

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 13

Ymateb gan : Mike Shooter

Response from : Mike Shooter

1) I chaired the Ministerial Expert Advisory Group on Advocacy (MEGA) for just under two years. It was a multidisciplinary group of senior people from all over Wales, and from all sectors with a stake in the advocacy of young people.

2) Our remit was to look at the current state of statutory advocacy in the country and to come up with suggestions for how it might be done better. We reported on a regular basis to the Ministers concerned.

3) In order to come to our conclusions, we interviewed individuals and organisations throughout the UK and I personally spoke to many of the bodies in Wales who would be affected by our suggestions. All the evidence was collated and agreed by MEGA before we made our plans.

4) The most striking and immediate finding was that there was a huge variation in the amount of money that local authorities were spending on their statutory advocacy duty. We commissioned a specific cost-calculator to identify this, taking into account all the variables between authorities that might be involved.

5) It did not seem to us that this variation was due to financial resources. Some of the less well off authorities were not only fulfilling their statutory duties entirely, but were going beyond them to give advocacy on a much wider basis. Conversely, some of the better off authorities were woefully short of even their statutory duties. It was a matter of attitudes and priorities, not resources.

6) We informed the authorities and central government of our findings and looked at several models of how it might be done more fully and more consistency. There was considerable resistance to change.

7) As a result, we came to a firm decision that only a national scheme, backed up by central government legislation and monitoring, could work effectively. Ministers agreed.

8) Working parties were then set up to work out the details of such a national scheme and MEGA concluded its work. We had examined the state of statutory advocacy across Wales and made firm recommendations. As an advisory group, we did not have the power to take it further.

I hope that this information, brief though it is, will prove useful. As I said, I would be very willing to flesh it out further in any way you wish.

Mike Shooter,
Former Chair, MEGA