitted to hospital and quickly reviewed by a psychiatrist and being told 'just distract yourself you'll be fine' and sent home.

I understand that there have been major cuts to these services over the last few years, but frankly it is unacceptable. There should not be a price on someone's mental health. Mental health should have the same level of care as physical health.

Why is there more support in place for children suffering from mental health? Children have support in place following hospital admissions but there's nothing for adults. There may be promises that they will receive support from certain services but they quickly fall through. I am disgusted by the horror stories I have heard from people in the system. I have witnessed first hand the lack of care provided for adults suffering from ill mental health. This needs to change and it needs to change fast. I will no longer sit back and watch this happen.

I want to see huge changes in the way adult patients are treated and supported. All services should liaise with each other to provide the best care possible. At the moment communication is lacking between services leaving the patient without support. If emergency services are needed then there needs to be some follow up support in place for when they return home. Most services work within the hours of 9am and 5pm but mental health doesn't go away at 5pm we need more accessible after hours support. I want to see more care from staff too, they may have the training required for their position but empathy and respect is nowhere to be found. It's time to change.

Additional information:

Ok let's talk..

Mental Health can still be quite a taboo topic but I want you to stick with me here for a minute. I just want you to imagine feeling completely lost, empty and like you have no reason to live. You want the pain to end so you take the most difficult step of your life; you ask for help. You just want someone to recognise how much pain you're in and make it go away.

The doctors/paramedics/police/psychiatrist tell you it's 'nothing to worry about you must be having a bad day that's normal'. The truth is it's not just a bad day you've been stuck in this dark place for much longer. They don't listen, you go home and although you didn't think it was possible, you feel worse than you did before asking for help.

THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE! The help and support should be readily available for those that need it but it's not and that's what needs to change. If this petition works it could save thousands of lives every single day. Please show your support by signing this and share it. Things have got to change.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Montgomeryshire
- Mid and West Wales

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Petition number: [P-05-0764](#)

Petition title: **Better mental health services for adults**

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve the treatment of adults in mental health services with particular focus on improving services in the community such as CMHT, inpatient, A&E and ambulance services.

Too often the mental health services have failed adults. It is appalling to think that everyday thousands of adults are being turned away when begging for help. To be admitted to hospital and quickly reviewed by a psychiatrist and being told 'just distract yourself you'll be fine' and sent home.

I understand that there have been major cuts to these services over the last few year, but frankly it is unacceptable. There should not be a price on someone's mental health. Mental health should have the same level of care as physical health.

Why is there more support in place for children suffering from mental health? Children have support in place following hospital admissions but there's nothing for adults. There may be promises that they will receive support from certain services but they quickly fall through. I am disgusted by the horror stories I have heard from people in the system. I have witnessed first hand the lack of care provided for adults suffering from ill mental health. This needs to change and it needs to change fast. I will no longer sit back and watch this happen.

I want to see huge changes in the way adult patients are treated and supported. All services should liaise with each other to provide the best care possible. At the moment communication is lacking between services leaving the patient without support. If emergency services are needed then there needs to be some follow up support in place for when they return home. Most services work within the hours of 9am and 5pm but mental health doesn't go away at 5pm we need more accessible after hours support. I want to see more care from staff too, they may have the training required for their position but empathy and respect is nowhere to be found. It's time to change.

Policy background

Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010

The [Mental Health \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#) has aimed to secure earlier, easier access to services for people with mental health problems, and help to prevent the development of more serious symptoms. This has included:

- establishing local primary mental health support services (LPMHSS) to improve access to mental health services within primary care settings;
- strengthening care and treatment planning for people with mental health problems in secondary care;
- providing adult patients with easier access back into care/treatment when they have been discharged from secondary mental health services;
- extending the categories of patients entitled to independent mental health advocacy.

The Measure also placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to review the operation of the Measure. The [Duty to review final report](#) was published in December 2015. The report made recommendations for amending the legislation and the way it is implemented including:

- extending the categories of health professionals able to undertake LPMHSS assessments and become care coordinators;
- amending Part 3 of the Measure to allow a person of any age, or a person they specify, to request a reassessment of their mental health;
- placing reporting requirements on health boards around patient satisfaction, outcomes, and improving awareness and understanding of services under the Measure, particularly amongst patients and GPs;
- a working group should consider improving the form and content of care and treatment planning. It should also look at strengthening the guidance on competence to undertake care coordination and on the interface between primary and secondary care.

The Measure was also subject to [post-legislative scrutiny](#) by the Fourth Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee (2014/15).

In his response to the Petitions Committee (dated 11 June 2017), the **Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport** highlighted a reduction in waiting times for mental health assessment and treatment.

with the introduction of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 we set targets that 80% of people should have a mental health assessment by a local primary mental health support service (LPMHSS) within 28 days of a referral. (...). In December 2016, more than 85% of people were seen for an assessment within 28 days, compared to just over 60% in December 2013. In addition, 77% of therapeutic interventions were started within 28 days following an assessment last December, compared to around 63% in December 2013.

Together for Mental Health

The Mental Health Measure underpins the Welsh Government's 10 year strategy to improve mental health and well-being, [Together for Mental Health](#) (published in 2012). A [delivery plan for 2016–2019](#), the second of three, was published in October 2016. The delivery plan identifies a number of priority areas, including the following re. access to, and quality of, services:

Priority area 3 – Services meet the needs of the diverse population of Wales.

Priority area 4 – People with mental health problems, their families and carers are treated with dignity and respect.

Priority area 8 – People with a mental health problem have access to appropriate and timely services. A number of goals in this area are relevant to the issues highlighted in the petition including:

- that mental well-being is given equal priority with physical well-being in the development and delivery of services;
- that public services and third sector work together to provide an integrated approach;
- that there are robust links between primary care and mental health services;
- timely and appropriate services for people who require a secure mental health setting.

Implementation of the delivery plan is to be assured through Partnership Boards at national and local levels, with progress reported publicly through annual reports produced by the Welsh Government, and local health boards/NHS Trusts' Integrated Medium Term Plans (IMTPs).

Crisis care

The mental health charity [Mind Cymru](#) reports that there is inequality of access to mental health crisis care across Wales, with care options and hours of availability varying significantly.

