

CYPE(6)-23-22 – Paper to note 5

Y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol

Health and Social Care Committee

Eluned Morgan
Minister for Health and Social Services

Julie Morgan
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Lynne Neagle
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

24 October 2022

Dear Ministers

Provision of written evidence

Members of the Health and Social Care Committee have asked me to write to express our disappointment with your letter of 11 October 2022, in which you indicate that you do not intend to provide written updates on the Welsh Government's progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee in respect of its inquiries into:

- Loneliness and isolation (2017)
- Use of antipsychotic medications in care homes (2018)
- Mental health in policing and police custody (2019)
- Impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, and its management, on health and social care in Wales: impact on mental health and wellbeing (2020)

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The information that we had requested for each of those inquiries was:

1. An indication of which recommendations the Welsh Government considers still to be outstanding and where further action is needed, whether there are any barriers to implementing these, and if so, what those barriers are.
2. How the Welsh Government's work to implement the recommendations is contributing to tackling mental health inequalities.

I note that the Welsh Government accepted the majority of the recommendations made by our predecessor Committee following each of these inquiries.¹ Acceptance of a recommendation is a commitment to implement that recommendation. Monitoring progress on implementing such recommendations is therefore an important part of our role in holding the Welsh Government to account. This includes understanding, for example, which recommendations have now been completed and which still require further work. It also includes understanding where there may be instances where changing circumstances mean that the Welsh Government's views on particular recommendations may have changed. This information is of interest and value not only to us as a Committee to inform our scrutiny, but also to other Members of the Senedd and to external stakeholders, many of whom will have devoted significant time, energy and resources to contributing to the original inquiries.

It would be helpful, therefore, to receive the information that we have requested in relation to each of the above inquiries **by 19 December 2022**.

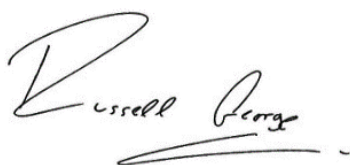
As you suggest in your letter, general scrutiny sessions and other formal evidence sessions are one mechanism by which we are able to monitor progress. We agree that such sessions are an important part of the way in which we fulfil the responsibility the Senedd has given us to hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): the physical, mental and public health and wellbeing of the people of Wales, including the social care system. However, we also understand that there are many calls on your time as Ministers. We therefore generally reserve such sessions to focus on the issues of highest priority, and those which we feel need detailed, in person discussion and exploration. It would not be proportionate, nor a good use of your time or ours, to schedule formal evidence sessions to discuss every issue or monitor the implementation of every Committee recommendation. Therefore, in line with long-established practice we will continue to make use of other mechanisms, including correspondence and requests for written information or clarification, where we consider it appropriate to do so.

¹ Of the 43 recommendations made in these four reports, 27 (63 per cent) were accepted in full, 14 (33 per cent) were accepted in principle, and 2 (5 per cent) were rejected.

Some requests for information will be time critical, whereas others will be more routine in nature. I have asked the Committee clerk to ensure that the urgency or otherwise of our requests and the timescales within which we are looking for a response are made clear when requests are made. The Committee would welcome assurance that you will encourage your officials to speak to the clerk if there are any issues about the timescales that have been requested.

We value the positive and constructive relationship we have with you and your Deputy Ministers, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this basis. I would be happy to meet to discuss these matters, or any other matter relating to the work of the Committee if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell George". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

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

cc Jayne Bryant MS, Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee