

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/03900/18

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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12 December 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 26 November regarding Petition P-05-857 Creating National Task Force for Children's Mental Health from the National Organisation for Children's Mental Health.

The Welsh Government positioned mental health as one of the six national priorities within *Prosperity for All* and I fully recognise the importance of supporting the emotional well-being of our children and young people. Schools have a crucial role to play in identifying problems early and helping to provide children and young people with the tools to cope with the stresses of growing up.

In September 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and I launched pilot projects in three areas to provide support from specialist mental health services in schools and to build relationships which extend from the classroom to those specialist services. The CAMHS in-reach pilots have a specific focus on consultation, liaison and advice and providing early identification and intervention.

Building on this activity and following publication of the report by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee *Mind over Matter*: <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf>, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and I reflected on what more we could do to accelerate the pace of change in this area, and achieve a whole school and system approach to health and well-being. Following this, we announced in September 2018 that we would convene a Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group, which held its inaugural meeting in October, to advise us on how to progress this work. The group is jointly chaired by myself and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and draws together those working in education and health and the wider public and third sectors, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

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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.

The work of the group is in response to, and will be informed by, *Mind over Matter* which called for emotional and mental well-being and resilience to be a stated national priority and contained recommendations for how this could be taken forward.

The new group will explore how different activities already taking place can be brought together, highlight any gaps in provision and ensure energy and resources are targeted so they can have maximum benefit. It will look at the new curriculum being developed and consider issues such as staff training.

The group will be supported by a stakeholder reference group, to ensure the broad range of agencies with a role in delivering a whole school approach have a meaningful engagement in the work. Central to this will be ensuring that children and young people have the opportunity to directly feed in their views to inform activity which directly impacts upon them. In this respect we are currently recruiting young people to join a young person's forum, which will sit alongside and advise the Task and Finish Group on how best to take this agenda forward.

I hope this reassures you that improving the mental health and well-being of children and young people remains a priority and that we have established new arrangements to strengthen our joint working and increase the pace of this work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Vaughan Gething'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services