

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

HSC PSS 42

Ymateb gan: | Response from: [Cŵn Tywys Cymru](#) | [Guide Dogs Cymru](#)

Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor **Initial priorities identified by the Committee**

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrysgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?

Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?

I would like the Committee to address a very important health and social care and children's rights issue.

There is a postcode lottery of habilitation services for children with sight loss in Wales. In 2018 Guide Dogs Cymru presented a State of the Nation report to the Welsh Government about the fact that many local authorities in Wales do not employ a habilitation specialist. Here is the link to the report:

http://www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/wales_vision_forum.php

The report indicated that in 2018 there were only 7.6FTE children's habilitation specialists employed in Local Authorities in Wales. A recent mapping exercise conducted by us in August



2021 suggests this number has increased slightly to 10.4FTE but there are still 6 Welsh Local Authorities who do not directly employ a habilitation specialist.

Our 2018 report has been ignored by the Welsh Government despite their own guidance setting out the importance of habilitation. Paragraphs 185-186 of the Social Services and well-being (Wales) Act Part 2 General Code of Practice provides the following guidance:

“185. Habilitation is central in enabling children and adults with a disability to live as independently as possible with the right level of support as it is key to acquiring and developing skills that otherwise would have been learnt incidentally. It is vital where an individual has been unable or delayed in developing those skills. Identifying preventative services that help people to learn, keep or improve skills and functional ability is integral to promoting well-being. As with reablement, effective habilitation should support physical, sensory, social and emotional needs and be delivered in partnership between the local authority and the Local Health Board. Habilitation support may differ from standard reablement services and require a different approach, one that focuses on the specific needs of the individual and their family. As a result, a more structured programme of support may be required, and for a longer period of time.

186. Effective reablement and habilitation should be delivered in partnership between the local authority and the NHS”.

Unfortunately, early years children aged 0-4 with a visual impairment, in many parts of Wales have no access to habilitation services. This is a failure by statutory services and the Welsh Government has been provided with the evidence about this and yet nothing gets done. If the Committee is serious about having an impact on the lives of vulnerable children, they must scrutinize and hold the Welsh Government to account on this.

We also believe this is a human rights issue. In 2020 Children in Wales, with their partners in the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group, carried out a project, funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), to deliver a series of activities for organisations in Wales to help them identify the key priority children’s rights issues. Following two events and gathering over 70 pieces of evidence they published the State of Children’s Rights in Wales report, which was submitted to the UN in December 2020: <https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/professionals/our-work/state-childrens-rights> to inform the 2021-22 UK review. This report flagged up concerns about the lack of specialist support for vulnerable children in Wales: –

“For children with visual impairments, there is a severe shortage of specialist habilitation support services despite legislation recognising their importance in enabling children to live as independently as possible”

“ Q – Will the W/Government ensure that education is fully inclusive; that teachers’ skills and competencies to support disabled children are enhanced, and gaps and delays in accessing health & social care support services, including specialist provision, are addressed?”.

We are disappointed that it is the UNCRC Monitoring Group that is holding the Welsh Government to account on the lack of habilitation services in Wales. It should really be a job for the Health and Social Care Committee.

There is another issue around habilitation that practitioners in Wales are concerned about. There is still also the gap for post 16 young people who have left education (so no longer getting support from habilitation services where available), and, yet receive no support from adult services, (Rehabilitation Officers for the Visually Impaired, ROVIs), because they are not yet 18 years old. Practitioners tell us they mention this gap all the time but whilst everyone agrees that it is a problem no solutions are being put in place. Perhaps, in the round, the Committee could also look at this transition issue.

Unfortunately, there are also serious problems with rehabilitation services in Wales. The Wales Council of the Blind submitted a report to the Welsh Government in June 2021 entitled "Rehabilitation for People with Sight Loss in Wales". This report can be accessed via the same link to the habilitation report:

http://www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/wales_vision_forum.php

This is a robust piece of research into the lack of rehabilitation services in Wales and the reality is that, given the lack of habilitation and rehabilitation together, visually impaired people in Wales are disadvantaged throughout life.

The evidence base about the poor quality of statutory services for visually impaired people in Wales has clearly been made. By examining this issue, the Committee could hold the Welsh Government to account and make recommendations to improve the situation.

There are around 120,000 people in Wales with a visual impairment of which about 2,000 are children and young people. Many are not getting basic support. The Committee needs to urgently address this issue now as one of its key priorities.

We suggest the Committee should involve or hear from the following:

Parents of and children and young people who are visually impaired

Visually impaired adults

Third sector organisations that support people with visual impairment

Local Authorities who provide habilitation services

Local Authorities who do not provide habilitation services

SENCOM a regional partnership of sight loss services covering 5 Local Authorities in Southeast Wales

Wales Habilitation and Rehabilitation Forums

The Wales Association of Vision Impairment Educators (WAVIE)

Welsh Government

WLGA

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Older Persons Commissioner Wales

EHRC

Public Service Boards

The Committee has the opportunity, if it undertakes scrutiny of this issue, to improve the lives of many vulnerable people in Wales. We hope this opportunity is taken.

Blaenoriaethau allweddol ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd

Key priorities for the Sixth Senedd

C2. Yn eich barn chi, pa flaenoriaethau allweddol eraill y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd mewn perthynas â:

- a) **gwasanaethau iechyd;**
- b) **gofal cymdeithasol a gofalwyr;**
- c) **adfer yn dilyn COVID?**

Q2. In your view, what other key priorities should the Committee consider during the Sixth Senedd in relation to:

- a) **health services;**
 - b) **social care and carers;**
 - c) **COVID recovery?**
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Gwasanaethau iechyd

Health services

The key issue for us regarding health services is to quickly reduce the waiting times for health interventions that support people who are visually impaired e.g., routine cataract operations.

Gofal Cymdeithasol a gofalwyr

Social care and carers

Our answer to question 1 sets out our key priority around social care

Adfer yn dilyn COVID

COVID recovery

COVID has disproportionately impacted on people who are visually impaired. The difficulties of social distancing and new street designs are examples of this. We will continue to campaign to ensure COVID recovery plans do not have any unintended consequences for our client group.