

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 12 June 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Naomi Stocks

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Public meeting

(09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Papers to note

(09.30)

2.1 Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement – Memorandum of Understanding Welsh Ministers and HM Prison and Probation Service

(Page 1)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee from the Cabinet Secretary for Education

2.2 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26

(Pages 2 – 4)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee to all Committee Chairs



2.3 Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform

(Pages 5 – 7)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Scrutiny of the First Minister to the First Minister

2.4 Implementation of education reforms

(Pages 8 – 11)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Education

2.5 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 12 – 14)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Interim Chief Executive of Colegau Cymru to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

2.6 HM Parc Prison

(Pages 15 – 16)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee

2.7 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 17 – 20)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Welsh Royal College Child Health Collaborative to the First Minister

2.8 Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill

(Page 21)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

2.9 Establishment and remits of committees

(Pages 22 – 24)

Attached Documents:

Letter to Committee Chairs from the Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

2.10 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 25 – 26)

Attached Documents:

Briefing note from the Institute of Physics

2.11 Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?

(Page 27)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice and the Minister for Mental Health and Early Years

2.12 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 28 – 30)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language from the National Chair of Cymdeithas yr Iaith

2.13 Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform

(Pages 31 – 37)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Scrutiny of the First Minister from the First Minister

- 3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and for the whole of the meeting on 19 June, 27 June and 10 July**
(09.30)

Private meeting

(09.30 – 12.30)

There will be a break during item 4, this will be at the discretion of the Chair at an appropriate time

- 4 Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare? – consideration of the draft report**

(09.30 – 12.30)

(Pages 38 – 242)

Attached Documents:

Draft Report

Agenda Item 2.1

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Sarah Murphy MS, Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru

8 May 2024

Memorandum of Understanding Welsh Ministers and HM Prison and Probation Service

In accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement, I am writing to notify you that a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) between Welsh Ministers and HM Prison and Probation Service](#) was published on 11th April 2024.

The MOU describes the working relationship between the Welsh Government and HM Prison and Probation Service. It sets out the general principles which underpin the Parties' shared commitment to reducing re-offending in Wales and the continued acknowledgement that learning and skills provision leading to sustained employment is one of the most effective means of reducing re-offending and combating crime. The MOU covers offender learning and skills within custody and sets out how offender learning is to be taken forward in Wales.

I have also copied this letter to the Children, Young People and Education Committee, the Equality and Social Justice Committee, and the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynne Neagle".

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Agenda Item 2.2

Y Pwyllgor Cyllid

Finance Committee

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

8 May 2024

Dear Committee Chairs,

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26: Engagement

At our meeting on 24 April 2024, the Finance Committee (the Committee) considered its programme of engagement for the forthcoming Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2025-26, ahead of the Committee's annual Plenary debate on spending priorities, provisionally scheduled for 17 July. I am writing to Chairs of subject committees to share our thinking. The Committee has agreed to undertake a number of engagement activities prior to the publication of the Draft Budget later this year. These include, a stakeholder event, focus groups held with the general public, and various other approaches to gather the views of young people.

Stakeholder Event: Carmarthen

This year's stakeholder event will take place at Canolfan S4C Yr Egin on Thursday 13 June. This will be an opportunity for the Committee to hear directly from interested organisations/individuals on the expected Draft Budget proposals, as well as their views on the Welsh Government's approach to setting the budget and prioritising resources. As cross-Committee engagement with stakeholders on the budget is crucial to effective scrutiny, I would like to invite Committee Chairs or a Member of your Committee to join the event. If Chairs or Members are interested in attending, please contact the clerking team seneddfinance@senedd.wales by 20 May.

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Citizen engagement focus groups with the Welsh public

On behalf of the Committee, the Senedd's Citizens Engagement Team will be holding a series of focus groups on the Draft Budget with the Welsh public. The team has undertaken similar exercises over the past few years and the aim of this work is to form a cross-sectional study to allow the Committee to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time. Participants will be sourced through similar partner organisations to cover the same demographics as last year, and groups will be organised to focus on particular policy areas. The Citizens Engagement Team will circulate the dates of sessions to all Committees, should any Members wish to participate. This will allow an opportunity for Members to hear first-hand from the citizens of Wales where spending should be prioritised.

Youth Engagement

In previous years, to further complement our engagement work, the Committee has held a workshop with Members of the Youth Parliament (WYP). As the WYP is currently not in session, the Committee will be engaging with young people by different means. There will be an opportunity for young people to provide their views at the Urdd National Eisteddfod, the National Eisteddfod and at the Royal Welsh Show. The Citizen Engagement Team is also organising a dedicated workshop for young people and will be inviting participants from Coleg y Cymoedd, the National Youth Advocacy Service and 'Voices' from Care Cymru. The Digital Communications Team will also be using interactive social media tools to encourage engagement, and we would appreciate if other Committees would use their own social media presence to promote this work.

Finance Committee Plenary Debate on the Welsh Government spending priorities

As mentioned above, the Committee intends to hold a Plenary debate on Wednesday 17 July on the Welsh Government's spending priorities for 2025-26. The outcomes of our engagement work will inform and feed into this debate, which will provide the best opportunity to influence the Welsh Government spending priorities before the Draft Budget is published later in the year. As ever, we would very much welcome the participation of Committee Chairs, as well as other Members, as part of this debate, to ensure that the Welsh Government's spending plans are informed by the views and priorities of Senedd Committees.

Approach to budget scrutiny

I will shortly be writing to Chairs, with regard to the Committee's approach to budget scrutiny, including information on the consultation and timetable once the Trefnydd has notified the Business Committee of the Draft Budget publication dates before the summer recess.

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

Yours sincerely,



Peredur Owen Griffiths
Chair, Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Agenda Item 2.3

**Y Pwyllgor Craffu ar
Waith y Prif Weinidog**

**Committee for the
Scrutiny of the First Minister**

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Vaughan Gething, First Minister
Via e-mail

Dyddiad | Date:

Pwnc | Subject: Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister meeting

Dear Vaughan

Thank you for attending the scrutiny of the First Minister Committee on 26 April 2024 and providing updates on some of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government commitments relating to care experienced children. It was a useful and informative session. It was also very positive to see the public gallery full of care experienced children and young people who are following the Senedd's scrutiny work in this area with interest.

We discussed with you during the meeting that the challenges of the corporate parent role are clear, as is their reach across the range of cabinet portfolios. A key concern, which you share, is the continuing rise in the numbers of children in care and what the evidence tells us about their long term outcomes. The Committee would therefore welcome some further information to aid our understanding about your future plans in respect of some of the particular challenges we discussed. These areas are set out in an annex to this letter.

