



Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

11 November 2022

Dear Jenny,

I am writing to provide a further update to the Committee for their forthcoming inquiry into experiences of the criminal justice system, focusing on young people with Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) needs, which is planned for later this term.

The Youth Justice Blueprint and supporting implementation plan sets out the Welsh Government's approach to the delivery of youth justice services in Wales. The Welsh Government takes a 'child first' approach to youth justice ensuring services are child centred and needs focused.

On 25 May I provided Members with a [Written Statement](#) updating on the delivery of the Youth Justice and Women's Justice Blueprint. This update coincided with the publication of our latest Implementation Plans. These plans highlight achievements to date and the continued progress we are making with partners against the Blueprint commitments.

Three of our agreed Youth Justice Blueprint priorities have particularly close ties to Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN):

- Enhancing prevention activity, particularly in view of the potential impact of the ongoing Covid pandemic on children's health and well-being.
- The development of a trauma-informed approach across youth justice services.
- The development of a vision for the future of the secure youth estate in Wales.

Work on SLCN is embedded across these three workstreams, and progress has been made on a range of issues. For instance, we have commenced referrals to the Forensic Adolescent Consultation Treatment Service for Enhanced Case

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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.

Management. Enhanced Case Management is available to all Youth Offending Teams (YOT) in Wales for children in voluntary and statutory contact with YOTs.

The Pathfinder report “A Child First Pathfinder Evaluation - Ceredigion Youth Justice and Prevention Service has been published. The findings will be used to inform the development of a Youth Justice Prevention Framework for Wales, which will include consideration of SLCN.

A vision for the future of secure youth provision in Wales was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021. The Welsh Government and Ministry of Justice continue to work together to develop a delivery model that best meet the needs of Welsh children requiring secure care within the justice and welfare systems. We want to deliver an integrated trauma-informed service which can respond flexibly to the complex needs of these vulnerable children, including children with SLCN.

A number of youth justice services across Wales have completed [‘The Box’ training](#) which is the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapist’s free e-learning tool designed for professionals working in the justice sector. The training has enabled services to consider how they might ensure that the young people accessing their service are signposted to the right support in the right place at the right time.

As part of our existing financial commitment for 2022/23 we have allocated a further £500,000 to the Blueprint programme which will support projects which strengthen links between women in prison and their children and help progress the delivery of trauma informed practice to Youth Justice Practitioners. This additional investment helps to provide meaningful multi-generational improvements to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society

In January 2023, the Counsel General and I are visiting HMP Berwyn, and I am looking forward to hearing of the excellent work Jacqui Learoyd, the Speech and Language Therapist is doing with the men. I understand that, by supporting the wider team in their work with and support for the men, Jacqui and the health team in the prison have had a significant impact on reducing the use of force in restraint. The innovative approach being used at HMP Berwyn has led to interest from other prisons including HMP Parc, who are looking into replicating some of the work. The following podcasts may be of interest to the Committee:

<https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-wxdjg-1146f48>

<https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-bitsq-11446d5>

<https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-v72wp-11b536c>

Since the publication of the *Talk With Me: Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Delivery Plan* in November 2020, the Welsh Government has been working at pace to deliver its overarching commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people through a fresh approach to promoting and supporting children and young people’s Speech, Language and Communication development.

The delivery plan has a clear commitment to embed effective SLC support within the Youth Justice Blueprint. The importance of SLC support for young people within the youth justice estate cannot be overstated.

The focus of the Talk With Me Delivery Plan is on early intervention and prevention of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). This will reduce the risk of children and young people presenting with challenging and anti-social behaviour, and therefore their likelihood of entering the youth justice system.

Our national SLC coordinators have facilitated links between The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and colleagues in the Crime and Justice Team in Welsh Government to take this work forward.

We worked closely with ESTYN to develop online training for inspectors who assess the provision of education within the youth justice estate. The training package is live on Estyn's intranet and will ensure that inspectors take account of the provision of SLC support within the context of education provision.

Finally, the Committee may wish to consider the following information which officials have received from the RCSLT following a routine meeting in August with Pippa Cotterill, Head of Wales Office, RCSLT:

The RCSLT Justice Evidence Base is on the link below. It has some key information about prevalence and incidence of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), implications, provision and outcomes.

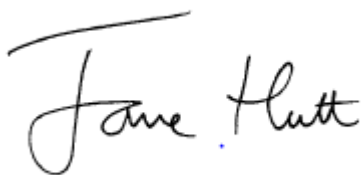
<https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/justice-evidence-base2017-1.pdf>

A 30 minute podcast 'Speech and Language Therapy at Feltham Young Offenders Institute' recorded a couple of years ago.

https://soundcloud.com/rcslt/speech-and-language-therapy-at-feltham-young-offenders-institution?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Below is the link to the 'Understanding the Triggers' report. Page 14 contains information about SLCN.

<https://gwent.pcc.police.uk/media/4y1ntacy/understanding-the-triggers-final.pdf>



Jane Hutt AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
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