

Response to the CYPE committee consultation on Sixth Senedd Priorities



Background

The Royal College Mental Health Expert Advisory Group (RCMHEAG) brings together partners from across health and social care services and acts as a source of independent and impartial, evidenced-based expert advice for policy and decision makers.

The group also aims to ensure a sharper focus and understanding on the current and necessary support for the people we collectively represent in social care and in primary, community, and secondary care mental health services.

For 2021/22, The advisory group has established common work areas of Covid Recovery (including workforce wellbeing), the Mental Health Workforce Plan, and Community Mental Health Services as initial priorities. These priority areas intend to offer scrutiny and guidance to compliment areas of national focus. However, this is not exhaustive, and the advisory group will be keen to develop and receive further areas of interest.

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the committee's consultation on its forward workplan.

The Royal College Mental Health Expert Advisory Group is calling for the Children, Young People and Education committee to give focus to the following:

- Increased recognition for the need to resource specialist mental health services for children and young people
- Post-legislative Scrutiny on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET)
- The sustainability of the neurodevelopmental services workforce
- Mental health workforce for babies, children and young people
- Continued monitoring of Mind over Matter
- Specialist CAMHS services (sCAMHS)
- Scrutiny and monitoring of existing work programmes



Response

Increased recognition for the need to resource specialist services for children and young people

In 2018, Mind over Matter identified the key role schools play in building an emotionally resilient population of young people. It called for a whole-school approach to reducing stigma and promoting good mental health. It also described the planned reform of the curriculum in Wales as a ‘once-in-a-generation opportunity’ to embed well-being into children’s lives. The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill was introduced in July 2020.

The support given by schools, parents and communities is essential to developing emotional well-being. This is understood well in Wales, and the provision that's been created will be needed in supporting both prevention and early intervention of mental health problems.

However, whilst focus and improvements are now being seen at the ‘front end’ of the care pathway, there needs to be a focus on the lack of provision for children and young people who need more specialist support, those with complex needs, and those who need help in a crisis.

Specialist services have long experienced staff and resourcing shortages, and these challenges must be addressed to improve outcomes for babies, children and young people.

Post-legislative Scrutiny of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET)

As the committee is well aware, this autumn will see the roll out of the ambitious new legislation for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). We believe strongly that the committee has a key role to play in scrutinising the implementation of the legislation and ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and young people with ALN. We feel a review of implementation of the legislation and impact of the lives of children and young people would be timely at a halfway point within the Senedd term. Given the staggered nature of implementation, we are of the view that lessons from such a review could inform implementation moving forward.

We believe such a review should bring together the perspectives of children and young people, their families and carers, education and health professionals and the third sector. It should consider:

- Identification of and support for children and young people with ALN including participation of children and young people in the process.
- Outcomes achieved by children with ALN
- Dispute resolution including the role of the Education Tribunal for Wales
- The roles of and collaboration between education, health and social care sectors
- Provision for 16-25-year olds including support for independent living; transition to adult services; and access to education.
- Welsh language provision

The sustainability of the Neurodevelopmental Services Workforce

Demand and capacity within neurodevelopmental (ND) services: we want to highlight the need to understand ND services as a whole so that we have a better picture of demand and capacity throughout Wales, not just of autism services but the whole ND pathway. During the consultation and development of the Code of Practice on the Delivery of Autism Services, several stakeholders raised concerns about capacity within ND services. Now that the Code has been published, it would be timely to investigate this. Outputs could include a review with evidence gathering; and a report to understand bottlenecks and pinch points within services, with recommendations as to how we can ensure services can meet demand not just for autism services but for all ND services, regardless of diagnosis.

Mental health workforce for babies, children and young people

We welcomed the Fifth Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee's focus on mental health and the significant progress made in driving forward the whole school approach. We now feel in terms of next steps that it would be extremely helpful for the committee to undertake scrutiny on the future mental health workforce for babies, children and young people, potentially in conjunction with the health committee.

We view the upcoming mental health workforce plan as a real chance to remodel current provision and create sustainable services which ensure that all people in Wales are able to access appropriate mental health support. We understand children and young people's mental health is due to be a key focus area within the plan.

What's also crucial is the need to protect and support our workforce in the immediate challenges that will be imposed upon them in tackling waiting lists whilst managing burnout; mitigating the rates of retirement post pandemic; all whilst planning a longer-term workforce that can manage the longer-term mental health needs of our population.

- Call for the committee to scrutinise the mental health workforce plan to ensure it considers the immediate challenges as well as the long-term vision for the workforce
- Call for the committee to scrutinise the extent the plan will drive change and include a wide range of professions considered given recruitment challenges in the traditional workforce and engages widely across service user and professional groups
- Call for the committee to ensure specialist skills and training are valued across the MDT

Continued monitoring of Mind over Matter

Continued monitoring by the CYPE Committee of delivery of the Mind Over Matter report and the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health, picking up where the previous CYPE Committee left off. One of the original Mind Over Matter recommendations was around training all professionals working with children and young people on basic skills around mental health: it would be helpful to understand progress on this and the report's other recommendations.

Specialist CAMHS services (sCAMHS)

There have been historic vacancies in specialist CAMHS posts, yet there are increasing instances where by professionals aren't being able to undertake work in the manner they are trained or specialist in. We need to ensure that specialists are able to operate at the top of their licence, and we hear increasingly that this is not the case across Wales.

This approach doesn't value the holistic approach to the individual and specialist skills that child and adolescent professionals bring, and will continue to affect recruitment and retention and the availability of specialist care.

We need to move away from referring to specialist services as a financial burden, this is hugely unhelpful and further stigmatises those vulnerable groups who need to access that specialist support.

- We must expand the specialist CAMHS workforce and ensure the wellbeing of the workforce is supported
- We must increase the capacity of CAMHS services, including increasing inpatient and bed capacity
- Professionals must be given the time and opportunity to undertake research and lead innovative projects, this is to the advantage of future service delivery in Wales
- The need for specialist intervention needs to be recognised across the health service, and specialists must be given the opportunity to operate at the top of their licence.



Increased scrutiny and monitoring over existing work programmes

- Long term strategy and delivery for children’s mental health: the Together 4 Children and Young People programme (T4CYP) has a relatively short term funding model as we understand it. It may be helpful to take evidence from stakeholders to understand the Welsh Government’s long term thinking and planning around children and young people’s mental health and the services that support them.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): we would hope to see ongoing scrutiny of work to develop ‘trauma informed’ programmes and to ensure that key stakeholders are working in a joined-up way, particularly given the changes and challenges to youth services over the period of the pandemic.

This response is endorsed by

- [Chartered Society of Physiotherapists](#)
- [Royal College of General Practitioners Wales](#)
- [Royal College of Nursing Wales](#)
- [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#)
- [Royal College of Physicians Wales/Cymru](#)
- [Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales](#)
- [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)
- [The Royal Pharmaceutical Society](#)