

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Eiriolaeth Statudol | Inquiry into Statutory Advocacy Provision

SAP 05

Ymateb gan : SNAP Cymru

Response from : SNAP Cymru

SNAP Cymru views based on our experience of working with families and the views of young people.

Introduction

SNAP Cymru agree with The All Wales Children and Young People's Advocacy Providers Group¹ response to the recommendations of 'Missing Voices: the Children's Commissioner for Wales review of independent professional advocacy services for looked after children and young people, care leavers and children in need in Wales'. In addition to that response SNAP Cymru are concerned that the diverse and often complex needs of children, young people and adults are not fully catered for. Our experience, and the concerns of families and children and young people, are that the barriers to accessing and understanding information are as diverse as their needs. Vulnerable individuals need much more than 'rights' and 'information' to engage, understand and participate. Their need for professional and independent advocacy to be heard and make choices is grossly underestimated. Many vulnerable individuals with and without ALN / Disability lack confidence to take control of their lives and need high levels of independent advocacy to express their views.

1. Do you agree that the Code identifies the people to whom advocacy must be provided?

Agree

What will further support this?

The need to emphasise advocacy to support explanation of information and improve understanding of rights and choice is crucial. The barriers to engagement and real participation will remain without support and explanation to aid understanding and build confidence.

There is a need for Local Authorities, wherever possible to agree with individuals whether or not there actually is an appropriate person available to support them and if not make clear their entitlement to a professional and independent trained advocate with a good understanding of their needs and circumstance including specific needs such as augmented communication, non-verbal communication and the often hidden needs of semantic pragmatic understanding of language. Local Authorities. Health, Education and Social Care must be proactive in this.

2. Do you agree that the Code identifies the range of circumstances where advocacy may be required?

Agree with proactive implementation

What will further support this?

A commissioned full range of specialist independent advocacy services with trained advocates who understand the particular area of needs and circumstances of each individual. See above for the range of need.

3. Do you agree that the Code identifies appropriate arrangements for publicising advocacy services?

Agree

What will further support this?

Ensure proactive promotion of advocacy through health, education, social care and third sector. Bilingual and cultural considerations with plain language used and printed are vital.

4. Do you agree that the Code will support local authorities to ensure advocacy is provided to support people to express their wishes and feelings?

Agree

What will further support this?

There is a need to expand specialist advocacy services and improve general advocacy services. All service providers should also be signed up to a formal referral scheme to ensure that individuals are not sent around the houses or get lost in the administration gaps. Vulnerable individuals need more than general information and signposting. There is also a need to continue general information and training for professionals and communities to improve a cultural shift and implement the rights of protected individuals.

Equality

5. Do you think that the proposals in this consultation will have any positive impacts on groups with protected characteristics? If so, which and why/why not?

We believe the commissioning and expansion of specialist advocacy services will have positive impacts on all groups.

6. Do you think that the proposals in this consultation will have any negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics? If

so, which and why/why not?

Other

We believe that full implementation of recommendations from the Advocacy Providers group facilitated by Children in Wales will positively impact on all groups. There is however concern that expectations will not be met in the current financial climate and the need to prioritise specialist independent advocacy for protected characteristics may not be met.

7. Re-balancing the care and support system to deliver the new legal framework will require reprioritisation of resources. What are the key actions that need to be taken to achieve this?

Expansion and commissioning of quality assured specialist advocacy will be vital to effective implementation.

8. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to tell us about them.