To aid your preparation for the next meeting of the Committee, it is scheduled for 12 July 2024 in Carmarthenshire or the Carmarthen area and the theme will be Rural Communities.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS

Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Annex: Additional information on care experienced children

We would welcome some additional information on the following:

The rise in the numbers of children in care

What *additional steps* your government intends to take to safely reduce the number of children going into care, given existing investment and approaches have not yet reversed the increase.

The Welsh Government's role as the corporate parent and grandparent

The timescale for strengthening the Welsh Government's [Code of Practice for looked after and accommodated children](#) as it refers to corporate parenting. We would also welcome information on any additional steps the Welsh Government can take to support Kinship Carers in recognition of the important role they play.

Homelessness

An update on how the next iteration of the Welsh Government's [White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales](#) will address the needs of care experienced children, including care experienced birth parents. You will be aware that [Welsh Government data](#) shows that 315 care leavers were homeless in Wales in 2022-23, a significant rise since 2020-21. As you will also be aware, these figures refer to young people up to the age of 25 being actively supported by their local authority as care leavers at the time their homelessness was reported. We note that both the Welsh Government's [Expert Group Review](#) has made a specific recommendation and the Children, Young People and Education Committee has [said](#) that a "sixth category entitled to 'reasonable preference' should be created for people who are care experienced regardless of homelessness status, in order to avoid them entering the homeless system to access social housing". Can you confirm this will be taken forward?

Delivering the outcomes of strategies to support care experienced children

What steps your Government intends to take to strengthen the mechanisms to *deliver* existing strategies affecting care experienced children. For example the national target in the 2016 strategy, [Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after](#) was to raise the attainment of looked after 15 year-olds at Key Stage 4 of the Level 2 inclusive threshold from 17% in 2014 to 25% in 2016. Latest [published figures](#) from 2019 show the percentage remained at 17% at that time.

Children's social care workforce

What additional steps your Government will take to ensure there is a children's social care workforce that's fit for purpose and your expectations of the role of local authorities and Social Care Wales in this

regard. You will be aware that in 2022 there were 639 vacancies in children's social work teams across Wales and that in September 2023, 17.5% of children's services social workers were employed by an agency.

Agenda Item 2.4

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

**Children, Young People and
Education Committee**

Lynne Neagle MS

Cabinet Secretary for Education

10 May 2024

Follow-up from evidence session on 8 May 2024 - Inquiry into education reforms

Dear Lynne,

Thank you again for appearing before Committee on 8 May 2024 to discuss the implementation of the new curriculum and the ALN reforms. We welcomed your constructive and honest engagement with us.

Thank you for your commitment to respond to some additional questions from us in writing. Please see Annex A for a list of questions.

During private discussion following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to publish an interim report on its findings from this inquiry to date. We are hoping to publish this report as quickly as possible to give you every chance to reflect on its findings as you develop your response to the challenges facing the education sector in implementing these two critical reforms. With that in mind, I would be very grateful if you could respond to this letter within a shorter timescale than usual - by 7 June - so that our report can fully take your response into account.

I understand that short response timeframes can be challenging for you and for your officials. As always, if this request causes any undue difficulties please contact the Committee clerks, who can work with your officials to mitigate the pressures on your department while enabling the Committee to report as promptly as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

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Annex A: Questions for the Cabinet Secretary for Education following the scrutiny session on 8 May 2024

ALN

General

1. In terms of how decisions are made regarding whether an IDP is the responsibility of the local authority rather than the school, can you give an update on how many local authorities, as expected by the ALN Code, have published their set of principles giving the criteria on how they will take such decisions?

Data

2. What are the timelines associated with the work on data you alluded to during the meeting? Specifically, when do you hope to have identified the data that is currently not collected that you believe needs to be, and when do you hope that this data will become available to inform the implementation of the ALN system?

Post-16

3. The general position is that young people are entitled to two years of further education or training post-16 unless there are "reasonable needs for more". However, NatSpec, the umbrella organisation for specialist further education providers, report that there are many cases where young people with ALN are being denied funding to spend longer than two years in further education or training. What does this say about whether the new ALN system is genuinely an age 0-25 system as has been the message all along?

Funding

4. Could you clarify how much has been spent on supporting implementation of the new ALN system to date (prior to 2024-25)? (Your written paper cited £62m revenue and £40m capital as having been spent between 2020 and 2024.) Your paper also stated that £56 million has been allocated for supporting implementation in 2024-25. Why does the amount budgeted in 2024-25 seem considerably higher per annum than the cumulative figure over the three or four-year period 2020 to 2024? Are the figures comparative or does the 2024-25 figure include other ALN budgets such as post-16 that the 2020 to 2024 figure doesn't?

5. Please can you confirm whether each of the four DECLOs in post serve individual health boards (rather than being shared across all seven health boards)? If so, are you satisfied that the three health boards who haven't appointed DECLOs are in compliance with section 61 of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018?

New curriculum

6. Progression and assessment skills seems to be the aspect of Curriculum for Wales implementation that schools find most difficult. How conscious are you of that and are you considering providing more detailed guidance on this as Estyn have suggested might be necessary for some schools, despite what has been provided already?



Agenda Item 2.5

Senedd
Cardiff Bay
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13 May 2024

Dear Buffy Williams MS,

Re: ColegauCymru welcome letter and invitation to the Colleges Alliance meeting

Firstly, many congratulations on your election as the new Chair of the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee. We know you have been a dedicated member of the Committee over the years, and as a long-term friend of further education (FE) (you might recall meeting with us in 2022 and visiting the Coleg y Cymoedd campus), we are looking forward to continuing our positive working relationship in your new role as Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight ColegauCymru's latest thinking on some key issues. ColegauCymru is an education charity which promotes the public benefit of FE in Wales. We believe that all learners should have the right to world-class education, delivered in a safe, diverse and inclusive setting and within a sector which supports the wider community, employers and the economy. As part of our representative role, we convene the FE Principals' Forum, as well as various other networks which represent FE colleges and FE institutions (FEIs) in Wales. ColegauCymru also undertakes research, policy development, and provides practical support to FE colleges in Wales including operating mechanisms through which FE colleges negotiate with trade unions on pay and workforce matters. As you will be all too aware, we are navigating a turbulent time with acute pressure on public finances, multiple changes to the education infrastructure landscape and continuing to bear the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

From 1 August 2024, Wales will become the first country in the UK to pioneer a single overarching regulatory, oversight, and coordinating authority for all tertiary provision with the operational launch of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). This landmark piece of legislation introduces some of the most significant reforms to the architecture of our education system since devolution. The Welsh Government's Statement of Priorities rightly commits to putting learners at the heart of the system and we welcome the commitment to further strengthen parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes as well as the focus on clearer pathways for learners of all ages, including adult learners and apprentices. Whilst there is much to welcome, it is critical that CTER quickly gets to grip with the true scale of the challenge and the need for reform. In particular, CTER must work with the Welsh Government to ensure there is a clear 14-19 Learning and Transition Pathway for young people taking their first steps into post-16 education and a commitment to reviewing the sustainability and offer between 16-19, in particular the viability of small school sixth forms and the breadth of choice learners are able to access. ColegauCymru stands ready to support both Welsh Government and CTER as its strategic plan is developed over the coming months.

