

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 64

Ymateb gan: Jackie Murphy, Prif Swyddog Gweithredol, Tros Gynnal Plan, Cymru, TGP Cymru

Response from: Jackie Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, Tros Gynnal Plan, Cymru, TGP Cymru

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

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

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)

Introduction

TGP Cymru asks is the Senedd Children and Young People's Education Committee to prioritise;

- **Highlighting the lack of Residential Visiting Advocacy in children's homes across Wales**



- **Backing our calls for Residential Visiting Advocacy to be a requirement of Registration and Inspection with Care Inspectorate Wales**

This response builds on

- **Evidence given to the to last meeting of the Senedd Children and Young People's Education Committee on the 18th March 2021**, where Sharon Lovell CEO of NYAS Cymru, Deborah Jones CEO of Voices from Care Cymru and Jackie Murphy CEO of TGP Cymru presented evidence on the issues encountered when providing services to children and young people during the pandemic.

Jackie Murphy CEO of TGP Cymru focussed on the issue of the need for Residential Visiting Advocacy in children's homes across Wales as an added safeguard. She stressed that these children were isolated before the pandemic, but their circumstances had become even more precarious, and these children have become even more isolated and at risk since Covid 19.

Jackie Murphy made an impassioned plea for the recommendations of the TGP Cymru Research 'Out of Sight – Out of Rights' to be prioritised in the next Senedd Term, particularly that Residential Visiting Advocacy becomes a requirement of registration with Care Inspectorate Wales.

In her evidence Jackie Murphy stated that children and young people were suffering harm now and that they could not wait another 20 years for the recommendation of the Waterhouse enquiry to be implemented by the Senedd.

- **Waterhouse Inquiry – Lost in Care 2000** - recommended that an independent person regularly visit children's homes to establish a relationship of trust with children and young people so they would have someone to confide in if they did not feel safe. This recommendation has never been enacted by Welsh Government.

- **Recent events at a children's home in Cardiff. between November 2019 and September 2020**

On the 9th June 2021 the BBC reported the story of Ty Coryton. The article stated that "children at Ty Coryton were restrained and locked up unnecessarily.... one teenager was locked in her flat regularly because she was menstruating." A member of staff reported "*on one occasion she thought a child was going to die while being restrained on the floor for almost 20 minutes.*"

- **Findings from a recent Pilot Project conducted by TGP Cymru during the Pandemic**



In September 2020 TGP Cymru received WCVA Emergency Funding to pilot a free Residential Visiting Advocacy to 140 independent homes across Wales during the pandemic. Only 37 homes took up this offer.

During these virtual visits our residential visiting advocate dealt with issues including general care in the children's home and referred other issues to locally commissioned advocacy providers, including contact issues for Roma children who were separated from their parents and family.

It is disappointing that following on this from this free Pilot service only 3 of the homes have commissioned an ongoing Residential Visiting Advocacy Service.

- TGP Cymru's commitment to the **UNCRC** and consultation with the Children and Young People through the research and service user's forums.

TGP Cymru is the largest provider of Statutory and Residential Visiting Advocacy for Children and Young People in Wales. We currently visit 22 independently run children's homes and schools and up until recently to 1 health Care setting for adolescent girls. We also hold the contract with Neath Port Talbot CC for Hillside secure unit. Most of these contracts are long running and are generally in North Wales and have been with us since the Waterhouse Enquiry of 2000.

Facts and Figures

- **How many Children are there in Care Homes in Wales?** - Our research found that there were 435 in total with 325 Welsh children and 110 English children. (However, these numbers vary – another report quotes 665 children and an article by The Children's Commissioner on the 27 February 2020 BBC online states there are 770 care home places for children in Wales with 80% being run by private companies.)
- **Who are these children?** – the majority are aged between 10 to 15 years. Boys are more likely than girls to be placed in residential care with a ratio of 60:40. The most common reason for child starting a placement in residential care was abuse and neglect, accounting for 48% of CLA starting a residential placement
- **How many Children's Homes are there in Wales?**- our research found there were 178 Children's Homes in Wales of which 23 were owned and run by a local authorities and 155 by independent or voluntary sector providers.
- **Who owns the Independent Homes?**- at the time of the research (2019) 81 of the 155 homes are owned by 5 providers (some of whom work across England and Wales).

Keys (22)

Priory (9)

CareTech Community Services (8)



Bryn Melyn Care (9)

Action for Children (8)

Landsker Child Care (7)

Stepping Stones Care Services (7)

Priority Childcare (6)

Genus Care (5)

- **Which homes provide Residential Visiting Advocacy services as an added safeguard?** All 23 local authority run children's homes have RVA contracts

Only 5-10% of children's homes provided by the independent sector approx. 22 homes out of 155.

This is quite an anomaly, the Local Authority are under closer scrutiny from elected representatives and officers of the Local Authority. Also children are placed closer to their home communities and tend to see their social workers more regularly, yet they are the ones where a Residential Visiting Advocacy service is prioritised.

Children placed in independently run Children's Homes tend to be further away from home and report they see their Social Worker, family members etc less frequently.

Cost of implementing these recommendations

The implementation of these recommendations would require no additional resources from the Welsh Government or Local Authorities as it will be the responsibility of the Independent Care Home Providers to meet the cost. The cost of these services are not onerous and in some cases can work out at the cost of £5 per child per week.

Support for these recommendations

TGP Cymru have consulted with the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Association of Directors of Social Services and Cross Party Group on Looked after Children who support the recommendations of Out of Sight – Out of Rights. .

TGP Cymru has also shared the research and above evidence with the Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children and the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

Welsh Governments commitment to removing profit from Children

With The Children's Commissioner for Wales's call to end profit-making in children's care services and the Welsh Governments commitment to remove profit from care in this term, TGP Cymru believe there will be a greater need for Residential Visiting Advocacy services to ensure these children are supported, consulted and their rights upheld through what could be a difficult transition for them.



Outcome

TGP strongly believe that if the Senedd Children and Young People's Education Committee does prioritise If our ask is for the;

Backing our calls for Residential Visiting Advocacy to be a requirement of Registration and Inspection with Care Inspectorate Wales and is successful in influencing the Welsh Government to enact this then TGP Cymru strongly believe hundreds of children and young people in the care system in Wales will have an added Safeguard against violence and abuse and will be made aware of their rights and have someone to ensure that their rights upheld.

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

See no 3

