

Jane Hutt MS

Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip

14 June 2023

Dear Jane

Committee report: 60% - Giving them a voice - Speech, Language and Communication Needs in the Youth Justice System

Thank you for your response to our report on speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the youth justice system, which we considered at our meeting on 12 June 2023.

We were glad to see that you share our ambition to improve outcomes for young people with SLCN in the criminal justice system. However, we were disappointed at the lack of detailed action being taken by the Welsh Government and would therefore welcome additional clarity in relation to the following points:

- Recommendation 1 called for the Welsh Government to convene a summit of key stakeholders working in the sector with the aim of formulating a new workstream looking specifically at the impact of SLCN on children and young people and the link to the involvement of most young people involved with the youth justice system. However the response does not commit to convening a summit and instead sets out work already underway. Please could you clarify whether a summit will take place? If not, the response should be amended to "Reject" in order to assist transparency.
- Recommendation 2 referred specifically to "young people as they progress from primary to secondary school", however your response refers to the "Talk with Me" plan, which is targeted at children aged 0-5. Please could you set out how the SLCN of children and young people aged 10+ will be met.
- The response recognises the benefits arising from Recommendation 3 but states there are currently insufficient NHS employed Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) to meet the



additional workload. Could you confirm whether other Ministerial Departments, such as Social Justice, could commission training places for SLTs? What discussions if any have been held with the Ministry of Justice on the need for funding for more SLTs, given that youth justice is currently not a devolved service?

- Could you clarify whether the Welsh Government intends to put *in additional resources to extend provision of advocacy services (emphasis added)* for all children and young people with SLCN in the youth justice system as set out in Recommendation 4? The response accepts this recommendation in principle while only referring to existing work.
- It is unclear from the response to Recommendation 5 whether any specific actions are being taken forward or whether there have been any lessons learned as a result of the Joint Inspection Report, to improve support for children and young people with SLCN. Could you please provide additional information in relation to this point?
- The Committee received strong evidence to support Recommendation 6, and while the benefits are acknowledged the response states that this “would require additional training places and workforce supply”. This appears to contradict the information provided elsewhere, for example in response to Recommendation 7, which says that the number of SLT training places in Wales “remains at 49 for 2023-24, to match service demand”.
- The response to Recommendation 7 refers to a national workforce implementation plan. However, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has said that a workforce plan for allied health professions (AHPs) has been rejected. Please could you confirm whether this is the case.

Finally, we would like to place further emphasis on recommendations of 3 and 6, which we consider to be key conclusions of our inquiry. These recommendations are based on evidence that the approach works and keeps people out of the offending system, and they address the inequalities that are evidenced by the figures in our report. We would encourage you to consider seeing how this works in practice in order to better understand our findings.

A debate is scheduled for 28 June and while the timescales are tight, we would greatly appreciate a response in advance of the debate in order to inform Members’ contributions if possible.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee



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