

30 November 2020

Lynne Neagle MS  
Chair,  
Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Neagle,

## **Mind Over Matter: Two Years On: Together for Children and Young People (2) Programme Response**

I am pleased to respond to your publication of the above report on behalf of the Together for Children and Young People (2) Programme, and welcome the continued focus on children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing in Wales. As Chair of the Programme, I was also pleased to see the acknowledgement that change is starting to happen and that the commitment from people and organisations to make things better is clear.

This letter sets out a response to the key conclusions in the **Mind Over Matter: Two Years On** report that relate to the Programme, and provides a realistic position of how we can act on these proposals while progressing the objectives given by Welsh Government up to March 2022.

### **Change is not happening quickly enough**

As a Programme we are keen to make a difference to the lives of children and young people as a priority, knowing that working collectively we can improve the emotional and mental health of children and young people across Wales. A T4CYP (2) Programme work plan is in place, which outlines the timelines across the three work streams: Early Help and Enhanced Support; Neurodevelopmental Services and working with Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs). A summary of the work progressed this year is outlined, as well as the actions set out to be achieved by the end of this Senedd term.

There is a strong desire to enable change to happen as rapidly as possible. It is essential however that whilst working hard to bring forward activity, the Programme works to ensure that all necessary steps and engagement are completed. It is important that the resulting resources and products have lasting value and impact. This is particularly the case for our Early Help and Enhanced Support (EHES) Framework. At the heart of this work is a need for long lasting culture change, built on robust engagement with all stakeholders.

In 2020 the Programme has continued to drive forward despite the pandemic. Outlined below are the key elements of action and progress.

- Strengthened the Programme Board and work stream groups, with new and broader membership to support our re-focused Programme objectives;
- Appointed an EHES Clinical Lead and held a range of virtual co-production sessions over the summer / autumn to develop a draft EHES framework. There has been significant breadth of involvement at this stage, working with a range of professionals, organisations, young people and families. This momentum is vital to the longer term objective of embedding the framework across sectors on a regional footprint;
- Discussed this work with the Chairs of the RPBs at the Deputy Minister's meeting. This gave the opportunity to formally begin engagement with the seven RPBs, sharing the Framework with them and discussing the support for implementation;
- Appointed a Neurodevelopmental (ND) Clinical Lead and work is now under way to propose a long-term vision for neurodiversity in Wales. The clinical leaders group has been established and facilitated communication between ND teams across Wales. In addition, a new National Strategic Steering Group, with membership of a wide range of stakeholders, is due to meet in late November. The clinical leaders group will focus on supporting the implementation of the current ND Pathway and Standards and consider how quality improvements can be achieved, whilst the Strategic Steering Group consider the approach to neurodiversity in Wales;
- Established a project that seeks to support families, children and young people earlier in the process of neurodevelopmental assessment to improve access, increase efficiency and ultimately quality. A partnership between 'Do It' Solutions and TEC Cymru has been established to deliver proof of concept testing of a digital tool, which will support a holistic ND assessment process, enhancing clinical and professional acumen. An evaluation will run in parallel and future actions will be agreed once this first phase is completed;
- Held a webinar with Senedd Members on neurodevelopmental and neurodiversity strategic thinking, providing a follow-up briefing paper, with strong involvement of parent and young person perspectives as key presenters.

By March 2021 the Programme aims to take forward a number of key actions, including:

- finalising the Early Help and Enhanced Support Framework, undertaking preparatory work for implementation. The draft EHES Framework will have been shared with a wide range of organisations, parents, carers, children and young people across Wales as part of an engagement process to gather feedback;
- engagement with individuals, families and organisations across Wales, to discuss the future for neurodevelopmental services and listen to their views and ideas. This will include meeting with the National Youth Stakeholder Group to discuss the best way to involve children and young people in this process; and completion of proof of concept and started testing of the *ND* digital tool. Once

the initial evaluation is complete recommendations will be developed for taking this forward ideally on a Once for Wales basis.