The multi-agency [Mental health crisis care concordat](#) (agreed between the Welsh Government and police, NHS, local government, and voluntary sector partners) aims to improve the care and support for people experiencing, or at risk of, mental health crisis, and minimise the use of inappropriate placements (such as in police custody). The Together for Mental Health delivery plan requires all partners to ensure they are adhering to the principles of the Concordat by March 2017. (Additionally, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 amends the Mental Health Act 1983 to prohibit the use of police cells as a place of safety for people under 18 years and places new restrictions on their use for adults).

Mental Health Act 1983

The arrangements for the compulsory detention/treatment of patients with mental health problems are set out in the Mental Health Act 1983. The [Mental Health Act 1983 code of practice for Wales](#) (revised 2016) provides more information on relevant professionals' responsibilities under the Act, and the rights of patients and their carers. This includes the right to aftercare services following discharge from hospital for example. The [Mind Cymru website](#) provides further advice on people's rights under the Mental Health Act.

The **Cabinet Secretary's response** highlighted that mental health spending in Wales is ring-fenced, and that more is spent on mental health services than any other NHS service area.

We have increased spending each year since the ring-fence was introduced, including £22 million over the last two years which includes more than £3 million a year for psychological therapies for adults. We have announced an additional £20 million this year, taking the total mental health budget for Wales to £629m, compared to £510 million in 2010-11.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd, Llesiant a Chwaraeon
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/01275/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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11 June 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 22 May regarding Petition P-05-764 from Megan Tudor on Better Mental Health Services for Adults.

I note the issues raised in the petition in respect of adult mental health services.

Regarding the budget for mental health, spending on mental health in Wales is protected by a ring-fence and we spend more on mental health services than any other part of the NHS. We have increased spending each year since the ring-fence was introduced, including £22 million over the last two years which includes more than £3 million a year for psychological therapies for adults. We have announced an additional £20 million this year, taking the total mental health budget for Wales to £629m, compared to £510 million in 2010-11.

Regarding the need for more community services, with the introduction of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 we set targets that 80% of people should have a mental health assessment by a local primary mental health support service (LPMHSS) within 28 days of a referral. We have since seen a fall in mental health waiting times. In December 2016, more than 85% of people were seen for an assessment within 28 days, compared to just over 60% in December 2013. In addition, 77% of therapeutic interventions were started within 28 days following an assessment last December, compared to around 63% in December 2013.

The Welsh Government has also worked closely with other key agencies including the police, ambulance service and the third sector to introduce a Crisis Care Concordat for Wales. The introduction of the Concordat has led to a dramatic fall in the number of people in a mental health crisis being detained in police custody.

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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.

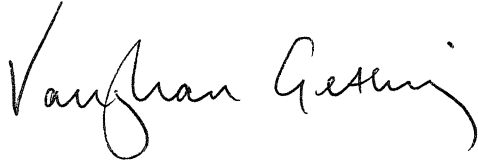
Pack Page 76

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.

Further information on our current priorities for mental health in Wales can be found in the 2016-19 Delivery Plan for *Together for Mental Health*, our 10-year mental health strategy for Wales.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd, Llesiant a Chwaraeon
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport

Agenda Item 3.1

P-04-472 Make the MTAN law

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to make the MTAN Guidance Notes, notably those relating to a 500 metre buffer zone around open cast workings, mandatory in planning law for Wales.

Additional information:

On 20th January 2009, Jane Davidson, the Minister for the Environment, introduced newly published Coal Minerals Technical Advice guidance Notes (MTAN) for Wales, and stated: “.. the Coal MTAN will fulfil the pledges (in 2008) to introduce Health Impact Assessments for coal applications, together with buffer zones, and with an emphasis on working closely with local communities. It reaffirms the commitment (in 2008) to a 500m buffer zone.” In 2009 the Welsh Government did not have the power to make its planning guidelines law. It does now.

Petition raised by: Dr John Cox

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 April 2013

Number of signatures: 680. Associated petition collected 330 signatures.

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Could be more Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-575 & P-04-472
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00973/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 17 May regarding petition P-04-472 Make the MTAN Law and petition P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Applications.

My officials are currently working on revising Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and as part of this we will be revising our planning policy on coal. Any proposed changes to national planning policy will be the subject of a public consultation exercise.

I am currently expecting a 12 week consultation on the revisions to PPW to be undertaken early next year.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

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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.

Agenda Item 3.2

P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications

Petition Wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to call in all opencast mining planning applications over 10 years duration or over 350 hectares in size because the implications of these developments are far reaching and long standing with effects beyond the immediate locality.

Petition raised by: United Valleys Action Group

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 130 – An associated petition relating to a specific planning application collected in excess of 6500 signatures

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Could be more Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-575 & P-04-472
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00973/17

Mike Hedges AM
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May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 17 May regarding petition P-04-472 Make the MTAN Law and petition P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Applications.

My officials are currently working on revising Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and as part of this we will be revising our planning policy on coal. Any proposed changes to national planning policy will be the subject of a public consultation exercise.

I am currently expecting a 12 week consultation on the revisions to PPW to be undertaken early next year.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

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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.

**P-04-575 Call in All Opencast Mining Planning Applications –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 20.06.17**

Response to Ministers second letter for Petitions Committee

In response to the Ministers submission dated 26th may 2017, where the Minister again quotes that Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is being revised next year, UVAG stands by the petition of 6500+ signatures to ‘call in’ all opencast mines over 10 years or 350 hectares in size.

The issue of opencast mining is so concerning in its present state with several large opencast mining operations either shelved or so called mothballed that could lead them all being abandoned leaving a massive legacy for restoration that falls on the Local Authorities or the Welsh Government, for this reason alone it should not be the Local Authorities but the Welsh Government that should be the decision makers on large opencast mining planning applications.

There are more large opencast mining operations working in Wales at the moment that could be shelved or mothballed the Welsh Government needs to ensure these schemes are completed with the company’s commitment to the restoration of the sites before any other opencast application is even considered.

UVAG would like the petition to progress to the Plenary for ALL Assembly Members to debate with the view of having the petition implemented.

Terry Evans UVAG

Agenda Item 3.3

P-05-743 End the Exotic Pet Trade in Wales

This petition was submitted by David Sedley, having collected 222 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to take action against the trade in exotic animals captured and bred for the pet trade in Wales, and to forbid the licensing of all businesses involved in this destructive, cruel and unethical trade, with clear exemptions for rescue centres and licensed rescue centres. We further urge the Welsh Government to follow the example of the Scottish Government which committed to a review of the trade and importation of exotic animals for the pet trade in Scotland in February 2015, led by The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment. For Wales to be taken seriously in the global conservation community, we maintain that we cannot be seen to be allowing this trade – which elicits the concerns of the British Veterinary Association (BVA), The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the RSPCA – to continue in our own country.

