

**P-05-859 Provide Child Houses in Wales for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 18.12.18**

Comments in light of the correspondence from Huw Irranca-Davies AC/AM

Reference one:

I would like to refer to the following information, that was reported at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/uks-first-child-houses-to-launch>

Date: *13 September 2016*

“Open since April this year, it offers a calm environment for medical examinations, counselling and therapy, with soft coloured chairs and brightly coloured rugs providing a soothing alternative to plastic clinical furniture, and artwork and a 3D technology system providing distraction. Funded by NHS England (London), it expands the services offered to adult sexual abuse victims at the three London Havens.

The new Child Houses, which will open next year, will build on the work of the CYP Haven. While the Haven offers an urgent 24/7 response, a predominantly clinical service and short term care and support, the Child Houses will provide a multi-agency, long-term support and advocacy service under one roof. Criminal justice aspects of aftercare will be embedded in the service, with evidence gathering interviews led by child psychologists on behalf of the police and social workers, and court evidence provided through video links to aid swifter justice”

And: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/04/Child-Sexual-Abuse-Hub-Toolkit-March-2017.pdf>

The toolkit for the CSA Hub which identified:

“The North London CSA hub pilot was evaluated after eight months and found improvements in the case management for children and young people, better access to early emotional support where needed and positive qualitative feedback from families and staff. Over 50% of children, young people and families attending the CSA hub were supported by the advocate and/or the CAMHS practitioners.

The CSA hub was reported to be a restorative experience for children and families and removed barriers to them accessing advocacy and CAMHS support by them being present in the first appointment. There was improved multi-agency and professional co-operation and better communication with children’s services

through advice and liaison. Awareness of the hub following the launch led to a fourfold increase in referrals at one of the CSA hub sites”

The CSA hub model is a one stop shop for medical, advocacy and early emotional support for children and their families, as well as offering advice and liaison to police and children’s social care services. The CSA Transformation Programme enabled the establishment of CSA hubs in North Central and South West London, funded by the Department of Health and local CCGs respectively. The Child House model is a multiagency service model for children and young people following sexual abuse or exploitation (CSA/CSE). The model was further recommended in 2015 by the Children’s Commissioner for England and is supported by the Home Secretary and Mayor of London. The Home Office has funded a national proof of concept of the Child House in London and Durham based on the international ‘Barnahus’ model”

Therefore in light of the above reported information, I would like to consider the already evaluated information for the Child House concept and how it can improve the therapeutic relationship to dealing with Child Sexual Abuse.

The concern is, that 5 Child Houses are planned to be rolled out in London, however there have been no suggestions put forward for Wales. The evaluations have already been crucial, in light of the above linked document, which continues to mention that within the 8 months of opening, 144 children and young people were seen at the Hub. The numbers speak for themselves, in how crucial implementing the Child House is, in all areas of the United Kingdom. Are proposals being put forward for Wales?

In regards to the comment:

‘Provide a place for children to run too’. I appreciate that the Child House is formed as a multi-agency hub identified by services, however I would like to kindly suggest consideration to the following:

We have a very large number of refuges for Domestic Violence and they have proven crucial for women fleeing violence in abusive relationships. Children would not flee to a Domestic Violence refuge, however if there could be consideration for forming something similar along the lines of a refuge but for children / young people suffering child sexual abuse or exploitation.

Having spoken with a number of survivors of child sexual abuse, many have agreed that had there been a place to ‘run too’, they would have.

As a Child Sexual Abuse survivor, on many occasions I 'ran away' from my home. Only to be returned by the police back to the same home, that was the place the abuse was happening.

I cannot speak in hindsight, but I do wonder if I was aware there was a place I could go to, that was child friendly, and welcoming, would I have run there to find solace, would I have disclosed the child sexual abuse I encountered from age 4 to the time of my father's arrest in 2011?

I guess that is a question unanswerable, but is it something we can consider for the future of our children, with statistics so high for child sexual abuse. I know that many I have spoken too, have shared this same idea.

I fully appreciate the role and purpose of the Child House and that they are more 'agency' based, however I would also like the committee to consider the following:

Services are doing amazing work, I am sure that funding is being allocated and robust measures are taking place for safeguarding with social services and organisations, however:

It is a given statistical fact that children do not report to the 'professionals' - we are taught from a very early age that Social Services will remove us and it is a bad thing, that is part of the grooming process, this is why children disclose in other ways other than walking up to a professional or police officer and saying 'I am being sexually abused'. Children are groomed by fear, but also their already role models are the ones abusing them.

The fact that we know child sexual abuse is undisclosed, means we have to review the current ways we are working with children, we have to see it from a child's eye. I feel that children would more likely 'run to' a place of comfort with their indirect disclosures and if we could provide that safety unit, are we saving a child. I believe it is to be considered.

I raised the petition in light of the above information from the CSA Hub toolkit, when I established there were no proposals for Wales, however this petition can also be reviewed and amended to consider my concerns of having a place for children to 'run to'.

On that note, I would like to provide a link and copy of the Blog Post I wrote in light of children disclosing, I hope this can bring some further reflection and open

mindedness to the petition proposal: <https://shecanconsultancy.com/why-didnt-you-report-why-didnt-you-protect-me/>

What was I reporting?

A man who was my abuser or the man who was my protector?

See that's the complexities of a child abuse victim they don't know what the difference is, their whole concept of normal is a disillusioned version.

The brain a mush, not knowing what to remember or should I even remember because what's the point nothing was done when I was a child. So what am I reporting?

I needed him... I relied on him... he was the man who had brainwashed me to love him and protect him. He was my father!

So you ask me why didn't I report...

You came too late, and that day left me confused and challenged. I have to now hate him? Maybe I do, maybe I don't.

Maybe I'm just the confused little girl that wants her daddy?

Why did I deserve so less?

He helped me, he was the only one there for me, he paid for things. He was evil by far but that was amidst the character of Jekyll and Hyde, I knew no different and now you want me too.

I'm scared, I'm lonely, I'm confused.

From 2011 to 2018 who was I now?

Who was I supposed to be, the little girl or the Survivor now?

I crave love and attention...

I need to help others without helping myself, because I deserve no less.

Do you understand now how confusing it is for a child when they were stripped of an innocence, their mind torn from birth to not know the difference between a good person and a bad person, because they form as one.

He was there for so long and then he was gone.

The days when I wondered what he was doing in prison, how did he cope, or am I still so groomed that I am stupid to believe he is anything other, now I wonder what he's doing out of prison, has his world changed as much as mine?

Do I owe him these thoughts and continued protection?

My life will never be free from what he did to me!

So don't ask me why I didn't report, ask yourself why you didn't protect me?

I disclosed with my anorexia, I disclosed with my body-focused repetitive behaviour disorders, I disclosed with my tears, I disclosed when I run away, I disclosed when you heard he was scarily possessive, I disclosed when I was in school disassociated and getting into trouble, I disclosed when I was angry and always fighting, I disclosed... I disclosed... what did you do? Nothing.

Why did you let him come in the night? Why did you let him hurt me so bad? Why did you let him make me scared? Why did you let him touch me there? Why did you let him make me so sad? Why did you let him drug me and rape me? Why did you let him take everything away from me? Why did you let him do the things you can't comprehend? Why did you let him leave me with no end?

And now tell me how you want me to behave, how you want me to continue this confusion and pain, tell me how you expect any child to just walk up to you and report?!

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