

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

**CYPE SP 60**

**Ymateb gan: Dr Caroline Walters, Rheolwr Materion Allanol, Cymru, Coleg Brenhinol Therapyddion Iaith a Lleferydd**

**Response from: Dr Caroline Walters, External Affairs Manager (Wales), Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists**

---

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

### **Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education**

#### **Post-legislative Scrutiny on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET)**

As the committee is well aware, this autumn will see the roll out of the ambitious new legislation for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). We believe strongly that the committee has a key role to play in scrutinising the implementation of the legislation and ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and young people with ALN. We feel a review of implementation of the legislation and impact of the lives of children and young people would be timely at a halfway point within the Senedd term. Given the staggered nature of implementation, we are of the view that lessons from such a review could inform implementation moving forward.

We believe such a review should bring together the perspectives of children and young people, their families and carers, education and health professionals and the third sector. It should consider;



- Identification of and support for children and young people with ALN including participation of children and young people in the process.
- Outcomes achieved by children with ALN.
- The transition from statements of special educational needs, School Action, School Action Plus and Learning Disability Assessments to Individual Development Plans.
- The level and distribution of funding for ALN provision.
- Dispute resolution including the role of the Education Tribunal for Wales.
- The roles of and collaboration between education, health and social care sectors.
- Provision for 16-25-year olds including support for independent living; transition to adult services; and access to education.
- Welsh language provision.

## **Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education**

Please see points above with relation to ALN provision for young people aged up to 25 in education or training.

## **Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)**

### **Neonatal services**

Given the recent critical review of neonatal services in Cwm Taf University Health Board, we feel it would be timely for the committee to review the provision of neonatal care across Wales.

Following the Neonatal Critical Care Review (2017), staffing levels on neonatal units have been revised and more specific information regarding Allied Health Professional (AHP) staffing ratios has been requested. This aims to move away from previous staffing recommendations of 'access to AHP input' and towards more equitable services for neonatal units across the UK.

Neonatal speech and language therapists have a specific role in the early identification and management of feeding and swallowing difficulties. They can facilitate positive feeding experiences and support feeding development from the beginning of the parent and infant's feeding journey to reduce the risk of known



prolonged feeding difficulties (Hawdon et al., 2000, Migraine et al. 2013, Johnson et al. 2016). They have a role in assessment and management of and in supporting families to promote effective early communication and interactions with their preterm and sick infants, improving early attachment and bonding and maximising speech, language and communication outcomes post discharge and beyond into adolescence (Van Noort-van der Spek et al. 2002, Foster-Cohen et al. 2007, Caskey et al. 2014, Rabie et al. 2016).

Since the Neonatal review, a number of external peer reviews in local health boards across Wales have been undertaken and have highlighted AHP shortages within teams and lack of ring-fenced funding for therapies as a significant concern.

Committee scrutiny of the AHP workforce within neonatal care as part of a wider inquiry into this area would be extremely helpful in shining a light on this issue and looking at potential ways forward for our youngest and most vulnerable children.

### **The sustainability of the Neurodevelopmental Services Workforce**

We are calling for a short inquiry into the current Welsh Government funded demand and capacity review of all-age neurodevelopmental services and have also raised this call in our response to the Health and Social Care Committee.

MSs will be well aware from their post bags of the high demand for neurodevelopmental services and long waiting lists exacerbated by the pandemic. Members working in these services have fed back to us significant concerns about the sustainability of services and ability to meet need. This featured strongly within scrutiny of the proposed Autism bill during the last Senedd term. A recent Welsh Government funded [Scoping Study for the Alignment and Development of Autism and Neurodevelopmental Services](#) also highlighted significant workforce sustainability concerns.

We would welcome scrutiny of the current Welsh Government funded demand and capacity review of all-age neurodevelopmental services. Given current issues within services, it is vital that the review incorporates the views of the broad range of stakeholders and that the findings support the development of long-term solutions. We are calling for a short one day inquiry to understand bottlenecks and pinch points within services, and provide recommendations as to how services may meet demand for all neurodevelopmental services regardless of diagnosis.