VCSEs

As part of their Qualified for the Future reforms, Qualifications Wales is reshaping the full qualifications offer which will be available to learners aged 14 to 16 alongside new Made-for-Wales GCSEs. ColegauCymru has engaged with Qualifications Wales on their VCSE proposals and we agree that there is a need for better options for all young people who are interested in studying vocational subjects. We will work with Qualifications Wales on the development of VCSEs to ensure that young people have the best possible options. It is essential that there is genuine parity between VCSEs and GCSEs and that young people who choose a vocational pathway are not disadvantaged. This must mean that VCSEs are taught by specialist staff and that there are partnerships with

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colleges to ensure pupils have access to high-quality, industry standard facilities. There must be a close monitoring of who is taking up VCSEs to ensure the changes are not creating a two-tier system and further embedding inequalities.

Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Wales

ColegauCymru continues to urge the Welsh Government to develop a Vocational Education and Training (VET) Strategy. For far too long, Wales has had no long-term plan for vocational education and training and the result has been a series of short-term and fragmented interventions. There is now a responsibility on Ministers to step forward and ensure a new strategic vision for the future is in place. This strategy was one of the primary recommendations from the Welsh Government's Vocational Qualifications Review last year. A strategy would offer us an opportunity to clearly articulate Wales' ambitions for what VET can deliver for Wales. Progress should be made as a matter of urgency so that we can identify the right priorities for the future. ColegauCymru, and colleges across Wales, are committed to working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to ensure our vocational qualifications suit the needs of today as well as future generations.

Internationalisation

CollegesWales International supports the internationalisation of the FE sector in many ways: to enrich and enhance teaching and learning experiences; raise learners' aspirations and broaden their horizons; inform professional practice and improve provision and raise the profile of international work undertaken in FE. Through the Taith programme, ColegauCymru is currently undertaking two projects to inform policy and practice. The first is on Vocational Qualification Reform and the Implementation of CTER with a delegation of Principals and Welsh Government officials travelling to Helsinki in April 2024 to learn from international best practice. The focus was aimed at understanding what a national strategy for VET could look like for Wales, a strategy which must link VET to Wales' economic and industrial priorities. Secondly, ColegauCymru has secured Taith funding as part of our Memorandum of Understanding with Colleges and Institutes Canada, to establish a community of practice intended to tackle the issue of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in FE, highlighted by Estyn's report last year.

Welsh-medium education

ColegauCymru, and the wider FE sector, are supportive of the Welsh Government's target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and we work closely with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to support the delivery of Welsh medium and bilingual provision. In order to boost delivery through the Welsh language, all colleges in Wales have taken part in the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme. Supported by the National Centre for Learning Welsh, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol co-ordinates the Cymraeg Gwaith programme on behalf of the FE sector. Cymraeg Gwaith aims to strengthen Welsh language skills in workplaces across Wales and has been operational in the FE sector since 2017. However, in order to continue delivering this successful programme, long term funding must be secured as this is crucial to ensuring the sector's contribution to Cymraeg 2050.

Towards an anti-racist Wales

The FE sector is showing real leadership in its journey towards anti-racism and supporting the Welsh Government's ambition of creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030. We are not complacent about the scale of the challenge or believe that strategies alone can prevent the experience of racism that learners and staff face. ColegauCymru, on behalf of our member colleges, is committed to supporting the Welsh Government in working towards an anti-racist Wales by 2030, and all colleges have local action plans in place.

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Active Wellbeing

Helping Wales to become healthier and more active is a priority, not only for Welsh Government, but also for the FE sector. Encouraging new approaches for young people and college staff to be more active and identifying clear links to better individual wellbeing provides a great start to tackling some of the wellbeing challenges which Wales faces. ColegauCymru develops opportunities for learners supported by our colleges, their staff and learners; promoting activity for young women and girls, and learners with additional learning needs remains a priority for everyone involved. The aim of ColegauCymru's Active Wellbeing strategy is to lead the sector in creating college communities that place the individual at the core of strategic development, creating outstanding environments for learners and staff in the process.

Additional Learning Needs

ColegauCymru is proud to host the position of the FE Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Implementation Lead, funded by Welsh Government. The Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET) and ALN Code became live for some learners in colleges in September 2023. This followed five years of transformation where colleges have sought to make enhancements to their provision, train staff and develop partnerships with Local Authorities, health boards and others. The FE Implementation Lead has worked closely with colleges to ensure a seamless experience for learners, and while there have been excellent examples of improved transition across Wales, there is still much to do to ensure a consistent picture for all. The recent Welsh Government 'Post-16 Transitions' event provided a great opportunity for ColegauCymru and FEI college representatives to share good practice with LA and school staff and it is hoped that this, along with other projects, will help to improve the picture across Wales.

Social Value of FE in Wales

This month, ColegauCymru launched a new report (you can read it [here](#)), demonstrating the social value of FE colleges in Wales. With grant funding from Welsh Government, ColegauCymru commissioned Cwmpas and the Centre for Local Economic Strategy to undertake a piece of research to establish the social value of FE in Wales. The report tells a positive story and provides an assessment and joint articulation of the collective social value of colleges in Wales; benefiting learners, community and society, and the wider economy, especially in light of recent difficult times with the ongoing fallout of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

Working across the UK and beyond

ColegauCymru is a proud member of the Colleges Alliance which brings together college leaders and government officials from across the UK and Ireland to share learning and practice. On 25 and 26 June this year, the Alliance is hosting a 'study visit' to Coleg y Cymoedd which will bring together approximately 20 college deputy Principals and government deputy directors for a 24-hour immersive visit to explore the opportunities presented by the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research. If your diary allows, we would like to invite you to take part in the event to share your reflections with delegates. I would be most grateful if you could let me know if that would be possible at your earliest convenience.

As you settle into the new role, I also hope you will accept my invitation to visit one of our colleges, to learn more about value of the FE sector in Wales. Once again, please accept my congratulations on your election as the new Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I, and the ColegauCymru team, look forward to working with you and your team in the future.

