

P-05-761 Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 16.06.17

Dear Senedd Petitions.

Reference: RE/00569/17

Thank you for your recent correspondence.

I am writing to you with a statement that consists of my views in light of the new correspondence from the Welsh Government regarding my petition: P-05-761.

The statement begins in the next paragraph:

Having read the Strategic Action Plan for autism and the proposed method of delivery, I do not see evidence that third sector providers have been sufficiently or effectively utilised.

In recent correspondence with Rebecca Evans AM, she had indicated that £13million of public money is to be spent on a National Integrated Autism Service. Rebecca Evans AM had previously intimated that the IAS would replace existing services, however, she now says that it will enhance existing local services including those provided by the third sector.

Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru provide a one stop shop service which provides support for over 500 adults and young people in South East Wales. I and many others have benefitted from this service greatly. I have accessed a whole range of services; 1:1 support, drop-ins, supported social groups, post-diagnostic sessions, employment workshops, employment support and tailored support for me as an individual with autism. If I may say, the other autism support providers have been sub-standard compared to Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru, or at least, they haven't been as specialised or effective on a day to day basis as any of the other autism support providers. I have previously struggled to access appropriate service and I value the work of this charity along with many others who have signed this petition.

From what I understand of the social services and well-being act, there is statutory responsibility for the Welsh Government and local authorities to engage in partnership with the third sector. I have asked Rebecca Evans AM to provide details of how the £13million allocated to the National Integrated Autism Service will fulfil this duty.

As a person living with autism and from speaking to many other autistic adults, I have not felt or been asked my opinion on what services we feel we need.

Rebecca Evans AM has stated that a scoping exercise was undertaken in 2015 to design new services for adults with autism in Wales. Nobody who I have been in contact with was consulted or have any knowledge of this scoping exercise.

It is unclear how the NIAS is going to enhance and support the existing service provided by Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru.

Rebecca Evans AM has made the point that Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru could apply for Sustainable Social Services Grant, however, if successful funding from them would not be forthcoming for at least two years. I feel it is unjust and wrong that funding cannot and will not be given to the invaluable service when there is £13million available specifically for Autism.

As such I and many others request that the Welsh Government effectively engage with and financially support Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru rather than replicate many of the services they already provide.

Yours Sincerely,

Aled Thomas.