

Eluned Morgan MS

First Minister

4 December 2025

Dear Eluned,

I am writing to you with both disappointment and frustration about what appears to be a member of your Cabinet avoiding committee scrutiny.

As we approach the end of this Senedd, we decided to hold final scrutiny sessions with the Cabinet Secretaries, and their Ministers whose portfolios sit firmly within our remit: Cabinet Secretary for Education; Minister for Further and Higher Education; and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care; Minister for Children and Social Services; and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

These types of general scrutiny sessions are an important feature of committee work. They provide us with opportunities to engage appropriately across the full range of a Cabinet Secretary or Minister's portfolio, rather than the more focused sessions on specific policy, legislative or financial areas.

We are very mindful of the diary pressures on Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers. We therefore issued our invites in October, well ahead of planned sessions in February. We had confirmation from both Cabinet Secretaries, and these sessions were confirmed.

However, after our scrutiny of the Health and Social Care MEG of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget, a request was made by the Welsh Government. The request was for the Minister for Children and Social Services to attend instead of the Cabinet Secretary, saying that this is because children sits under her portfolio.

We were surprised, as while there are some individual policy areas that sit with the Minister for Children and Social Services, she is not responsible for a whole swathe of significant children's health policy which we may wish to cover during such a session. We note, during the scrutiny of the then



Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill in June 2024, the Minister was clear on multiple occasions during Committee scrutiny that she could not answer questions on healthcare matters that sat outside of her portfolio.

During the recent budget scrutiny session, we covered a number of areas that could only be answered by either the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, or the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. For ease of reference, I have included in an annex all the potential areas which do not sit within the Minister for Children and Social Care's portfolio.

We considered and discussed the request as a full Committee. We were unanimous and clear that our scrutiny requires the Cabinet Secretary and both the Ministers to attend this session. A view which was communicated back to the Welsh Government.

When we were advised that there was no longer availability for the original date for the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, we were surprised. The Cabinet Secretary's attendance had previously been confirmed. We therefore offered an alternative date, hoping that we could find a date which all three could attend. We were not wedded to the date, and could be flexible about this.

We were therefore even more frustrated when we were advised that because of the forthcoming dissolution; the calls on Cabinet Secretary and Minister's diaries; the Committee's remit; and ministerial portfolios that the view remained that the Minister for Children and Social Care should come rather than all three. It was clear from this, that offering further dates would be unlikely to lead anywhere. Reading between the lines, it seemed that the Cabinet Secretary would not be available for any date we offered.

Firstly, it is a matter for a Senedd committee to decide who it wishes to scrutinise, when and why. We understand there may be occasions where a Committee wants to invite in a certain Cabinet Secretary or Minister, but the areas they wish to cover sit within another's portfolio. In those instances, it would be perfectly reasonable for the committee to be advised, and reflect on that in issuing an invite. This is not the case here, we wish to hold a general scrutiny session which covers portfolio responsibilities for all three.

Secondly, our remit encompasses education, *health* and social care of children. The Minister for Children and Social Care's remit does not cover health, which is an important area for scrutiny. She would not be in a position to answer a significant number of questions we may have. It would be unfair to both the Minister and the Committee.

Thirdly, we understand the calls on ministerial time. This is why we issued the invite months ahead of the session. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has not been regularly called before our Committee since taking up this post. It would only be his third appearance in this capacity, with the previous two sessions being part of Draft Budget scrutiny. We, therefore, do not believe we have made undue calls on his time.

While ministerial diaries will be busy, an invite by a Committee should be prioritised, this is a core part of being a Cabinet Secretary or Minister. We note that the Cabinet Secretary for Education is coming in. When she could not do the original date offered, we were able to find an alternative slot. This is in the context that we have already taken evidence from her four times in this term alone.

When the Cabinet Secretary for Education previously requested rescheduling of other sessions, we were very flexible and agreed to moving sessions.

In relation to this request, we could also be flexible with the dates that we are offering. However, it was clear when we offered an alternative date that there was a desire to avoid coming to our committee by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, which went beyond logistics.

I hope that you would agree with us this is not acceptable. Please can you confirm that it is not your position that members of your Cabinet should be avoiding such scrutiny, and that you will reiterate to all of them the importance of respecting Committee's requests for appearances.

I would appreciate a response in time for our final Committee meeting of the term on 17 December.

I am copying in the Llywydd in her capacity as Chair of Business Committee due to the serious nature of this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cc: Llywydd, Chair of Business Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

# Annex 1

Areas of relevant ministerial responsibility that sit outside of the Minister for Children and Social Care

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

As they relate to children and young people:

- Oversight of NHS Wales
- Health Protection
- Health Improvement
- Public Health
- Health inequalities
- Primary Care
- Patient experience, involvement and the citizen's voice
- Integration
- Obesity

Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

As they relate to children and young people:

- Mental health services
- Suicide prevention
- Neurodiversity
- Learning disability
- Addiction services
- Health impact of problem gambling
- Tobacco and Vaping
- Substance misuse
- Physical activity and active recreation in Wales

- Women's health
- Health improvement and wellbeing services

