



Ein cyf/Our ref DB-PO-0031/24

Delyth Jewell AS  
Chair  
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

31 January 2024

Dear Delyth,

The report of the Committee “Allegations Concerning the Welsh Rugby Union” published in June 2023 contained the following recommendation:

*“Recommendation 4: The Welsh Government should review its protocols for responding to concerns raised with Ministers, Deputy Ministers and civil servants about inappropriate behaviour in organisations in Wales. It should report back to the Committee within the next six months on the outcome of this review and should set out what steps it will take as a result.”*

In my response to the Committee on their report I said that the Welsh Government accepted this recommendation and that I would write back to the Committee within six months. I am sorry that I have not been able to write sooner. However, the review of protocols has now been completed and as a result the Welsh Government is introducing two significant changes to its arrangements for dealing with concerns raised with Ministers or civil servants about inappropriate behaviour in organisations in Wales.

The first change relates to the circumstances where the concerns are raised about an organisation which receives funding from the Welsh Government. As I explained when giving evidence to the Committee, there has always been an expectation that if a body receives public funding then it has a responsibility to live up to public values. This includes having proper processes in place for dealing with complaints about inappropriate behaviour and making sure that those processes are applied properly when concerns are raised.

As part of the review we are introducing revised protocols in the Welsh Government for dealing with concerns raised about grant recipients and service providers. I am attaching a copy of the protocol and, as the Committee will see, the protocol covers three types of concerns, one of which is allegations of poor behaviour or cultures. While we have certainly investigated where such concerns have been raised in the past, the new guidance is more detailed, strengthens the approach and will act as a reminder to grant officers throughout the Welsh Government of the process which should be followed. I hope that the Committee will welcome this new approach.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth Gymraeg sy'n dod i law yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I thought that the Committee would want to see the new guidance itself but I would be grateful if the document is not made public since some of it relates to our procedures for combatting fraud, which need to be kept confidential.

The guidance has been drawn up, and will be overseen by, the internal group of officials who form the Welsh Government External Assurance Panel. This Panel includes representatives from the teams supporting each Additional Accounting Officer as well as specialist advisors from the Grants Centre of Excellence, the Corporate Governance Centre of Excellence, Internal Audit, Legal Services Division and the Third Sector Policy Team. It is chaired by the Director of Propriety and Ethics and the Welsh Government HR Director is also a member. The remit of the Panel is to advise Ministers and Accounting Officers on all cases where there are concerns about an organisation which is funded by the Welsh Government. The Panel can draw on the pooled professional expertise available to advise on cases brought to it and ensure that there is consistency of treatment of cases and lessons are being learned and promulgated.

Alongside this change we are refreshing our guidance to grant recipients to ensure that they are aware of what we expect from those in receipt of public funding.

The second significant change relates to instances where the concerns relate to organisations which are not funded by the Welsh Government. As we discussed when I met the Committee last year, the scope for intervention in these cases is very limited and it is important that individuals who feel that they are not being treated properly by their employers should be encouraged to follow the avenues open to them to pursue their concerns, whether those are the internal processes or the statutory avenues.

Nevertheless, the Welsh Government recognises that it would be helpful to ensure that we have a consistent approach where representations or notifications are made to either Ministers or civil servants, and whether or not those notifications come directly when they are undertaking their official duties; and that appropriate professional advice is available to them at an early stage.

We will issue internal guidance to Ministers and civil servants that, if they are approached or become aware of concerns raised over inappropriate behaviour in an organisation which is not funded by the Welsh Government then they should seek advice promptly from the External Assurance Panel. The Panel will, in turn, be advised by the Director with responsibility for Equality and Human Rights, together with legal input. The terms of reference of the Panel will be amended to reflect this additional function and will form part of the annual report on the work of Panel which appears in the published accounts of the Welsh Government.

I hope that the Committee will feel that we have given proper consideration to this important recommendation and that the changes outlined here meet the concerns of the Committee. Since the report of the Committee was published there have, regrettably, been several other instances of concerns about culture and inappropriate behaviour being raised in respect of prominent organisations in Wales. The Welsh Government will keep its procedures under review in the light of those instances and will make any further changes which we think appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Dawn' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Bowden'.

**Dawn Bowden AS/MS**  
**Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth**  
**Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism**