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Date/Dyddiad: 11/02/08
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Helen Mary Jones AM
Chair, Children & Young people Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay, CF99 1NA

Dear Helen Mary

Re: Committee Inquiry into Advocacy services

I am writing to follow up on the evidence provided by the WLGA and ADSS Cymru to the Children and Young People's committee Inquiry into advocacy services on January 31st.

During the meeting it was agreed that additional information to support our evidence, should be sent to the Committee to help inform future discussions around a desired model of Advocacy.

The WLGA, ADSS Cymru and ADEW have worked to produce what we hope will be a helpful outline of how an Advocacy model would look operating under existing statutory requirements and commissioned by the Children and Young People's Partnerships, supported by the Partnership Support Unit and Social Services Improvement Agency.

The model identifies the key national and local drivers and places the Children and Young People's Partnerships at the heart of the commissioning process, in line with the Children Act 2004 and the Welsh Assembly Government's guidance: Children Act 2004 'Stronger Partnerships for better Outcomes'.

If you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Wishes

Beverlea Frowen
Director of Health Improvement & Social Services

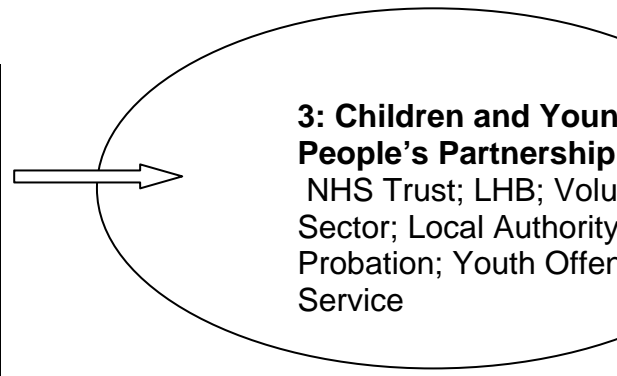
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1: National Drivers
National Advocacy Standards
National Participation Standards
Children's Act 1989; Children Act 2004 -
NSF Key Action 2.6
UNCRC

2: Local Drivers
Local multi-agency needs assessment (advocacy)
Local multi-agency service mapping (advocacy)
Participation of children, young people and their families
Analysis of the above to define local priorities, actions and outcomes

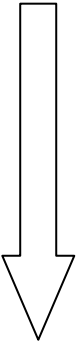
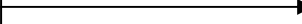
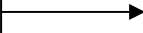
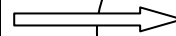
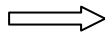


