

CIM1R09 Covid Committee Observation Group

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: Grŵp Arsylwi'r Pwyllgor Covid | Evidence from: Covid Committee
Observation Group

Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee

Dear Joyce Watson MS, Tom Giffard MS,

Following the publication of the UK Covid Inquiry's Module One report members of the Covid Committee Observation Group met to discuss what opportunities we felt there could be for the Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee to consider 'gaps' which require greater attention from a Welsh perspective.

We appreciate that what defines a 'gap' is a matter which the Committee as well as ourselves have been seeking to define. Having read the module one report we have found it necessary to interpret the term both with regards to what the report was assessing that has happened in the past as well as when looking at the recommendations proposed. I have set out some of the 'gaps' we believe require consideration below.

Action taken on emergency preparedness reports/exercises

The module one report references recommendations made in a 2012 report by the Wales Audit Office (now known as Audit Wales) which focused on civil contingencies in Wales. It made several observations surrounding accountability and efficiency of emergency planning frameworks. It was noted that the current structures and systems in place in Wales could lead to gaps or overlaps. These observations were found to be as true in 2020.

It is the view of the Covid Committee Observation Group that understanding why the Audit Wales report was not acted upon is a 'gap' which requires further investigation.

A related matter which we also feel constitutes a gap is with regard to what actions were undertaken following Exercise Shipshape. This 2003 preparedness exercise considered a SARs outbreak with warnings about Wales' readiness for

an infectious disease and documented a need for plans for PPE and care homes to be prepared. Were these recommendations acted upon and if so, how were the lessons from this exercise developed to support the response to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Gaps in relation to recommendations

While we welcome the recommendations brought forward by the Inquiry, it is felt that there is an inherent gap related to these until clarity is provided over who will be accountable for taking forward each recommendation.

The recommendation for better data collection and sharing is welcome but it is important to identify what 'better data' will actually look like and how accessible and comparable such information will be across four different UK health systems. The Observation Group also felt there had been a relative paucity of data from Wales during the inquiry to date and wondered if this constituted a gap due to data publication.

Beyond simply the issues around data, there is a need to have clarity on who from Wales will have ownership of responding to the recommendations and how responsibility for implementing the changes will be determined in a manner that allows for auditing of progress.

Healthcare preparedness

Finally, we note that healthcare preparedness was de-scoped from the first module. Clearly, it is an important consideration, and we anticipate that it will be covered in subsequent modules. Nonetheless, we think it important that this current 'gap' is not overlooked, should it not be fully addressed for Wales in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Webb
On behalf of the Covid Committee Observation Group

Notes:

The Covid Committee Observation Group includes representation from predominantly health and care sector organisations along with colleagues from other sectors affected during the pandemic. The group is currently Chaired by Nicolas Webb, Policy & Public Affairs Manager, Royal College of GPs.