

Eluned Morgan, First Minister

Via email

Dyddiad | Date: 15 January 2026

Pwnc | Subject: Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister meeting

Dear Eluned

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee on 12 December 2025. It was a useful and informative session and the Committee appreciated the opportunity to explore the Welsh Government's work in the context of Education, young people and future generations, as well as other topical issues.

Due to time constraints, the Committee was unable to cover issues relating to future generations and children's rights and would welcome responses to the following questions:

- How would you characterise progress on implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, given the Future Generations Commissioner has said "while progress is being made, we are not on track to achieve our seven well-being goals", and the Auditor General has said that "the Act is not driving the system-wide change that was intended"?
- The 2025 Well-being of Wales report highlights issues with child poverty and young people's mental well-being. The Future Generations Report 2025 suggests children and young people are underrepresented in decision-making in Wales, and employment rates for working class Welsh young-people are lowest in the UK. Ten years after the Act became law, to what extent has its implementation delivered for Welsh young people?
- What are your reflections on the importance of the role of the Children's Commissioner in terms of providing challenge to, and scrutiny of, the Welsh Government's legal obligations to have due regard to children's rights? Given half of the 659 cases dealt with by the Commissioner in the last year related to education, as documented in her latest annual report, what are your reflections on the scale of concern raised about education?

There were also some areas the Committee would welcome further information on following the answers you provided in the session:

Education and young people

- As discussed in the meeting, Estyn's early insights on its 2024/25 annual report indicate leadership weaknesses in around two thirds of secondary schools and you mentioned that Dysgu, the new national professional learning and leadership body that is being established, would help to address this. Would it be possible to provide further information on this and to expand on whether there is other targeted support being provided to strengthen school leadership and how the impact will be measured?
- What specific actions is the Welsh Government taking to improve standards in secondary schools in response to Estyn's early insights on its 2024/25 findings, and what is the timetable for those actions?
- With the operational responsibility for school improvement returning to local authorities, what assessment has the Welsh Government made of local authorities' capacity and improvement services, and what additional resources or safeguards will be provided to ensure they can deliver?
- How is the Welsh Government ensuring that recent additional funding for education is translated into demonstrable school-level improvements?
- While recognising that the Welsh Government's Revenue Support Grant for local government is unhypothecated, what assurances or mechanisms exist to ensure that increases in funding for local authorities will be reflected in the budgets they provide to schools?
- Can you confirm the amount of the consequential received in respect of both 2025-26 and 2026-27 following increases in funding for education in England, how much has been allocated to education in Wales and how that funding is being prioritised and tracked? (The Committee is aware that the Children, Young People and Education Committee has asked for clarification of this in its report on the Draft Budget 2026-27.)
- There has been a rise in exclusions in secondary schools. What is the Welsh Government's analysis of the causes and what steps are being taken to keep pupils in school as much as possible, while balancing this against behaviour management and the impact on other pupils?
- There was some discussion of NEET and youth unemployment rates during the meeting. What specific, measurable plan does the Welsh Government have to reduce the number of 16 to 24 year olds who are NEET, including targets, timelines, and evaluation metrics? How do current plans join up across education, skills and employment policy to reduce the number of young people who are NEET?

Disabled people and employment

- What progress has been made in public sector bodies in Wales achieving Disability Confident employer status, particularly since the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report in June 2025

and recommendation that further action be taken on this? Can the Welsh Government provide a breakdown by health boards and local authorities?

- What is the Welsh Government doing to build on the legacy of the Engage to Change project and how it is ensuring disabled people have access to supported employment and specialist job coaching?
- How will the Welsh Government work with disabled people, employers and local partners to co-design sustainable employment pathways that avoid short-term or fragmented interventions?

Transport

- How is the Welsh Government providing funding to support bus services, what is the budget position for commitments relating to the Bus Services (Wales) Bill, and what contingency plans exist if funding pressures continue?
- While there may not yet be a firm budget for the project, what are the likely funding implications for Wales in relation to the Liverpool to Hull rail line classification as an England and Wales project?
- What assurances can you provide that the Welsh Government is proactively planning, and involved in discussions, regarding improvements that could be made should further UK Government investment in rail infrastructure be forthcoming? For example, is there a pipeline of projects in place and to what extent are they ready to be put into action?

Health

- How does the Welsh Government's preventative health strategy align with the Primary Care Model for Wales and the Public Health Wales Long-Term Strategy? What specific funding streams and performance indicators are in place to ensure delivery, and how will progress be monitored across health boards?
- What modelling has the Welsh Government undertaken to assess workforce flexibility across education and health (for example teacher workforce flexibility and NHS nursing workforce), and what contingency plans measures are in place to address critical shortages?
- What conversations has the Welsh Government had with the UK Government regarding extending the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to include milk-based and ultra-processed sugary drinks? How will the Welsh Government assess the potential impact of these fiscal measures on reducing obesity and health inequalities?
- What actions has Public Health Wales taken since your last update to increase breastfeeding rates, and what measurable progress has been made towards achieving UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation across health boards? What additional interventions are planned to address persistent regional disparities?
- What criteria does the Welsh Government use to identify key NHS services and what emergency funding or commissioning mechanisms are in place to maintain continuity of those services? How

will prioritisation decisions be made transparently, and what lessons have been learned from previous interventions to protect essential NHS provision?

- The committee raised examples of third sector services closing due to funding pressures (for example early years cerebral palsy services and hospice support). What assessment has the Welsh Government made of the financial resilience of third sector health and social care providers? What immediate measures are in place to prevent service closures and what longer-term funding models are being considered to ensure sustainability?

The final scrutiny session of this Senedd term is scheduled to take place on Friday, 20 March 2026 and the session is likely to focus on looking back over the last 5 years of Government. It would be useful if you could confirm whether you intend to publish an annual report on your Programme for Government for the period from July 2025 to March 2026 (as in previous summers), or something reflecting the last five years and whether this would be available ahead of the meeting. If you are not intending to publish such a document before our March meeting it would be useful to have a paper setting out the Welsh Government's achievements against its commitments in this Senedd term.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS

Chair, Committee for Scrutiny of the First Minister

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.