



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA - P/FM -/4599/17

Ann Jones AM  
Chair  
Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
[ScrutinyFM@assembly.wales](mailto:ScrutinyFM@assembly.wales)

20 December 2017

Dear Ann

I am writing in response to your letter of 23 November, following my attendance at the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister held in Cwmbran on 27 October.

In your letter, you asked some additional questions. I have responded to each point below, under the relevant subject heading.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Monitoring**

As the signatory to the Convention, it is the UK Government's responsibility to respond to the concluding observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. As a Government, we have identified the Committee's recommendations which relate to areas devolved to the Welsh Government and we maintain an overview of the progress of our policies, programmes and legislation in those areas. On 11 July this year, the former Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children marked the first anniversary of the publication of the concluding observations, by issuing a written statement outlining the Welsh Government's progress to date. The statement is annexed to this letter, and is available here:

<http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/anniversaryuncrcobservationreport/?lang=en>

I agree we should maintain an overview of our policies and programmes for children, and how they improve outcomes for children and young people. However, I do not agree that this means we need a separate Children's Rights Action Plan. Children's rights are an integral part of our approach to developing and implementing policies.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400  
[YP.PrifWeinidog@llyw.cymru](mailto:YP.PrifWeinidog@llyw.cymru) • [ps.firstminister@gov.wales](mailto:ps.firstminister@gov.wales)

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.

Through the Welsh Government's national strategy *Prosperity for All*, we have set out our focus on working collaboratively across government. Our five cross-cutting priorities recognise the importance of improving outcomes for children and young people through a focus on the early years, and on better mental health and social care, including early action to help children stay in families where possible and reduce the impact of physical and mental ill-health. A focus on the best interests of children and young people is woven through the strategy.

We are therefore focussed on delivering for children and young people, in line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, our programme for government *Taking Wales Forward*, and *Prosperity for All*.

### **Awareness of the UNCRC and Children's Rights**

The Welsh Government's strategy to raise awareness of children's rights is multi-faceted, and includes:

- a Children's Rights website and Twitter account;
- provision of resources about children's rights to schools, youth organisations and others aiming to increase awareness of rights;
- training on children's rights across a number of sectors over a three year period; and
- grant funding to Children in Wales to tackle child poverty, deprivation and raise awareness and understanding of children's rights through improved policy and practice and effective engagement of children and young people and the workforce.

All Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers help to raise awareness of children's rights. The former Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children wrote to Cabinet colleagues earlier this year to highlight the actions they could take to ensure children and young people are consulted on decisions which affect them, and to raise awareness of children's rights. While some of our work involves communicating directly with children and young people, we also provide funding and free resources to organisations who can work with children and young people to help them to become aware and understand their rights. The strategy for raising awareness of children's rights will be reviewed in the coming months, to assess the efficacy of its different aspects, and how it can work best alongside the awareness raising work done by others, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

### **Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA)**

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services and Minister for Children and Social Care wrote to the Chair of the Education Children and Young People Committee on 1 December, outlining the Welsh Government's approach to undertaking CRIsAs and explaining the rationale for integrated impact assessments. I have attached a copy of that letter for your information.

CRIsAs are most effective when they are an integral part of the policy development process, so that the impact on children and young people is considered alongside other potential impacts at the outset, and continues to be a part of the thought process as the policy develops.

For this reason, it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly where the CRIA process has had an impact on Welsh Government decisions, as ideally the impact on children and young people will have informed the policy from the outset, well before the publication of a CRIA document. This is an iterative process, rather than a single event.

Some examples of recent Welsh Government policy and legislation where the impact on children and young people has been integral to the policy making process, and where comprehensive CRIsAs have been published, are:

Additional Learning Needs Bill: the proposals for this Bill were informed by the outcomes of a series of engagement events held for children and young people and their families. The Bill provides for the views, wishes and feelings of children, parents and young people to form a core element of the new system. It emphasises the importance of children's, parents and young people's participation in relation to additional learning needs and provision.

Tobacco Control Delivery Plan for Wales: launched in September, this applies to the whole population, but the CRIA specifically considers the fact that the younger a person starts smoking, the greater their risk of smoking related diseases. So the plan specifically aims to make children and young people aware of harms associated with smoking, and the plan will de-normalise smoking as acceptable behaviour to under 18s.

Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Bill: introduced on Monday 23 October, this Bill aims to tackle alcohol related harm by targeting alcohol consumption in hazardous and harmful drinkers (including young people). It recognises positive impacts for children if adults with whom they live reduce excess alcohol consumption, but also possible risks if some adults do not reduce that alcohol consumption resulting in money otherwise earmarked for family or domestic matters being used to meet any increased cost of alcohol. On balance the Welsh Government considers the policy will be beneficial for children and young people but consideration of the possible impacts on children and young people has ensured we are focusing on the wider support some families may need. We will be working closely with local Area Planning Boards ahead of implementation to ensure that there is general awareness of the proposals and that support is provided through existing services as necessary.

