

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

John Griffiths MS
Chair, Equality, Local Government and
Communities Committee

11 November 2020

Dear John and committee colleagues,

Thank you for your letter of 21 October in response to evidence I presented to the Committee on 12 October.

You have asked for clarity on three points:

1. COVID-19 reconstruction: Challenges and priorities report

Your letter notes concern that the **COVID-19 reconstruction: Challenges and priorities** report does not appear to cover the role older people can play in the recovery. You ask whether this was an oversight by the Government, or whether the remit of the report did not cover this.

The Welsh Government has a clear commitment to upholding and protecting the rights of all older people in Wales. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked with the Older People's Commissioner, EHRC Cymru and Age Cymru to monitor its impact on older people's rights and take appropriate action.

The Older People's Commissioner continues to hold weekly meetings with the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services. Recent conversations have focused on the rights of older people in care homes. The Director General for Health and Social Services has also met with the Older People's Commissioner and EHRC Cymru to discuss Welsh Government's approach to protecting the rights of older people living in care homes so that lessons can be learned and older people's rights strengthened further.

We are taking steps to embed a rights based approach across the Welsh public service and will shortly be publishing our practical guidance on how local authorities can have due regard to the UN Principles for Older Persons.

We plan to publish a public consultation on our Strategy for Ageing Society this autumn. The Strategy will set out our vision for an age friendly Wales that upholds the rights of older people, challenges ageist stereotypes and promotes inter-generational solidarity.

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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.

Members of the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing recently took part in a discussion with Professor Simon Hoffman who is currently leading on important research focused on options to strengthen and advance equality and human rights in Wales. I am confident this forum, whose membership includes older people, leading academics, and representatives from a range of sectors, will play an active role in both monitoring and promoting older people's rights.

Jeremy Miles MS, Counsel General and Minister for European Transition has also written to the Chair of Age Alliance Wales, Victoria Lloyd, in response to the concerns she raised regarding the lack of a specific reference to older people in the ***Covid-19 Reconstruction: Issues and Challenges*** report.

He confirmed that the Welsh Government wholeheartedly acknowledges the immense contribution older people make to life in Wales. We are very aware of the impact of Coronavirus on older people and we have acted from the first to mitigate those impacts and to keep older people safe, as well as to recognise the positive contribution many older people have made to the response to Coronavirus, and that, as a government, we intend to continue doing so.

While it is noted that the difficulties older people have faced as a result of Coronavirus are not explicitly mentioned in the document, there are other groups in society which have not been explicitly referenced in the document. We remain clear that the significance is not the naming of a group, but rather, in the substantive action we are taking to support older people.

This support includes;

- support for older workers,
- those older people furthest from the workforce,
- our commitments on lifelong learning,
- the planned support for public transport (including on-demand transport),
- action to improve housing and to tackle fuel poverty,
- support for the NHS for non-coronavirus conditions,
- support for other public services and the third sector,
- initiatives to tackle digital exclusion, and
- the revitalisation of town centre including plans for town centre health and social care facilities.

Each of these, and indeed a range of other interventions, will have an important impact in the lives of our older citizens.

Our approach to reconstruction reflects all that we have heard from the range of voices who have participated in our engagement processes, including, importantly, older people. Our approach includes a focus on the values of economic justice, social justice, and environmental justice, which guides all of our work as a government, and which enhances the lives of all of the citizens of Wales.

2. Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED)

You have asked how the Welsh Government will promote compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales. As you acknowledge, regulatory responsibility falls within the remit of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, however I maintain close contact with the EHRC about this and other relevant matters, as do officials in the Equality Branch.

The review of the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties was started in January 2020 but temporarily halted during the initial months of the Covid pandemic as resources had to be reallocated to other equality and human rights work. PSED reporting obligations were suspended for six months from March 2020 by the EHRC to acknowledge the burden placed on public bodies during the initial response to the pandemic.

Consideration is now being given to how the PSED review work can be progressed over the coming year, building upon work already begun within the Welsh Government to improve the gathering and publication of employment and other equalities data. The findings of the ongoing research into strengthening and advancing equalities and human rights in Wales will be an important source of evidence for the PSED review work over the next few months. It is anticipated the extensive stakeholder engagement which is taking place will shed light on how best to strengthen the Welsh Specific Equality Duties and improve compliance with the PSED as a whole. The report will be concluded by the end of February 2021.

3. Sustainable funding for the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) sector

Further to my commitment to give an update on the timetable for the completion of the sustainable funding model for VAWDASV sector, I have confirmed with Yasmin Khan, the Chair of the Sustainable Funding Group, that the deadline for the finalisation of the VAWDASV Sustainable Funding Model is 31 March 2021. This will be dependent on agreement by members of Sustainable Funding Group.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

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