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Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Ann Jones AM
Chair of the Children and Young People Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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26 November 2013

Dear Ann

We refer to your letter of 29th October, outlining your main conclusions which have been drawn from your scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2014-15. Please find below our responses in relation to the issues on which you have asked for further information.

NHS Expenditure on services for children and young people

The Committee acknowledges it is inappropriate for the Welsh Government to require Local Health Boards to spend specific amounts on services for children and young people. I would however like to reassure the Committee that value for money consideration is a priority. An example of effective working across agencies, particularly in the context in delivering value for money is the Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan.

On 17 July 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills, the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty and the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty launched the Plan which sets out direction of travel for the next 10 years with actions and timescales for delivery. The Plan brings coherence across different policies and programmes impacting on and influencing the early years. The Plan works across a wide range of organization and through providing commonality of purpose will drive effective inter agency working.

The Rights of Children

The Deputy Minister is confident that the reduction announced by the Minister for Tackling Poverty to the Rights for Children budget will not impact on the Government's ability to implement the full range of duties under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. The budget in respect of the Measure remains at £0.5 million. The reductions come from two elements:

- the need to end old programmes; and
- merge others with as little impact on front-line services as possible.

Hospice Support

The reduction to the hospice budget is as a result of the recurrent effect of savings identified in 2013-14. Funding is allocated by a robust needs based formula developed by the Palliative Care Implementation board and these savings have been identified using this formula. There is therefore no cut in real terms to the amount available in 2014-15 and no change in the amounts available to frontline services compared to 2013-14. The amount provided to children's hospices for the provision of specialist care remains consistent to that provided in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

You asked to receive further information on the work we are undertaking on the two drugs that are most often prescribed for young people identified as having ADHD firstly, to monitor the increase in uptake of medication and, second, to evaluate the causes or reasons for such increases.

My officials routinely monitor prescribing patterns of all medicines but have not commissioned specific work to evaluate the causes or reasons for any increase in the use of medicines to treat ADHD. We will undertake further analysis of the prescribing trend over the past three years. The work to monitor changes is already in place – full details of prescriptions dispensed in the community is available to Health Boards through the CASPA.net system, this is updated monthly and provides details of cost and volume of prescribing over time. LHBs are expected to monitor trends in prescribing and take appropriate action in the case of inappropriate prescribing behaviour. If further analysis of data is required at a national level we can arrange for that to be provided either on an ad hoc or routine basis.

The increase in the number of young people with ADHD is international and has affected services across the UK and western world. The major contributory factors are:

- Possible increase in incidence
- Definite Increased awareness
- Lack of robust preventative services such as early parenting consistently across wales
- Public expectations and need for diagnosis to access support in education and possibly access to benefits

Childhood Immunisation and Screening Programmes

In 2014-15 budget provision of £7.6m in respect of the vaccination and immunisation programmes is held within the Deliver Targeted Health Protection and Immunisation Action and not the Promote Healthy Improvement and Working Action, which was quoted in error in the evidence paper prepared for the 16 October meeting.

Recognising the importance of this area of preventative spending, we are committed to fully fund the vaccination and immunisation programme. The extra costs of the new programmes have been provided as part of the additional funds announced by the Finance Minister and will see the expected spend on the All Wales Vaccination Programme rise significantly to around £16m by 2015-16. This additional funding currently sits within the Delivery of Core NHS Services Action.

We cannot accurately predict actual uptake rates for these new programmes as they are demand-led and we are unable to predetermine who will wish to participate. We do however monitor the position closely and review the budget as necessary.

Screening Programmes

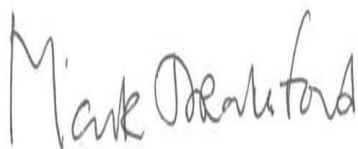
All screening programmes including those specifically for children are contained within Public Health Wales' core funding. The funding for PHW is contained within the Sponsorship of Public Health Bodies Action. This funding is not ring-fenced so allows PHW the flexibility to allocate resources according to need. £3.4 million is spent on children's screening programmes including new-born hearing, new-born bloodspot and antenatal screening.

CAFCASS Cymru

The anticipated change to the Family Justice System was one of the integral drivers of the CAFCASS Cymru Change Programme which began in 2011.

The budget, which remains the same as it was in 2012-13, has enabled CAFCASS Cymru to undertake a leading role in Family Justice Reform in Wales. Despite applications for care remaining at the second highest in the organisation's history and a 29% increase in private law referrals for safeguarding in the first six months of the financial year, CAFCASS Cymru has now eradicated its backlog of unallocated cases.

CAFCASS Cymru has worked closely with Local Authorities and HM Courts and Tribunals Service to deliver the President of the Family Division's pilot of the revised Public Law Outline which came into effect on 2nd September in the Gwent and Cardiff Local Family Justice Board area and on 7th October 2013 across the remaining LFJB areas in Wales. The retention of the budget ensures that CAFCASS Cymru can complete its change programme and meet the challenges of the Family Justice Reform Programme.



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