

CIM1R03 Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diben Arbennig Ymchwiliad COVID-19 Cymru | Wales COVID-19
Inquiry Special Purpose Committee

Adroddiad Modiwl 1 Ymchwiliad Covid-19 y DU | UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1
Report

Ymateb gan: Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr | Evidence from: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board



Co-Chairs - Joyce Watson MS &
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Dyddiad / Date: 13th December 2024

Dear Co-Chairs,

RE: Public Consultation: Consideration of UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1 - Resilience and Preparedness of the United Kingdom

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation letter from Joyce Watson MS and Tom Gifford MS, Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee Co-Chairs, to inform scrutiny of its consideration of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report.

For some time now, the Health Board's Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) Lead has been in discussions with other Health Board EPRR Leads in relation to the recommendations from Module 1 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. There is a consensus across the Health Boards in Wales around the priority actions needed to improve the resilience and preparedness of Wales as part of the UK, and the resources needed in order to deliver the recommendations within the timeframes of the report. It is therefore very likely that you will receive very similar responses from other Health Boards across Wales.

We provide a response to the three questions posed by the Special Purpose Committee below:

Q1 Whether the recommendations in the Module 1 report capture the priority actions needed to improve the resilience and preparedness of Wales as part of the UK. Is there sufficient detail and are there any clear gaps requiring the Committee to take further evidence itself.

Overall, the Module 1 C-19 report recommendations are supported.

A radical simplification of EPRR systems (Recommendation 1) will improve responsiveness and efficiency, decision making will potentially be more efficient with more rapid deployment of resources which should lead to less confusion and delay leading to a less complex more agile system.

The new approach to Risk Assessment (Recommendation 2) will allow for a better understanding and preparation for several types of crises, moving beyond pandemics. This supports a wider range of threats and allows for the identification of vulnerabilities in the system for both known and unforeseen risks.

A more coordinated and integrated approach to strategy development (Recommendation 3) should ensure lessons learnt from past events are incorporated into future planning, addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities – we need to understand how different communities are affected by crises and plan accordingly.

It is without doubt necessary to improve systems for data collection and sharing (Recommendation 4). The aim should be to gather and disseminate critical information ahead of potential pandemics or emergencies. This will allow for improved crisis management especially in rising tide events with the ability to adjust to rapidly changing events and aid research. Information however must be timely.

UK wide Pandemic Exercise every 3 years (Recommendation 5) will support, test and refinement of a national response and capabilities. Any identified weaknesses and gaps should be transparent with learning captured and plans adjusted accordingly. Planning, timeliness and resourcing of such large-scale exercises will need to be considered and mapped accordingly.

External expertise to guard against groupthink (Recommendation 6) advocates experts outside government to offer independent perspectives supports un-biased and objective decision making and will enable challenge of assumptions.

The creation of an independent statutory body for EPRR (Recommendation 8) adds weight to the EPRR professional body and provides oversight, this will support recovery measures to be applied where statutory requirements are not sufficiently robust

Potential gaps within the above recommendations are outlined below:

Localised preparedness:

Organisations must not lose sight that there will be local issues that need addressing - cannot have just national oversight.

Resource Allocation and Funding - It does not specifically identify how resource and funding allocation will be made.

Psychosocial and Public Health Resilience:

Wider preparedness particularly regarding mental health and social cohesion to be considered.

Integration with Global Efforts:

Alignment with international frameworks such as the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Q2. The resources that will be needed in order to deliver the recommendations, within the timeframes set out in the report.

Resource requirements:

Workforce:

Adequate staffing of EP RR equipped with skills and knowledge

Financial:

Dedicated funding to deliver on statutory duties

Technology:

Investment in secure data infrastructure

Systems for conducting realistic pandemic exercises and simulations

Knowledge and Expertise:

Bringing in experts from academia as well as from multi-agency fora

Q3. How progress should be monitored and reported. The need for transparency and clear lines of accountability for delivery of the recommendations.

Monitoring of Progress

Evaluation:

Conducting independent evaluations after each national pandemic exercise/critical incidents

Public and Stakeholder Reporting:

Regular publication of reports on the state of EP RR preparedness

Feedback to: Resilience and Community:

Establishing feedback links for those in resilience and the communities

Independent Oversight:

Crucial for ongoing monitoring, ensuring that recommendations are followed, and that there is a mechanism for accountability

Regular publication of reports on EPRR (Recommendation 7) is an essential component in Civil Contingencies and ensures transparency and accountability at Board level.

As these recommendations need to be translated for preparedness for any significant emergency, addressing the above could build a highly resilient and well-prepared system that can respond swiftly and effectively to any future crises.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,



Carol Shillabeer
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive