

Tracey Burke

Director General – Education and Public Services Group

Welsh Government

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29 April 2020

Dear Tracey

### **Public Accounts Committee inquiry into Housing Adaptations**

I refer to your letter of 5 July 2019 in which you updated the Committee on the implementation of the six recommendations contained within the Committee's Report, which was published in July 2018. The Committee noted that continuing focus on delivering the actions which were prompted by, both our and the Auditor General for Wales' Reports, had been supported by the work of the Housing Adaptations Steering Group. We also noted that four of the six recommendations in our report had been completed and progress was being made on the two outstanding ones (R3 & R5). I would welcome an update on the implementation of the two outstanding recommendations. In addition, the Committee noted certain developments/changes in direction compared with the original Welsh Government response (September 2018) to the Committee's recommendations.

The original response to **Recommendation 3** said that:

“We have begun the work of reviewing the means test for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and officials are working with local authorities to establish what additional funding they provide for smaller adaptations outside the DFG process. This work will serve to clarify which local authorities have adopted changes under the discretion afforded them under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to allow smaller and/or medium adaptations to be undertaken without the need for a means test. We will publish the outcome of this work by December 2018, followed by guidance on DFGs and the use of means tests aimed at improving consistency and streamlining processes within the allowable scope of the current legislative framework. We are building a more fundamental review of means testing into the wider Systems Review of the adaptations process. The review will explore a wide range of complex issues and as such will not report in full until December 2019.”



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The Committee noted the longer timescale for completion of this recommendation set out in your update of 5 July 2019 recognising the need to now consult on the policy options. While the Welsh Government may not consider that the work undertaken to explore how local authorities had developed changes of practice under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 merits formal publication, the Committee welcomes more detail on the findings from that work, even if only in summary form.

Members were also interested to note that the wider 'systems review' that had been mentioned in response to this recommendation and in response to **Recommendation 4** is not being progressed as previously planned. Nevertheless, the actions set out in response to Recommendation 3 still seem to amount to a 'fundamental review' of policy options around means testing.

The response to Recommendation 4 sets out a number of actions undertaken that promote integrated working. However, as the Welsh Government acknowledged, the wider systems review which the Government had previously said would also examine the benefits of integrated service delivery has not progressed as intended. Some alternative and more narrowly scoped research was planned within the same timeframe. The Welsh Government had stated previously that: "In considering the findings of the review and any more substantive changes to the aids and adaptations system that follow from it the Welsh Government will seek to develop a single, overarching suite of guidance covering all aids and adaptations" - but it is not clear from the response whether that same action is still planned following the revised plans for the research.

Finally, the original response to our report said that "Improved guidance for the ENABLE programme officials will be published by April 2019. This will promote and support integration of services, including integrated delivery teams and we will aim to provide this guidance by April 2019." Your last update didn't reference this explicitly and I would welcome clarification that the guidance was published.

Yours sincerely,



**Nick Ramsay AM, Chair**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

