

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Buffy Williams MS (Chair)
Carolyn Thomas MS (Temporary Chair)
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

12 March 2026

Dear Buffy and Carolyn,

Please find below an update on the agreed actions arising from the committee session on 4 March 2026 along with a response to the question not reached during scrutiny.

1	<p>Total number of children who are waiting for treatment including those waiting for treatment outside Wales.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>Official referral to treatment (RTT) statistics show there were 54,435 pathways for Welsh residents under age 18 provided by Welsh health boards at the end of December 2025, the latest available figures.</p> <p>For clarity, we refer to “pathways” because an individual may be on more than one treatment pathway at the same time. As we do not hold patient-level data, “pathways” is the accurate and appropriate term to use.</p> <p>Data held by Welsh Government for Welsh residents on waiting lists provided outside of Wales are not available with age breakdowns. Local health boards may be able to provide more information.</p>
2	<p>Figures on the number of health care assistants that are providing support to families.</p> <p>Response:</p>

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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.

	<p>The NHS Electronic Staff Record shows 503 healthcare support workers are currently employed across maternity services in Wales to provide additional support to families.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Information on the outreach element of Flying Start.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>The outreach element of the Flying Start programme allows services to be delivered to those living outside of core Flying Start areas who are identified as in need of support. Data on the provision of the Outreach element of the programme is not recorded by Local Authorities on a consistent basis within the official statistics, which means it is likely that the actual number of children benefitting from Flying Start will be higher than the officially recorded total of 40,943. The year 1 report of the National Evaluation of Flying Start reports that the scale of outreach varies between Local Authorities but generally represents a small proportion of Flying Start provision. One local authority reported working with 50 to 60 children in outreach services, compared with around 1,000 in core services, while another local authority reported working with about 150 families on their outreach list and around 1,400 children in receipt of services.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>To share the findings from the spotlight event.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>A report on the findings and actions agreed following the 4 December 2025 spotlight event is currently being finalised and will be shared with the committee as soon as it is available.</p> <p>To summarise, the event shared good practice examples, policy overviews and facilitated discussions to improve multiagency, integrated population planning, accountability and delivery at Regional Partnership Board level.</p> <p>The event shone a light on the challenges of navigating the current cross-sector system particularly in relation to supporting children and young people with ALN and health and care needs. It also highlighted the opportunities for improved integration and examples of what is possible through effective cross sector collaboration.</p> <p>To support improvement action, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Minister for Mental Health and Well-being and Minister for Children and Social care and I have made a joint commitment to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embed children and young people with ALN and health and care needs in Regional Partnership Boards' priorities. 2. Develop a health policy statement to inform the co-production of new multi-agency ALNET guidance with delivery partners. 3. Review the Supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs guidance alongside Part 2 of the School Nursing Framework for Wales and develop new joint guidance that provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of education and health providers

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Undertake a mapping exercise to strengthen area-based planning by improving population-level data sharing between schools, local authorities, health boards and Regional Partnership Boards on children and young people with ALN and health and care needs. 5. Map current no wrong door / single point of access work and explore need for co-produced national guidance. 6. Appoint a Professional Advisor for Multi-agency Collaboration across education, health and social care. <p>We are clear in our expectations that all sectors must collaborate and uphold the 5 ways of working set out in the Future Generations Act and reflected in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. To support this, we will be requesting progress reports at our meetings with RPB leads and chairs, during Health Board accountability meetings, and at Association of Directors of Education meetings and National ALN Delivery and Improvement Board, to ensure this work is being taken forward at pace.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>To share the report from The Royal College of Psychiatrists regarding on CAHMS referrals for 11 to 18-year-olds.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>We expect the final report on the Sanctuary pilots to be available by the end of March and will share with the Committee then, or as soon as it is available.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>A progress report on how regional safeguarding boards are embedding the recommendations from the Child Practice Review.</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>Following the publication of Our Bravery Brought Justice, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Social Care wrote to all Regional Safeguarding Boards the following day, asking them to take responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the report's recommendations within their respective regions. Boards were also asked to ensure that the learning from the report was shared widely across their partnerships.</p> <p>Regional Safeguarding Boards were asked to submit a progress report by 2 March, setting out the action taken to implement recommendations made directly to Boards, as well as those directed at key partner agencies. This included evidence of how Boards had assured themselves of progress and impact.</p> <p>Each Board undertook an exercise with its key partners to gather information on implementation. This information was then brought back to Boards for scrutiny and challenge, enabling members to test progress and identify areas requiring further action.</p> <p>Boards have confirmed that learning from Our Bravery Brought Justice has been disseminated across their regions and embedded within local work programmes. Their progress reports are currently being reviewed by officials.</p>

Across Wales, substantial Board led work is ongoing to ensure that the importance of listening to the voices of children and young people is consistently embedded within training, policies and procedures developed by both individual agencies and Regional Safeguarding Boards.

7 **Question not Reached**

Children on the Margins: You rejected the recommendation in our 'Children on the margins report' for a statutory footing for 'return interviews' to take place when a child or young person has gone missing so professionals can understand what happened and identify what can be done to prevent them being missing in the future. Can you tell us the latest position on your work to review the practice around return home interviews in Wales and the update of the All-Wales Practice Guides on Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care? How can you be assured this will prove the necessary safeguards?

Response:

We recognise the importance of return home interviews in helping professionals understand the circumstances around a child or young person going missing and in identifying actions to reduce the risk of repeat episodes. However, we did not accept the recommendation to place return interviews on a statutory footing, as commissioned research did not reach a consensus on mandating return interviews in all circumstances or on who should conduct them. We also considered it important to retain professional judgement and flexibility to respond proportionately to individual children's needs.

Since the publication of the Committee's report, significant work has progressed to strengthen practice and safeguards. In September 2024, we established a multi-agency Steering Group to revise the All-Wales Practice Guide: Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care, alongside related guidance for children placed out of area or cross-border. The Steering Group met monthly, followed by a 12-week period of structured engagement with key stakeholders on the draft guidance. The revised documents are now complete and are due to be presented to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board for sign-off and national rollout.

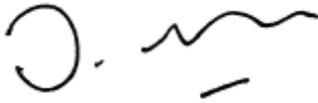
Assurance is further provided through existing statutory safeguarding arrangements. Under Part 10 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, all looked after children are entitled to an active offer of independent advocacy, including to make representations about the care and support they receive.

Where concerns arising from a missing episode indicate potential risk of harm, these are addressed in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, including child protection processes and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, providing further assurance that risks are identified, escalated and responded to.

To ensure the revised guidance is embedded effectively, we have committed to post-publication engagement six months after release to review how it is being applied in practice. The Steering Group will also reconvene in April 2026 to develop a core data set for children who go missing and to map commissioned and local authority provision across Wales, strengthening system-wide oversight.

Taken together, this programme of work provides proportionate and robust safeguards without legislative change at this stage, while keeping practice and impact under ongoing review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

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