



National Assembly’s Finance Committee: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget 2019-20

Contribution by ADSS Cymru

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General Comment

The Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS Cymru) is the professional and strategic leadership organisation for social services in Wales and is composed of statutory Directors of Social Services and the Heads of Service who support them in delivering social services responsibilities and accountabilities; a group of more than 80 social services leaders across the 22 local authorities in Wales.

As the national leadership organisation for social services in Wales, the role of ADSS Cymru is to represent the collective, authoritative voice of Directors of Social Services, Heads of Adult Services, Children’s Services and Business Services, together with professionals who support vulnerable children and adults, their families and communities, on a range of national and regional issues of social care policy, practice and resourcing. It is the only national body that can articulate the view of those professionals who lead our social care services.

As a member-led organisation, it is uniquely placed as the professional and strategic leadership organisation for social services in Wales, to lead on national service development initiatives to ensure a consistent efficient and high standard of delivery for people who access care services across Wales.

ADSS Cymru is committed to using the wealth of its members’ experience and expertise, working in partnership with other agencies, to influence important decisions around social care to the benefit of the people it supports and the people who work within care services.

Therefore, ADSS Cymru welcomes the opportunity to set out some of the financial pressures and concerns that our members have ahead of the Committee’s scrutiny work on the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget for 2019-20.

Impact of the 2018-19 Budget

While the 2018-19 budget settlement was better than initially anticipated and the additional funding in respect of Nation Living Wage (NLW) and preventative services - Looked After Children and carers respite - were welcomed, Councils were still faced with identifying further budget reductions at a time when the demand and expectation for social services has increased considerably.

Spend on social services linked to demographic pressures and social care inflation continues, for many, to exceed an affordable budget allocation. There is now little flexibility within local authority social services budgets to respond to in-year financial pressures. So much so that some authorities have had to take recourse action through the use of contingency and reserve funding. This is clearly not a sustainable position going forward.

Within Adult Social Care, the impact of the 2018-19 budget allocation has been that local government social services departments' have continued to reduce costs wherever possible. However, most have seen little reduction in actual costs. Moreover, at this stage of the transformation and integration journey, new models of delivery are proving more costly for the local authorities at least in the short to medium term. Whilst citizens are clearly benefitting from a better offer, more aligned to their aspirations and well-being outcomes, the scale of the shift of funding from secondary health care services into resilient and well resourced community approaches (including those funded by local authorities) is not at sufficient pace or scale to see a significant amount of realised savings.

Expectations of the 2019-20 Budget and financial preparedness

As leaders in social care, our expectation is that more people will be supported in community settings moving forward, as opposed to hospitals and that those associated care costs are likely to fall, at least in part, to social care departments across local authorities.

Welsh Government must acknowledge this and must better recognise the real costs of social care inflation linked to things like the NLW, new regulatory requirements and increasing citizen expectations. It has to properly recognise too, that new models of care are very expensive to implement in the short term and that demand for core services continue to increase at least at this stage of the transformation journey. If the vision is genuinely to shift secondary health care spend to better community services, this cannot be done by simply increasing health spending in primary and community services; it needs to include significant increases in the allocation available to local authorities to maintain and preferable increase, spend on social care (albeit more preventative, asset and strengths based approaches).

That is why the allocation of consequential funds relating to the block grant are crucial.

In terms of preparedness, it is an extremely challenging picture looking forward. The impact of the consecutive years of 'austerity' has been that the perceived "easier" options such as reduction in management structures and back room services have already been implemented and any future efficiency can only be realised through the reduction of direct social care service provision.

For authorities to determining their medium term financial plans, factors such as children moving through to adult services requiring support, can be built into those plans and trend data can determine the level of need to a certain extent. However, regardless of any diligent financial modeling based on this data, there continues to be unexpected expenditure that cannot be factored in due to the unpredictability of levels of needs and, in particular, high cost placements for people who are unknown to social care previously.

Directors of Social Services are also indicating that a poor settlement in 2019-20 potentially puts at risk some of the successful transformation work that has been done to date. In delivering those new models, authorities would have planned to utilise those realised savings toward more enabling and preventative approaches. This would be undone as a result of short term cuts having to be implemented simply to get authorities across the line.