## **Children's Rights Following Brexit**

I am committed to ensuring that we give full and careful consideration to the impacts of Brexit on children and young people and their rights.

Alongside research being conducted by a variety of organisations, we are planning our own engagement process, including workshops with young people across Wales, to hear their views. I am pleased that funding has already been agreed for an external organisation(s) to deliver an online consultation and a series of workshops across Wales to enable children and young people to have a voice on Brexit.

I will ensure that this comprehensive package of work delivers on the Welsh Government's commitment to listen to the views of children and young people, as set out in the Securing Wales Future White Paper.

## **Ministerial Advisory Group on Looked After Children**

The Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) reports to, and is accountable to the Minister for Children and Social Care. The MAG provides expert advice to the Minister on a wide range of strategic and operational issues that focus on improving outcomes for children.

The Group is chaired by David Melding AM, who reports directly to the Minister, after each quarterly MAG meeting, on progress with the Improving Outcomes for Children work programme, next steps and its strategic direction. The group has a broad cross-government

and cross-sector membership from all key stakeholders involved in the lives of looked after children.

Collaboration is fundamental to the work of the group which is reflected by its broad membership. The group includes senior officials from across local government, the third sector and Welsh Government, with policy remits that span housing, health, education, youth justice and tackling poverty. Working collaboratively to improve the lives of looked after children is one of the best and most worthwhile opportunities we have to demonstrate the value of cross-government working.

I am pleased that the MAG has a care leaver, Dan Pitt, as its Vice-Chair. Each of the three MAG work streams is chaired by a local authority head of children's services and supported by a vice-chair from the third sector. The role of the work stream chairs is to provide direction and maintain progress over the delivery of the work strands within their work stream.

In recognition of the step change required in outcomes for looked after children, Phil Evans, former Director of Social Services at the Vale of Glamorgan, has been appointed as MAG Change Programme Manager on a part-time basis. His role is to oversee the delivery of the £8m consequential funding to support looked after children and care leavers and a three year change programme (2017-2020) to realise the vision and objectives.

A MAG Operations Group has also been established, jointly chaired by Phil Evans and a senior Welsh Government official from the Social Services and Integration Directorate. The role of the Group is to provide operational oversight of the MAG work programme, including interfaces across work streams and the delivery of funding allocated to support work areas. Membership consists of the three work stream Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Social Care Wales, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the All Wales Heads of Children's Services and members of the Improving Outcomes for Children team at Welsh Government.

## **Youth Work**

As you are aware, Youth Work sits in the portfolio of the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning. The former Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language asked for a review of Extending Entitlement to be undertaken, with the expectation that this would highlight what works and what doesn't work, and to provide future direction for the sector in today's legislative, policy and financial landscape. This work, undertaken by Margaret Jervis, MBE DL, has now concluded, and was informed by discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, including young people. Margaret's draft recommendations are currently with the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, the final report will be submitted to her shortly, following which she will then set out how she intends to take them forward in partnership with the sector.

It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on specific details at this time. I am however, aware that both Margaret, and the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, have reflected on the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Youth Work, which included recommendations that touched on both accountability and ensuring sufficient levels of provision. I will write to the Committee to provide a further update, once the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning has set out her preferred direction of travel.

I agree that it was hugely beneficial to hold the meeting in a venue which supports young people to achieve their goals. I would also like to acknowledge the success of the Cwmbran Centre for Young People for being the first youth work organisation to achieve the Gold Level - Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales.

## Work Experience

We recognise that effective employer engagement with schools can help young people plan their career journey, relate their classroom experience to their future career options and ideas, and help them make successful transitions into further education, training and employment. With that in mind, the new curriculum being developed for Wales will be based around four purposes, one of which is to develop our young people as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.

Building on this, our recently published national strategy *Prosperity for All* states that we will ensure closer working between schools, colleges, universities and employers to raise ambition and better anticipate the skills needs over the coming years. To help deliver this aim we are pursuing a number of options, one of which is through Careers Wales.

Careers Wales currently facilitates links between schools and employers, and has been remitted to refresh its approach in this area. As part of this they are working to establish a new 'Education Business Exchange' which will support a national network of business education partnerships with an employer engagement database.

The Education Business Exchange will support schools in putting enriched learning experiences at the heart of the new curriculum and in developing new partnerships. It will also build a comprehensive 'data set' containing details of employers' willingness and ability to support the curriculum in activities such as:

- work experience with an employer;
- visits to industry which are curriculum focused;
- master classes with employers;
- work shadowing; and
- employer mentoring.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Education has recently approved additional funding of £400,000 to Careers Wales to strengthen its work in supporting stronger partnerships between schools and business. The additional funding will be used to pump prime the roll out of the Education Business Exchange in more schools; and for Careers Wales to review best practice in establishing partnerships between schools and business. This will include a sample survey of schools and local authorities on approaches and policies to school-employer engagement and work experience. We are expecting to receive recommendations in the summer term.

Yours sincerely



**CARWYN JONES**