Additional Information

Animals such as monkeys, meerkats, reptiles and turtles are wild animals who belong in their natural habitat, not in cages and glass tanks in somebody's home. Over 1000 species of mammals, birds, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and fish are bred and captured for the exotic pet trade, and it is our argument that the complex social, physical and behavioural needs of these animals cannot be met other than in their natural habitats. Furthermore, there is strong evidence linking the trade in exotic animals with habitat destruction and the extinction of species in the wild. In tandem with the suffering of such animals in transit – including many documented deaths – young animals can grow into dangerous adults which can become unmanageable in domestic environments not conducive to satisfying their welfare needs for increased space and food.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Swansea West
- South Wales West

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-743
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/01005/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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6 June 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 25 April regarding Petition P-05-743 – End the Exotic Pet Trade in Wales. You have written to seek my views on questions raised by the petitioner, David Sedley.

Officials regularly engage with their counterparts in the Scottish Government and Defra. In my letter to you in February this year, I said I was aware of the Scottish review and proposals to overhaul the licensing of animal establishments, including pet shops, in England. Defra published a 'Review of Animal Establishments Licensing in England – Next Steps' in February 2017 which considers pet sales and the care of exotic animals. I await the findings of the Scottish review and officials continue to engage with Defra colleagues as to their future intentions.

There are no plans, currently, to regulate the sale of exotic pets. No person may keep any dangerous wild animal (including many primates) without first obtaining a licence, under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, from their Local Authority. Under this Act Local Authorities inspect premises, and as part of the inspection, consider welfare requirements. All zoos in Wales, and a number of smaller 'mobile animal exhibits', which display exotic animals, are licensed under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981. All licensed premises are inspected regularly and the welfare of the animals is at the forefront of these inspections.

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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.

In October 2016, RSPCA Cymru issued a briefing document calling for a ban on keeping primates as pets. Officials met with RSPCA Cymru representatives in February to discuss this matter and await information on the level of ownership of primates in Wales. Further meetings on this subject, and the keeping of other exotic species, will take place with RSPCA Cymru and others.

RSPCA Cymru recently launched its 'Delivering for a Decade: 10 years of the Animal Welfare Act in Wales: 2007–2017' and amongst its future priorities is a ban on keeping primates as pets or, if it is not achievable, for the Welsh Government to issue a code of practice on keeping primates as pets. The Welsh Government is committed to updating the existing animal welfare codes of practice and identifying new species-specific codes to introduce in Wales. The development of a code on primates will be considered in discussions with stakeholders.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time

Petition Wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to review the guidance to Local Authorities on head teachers being able to authorise absence for family holidays during term time. Many families from poor backgrounds can only afford to go on holiday during term time, as holidays are about 60% more expensive during the holiday period. Also, many families where parents work are unable to take time off during the school holidays. Holidays can be extremely educational, giving the children awareness of the world in which we live.

Petition raised by: Bethany Walpole-Wroe

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 15 July 2014

Number of signatures: 1008 – An associated e-petition has collected over 10,300 signatures.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-576
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00844/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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5 June 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 24 May providing further evidence from the petitioner about holidays in term time and seeking details on the timescale for the independent evaluation of fixed penalty notices. I am grateful for the Committee's continued interest in this matter.

The independent evaluation on fixed penalty notices is currently underway and is due to be completed in the autumn. The outcome of the evaluation will feed into future decisions for any need for changes to current policy and practice that are planned for the wider attendance review which will be completed towards the end of the year. I will let you know the outcome of this work when it becomes available. I appreciate the further evidence provided by the petitioner and I have asked that this is considered as part of the review.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

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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.

P-04-576 Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 14.06.17

Thank you,

There seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding about our campaign, clearly this committee have not read all our previous evidence put before the original committee, from the previous assembly. All we are asking is that the consortia stop interfering, with Headteachers doing their jobs, and that when the consortia do interfere, the Welsh Assembly upholds its own laws that are already in place. The law states that parents have the right to ask for a 'term time holiday', this is at present being denied in most Welsh Schools, because of the direct pressure being put on Head teachers by the consortia.

All schools should have a holiday request form

All Head teachers should have the 'H' code to use at their discretion, in order to allow it, if after individual consideration they feel that it would be appropriate to do so.

In removing the forms and the 'H' code the consortia are contravening Welsh law, we want this stopped.

If it is not stopped that proves that the Welsh Assembly are not in control of Education in Wales, if this is the case are you in control of anything else, or is the whole thing a scam?

I REPEAT, WE DO NOT WANT THE LAW CHANGED, WE WANT IT UPHELD.

I really do not see what is difficult to understand about this, and hope I have made it simple enough for you to grasp

Beth Walpole-Wroe

Agenda Item 3.5

P-04-606 Ensure schools exercise their statutory powers under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 without interference or bias.

Petition wording

We ask the National Assembly for Wales to ensure that schools are free to exercise their statutory powers under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 without interference from bodies such as regional educational consortia and local authorities and without threat of penalisation through school inspection, performance judgement and banding processes.

Local authorities in Wales and their consortia are recommending that schools do not exercise their statutory powers under the above legislation leaving more families exposed to the threat of penalty notices under the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 than would have been otherwise. These recommendations are made on the basis that they can improve attainment despite the lack of evidence that absence of the type allowed under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 results in poorer attainment.

Currently schools in Wales can be penalised through inspection, performance judgement and school banding processes for authorising legitimate absences such as sickness, family holidays or other events or instances which enable families to participate fully in a normal, private family life.

These recommendations and processes bias schools against the authorisation of legitimate absence and make schools reluctant to exercise their statutory powers under regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010. This can damage the home/school relationship and child well-being. Where a family disagrees with a decision to refuse authorisation of absence on the grounds of equality, human rights

or child well-being there is no independent route of appeal. Where a family disregards a decision to refuse authorisation of absence the issue of a penalty notice and potential criminalisation can result. There is an economic impact on the Welsh tourism and leisure industry which provides employment and income to many of our families.

Additional Information

Regulation 7 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 gives schools the discretionary power to authorise up to 10 days absence during a school year for family holidays and more than 10 days absence in exceptional circumstances.

