

Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 23 Hydref 2018
Petitions Committee | 23 October 2018

Young people's involvement in commissioning services

Petition title: [P-05-842](#) Give young people a voice when commissioning local services in Wales.

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to acknowledge that the current level of young persons' participation in the commissioning of services does not allow for the inclusion of marginalised groups. We request a review of the policies and guidance in place and a recommendation that new guidelines are mandatory for services commissioned to work with young people.

Every young person in Wales needs to be able to share their voice and experience in a way that is meaningful to them, to shape the services that are available to support them. We are asking for your support to promote changes to achieve this goal. As young people we must be able to share our thoughts and views on the projects that we need in our area.

Currently, only youth councils/ forums are consulted– which is not representative of those who struggle to attend such forums such as those 1 in 5 young adults who have a diagnosable mental health disorder. There needs to be a platform for those young people who may not be able to participate in the current schemes due to their mental health to share their opinions on services and projects that are directly affecting them.

We are a group of young people that have been involved in the Changing Minds Project coordinated by Newport Mind, which is due to lose funding in November of this year. Because of this we have been learning about the commissioning process, which has led to this petition being created and to our wider #changeit campaign. Direct inclusion of young people with mental health issues in the commissioning process will allow for greater tailoring of service provisions and improve confidence in the services amongst the targeted demographic.

“Involvement in this project enabled me to really understand the concerns of young people and the issues they face. Without these concerns being raised and included from the

inception of any policy which affects them, any initiative affecting young people will be flawed".

The Children's Rights Approach in Wales by the Children's Commissioner for Wales outlines a framework for embedding children's rights within services working with young people. These are guidelines and thus non-binding. Based on the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 outlines the right of children to be involved within policies creation and implementation; particularly those which affect their demographic. The Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report for the 2016/2017 year (the Report) specifically highlights the Commissioner's wish to see greater integration of young people within the commissioning process. The current guidelines for youth participation in Wales are, amongst other sources, contained within the Children and Young People's Participation in Wales Good Practice Guide 2016. The seven 'Core Standards' contained within the Guide are excellent starting steps. We feel that the non-mandatory nature of these standards and approaches, although partly met within some authorities in Wales, are insufficient for ensuring accountability for all services working with young people. We seek to ensure that young people from marginalised groups have a voice in the decision making processes as well as ensuring that service provision for young people all over Wales are of a similarly excellent standard. Our petition is in line with Recommendation 10 of the Mind over Matter report that highlights the current levels of provision of mental health services for young people, and compliments the work by the Together for Children and Young People Programme. Without change to the current guidelines, young people across Wales will continue to be marginalised. Specifically, those with mental health issues or additional needs who may not be able to take part in the current - and limited - youth participation initiatives will continue to find it difficult to voice their opinions.

Young people's participation in decisions which affect them

Legal right to have a say in decisions which affect you

Children and young people up to the age of 18 have a range of rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including rights to protection, health, family, education, culture and leisure (see [summary of the rights](#)).

The Welsh Government received international recognition when it incorporated the UNCRC into domestic law in Wales through the [Rights of the Child and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#). This law means that Welsh Ministers must, when exercising any of their functions, have due regard to the UNCRC. The term due regard requires a balanced consideration of issues, in this instance the articles of the UNCRC. This means that Ministers must think about how what they are doing relates to the rights and obligations in the UNCRC. In identifying any negative impact on children and young people, Ministers must consider how to avoid or minimise this impact.

In summary, Article 12 of the UNCRC says that **when adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.**

Also relevant to this petition is Article 24 of the UNCRC which, in summary, says that healthcare for children and young people should be as good as possible.

National Participation Standards for Wales

Wales has had a set of [national participation standards](#) for children and young people in place for over ten years, which were '[refreshed](#)' in 2016. The Welsh Government has [said](#):

The National Participation Standards are at the centre of our work. They tell you what you should expect from your services, and how practitioners and organisations should be involving you.

The standards make the following commitments to children and young people to:

- Provide information that is good quality, clear and accessible.
- Inform you about who's going to listen and let you know what difference your involvement could make.
- Give you enough support and time to choose if you want to get involved.
- Challenge discrimination.
- Provide a range of opportunities and support to meet the needs of children and young people.
- Listen to your views, experiences and ideas and take you seriously.
- Work with you on things you say are important.
- Value what you have to offer.
- Work with you in safe, fun and enjoyable ways.
- Make the most of what you know and do things that build your confidence and skills.

- Always ensure you have feedback in an agreed time.
- Tell you how your ideas have been used and why.
- Tell you what happens next.
- Work with you and learn how we can do things better.
- Ensure your views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.

[Statutory Guidance issued under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#) sets out expectations on how public bodies should apply these standards. It states:

Whilst it is not a requirement under the Act, the Welsh Ministers would strongly encourage public bodies to apply [...] the National Participation Standards for Children and Young People.

Emotional and mental health services for young people

2014 Assembly Committee inquiry leads to a ‘root and branch review’

During the Children, Young People and Education Committee’s 2014 [inquiry into child and adolescent mental health services](#) then Minister for Health, Mark Drakeford, announced that he had set in place a “root and branch review” to modernise and redesign the service for the future. This led to the creation in 2015 of the [Together for Children and Young People Programme](#) (T4CYPP). It is a multi-agency service improvement programme that aims to reshape, remodel and refocus the emotional and mental health services provided for children and young people in Wales.

2018 Assembly Committee report calls for ‘urgent action’

The Children, Young People and Education Committee published its report [‘Mind over matter’](#) in April 2018, calling for a step change in the support needed to tackle mental health issues and build emotional resilience in children and young people in Wales. The report’s main recommendation is that the Welsh Government makes the emotional and mental well-being and resilience of children and young people a stated national priority. It calls for much earlier intervention and states that ‘the urgent challenge now lies at the “front end” of the care pathway – emotional well-being, resilience and early intervention.’

Changing Minds Project

The petition has been submitted by the [Changing Minds Project](#), based at Newport Mind and designed for young people aged 14–25 who have or are experiencing mental health difficulties. It has offered the following opportunities for young people: Peer Support; 1:1 Transition Support; Self-Management Workshops; and Volunteering. Its website states the project’s five year Big Lottery Funding is ending and it will close on 28 November 2018 unless continuation funding can be found.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.