We are of the view that such an inquiry should include feedback from neurodiverse people, representative service user organisations and professional bodies representing the range of health care professionals working in ND teams. We work closely with other professional bodies working in this area and would be very keen to discuss and support further.



## **The impact of COVID-19 on pre-school children**

It is widely acknowledged that that Covid and the lockdowns it has entailed have had a huge impact on the lives of children. We know that much of the predecessor committee's scrutiny understandably focussed on the impact on older children and believe it would be extremely timely if the committee conducted a short inquiry into the impact on young children and how they now need to be supported.

Consideration should also be given to what mitigating steps need to be put in place in case of further lockdowns. We believe such a review could consider:

- Impact of disruption to early childhood education and care.
- Impact of redeployment of key early years professionals
- concerns around developmental delay due to lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic including speech, language and communication delay; fine and gross motor skills delay; and personal and social development
- Steps taken by Welsh Government to mitigate the impact of lockdown via the Child Development Fund

The inquiry should specifically focus on the impact on children from more deprived areas and those with additional learning needs.

There has been very recent research published on this area by [ICAN](#) and a team from [Oxford Brookes University](#) which could be helpful in shaping such an inquiry.

## **Mental health workforce for children and young people**

We welcomed the Fifth Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee's focus on mental health and the significant progress made in driving forward the whole school approach. We now feel in terms of next steps that it would be extremely helpful for the committee to undertake scrutiny on the future mental health workforce for children and young people, potentially in conjunction with the health committee. We have also raised this issue in our response to the Health and Social Care Committee consultation.

We view the upcoming mental health workforce plan as a real chance to remodel current provision and create sustainable services which ensure that all people in Wales are able to access appropriate mental health support. We understand children and young people's mental health is due to be a key focus area within the plan.

We believe that multidisciplinary working – with a well-trained, supported workforce that is equipped to meet the demands – should be central to the future provision of mental health services for all ages. This approach would enable each group of professionals to use their unique skills, knowledge, and abilities to better meet the



needs of individuals. In our view, development and improvement of the mental health workforce must include the full range of allied health professionals and bring in new professions and skillsets.

Additional scrutiny would be very timely in determining to what extent the plan will drive change and include a wide range of professions considered given recruitment challenges in the traditional workforce. We would hope such an inquiry would engage widely across service user and professional groups and include professions such as speech and language therapy which are not currently routinely part of core mental health teams but evidence suggests have a great deal to offer, particularly for children and young people.

## **Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people**

### **Young People within the Youth Justice Estate**

We are calling for a short inquiry into the speech, language and communication needs of young people in the youth justice estate. As the facts below highlight, this is a significant issue which could benefit from a timely, focused review.

#### **Key facts**

- Up to **60%** of young people in the youth justice estate have speech, language & communication needs (Bryan et al, 2007).
- **66%-90%** of young offenders have low language skills. 46-67% of these are in the poor or very poor range (Bryan et al, 2007).
- Around **40%** of young offenders find it difficult or are unable to access and benefit from rehabilitation programmes that are delivered verbally, such as drug rehabilitation courses (Bryan et al, 2004).

To our knowledge, this issue was last reviewed by the Senedd over ten years ago when the then Communities and Culture Committee report 'Youth justice: the experience of Welsh children in the secure estate' (2010) highlighted a lack of provision in Wales for young and adult offenders who have speech language and communication needs and recommended the Welsh Government enable pilot work to be done in Wales on the potential benefits of speech and language therapy for juvenile offenders both in custody and on release. Despite evidence from the pilots, provision remains extremely patchy over a decade later. This was briefly touched upon by the recent Health Committee inquiry on the provision of health and social care in the adult prison estate in Wales in which the governor of HMP Parc acknowledged that there was unmet need for speech and language therapy among the prison population.



We believe a potential short inquiry by the committee could be extremely helpful in shining a light on this key area. We are aware that this is an area that sits across the remit of a number of committees and we have also raised a potential inquiry with the Legislation, Justice and Constitution committee and the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