Schools are being advised against exercising this power by their local authorities. They are feeling pressured to improve school attendance figures by Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, who can penalise them if attendance falls below a certain level.

The drive to improve attendance is based on an assumption that it will improve educational attainment. This is an over-simplification of a very complex issue. Attendance and attainment are linked but a causative relationship is not proven. Research shows that absence for family holidays does not affect attainment at primary school level, and a small degree of absence is unlikely to have any effect at secondary school level. ("A Profile of Pupil Absence, 2011, DfE").

A school's refusal to authorise an absence which is allowable under the law can seriously damage the home/school relationship, particularly if the family believe that the absence is important to their child's well-being and take their child out of school anyway. The family can receive a penalty notice (fine) or be criminalised.

There are many legitimate reasons why children and families need the flexibility to be absent from school during term time which include difficulty obtaining annual leave during school holidays, important family events, geographical remoteness from non-resident parents, grandparents and

extended family. Families employed in the Welsh tourism and leisure industry have felt a significant economic impact from the English term time holiday ban this year. The Good Childhood Report 2014 identified school as only ONE of the ten aspects of life with the greatest influence on child well-being. Family, home, finances, friends, health and choice were among the others.

Petitioner: Pembs Parents Want a Say / Rhieni Pembs eisiau cael dweud

First considered by the Committee: 9 December 2014

Number of Signatures: 812 electronic signatures

Agenda Item 3.6

P-04-679 Remove the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

This petition was submitted by Jago Lewis, having collected 378 signatures.

Text of the Petition

At a time when young people are told that they must excel in core curriculum subjects such as English, Maths and Science the Welsh Baccalaureate takes up time that can be used to concentrate on these areas. The Welsh Baccalaureate is a pointless qualification that serves no real purpose to a student's future. The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification could easily be removed or replaced by a citizenship course. The removal of Welsh Baccalaureate could also help improve grades as it would allow students to focus on real GCSE's and A Levels and will relieve students of added pressure.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Islwyn
- South Wales East

Agenda Item 3.7

P-05-707 Teachers' Training Must Include Statutory Training in Autism

This petition was submitted by Tim Thomas, having collected 313 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that teachers' training must include statutory training in Autism.

One of the major concerns for people caring for people with Autism is the lack of understanding from teachers and others working in the education profession. While teaching in Wales is of high quality, improvements could be made in raising awareness of Autism, especially given how common it has become in society.

It is proposed, as part of the English Teacher's training review, Special Education Needs, including Autism will be a key part of teachers' training in England.

The review of the Initial Teacher Education in Wales must ensure that teachers get specific and statutory training in supporting people with Autism within the school environment.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Bridgend
- South Wales West

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-707
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00829/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

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2 June 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 23 May about the submission received from the National Autistic Society. I have noted the comments. You also ask if it is our intention for autism to be included as a requirement within the new programme of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from 2019.

The reconceptualised Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales: Teaching Tomorrows' Teachers: was published 15 March and makes clear the requirements for ITE in Wales:

- An increased role for schools
- A clearer role for universities
- Joint ownership of the ITE programme
- Structured opportunities to link school and university learning
- The centrality of research

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/initial-teacher-education-accreditation-criteria/?lang=en>

The ITE reforms will require future accredited providers of ITE to design and deliver courses supporting the new curriculum for Wales in joint ownership with schools; to develop future teachers who will meet the needs of **all** learners.

ITE courses which will be accredited under new arrangements from 2018 will be required to have carefully planned and integrated core studies, professional and pedagogical studies, school experience and subject studies. Core studies will draw explicitly on a range of theories, research and other intellectual resources to develop student teachers' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of pedagogical practice. The Welsh Government's newly developed ALN Transformation Programme which aims to transform expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional learning needs is one element of core studies.

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

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

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en>

Wales was the first country in the UK to publish an autism strategy in 2008. In November 2016, the Welsh Government published a new ASD-Strategic Action Plan and delivery plan. The new action plan has three main priority areas: assessment and diagnosis; meeting support needs; and awareness raising, information and training. Many of the improvements we are seeking will be delivered through our new £13m all age Integrated Autism Service which will be available across Wales by 2018.

We are continuing work to improve knowledge and awareness of autism amongst professional groups, including those working in education. As part of the ASD Strategy a bilingual package of resources was developed for primary schools called 'Learning with Autism' which raises awareness across the whole school community. The package includes awareness raising and training modules for teachers, learning support assistants, other support staff including governors, and pupils. It is our intention to continue to develop and roll out this programme, in collaboration with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), to improve support available to children and young people across early years, primary, secondary and further education sectors from 2017.

The WLGA is also working collaboratively with Cardiff University on the SIGNS schools project which is part of the Learning with Autism suite of resources. The SIGNS posters set out the key behaviours which could indicate autism and the research is investigating whether the SIGNS are having an impact on teachers and or parents in recognising the signs of autism in children.

Understanding ALN and SEN issues is a career-long development need for teachers, which starts in ITE and continues throughout their career. The Welsh Government has expectations for all teachers to undertake ongoing development, reflective practice and on-the-job research throughout their teaching careers. New professional standards for teaching and leadership, (recently consulted on) make clear the responsibility on teachers and leaders to ensure the needs of all learners are met. These responsibilities are career-long and are intended to be an integral part of the evidence required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

The scope of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Special Educational Needs (SEN) is wide and we do not want to exclude any groups by inadvertently omitting a specific form of ALN. However, we agree that teachers need to develop an understanding of these specific needs and an ability to recognise them in individual pupils. Providing each individual pupil with practical support strategies, in order for them to reach their potential, whatever their personal circumstances, is essential.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Agenda Item 3.8

P-05-748 School Buses for School Children

This petition was submitted by Lynne Chick, having collected 1,239 signatures – 502 on paper and 737 on-line.

Text of the Petition

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure every child's safety is put first when traveling to and from school.

We want designated school buses so children can travel safely to and from school, each with a seat and seat belt, with no child forced to travel on overcrowded public buses. Children's safety must come first.

Our children have a right to feel safe. Public buses can become over crowded. We have no clue who may board a public bus. Public buses are for public use not school transport. We are not asking for this service to be free, We don't want something for nothing, Just peace of mind that our children are safe when traveling to and from school. We teach our children about stranger danger yet we are expected to send them on a public bus full of strangers daily.

