

CYPE(5)-28-20 - Paper to note 5

Dear Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supplementary evidence to the committee in relation to the issue of visibility and accessibility of child and adolescent mental health services on local Health Board websites.

Firstly, here is a summary of action which has been taken by my office:

- Following frustrations experienced by my team in providing information for families on local CAMHS provision, my office reviewed local health boards' websites in April 2020.
- I then wrote to all LHBs in April 2020 (sample letter attached), summarising issues affecting many of the webpages when trying to find information about CAMHS services.
- I received responses from Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. We were pleased that all three promised some action on improving the visibility / awareness around CAMHS services. Promised improvements included updating information on web pages, and using social media channels to raise awareness of relevant web pages. Our assessment is that welcome improvements have been made and web pages have been updated with further information. However, we feel that accessibility of web pages and clarity of information on those web pages continues to be an issue for several Boards.
- My office reviewed the websites again in October 2020. We noted that most websites have improved following our letter in April, but most are missing one or more of the key elements listed below.
- I raised this issue with Chairs, Chief Executives and Vice Chairs in a meeting on 23rd October.

Here are some examples of where I think improvements could be made:

- There is a lack of child-friendly information for mental health support;
- There are general navigation issues – CAMHS web pages often take several attempts to locate and search function does not always lead to the page you need. Some CAMHS links on LHB websites take you to a Twitter feed only;
- Websites often do not have a tab on their home page which links to mental health services webpages, or to children's services;
- There is often little or no information for families if a child or young person were to experience a crisis, particularly out of hours;
- Where there are web pages relating to mental health services on the main Board websites these are often only for adult services, and do not include information about CAMHS.

Some examples of positive practice which I think should be replicated across all health board websites include:

- Detailed explanation of the process to expect when making contact with the health board, for both parents/carers and young people. An example of this can be found [here](#);
- Telephone contact numbers on web pages for families as well as for those making referrals. An example of a direct line set up as a result of the pandemic that young people and parents/carers can use is [here](#);

- Straightforward explanations of what is meant by mental and emotional health issues. An example can be found [here](#);
- Advertisement of the CALL helpline;
- Web pages listing who can refer to CAMHS;
- Virtual tours of mental health settings;
- Lists of potentially useful organisations to contact. An example can be found [here](#).

My office will continue to monitor the Boards' websites in relation to CAMHS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Holland', written in a cursive style.

Sally Holland

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Via email only

29th April 2020

Dear Chair and Chief Executive,

Re: Information for Children and Young People from Health Boards

I wish to begin by thanking you and every member of staff within your health board for your fantastic efforts during this time of national crisis.

My team and I remain in work and I'd invite you to contact the office if there's anything we can help with at this time

I wanted to raise the issue of public-facing communication channels operated by individual health boards.

While I know there has been tremendous effort in ensuring clear messaging during this time, I wished to flag two issues which have been drawn to our attention:

1. Clarity and visibility over hospital visiting policies. While we are aware that national guidance has been sent out to all Boards via the CMO, and that all Boards have somewhere on their websites details around visiting arrangements, we would request that every Board reviews the visibility of this information on their websites and social media channels. I am concerned that some families will assume that the current visiting restrictions apply across the board, and are not aware of the exemptions for specific situations, which includes one parent or guardian being able to visit paediatric inpatients and neonates.



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2. Clarity and visibility of contact details for CAMHS services and the CALL helpline. I am concerned that, while CAMHS teams across Wales are managing to continue to provide their core services, children and young people's ordinary referral pathways may not be available to families and professionals in the same way as before (i.e. through school, GP visits, youth services etc.), and therefore children and young people are not being 'picked up' in the way they would have been before. This is true for both existing service users and new referrals. I therefore would like to request that the availability of CAMHS services is made clearer through websites and social media channels, targeting both families and professionals.

I would be very grateful for your assistance in reviewing your current publicfacing communications channels to see what more can be done to ensure these issues are well advertised to families so that they understand that they are able to visit their children in hospital, and that CAMHS services remain operational.

I would like to request that you also consider how children and young people would experience accessing information, and whether your communications are child-friendly. From our own research we have found that while some Health Board websites were easier to navigate than others from an adult perspective in terms of finding information on visiting policies and CAMHS, some had no information about CAMHS at all, and none of the websites are child-friendly. I would therefore urge you to consider how you can improve the visibility of services from the perspective of a child or young person, through both your website and other communications channels.

I wanted to also just remind you that we have set up an Information Hub on our website for children and young people, and their parents. We have included a range of age appropriate advice and guidance, some learning resources, fun activities and also a FAQs section. We are updating the content daily and we'd welcome any suggestions or feedback from your communications staff on what we can include. If you have any useful resources, particularly those aimed specifically at children and young people, we'd be happy to include links to these on our website. We'd also invite you to share this information via your own social media and communications channels, so that information for children and young people is being widely shared.



<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus/>

<https://www.complantcymru.org.uk/coronafeirws/>

We've also ensured that our Investigation and Advice service remains operational during this time. All of our staff are working from home and have telephone and email contact. Your staff or families in your locality can email advice@childcomwales.org.uk or contact us on 07507 648245 or 07794 123132. We are continuing to offer advice to children and young people, parents and carers and also professionals. Where we are unable to address specific queries, we are raising these directly with Welsh Government officials, on a weekly basis or on the day if the issue is urgent. If your staff are finding it difficult to find answers to particular questions, particularly relating to national policy and guidelines, please do feed them through to my team and we'll endeavour to raise these on your behalf.

Thank you once again for everything you are doing at this time.

Kind regards,



Sally Holland
Children's Commissioner for Wales

