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Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
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Annwyl Dai

Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Bill – new Citizen Voice body

As you know stage 2 of the above Bill began on 27 November 2019. In my response to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's call for evidence on the draft Bill at stage 2, I explained that the best way to ensure that the new Citizen Voice body will be required to comply with Welsh language standards as soon as possible, would be to amend the reference to community health councils in the Welsh Language Standards (No.7) Regulations 2018 and for that to be reflected in schedule 3 of the Bill. In my opinion, this is essential in order to facilitate the smooth transition of these duties from the community health councils to the new organisation.

Although there is a commitment to continue with the process of setting Welsh language standards on public organisations in Wales and a specific commitment to introduce regulations for water companies and health and social care regulators, a further timetable has not been agreed. In the interim, some public sector bodies, such as Health Education and Improvement Wales, are not currently required to comply with Welsh language standards as they have not been named in the relevant regulations.

Therefore, in order to ensure consistency and to facilitate a smooth transition of language duties from the community health councils, the Citizen Voice body should be included in standards regulations from the outset. That would allow me to start working with them immediately after their establishment.

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As the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee considers amendments in stage 2, I ask that Committee members consider tabling an amendment to the Bill to amend the Welsh Language Standards (No.7) Regulations 2018 to include the Citizen Voice body and for the change to be reflected in schedule 3 of the Bill. I am of the opinion that these regulations are appropriate for the new organisation without the need to wait for further regulations. Operating in this way would be consistent with the way standards have been imposed on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in part 7 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019².

I have also written to the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language to make them aware of this matter. I very much hope that this will lead to ensuring that the Citizen's Voice body will comply with Welsh language standards as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Aled Roberts
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