

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

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 37

Ymateb gan : Tros Gynnal Plant

Response from : Tros Gynnal Plant

Question 1 – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

- National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People (Review its implementation and effectiveness)
- Advocacy for Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum seeking Children
- Safeguarding children and young people in Independent Residential Units and Schools through a Visiting Advocacy Service
- Around CAHMS – in particular the lack of meaningful support for those young people deemed to not be eligible for CAHMS – to support them with their ‘issues’ or ‘concerns’ – to build emotional resilience.
- Missing/Absent Children – lack of consistent national procedures and protocols for ensuring the child is seen by an independent person/advocate prior to being returned to their home/residential placement

Question 2 – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

- **Advocacy for Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum seeking Children**

Tros Gynnal Plant is currently developing a national participation network project aimed at giving Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum

seeking children and young people an opportunity to share their experiences and develop a means of collectively informing service providers of their needs and support requirements.

A clear message from the children and young people we are engaged with is that they feel that they would benefit from the support of an advocate at a very early stage in their engagement and discussions with authorities and service providers.

- **Safeguarding children and young people in Independent Residential Units and Schools through a Visiting Advocacy Service**

A child or young person placed in an Independent Residential Unit or School may be placed in a county within Wales other than the child's home county and in some instances this can mean a great distance from their home area. Those Welsh children placed in a Unit or School in another county in Wales can expect to access their home area advocacy service and to be visited by their social worker at scheduled intervals.

However, some children placed at these Units or schools are placed by local authorities who are at a great distance from the Unit or school, quite often from areas of England and the availability of the home area advocacy service or the regularity of visits from social workers can prove problematic. It was this lack of regular independent contact that prompted the recommendations in 'Lost in Care' that children placed away from home should have regular access to an independent person such as an advocate.

Some Residential Units in Wales, in recognition of these facts and in an attempt to further provide their young people with an independent source to share their concerns with, commission an independent Visiting Advocacy service to visit the Unit or school on a regular basis.

The young people are able to confidently approach the visiting advocate to raise concerns or issues about the unit/school management or to ask that the advocate help with contacting their social worker from their home area in order to resolve issues regarding their care plan.

However, the commissioning of this service is not mandatory and this vital safeguarding element is left to each individual provider to decide whether or not they wish to secure a service for their children and young people.

The committee should consider whether the provision of such a service could be stipulated as a condition of registration of the residential unit or school.

- **National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People (Review its implementation and effectiveness)**

During the last two years Welsh Government Ministers have invited local government to produce a model for the consistent delivery of statutory advocacy for children and young people. This was in response to a number of reports from the Children's Commissioner under the title 'Missing Voices' as well as some extensive work undertaken by the CYPE committee that also produced recommendations improving advocacy services.

That work was recently completed and local government are beginning to implement the National Approach. It would therefore be timely for the committee to revisit the issue towards the end of the year to gauge how well the Approach meets the recommendations made by the committee and commitments made by Ministers.