

30th of January 2024

Dear Mr Gething,

We write to you in your capacity as candidate for the next First Minister for Wales. We wish to extend our congratulations on your nomination for this prestigious role and wish you well for the upcoming election.

Children in Wales is the national umbrella body for organisations and individuals who work with children, young people and their families in Wales. We work to amplify the voice of our members through our policy work and of young people directly through Young Wales, our youth participation arm. Our vision is of a Wales where all children and young people have all their rights fulfilled. We are sure that you will share that vision and write to you with a proposal designed to ensure that children are able to hold Welsh Government accountable for progress toward that ultimate aim.

One of the first tasks for the next First Minister for Wales will be to appoint his new cabinet. This process provides an opportunity to review the personnel and membership of the current cabinet, as well as the allocation of ministerial portfolios and titles. It is also an opportunity to consider where changes could be made to better strengthen accountability and to make adjustments which better respond to the needs and demands of the population, including children, young people and their families.

We believe that a key priority for the next First Minister for Wales should be to **appoint a dedicated and named Minister for Children** to the Welsh Government cabinet. By this, we mean a named minister with responsibility for babies, children and young people as recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Aside from the very first term of the Senedd, this is the first period in the history of the Welsh Government where there is no named minister for children in the cabinet. Throughout the majority of the period between the second and the fifth terms of the Senedd (2003-21), there has been a named minister in the Welsh Government, with at least one member of the cabinet with 'children' in their title.

The need for an identifiable, named Minister for Children has received considerable coverage over recent years. For instance, during the recent examination by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child of the Welsh Government's compliance with the UNCRC, both children and young people, as well as civil society organisations in Wales, raised concerns that Wales does not have a Minister with 'children' in their title unlike other parts of the UK.

Reinstating responsibility for children clearly in the title of a cabinet minister's role would send a powerful reminder that children's rights and wellbeing are front and centre of the Welsh Government's priorities. It would provide much needed assurance directly to children, many of whom do not have a voice or a vote and are wholly reliant on adults to make the right decisions to enable them to grow and thrive, that the issues that matter to them are being listened to and prioritised.

In addition to being the dedicated lead for children, with oversight of, and accountability for, all policy areas which have an impact on babies, children and young people, we wish to see that named minister granted responsibility for co-ordinating children's policy across government and ensuring that children's rights continue to be a priority across every portfolio.

Babies, children and young people, particularly those most vulnerable due to their characteristics or circumstances, continue to be most exposed to, and disproportionately affected by, the cost-of-living crisis and the legacy of the global pandemic. This is demonstrated through the reported rise in mental health difficulties, poorer emotional well-being, worsening health and education outcomes, and deteriorating family financial situations children are experiencing in Wales.

With the release of a new Children and Young People's Plan alongside the Welsh Government's pending response to the UN Committee's recommendations expected before the summer, we believe that a forthcoming cabinet reshuffle provides an ideal opportunity for the next First Minister to positively respond to the overwhelming levels of support amongst children and young people in Wales for a named minister for children.

Children need the next First Minister to demonstrate that his government prioritises their rights. An empowered, dedicated and explicitly named advocate for children in the cabinet would go a long way to providing that assurance.

We look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours Sincerely



Hugh Russell
Chief Executive



Sean O'Neill
Policy Director