

Rebecca Evans AM
Minister for Social Services and Public Health

12 January 2017

Public Health (Wales) Bill – request for information following attendance at Committee on 11 January 2017

Dear Minister,

Thank you for the oral evidence you provided in the session on 11 January. Further to your evidence, the Committee heard from Dr Olwen Williams, representing the Royal College of Physicians. It is their view that the provisions in the Bill relating to the age restrictions for intimate piercings should be amended in order that they apply to children and young people up to the age of 18 rather than 16.

The Committee has serious concerns in light of the evidence received, in particular regarding Dr Williams' evidence about the vulnerability of that age group and their capacity to make informed decisions about intimate piercings. Her evidence, based on examples in Wales, also suggested concerns relating to links with potential child sexual exploitation and also indicated that such procedures can lead to permanent physical changes.

We would therefore be grateful if you could provide some additional information to that set out in the Bill's Child's Rights Impact Analysis (CRIA). We are keen to understand your view on how articles 1, 3, 4, 6, 24, 34 and 36 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are given effect to 16 and 17 year olds in light of the Bill's provisions setting the age restriction at 16 rather than 18.



We also note that the CRIA sets out that ‘Protecting children and young people from these procedures is important as they may have inadequate information or understanding about their long term consequences and impacts’ and would welcome your views on how this differentiates between a young person age 15 and someone aged 16.

The CRIA also sets out that the Welsh Government’s consultation on the Public Health White Paper in 2014 asked specific questions on this issue and that 228 responses were received, including 65 from young people. We note that in respect of the specific questions about intimate piercing, 77% of respondents felt that young people should not be allowed an intimate cosmetic piercing; that 89% of piercing businesses were strongly in favour of a restriction; and that 62% of responses from young people stated that young people should not be allowed an intimate cosmetic piercing.

The CRIA also sets out that a question was also asked about the minimum age a young person should be allowed to have an intimate cosmetic piercing. 140 respondents suggested 18 years of age (61%). 47 respondents suggested 16 years of age (21%). The remaining respondents suggested other ages or did not answer the question.

In light of this consultation, the Committee would welcome further clarification of your decision that the age restriction on intimate piercing in the Bill should be at age 16 rather than 18.

I have also written to the Children’s Commissioner for Wales asking for further comments from her on the matter.

In addition to the above, during the meeting you also agreed to provide the following:

- a note detailing a practitioner’s ability to refuse to perform an intimate piercing on a person under the age of 18 when the legal restrictions only apply to those under the age of 16, and the potential consequences, legal or otherwise, for such a practitioner;



- further details on the relevant offences outlined in section 63(3) of the Bill, and the current lack of mention of sexual offences;
- a copy of your letter to BMA Cymru Wales, sent in December 2016, addressing their concerns about pharmaceutical services and Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments.

Given the timetable for our scrutiny of the Bill, we would be grateful for a response by 25 January.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Lloyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Dr Dai Lloyd AM
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