ADSS Cymru have recently produced, in collaboration with the Welsh Local Government Association, two position papers examining the pressures on both Adults and Children's Services. We have included them in Annex's 1 and 2 because they provide additional added data and commentary to underpin this written evidence.

Additional financial pressures in relation to the delivery of *A Healthier Wales*

The implementation of the *A Healthier Wales* strategy will require local authorities and local health boards to work in a more integrated way. Initially, this will require financial resources to support the transition and whilst an element of this has been built in using the Government's Transformation Fund over the 2 year period, financial pressures are likely to impact authorities when that funding period comes to an end and those services will be required to be mainstreamed; for example, the financial risk of recruiting permanent staff will remain with the partners post Transformation Fund. To date, transformational projects have managed to relieve some of the pressures within the health and social care system and prevented increased cost pressures but have not released significant levels of funding to reinvest in alternative service models. Moreover, whilst it is the Welsh Government's vision to see funding released from the acute to community settings, realistically, this is not going to be completed within the next two years; ADSS Cymru believes that this realisation is likely to be more like 5 years to show any impact.

Sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation

Social care is involved in developing the new models and supporting focus required to meet the needs of the population. However, social care needs proper funding to become properly sustainable. While one off funds help develop the models of care, they do not deal with the real underlying deficit in funding; offsetting future cost pressures does not pay the bills today. There is also an added anxiety that the future real costs of paying for care will necessarily escalate.

That is why ADSS Cymru is proactively working with Welsh Government, through the Delivering Transformation Grant work stream, to enable local authorities to develop more new integrated service models and most importantly, upscale them so that they work right across an authority area. ADSS Cymru can showcase genuinely integrated models of delivery, which operate seamlessly for the service user/patient. However, challenges between systems still exist, for example separate IT systems, separate terms and conditions, separate funding arrangements, free NHS provision vs charged social care, information governance etc. This piece of collaborated working will look to overcome some of those key challenges.

ADSS Cymru welcomed the announcement of the Transformational Fund for health and social care and it is working closely with its partners in local government and health, to identify how best we can utilise the funding available. There is, however, some concern in terms of the current time limited nature of the funding and how Councils will be able to sustain current and future service levels should the grant funding cease. There is a similar concern around the future of ICF funding, which we have already expressed publicly.

Whilst the £100m fund is significant, it is evident that from existing bids that to allow for more funding to be spent on the development of new models of care is going to take some time, if planned effectively. Moreover, the outcome and benefits that will flow will equally take some time to be realised as new service models become established. That is why there is some concern in terms of the long-term future of the Transformation Fund. In reality, given the scale of developments, the nature of its integration, the anticipated time to recruit and establish new working practices, the ability to 'base line' and evidence service improvements and outcomes, to limit the Fund within a 2 year timeframe is unrealistic. It currently remains unclear as to the timeframe of the 2 year fund i.e. is it limited to 2018-19 (year 1) and 2019-20 (year 2) as of September 2018, no proposals have been approved by Welsh Government.

Financial impact on regionalisation

The regionalisation agenda means that the local authorities are funding the regional activity relating to Part 9 of the Social Service and Well-being Act. While this initially came from Welsh Government via Delivering Transformation Grant funding, it is now part of the Revenue Support Grant. However, the more policy functions that are channelled regionally, the more funding will need to be put towards regional activity. Where this however, replaces current local services/functions, then that money can be released but to date, that is not the case. For example, there is a requirement for a regional commissioning function but this is on top of local commissioning functions. Also, for the pooling of budgets there will need to be regional officers to manage any regional pooled fund.

The financial impact has been variable dependent upon each service. However, on the whole, regionalisation of local authority functions has brought some financial economies of scale, in the main through streamlined management and support costs.

Investment in residential care services and domiciliary care services

Across Wales overall, there has been a reduction in the percentage of people requiring support from a placement in residential care, with the majority being maintained in the community. For the overwhelming majority, the focus should be on supporting people to remain well and safe in their own homes wherever viable, as this tends to be the preferred option for the service user. This has resulted in people with significantly more complex needs being supported in the community and in some cases it can be a more expensive option than more institutional forms of care. However, there is a need to maintain investment across the care continuum because if the system is to work to its optimum effect, those individuals who can only be safely cared for within more institutionalised forms of care and who have extremely complex needs, also require a range of additional care choices, whether in supported accommodation, residential, nursing or even more specialised settings. Meeting that level of complex need is very expensive irrespective of the setting.