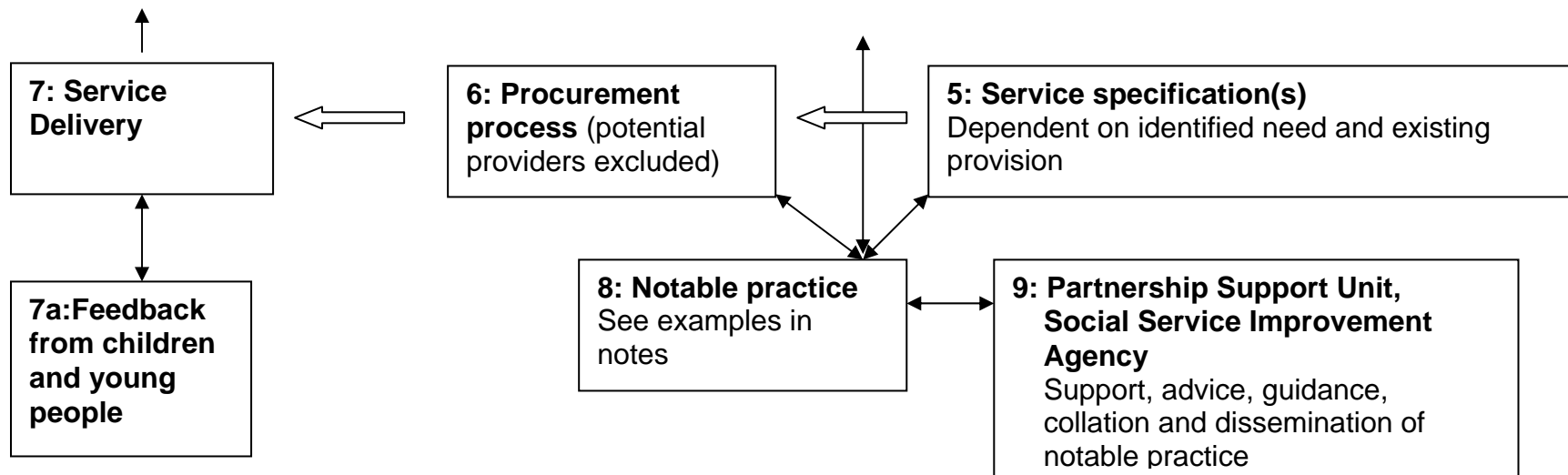
7c: Outcome Data

7b: Performance Management Information

Monitored by CYP Partnership via SLA
Inspection – CSSIW/Estyn/HIW/ Audit Commission (as part of new integrated inspection regime)
Scrutiny- at a local level

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Explanatory Notes

Advocacy Service Commissioning & Delivery Model (Flow Chart)

1: National drivers

The Children Act section 26 1989 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide advocacy services for children in care and care leavers. Also in place are minimum standards for service provision, which apply on a Wales wide basis to advocacy and participation.

The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty to co-operate on Local Authorities, NHS Trusts, Local Health Boards and key “relevant partners” in order to improve the well-being of children and young people. The legal duty requires Children and Young People’s Partnerships to produce a Children and Young People’s Plan, which will “provide a basis for the joint commissioning of services¹”, and that, “local commissioning should include consideration beyond a single local authority area²”.

2: Local drivers

The Children and Young People’s Plans are required to be based on the analysis of a local needs assessment and service mapping data, alongside the participation of children, young people and families.

With regards to advocacy, this process would identify current gaps in provision and local need, whether these existed for local, universal services, or for the more specialist s

¹ ‘Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes’ Wag, 2006

² ibid

ervices for which a regional commissioning process could prove more appropriate. CYP Partnerships from adjoining local authority areas are well placed to co-operate in jointly funding and commissioning regional services if deemed necessary.

3: Children and Young People's Partnerships

Statutory multi-agency partnerships with the duty to plan for all children and young people up to the age of 18, and those up to 25 if in receipt of Youth Support Services or care leavers. CYP Partnerships are required to respond to both national direction and locally assessed needs. The multi-agency nature of the Partnership allows it to develop a commissioning strategy in order to develop a service to meet these needs. Such a strategy would include clear procurement processes, which ensure the separation of service purchasers from service providers.

4: Requirements

Independence in the context of commissioning advocacy services has two separate meanings. In its broader commissioning sense, it refers to the purchaser/provider split as noted above. In a more advocacy specific sense, independence refers to ensuring that the service provider can demonstrate the ability to resist any pressure from any agency, and to maintain support for the child and young person to follow their preferred course of action. It is for this reason that in many cases statutory services commission external agencies (i.e. NSPCC/ Tros Gynnal) to provide advocacy services, and ensure a clear "arms length" approach.

Advocacy should be seen not just as a complaints service but as part of the wider participation continuum, empowering children and young people to engage in a dialogue with, and influence, the services that affect their lives. The provision of Advocacy services, commissioned by the CYP would provide a robust mechanism to support this process, from a children's rights basis and embedded in the seven core aims of the children and young peoples plan.

Robust performance management mechanisms are essential to allow commissioners of services to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the services they purchase. Process, output (the services and interventions delivered) and outcome (the measurable change the interventions make to the lives of the children and young people involved) data are all important dimensions of a comprehensive Service Level Agreement.

The development of a new model for Advocacy services provides an opportunity to maximise the potential of the ongoing review of existing inspectorates. It would be prudent to advocate that an integrated inspection, based on the existing fragmented requirements is developed to represent the multi agency approach that will underpin Advocacy services and support holistic improvement.

Research evidence of effective advocacy approaches, coupled with the input from children and young people as potential service users, should be used to shape the service specification.

5: Service specification

The service specification sets out target audience, what work is to be delivered, skills, knowledge and experience requirements of staff and the host organisation, and provides targets – both in terms of outputs and outcomes – which will form part of the management information monitored by the Service Level Agreement.

6: Procurement process

Once the service specification has been agreed, the procurement or tendering process can begin. If the service specification can be likened to a job description, the procurement is the recruitment. An advert is placed (regulations set out how and where this occurs, frequently

linked to the level of resources available) and interested parties respond via written application, and once short-listed, via interview. As with recruitment, the process needs to be transparent, fair and open. Potential providers are excluded from the short-listing and interview panel. Many Children and Young People's Partnerships are now involving children and young people in the interview and selection process.

