

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education
Committee
Ymchwiliad i Eiriolaeth Statudol | Inquiry into Statutory Advocacy Provision

SAP 02

Ymateb gan : ProMo–Cymru

Response from : ProMo–Cymru

What are your views on the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the delivery of statutory advocacy provision?

ProMo–Cymru does not offer here any views on the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the delivery of statutory advocacy provision.

However, it is exercised by and wishes to bring to the Inquiry's attention the fact that there is no reference currently to Meic in the National Approach. ProMo–Cymru feels strongly that this is at best, an opportunity missed – at worst – a significant oversight. This is exacerbated further by the lack of any reference to Meic within documents supporting commissioning and procurement processes, marketing and awareness raising digital and hard copy information, training materials.

As such, ProMo–Cymru feels compelled to respond to the Inquiry.

While Meic is not a statutory advocacy service provider, Meic supports and provides the foundation for the advocacy pyramid, as well as providing a vehicle for movement within and between the universal, targeted and protective spectrum of face to face service provision.

Meic's role is twofold: i) to directly support and assist children and young people (CYP) with the issues they present, thereby preventing escalation of problems requiring and so, diverting them from further / statutory intervention, ii) to facilitate the securing of CYP rights and entitlements and referring them into statutory / other services as required.

Meic therefore plays a hugely significant role in the delivery of statutory advocacy provision currently; this could be significantly enhanced for the benefit of children and young people, as well as professional stakeholders, including providers and commissioners. (See below for details).

Rights based, and with over 30 years experience in the facilitation of coproduction and user engagement through digital technology and multiple remote channels ProMo–Cymru is the organisation leading on the delivery and implementation of Meic – <https://www.meiccymru.org/> – the independent, bilingual, free and confidential information, advice and advocacy to children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales

Meic is

- High volume, low cost information and assistance services to users and professionals delivered by a team of experienced and qualified staff
- Low threshold, multi-channel with no physical constraints to access – through: webchat, landline, mobile phone, text, email, available up to 16 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year
- Coproduced with service user and professional engagement through user-generated content / news, problem shared, invitation to and sharing of comment
- Provides: i) information, ii) signposting, iii) transfer options if busy / unavailable, iv) direct representation, v) self help, vi) referral to relevant agency, vii) referral to statutory / independent advocacy service provider

If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?

No Response

Q3. What are your views on the latest position in relation to the implementation of the National Approach to Advocacy Services?

As an actively participating member of the Advocacy Providers' group facilitated by Children in Wales (CIW), ProMo–Cymru is aware of the journey and latest position regarding the implementation of the National Approach.

Based on the knowledge and experience shared within that group, ProMo–Cymru welcomes the progress made by Welsh Government to date and the efforts made to enable local authorities to implement the National Approach locally / regionally.

However, we support the concerns expressed by the group with regard to the time taken to get to this latest position, and the continued absence of a clear time frame / commitment from most local authorities to roll out the National Approach. We would suggest that this can only be to the detriment of children

and young people potentially or actually in need of advocacy services.

We are also concerned about the lack of clearly defined scrutiny and accountability arrangements for ensuring the monitoring, review and evaluation of the National Approach, and the absence of the young person's voice in informing and contributing to this.

What impact has Part 10 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 had on advocacy provision?

Anecdotally, and based on discussions with commissioners and policy makers within local authorities regionally and locally, ProMo-Cymru suggests that to date, Part 10 has had very little impact:

- a) there continues to be a lack of understanding and awareness of advocacy (despite the very good online resource and training tools)
- b) a perception that all CYP advocacy is covered by the National Approach and separate from Part 10
- c) there is patchy and inconsistent commissioning
- d) there are suggestions that commissioning and procurement will be targeting resources at the Independent Professional Advocacy duty exclusively, undermining the prevention / golden thread principle of the Act

Q4. Which priority areas in relation to advocacy provision for children and young people do you believe the Welsh Government should address?

ProMo-Cymru suggests the key priority areas as follows:

1. There needs to be a clear and preferably integrated interface between the National Approach and Part 10, so all CYP, regardless of category, have fair and equal entitlement to the golden thread of advocacy that runs through the Social Services and Well-Being Act
2. This interface needs to be clear in defining seamlessness of entitlement to advocacy with regard to prevention and safeguarding for children and young people not covered by the National Approach, to ensure Part 10 is not interpreted and implemented by local authorities and health solely and exclusively in respect of adults.
3. Commissioning and procurement of services need to make specific references

to expectations around promotion and marketing of Meic to children, young people and professionals, as well as service delivery and operational aspects including evidence of signposting children and young people to Meic.

4. Ideally, we would like to see commissioning and procurement arrangements locally specifying Meic as a Single Point of Entry (SPOE) into advocacy service provision, to ensure low threshold access to an independent, impartial, external service. This would have the added benefit of generating robust and uniform quantitative and qualitative data, in turn providing reliable and consistent evidence of need / unmet need.

5. Meic needs to be offered to children and young people as part of any active offer.

What do you think is needed to achieve that progress?

No Response

Q5. If you could recommend one thing to the Welsh Government that it could do to improve statutory advocacy services provision, what would it be?

In identifying one thing Welsh Government could do to improve statutory advocacy service provision for children and young people, this would be to continue to provide strong strategic leadership, and challenge any resistance to the fundamental underpinning purpose and rationale for statutory advocacy, in the context of the UNCRC and Welsh Government's vision and mission of promoting and protecting children's rights.

Q6. Finally, are there any other issues relating to the terms of reference that you would like to draw to the Committee's attention?

No Response