All care sectors are advising local government and the NHS that their costs are increasing. These costs are recognised with growth being primarily with the NLW and other employee entitlements. This is considered likely to increase further as more staff require registration. This is at a time when the funding from Welsh Government to local government is reducing. The costs have been held to approx. 2.5% overall, however this position is difficult to sustain with increased arbitration regarding care fees.

Local authorities regularly undertake independent reviews of their care home fees to ensure that a fair fee model is in place. This review is undertaken in consultation with care home providers. Fees are adjusted to take account of any new or emerging cost pressures (e.g. NLW) and also to ensure financial sustainability for providers.

Fees are generally at a sustainable level if the disparity between the pay and conditions of social care staff contrasted with their health equivalents is accepted. However, even without rectifying this disparity, social care inflation is running at least at about 5% year on year. Recruitment and retention within the social care workforce is severely impacted by pay and conditions. This creates hidden additional costs to the system and we can reasonably hypothesise that it impacts on the extent to which citizens can realise their optimal outcomes.

In regard to domiciliary care, fees paid to care agencies are part of an agreed contract with annual inflationary uplifts agreed through consultation with care providers. Cost pressures are identified and the local authority in agreeing its fee levels, ensures that any such legitimate costs are supported (e.g. NLW).

In terms of the workforce, agency staff in some positions can be more cost effective than permanent staff. Unsecured funding such as the ICF and now the Transformation Grant, will result in increased agency usage in order to protect organisations from financial risk. There is progress regarding reducing the number of agency social work staff, however this fluctuates. Significant recruitment campaigns help but the unattractive pay and conditions of front line care makes this challenging. Until care staff are paid well for the work they do and society values that work more highly, this will remain demanding.

In terms of domiciliary care, feedback is being received by a number of local authorities from their independent providers that they are experiencing increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining care staff. A number of providers are reporting that people leaving the sector are doing so as they can achieve a comparative wage in the retail sector with less responsibility. Whilst there has been a shift in the providers' ability to recruit over time this position has been increasing problematic over the past 2 years. With recruitment and retention of staff to this sector being more problematic than that of residential care, it places additional financial and operational burden on providers, for example, workforce planning, training etc.

One of the significant cost factors facing Councils in 2019-20 is the increased costs linked to NLW. Whilst the additional funding received in 2018-19 settlement was welcomed, there is an ongoing pressure linked to any national increase in NLW rates, these are likely to be 4%+ and will have significant cost implications upon both internal staff costs and more specifically those costs of services contracted with the third & private sector.

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WLGA and ADSS Cymru Position Statement on Adult Services

Key Facts and Figures



In 2016-17 around 150,000 care and support services were provided to over 82,000 adults (aged 18+) by Welsh Councils. This included:

- Over 31,000 domiciliary care services provided
- About 18,000 care home placements
- Over 34,000 receiving equipment and / or adaptations



Every day:

- 210 assessments were carried out
- 62 care and support plans and support plans were put in place



9 assessments were carried out every hour by Welsh Councils



1 in 5 adults in Wales report feeling lonely or isolated



1 in 4 experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime



9 in 10 prisoners have a diagnosable mental health and / or substance misuse problem



75%
of carers in Wales are concerned about the impact of caring on their health over the next year



127%
increase in the number of people aged over 85 by 2039



56%
increase in the number of people in need of adult social care by 2035



22%
reduction in Council funding since 2010 impacting on a wide range of preventative services vital in supporting health and wellbeing



£1.2bn
the total amount spent on adult social care by Welsh local authorities each year



£2.2bn
the wider contribution of adult services to the Welsh economy

Adult social care is one of our most vital public services. It supports adults of all ages across a wide spectrum of need to live as independently as possible and protects people from harm in vulnerable situations. Over 150,000 care and support services were provided by adult social services in Wales last year, with over 70,000 assessments of care and support needs being undertaken. Over £1.2bn was spent on adult services by Welsh Councils, which equates to around a fifth of their total budget.

