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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Lynne Neagle AC/AM
Cadeirydd/Chair
Children, Young People & Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

8th November 2016

Dear Lynne

Your letter dated 13 October requested an update on progress with the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People, and the impact of Part 10 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014.

The Welsh Government has fully supported the development of a national approach to advocacy. We have provided funding for a secondee to support the delivery of a National Approach and established a Strategic Leadership Group to advise and support delivery and decision making on development of the National Approach. Ensuring that the children who have a statutory entitlement to advocacy are receiving it is a high priority and I continue to take a personal interest in following the progress of the development and implementation of the national approach.

I have a meeting with Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and the Children's Commissioner on 24 November to discuss the implementation plan for the National Approach. The following response to your questions has been informed by my understanding of the current progress on the approach in advance of that meeting.

- 1. What is the latest position in relation to the implementation of the National Approach to Advocacy Services? Is there a draft version of the National Approach? If yes, how long has a draft version been under consideration? Can a copy be provided to the Committee?**

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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.

In December 2015 local government shared with Strategic Leadership Group a draft business case which set out the following key components of a national approach:

- **National Standards and Outcomes Framework** - including an 'active offer' of advocacy and a draft National Standards and Outcomes Framework (NSOF) aligned to well-being under the 2014 Act.
- **Regional Performance Reporting Template** - delivering the evidence and statistics identified within the NSOF for service quality and performance monitoring purposes.
- **A Commissioning Framework** – providing consistent approach and aligned to the NSOF
- **Regional Service Specification** - providing consistent specifications for commissioning of services and aligned to NSOF.
- **A Range and Level Assessment Mechanism (Service Capacity)** - which when applied to the eligible population locally and regionally assists with gauging service capacity requirements and associated costs.

As components of the proposed national approach were developed individual members consulted with groups and organisations they were representing - this included consulting with children and young people. The business case was also subject to this consultative process.

The business case has been, and continues to be, subject to local government governance and accountability mechanisms.

Since the national approach was developed we have been liaising with Local Government through the Strategic Leadership Group about how they intend to deliver the National Approach and expect an implementation plan by 24 November.

2. How will the National Approach be fully implemented? What are the timescales for implementation?

Implementation will be led by Local Government in line with the implementation plan they are developing. Local Government has advised that an implementation plan, which will include timelines, to progress the National Approach will be available by 24 November.

3. What assessment has been made of the costs of implementing the National Approach? How will these costs be met?

A Task and Finish Group developed a 'Range and Level mechanism' that can consistently calculate the funding levels required to deliver the National Approach on a local, regional or national basis. It is based on the cost of an 'advocacy hour' plus average service running costs set against a target 'take up' percentage of the eligible population. Using figures from 2014 as a baseline the estimated cost of implementation of the National Approach is an estimated £1 million which incorporates the active offer at a cost of £247,553.

The provision of statutory advocacy is a local authority duty met from the revenue support grant. In recognition that the active offer is additional to the current provisions set out in legislation the Welsh Government has agreed to meet the full costs of the active offer. Full consideration of the level of funding provided by Welsh Government will be given when the implementation plan is received.

4. How will you assess the impact and outcomes for children and young people of a National Approach?

The National Approach set out in the business case includes a National Standards and Outcomes Framework which has been mapped to the Well-being Statement that underpins the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

In addition the business case has set out proposals for Welsh Government to commission an independent review of the National Approach to be undertaken at the end of the first year of implementation. The review would seek to identify improvements achieved in awareness and engagement at the various stages of implementation.

The review would also assess any service quality improvements and capacity issues encountered, whether any adjustment and or recalculation using the Range and Level mechanism needs to be undertaken (i.e. using latest population numbers, Performance Management Reports). I will consider this proposal further on the receipt of the implementation plan.

The impact of Part 10 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014

5. What are the implications of provisions in the Act on advocacy services for children and young people?

Welsh Government has published the Code of Practice on the exercise of social services functions in relation to Advocacy under Part 10 and related parts of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Within the Code we are clear that local authorities and local health boards must use the outcomes from their shared population needs assessment to inform commissioning and partnership arrangements under the Act for the provision of advocacy services. Advocacy includes the full range of provision set out in the Code of Practice.

The first round of Population Needs Assessment reports are due in April 2017 which will provide a better understanding of the need for provision of advocacy services.

6. How will you assess the impact of provisions in the Act that relate to advocacy and the associated Code of Practice on Advocacy?

As we shift our focus from development of the statutory framework under the 2014 Act to delivering its commitments, I recognise that it is vitally important that we have adequate evaluation arrangements in place to be able to assess whether the Act is achieving what we set out to achieve.

The evaluation will be undertaken in three phases. The first will be about monitoring policies under the Act during the initial year of implementation. The second phase will involve on-going evaluation, through the national outcomes framework and local authority performance measurement frameworks. The third phase will be an independent long term one-off evaluation, commencing in the third year of the implementation of the Act.

The monitoring looks at the difference the Act in its entirety is making rather than focus on specific parts of the Act. Stakeholders welcomed the approach and the national direction set out in the national outcomes framework.

We will also continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure we have a clear understanding of how the requirements under Part 10 are operating in practice.

7. Do you have evidence that the provision relating to advocacy in the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2014 have resulted in better outcomes for children and young people?

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 commenced on 6 April 2016 and the National Outcomes Framework has been published. Welsh Government will be publishing its first annual report on the outcomes framework by March 2017. There will also be additional data from Local Authority Social Services in relation to children and young people which will be published by the autumn 2017. However, the data will not be specific to advocacy as there are no specific outcomes or measurements in place for this area at a national level at this time.

I expect to see significant progress on moving forward with the National Approach when the implementation plan is in place later this month.

Yours sincerely



Carl Sargeant AC/AM

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