

P-05-842 Give young people a voice when commissioning local services in Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Chair, 07.08.19

Dear Ms. Saunders,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the letter from Vaughan Gething dated 17 June 2019.

We would firstly like to thank Mr Gething and Ms. Hutt for this excellent opportunity. Certainly, having a youth representative on the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights in Wales Working Group is a very positive step forward.

However, this still does not address the gap highlighted in our petition. We are calling for there to be a statutory right for young people to be included in the commissioning of children and young people's services in Wales.

While having a representative on the board mentioned by Mr Gething is good progress, it risks being tokenistic for two particular reasons.

The first is an issue of full representation. Naturally, the diverse backgrounds of Welsh youth cannot be neatly embodied by a single representative. In order to represent the full spectrum of Welsh youth, we wish to advance the argument that there needs to be a panel of young people to consult on the commissioning of youth services in Wales. This is the only way for young people's views and opinions to be accurately and fairly advocated.

Secondly, there is an issue of accessibility. As our Petition has noted, there are many young people who cannot participate in face to face engagement. This is frequently due to circumstances of which they have little or no control. This can be due to issues as diverse as poverty (thus an inability to afford travel), mental health (e.g social anxiety, therefore an inability to leave their house) or physical disability (resulting in an incapability to move).

The need for diversity of representation in the commissioning of youth services goes to the core of our Petition. Diversity in the appointments is critical as, for example, it is unlikely that LGBTQ+, BAME and mental health could be adequately represented in a single individual. It is the aim of our Petition that the views of the wider background of Welsh youth are consulted in the process of commissioning services.

By way of a hypothetical, a young man from inner city Cardiff could not accurately represent the views of a young woman from a more rural environment in mid-Wales, and vice versa.

Therefore, a modality needs to be devised which allows for the inclusion of those who cannot engage face to face. For example, an online platform that would be easily accessible by those who cannot travel to Cardiff is a possible solution. Regardless of what solution is eventually adopted, our Petition calls for it to be open and easily accessible to engage the broadest spectrum of Welsh youth with particular emphasis on those who would otherwise have difficulty voicing their views.

Again, we would like to note the progress that has been made in the course of our Petition. In particular, we would like to thank the Petitions Committee, Mr Gethin and Ms. Hutt for their co-operation and efforts to implement a solution that works for all parties concerned and, most importantly, the young people of Wales. We welcome any feedback about how work can be undertaken to ensure that there is a statutory right for young people to be included in the commissioning of children and young people's services in Wales.

As ever, if we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

The #Changeit Campaign Group