

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/JH-/1229/23

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

6 July 2023

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter of 14 June regarding the Welsh Government response to the Equality and Social Justice committee's report entitled *60% - Giving them a voice - Speech, Language and Communication Needs in the Youth Justice System*.

Thank you for providing detailed feedback on our response ahead of the Plenary debate on 28 June.

Regarding recommendation 1, I can confirm that the Welsh Government accepts this recommendation. In addition to the work of development of the Youth Justice Prevention Framework noted in my previous response, Welsh Government Policy officials will work together to organise a summit of key stakeholders, including Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service to look specifically at the impact of SLCN on children and the link to the involvement of most children involved with the youth justice system. This summit will also consider the point made by Jane Dodds in the Senedd debate on 28 June, in terms of how Neath Port Talbot have been able to embed SLC provision into their service given the broader staffing challenges in the sector. The findings and outcomes of this summit will be shared with the Criminal Justice Board for Wales, which we understand to be the intention of the recommendation.

Regarding recommendation 2, language skills are an essential part of Curriculum for Wales. These skills are woven throughout the Statements of What Matters in the Area of Learning for Languages, Literacy and Communication. The Descriptions of Learning at progression

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales

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.

Step 3, which broadly covers learners aged 8-11, includes detailed guidance for progression so that all learners are supported to develop their spoken language and communication skills. More information can be found at [Languages, Literacy and Communication \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/languages-literacy-and-communication).

Regarding recommendation 3, no discussions have taken place with the Ministry of Justice on the need for funding for more SLTs, or funding education places in Wales. At present, these education places and SLT employment is through the NHS and health (including funding responsibilities) is devolved. Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) hold contracts with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Wales for the education and provision of training, including SLTs, these numbers are based on Health Boards IMTPs and assessment of their requirements to meet their entire population needs.

One of the limiting factors for significantly increasing the number of healthcare professionals is the capacity of existing services and professionals to meet the requirement for students to undertake practice-based education in health and care services, overseen by a registered speech and language therapist, in order to complete their course requirements.

Regarding recommendation 4, an initial meeting with key stakeholders has been arranged for 29 June 2023 to discuss independent advocacy for young people with SLCN within the youth justice system, with a view to outline the full approach to this recommendation. The nature and scope of additional resource will be informed through our engagement and analysis with our partners across the Youth Justice system. We share the Committee's conclusion to ensure children are supported by an appropriate advocate.

Regarding recommendation 5, the Welsh Government has not been directly involved in looking at the outcomes of the Joint Inspection report, however we continue to work with our partners in the Ministry of Justice following the report's publication. We are delivering an improvement programme for Neurodivergence Services in Wales, supporting the development of multi-disciplinary teams providing needs led assessment and support services for children and young people, this includes ensuring where necessary speech, language and communication services are available. The programme also has a clinical advisory group which can provide expert advice on meeting the speech, language and communication needs of neurodivergent people.

Regarding recommendation 6, the number of education and training places commissioned for SLTs, as for all healthcare professional education are based on the workforce planning in NHS IMTPs, plus consideration of the wider health and care sector, for example, in the case of SLTs in the Flying Start requirement. The IMTPs are submitted to Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), who are responsible for the annual education and training commissioning process in Wales, to address workforce requirements on behalf of the NHS Wales. The reference to 'match service demand' refers to the current process for identifying the workforce demand for SLTs in health and care services in Wales.

Regarding recommendation 7, one action in the National Workforce Implementation Plan that will be completed by July 2023, is that "HEIW will review allied health professions to understand the current position and future needs to deliver our services, resulting in an AHP retention plan". Progress on this action will be reported to the Welsh Government's Strategic Workforce Implementation Board, chaired by Judith Paget, Chief Executive of NHS Wales. At present, the retention plan is on track, but preparatory work, such as accessing data is needed as a first step before undertaking a full review.

I hope this information has clarified our original response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first few letters.

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