



PLANT YNG NGHYMRU
CHILDREN IN WALES

MINUTES of
Inaugural meeting Cross Party Group Children & Families &
Cross Party Group Children in our Care
1 February 2022

1. Welcome/Introductions

Jane Dodds MS welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this is the inaugural meeting of both the Cross Party Group (CPG) for Children & Families and CPG for Children in Our Care. She confirmed that there is cross-party support for these two groups across the Senedd.

2. Attendees

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| Jane Dodds MS | Member of the Senedd |
| Sioned Williams MS | Member of the Senedd |
| Heledd Fychan MS | Member of the Senedd |
| Mike Hedges MS | Member of the Senedd (or one of his staff) |
| Jenny Rathbone MS | Member of the Senedd |
| Sarah Murphy MS | Member of the Senedd |
| Rhys Taylor | Staff of Jane Dodds MS |
| Shannon Orritt | Staff of Mabon ap Gwynfor MS |
| Andrew Jenkins | Staff of Sioned Williams MS |
| Eleri Griffiths | Staff of Heledd Fychan |
| Ken Moon | Staff of Heledd Fychan |
| Ioan Bellin | Staff of Rhys ab Owen |
| Ryland Doyle | Staff of Mike Hedges MS |
| Alex Hughes-Howells | Staff of Peredur Owen Griffiths |
| Gareth Llewellyn | Staff of Peredur Owen Griffiths |
| Owen Evans | Children in Wales |
| Louise O'Neill | Children in Wales |
| Helena Molloy | Children in Wales |
| Helen Mary Jones | Consultant, Voices From Care Cymru |
| Deborah Jones | Voices from Care |
| Sally Holland | Children's Commissioner for Wales |
| Chloe Gallagher | Children's Commissioner's Office |
| Sharon Lovell | NYAS Cymru |
| Patrick Thomas | Children in Wales Trustee |
| Mike Greenaway | Play Wales |
| Izzabella James | Home Start Cymru |
| Rachel Thomas | Children's Commissioner's Office |
| Peter Jones | Guide Dogs Cymru |

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| Sarah Durrant | TGP Cymru |
| Elinor Crouch-Puzey | NSPCC Cymru |
| Amy Bainton | Barnardo's Cymru |
| Viv Laing | NSPCC Cymru |
| Brendan Roberts | DWP/Care Experienced Young Person |
| Rebecca Millar | Care for the Family |

Apologies

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| Mark Isherwood, MS | |
| Llyr Gruffydd, MS | |
| Jack Sergeant MS | |
| Mark Isherwood MS | |
| Joyce Watson MS | |
| Peredur Owen Griffiths MS | |
| Laura Anne Jones MS | |
| Dave Williams, Chair, Children in Wales | |
| Gethin Matthews-Jones, RCPCH | |
| Tracey Holdsworth, NSPCC Cymru | |
| Suzanne Griffiths, National Adoption Service for Wales | |

3. Appoint Officers

Owen Evans, Chief Executive, Children in Wales spoke to this item. It was confirmed that:

Jane Dodds, MS is appointed as Chair of the CPG for Children & Families – Jenny Rathbone MS nominated / Sarah Murphy MS and Eleri Griffiths (on behalf of Heledd Fychan MS) seconded the decision

No Vice Chair was required

Children in Wales will provide secretariat for future meetings

Jane Dodds, MS is appointed as Chair of the CPG for Children in Our Care – Eleri Griffiths (on behalf of Heledd Fychan MS) nominated and Sarah Murphy MS seconded the nomination

No Vice Chair was required

Voices from Care Cymru will provide secretariat for future meetings

Some discussion took place around the need for the two groups to continue, as there are so many cross-party groups already in existence. Jane Dodds MS confirmed that there is a recognised need to keep them both separate and there is a justifiable need for them to continue in the future.

4. Agree Terms of Reference

Jane Dodds, MS shared the main purpose of each CPG, as drafted by Children in Wales and Voices from Care Cymru respectively.

Attendees agreed to both lists, though Sharon Lovell, NYAS Cymru asked that Statutory Advocacy services in Wales be added to the Children in Our Care Terms of Reference, to include advocacy in mental health and education. Jane Dodds, MS agreed to add these points.

5. Children's rights in Wales and the challenges ahead

Jane Dodds, MS welcomed Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner for Wales and thanked her for her commitment during her term in office.

The Commissioner mentioned how grateful she had been to see various policy initiatives being introduced during her term, however, stressed how legal entitlements for children and young people (with funding) will need to be secured going forward. Primary legislation or statutory guidance for children will need to be a continued priority.

The Commissioner highlighted an event which will be taking place, introduced by the First Minister, on 4 April 2022 from 4.30pm, where she will be presenting her final remarks as Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The Commissioner noted some of the main achievements of her office's work during the fifth Senedd term, including:

- Youth Parliament – supported by the Senedd
- Mind over Matter report – this has been a milestone and will be equally as important moving forward

Some unfinished business which will need some focus includes:

- Legislation to protect and support care experienced children and young people, as there are a number of specific entitlements missing at present
- Gaps in support for young people up to the age of 25 years. This needs to be made everyone's business
- Elective home education is not strong enough
- Safeguarding in schools
- Child poverty – this is one of the biggest challenges. Initiatives that have been introduced to support early years provision and free school meals has been hugely welcomed, however, the Senedd will need to focus going forward
- Safeguarding of public services

A few thoughts on priorities for the sixth Senedd were presented next:

- Social care reform
- Specific entitlements for care experienced children and young people
- Corporate parenting legislation
- Stronger duties on public services
- Full incorporation of the UNCRC into legislation

Jane Dodds MS thanked the Commissioner again and this was seconded by Sarah Murphy, MS. She mentioned how the Commissioner's support to her local constituents had been huge and agreed that children's rights need to be incorporated into all pieces of legislation.

Helen Mary Jones and Debbie Jones of Voices from Care Cymru noted some further concerns around the need for real change in service provision for care experienced children and young people in Wales. Children's rights are not being claimed by those in care in Wales – children's rights are embedded in many other countries and Wales is lagging behind. There is a vision to have a children's rights approach to services, and work will be done to ask those in care what a fully-aligned service would look like. The existing Welsh Government Oversight Board, which it is intended will be co-chaired by care experienced young people and of which Voices from Care Cymru is a member, will need to take these issues forward.

6. Discussion on priorities for both CPGs

Jane Dodds MS confirmed that she will be adding the UNCRC into the Terms of Reference for both CPGs, together with the effectiveness of advocacy, especially in mental health cases. Members will have the opportunity to finalise the Terms of Reference when the two Groups meet separately.

Any further comments can be emailed to jane.dodds@senedd.wales

7. Any Other Business

It was agreed that:

- The two CPGs would continue as separate entities
- Children in Wales will provide secretariat for the CPG for Children & Families.
- Voices from Care Cymru will provide secretariat for the CPG for Children in our Care.

8. Next meeting date

Jane Dodds MS confirmed that she would work with both the above organisations to organise future meetings and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend. She stressed that we must do everything we can to push this agenda forward, and take the voices and experiences of children and young people themselves to make the point even clearer. We need good policies in place and we need to be innovative!

The meeting was closed.