



prEich cyf/Your ref: P-06-1161  
Ein cyf/Our ref: JMSS/00781/22

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair - Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

22 July 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 4 July seeking details of the practical steps being taken to deliver the eight Programme for Government (PfG) commitments that concern children's services. I am pleased to set out a summary of progress for each of these below and next steps.

Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers

We want to see fewer children and young people entering care and for the period that young people stay in care to be as short as possible, consistent with meeting the needs of the young person.

An Oversight Board is in place, chaired by an independent person, Anthony Douglas, to deliver a new vision and ambition for children's services, based around consistent practice, less risk adverse behaviours and national restorative approaches to be adopted across Wales. Achieving this vision is not solely the responsibility of local authorities; it requires partnership working across public services and third sector organisations. The Chair has met representatives from every local authority children's services department in Wales to discuss these issues.

A half day event is being arranged during the early Autumn for members of the Oversight Board to consider findings from the Chair's meetings with local authorities. The event will focus on best practice, development of a National Practice Framework and a coherent programme of radical reform.

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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.

Additionally, Ministers are undertaking visits to local authorities over the summer to discuss transformation of services for looked after children. Visits concentrate on the delivery of a restorative approach to social care practice that focusses on keeping families together, through early help and advice services which are available at the right time for parents and children.

A Care Leavers Summit is also being held on 10 September between care leavers, Welsh Ministers and local government politicians to hear directly from care experienced young people and to develop a coherent vision of what radically reformed services would look like, influencing policy and service delivery across portfolios.

#### Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care

Funding arrangements to support the delivery of parental advocacy services in each of the seven regions in Wales have been agreed from April 2022. The service will support parents whose children are on the edge of care, helping to avoid statutory social services involvement, escalation of needs and reducing the risk of children entering the care system.

Funding will be used to scale up existing Parental Advocacy projects on a regional basis and to ensure new services are established as part of a national roll-out. We are working closely with existing third sector partners (NYAS in Gwent and Parental Advocacy Network in West Glamorgan) to develop their regional capacity.

We have also now developed a draft National Framework for Parent Advocacy which will describe the core service criteria that all regions must have in place, ensuring consistent service delivery throughout Wales.

Funding in 2022/23 will focus on growing existing regional supply, the development of the national framework and encouraging a consortium based approach to enable additional capacity to be developed before extending delivery to other regions thereafter.

#### Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care

Through the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) and via Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) we have identified projects and new approaches across Wales that benefit children with complex needs, such as disability and emotional/behavioural needs, and enable children to remain in the care of their families. We have received plans from RPBs and worked with colleagues across government to ensure the funding available in the 2022/23 financial year positively impacts on outcomes for children with complex needs.

A thematic review of 2022/23 investment proposals to understand the exact planned spend against each model of care began in June. We have currently identified 28 projects contributing towards the 'Supporting families to stay together safely and therapeutic support for care experienced children' model of care. The Welsh Government continues to meet with RPBs on a quarterly basis to undertake progress meetings, covering finances, key activities, progress and risk.

### Eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after

Welsh Minister's believe that 'public care' should mean that children are cared for by local authorities, or other not-for-profit providers, where social values and the best interests and outcomes for children are the overriding motives.

We have begun putting plans in place to help the transition to a not-for-profit model of care for foster and residential care services in Wales during this Senedd term. A key principle is that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children is not taken out as profit, but instead reinvested into the service to deliver better outcomes for children, service improvement and further professional development.

This is not about like for like replacement of one provider by another. Our vision is to redesign how we look after children and young people so we can do the best for our young people, their families, and communities by providing services that are locally based, locally designed and locally accountable.

We will do everything we can to avoid destabilising placements for children. We will work closely and in a timely manner with the sector, to carefully transform how we best care for children in Wales.

We have established a multiagency Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales, Albert Heaney. The Board is focused on delivery within a strong governance framework and thorough impact assessment. Working collaboratively with our stakeholders will be key to success.

We have thorough representation from the sector which includes public and third sector providers, service commissioners, Children's Commissioner for Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, trade unions and Voices from Care. Our commitment to children's rights and the voice of children and young people is also documented in the work of the Programme Board and its work streams.

In addition, we are working collaboratively with stakeholders right across the sector to ensure we offer thorough engagement and opportunities to take into account varying issues, concerns and suggestions.

### Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable

Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) are at various stages of development with their proposals and end of year reports will be completed in July. RPBs are expected to continue investment and build on provision through the Regional Integration Fund. Powys have requested additional revenue funding as their project is a year late and we are in discussion to find this funding.

### Strengthen public bodies in their role as 'corporate parent'

The key deliverables for this work are the development of a corporate parenting charter during 2022 and a statutory code in 2024. An Implementation Group consisting of statutory and third sector partners has been set up to oversee this work.

The Charter is currently being finalised and will then be submitted for my approval. Signatories to the Charter will be sought from senior leaders during engagement sessions and events are being held with the public sector later in 2022, including with health, education and housing.

Organisations and senior leaders signing up to the Charter will be making a clear public commitment stating their support of care experienced young people and by so doing be held accountable to ensure a better offer of support is provided to care experienced young people by all parts of the public sector.

It is intended the Charter will be launched at the Care Leavers Summit on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

#### Continue to support and uphold the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people

On 22nd June, the UK Government announced its scheme to Parliament which will provide a visa route to sponsorship for children with or without family members. The Welsh Government supports the scheme in principle but there is further work to be done in relation to the costs of the scheme.

We have argued strongly for differently applied and higher tariffs. A joint letter was sent from the Minister for Social Justice and Neil Gray MSP to Lord Harrington Minister for Refugees outlining joint concerns. Funding issues have yet to be resolved and conversations are ongoing. We have argued for the highest bar of safeguarding assurance to be applied to the scheme and are pleased that the UK Government agreed to our proposal to use a matching service to support applications to avoid social media matching.

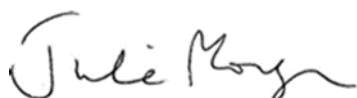
A range of meetings have taken place hosted by the UK Government (Home Office) officials to discuss guidance pertaining to unaccompanied minors and these are ongoing.

#### Support our national Foster Wales scheme

Foster Wales has been established as a collaborative national network of all the not for profit Local Authority fostering teams in Wales. Foster Wales works as a team with foster carers to build better futures for local children by helping them stay in their local area when it is right for them. Foster Wales have undertaken high profile marketing campaigns in the 2021-22 financial year and the Welsh Government is continuing to support the infrastructure of Foster Wales through bi-annual funding arrangements.

Campaigns are being developed for specifically targeting foster carers from other agencies. This will be the focus of national and local marketing during July and August. In addition, a campaign around Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) is also being planned for roll-out at the end of July.

Yours sincerely,



**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services