

Lesley Griffiths MS

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice

1 July 2024

Dear Lesley,

Summit on Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Thank you for your letter dated 30 May. We consider the latest update to be a departure from correspondence with your predecessor which had left us hopeful that progress was being made on this important matter. However there is now a marked change in the Government's tone which we find deeply disappointing.

Our report sets out the clear and compelling case for the Welsh Government to do more in this area. It is simply not good enough for the Welsh Government to leave it up to health boards to determine provision. It requires intervention at the centre to coordinate resources and people so that they may be more creatively and effectively deployed to where they are most needed. That is why we proposed a summit as a first step in bringing people together to look again at provision and how SLCN in the youth justice system is funded. All the signs were that this had been a positive exercise, however, the lack of detail in your most recent letter suggests to us that the Welsh Government's position has changed – we expect a full explanation for this. In particular we would like you to outline whether or not further action will be taken to establish a workstream and implement recommendation 1. We would also be grateful to receive the summary report from the Summit as previously requested as we do not appear to have received a copy.

Finally, one of the Welsh Government's key aims with regards to the future devolution settlement is to secure powers over criminal justice. It is especially troubling therefore that in youth justice, an area where the jagged edge in devolution is most prominently displayed, the Welsh Government is not fully utilising its resources to influence outcomes through its control of social policies like funding for speech and language therapists. This is despite strong evidence that such funding can greatly improve the outcomes for these young people who, without support, are likely to end up unjustly incarcerated. On their behalf, we urge you to reconsider.

I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care given their responsibility for Speech, Language and Communication provision.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the name.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Welsh Parliament

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