Cofion gorau,



Kelly Edwards
Interim Chief Executive

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Agenda Item 2.6

Y Pwyllgor Deddfwriaeth, Cyfiawnder a'r Cyfansoddiad

Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

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Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP
Chair, Welsh Affairs Committee

14 May 2024

Dear Stephen

Parc Prison

As you expressed in your supplementary to the urgent question asked by Chris Elmore MP in the Commons Chamber yesterday, the current situation in HM Prison Parc is deeply concerning.

We expressed our concerns at the position that has emerged during our Committee yesterday following correspondence from Adam Price, a member of our Committee.

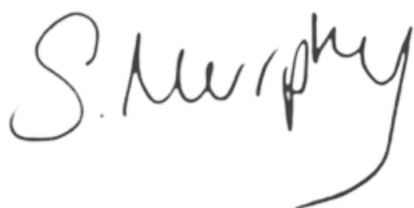
We are aware that prisons and offender management is a reserved matter under Schedule 7A of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. However, by virtue of an exception to that reservation, the provision in prisons of health care, social care, education, training or libraries are devolved matters. We are therefore exploring options for any work that we could undertake, including with other Senedd Committees, given the gravity of the situation at the prison.

We are aware that your Committee is undertaking an inquiry into prisons in Wales, and you will be taking evidence from the Minister for Prisons, Parole and Probation tomorrow. We will therefore follow the work of your Committee on this issue and look forward to seeing your final report and recommendations.

As the committees responsible for the respective scrutiny of the provision of healthcare and education to prisoners in Wales, and for considering equality and human rights issues, I am copying

this letter to the chairs of the Health and Social Care Committee, the Children, Young People and Education Committee, and the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

Sarah Murphy

Chair

Agenda Item 2.7



Welsh Royal Colleges
Child Health
Collaborative

Cydweithredfa
Iechyd Plant
Colegau Brenhinol Cymru

First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Monday 20 May 2024

Dear First Minister

We have come together as 20 organisations today to form the Welsh Royal Colleges Child Health Collaborative (WRCCHC).

Together we're asking how your government will improve health outcomes for babies, children and young people and how you will ensure the sustainability of the workforce that care for them.

Recently both the [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges](#) and [Academy of Medical Sciences](#) published stark reports that highlight the wide-ranging evidence of declining health among children.

We echo the stark warning of these reports as we see every day the impact of poor child health, the disproportionate impact of health inequalities on children and the consequence of this on people's long-term health and wellbeing.

Major health issues like infant mortality, obesity and tooth decay are not only damaging the nation's youngest and their future, but also the nation's economic prosperity. The issues we see today will impact the health of future generations, our economic potential and will cost more to address in the future.

In Wales we have an opportunity to do things differently and improve our children's life chances. We urge you to seize this opportunity and answer the urgent calls to prioritise babies, children and young people's health and the services that provide for them.

The health of children in Wales

Emergency department attendance: 18,924 children (under 18s) attended an NHS Wales emergency department in February 2024, compared to 15,507 in February 2022. An increase of 22%.

Waiting lists: There are 7,310 under 18s waiting longer than a year for treatment, and 1,212 waiting longer than two years (February 2024). Those waiting longer than a year for an outpatient appointment have increased by 18% since September 2022 (3210/3779).

Mental health: 1 in 6 children and young people have a diagnosable mental health problem, and many more struggle with challenges from bullying to bereavement.

Poverty: 29% of children are living in relative income poverty, compared to 21% of working adults and 16% of pensioners in Wales.

Healthy Child Wales Programme: Over 62,000 contacts which should have been offered in 2022 were not recorded as taking place.

Breastfeeding: Whilst over 60% of women intend to breastfeed, the figure falls to 26% reporting any breastfeeding at 6 weeks.

Physical activity: Only 17% of young people (aged 11-16) are active for at least 60 minutes across every day of the week, while nearly a third (32%) of children (aged 8-11) reported watching TV/screens for two hours or more every day.

Oral Health: Nearly a third (32.4%) of year one school aged children had experienced dental caries. This increases to 43.4% of those in the most deprived quintile a rise of 1.2% compared to the previous year.

Healthy weight: The proportion of children overweight or obese ranges from 24.1% in Powys and Cardiff and the Vale, 27.6% in Betsi Cadwaladr, 28.3% in Swansea Bay and 29.2% in Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Smoking: 4% of 11-16 year olds identify as current smokers, rising to 9% of those aged 15-16. Adolescents from less affluent families are twice as likely to be current smokers as those from more affluent families.

Vaping: 1 in 5 (20%) of secondary aged learners (Year 7 to 11) have tried vapes. With 5% reporting using of vapes regularly, rising to 14% for Year 11 pupils.

Speech, language and communication skills: 4.8% of school children in Wales have speech, language & communication needs with nearly a third (32%) living in areas of high social disadvantage.

Safeguarding: The proportion of children on the child protection register has remained stubbornly high at 14% since 2017.

As a collaborative of Royal Colleges and professional bodies we have expertise in pharmacy, nursing, public and oral health with professions in primary, secondary and community care. We'd like to offer expert advice and support and work with you to improve children's health.

The WRCCHC aims to ensure a sharper focus and understanding on the current and necessary support for babies, children and young people and the workforce we represent.

We have established common work areas of health inequalities, workforce, data, safeguarding and accountability. However, this is not an exhaustive list. As individual organisations we all have our own priorities and expertise, but we all feel the need to focus on the common work areas identified above.

We look forward to working with you, your ministers and both the NHS Executive maternity and neonatal network and child health network.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely,



Welsh Royal College Child Health Collaborative (WRCCHC) as designed by Ty Hafan Youth Board.

Endorsed by:

1. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (*WRCCHC Chair*)
2. Royal College of General Practitioners (*WRCCHC Vice Chair*)
3. British Dental Association
4. British Psychological Society
5. Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
6. College of Paramedics
7. Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine
8. Faculty of Public Health

9. Royal College of Emergency Medicine
10. Royal College of Midwives
11. Royal College of Nursing
12. Royal College of Occupational Therapists
13. Royal College of Pathologists
14. Royal College of Physicians
15. Royal College of Podiatry
16. Royal College of Psychiatrists
17. Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
18. Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
19. Royal Pharmaceutical Society
20. Society of Radiographers

Cc'ing for information

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Eluned Morgan MS

Minister for Mental Health and Early Years, Jayne Bryant MS

Minister for Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS

Chief Medical Officer, Dr Frank Atherton

Chief Allied Health Professions Adviser, Ruth Crowder

Chief Nursing Officer, Sue Tranka

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Andrew Evans

Agenda Item 2.8

Y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol

Health and Social Care Committee

Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children and Young People Committee

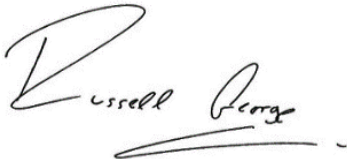
20 May 2024

Dear Buffy
Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill

As you know, the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill has been referred to the Health and Social Care Committee for stage 1 scrutiny.

