

Vaughan Gething AM
Minister for Health and Social Services
Kirsty Williams AM
Minister for Education

12 December 2019

Dear Ministers,

The emotional and mental health of children and young people – next steps for Mind over Matter

Thank you for the Minister for Health and Social Service's letter of [9 December 2019](#), confirming his final decision about the future focus of the Together for Children and Young People Programme (T4CYPP).

Our meeting of 4 December

At our meeting on 4 December, we considered your joint response of [22 October 2019](#) to the findings of our follow-up work on our Mind over Matter report (published [8 August 2019](#)). To inform our next steps, we also considered a detailed analysis of the information you have provided to update us on progress in relation to our original and follow-up recommendations. I was also able to share my perspective on the important work that is being taken forward through the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group on the Whole School Approach where I feel steady progress is being made.

We recognise the work that is underway across services to improve support for children and young people. However, following our consideration of the latest available information, we remain concerned that a significant distance remains to be travelled, particularly in relation to health and social care services.

As a Committee we have stated clearly and repeatedly our belief that the development of a whole-school approach to mental health must take place within the context of system-wide reform. This was why we recommended as part of our follow-up work that the T4CYPP should continue in order to ensure a strategic, cross-sector focus.



Next steps for the Together for Children and Young People Programme

Further to the Minister for Health and Social Service's letter of 9 December, we remain concerned that the proposals for a considerably smaller T4CYPP will make system-wide reform harder to deliver. With important work remaining to be done across the wider health and social care system, we believe this risks fragmentation that could impede the pace and oversight required to deliver meaningful change for our children and young people.

We note your intention to "maintain strong, system wide engagement and support the required strategic oversight" by ensuring that the T4CYPP reports progress to both the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group on the Whole School Approach, and the Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group. We would be grateful for confirmation of the scope of the Outcomes for Children MAG given its understandable focus to date on looked after children. We would further suggest that consideration should be given to widening the scope of the Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group to encompass the whole-system change that is required.

In light of your decision about the future of the T4CYPP's focus, and our concerns about the risk of fragmentation, it is our intention to monitor the impact the proposed changes on cross-sector progress in this area.

Our next steps as a committee

You will be aware that we made a commitment in our original report not to allow this significant issue to be passed, yet again, to a successor committee with repeated conclusions of "more work left to be done". In light of this commitment, we intend to hold a stakeholder workshop in February 2020 to label progress against each of our original and follow-up recommendations with a red/amber/green status. We will also draw on that session to identify what more we need to press for as a Committee by the end of this Assembly.

While we were disappointed that each of our follow-up recommendations did not receive an individual response in your letter of 22 October, we would be happy to receive more detail – in advance of our stakeholder session – to inform our work. We would be pleased to receive that before the end of January 2020.

Finally, to mark the second anniversary of our Mind over Matter report in April 2020, we intend to request a plenary debate. In keeping with our long-standing commitment to listen to the voices of children and young people in all that we do, we also intend to invite the Welsh Youth Parliament and the T4CYPP's National Youth Stakeholder Group to contribute to our work.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynne Neagle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lynne" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Neagle".

Lynne Neagle AM

Chair

Cc Carol Shillabeer, Chair, Together for Children and Young People Programme

