

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 Inquiry Module 1

Report

Ymateb gan Newport City Council | Evidence from Newport City Council

1. Do 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.

Partly

2. Is there sufficient detail in the recommendations?

Partly

3. Are there any clear gaps requiring the Committee to take further evidence itself?

Yes

Please outline your reasons for your answer to this question.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words, however should it be required, an additional answer box of 500 words is available).

The evidence provided to the Inquiry which is referred to in the report's findings, reflect a perceived view that there were several flaws in not only the UK's level of preparedness for the Pandemic, but also in the structures responsible for delivering the emergency planning response.

Therefore, based on the findings of the Inquiry, the recommendations broadly address the actions needed to ensure a whole system review of Civil Contingencies across the UK, which will include review and streamlining of systems with identifiable accountability. In addition, the recommendations, recognise the need to improve the foundations for resilience and preparedness i.e. risk assessment processes, sharing of data and systems to ensure sharing of lessons learned from exercises and incidents.

There is an observation that some recommendations (3, 5, 9 and 10 in particular) require more clarity on terminology used and expectations from the Inquiry Board on how these recommendations will be delivered. They include for significant changes to the current structures and processes and may require changes to existing legislation, which will impact their delivery. This also includes the setting up of an independent body to not only provide independent strategic advice to government, but assess how governments, and ultimately all categorised agencies deliver its resilience and preparedness functions.

With regards Wales, the report recognises the role of Welsh Government in planning and policy as referred on it via 'Welsh Ministers (Transfer of Functions) Order 2018' where those parts of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 aligned to civil protection were devolved to Wales. It must be noted that work is already being undertaken within Wales and led by Welsh Government in reviewing Welsh resilience structures and the assessment of risk via the Wales Resilience Framework, which is not reflected in the report.

However, encouraged by this request for views and the stakeholder event that has taken place, there remains a role for the committee to ensure that all agencies that have a role to play in resilience in Wales, including categorised agencies as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act, 3rd Sector, and Welsh Government Policy Teams, are able to provide evidence and reflections on current gaps, good practice and concerns on the delivery of resilience across Wales, to inform the delivery of the recommendations.

4. Your views on the resources that will be needed in order to deliver the recommendations, within the timeframes set out in the report.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words, however should it be required, an additional answer box of 500 words is available).

As the recommendations are aligned to UK and Welsh Governments, in the first instance it will be for the respective Governments to determine that adequate resources will be required to respond to and adopt the recommendations resulting from the report within the timescales allotted.

However, it must be recognised that consideration and adoption of the recommendations cannot be done in isolation at Governmental level, and there will be need for engagement and support from the categorised resilience partners and structures across Wales, with whom the legislative sovereignty of delivering the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 remains.

Teams leading on Civil Contingencies across all categorised partner agencies in Wales remain small. Therefore, the expected additional workload on these teams in engaging with the consultation, development and implementation of the recommendations, must be considered and accounted for, especially as we continue to deliver our statutory duties and respond to significant incidents and unforeseen events.

5. Your views on how progress should be monitored and reported. The need for transparency and clear lines of accountability for delivery of the recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words, however should it be required, an additional answer box of 500 words is available).

The UK Covid19 Inquiry Chair has previously issued a statement that the Inquiry Board will write at regular intervals to encourage recommendation owners to adhere to the time table set out in the final Module report for each recommendation, and that "If an institution does not publish a response within nine months of a recommendation being made the Inquiry will make its disappointment known publicly and urge the institution to respond swiftly. If after one year of the recommendation being published no response is published, the Inquiry will request the institution to set out the reasons why it has failed to do so. All correspondence at this stage will be published on the Inquiry website."

The above indicates that the Inquiry Board will provide an independent body that will ensure that the recommendations are adhered to, which will provide transparency in communicating progress in meeting the recommendations.

The Module 1 report states that “any groups and committees retained or created to support this core structure should have a clear purpose and should report regularly about progress with, and completion of, tasks assigned to them.” As the Recommendations are primarily assigned to Government, it is suggested that Governments utilise existing processes to ensure that the recommendations are undertaken, and for reporting to the Inquiry Board.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words, however should it be required, an additional answer box of 500 words is available).