A significant portion of the Bill concerns eliminating profit from the care of children looked after; a policy area of interest to your committee. As such, we would like to invite CYPE Committee members to attend the evidence sessions where we are discussing the relevant sections of the Bill. Once we have finalised our schedule, I will ask the clerk to liaise with your team about meeting dates.

Yours sincerely



Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

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

Senedd Cymru

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Welsh Parliament

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Agenda Item 2.9

Y Pwyllgor Busnes

Business Committee

Senedd Cymru
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Chairs of Senedd committees

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
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0300 200 6565

22 May 2024

Committee remits

Dear Chair,

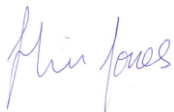
During the Business Committee's meeting on 14 May, we considered a letter from the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee regarding challenges in relation to that Committee's remit which have arisen from recent changes to ministerial portfolios.

The Business Committee agreed to write to other Senedd committees to invite you to provide any views that you have on current committee remits, in order that we can consider any issues that have arisen in a coordinated manner.

I intend for the Business Committee to return to consider these matters further ahead of the summer recess and would therefore be grateful to receive any views or reflections that your Committee has by Friday 21 June 2024. Please let me know if you anticipate having any difficulty responding in this timeframe.

I enclose a copy of the correspondence sent from the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee concerning their remit for context.

Kind regards,



The Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

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

Elin Jones MS

Llywydd

Chair of the Business Committee

10 May 2024

Dear Llywydd,

Committee Remits following the recent reconfiguration of the Welsh Government Cabinet

I am writing to request that the Business Committee consider the remits of policy committees following the appointment of the First Minister and subsequent reconfiguration of cabinet portfolios.

You will be aware that the recent changes to ministerial roles resulted in a significant redistribution of responsibilities, particularly those of the former Minister for Climate Change. The Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's remit now covers the portfolios of four cabinet secretaries, encompassing diverse and substantial policy areas, as follows:

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy & Welsh Language

- Energy policy, including renewable energy
- Circular economy
- Ports policy, including freeports
- Oversight of Cardiff Airport
- Digital connectivity infrastructure

Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs

- All matters relating to climate change and the environment.

Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport

- Rail services through the Wales and Borders franchise
- Bus services
- Active travel
- Roads policies

- Transport for Wales

Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government & Planning

- Planning, including Future Wales: The National Plan 2040
- National Infrastructure Commission
- Coal tip safety
- National Parks

I do not believe it is realistic to expect the CCEI Committee to scrutinise such a wide range of portfolios effectively. I am concerned that certain significant areas of Welsh Government policy will likely go without scrutiny because of the challenges presented by the changes to cabinet portfolios. Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget, in particular, is likely to prove difficult, especially considering the time constraints under which committees already operate.

I would be grateful, therefore, if the Business Committee would consider a reconfiguration of committee remits to streamline the number of Cabinet Secretaries the CCEI Committee is required to scrutinise. This could include the transfer of planning and related matters, as set out above, to the Local Government and Housing (LGH) Committee. This could also include transferring the matters that fall within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy & Welsh Language to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee.

These changes would decrease the number of Cabinet Secretaries requiring scrutiny by the CCEI Committee from four to two. However, they would not affect the number of Cabinet Secretaries requiring scrutiny by the ETRA or LGH committees.

Of course, given the overlapping nature of Senedd policy committee remits, I recognise that changes to the CCEI Committee's remit would not prevent the Committee from looking at a matter through the lens of the environment or climate change. However, these changes would mean that the CCEI Committee would not be the Committee with primary responsibility for scrutiny in that policy area.

I recognise the Business Committee will wish to consult other committees as part of this process and would be happy to discuss any issues with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

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

Science and the Senedd Teacher Numbers

- Call on the Welsh Government to work with the Institute of Physics and identify a path forward to **increase the number of specialist physics teachers in secondary schools** in Wales.
- In 2022, Wales had fewer physics-trained teachers (177) than secondary schools (178).^{1 2}
- Data on the teacher shortages is lacking. We do not know which schools have specialist physics teachers and which schools do not. If the Welsh Government collected this data we could see if there is a pattern to the shortages which would help us make recommendations on diagnosing the problem. Initial data suggests that teacher shortages align with economic deprivation – but we want to confirm this.
- We believe that students who have a specialist physics teacher at school are much more likely to go on to study physics at a higher level, opening up huge career opportunities.
- IOP analysis shows that one in 10 jobs in Wales is physics based, with the physics sector directly generating 10% of Wales' GVA at £7.3bn.³
- However, Wales' shortage of physics trained teachers to inspire students and help them realise their physics talents could prevent learners from following a physics career in this thriving sector and the sector from growing.
- The Welsh Government targeted the recruitment of 61 students to complete the physics initial teacher education (ITE) programme for 2023–24.⁴ Despite this, it saw only three students become trained in physics last year, falling short of its target by almost 95 percentage points.⁵

¹ Education Workforce Council. 2023. [Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales 2023](#). Cardiff: Education Workforce Council.

² Welsh Government. 2023. [Schools' census results: January 2023](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

³ Institute of Physics. 2019. [The contribution of physics to the Welsh economy](#). London: Institute of Physics.

⁴ Education Workforce Council. 2023. [Secondary Intake allocations 2022-23](#). Cardiff: Education Workforce Council.

⁵ Education Workforce Council. 2023. [Initial teacher education \(ITE\) results](#). Cardiff: Education Workforce Council.

- 58% of secondary schools considered themselves understaffed for physics teachers in 2022.⁶ This was much higher than any other nation in the UK.
- Wales also achieved its lowest ever PISA score in science in 2022.⁷

The bursary

- The Wales ITE bursary is worth just over half of the bursary in England.
- Wales offers £15,000 for secondary physics, extended to £20,000 for Cymraeg.
- England offers £27,000, rising to £29,000 for ‘high calibre’ applicants, and a £3,000 incentive for those training in the most disadvantaged areas (a separate veterans offer is worth £40,000).
- For further education physics, the Welsh incentive is £3,000 with an extra £1,000 for Cymraeg. In England, further education is £26,000.

Retention

- There are many avenues to better the support early careers teachers receive. Ensuring that physics-trained teachers stay within the system in the first five years of their teaching career greatly increases the chance of them remaining as teachers for the long-term.