Having lost my daughter under the wheels of a public bus she had travelled home from school in, I feel it's only a matter of time before another parent lives my nightmare if something isn't done to ensure children have a safe means of transport to and from school.

Additional Information

A lot of people will remember my Daughter Louise and the horrific way she lost her life. For those that don't, Louise was 11 years old and had not long started high school. Because of the distance to get to school my children relied on using a public bus. On the 19th March 2001 Louise was due home from Connah's Quay High school at her normal time, only this day the bus was late. I started to worry as I headed out the door I was greeted by Louise's friends telling me she had been run over. I ran to the end of my street to find my beautiful Daughter clinging to life in the road, distressed school children all around. I couldn't understand what had happened. Over months it emerged the bus Louise had travelled home from had been over crowded, adults had stood talking to the driver, there was an alleged push, also a mention her bag had got caught in the door or wheel causing her to be

dragged under the bus she had just alighted from, it was proven the mirrors had blind spots that had been a contributing factor.

After the decision to close a local school, John Summers High School, a lot of parents have spoken to me with concerns for their Child's safety travelling on public buses to and from school. Points have been raised that totally alarm me, So I'm heading a campaign in my Daughter's name to make sure no Child is forced to use public transport buses as school transport.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Alyn and Deeside
- North Wales



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/01876/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

6 June 2017

Dear

Thank you for your further letter of 24 May regarding petition P-05-748 School Buses for School Children.

The statutory distances are set out in the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure"). Local authorities are responsible for the operational delivery of learner travel in their area and may choose to provide transport to those learners who live closer than two miles for primary school children or three miles for secondary school children. However, this is at each authority's discretion and local authorities may charge parents for such provision. The Measure provides the greatest eligibility across Great Britain. In England and Scotland learners are provided transport for pupils who live more than 2 miles (if they are under 8 years of age) and 3 miles (if they are over 8 years of age).

The Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance ("Operational Guidance") are subject to ongoing review as a matter of course. The Operational Guidance was last substantially reviewed in 2014 and children and young people were consulted as part of that process.

The Safety on Learner Transport (Wales) Measure 2011 gives Welsh Ministers powers to introduce specific safety standards for dedicated school transport. This includes the option to introduce specific driver training, CCTV, escorts and compulsory risk assessment. In October 2014, it became compulsory to have seat belts on dedicated home to school buses.

The safety, health and well-being of learners is kept under review, whether they travel by dedicated school transport, public transport, active travel or by private modes of transport. Local authorities are already equipped with powers to provide dedicated learner transport to all children. It should be noted that the costs to local authorities of doing so will be substantial, potentially doubling the cost of providing learner transport in Wales with many parents unable or unwilling to meet these costs if the cost was passed on to them. I would

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not wish to place unsustainable burdens on the local authorities' finances or on families in Wales.

Additionally, dedicated learner transport provision is not necessarily the most appropriate form of transport for all learners. Learners who are able to travel to education by walking or cycling benefit from the improved mental and physical well-being that flows from travelling actively. Learners, particularly older children, who travel by public transport are developing valuable life skills, such as being able to make a journey independently and behave appropriately in society. The current policy and legislation supports learners to gain these benefits, while maintaining a high level of regard for their safety, their well-being and their physical and educational needs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a stylized flourish above the letters.

Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

**P-05-748 School Buses for School Children - Correspondence from the
Petitioner to the Committee, 21.06.17**

Dear Sir/Madam.

In regards to my petition Louise Oldfield school bus campaign
#SchoolBusesForSchoolChildren to be considered in your meeting Tuesday
27th June, the last 2 meetings the petition was taken wrongly, either it hasn't
been read correctly or its been misunderstood, the chair of the meeting's
both times has said my petition is to bring down the 3 mile school transport
rule, I've never mentioned this in my petition or documents sent, the petition
is for dedicated school bus for School Children for them not to be expected
to travel on public transport buses. I'm very upset to think my petition has
not been read correctly even after I've clarified by email what my petition is
about. Our local council had no problem understand the outlining problems I
raised via my petition as it received there full backing in the notice of
motion. Could you please make sure those present at the meeting are made
fully aware of the details I've provide. My local MP Mark Tami had wrote to
you with the offer i present myself at your meeting with evidence to support
but I have heard nothing back from yourselves in regard to this. I have also
met with Carl Sargent AM about my campaign and petition, both are able to
explain to the Chair if any questions need answering I'm sure.

Kind regards

Lynne Chick

#SchoolBusesForSchoolChildren

Agenda Item 3.9

P-04-505 Eating Disorder Unit in Wales

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to inform the Welsh Government of the urgency and necessity to provide a specialist eating disorder unit in Wales.

Additional Information:

We would like to see a specialist eating disorder unit built in Wales to reduce the stress and disruption of traveling so far from family and friends by having to go to England to receive treatment. In 2007 the government acknowledged that there was no specialist treatment in Wales and that this needed to change, yet 5 years on we are still waiting for that change. I know from personal experience how hard it is to be in hospital so far away from home and believe that an eating disorder unit in Wales would make the process of treatment and recovery easier for Welsh sufferers.

Petition raised by: Keira Marlow

Date petition first considered by Committee: 8 October 2013

Number of signatures: 526



Ein cyf/Our ref VG/01288/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 June 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 24 May on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-04-505 – Eating Disorder Unit in Wales.

I am aware of the petition from Keira Marlow and I note her concerns in relation to this matter.

As with all other services, it is the responsibility of health boards to provide health services to meet the needs of their population according to their clinical need. The vast majority of people with eating disorders who require inpatient care would be treated locally within child and adolescent or adult mental health services where they can get the appropriate care and treatments which includes specialist care for eating disorders.

Whilst there are currently no single condition adult eating disorder units in Wales, within Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) both of the Welsh inpatient units have significant specialist experience of managing young people with eating disorders, as around 40% of inpatients are admitted for conditions relating to eating disorders.

In 2012, we made annual funding of £1 million available to develop specialist community eating disorder teams for adults. Since 2013, we have invested an additional £250,000 a year in CAMHS services, which has provided new specialist staff and funded additional training for both inpatient and community services. This ensures that most people can be treated early and prevent the disorder escalating and requiring specialist inpatient care. It also ensures on the rare occasions when people do need to leave Wales for treatment they have the support they need to allow a speedier return.

