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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P-EM-2730-18

Lynne Neagle, AM, Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

8 August 2018

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your letter of 12 July concerning the Children, Young People and Education Committee's follow up into its Youth Work Inquiry. I am grateful for your continued and valued scrutiny of our strategic approach. It was also reassuring to read that, through your work, stakeholders have acknowledged progress is being made, and that they have welcomed a renewed focus on youth work. However, as you rightly identify, there is still much work to do.

In response to your specific points, I am pleased to provide the following additional information:

National Youth Work Strategy

The draft timeline for the delivery of the new strategy is challenging but I remain committed to its delivery. To do this meaningfully we must listen and take account of the views of young people and the sector, including the advice of the Youth Work Reference Group and, once fully established, the Interim Youth Work Board. Therefore, and as previously confirmed to Committee, the strategy's development will be an iterative process, responding to emerging evidence and adapting as appropriate.

With regards to the meaningful involvement of young people in the strategy's development, they have already played a vital role, both in informing Margaret Jervis' report 'Our Future' and the review of the current youth work strategy. However, this represents only the beginning of a wider period of engagement that places young people at the heart of the strategy as it is written. This is a key priority for me and for Keith Towler, in his role as the Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board.

Keith has already outlined to my officials his plans to undertake a youth survey to help inform the development of the strategy and he is currently giving further thought to how he will develop this work.

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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.

I also agree that the strategy alone is not enough to help drive forward the greater level of accountability across youth work in Wales; it has always been the intention to have the new long term strategy underpinned by a clear shorter term action plan with clear timelines. Additionally we will be giving consideration to a separate document which helps young people understand what this strategy means for them.

Sufficiency Assessments

Work on this area will start shortly, and I anticipate it being something the new Board will wish to pick up quite quickly. However, this must be developed with a clear vision for youth work in Wales which is informed by young people. I remain committed to the concept of Sufficiency Assessments but this work must be done at the appropriate time.

Interim Youth Work Board

In terms of the new Board I was pleased to announce Keith Towler as the new Chair, and we are working to get the remainder of the Board in place as quickly as we can following a 'light touch' public appointments process to ensure this is done in an open and transparent way. I have advised Keith I do not expect to see this as the 'usual suspects' and I know he is giving serious thought as to the appropriate make up of the board to ensure the members are of a sufficient level to be able to influence the sector, diverse enough to ensure we have knowledge and expertise where needed and committed to driving forward change in a positive way.

Keith is considering how young people can influence the work of the board, but is mindful that the previous approach of having a 'token' young person sitting in on meetings is not a robust way of ensuring a cross section of young people are able to influence the Boards work; I know he is considering his approach further.

In addition to this Keith has advised his key priority initially will be a communications plan so the sector can understand the work of the board, progress in terms of setting the board up, and a clear work plan for the next two years.

Engagement with Young People

I consider the input of young people as vital to the development of a meaningful strategy. However, as outlined above there are a number of approaches now being explored which will start to address this imbalance and I expect to see work taking place on this shortly.

Funding

Consideration of how the funding available for youth work across Wales is spent will be part of the Board's considerations once it has been fully established. I would expect to have more detail when they have developed a work plan.

Curriculum Reform

I met with the Principle Youth Officers in July and they were keen to discuss their engagement with the development of the new curriculum. They told me that they perceive there are issues ensuring that youth work is considered appropriately. It's very important that our new curriculum reflects the crucial role youth work plays in supporting young people to achieve their full potential.

Additionally, officials in the Curriculum Reform team have met with the Youth Work Reference Group, which includes members of the Principle Youth Officers Group, to update them on developments, and to invite them to provide feedback on the development of the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE). Officials will continue to engage with the youth sector as part of the wider stakeholder engagement that is planned for the new curriculum going forward and have offered to meet on a more regular basis if helpful, including attending a future Youth Work Reference Group meeting, or in due course the interim Youth Work Board.

The youth work sector are also represented on the Welsh Government's Strategic Stakeholder Group which was established to provide external challenge, scrutiny and advice as the new curriculum is developed. As part of the remit members of the Strategic Stakeholder Group are expected to keep their sector and those they represent updated on progress with the developments around the new curriculum and to feedback stakeholder views to Welsh Government.

Finally, I would like to say I am pleased the committee is continuing to take an interest in youth work. The developments to date have been very positive and we will continue to push forward, working with young people and the sector to help strengthen and raise the profile of youth work in Wales. I would be happy to update on progress as you feel is appropriate.

Yours sincerely,



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