

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 57

Ymateb gan : Llamau

Response from : Llamau

Question 1 – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

Llamau's mission is to eradicate homelessness in Wales. In particular we work with young people who are currently or at risk of experiencing homelessness. We know from our work that particular groups of young people are more at risk of homelessness than others and we would ask the committee to consider the needs of these groups in their work over the course of the fifth assembly.

Improving outcomes for young people in the care system or who have left the care system

A large proportion of the young people who find themselves at risk of homelessness have experienced the care system. There is a strong link between being in care and not having adequate housing as a young adult. The transition arrangements to manage the process of leaving care need to be considered by the committee.

Llamau's Symud Ymlaen / Moving Forward Programme works with care leavers and young people who have been involved with youth offending services, working with them to improve their employability skills and obtain qualifications and accreditations, along with a six-month work placement. Of those who have finished their work placements, 75% have continued employment, found new employment or started an education or training course. This funding is due to come to an end in March 2017 and there are no other

programmes that come close to identifying and successfully combatting the extra barriers that care leavers and young people who have offended face.

Greater support for preventative work, and greater support for those in crisis

We suggest that the committee consider looking at how inequalities that already exist from a very young age can be reduced. This includes the preventative work to mitigate impacts, before challenges turn into problems. There are currently funded projects and programmes that have an impact, such as Llamau's EMPHASIS project, which identifies homelessness risk factors in children as young as 14, engaging as appropriate to ensure housing outcomes when they are older are positive – 81% of young people we supported last year remained in their own home after our support ended.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Research ¹ conducted by Public Health Wales shows a long-term relationship between multiple negative experiences as a child and health-harming behaviours as an adult. Our own SEYHoPe² research also shows a clear link between negative childhood experiences and poor housing outcomes. Those adults who experience four ACEs during childhood are 20 times more likely to be in prison as an adult than the general population and 16 times more likely to use crack cocaine or heroin.

The impact of these ACEs are not easily dealt with, and our evidence shows that many of the young people that are supported by Llamau are dealing with ACEs. The coping strategies that young people develop to deal with ACEs can be negative and generate behaviours that can threaten tenancies and risk homelessness when they are older.

Therefore, protection of funding for the Supporting People Programme in Wales is vital to reduce the occurrence of ACEs, or to mitigate the impact of ACEs if they occur. We are concerned that

¹ <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/news/40000/>

² <http://www.llamau.org.uk/seyhope-study-of-experiences-of-young-homeless-people/>

potential cuts to S180 funding and Supporting People Funding will have a negative impact on preventative support and advice projects that can make a difference to young people and children.

The CYPE Committee could take into account the prevalence of ACEs and monitor the work that is going on to mitigate their impact. We would ask the committee to investigate not just issue-based approaches to funding, which look to prevent or mitigate one particular issue that a young person is experiencing, but to look at interventions which are strengths-based and can operate in a holistic manner for young people, being flexible to their needs.

Ongoing support for young people who face homelessness – improved support, advice and provision, and scrutiny of the local authorities who provide it.

We would ask the committee to investigate legislating around a comprehensive system of support for young people who are homeless. The patchwork of support services that are commissioned from local authorities can often result in a postcode lottery. This again is not helped by potential cuts to services due to uncertainty over S180 funding and Supporting People Funding.

We need a “one stop-shop” approach where young people can access support and guidance whenever they need it, wherever they need it (pre-56 day support if required) in a way that suits them and not in a way which suits local authority housing departments. This approach would potentially be able to interact and allocate directly with housing and housing-related services on the basis of need.

Legislative Scrutiny of Implementation of 4th Assembly Acts

The ACE Public Health Wales study, also suggests that some 16% of adults in Wales experienced domestic abuse in the family when they were children. This prevalence of domestic abuse is an issue that should be considered by the committee in order to think about how we can better improve provision for children in these situations. The

newly created national strategy and soon-to-be-created local strategies at a regional level under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Act will be updated on an annual basis and should be scrutinised by the committee.

When scrutinising the National VAWDASV strategy, to take particular care when looking at the Whole School Approach. It is imperative that approaches will look at what is done outside of the formal school setting – the disadvantaged young people that we work with have a higher incidence of intimate partner violence, and many will disengage from formal modes of education. We need to look at healthy relationship guidance for children and young people in the care system.