⁶ Royal Society of Chemistry. 2022. [The science teaching survey 2022](#). Online: Royal Society of Chemistry.

⁷ Senedd Research. 2023. How did Wales perform in PISA 2022? Cardiff. Senedd Research.

Agenda Item 2.11

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Ddiwylliant a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice

Lynne Neagle MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Jayne Bryant MS

Minister for Mental Health and Early Years
Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a'r Blynyddoedd Cynnar



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Welsh Parliament,

Cardiff Bay,

Cardiff

CF99 1SN

23 May 2024

Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare.

Dear Buffy,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April offering us the opportunity to provide the Committee with any further information or updates that may help inform your report and conclusions.

In addition to the evidence paper provided to the Committee by the previous Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip and Deputy Minister for Social Services, the Cabinet Secretary for Education has subsequently provided further written and oral evidence to the Committee on Curriculum and ALN Reform. We hope all of the evidence provided will assist the Committee in your consideration of your report.

We are looking forward to receiving your report and to responding to your recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Ddiwylliant a Chyfiawnder
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Culture
and Social Justice

Lynne Neagle MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for
Education

Jayne Bryant MS
Minister for Mental Health and
Early Years
Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a'r
Blynyddoedd Cynnar

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

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.

Agenda Item 2.12

This document provides a translation of correspondence received

Dear Jeremy Miles,

Thank you for meeting with us recently to discuss the Welsh Language Education Bill, and how you and Lynne Neagle will be sharing your responsibilities in the new Cabinet, along with other issues.

As we mentioned during the meeting, we are pleased and appreciate the fact that you remain responsible for steering the Welsh Language Education Bill, which will ensure consistency, moving forward, and will mean that your experience, expertise and enthusiasm will be retained. We also appreciate the commitment that you made during the meeting to introducing the Welsh Language Education Bill before the Senedd's summer recess in July this year.

However, we are concerned about your comment that the target of ensuring that 50 per cent of Welsh children are in Welsh-medium education by 2050 will not be a statutory target, and that it will only be a target for the "most ambitious trajectory".

You will understand our concern that this target – like the Government's previous targets – will be missed if there is no legal obligation on the Welsh Government, over the next 25 years, to fund and plan the progress that must be seen by 2050.

If the Government really wants *"all pupils in Wales to become confident Welsh speakers through the statutory education system"*, as is stated on the front page of the White Paper on the Welsh Language Education Bill, conditions must be created and plans must be made for a significant increase in the number of children receiving Welsh-medium education, through statutory targets at a national and local authority level. We will continue to press for these things during scrutiny of the Bill.

During the meeting, we agreed that a single continuum is the ideal vehicle for learning and assessing the Welsh language in our schools, with the attainment of young people in Wales subject to a unified qualification. This

also reflects public opinion. According to the data in the consultation report on the White Paper, 93 per cent of organisations and 59 per cent of individuals are in favour of creating a single continuum. Contrary to the suggestion made during the meeting, none of the responses that were opposed to a single continuum cited the workforce as a reason for not introducing a single learning and assessment continuum for GCSE Welsh, and none of the responses were opposed to the principle of creating a single continuum. Such strong support for the establishment of a single continuum suggests that there is a need to move immediately to ensure a single learning and assessment continuum, and equal opportunity for all pupils in Wales to learn the Welsh language. We welcome the suggestion that you made during the meeting that action should be taken in respect of this recommendation.

However, contrary to what was said at the meeting, we feel that it would be possible to achieve this ideal by reforming the curriculum in 2027, rather than waiting until 2032. Through the establishment of a working group of teachers and experts over the next six to nine months, it would be possible to introduce plans for the creation of a single continuum early in 2025. It would be possible to undertake a consultation and pilot the recommendations in 2025–26, so that they could be fully implemented in 2027. Sioned Davies' 2013 report, 'One Language for All' ('Un Iaith i Bawb'), concluded that this would be academically possible, following full consultation with teachers, parents, young people and experts:

"Consideration should be given to developing a dual award whereby pupils in English-medium schools would receive an additional grade to show what comparative grade they would have achieved in the Welsh (first language) examination. This would not only assist employers to understand the difference in Welsh-language skill levels, but could also support the Welsh Government aim to ensure that learners who have received Welsh-medium education in primary schools continue to progress on transfer to secondary school."

One Language for All: Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 (Welsh Government: 2013), p. 29.

This is, therefore, a practical timetable that could be implemented if the will is there. Continuing with a system in which there is no overlap between the

two GCSE Welsh assessments, as is the case at present, is entirely unacceptable.

The short-term goal is a swift public statement regarding the timetable and work plan for creating a single continuum and a single assessment pathway, so as to raise expectations and to ensure that every single pupil can have an opportunity to attain the highest standards. You mentioned during the meeting that you would contact Qualifications Wales and press the body for a statement regarding a public timetable for starting the planning work on that. We hope for – indeed, we expect – a swift announcement on that. According to our research, 142,351 children have received a GCSE Welsh Second Language grade since the publication of Sioned Davies's report in 2013. As a result, they have been deprived of the opportunity to learn Welsh confidently. Further delays would mean that more and more children would lose their Welsh skills through the education system.

We look forward to hearing your response, and we hope that we can meet again in the future.

We will be sending a copy of this letter to the Children, Young People and Education Committee.

Sincerely

Josef Gnagbo, National Chair, Cymdeithas yr Iaith

Toni Schiavone, Chair, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Education Group

Mabli Siriol, Vice-chair, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Education Group

Mr David Rees MS
Chair,
Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1SN

6 June 2024

Dear Chair,

Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

I am writing in response to your letter of 9 May following the recent scrutiny session on care-experienced children and young people. I was very pleased to have the discussion with the Committee on this very important area and especially with care-experienced children and young people able to witness first-hand this discussion.

The attached annex A provides responses to the Committee's questions outlined in your letter. The responses will show that through the current Transformation Programme for Children's Services substantial progress has already been made. I do acknowledge this is a journey and this is the beginning, and we will constantly review and update our work to ensure we address the concerns identified by young people whilst also aligning to our Children and Young People's Plan. You will know that the various elements of work ongoing are at different degrees of maturity, and I am confident that they will deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

I look forward to our discussion on 12 July.

Yours sincerely,



VAUGHAN GETHING

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@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.

Additional information on care experienced children

The rise in the numbers of children in care

What additional steps your government intends to take to safely reduce the number of children going into care, given existing investment and approaches have not yet reversed the increase.

