

Jane Hutt AC/AM

**Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Our ref: SF/JH/187/09

Helen-Mary Jones AM
Chair
Children and Young People's Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 June 2009

Dear Helen-Mary,

**Response to recommendations made by the Children and Young People's Committee
in a report *Scrutiny of developments in the provision of advocacy services to
children and young people in Wales - May 2009***

Thank you for letter requesting a response to recommendations made in your report.

Please find enclosed my response to these recommendations and trust they provide the relevant information.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Hutt".

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Ffacs * Fax 029 2089 8475
Correspondence: Jane.Hutt@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

Printed on 100% recycled paper

Written Response to the National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People's Committee Recommendations made in their document *Scrutiny of developments in the provision of advocacy services to children and young people in Wales (May 2009)* by Jane Hutt, the minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

1. The CYP Committee recommends that: Members of the National Independent Advocacy Board should have the opportunity to report to the National Assembly for Wales, on an independent basis of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Response : Accept in principle

The National Independent Advocacy Board will take an independent, strategic overview of the development and delivery of advocacy services for children and young people in Wales. The Board will meet independently and will present its advice to Welsh Ministers as and when required. As lead Minister responsible for delivering the advocacy framework, I am committed to regularly reporting to the National Assembly for Wales on progress made. The Board may, in addition, make its views known to the National Assembly through other means such as through the provision of evidence to committees of the Assembly.

Financial Implications – The cost of facilitating the National Independent Advocacy Board and the development and procurement of a National Advocacy and Advice service will be met from the Counselling and Advocacy BEL within DCELLS MEG

2. The CYP Committee recommends that: Children and Young People Members of the National Independent Advocacy Board should be directly asked whether they wish to have the opportunity to meet separately to adults on the Board, prior to its meetings.

Response : Accept

The young people chosen to sit on the Board were all made aware that they would be sitting on a mixed panel of adults and young people during recruitment and have shown a positive response to this. Board meetings will be very interactive using a variety of innovative and participative methods and activities to ensure all members are fully involved at all times. The Terms of Reference will be drawn up and agreed by all members at the first meeting ensuring that all issues are addressed and all members are happy with the arrangements. However, the Young People will be asked directly at the first meeting if they wish to have the opportunity to meet separately to adults on the Board, prior to its meeting.

Financial Implications – The cost of facilitating the National Independent Advocacy Board and the development and procurement of a National

Advocacy and Advice service will be met from the Counselling and Advocacy BEL within DCELLS MEG

3. The CYP Committee recommends that: The Welsh Assembly Government should clarify what funding will be utilised to enable the establishment of consortiums of Children and Young People Partnerships, for jointly developing and commissioning integrated advocacy services.

Response : Accept

There is no specific additional funding for Children and Young People's Partnerships to enable the establishment of consortiums. Children and Young People's Partnerships have a facilitating role and should enable joint working and better value and service for the customer. Many Social Services currently commission advocacy providers on a consortium basis and the *Guide to the Model for Delivering Advocacy Services to Children and Young People (2009)* encourages regions/sub-regions to consider these arrangements as a foundation for the development and commissioning of integrated specialist advocacy services. The Advocacy Development and Performance Unit will provide support and guidance for Partnerships in setting up their arrangements.

Financial Implications – The running costs of the Advocacy Development and Performance Unit established within the Welsh assembly Government are estimated at between £75k-£100k per annum, and will be met from the DCELLS Delegated Running Costs budget.

4. The CYP Committee recommends that:

4.1. The Welsh Assembly Government should determine the cost of establishing a telephone and text advocacy and advice service, which is free to call from mobile phones.

4.2. Following this determination, the Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that the Advocacy Development and Performance Unit has sufficient funding to establish this service.

Response : Accept

4.1 One of the first tasks of the National Independent Advocacy Board will be to look at the different options for the development and procurement of a National Advocacy and Advice Service, to include a telephone and text service which is free from mobile phones. The Board will have its first meeting on 12th June 2009

Response : Accept in Principle

4.2 Long term funding arrangements will depend on future budget decisions.

Financial Implications – The full year budget for the Advocacy Development and Performance Unit, which includes implementing the new advocacy and advice service and the administrative cost for running the National

Independent Advocacy Board is £560k for 2009/10, rising to £850k in 2010/11 and will be met from the Counseling and Advocacy BEL within the DCELLS MEG.

5. The CYP Committee recommends that: The Welsh Assembly Government must set out, in its commissioning guidance for Children and Young People Partnerships, clear direction that children and young people should be able to change a professional advocate representing them, without having to explain why they are unhappy and want to change.

Response : Accept

This direction is set out clearly and specifically for Children and Young People's Partnership in the *Guide to the Model for Delivering Advocacy Services to Children and Young People (2009)*, the statutory guidance *Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Making a Representation of a Compliant under the Children Act 1989 (point 2.15 refers)* and the *National Standards for the Provision of Children Advocacy Services (standard 1 refers)*. In addition the statutory guidance to follow will also reflect this recommendation.

Financial Implications – None.