

Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Dawn Bowden MS

Minister for Social Care

18 July 2024

Reducing the Criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults in Wales: A Practical Toolkit for Professionals & funding for Hillside Secure Children's Home

Dear Jane and Dawn,

As you know, we are currently gathering evidence as part of our inquiry 'children and young people on the margins'. The inquiry is focusing on missing children and criminalised children and young people. More detail about our inquiry, including its terms of reference, can be found on [our web pages](#).

The Missing People toolkit

On Thursday 27 June I attended a meeting of the [Missing the Point](#) Steering Group, hosted by NYAS Cymru. During the meeting we spoke about the [Missing People toolkit](#), which was funded by the 4Cs, supported by Welsh Government, and jointly developed with Llamau and decriminalisation expert Claire Sands. The toolkit offers multi-agency professionals practical tools, resources and good practice examples to reduce criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults. I heard from a young person in care, her foster carer and different professionals around the table that the toolkit was an excellent resource.

It was very positive to hear that the Welsh Government has supported the development of the toolkit. But I was surprised to hear concerns from the Steering Group that the future of the toolkit is uncertain because the Welsh Government has not committed to provide a relatively small amount of annual funding to maintain it going forward.



I would be grateful for your assessment of what the toolkit has delivered to date and for an outline of what plans the Welsh Government has, if any, to provide recurrent funding in future.

Funding for Hillside Secure Children's Home

On Wednesday 10 July, we visited Hillside Secure Children's Home in Neath. As you will know, the children's home is generally funded by local authorities (in the case of children placed in the home under a secure accommodation order) and by the Youth Custody Service (YSC) (in the case of children in custody or sentenced to youth detention). Currently, more children at the home have been admitted on welfare grounds by the local authority than by the Youth Custody Service.

We heard that the UK Government has made significant investments to maintain capacity and expand provision in secure children's homes in England. Staff explained that secure children's homes in England receive commissioned provision from NHS England and the Department for Education *in addition to* any provision provided by the secure home itself to provide health and education services to children at the home. We were told that Hillside does not receive equivalent additional provision, and has to pay for health services from NHS Wales and education services from the local authority out of its own budget. We were told that this means that there are more financial resources available per child for secure children's homes in England than there are for children at Hillside.

We are concerned that it appears that vulnerable children attending Hillside – whether placed by a local authority or by the YSC - are financially disadvantaged compared to children who are placed in English secure children's homes.

Please could you:

- clarify the funding arrangements for Hillside Secure Children's Home (both revenue and capital), including in relation to funding for education and health services for children at the home;
- set out the relevant legislative provisions from which those funding arrangements originate; and
- set out your understanding of the differences in the funding and commissioning processes between Hillside secure children's home and equivalent homes in England and the reasons for that difference?

I would appreciate a response to this letter no later than Friday 30 August 2024.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.