

Vaughan Gething AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/08607/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

10 December 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 19 November on behalf of the Petitions Committee about Petition P-05-724 Rights to Primary Health Care in Welsh.

The Welsh Government recognises that having services through the medium of Welsh is a key component of care. I appreciate the fact that the majority of people's first point of care with the NHS in Wales is with primary care and for vulnerable groups, for example, the elderly, patients with dementia and children, communicating in their first language is a matter of need rather than choice.

Unlike the majority of bodies that are required to comply with Welsh language standards, independent primary care providers have not previously been subject to Welsh language schemes. The six common duties placed on independent primary care providers in relation to the Welsh language are at a level that was currently considered appropriate and reasonable. I consider the duties in their current form to be an important first step on the journey towards greater provision of primary care services in Welsh.

We have been clear from the outset that we will need to keep the duties under review as they bed-in. We have no plans to weaken the duties and will be reviewing them with the aim of building on the starting point which the duties currently provide and within the context of providing better health and care services through the medium of Welsh as set out in the *More than just words* framework. This review will be undertaken during 2020/21.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We have recently undertaken a survey with GP practices to collect baseline data on Welsh language services. The high-level results showed that 77% of practices would be interested in receiving further guidance and support on the 'active offer'. This demonstrates there is an impetus within the sector to improve Welsh language provision. The Welsh Government will be supporting practices to implement the duties and to further improve Welsh language services by developing a primary care toolkit to provide practical guidance and support. We are also undertaking Cymraeg Byd Busnes pilots with two primary care clusters to support the introduction of the duties.

The duties being placed on independent primary care contractors, just like the standards for the health sector, are all important pieces of the jigsaw of intervention and support which build on the firm foundations laid by *More than just words* within the health and care sector.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

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