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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.

A review of inpatient eating disorder provision in Wales undertaken by Cwm Taf University Health Board on behalf of the Welsh Government in 2015 concluded there was no strong case for development of dedicated eating disorder provision at this time and given the investment in both adult and children's provision in recent years.

It may also be useful for the Committee to know that the Welsh Government's 2017-18 budget includes proposals to increase funding for eating disorder services in Wales by an additional £500,000. We are currently in the process of discussing with health boards how best to use this funding to benefit people with eating disorders.

In relation to the results of the formal review of the Eating Disorders Framework, an update of the evidence underpinning the Framework was undertaken by Public Health Wales in 2016. Our Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2016-19 includes a commitment to consider the need to review the *Eating Disorders Framework* following publication of NICE Guidance on Recognition and Treatment of Eating Disorders by March 2018. The NICE guidance was published in May 2017 and we will consider the need now to review the Framework.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd, Llesiant a Chwaraeon
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport

P-04-532 Improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Health Boards implement the investment proposed by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network Vision Document for improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales.

Additional Information:

The Welsh Neuromuscular Network is recommending the following priority developments: 1. Increase in Family Care Advisors and support. 2. Specialist adult neuromuscular physiotherapists. 3. Appointment of consultant in adult neuromuscular disease. 4. Increase in clinical psychology. 5. An equipment budget to enable minor purchases and lease arrangements.

Petition raised by: Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

Date Petition first considered by Committee: 4 February 2014

**P-04-532 Improving Specialised Neuromuscular Services in Wales –
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 07.06.17**

Dear Kayleigh,

Thanks for your email.

We welcome the responses from the Cabinet Secretary and representatives of the Health Boards, and details on existing provision and governance.

To ensure the most effective use of the resources available, there needs to be increased co-ordination on several levels:

- How Health Boards can work with the Welsh Neuromuscular Network to address capacity and succession planning
- Ensuring outreach clinics are adequately co-ordinated and supported by the Health Boards
- How Neuromuscular Network co-ordination can be best supported, which follows good practice in Neuromuscular Networks such as the South West Neuromuscular Operational Delivery Network and Scottish Muscle Network

For the next Petitions Committee meeting, would there be opportunity for us to provide an oral update, perhaps alongside a representative or two from the Welsh Neuromuscular Network?

Regards,

Jonathan

Jonathan Kingsley

Parliamentary and Policy Manager

Muscular Dystrophy UK, 61A Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BU

Agenda Item 3.11

P-05-720 Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council Petition for the Installation of Fibre Optic Broadband

This petition was submitted by Cllr James Campell, having collected 166 paper signatures.

Text of the Petition

We, the residents of Penderyn have signed the below petition to express our desire that Fibre Optic Broadband be installed in our village. The use of this service will transform our community, enhancing us the users in our social use of the internet as well as those who work within the village either in local business or those who work from home.

Assembly Constituency and Region:

Cynon Valley

South Wales Central

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Sgiliau a Gwyddoniaeth
Minister for Skills and Science



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00524/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

5 May 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 24 May regarding the request for an update on the provision of fibre optic broadband to Hirwaun and Penderyn from the Petitions Committee.

As I have highlighted in my previous correspondence on superfast broadband provision to the area, it is impossible to provide specific roll-out timescales to residential and business premises without specific postal addresses. Premises within any given area can potentially see different types of technology used to facilitate superfast broadband and, subsequently different scheduled completion dates.

However officials have checked several random addresses in Hirwaun and Penderyn and can confirm that fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) technology has already been rolled out to many properties, delivering speeds ranging between 30Mbps and 70Mbps, with fibre to the cabinet (FTTP) to be completed by mid to late June.

Constituents living within Hirwaun and Penderyn wishing to receive the very latest position on roll-out to their individual properties can obtain this information by calling our First Point of Contact Centre on 0300 0604400 or by e-mailing customerhelp@wales.gsi.gov.uk with their full postal address.

Yours sincerely

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Sgiliau a Gwyddoniaeth
Minister for Skills and Science

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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.

Agenda Item 3.12

P-05-725 Widen the A470 from Pontypridd to Coryton to 3 Lanes.

This petition was submitted by Geraint Williams, which collected 130 signatures.

Text of the Petition

We call for the Welsh Assembly to invest into one of the major artery roads into the capital by widening the existing dual carriageway into a 3 three lane road from Pontypridd to Coryton interchange.

The existing road suffers with high levels of congestion on weekday mornings and evenings which is causing misery for motorists travelling to/from the Valleys to the the city. It is believed this is a key limiting factor effecting the prosperity of the people and businesses of Cardiff, as well as the Rhondda, Caerphilly, Merthyr and Rhymney Valleys who rely on good road links with the M4 and the city.

From Pontypridd southbound the road is particularly congested due to several factors which include the build up of traffic queueing to join on to the M4 at Coryton and the large number of cars joining existing traffic from Merthyr and Aberdare at Pontypridd, Upper Boat, Nantgarw and Tongwynlise, all bringing traffic from the Rhondda and Caerphilly Valleys meaning the road struggles to cope.

From Coryton Northbound the road is slightly better, however the high volume of joining traffic from the M4 causes confusion and hesitation for road users at Coryton. The road then continues to be congested and slow until it reaches Pontypridd until lots of traffic have taken exits at various slip roads. When slip roads themselves are congested (such as at Nantgarw and Upperboat) the flow of traffic is exceptionally slow.

While no data is available at present it can be hypothesised that the financial cost benefit ratio of this investment in the regions' infrastructure is positive and we hope at the very least the government consider the proposal seriously.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
- South Wales East

P-05-742 Stop Forsythia Closing!

This petition was submitted by Forsythia Youth Centre, having collected 74 signatures. The petition has also collected 533 signatures on an alternative e-petition website.

Text of the Petition

Forsythia Youth Centre is at risk of closing due to the uncertainty surrounding Welsh Government's Communities First funding. Forsythia Youth Centre is a FREE access youth provision which is open: –

- 4 nights a week for 51 weeks of the year;
- Open during the day and the evenings throughout school holidays;
- Open on the weekend if completing project work.

Without fail, Forsythia has a minimum of 50 young people aged 11–20 from across Gurnos, Galon Uchaf, Pant, Dowlais and Penydarren, attending every night. Without Forsythia Youth Centre, young people would not have a safe place to access within their community and they would not have anywhere else to go due to a lack of other provision aimed at young people.