I am firmly committed like my predecessor to deliver on our ambition to transform social services for children, young people, and their families across Wales doing all we can to help support families continue to successfully care for their own children. I and all Welsh Ministers share the passion to make the radical change that is so obviously needed.

I acknowledge that the numbers of children in care have remained static. You will appreciate the last few years have seen difficult and challenging times for Children's Services post covid. We have had to scrutinise and prioritise how best we spend our money given the financial situation we face given the cost-of-living crisis in the UK. This has also resulted in both financial and workforce challenges for local authorities.

We are working to tackling these challenges through the current Transformation Programme for Children's Services. The Programme has made substantial progress, but we are on a journey and know that change will not happen overnight. The following are just some of the steps being taken that I believe will safely reduce the numbers of children going into care.

Continuing our work to ensure the lived experience of care experienced children and young people is at the heart of everything that we have done and continue to do. We will continue to work closely with Voices from Care on the Care Leavers Summits. These Summits have provided an opportunity for Ministers to hear directly from care-experienced children and young people their experiences and their thoughts on what changes need to be made.

We are progressing work to deliver the commitments set out in the Care Experience Summit declaration, the first of its kind in the UK. The Minister for Social Care and I are committed to achieving the vision outlined by the young ambassadors.

Our Transformation Delivery Group has been established for over a year and is chaired by Jonathan Griffiths who is our Transformation lead for both adult and children's social services. The Group within its membership includes care-experienced young people representation. The Group is taking forward two workstreams – one focused on data and metrics and the second looking at early help and prevention which align to themes from the Children, Young People and Education Committee report "If not now, then when".

Aligning to early help and prevention, parental advocacy supports parents to positively engage with social workers, third sector organisations, the family courts and other professionals to resolve issues that are negatively impacting their family. We are investing £1.6 million of funding during this Senedd term through the Care Experienced Children Change Fund to scale up existing Parental Advocacy projects on a regional basis and to ensure new services are established in each of the seven regions in Wales as part of a national roll-out.

Work is firmly underway to develop and deliver a National Practice Framework. The Framework will be the first set of national standards for children's services in Wales, sitting alongside other all-Wales procedures like the All-Wales safeguarding procedures. We undertook engagement on the **Part 6 Page 32** earlier this year and following consideration

of the feedback received, we are now developing a full draft of the Framework for continued engagement and aim for a full Framework, for implementation, to be published by the end of the year.

We are progressing our commitment to eliminate profit from care and have introduced legislation to deliver on this. Eliminate is much more than models of ownership and profit, it is about building resilience in the sector, best meeting the care and support needs of our young people, keeping them within their communities and doing all we can to support them to be with their families.

We launched the Corporate Parenting Charter in September last year. To date 40 organisations have signed up including Welsh Government and Welsh Ministers. We continue to encourage all public bodies as well as private bodies and the third sector across Wales to sign up and become Corporate Parents.

Between 2021 and 2023, a total of £3.5m of Regional Accommodation funding was used by 15 projects across all regions in Wales. This resulted in the creation of 26 new beds of regional provision for children with complex needs and support was provided to 62 children and young people with complex needs. Since then, we have allocated over £23m in this area and continue to receive proposals through the Housing with Care Fund. This will deliver a further 96 beds in total, of these 5 homes are already operating with 15 beds. Complementing this approach, the Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (the RIF) includes a significant investment of circa £18m per annum in supporting families to stay together safely and therapeutic support for care experienced children.

We have continued to heavily invest in our national fostering scheme, Foster Wales, to improve the ability of local authority fostering services to recruit and retain foster carers.

We are committed to ensuring that kinship foster carers receive the same support as mainstream foster carers and through the Foster Wales National Commitment we are working towards an agreed package of training, support, and financial assistance being consistently available to all kinship foster carers through all 22 local authority fostering agencies in Wales.

This is a journey, this is the beginning, and we will be constantly reviewing and updating our work to ensure we address the concerns identified by young people while aligning to the Children and Young People's Plan. Various elements of work are at different degrees of maturity, and I am confident that they will deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Welsh Government's role as the corporate parent and grandparent

The timescale for strengthening the Welsh Government's Code of Practice for looked after and accommodated children as it refers to corporate parenting. We would also welcome information on any additional steps the Welsh Government can take to support Kinship Carers in recognition of the important role they play.

We will be developing a draft of the dedicated chapter on Corporate Parenting within the Part 6 Code of Practice, this year. The chapter will set out more clearly duties for corporate parents and support a strengthened strategic approach to corporate parenting. We will be engaging with all stakeholders in the development of the chapter and will be sharing the draft with care experienced children and young people to get their input. The chapter will form part of a wider update of the Part 6 Code of Practice which will come into effect before the end of the Senedd Term.

Welsh Government values the role that kinship care offers. Providing the opportunity for a child to live with a family member or close friend, when their parents are unable to look after them, will make a huge difference to the life of a child.

As part of our work to radically reform children's services in Wales, Welsh Government has set up a Special Guardianship Expert Group which will develop an improved and consistent needs-based approach to supporting Special Guardianship families across Wales. This group has representation from the statutory and third sector alongside service users and as part of its work it will look at ways of capturing the views of children and young people. The intention is to widen the scope of this group in due course to look at the use of and support available for kinship foster carers in Wales.

In addition, Foster Wales is committed to ensuring that kinship foster carers receive the same support as mainstream foster carers and has launched its national commitment which is an agreed package of training, support, and rewards consistently available to all foster carers (mainstream and kinship) in Wales through all 22 local authority fostering agencies in Wales.

Foster Wales is also committed to ensuring that kinship foster carers receive the same financial support as mainstream foster carers. One of the aims of our current work on fees and allowances is to ensure consistency, alongside other elements of the financial support to all approved foster carers. Currently all approved foster carers across Wales (including mainstream and kinship foster carers) are paid at least the national minimum allowance to meet the needs of children in their care. In addition, all local authorities pay an enhanced allowance/fee to mainstream foster carers.

Through Foster Wales and the harmonisation of fees and allowances work, we are seeking to ensure that the availability of an enhanced allowance/fee is available to all approved foster carers (including both mainstream and kinship foster carers) providing they are assessed to meet the eligibility criteria as set out in the enhanced allowance eligibility policy.

The current legal framework, under the Fostering Panels (Establishment and Function) (Wales) Regulations 2018, necessitates kinship foster carers reaching the same standard of suitability to foster as mainstream carers. The only difference for kinship foster carers is that they are approved to be a foster carer for a particular child under these regulations. Welsh Government is aware that many practitioners, panels and decision makers have struggled with the fitness for purpose of the current regulatory framework for kinship foster care.

