



**National Autistic Society Cymru**  
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8 Mawrth 2019

Dr Dai Lloyd AM/AC  
Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Iechyd, Gofal Cymdeithasol a Chwaraeon / Chair, Health, Social Care  
and Sport Committee  
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales  
Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
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Annwyl Dai Lloyd

Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute evidence to your Committee during your scrutiny of the Autism (Wales) Bill.

While we recognise the Committee was not able to reach a consensus on whether legislation is the most appropriate vehicle, we welcome the Committee's view that there is a pressing need to improve support services for the 34,000 autistic people in Wales and their families.

The recommendations in the Committee's report reflect this and we would support the call for urgent action to be taken so that families do not have to struggle to access the services and support they need, and the improvements we all want to see can be achieved.

We understand that your Committee is due to consider the Welsh Government's response to your Stage 1 report shortly and would like to take this opportunity to make the Committee aware of some of our concerns in advance of that discussion.

While we welcome the fact that the Welsh Government is in agreement with eight of the nine recommendations made in your report, we are concerned that the accompanying comments in that response don't explain in sufficient detail the actions that the Welsh Government is taking to implement the recommendations it has agreed.

For example, based on the evidence it heard, the Committee recommended that the Welsh Government increases the provision of direct autism services, beyond what is currently offered through the integrated autism service. Concrete details on how the Welsh Government intends to deliver these autism service would be helpful so that autistic people know what is available locally.

The Committee heard specifically that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act had failed to deliver improved outcomes for autistic people, because the assessments are not appropriate and they are therefore wrongly denied the care and support they need. The Committee recommended amending the codes of practice issued under Parts 3 and 4 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act to improve outcomes for autistic people. It's unclear how the Welsh Government intends to amend the codes under Parts 3 and 4 despite agreeing to the recommendation.

The Welsh Government has also agreed to the recommendation that it should be mandatory for all school staff to receive training in awareness and understanding of autism. The Committee will be aware that work on the Additional Learning Needs transformation programme is well underway and therefore presents an ideal opportunity to implement the Committee's recommendation. Again it would be helpful to know how the Welsh Government intends to take action here.

In addition, in a letter to Assembly Members dated 15 January 2019, the Minister committed to a programme of work the Welsh Government will undertake in the coming months to reform and improve autism services. This includes publishing an independent report on the integrated autism service by February 2019. We were disappointed that the full report was not made public and instead the Welsh Government published only preliminary findings.

Further reports include a review of the barriers to reduce waiting times due to be completed at the end of March; data on the 26 weeks waiting times available from April; and an annual report by June. All these reports will be useful evidence of the support and services available for autistic people. Assurances that there will be no further slippage or changes in publishing these reports as stated would be welcomed.

We look forward to hearing the Committee's views on its work in this area over the coming months. Should the Committee feel that this would require further information from the National Autistic Society Cymru, we would be happy to oblige.

Yn gywir iawn

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████████████████████, Rheolwr Materion Allanol / External Affairs Manager