

**P-05-754 Demand Funding from the Welsh Government to Support Autism Spectrum Connection Cymru –
Correspondence from petitioner to Committee, 05.04.18**

Dear Petitions Committee.

I'm writing a response to the latest information sent to me regarding my petition under the reference number P-05-761.

I'm concerned that the latest responses from the Welsh Government do not address many of the questions raised in previous responses.

The response from the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Integrated Health and Social Care Partnership does not demonstrate how they are truly working in partnership with Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru (ASCC). It mentions working in partnership. How can a partnership and services for people with autism be maintained without funding for them?

I am interested in knowing who the membership of the regional partnership boards are. Also, which third sector organisations are included as part of the boards and are ASCC being consulted or have they been consulted in any way in the development of the autism strategy and/or the Integrated Autism Service (IAS) and if not, why not?

It is clear from the previous letter from Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru that requests for funding from people involved at a grass roots level within the NHS/ Council to support rather than replicate existing services have been refused. Who has refused them? How much control over the Regional Partnership Boards is there from the WLGA/ Welsh Government? In the Interim evaluation of the IAS it shows that there has been an over reliance upon one person's vision. Where is the oversight and partnership working needed to truly deliver something which meets the needs of people with autism. What qualifies this one person employed by the WLGA to set government policy and many millions of pounds of public money?

It is clear from the literature and press releases that whilst the interim evaluation states that the IAS is not "the" autism service, Welsh Government and the WLGA have marketed it exactly as such. I am aware that a number of the things promised have not yet materialised and accessing these services is problematic for some others with autism who I have spoken with.

I have recently become aware that the individual who led the autism strategy on behalf of the Welsh Government and was employed by the WLGA has left her role and has set up a private consultancy and is being commissioned by statutory services including the IAS to provide groups and training for professionals and people with autism which already exists through the services of Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru. This is the same person who the Evaluation report states has led the design and delivery of the IAS. This seems corrupt to me.

The web address for this company is www.auspicious.wales.

Do you have details of how much money has been paid to this consultancy?

Can I have all documents and emails pertaining to the development of the proposals for the IAS? The FOI that I have seen shows no proposal for the scoping exercise– instead it shows that the WLGA received additional funding to carry this out based upon a telephone conversation.

Who decided that an IAS needed to happen in the first place? And where did the proposal for the scoping exercise come from? And why was the WLGA the chosen private company selected to undertake this exercise? How much money do the WLGA receive without a procurement exercise? And why is it acceptable not to have a procurement exercise when commissioning a private company with hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money?

Are the large sums of money being given to the WLGA part of the money that is being given to the Integrated Care Fund?

What procurement exercise was undertaken in funding the WLGA associated posts and what appears to be duplication of funding for staff and projects?

According to an FOI, for every member of staff there is a £10,000 management charge paid to the WLGA by the Welsh Government. Is this standard practice? Does this represent best use of public funds? Per year that amounts currently to seventy thousand pounds in management charges alone!

From reading the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, there seems to be salary and project costs which appear to show duplication in funding from Welsh Government.

You gathered data as part of your scoping exercise which justifies the development of this form of support. Who was engaged, what were the numbers of people engaged and what were the outcomes? Do you have this data? How many people with autism were involved in this scoping exercise?

Many of the responses from the government mention working in partnership with the third sector. Where is the partnership working with the third sector within the autism strategy? Which third sector organisations are they? What funding is given to the third sector through the autism strategy and the IAS?

The government mentions that the One Stop Shop model in Scotland was considered as part of the scoping exercise, why did it not occur to the Welsh Government and the WLGA to consult with the One Stop Shop that exists in Wales run by Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru?

I am very concerned about this evidence which shows that this whole process is procedurally improper and shows favouritism and bias against the third sector.

Yours Sincerely,

Aled Thomas.