

Janet Finch-Saunders

Cabinet Secretary, less than 1 per cent of Welsh NHS expenditure is targeted towards child and adolescent mental health services, yet 5,400 children and young people are referred to local primary mental health support services for assessment each year, with a further 2,355 waiting several months for their first out-patient appointment. Latest figures now show that 73 children and adolescents are waiting 26 weeks and beyond for treatment. At such an impressionable age, and when we talk about childhood experience, do you not agree with me that the earlier that we can get intervention and good treatment for our children, the greater outcomes are likely to be? Therefore, will you commit here today to working with the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport to bring down these unacceptable waiting times?

Carl Sargeant

I'm grateful that the Member is now on board. I work with the health Cabinet Secretary already, as I do with all Cabinet colleagues, including the education Cabinet Secretary. We must get upstream of some of these issues. We've got to tackle the here and now, and the mental health cases that you talk about, particularly in young people, are ones that trouble me too, but, actually, what we've got to do is get to the prevention end of this and make sure that the experiences of young people don't lead them into mental health trauma later on in life. So, I would encourage the Member, in her questions in the future also, to think about how we collectively have a non-political view on how we move resources from the critical end into the prevention end. It is an important process in where we're going to be. There's only one pot of money, and we've got to get in early on to make sure the young people she talks about aren't duly affected in the long term in terms of adulthood.