## Whole-system change

A whole-system change is supported and the Programme is committed to playing its full part in helping to create the change that is indeed system wide. As a Programme there are a number of key areas where this commitment is being actioned, including:

- Ensuring that the T4CYP(2) Programme Board and the work stream groups that oversee the work has a diverse range of representatives from across the whole system – third / voluntary, Welsh Government officials, local government, education, social care, health, families, children and young people. Our Programme Board has representatives who lead on the work of the specialist CAMHS Network and Whole School Approach Programme;
- Ensuring that the T4CYP(2) Programme has membership on a number of groups to ensure the connectivity between our work and others e.g. Joint Ministers T&F Whole School Approach group, Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group, senior WG policy leads meeting, the CAMHS sub-group and Whole School Approach steering group;
- Establishing discussions to develop a common set of evaluation measures for the Whole School Approach and EHES, which are connected and aligned to a system wide offer;
- Working with Welsh Government Whole School Approach colleagues to refresh the National Youth Stakeholder Group membership. This joined up working enables co-production at the heart of work that crosses both T4CYP & Welsh Government.
- Establishing dialogue in relation to the long-term approach to neurodiversity. There is a desire to effectively align to approaches in relation to Additional Learning Needs and Emotional Wellbeing and the National Strategic Steering Group is the key mechanism for generating dialogue and a proposal for broader policy consideration. The thrust of this dialogue is to increasingly develop a joined up approach, identifying needs and providing early help and support, with streamlined referral to specialist secondary ND services when required, utilising a single repository of information ensuring coordinated care and support for our neurodiverse children and their families. The continuation of these conversations with key partners around future alignment of ND services is critical to a whole system change.
- Outlined in the section above is the work relating to Regional Partnership Boards. Whilst as a Programme we can develop helpful frameworks and guides, the importance of deep-rooted engagement and commitment to implement is a critical success factor in delivering better outcomes. Having truly multiagency, partnership planning and delivery approaches via RPBs is a major priority for the Programme in terms of supporting implementation 'on the ground'. RPB Chairs and co-ordinators dedicated briefing and discussion sessions have been held to begin to scope out the planned implementation of the completed Framework in 2021. A number of RPBs have signalled a desire to become early adopters of the EHES Framework, with the aim of expediting the final

implementation across all seven RPBs in 2021-2022. The Programme anticipated working with all RPBs but with 2 'early adopters' more intensively at the start of 2021. A review of the planned approach and resources will be undertaken if a larger number of RPBs offer to adopt early the Framework.

### **Impact of the coronavirus pandemic makes progress more necessary than ever**

As a Programme we have heard first hand from clinicians and families the impact COVID-19 has had on children and young people. It is clear that the pandemic has brought significant challenge and also some opportunities. The commitment to consider experiences in order to influence future actions remains a strong feature of how the Programme has been working particularly over recent years.

As Chair of the Programme, I would wish to thank all children, young people, parents and carers for their continued involvement in shaping the key developments the Programme seeks to take forward, particularly during the pandemic. I include just two of a number of examples the views of people have helped shape. The first relates to the development of the neurodevelopment online digital tool. As a result of seeing the benefit of online support during the pandemic, views were shared and considered in developing an online tool, not as a replacement for but as part of a blended approach that could help reduce waiting times for assessments. The second example focuses on supporting a range of developments including the Public Health Wales 'How are you doing?' campaign and resources for children & young people; providing carefully considered feedback from the National Youth Stakeholder Group on the Welsh Government Mental Health Toolkit and using our communication channels to publicise services for children and young people.

I hope that the Committee finds this response helpful. Whilst it is clear that progress has been made in relation to the children and young people's emotional and mental health in Wales, there is a recognition that there is more to do and a strong commitment to build on the momentum already gathered in delivering impactful change. I look forward to a further opportunity to discuss the key issues and priorities with the Committee, as we have done throughout the Together for Children and Young People Programme.

Yours sincerely



**Carol Shillabeer**  
**Chair,**  
**Together for Children and Young People (2) Programme**