

Gwenda Thomas AC / AM  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Mark Isherwood AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

12<sup>th</sup> July 2012

*Dear Mark,*

### **ID Cards for Young Carers and Looked After Children**

During Business Questions on 29 May, you asked that the Welsh Government provide a statement relating to the provision of ID cards to support young carers, looked after children and carer leavers. I too, was interested to hear about the partnership between Barnado's Cymru and Flintshire Council to develop and implement a local ID card scheme.

I share your concerns that we need to find ways to reduce the barriers faced by our citizens including young people in accessing services and support. I met with the Young Carers Network on 3 April and discussed some of the difficulties young carers' experience. They told me that it is very important that they should not have to continuously repeat their life stories to different agencies to explain their special circumstances.

Other difficulties they highlighted and for which they thought ID cards would be beneficial, included experiences where some pharmacies do not allow young people to collect prescriptions for the person for whom they are caring. We also discussed access to public transport as part of their caring role. On both of these occasions, young carers felt an identity card might be helpful.

Carers are the first line of the preventative agenda and I want to ensure all carers are recognised, respected and informed. Early identification and involvement of carers will also help ensure that the health and well-being of carers is considered alongside that of the person they provide care for.

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Health and Social Care staff are key in putting these simple principles into practice and for ensuring that carers are treated as a key partner in making decisions about the person they care for. GPs for example are most often the first point of contact for carers and have clear opportunities in facilitating carers' access to the services and support they need to enable them to care to the best of their ability.

You will know that as part of our Programme for Government we are refreshing the Carers Strategy and that I have established a Stakeholder Advisory Group to help shape the priorities for action for the coming years. The Group recently discussed the opportunities an ID Card Scheme could provide.

One area of good practice highlighted by the Group related to GP's who provide a conduit between young carers and pharmacies to ensure that there is little or no disruption for the young carer when collecting prescriptions. Other opportunities that are being explored by the Group include initiatives with professional bodies such as the Royal College of Pharmacists.

We plan to consult on the refreshed strategy in the Autumn and aim to publish the final strategy by April 2013.

There are also wider opportunities inherent in this work, as demonstrated by the partnership between Flintshire County Council and Barnado's. Looked after children and care leavers similarly face a number of additional challenges in engaging with professionals and services whilst in care but also during transition to adulthood. It is my intention to consult on a scheme to enable these young people to remain in their placements beyond the age of 18 if they are not ready to move onto independent living. I will also consult on whether to enable these young people to re-engage with education up to the age of 25 and to provide them with a personal advisor.

There may be other opportunities that we can take when considering the benefits of a national ID Card Scheme and we will ensure that we are engaged with all those who have an interest in this issue, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Yours sincerely



**Gwenda Thomas AC / AM**

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