

## **Tros Gynnal Plant's response to the Health and Social Care Committee call for evidence (Stage 1)**

We welcome this opportunity to respond to the call for evidence.

As Wales' leading advocacy provider for children and young people we welcome the Bill's aim to bring together duties and functions in relation to well-being of people and children who need care and support and carers who need support.

We do, however, have the following concerns.

In light of recent events and given the widely held recognition within Welsh Government that -

- advocacy has a core function in empowering and ensuring that children and young people's rights are supported and protected
- advocacy also has a significant role to play in Safeguarding children and young people

we find the absence of reference to the child or young person's rights to be supported by an advocate to be a worrying weakness throughout the Bill.

We are particularly concerned that no mention is made of advocacy in **Part 2.6** under **Preventative Services** or **2.8** under **Provision of information, advice and assistance** (particularly in relation to children and young people).

We are also concerned that no clear reference is made to the local authority's duty to provide and facilitate access to advocacy in **Part 6** under **Looked after and Accommodated Children** – reference is made to the role of an Independent Visitor, often confused with that of an advocate. Currently Independent Visitors end their contact when the young person becomes 18; the Committee might want to consider pre-empting changes currently being considered around extending after care services age limits.

We believe that the failure to embed the local authority's statutory responsibility to make advocacy available and to actively facilitate access to the service severely weakens the Bill.

Further, we believe that succinct reference should be made to advocacy in **Part 10** under **Complaints and Representation** rather than the current general reference to 'assistance'.

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