

Date: 27 October 2020

Mr Vaughan Gething MS  
Minister for Health and Social Services  
Welsh Government

Dear Vaughan

### **NHS Complaints data**

As you know, the National Health Service (Concerns, Complaints and Redress Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2011, stress the need for NHS bodies in Wales both to learn from complaints and to record and monitor information about complaints. You will recall that Keith Evans, in his June 2014 Report 'Using the Gift of Complaints' noted variation across Wales in the implementation of the regulations and of 'Putting Things Right' and he recommended better and more consistent recording of complaints and analysis of themes and trends.

The then Minister for Health and Social Services said, in November 2014, 'They have already begun a number of pieces of work, including the development of a national complaints dataset to ensure all NHS organisations publish information in a consistent way, which is easy for the public to understand and allows for meaningful comparisons across Wales.' He went on to say that 'the Evans review contains many practical recommendations, which will help the NHS in Wales to use complaints as an opportunity to improve the way it provides healthcare in the future. Many of the issues it identifies will require a change in culture, which will take time and effort at all levels of the NHS. I intend to pursue the achievement of such cultural shift in the meetings I have with staff at all levels in the NHS so that we can act collectively to bring about a significant improvement in the way concerns are addressed.'

I was delighted to hear such positive support for these important proposals. Whilst I am aware that work has started, including work under the 'Once for Wales' project, nearly six years on there remains inconsistent recording and reporting of complaints data, use of Datix remains variable and inconsistent and there appear to be inconsistent approaches to the publication of complaints data that your predecessor anticipated.

Even before the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, I was keen to see consistent capture and recording of complaints data, to allow this analysis and to support improvement. With the Complaints Standards powers under the 2019 Act, I will shortly be seeking regular and consistent complaints data from NHS bodies in Wales, and I am concerned that the improvements and standardisation of complaints recording and complaints data, commenced in 2014, has not yet borne fruit.

These are really important matters for the culture and approach in NHS bodies, for accountability of Health Boards and Trusts in Wales and for the Complaints Standards work that my office is now undertaking. I would be most grateful for an update on work commenced in 2014 on consistent recording of complaints and publication of complaints data and I would ask that the work started in 2014 is concluded as a matter of urgency.

This data will be valuable for my Complaints Standards work, but more importantly will help Health Boards and Trusts focus on learning from what has gone wrong, and continuing the work on improvement. I therefore ask for a meeting with you to see how the work started in 2014 can come to fruition.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Finance Committee and the Equality, Local Government & Communities Committee as this was a matter that came up at recent scrutiny sessions with both Committees.

Yours sincerely



**Nick Bennett**  
Ombudsman

Copy: Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair - Finance Committee

[SeneddFinance@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddFinance@senedd.wales)

John Griffiths MS, Chair - Equality, Local Government & Communities

[SeneddCommunities@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCommunities@senedd.wales)