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Vaughan Gething AM
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

8 November 2016

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

As you know, when I published 'Dementia: more than just memory loss', I asked the partnership boards across Wales to write to me with information regarding the ways in which they were addressing the issues that people affected by dementia had raised.

I have now been able to analyse these responses and will shortly be providing detailed feedback to each partnership board to support them in their ongoing further work. I will also be providing them with a self-scrutiny tool and examples of good practice.

My office has also liaised closely with yours throughout this process and I will be sharing this detailed feedback with them.

In the meantime, I thought it might be helpful to share with you a number of high-level observations:

- For many we are still not getting the basics right and it can feel almost impossible to navigate through services. Clear and flexible national pathways are required which begin pre diagnosis and take a full life course approach.
- The importance of support from an individual who understands what it is like to experience and live with dementia cannot be underestimated. This extends through the skills of a wide range of

public service staff, to specific dementia support staff to key workers. This is much more than just dementia awareness training and goes to the heart of skills and competency frameworks, pre-reg and post basic training.

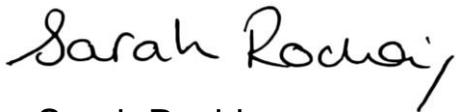
- Respite care remains a significant issue, with many public services failing to grasp the importance of providing a personalised approach to respite directly linked to the daily challenges that face people and families affected by dementia. As dementia progresses, and everyone affected responds differently, a one-size approach will not deliver the emotional resilience, support and validation of individuals needed to strengthen relationships and enhance their capacity to face whatever the future may be.
- There is also clearly a lack of emotional and mental health/wellbeing support to carers and people living with dementia. The importance of the carer in orientating the person with dementia to their surroundings is not yet understood by some Health Boards in Wales. Carers should not be being excluded from being part of the care team when people with dementia are admitted to hospital
- The new Dementia Strategy must take into account dementia care in its breadth – this includes the commissioning of services or care of people in their own homes and in care homes. There is a lack of consistency and focus on clear wellbeing outcomes for people with dementia in much of the commissioning that takes place.
- All public bodies must have proactive and active role in changing wider public perception about dementia and working thorough the new partnership arrangements to widen inclusivity across our communities.

I have spoken publicly many times about the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services and how good it is. It must, however, be relevant to people living with dementia and, in my view, making this a reality is a key starting point for the new strategy.

I believe it is also important that the language and narrative used within the new strategy is developed in such a way that has clear relevance to people with dementia and their carers. I have shared an example of what this might look like with your officials.

The views of people living with dementia clearly sit at the heart of my recent report and subsequent analysis of partnership board responses. It is therefore my expectation that the new strategy directly responds to these issues in a way that is meaningful and relevant to people affected by dementia and I look forward to continuing to work with you and your team to deliver that which people with dementia have a rightful expectation to.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Rochira". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Sarah Rochira
Older People's Commissioner for Wales