

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-511

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

17th September 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter dated February 2014 (which I received electronically on 18th June 2014) and the petition you received from Powys Youth Forum about the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales, together with the response from the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty.

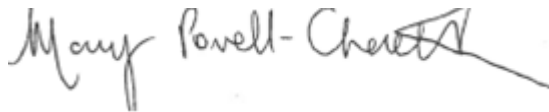
With regards to your specific enquiry regarding correspondence from Jeff Cuthbert, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, I have made some enquires of staff that worked here at the time and have established the following:

- In 2008, Save the Children underwent a restructure which resulted in a decision that the Participation Unit would be transitioned out of Save the Children at the point that European Funding ceased.
- Whilst the Participation Unit was hosted by Save the Children, its work was steered by the Participation Consortium for Wales. A number of Children's Charities were on the Consortium including Children in Wales, Funky Dragon and Barnardos (a full list can be provided on request). Consortium meetings were also regularly attended by Welsh Government officials.
- The Consortium discussed an exit strategy for the Participation Unit from an early stage but as the funding came to an end, none of the organisations on the Consortium were in a position to lead the work although it was widely agreed that there did need to be national co-ordination of the work (Minutes of Consortium meetings can be provided).
- As well as the time bound ESF funding, the Participation Unit received additional funding from the Welsh Government for specific pieces of work.
- The Participation Unit were able to complete the programme of work that they had received funding for including convening meetings of the Participation Consortium and associated activities. A formal letter to this effect was sent in February 2012.

- As a result of no other Consortium member being in a position to continue the work at the time, the Participation Unit approached the Welsh Government in October 2012 about the possibility of funding them on a short fixed term basis to continue looking for a suitable transition option (an e-mail to this effect can be provided). Funding to support the transition of the work was ultimately not offered by Welsh Government.
- The Participation Unit put forward a number of recommendations (See Appendix 1) in its final report, Small Voice, Big Vision (2013) on ways the Welsh Government could continue to support this work. Save the Children currently still has some expertise in the organisation and would be happy to offer advice on the implementation of these recommendations if needed.

With regard to the call made in Powys Youth Forum petition, Save the Children would welcome support and leadership from the Welsh Government for the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales' self-assessment process.

Yours sincerely



Mary Powell-Chandler
Head of Save the Children, Wales

Appendix I

Recommendations from the Participation Unit Final Report, Small Voice Big Vision (March 2013)

There are three crucial steps that need to be taken by Welsh Government, working with partners, to progress participation in the future.

1. Develop a National Participation Strategy

In practice this would:

- Set out clearly what is meant by participation.
- Outline the structures to support participation – within a broader child-rights approach, this would include provision for a national overseeing structure and a National Youth Forum.
- Set out how Participation is to be promoted, implemented and evaluated at a national level.
- Show how National Government will work with NGOs, local authorities and other organisations to ensure that policies are joined up.
- Outline procedures for evaluating progress.
- Include references to useful documents and resources.

A Strategy would not need to be a lengthy document, and should be accessible to all, including children and young people. Some of the above is already contained in resources such as the Blast Off Guides to Participation and on websites.

2. Ensure there is national oversight of the National Strategy, in the form of a national structure.

In practice this structure would:

- Ensure there is clarity and transparency around how due regard will take into account the views of children and young people.
- Coordinate an advisory group to allow input of practitioners into strategic development.
- Raise awareness of the National Participation Standards across Wales and ensure embedded in all relevant inspection processes.
- Evaluate the implementation of participation and the child's right to have their voices heard.
- Lobby, campaign and strategically plan the development of participation policy and practice.
- Complete small-scale pilots and research projects with children and young people to aid with lobbying and contribute to good practice.
- Develop and maintain good practice resources and disseminate to practitioners.
- Develop and pilot new tools and models for organisations to utilise.
- Provide practical support and advice to practitioners.

3. Maintain the Participation Hub and Resources.

As has been highlighted throughout this report, there are a number of resources that have been developed and cases of good practice. It is vital that there is a central hub that hosts these resources and that it is promoted. Without such support, a vast amount of work will be wasted and resources lost.