



18 November 2020

Vaughan Gething MS
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Minister

Winter Planning: Therapy Support for Children and Families

With winter planning now taking place, we want to draw your attention to the need for children's therapy services to be protected.

The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people, especially those with additional learning needs has been significant, involving much hardship. Access to therapies in Wales which is vital in supporting children's physical health, mental health and development was severely limited during the 'first wave' of the pandemic.

Cancelled therapy has led to lost opportunities for learning and reduced quality of life for the most vulnerable in our society. This is likely to have long term consequences for children's health, well-being and life opportunities.

As the winter pressures increase and we enter the next phase of the pandemic, we need to protect families, children and young people who rely on therapy support to engage in learning and be able to function at their best.

We therefore ask that children's therapists are protected from redeployment, to ensure that families with children – particularly disabled children – and young people have access to the support they sorely need. This is an approach which has recently been adopted by the UK Government. We would welcome similar assurances that this will also be the case in Wales.

The most vulnerable young people in our society have already had to deal with reduced access to health professionals throughout this crisis. They cannot afford to lose access to vital therapy services for a further six months, when their access to education and their personal well-being is already extremely delicate.



Research has shown that disabled children and young people are at higher risk of abuse and neglect, and that they encounter additional barriers when trying to disclose. For those very vulnerable young people, not accessing therapy could mean a missed opportunity for professionals to pick up on signs that a young person needs help.

We recognise the need for flexibility in areas where acute pressures are high, where individual discussions may be appropriate regarding a hybrid approach to regular workloads, but this should be only for the shortest time needed. Children's therapy services should not be left without the staff to deliver essential therapy services as occurred earlier in 2020.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D m Davies".

David Davies

RCOT Professional Practice Lead – Wales

Caroline Walters

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists



Melanie Simmonds

Save the Children



Cecile Gwilym

NSPCC

