



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P/VG/0956/19

Suzy Davies AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

20 March 2019

Dear Suzy,

I am responding to your request made in First Minister's Questions on 5 March for action on the recommendations in the Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report 2017-18 in relation to advocacy for children and young people in health settings.

The Commissioner first wrote to me in March 2017 about the issue of health related advocacy for children and young people and since then there have been several pieces of correspondence and meetings with the Commissioner and my officials.

In January 2018, Professor Chris Jones, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, wrote to all Nurse Directors of health boards, seeking immediate assurance that arrangements are in place to provide complaints advocacy service for children and young people who wish to make a complaint about health services in NHS Wales, in line with the direction to health boards. He was assured that all health boards and trusts are able to provide, or secure the provision of, complaints advocacy services for children and young people who need them.

Health Boards are responsible for providing or securing the provision of independent advocacy services for children and young people under the age of 18 if they wish to complain about services provided to them by the NHS in Wales. For those children and young people who are not aware of the complaints advocacy services provided by their health board, the [MEIC](#) helpline service is able to provide a first point of contact and signpost them to the relevant health board. It has been decided that MEIC should be referred to in the PTR information for children and young people, as it would be confusing to include the contact details for each of the health boards. This has been discussed with officials from the Commissioner's Office.

The Putting Things Right patient information was updated in 2017 and the children's leaflet refers children and young people to the MEIC helpline service to access advocacy services for complaints about services provided to them by the NHS in Wales.

Most health boards also have a Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) or similar service. As well as dealing with 'on the spot' concerns these service signpost patients to services that can support them in raising a concern.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

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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.

In response to the recommendation about complaints advocacy services for children and young people in the Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report 2017-18, Professor Chris Jones wrote to health boards on 14 March 2019. His letter sought their assurance that all staff are aware that they need to refer children and young people to their advocacy services when they wish to make a complaint about their care or treatment in NHS Wales.

Children and young people in receipt of mental health care could be further supported to raise concerns through accessing independent mental health advocacy. All health boards in Wales have in place arrangements to provide mental health advocates trained in working with children and young people.

On 13 November, I accepted the recommendation that the Welsh Government undertakes an audit of the provision of advocacy in health settings for under 18s and takes forward measures to ensure that any gaps identified are filled.

A review of current provision of advocacy services for children and young people accessing all mental health services (not just in patient settings) was also recommended in the Mind Over Matter report published by the Children, Young People and Education Committee.

The Together for Children and Young People Programme will shortly commission a review of the current provision of and need for advocacy services for Children, Young People accessing all mental health services in consultation with key stakeholders including the Children's Commissioner, the National Youth Advocacy Service, commissioned providers of services and Children, Young People.

My officials met with staff from the Children's Commissioner's office on 6 December and again on 1 March to discuss the recommendations and agree a way forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

**Vaughan Gething AC/AM**

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Health and Social Services