7: Service delivery

Once the contract is awarded, service delivery can begin. The service specification will include details of information the provider will need to gather and feed back to the CYP Partnership in order to meet the Service Level Agreement, and allow robust monitoring and evaluation. Additional objective feedback will be available via the inspection regimes – either single or joint inspections.

7a: Feedback from children and young people

Effective participation mechanisms to secure feedback from service users are essential. This will be set out in the service specification, and is integral to meeting the standards for both advocacy and participation, and provides the service provider with the opportunity to improve their services. Evidence of this feedback, and how it is used, will be supplied to the CYP Partnership.

7b: Performance Management Information

Data regarding progress against milestones during the early part of the contract (staff appointed, induction training, marketing, etc.) and over time, outputs (number of children and young people supported, feedback from service users, etc.), along with financial information will allow the efficacy of the service to be effectively monitored by the CYP Partnership. The outcomes for clients supported will also be included in the management information.

7c: Outcome data

As part of the ongoing review of the overall Children and Young People's Plan, the CYP Partnership will monitor key outcome data for the children and young person population. Though in many cases a causal link will not be possible to identify, it may be possible to infer some contribution from a service, or range of services, to this overall outcome data.

8: Notable practice

Gwynedd- A multi agency advocacy service is in the process of being implemented. Following a tender process and presentation, a multi-agency joint working group, with the participation of young people from the Clywed group and North West Wales NHS Trust users group, has offered a contract to NYAS to provide advocacy services to the children and young people of Gwynedd. This service is being provided in a phased programme. The children and young people actually conducted the interview process and were the leading voice in the appointment offered to NYAS. This was ground breaking and innovative work brought about by multi-agency working and cooperation and as a direct result of the voice of the child.

Powys – A multi-agency Project Management Board oversees the work of the advocacy project, which provides direct feedback to Senior Managers across the agencies in respect of the issues as experienced by young people. This allows for practise, policy and procedures to be amended accordingly.

The local resolution and ability to respond quickly and flexibly are seen as key strengths by partners and services users, and are viewed as important in promoting accountability and ownership.

Powys have also worked hard to promote an effective, honest and open dialogue with providers – including to support providers ability to appropriately challenge the “commissioner” – and to respond to issues raised.

9: Partnership Support Unit / Social Services Improvement Agency

Both of these teams are hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association, and part funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The newly formed Partnership Support Unit (PSU) was created to support Children and Young People's Partnerships to meet the statutory duties of the Children Act 2004, including the production of Children and Young People's Plans, and the duty to co-operate.

The Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) created in 2005 "works with local authorities in Wales to increase the pace of improvement and promote excellence within Social Services"³. Hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association the Agency is a partnership enterprise between the Association, ADSS Cymru and the Welsh Assembly Government. The work of the SSIA, funded by a Welsh Assembly Government Improvement Fund, has a strong emphasis on:

- improving service delivery and enabling officers and members to better understand their performance;
- enabling councils to improve their decisions and to make changes to services based on a better understanding and interpretation of evidence based practice;
- increasing council's knowledge of their own performance through self assessment and through the design and implementation of workable local solutions for improvement;
- Councils working collectively to enhance the sharing of good practice to ensure that vulnerable groups within their communities receive first class services.

Both units were created as a direct response to the need to provide expertise at a local level and enhance the pace of improvement around key issues such as commissioning and service delivery.

There is now a considerable body of expertise residing in the PSU and SSIA that would be able to provide ongoing support and advice to partnerships in developing and delivering a model of advocacy, aligned to the wider improvement agenda and supportive of the delivery of the children & Young people's plans. The WLGA would be keen to engage with the Assembly Government to determine an ongoing role in terms of the advocacy agenda.

A commissioning workshop, which builds on existing work undertaken by the SSIA to develop commissioning practice, is to be jointly delivered by the PSU and SSIA in April.

It is intended to ensure participants are equipped with the transferable skills, based on core underlying principles, to effectively engage in the commissioning process. This approach, along with the access to notable practice in a wide range of services areas, will build the capacity of Children and Young People's Partnerships to secure evidence based local and regional services to meet their identified needs.