Forsythia Youth Centre offers young people the opportunity to take part in youth projects, such as 'Commit to Quit' with Ash Wales, Erasmus+ project on 'Attitudes and Values of Youth Work', and the 'Agenda Project' with Cardiff University. Young people are also provided the opportunity to access organisations such as Drug Aid, Sexual Health projects, Smoking Cessation, Mental Health and Confidence Building, Skills and Qualifications and receive in house support from qualified youth workers.

Young people and the workers are very concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the Communities First funding, as without this funding, Forsythia will have to close down.

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that potential changes to the Communities First programme do not cause the closure of Forsythia Youth Centre.

Additional Information

1. The young people involved with Forsythia Youth Centre have been part of a campaign to improve community safety, which resulted in having a zebra crossing installed outside of the Youth Centre, lighting installed on the hospital pathways and the dangerous subway closed which was always full of drug paraphernalia.
2. The young people are involved with going into local schools and Merthyr Tydfil College to deliver peer education on Smoking Cessation.
3. The young people of Forsythia have been involved with the National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee during the Forth Assembly, where young people took part in a focus group meeting with Assembly Committee Members on the new Psychoactive Substances Inquiry.
4. The Forsythia Youth Centre has won 18 awards over the past 13 years both locally, nationally and internationally.
5. Young people at Forsythia have collected 533 signatures using change.org to support this petition.

Assembly Constituency and Region.

- Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
- South Wales East

Alun Davies AC/AM
Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref ARD/00367/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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12 June 2017

Wun Mike

Thank you for your letter of 22 May concerning the petition from the Forsythia Youth Centre (FYC), Merthyr Tydfil and specifically asking if there is a route to supporting projects like FYC through youth work following the closure of Communities First.

I am aware of the good work that has been carried out at the centre and the support being provided to the young people.

At present there are no funding streams available directly from the Welsh Government for local organisations. Funding for youth work provision is currently allocated to local authorities through our Youth Support Grant and to the voluntary sector through our National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant.

Lead Delivery Bodies are responsible for deciding on what is funded during the transition year following the closure of Communities First and through the legacy fund. I would encourage FYC to keep in contact with the Lead Delivery Body in Merthyr as they are key in any decisions being made at a local level and should be discussing any changes going

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forward with their cluster staff and partners. Details of the Lead Delivery Bodies can be found at <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitiesfirst/clusters/?lang=en>

Yours
Alun

Alun Davies AC/AM

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language



NORTH MERTHYR CLUSTER COMMUNITIES FIRST PROGRAMME

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3Gs Development Trust Response to the 'Stop Forsythia Closing' Petition

(P-05-742)

I write in response to your letter dated 22nd May 2017.

Firstly I think it may be useful to clarify the position of the 3Gs Development Trust with regard to the above Petition.

The opening statement in the letter says that 'The National Assembly for Wales's Petitions Committee has been considering the following petition from the 'Forsythia Youth Centre'.

The 3Gs Development Trust would respectfully like to inform the Committee that although it is responsible for the Forsythia Youth Centre and the Youth Workers therein, the Trust did not sanction the petition, or was even aware of its existence until receipt of your letter. Therefore, the irony is not lost with the Trust's Board of Directors in having to respond to the National Assembly on a matter connected directly to a Welsh Government decision to end the Communities First Programme.

The Forsythia Youth Centre is one of many exceptional projects that the 3Gs Development Trust has been delivering in the local community supported through the Communities First Programme. Each project is of value to The Trust, and even more so to local people of all ages and backgrounds that rely on the continuation of such projects. You may have seen recent media coverage of just one of these projects, the '3Gs Men's Project', which has been awarded the 'Community Group of the Year' Award at the recent 'National Inspire Awards' Ceremony in Cardiff. The 3Gs has a history of such successes.

The first impact of the Welsh Government's decision to phase-out the Communities First Programme took place on the 1st June when 17 of the 3Gs Development Trust's Communities First Staff (out of a total of 20 CF Staff) were made redundant. With much reduced resources, the Trust's Board of Directors have also had to make very difficult decisions on which remaining priorities and projects should be supported through this final year of the Communities First Programme.

However, the Trust's Board have agreed that the focus of the remaining resources be allocated to **children and young people (including immediate families) projects**. Whilst the Trust cannot guarantee that any project will not be negatively impacted upon by the Welsh Government's decision to end Communities First, the Trust has agreed that a significant amount of these remaining resources will be allocated to the **continuation of the Forsythia Youth Centre**.

In arriving at these decisions the 3Gs Development Trust has worked very closely with Merthyr Tydfil County Council who, in their role of Local Delivery Body, has agreed these priorities and projects in our area for 2017-18.

In conclusion, the 3Gs Development Trust would respectfully ask the Petitions Committee to acknowledge that very many excellent projects will now cease over the coming weeks, leaving many people and groups behind. The fall-out from this will involve a lot of anger, frustration and desperation within the community, and which will present itself at 'ground-level'.

It is the 3Gs Development Trust that will be focal point for this - not Government.

Regards

Aeronwen Sneddon

Chairperson

3Gs Development Trust

Communities First North Cluster July 17 – April 18

Forsythia Ready for Work Programme	Integrate with Work Clubs	July '17 – March '18.
Transition Into employment	Now available through Inspire to Achieve/Work borough wide	April 2020
CAB Financial Capability 1:2:1 Advice Service and Managing your Money	Strategic programmes funded separately by WG	April 2018
Forsythia Physical Activity Programme	'Will be brought together to form multi activity delivery around young people's personal and social, emotional and educational development'	July '17 – March '18.
Forsythia Reducing Risks Programme		July '17 – March '18.
Engine House Physical Activity Programme Encouraging Healthy Eating Programme. Reducing Risky Behaviour Programme Youth Mental Wellbeing Programme	'Will be brought together to form multi activity delivery around young people's personal and social, emotional and educational development'	July '17 – March '18.
Street Games (door step sports)	Strategic programmes funded separately by WG	April 18



Civic Centre, Castle Street,
Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN

Canolfan Ddinesig, Stryd y Castell,
Merthyr Tudful, CF47 8AN

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Croesawn alwadau yn y Gymraeg
We welcome calls in Welsh

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi.
Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay.
Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.