To aid the fostering sector, Welsh Government is currently undertaking a scoping exercise to consider legislative changes that could be introduced to enable an alternative and more 'fit for purpose' way forward for the assessment of kinship carers.

Homelessness

An update on how the next iteration of the Welsh Government's White Paper on ending homelessness in Wales will address the needs of care experienced children, including care experienced birth parents. You will be aware that Welsh Government data shows that 315 care leavers were homeless in Wales in 2022-23, a significant rise since 2020-21. As you will also be aware, these figures refer to young people up to the age of 25 being actively supported by their local authority as care leavers at the time their homelessness was reported. We note that both the Welsh Government's Expert Group Review has made a specific recommendation and the Children, Young People and Education Committee has said that a "sixth category entitled 'fit for purpose' should be created for people

who are care experienced regardless of homelessness status, in order to avoid them entering the homeless system to access social housing". Can you confirm this will be taken forward?

The Welsh Government published our White Paper on ending homelessness at the end of last year and we recently published our [analysis of responses](#) received to that consultation. The proposals within the White Paper are rooted within corporate parenting responsibilities and hold huge potential to transform the experience of young people and particularly care leavers, experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We are not able to set out the content of any future legislation at this stage, but we are committed to ensuring the needs of care leavers are prioritised in that work and will continue to engage with stakeholders to deliver this aim.

Delivering the outcomes of strategies to support care experienced children

What steps your Government intends to take to strengthen the mechanisms to *deliver* existing strategies affecting care experienced children. For example the national target in the 2016 strategy, Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after was to raise the attainment of looked after 15 year-olds at Key Stage 4 of the Level 2 inclusive threshold from 17% in 2014 to 25% in 2016. Latest published figures from 2019 show the percentage remained at 17% at that time.

Our ambitions for education in Wales are set out in *Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all*. They include a commitment to equity of outcome in education for every child and young person in Wales.

We remain committed to improving educational outcomes for care experienced children, whilst recognising the importance of looking holistically at their needs in school. We also want a focus on progress along the child's own learning pathway and for them to build positive relationships with adults and their peers. The Cabinet Secretary for Education is considering the points made by the young people at the third Care Experienced Summit in March. They very eloquently gave their ideas on how the education system could be improved for care experienced learners.

Care experienced children are at higher risk of poor mental health, so this must be addressed as a platform for them to achieve the best possible outcomes. Welsh Government has provided significant funding through the looked after element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) to support this objective. This is underpinned by the whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing, which continues to be a key priority for the Welsh Government.

Our commitment to care experienced young people's education is matched by a range of support in schools and for post 16 education. The PDG includes £5.7m funding in 2023-24 to specifically support care experienced children in school. The funding aims to improve educational outcomes by reducing the barriers they often face to achieving their full potential.

We have provided £1.2m to local authorities over the last three years to implement a pilot Virtual Schools Model (VSM) to improve educational outcomes for care-experienced children. We are evaluating the pilot and expect the final report to be published by March 2025. The findings will influence future policy development and strategic direction on support for the education of care experienced children.

The VSM pilot complements other provision in local authorities which support the education of care-experienced children. These include the Virtual School Head and Looked After Children Education Coordinator roles; Personal Education Plans; additional academic support and strong pastoral systems tailored to the needs of care experienced children. Every college in Wales has a student services team to provide wellbeing, practical and financial support to help learners fulfil their potential post 16. The Welsh Government also provides a range of financial support to enable care experienced learners to continue their studies in Further Education Institutions.

Children's social care workforce

What additional steps your Government will take to ensure there is a children's social care workforce that's fit for purpose and your expectations of the role of local authorities and Social Care Wales in this regard. You will be aware that in 2022 there were 639 vacancies in children's social work teams across Wales and that in September 2023, 17.5% of children's services social workers were employed by an agency.

We are acutely aware that the social care workforce faces recruitment and retention challenges, and the Welsh Government, Social Care Wales (SCW), social care organisations, and employers are working together to address these issues. A holistic approach is necessary to ensure sufficient staff with the right skills to meet the needs of adults, children, and young people. The government and SCW collaborate with local authorities to address workforce needs and ensure sufficient training opportunities.

The Social Care Workforce Development Programme through SCW supports local authorities with their 'grow your own' initiatives. This provides opportunities for employees to study social work whilst employed. The number of "grow your own" students continue to rise (6% higher in 2022-23 with updated figures for 23-24 expected in June). Welsh Government has invested £10 million in the social worker bursary to make the social work degree financially attainable for those on a HEI study route. Initial data on the social worker bursary shows a 50% higher uptake from postgraduates in 2023-24, and a 13% growth overall in both undergraduate and postgraduate numbers. However, we must be mindful that social work training can take between 3- 6 years to complete. We maintain our support for employers interested in recruiting international social workers ethically and sustainably. Well over 100 international social workers applied to register with SCW last year, and this upward trend is continuing.

Children and young people frequently tell us that they experience frequent changes in social workers. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is currently leading work focusing on terms and conditions for social workers, including looking at the national approaches for example digital solutions and caseloads. We know that caseloads are a key pressure on social workers, however they are a symptom of wider workforce pressures and cannot be looked at in isolation. This piece of work will aim to support and attract individuals into the profession, but also to also reduce movement of qualified staff between local authorities due to variations in terms and conditions.

The Association of Directors in Social Services (ADSS) are leading on the "All-Wales Pledge – Stabilising Children's Recruitment Agencies" where they brought local authorities together to develop a Memorandum of Co-operation for Wales. The pledge looks at setting consistent agency pay rates across Wales, and a set of principles local authorities will adapt in engaging their agency workforce. ADSS information shows a reduction in the use of agency workers within Local Authority services between 1 July 2023 and 1 January 2024, (from 320 in October 2023 to 280 in January 2024). Positively, there was also an increase in

agency staff transitioning into permanent roles (27 agency workers in the same timeframe). This work continues to gain further traction.

SCW has embedded “WeCare Wales” the first national profile-raising campaign for careers in social care, early years, childcare and play, into all aspects of its work to help attract, recruit and retain workers into the sector. It has developed targeted schemes for professions experiencing staff shortages and those finding it hard to recruit, including social work.

The well-being of the sector is a priority and should underpin all our policies. We recently extended the free mental health support offer (Canopi) to the social care workforce which was originally for health only. Canopi have reported an increase in take up of social care staff and we are exploring how we can further support Canopi to deliver the full offer to the social care workforce. We will also continue to fund the delivery of the BASW Peer Support Service (PSS), which offers social workers a free peer to peer support, allowing them to manage work related issues, and to develop their career by getting advice and support from more experienced, fellow social workers.

Agenda Item 4

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

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