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Y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Wasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Mr Richard Andrews
Wales Young Carers
Network
c/o Children in Wales
25 Windsor Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BZ

16 June 2008

Dear Richard

When I met with young carers on 14 February I was very glad to receive their 10-point Action List and I undertook to provide an initial response in Carers Week, followed by a progress report in December. I would be glad if you could arrange to forward this response to the Young Carers projects along with my thanks to all those who participated and contributed to the Network Conference report and to the Action List itself.

All the action points are well put together, none is impossible and all I think are worth taking forward, although I have to say that we may not be able to do everything at once and might need to change some of the detail. Perhaps I could make some general remarks before commenting on the individual proposals.

The young carers were well informed that the "One Wales" document includes a commitment to prepare new Assembly legislation on the rights of carers and I understood that they had this in mind when they put the Action List together.

The Cabinet agreed in March that an Order on carers' rights should be included in the Assembly Government's programme of legislation for 2008-9. The first step for us is to get legislative competence in the area of carers' rights through a Legislative Competence Order. Once approved, the Order will allow the Assembly to bring in its own laws, or measures. We are now putting together policy instructions for lawyers and aim to publish our detailed proposals in the Autumn.

As a result of the discussions with the young carers, and with other carers groups, what we are seeking through these policy instructions is an Order that could support a wide range of possible measures, including those specifically mentioned in the Action List which will need new legislation.

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The young carers also knew that we have a commitment to reviewing the Assembly Government's own carers' strategy in the light of the review of the UK Carers Strategy that was published on Tuesday. A key issue will be resources and this is where we may not be able to do everything very quickly bearing in mind that the next spending review is in 2 years time. I am planning to have detailed talks with the Carers' Alliance and others to determine how to manage this and I would very much like to involve the Wales Young Carers Network in this. Perhaps they could consider this and let me know after the network meeting on 24 June what they think is the best way of doing this.

Turning to the specific Action list items:

Legal requirement for local authorities to ensure the provision of dedicated young carer services (no 1), and flexible respite care (no 8) These might be alternatively expressed as a specific duty to ensure that children and adult social services, education services and health services work together to ensure that young carers do not carry an inappropriate burden of care. We are looking at this in the context of the Carers' Legislative Competence Order (LCO) although a Measure dealing with this might be possible as a result of the Vulnerable Children LCO.

Upper age limit for young carers services to increase to 25 (no 7). Again, we are looking at this in the context of the Carers' LCO although a Measure may be possible under the Vulnerable Children LCO.

Legal powers to provide or support the provision of free public transport for young carers (no 4) We are seeking advice on whether this needs new legislation or whether there are existing powers to achieve this.

Funding of support workers to deliver awareness raising to schools in each local authority (no 5) Pilots funded by the Assembly Government have been successful in raising awareness but Lynn Williams' evaluation of the "Caring for Young Carers" training pack for schools is likely to confirm that there is still a long way to go. We shall look at this again when Lynn's report is published, which should be in the next few weeks.

Nationally recognised Care ID scheme (no 6) Informal discussions with Community Pharmacy Wales suggest that a pilot might be feasible and we aim to move this forward this year.

Information pack for professionals (no 2). Yes.

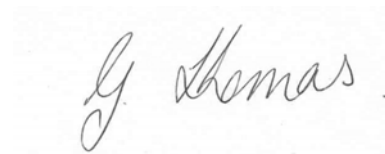
Let me know after the 24 June meeting how the young carers want to input to these two.

Health Workers to recognise the role of young carers (no 9) this is an issue for carers of all ages although there are special issues around young carers. We are looking to the Legislative Competence Order to cover the possibility of a new duty on health bodies to identify carers including young carers, and to inform carers of their rights.

Compulsory Core Training for professionals. Again this is an issue for all carers and we shall be taking it forward through the review of the strategy.

So, much of this is work in progress but there are some positive things to report even at this stage. I look forward to getting feedback from your next network meeting and I shall be reporting to you again in December.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Thomas". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Gwenda Thomas AM/AC