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Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS
Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

18 October 2023

Dear Jenny,

We are writing to you in response to the recent questions posed to us at our committee evidence sessions regarding our confidence in the care system for children in Wales.

We are in no doubt that professionals across the health, social care, and specialist VAWDASV sector in Wales do their utmost to support those in need. It takes a whole-system approach to ensure that vulnerable children and young people are safeguarded and supported effectively after they have experienced harm, and here in Wales, we are improving our cross-agency engagement and delivery.

Through the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Blueprint and the National Partnership Board, we are working towards a better unified approach to policy development and delivery between VAWDASV and Safeguarding. The VAWDASV Blueprint has a workstream specifically designed to focus on the needs of children and young people. Membership of the workstream spans the public sector, including education, social services, health and policing in Wales alongside specialist and third sector organisations, thus reinforcing the whole system approach to tackling VAWDASV.

With this partnership approach, the work will ensure clarity and consistency in terms of supporting children and young people. The workstream is also supporting the implementation of the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) to promote healthy relationships at all ages, as well as addressing peer on peer sexual harassment and abuse.

The National Training Framework's Ask and Act training is aimed at professionals who are in jobs where VAWDASV may be an issue for those they engage with. The training ensures that

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

professionals can recognise the signs that someone is being abused, talk to them about it in a safe and sensitive way where appropriate, and offer options regarding services and support, quickly and efficiently. The Ask and Act framework was evaluated last year, and further evaluation around the Ask and Act programme will be discussed within the Blueprint workstreams to ensure the programme remains fit for purpose.

You also ask about our confidence in the systems to support and protect our children. This is informed through a range of evidence and activities. We have been able to discuss these in great depth and breadth as part of the work of the Children, Young People and Education Committee into the “*Radical Reform of Services for Care Experienced Children*”. During the most recent scrutiny session on 14 September, I was pleased to re-affirm our ambition to transform services for children, young people and their families. The Committee’s aspirations align with the work we are taking forward through our Transformation Programme of Children’s Services.

Alongside that Programme, I have previously shared with the Committee how the Single Unified Safeguarding Framework will provide a single consistent safeguarding umbrella and will enable swifter identification of learning outcomes and the wider dissemination and implementation of all learning on a pan-Wales basis.

Work is firmly underway to develop and deliver a National Practice Framework that will secure consistent practice and experience for children and families. We will be delivering up to 5 new standards of practice by the end of 2023 with further standards being co-produced by the end of 2024. The Framework will be the first set of national standards for children’s services in Wales, and sit alongside other all-Wales assurance mechanisms like the All-Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the associated Practice Guides.

Additionally, I have recently met the Members of the National independent Safeguarding Board to receive an update on some critical activities they will shortly bring forward as part of their responsibilities to report on the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children and adults in Wales and to make recommendations to the Welsh Ministers as to how those arrangements could be improved.

We trust that this letter provides you with the assurance that you required, and welcome any further correspondence from the Committee with regards to this matter

Kind regards



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