We would also suggest particular scrutiny of process issued as statutory guidance for under 18s accessing emergency homelessness provision (ensuring guidance is followed around bed and breakfast, with the potential of bringing forward primary legislation if it is considered that children's welfare is being compromised if guidance is not being followed).

In a similar vein, we would suggest the committee look at the development of local authorities' application of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people during the fifth assembly and beyond.

Funky Dragon Parliament – how can this work to go forward – brilliant opportunity to offer a voice – fantastic interface between AMs and young people facing specific problems.

As always, we would urge the committee to consider how the assembly better engages young people and children. The youth engagement team needs continuous support to ensure meaningful dialogue can take place between assembly members and the young people they represent. The young people we work with have experienced significant challenges and problems already, and have important things to say about the way services are delivered in Wales.

Question 2 – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

Priority 1

We would urge the committee to scrutinise funding decisions taken by the National Assembly of Wales and local authorities around the Supporting People Fund and S180 funding decisions. Specifically, the committee should have regard for the most vulnerable young people and children in our society and the impact that these cuts will have on them.

Priority 2

Understanding the landscape of support available for children and young people who are leaving the care system or the secure estate, and ensuring, through robust scrutiny of Welsh Government that these young people have access to the very best support, to improve their life chances and reduce inequalities.

This should be a key priority because:

We know that 40% of people who are in the secure estate as adults had some type of contact with the care system when they were children.

The very successful Symud Ymlaen / Moving Forward project, of which Llamau is the lead delivery partner, works with young people who have left care or have been involved with youth offending services. This project will come to an end in March 2017, and there is no obvious source of funding for programme continuation that will allow the very successful outcomes that have been achieved by the programme to be replicated in years to come. It is a pan-Wales programme that has achieved buy-in from many statutory partners, especially in the youth offending service, working with over 1,100 young people since 2013.

With only a relatively small amount of money needed to continue this programme of work, we would ask the CYPE committee to scrutinise Welsh Government's approach to how it intends to ensure that the opportunities that have been available continue to remain available to young people.

Priority 3

We believe the committee should look into the feasibility of, and to encourage Welsh Government to fund a 24/7-staffed support service for homeless young people across Wales. There is a clear gap in specialist support outside of office hours, which charities must not be expected to fill without appropriate funding, where young people can be given age-appropriate advice for their situation.

In general, local authority “housing options” 24/7 lines which exist have telephone numbers which are not always particularly easy to find on some local authority websites, and have accessibility issues, especially when we challenge the assumption that all young people have access to internet-enabled smart phones. It also assumes that young people understand the breakdown of local government structure (i.e., know what LA they live in) and who has responsibility to offer support and advice to them. There is an expectation that they will access support in a specific way that is designed to the local authority's needs, rather than a young-person-focussed approach.

Our proposal would involve a multi-channel advice and support service, which would proactively market itself and be available via mobile app, telephone, web and social media. It would be able to assess and give advice to a young person, identify emergency safety issues if someone is rough sleeping or is at immediate risk of doing so, and to issue appropriate referrals to statutory and non-statutory agencies, so that a young person's needs can be dealt with on a holistic basis from as early on as possible.

Priority 4

We would also ask the CYPE committee to keenly scrutinise Welsh Government's Programme for Government, when it is more clearly articulated, to ensure that the mental health of children in Wales is adequately supported. The CYPE issued a report during the last assembly around children's mental health and the reality is that many of the report's conclusions are still active and relevant today, and that real change is needed from both policy and decision makers in Cardiff Bay and at the local health board level in terms of practice, service design and delivery, and resource allocation. This will require the CYPE committee to ask even more challenging questions.

Llamau's SEYHoPe research should make for disturbing reading for CYPE committee members, and emphasises the need for good mental health support while receiving support with housing issues. The sheer prevalence of mental health issues at the point, show that inability to successfully resolve mental health conditions that present themselves earlier in childhood has a very real connection to insecure housing and poorer life outcomes before someone hits the age of 20.

It is clear to all that mental health issues are triggered and/or exacerbated when experiencing homelessness and it is at the point when support is most needed when it is least accessible, due to people's living situations. It's this difficulty that the CYPE should look at, with radical solutions needed for a pernicious and engrained problem.