It is essential in its own right for these reasons alone. But it is also essential in other ways. It touches the lives of millions, whether that be people working in the sector, those who receive services, or their informal carers, friends and family. Its paid workforce is larger than that of the NHS. It is a vital connector to other public, private and voluntary sector services. And it contributes some £2.2 billion to our national economy, creating 127,000 jobs. In short, adult social care should be everyone's concern.

The overall state of local government funding

The state of funding for adult social care cannot be seen in isolation from the state of funding for local government overall. Since 2010 Council's core grant funding has reduced by 22% after adjusting for inflation. Fast forward to today and the current and future outlook for local government funding remains extremely challenging, with any cost pressures arising during this period having to be offset by further savings. Such pressures will include, but are certainly not limited to:

- ⇒ **general inflation**
- ⇒ **increases in demand for everyday services as the population grows and ages**
- ⇒ **increases in core costs, such as national insurance, the National Living Wage and pension contributions**



Taking account of the path of future funding and the full range of pressures facing councils in relation to future years compared to now, the WLGA estimates that local government will face over £800m of pressures over the next 5 years. This is essential context and explains, in part, why adult social care funding remains under such enormous pressure. As the savings available in other parts of the Council disappear, inevitably it is areas such as adult services and preventative services which have to offer a significant contribution to the council's full savings requirement to help tackle the overall funding gap.

Adult Social Care

Adult social care continues to help mitigate demand pressures on the NHS and is not simply about support at the 'back door'; councils work closely with the NHS to improve self-management of conditions, prevention, community support and information and advice, which are all services that stop people presenting at the 'front door' in the first place. However, demand for services is increasing, by 2035, the number of people aged over 65 will have increased by a third and the number aged over 85 will have doubled. Spending will have to grow at 4% every year on top of general inflation to meet these pressures. Whilst day-to-day spending on local authority-organised adult social services has remained broadly flat in real terms, spending per older person has fallen by nearly 13% in real terms over the last five years in Wales, inevitably leading to impacts on services for older vulnerable people. Spending per head would have to increase by at least £129 million (24%) (2016-17 prices) between 2015-16 and 2020-21 to return to the equivalent level of spending in 2009-10, which amounts to a 2.5% year-on-year increase for adult social care services.

Pressures due to social care continue to pose the most risk to council's financial sustainability in the medium to long term. The current funding arrangements will not cover the expected increases in cost and demand facing social services. Local government's spending pressures will total around £264m in 2019-20, which includes £102m of pressures for social services. These will have to be either fully absorbed by councils (or cuts made elsewhere). As with other service areas, the main inflationary drivers are increasingly workforce costs. In the next financial year, the additional resources required for pay deals, pension contributions and the National Living Wage come to £54m and demographic pressures will add another £49m. The cumulative pressure by 2021-22 is £358m.

This is at a time when the sector is experiencing an increasingly fragile provider market, with all the signs that the difficulties will increase. We know that the recruitment and retention of care workers, particularly in the domiciliary care sector, remains a challenge and that frontline roles within the care sector are generally perceived as low-status, low-skills jobs and this is reflected in the rates of pay, with most workers being paid at or around the National Minimum Wage. Low wages in turn impact directly on the ability to recruit and retain staff particularly in the context of other sectors, including retail, being able to offer higher pay. There is a real danger that if we don't invest time and resources in bringing order to the system and truly value our social care workforce now, costs across the health and social care system will rise significantly in the future.

Despite Councils best efforts to protect spend on adult services demand continues to outstrip supply, with difficult choices having to be made to ensure the sustainability of services. In recent years, adult social care spending has been kept under control through a mix of service savings, disproportionate reductions to other services, and looking at innovative and integrated ways of delivering services. It has meant that councils have clearly prioritised adult social care and support services for vulnerable people but this is inevitably and unavoidably to the detriment of

other local services. Every council will have made their own decisions in this process but it is safe to assume that the services that had to deal with deeper reductions to funding will have included services such as libraries, leisure, and bus services. This is clearly a false economy given these universal neighbourhood services are preventative in the widest sense and contribute to wellbeing.

