

# Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Children's Commissioner for Wales

## Sally Holland

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By e-mail only

To: Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Welsh Government

22 February 2018

Dear Kirsty,

**Re: Whole-school approach to protecting and promoting learner well-being**

I write in relation to the issue of coordination between the Together for Children and Young People (T4CYP) Programme and education reforms within the National Mission, with the objective of securing a rights-based approach for education in Wales.

I was disappointed to hear your comments to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in response to Llyr Gruffydd AM on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February, where he had asked a question raising my concerns about joint working between T4CYP and education reform. In that committee session you said:

*'Since her evidence to your committee Vaughan and myself have met with the Children's Commissioner and I asked...to be honest, being blunt...I asked her to give some specific examples of where she thought that was the case and actually very specific examples weren't forthcoming. Where there is exact evidence I will act on that...but I think we were able to give the Children's Commissioner a level of assurance about the nature of the work that was going on as a result of that meeting...which was subsequent to the evidence that she gave'.*

I stated in our meeting on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January that in a recent T4CYP ERG meeting, members had been unable to identify where the cross governmental work on a whole school approach to promoting and supporting children's well-being was being taken forward. I had observed that there were a number of programmes operating across government, including the ACEs hub, T4CYP and the educational reform process whose aims include enhancing children's well-being support in schools and was concerned that these were working largely in parallel.

Following this meeting, in your joint letter with Vaughan Gething AM, dated Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February, you acknowledged that gaps existed 'in the aims of the curriculum reform work and T4CYP early learning and prevention work-stream'. I attach a copy of this letter for ease of reference.

I would like to emphasise that my motivation for writing to you on this topic is that I believe we have a unique opportunity here in Wales to embed a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being into the current education reforms. Joined-up working between the T4CYP Programme and the education reform agenda is essential to this objective.

I realise the programme of curriculum reform can be argued to be a separate agenda to the provision of mental health support through T4CYP. I maintain there are key opportunities in developing the new Areas of Learning and Experience to develop children's resilience and skills that protect and support their own well-being. Additionally, what children learn *in* the classroom should be reflected *across* the wider learning environment in schools. Schools should be used as important hubs to support learner well-being and are well

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positioned to improve collaboration and join-up between wider support services for children and young people.

One of the High Impact Change Areas of the T4CYP Resilience and Early Intervention Work Stream is the 'development of a framework to link the work of the T4CYP with that of educational reform', I would like reassurances that the join-up of support services is being considered as part of your wider education reforms and some information as to how this is being achieved. I would also be grateful for an update on what progress has been made since the Resilience and Early Intervention Work Stream group met in November, particularly in relation to links with the education reform programme.

Yours sincerely,



Sally Holland  
Children's Commissioner for Wales

CC: Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Welsh Government  
Lynne Neagle AM, Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee, Welsh Government

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Vaughan Gething AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau  
Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref DC/VG/2620/17

Sally Holland  
Children's Commissioner for Wales  
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5 February 2018

Dear Sally,

We were pleased to meet you and your officials on 17 January to discuss emotional and mental health in schools, and elective home education and safeguarding.

We hope the meeting clarified our intentions in this area and laid to rest any concerns you had over how the various agendas and work-streams are coordinating. In this respect we noted the following outcomes and actions arising from the meeting.

You were concerned around gaps and overlaps in the aims of the curriculum reform work and the Together for Children and Young People Programme (TfCYP) early learning and prevention work-stream, in particular around schools being developed as multidisciplinary sites for promoting emotional and mental health. In response we noted that there are indeed some gaps. These have arisen for a variety of reasons; including the fact the early learning and prevention work-stream had experienced a hiatus for a period during 2017 whilst changes were made to its terms of reference and membership. However, the new group met in November 2017, with representation from both Education and Health, we hope that activity will now progress at pace.

We also noted that there is much common ground in relation to our wider work in schools and our curriculum reform, though there are also subtle differences. The former is trying to influence the school environment to develop a holistic institution where positive emotional wellbeing and resilience is promoted as a whole school approach, one of the aims of our

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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.

CAMHS/schools pilots. The latter is focused on developing healthy, confident individuals in the context of individual learning and education with the intention of equipping our young people for the world they will enter on completion of their education.

Specifically in relation to our CAMHS/schools pilots we noted the evaluation will inform if and how we roll-out activity more widely on completion of the pilots in 2020. The intention of running three pilots is to test a range of delivery models to see what does and does not work, operating within overarching principles which enables comparison across the pilot areas. In this respect we discussed how your office could help inform the evaluation through engagement with young people and that this was something our officials could pursue with their counterparts in your office.

You also raised the issue of referral routes into CAMHS and noted that some health boards accept referrals from schools/school counsellors directly, whereas others do not, directing the individual first to their GP. It was noted that we would be concerned if this was the case and you were asked to provide further information, which we note has now been received by the Cabinet Secretary for Health's private office. The Specialist CAMHS Framework for Improvement includes details of those bodies/individuals which can refer to specialist CAMHS and includes schools and a range of others, aside from GPs, as eligible referrers. All health boards should be working in line with the Framework. Your letter has been passed to Health Department officials who will look into this matter and we will write to you formally with a response in due course.


In relation to Elective Home Education it was noted that I (Cabinet Secretary for Education) intended to make an oral statement to the National Assembly on 30 January outlining my approach to use existing legislation to require local authorities by way of regulation to establish a database of children, in order to identify children not on a school roll, not in EOTAS and not receiving a suitable education. To support local authorities in the operation of the database, and in arrangements to assess the suitability of education provided to children on the database, I will issue statutory guidance to local authorities. Your support for this agenda is welcomed and you agreed to work with me and my officials to develop consistent messages. In this respect, where appropriate, we will share embargoed documents on a confidential basis to support the delivery of consistent communications.

We hope you found the meeting useful and we look forward to meeting you again in the future.

Yours sincerely



**Vaughan Gething AC/AM**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a  
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Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social  
Services



**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**  
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