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Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1518  
Ein cyf/Our ref SM/00415/25

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

27 August 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter about Petition P-06-1518: Provide more timely and accessible mental health support for children under 10, including by referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is a priority for the Welsh Government, demonstrated through the appointment of a dedicated Minister for Children and Social Care, and myself as Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. The Cabinet Secretary for Education has been very clear in her commitment that good mental health is the platform on which our education system will be built.

We recognise the importance of supporting children and young people with their mental health - our all-age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy reflects this: [Mental health and wellbeing strategy 2025 to 2035 | GOV.WALES](#). It sets out our priorities for the next 10 years with a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention, delivered through a joint approach from health and social care.

We know that early childhood experiences, whether positive or negative, can have significant impact on children's current, and future, mental health and wellbeing. The Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) approach focuses on the child and their development. This builds on and recognises the importance of working together with parents, and other care givers, to support every baby and young child to feel empowered, cared for, nurtured and to create environments in which children are able to thrive. It also builds on the nurturing and learning parents/carers provide at home and/or helps as a preventative measure for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The approach is supported by a number of early years policies and programmes, including Families First, and Flying Start, which promote the development of multi-agency systems of support for families and places an emphasis on early help and prevention.

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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.

The Healthy Child Wales Programme [Healthy Child Wales Programme | GOV.WALES](#) supports all families in Wales by providing a universal health offer for all children. It is delivered primarily by health visiting services for children under five and sets out the planned contacts children, and their families can expect from their health boards, from maternity service handover to the first years of schooling.

These universal contacts cover three areas of intervention: screening; immunisation; and monitoring and supporting child development (surveillance). Health visitors play a vital role in supporting children and families at this early stage of life. They are well placed to identify any health issues early and can offer expert advice, support and interventions tailored to meet the individual family's needs.

Building upon the Healthy Child Wales Programme is the Healthy Child Wales Programme for school aged children, [Healthy Child Wales Programme: for school aged children | GOV.WALES](#) which is a new unified operating model for school nursing services. It provides a structured and equitable national programme of planned universal health contacts for all compulsory school aged children and young people (aged 5 to 16 years) in Wales, regardless of setting. It will ensure that children and young people can receive the universal benefits of a public health programme, which prioritises prevention and ensures children and young people are supported by NHS Wales with their health and well-being, according to need, throughout school age.

Health Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn produced a joint review on healthcare, education and children's services supporting the mental health needs of children and young people in Wales. It showed the progress we have been making to reduce waiting times and positive developments in schools to support young people, and single points of access for CAMHS. However, it also identified areas where further work is required, and this work has been embedded into the work programme underpinning the strategy. As a result, we have developed a CAMHS service specification to reduce variation across Wales. This includes our expectation that CAMHS can accept referrals from the age of five. Health boards have undertaken baseline assessments against the specification and are working towards implementation. We will be providing annual updates on this work as part of the implementation of the strategy which will be made publicly available.

In March 2021, we published the [Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing](#). This statutory guidance for schools, local authorities and others is designed to support them in assessing the well-being needs of learners, staff, and the whole school population. It also complements the curriculum's Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience within the Curriculum for Wales.

In 2025-26 the Welsh Government has made available £13.6 million from its education and health budgets to support implementation of the Whole School Approach framework and programme of work through schools, local authorities, and other education settings. We have allocated £4.75m within the Local Authority Education Grant (LAEG) equity strand in 2025-26 to support delivery of universal and targeted well-being interventions, staff training, and provision of school and community-based counselling. School and community-based counselling is a statutory duty on all local authorities in Wales to support children and young people in schools from Year 6, however Welsh government funding is giving authorities the ability to voluntarily extend this support to below Year 6.

The health and well-being area of learning and experience of the new Curriculum for Wales, which is mandatory for all learners, provides a holistic structure for understanding health and well-being, equipping them with the capacity to navigate life's opportunities and challenges. Central to this area is a strong emphasis on physical health and mental, emotional, and social well-being. It encourages learners to explore how these elements are deeply interconnected

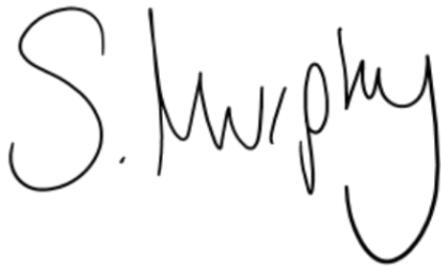
and highlights the vital role that good health and mental well-being play in supporting effective learning.

By creating opportunities for children to express their emotions and build emotional literacy, we foster a culture in the school curriculum where open conversations about mental health are normalised. This not only supports individual growth for our young learners but also helps to create a more compassionate and supportive learning environment.

We are taking a whole system approach to mental health and wellbeing support for babies, children and young people and their families. This is particularly important for under 10's whose mental health and wellbeing must be supported in a holistic way through their trusted adults and safe and supportive communities. Our [NYTH/NEST framework](#) for mental health and wellbeing for babies, children and young people provides a set of key principles and shared language for sectors to work together to create layers of support for babies and children's mental health and wellbeing support.

Regions are working to imbed the NEST framework with some excellent examples of good practice including West Glamorgan funding the charity Faith in Families to provide mental health support to children and their families to increase school attendance. Whilst West Wales fund the Early Years Intervention Team who work in partnership across health and social care with children in the early years offering one-to-one and group support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Sarah Murphy AS/MS**

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