Prevention and early intervention has been a key focus. But as councils strive to return balanced budgets each year, the reality on the ground is that funding reductions are making it harder for councils to manage the tension between prioritising statutory duties for those with the greatest needs on the one hand and investing in services and communities that prevent and reduce future demand on the other.

All recent efforts to support adult social care are welcomed, such as the additional £10m provided for social services to deal with winter pressures. And we do not want to downplay the significance of the additional investment and the relative protection provided by Welsh Government. It has, without question, gone some way to alleviating the significant pressures facing the care and support sector, but that simply means that the cuts have not been as deep as we have seen across the border. Social care funding is now at its absolute limit and along with the growing pressures and demand facing adult services the great progress that has been made in challenging circumstances is being threatened – the need to resolve the long-term future of care and support is now urgent, along with the need for more significant investment in the shorter term.

The Way Forward

Local government are committed to working with our colleagues in health and the Welsh Government in responding to the recommendations of the Parliamentary Review and taking forward a “revolution in health and social care” through ‘A Healthier Wales’. An integrated and joined up approach is viewed as the way that we will best be able to improve services and meet the increasing demands being placed on all public services in Wales. The present system is not a sustainable way forward and it impedes the ability of our committed workforce across social care and health to carry on caring for our residents to the same high standard. With the Welsh Government currently developing plans on how to spend its budget, the Government must seize the moment and demonstrate its own commitment to enabling councils and their partners to do what they do best: look after our local communities and our local residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable and have support needs.

Moving from the current system to one that is more sustainable and meets the needs of our ageing population requires a variety of responses. Undoubtedly without more funding for social care, many of the difficulties faced by the care sector will continue to grow and the impact will be felt by families. With better funding it is possible to build a wider spread of quality services and a sustainable care market – urgently needed in the short and longer term.

We are calling on the Welsh Government to:

1. Use the upcoming budget settlement to demonstrate their recognition of the context that adult social care is operating in and the challenges facing the system, including rising costs and the costs associated with supporting working age adults, not just older people by a significant uplift in funding levels. Along with recognising councils' efforts to date and the improvements those efforts have yielded; the value and core purpose of adult social care in helping people to live independently and supporting their wellbeing.
2. Avert a deepening of the crisis facing adult social care by closing the funding gap facing local government. This means adequate funding to address immediate demand pressures, particularly those facing the provider market. The recent announcement of consequential funding coming into Wales provides an opportunity to put additional funding into councils' baseline budgets so it can be counted on in future years enabling Welsh councils to plan with some surety over the next three years. Any additional funding needs to allow local authorities flexibility to best meet local demand and needs, focussed on improving outcomes for their citizens and communities.
3. Develop a balanced approach that does not give one part of the system primacy over the other in dealing with the pressures facing social care and health in the short and long-term, with health and social care treated with parity in the budget considerations, recognising that health and social care are equal partners in the aspiration of delivering one seamless health and social care system for Wales organised around the individual and their family.



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WLGA and ADSS Cymru Position Statement on Children's Services

Key Facts and Figures



There are about 630,000 children and young people living in Wales.

This includes:

- Nearly 16,000 children receiving care and support from Welsh Councils
- Just under 6,000 who are looked after by Welsh Councils

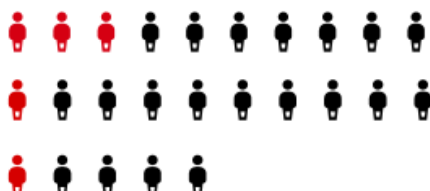


Every day last year:

- 78 children and families received advice or assistance from Councils
- 106 assessments were carried out
- 23 care and support plans were put in place



Every 4 hours a child or young person was brought into care in Wales last year



3 in 10 children in Wales are living in poverty

1 in 10 children in Wales will have a diagnosable mental health condition

Around 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse

15%

increase in children looked after since 2010, with a 5% increase on last year

149%

increase in the number of court applications to remove children into care over the last nine years

12%

increase in children on child protection register between 2010-16

22%

reduction in Council funding since 2010 impacting on a wide range of preventative services vital in supporting children and families

30%

real terms increase in expenditure on LAC services by LA's since 2010

£3,500

the average cost per week of placing a child in residential services

Nearly **16,000** children received care and support from local authorities in Wales last year. Just under **6,000** children were 'looked after' by local authorities, a figure that has increased by nearly a quarter over 10 years. Over the same period Council's expenditure on Children's Services has increased to meet the increasing demand, with a real term increase of 30% spend on Looked After Children's Services. This comes despite Council's core grant funding reducing by **22%** after adjusting for inflation. If you take schools out, core funding has fallen by **35%**.