Mike Hedges AM
Chair of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dyddiad/Date: 23rd May 2017

Ein Cyf./Our Ref.: CE/GC/CH/HJ
Eich Cyf./Your Ref.:

Gofynnwch am/Please ask for: Chris Hole
Llinell Uniongyrchol/Direct Line: 01685 724601
e-bost/email: chris.hole@merthyr.gov.uk

Dear Mr Hedges

FORSYTHIA YOUTH CLUB - 3G'S DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the concerns about the future of Forsythia Youth Centre in the current Communities First North Cluster of Merthyr Tydfil. Within Merthyr Tydfil the Communities First programme is delivered by third sector organisations who have worked in partnership with the Local Authority as the nominated Lead Delivery Body. In the case of the North Cluster and the Forsythia Youth Centre this would be the 3G's Development Trust.

As I am sure you will be aware the current Communities First programme is facing a significant period of change and uncertainty since the decision to end the programme was announced by Welsh Government. As the Lead Delivery Body and in line with the Welsh Government guidance we have been supporting our third sector colleagues to plan for and undertake this transition year, building towards the full closure of the Communities First programme.

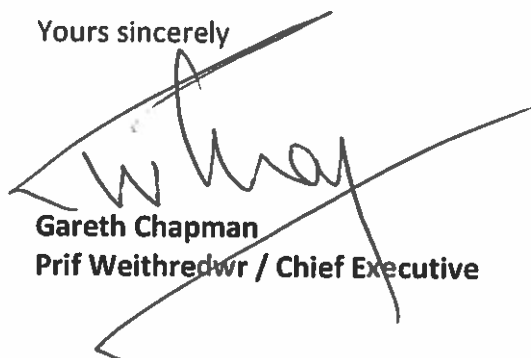
In order to provide organisations including the 3G's Development Trust with the time to both plan the way forward and manage their Human Resource responsibilities, a full programme has been maintained through April – June. This will then mean however a significant reduction in Community First services across the North cluster area from July onwards before a full closure at the end of the financial year. It is unavoidable however that there is going to be concern across the communities as organisations have to undertake consultation and go through redundancy processes with their entire workforce.

Gareth Chapman CSTJ., DL., LL.M., MBA., CMgr., DipLG., CCMI., Solicitor
Chief Executive/Prif Weithredwr

In line with the Welsh Government guidance the 3G's Development Trust has agreed draft priorities for funding for the July – April period with the local authority and these are focused on maintaining services to children and young people. These priorities will continue to meet the needs of the community and ensure an effective element of preventative work at a universal level remains in the community throughout the financial year of 2017/18. These services will contribute to the Local Authority's Wellbeing priorities and provide an important part of the Local Authority's approach to mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as outlined in the Young People's section in the Welsh Government guidance on Families First.

If we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact Chris Hole our Head of Community Wellbeing on the telephone number outlined above.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Chapman
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive

P-05-742 Stop Forsythia Closing – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 20.06.17

Hi All

On behalf of our young people I would like to say a big thank you to the petitions Committee for raising the issue around Communities 1st and the impact on our young people and the communities that we serve.

Just to update you all, we do not know the future of Forsythia as yet. Myself and another youth worker Catherine Saunders (along with 16 other community workers from the 3G's Development Trust) have been made redundant and will be finishing our roles on 30th June.

A saving grace is that the 3Gs Development Trust are retaining 2.5 posts and these posts have been allocated to youth work posts. The three youth workers are currently based at Forsythia and have all come through the project as volunteers, they are an excellent team and are established and respected within the community.

I have a heavy heart leaving the project as I see all the young people and workers as my extended family. I am really proud of this community and all that it has achieved and I truly believe that given your continued support the legacy will carry on.

Thank you again for supporting and listening to our young people.

Kind regards

Geraldine

Geraldine Maddison

Mike Hedges AM
Chair Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff, CF99 1NA

12 June 2017

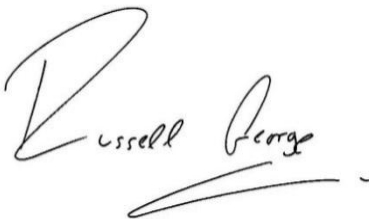
Dear Mike,

Petitions currently under consideration by the Petitions Committee

Thank you for your letter dated 25 May regarding petitions currently under consideration by the petitions committee. The EIS Committee noted the letter at our meeting on 7 June 2017.

When we look at our future work programme later this term, we will consider whether there are themes emerging from the petitions which could inform a future inquiry.

Yours Sincerely,



Russell George AM

Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee



Petitions Committee

15 June 2017

Dear Chair

Scrutiny of the draft Budget

I am writing following the Business Committee's consideration of their draft report on changes to Standing Orders in relation to scrutiny of the draft Budget, prior to the Standing Order changes and the Budget Process Protocol being considered in Plenary next week.

The changes to the Budget process are the culmination of a piece of work started by the Finance Committee in the Fourth Assembly; the devolution of fiscal powers in the Wales Act 2014 have meant that the Assembly's scrutiny now has to consider not just Welsh Government spending plans, but how these plans will be financed, through taxation and borrowing.

The main changes which are being proposed are that the budget scrutiny becomes a two stage process, whereby the higher level information which would be scrutinised by the Finance Committee is published prior to the detail needed by the policy committees, and more time is allowed for scrutiny. Specifically, it is hoped this additional time will allow the policy committees to undertake more detailed scrutiny of the spending in your portfolios, and you will no longer be required to report to the Finance Committee, you are able to report in your own right should you so wish.



I have requested a discussion on these changes at the next Chairs' forum, to enable us to talk through the changes in more detail and we can consider how:

- the Committee scrutiny will work in practice,
- the Finance Committee can maintain an oversight role,
- we can work together to maximise public engagement,
- any training and development needs for committees can be met

Prior to consideration in Plenary the [proposed changes to Standing Orders have been tabled](#), as has the [revised protocol](#).

Should you have any queries on this please do not hesitate to let me know, and I look forward to discussing these changes further at the Chairs' Forum meeting on 12 July 2017.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Thomas'.

Simon Thomas AM

Chair of the Finance Committee



Agenda Item 5

P-04-628 Access to BSL for All

Petition wording

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.

Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.

Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

Organisation: Deffo!

Lead petitioner: Cathie Robins-Talbot

First considered by the Committee:

Number of signatures: 502 online signatures. 660 paper signatures . total
=1162 signatures

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