

Eluned Morgan, AM  
Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning  
Welsh Government

12 July 2018

Dear Eluned

### **What type of youth service does Wales want? Committee Follow up into its Youth Work Inquiry**

As you will be aware the Children, Young People and Education Committee (the Committee) recently undertook a short follow up inquiry into our 2016 Inquiry into Youth Work.

The main focus of the follow up inquiry was to establish what progress has been made since publication of our report and whether that is making a difference to young people in Wales and those involved with delivering youth work/youth services on the ground. To help inform our views, the Committee undertook a targeted consultation and held oral evidence sessions with key stakeholders.

The Committee was very grateful to you for the update on progress you provided on 15 February 2018. This provided a clear picture of the action taken, and the action Welsh Government will take, against each of the Committee's recommendations. Your response formed the basis of the consultation undertaken by the Committee, and provided a focus for the Committee's considerations.

In summary, we heard there was general agreement from stakeholders that the approach taken by Welsh Government in recent months has been positive. The sector perceives that things are moving forward and as a Committee we very much welcome that. One area highlighted in-particular was the shift of focus back to 'youth work' rather than youth services, which was seen as a very welcome step forward. The primary message that we heard was that there have been some very positive messages from you as the new Minister and that this must now to be translated into action that benefits young people across Wales.

In both responses to the consultation and in oral evidence sessions, specific concerns were raised – these are outlined below.

### **National Youth Work Strategy**

The Committee welcomes the fact that you have set out a work plan, which includes timescales, towards the development of the new 'National Youth Work Strategy' for Wales,



and that this includes the youth work sector in its development and delivery points. It was noted that the work plan also attempted to clarify the steps that were needed to be taken to deliver this Strategy.

We note the timeline for the new Strategy is however challenging, and heard concerns that this may not allow for full and proper consultation with the sector. There also appears to have been very little meaningful involvement to date with young people in the development of the strategy. We believe it is essential that young people play a part in the development of the Strategy. We therefore welcome your recent written statement on 2 July 2018 in which you reiterate that the development of a new Youth Work Strategy will be taken forward in partnership with young people and the voluntary and statutory youth work sectors.

There was also strong feeling across stakeholders that it was not enough to have the Strategy on its own. It must now be delivered and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting that action must be put in place.

### **Sufficiency Assessments**

The principle of the proposed sufficiency assessments was generally supported, and it was noted that these could help to develop an ongoing and fuller understanding of youth work provision available. However, there remained concern about the status and specific requirements of such assessments, as well as what the content of these may be.

### **Interim Youth Work Board**

There was general support for the establishment of the Interim Youth Work Board, and some stakeholders saw this as a positive move towards a national body. Concern was however raised that there was potentially a lack of clarity on the role of the Board, and clear terms of reference must be established for it. There was also a call for further information on the Interim Board, including details of how it will be held accountable, and how it was going to be made up.

The interim board needs to take account of the needs of the sector, and the appointment of the Chair of the Interim Board was critical. There was agreement that there was a need to ensure that the person appointed had understanding and knowledge of youth work and of the sector. We note that your statement of 2 July 2018 in which you confirmed that you have appointed Keith Towler as Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board and that you have emphasised to him that this is a challenging agenda.

Stakeholders also believed that consideration should be given to how young people could meaningfully influence the work of the Board.

### **Engagement with Young People**

One of the significant issues raised in evidence is that the involvement of young people in the work undertaken by Welsh Government seems to have diminished in the last two years. A number of stakeholders commented that in their view there had not been enough consultation with young people on recent decisions made.



One example noted was that the Youth Work Reference Group no longer has any young people sitting on it, where this used to be the case. The Committee believes that the Welsh Government should reconsider this.

The Committee also believes that it is essential that, as the Minister responsible, you should engage with young people about the offer. There is a clear need to articulate what the offer means for young people, in order for it to be understood and for young people to engage with it.

## **Funding**

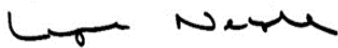
Evidence received suggested that, in relation to the total funding of £31 million per year, the percentage of this that goes to the voluntary sector is small. In order to fully understand how that total funding is distributed, there needs to be a transparent way of measuring how the £31 million is spent.

## **Curriculum Reform**

There was agreement across the sector that there is currently a great opportunity to build youth work into the national curriculum, but it is difficult to see how this can be done effectively as there does not seem to be a strategic approach across Welsh Government to enable this. The Committee believes that as Minister, you should work with Cabinet Secretary to help promote the inclusion of youth work within the new curriculum.

As we have outlined previously, the Committee is committed to undertaking on-going scrutiny of the Welsh Government's approach to youth work, and is keen to ensure that work is undertaken against all of the recommendations made in its report. While the Committee welcomes the role the Youth Work Board will have in providing advice and guidance to the Welsh Government, we recognise that responsibility will still rest with Welsh Government. To that end the Committee will continue to monitor the Welsh Government's actions against the 2016 recommendations, and the commitments you have given to these.

Yours sincerely



**Lynne Neagle AC / AM**  
**Cadeirydd / Chair**