Rapidly increasing and complex needs, along with constrained funding is placing significant pressure on children's social care services. Councils and social care staff have coped extremely well up to now despite the exceptional pressures, however this is not sustainable in the face of further budget cuts.

With a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of looked after children and support some of our most vulnerable in our communities, Councils have committed to providing as much resource as possible to safeguard and support children and their families continuing to deliver vital services. But this commitment leaves some challenging choices elsewhere and it is important that decision makers recognise the current situation and the impact that it is having.

Key Messages



- ⇒ **Over the last decade the number of children in the care system in Wales has increased significantly.** The reasons why children become looked after and their needs while in the care system are complex and multifactorial.
- ⇒ **Recent years have seen an increase in expenditure on Children's Services at a time when Councils overall budgets have been cut.** This demonstrates the commitment that has been made by local authorities to meet the demands being placed on services by the rising numbers of looked after children. However, this is becoming unsustainable, with most local authorities now anticipating significant overspends on their children's services.
- ⇒ **Services for the care and protection of vulnerable children are now, in many areas, being pushed to breaking point.** The huge financial pressures councils are under, coupled with the spike in demand for child protection support, mean that the limited money councils have available is increasingly being taken up with the provision of urgent help for children and families already at crisis point, leaving very little to invest in early intervention. Hence a spiral of uninterrupted and increasing need for services is driving a mounting complexity of challenges for the most vulnerable children.

Pressures on Children's Services

WLGA and ADSS Cymru have identified four key areas where significant pressures are being experienced in relation to children's services in Wales:

- 1) **External demands and complexities** The on-going introduction of welfare reforms and a decade of austerity has amplified the pressures on families. Increased public awareness and reporting of potential abuse, the impact of poverty and deprivation on families and a lack of funding to help families early on before problems escalate all contribute to this. There is an increased awareness and understanding of issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and an increase in the number of initiatives that are aimed at early identification and intervention such as the evidence based work in respect of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Flying Start and Families First.
- 2) **Placements** The increasing complexity of cases and the growing numbers of children coming into care are negatively impacting on both the availability of appropriate placements and the cost of placements. An ageing foster carer population and the increasing costs of providing residential care has a significant impact on the sector.
- 3) **Legislation and work with the Courts** The last few years have seen a substantial increase in the number of care applications that have been made, with a significant increase in the number of children subject to care proceedings. Increasing expectations from legal judgements create a challenging environment.
- 4) **Workforce** Child and family social work is challenged by high turnover and vacancy rates and a reliance on agency staff, with demand for permanent, experienced workers outstripping supply.



Urgent action is required to reduce the number of families relying on the children's social care system for support and so we are calling on Welsh Government to:

- ⇒ Urgently address the growing funding gap being seen in Children's Services and reinforce our shared commitment to improving the life chances of children and young people.
- ⇒ Use the recent announcement of additional consequential funding coming into Wales to identify new, non-ring-fenced money, that allows local authorities flexibility to best meet local demand and needs, focussed on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and helping to ensure that children who leave the looked after system have properly planned and supported exits so that they also achieve their outcomes. Recent funding made available for Children's Services from Welsh Government has only been for specific pieces of work and to support new initiatives rather than to be able to meet increasing demand and current pressures.
- ⇒ Establish a new Preventative Care Fund for Wales. There is a need for a strategy of investment focused upon achieving a coherent preventative approach to improving children's outcomes. A Preventative Care Fund, focussed throughout the life-course, would enable some double running of new investment in preventative services alongside 'business as usual' in the current system until savings are realised and reinvested back into the system. This would help to stem the decline of local preventative services and provide a way to make some significant investment into new and existing preventative services.
- ⇒ Ensure that the funding currently provided for children's mental health and wellbeing services is used to best effect. Supporting us in tackling mental health issues and building resilient, emotionally and mentally healthy children and young people and making this a national priority.

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