

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education
Committee**

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Ymateb gan | Response from : ProMo-Cymru

Evidence Sessions 1 and 2 – 16, 24 November 2016

As the Head of Social Action with ProMo–Cymru, responsible for the national Meic advocacy, information and advice helpline, I am writing to you, the Chair, to thank the Committee for undertaking this inquiry and hearing evidence from a number of interested parties.

I would also like to follow up on references made to Meic during some of the sessions, particularly in respect of the omission of Meic from the National Approach. I am happy for this letter to be circulated to Committee members as you see fit.

The Committee is already aware that Meic is the national information, advice and advocacy helpline service for children and young people in Wales – accessible to them 16 hours a day, every day of the year, through the medium of Welsh if wanted, through any communication device in any geographical location / physical setting – the ultimate safeguard and back up.

Members of the Committee expressed curiosity and sought an answer to the question regarding the omission of Meic from the National Approach – a stated observation of a fact, which we find extraordinary, and that remains a concern.

Having seen the transcripts of the evidence session, and the responses from Children in Wales (Mr. O’Neil, Session 1), and the Children’s Commissioner (Professor Holland and Ms Thomas, Session 2), and without repeating the points made by us in our written submission, I would like to offer our direct response.

Marco Gil-Cervantes, the Chief Executive of ProMo-Cymru was a representative on the Ministerial Expert Group on Advocacy (MEGA), which, whilst it focused on Statutory Advocacy explicitly had Meic on the Agenda but when MEGA was disbanded Meic was not carried forward to future discussions.

The SWOT PESTEL of proposed advocacy delivery models carried out by the Advocacy Providers Group highlighted Hybrid model as the best way forward and proposed, the “collaborative commissioning such as Meic Helpline – could build upon Meic Service”. It is the Hybrid model that has been progressed.

From the point that the MEGA group was disbanded and developments were carried forward by Strategic Leadership Group, Meic and ProMo-Cymru was no longer engaged in direct discussions. As already highlighted we believe this is a missed opportunity.

We would welcome any opportunity to engage in open and direct discussion to establish clarity. Given the opportunity for open discussion with a cross section of stakeholders, this could result in improved understanding of Meic, what it delivers, how it works, and most importantly how Meic’s full potential could be harnessed to deliver better outcomes for children and young people as part of the statutory advocacy landscape as well as more broadly.

We have been successfully delivering Meic since its inception in 2010 and have been developing and making ongoing improvements to the service based on reiterative learning as well as discussions with a range of stakeholders, including our service users and our Welsh Government partners and funders. We know the service has an established track record and is highly valued by those who are familiar with and understand it.

We wish to broaden this understanding, and in so doing would expect this to lead to:

- improved understanding of Meic’s role in safeguarding children and young people,

- improved awareness and use of Meic by professionals in their supportive and safeguarding role to children and young people, and finally,
- active promotion of Meic by commissioners and providers to children and young people who could benefit from our early intervention (diversion away from services) or our support to secure entitlement to appropriate services as needed
- improved promotion and awareness of Meic within Welsh Government, as supported by the recent co-ordinated approach to the national anti bullying campaign

Specific and detailed proposed suggestions on where and how Meic fits in the National Approach and the wider advocacy agenda is set out in our written submission.

As stated in our formal response to the consultation we feel strongly we have much to offer and contribute that is of benefit to children and young people themselves, the professionals who support them, and the commissioners who procure advocacy services. We would welcome any opportunity to directly contribute to existing forums and / or new ones for progressing and developing the gaps identified.

Stephanie Hoffman
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