



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1514
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/00444/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

18 August 2025

Dear Carolyn,

I am writing in response to the letter you wrote to the First Minister on 4 July in respect of a petition (Petition P-06-1514) you will be considering from Emily Vaughn, requesting an inquiry into group-based exploitation in Wales. This has been passed to me to respond to as safeguarding sits within my portfolio.

In January, the Prime Minister commissioned Baroness Casey to undertake an audit of group-based exploitation across England and Wales. The report detailing the outcomes of this audit was published on 16 June. Welsh Government provided information to the audit team that was requested.

Baroness Casey has recommended that a national inquiry be established that will encompass England and Wales which has been accepted by the Prime Minister. The First Minister has already written to the Home Secretary requesting assurance that investigations in Wales will be included in the national inquiry. It was always our intention to revisit the suggestion of a national inquiry as discussed in the Senedd in March.

Baroness Casey's report provides a 'state of the nation' position on group-based exploitation that will be the foundation for the national inquiry that is being established.

Undertaking this across England and Wales, instead of separately, is the optimum choice given that policing and criminal justice are reserved to the UK Government. We need to ensure the whole system is reviewed as part of any inquiry and that it acknowledges both reserved matters and devolved areas such as education, social services and health.

Additionally, this will ensure that any cross-border group-based exploitation and trafficking for sexual exploitation is identified. This is an issue that has been raised by Ms Vaughn previously.

We believe it would be counterproductive to establish a national inquiry in Wales that is separate from the inquiry in England. This would increase the risk of us not being able to fully understand cross-border issues, not being party to important changes in policing and

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg 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.

criminal justice and could delay the prompt identification of learning to ensure any improvements are made at pace.

We will fully engage with the UK Government national inquiry that is being established. Welsh Government will specifically focus on what this means for Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden', written in a cursive style.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol

Minister for Children and Social Care