

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

—
**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Senedd Cymru

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Eluned Morgan MS,
Minister for Health and Social Services

Julie Morgan MS,
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Lynne Neagle MS,
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

25 October 2022

Request for information

Dear Minister and Deputy Ministers,

Thank you for your letter dated 11 October following our request, along with the Health and Social Care Committee for a range of information. We discussed your letter at our Committee meeting on 19 October 2022. We were unanimous in our views expressed below.

To provide context to our request, we wrote jointly because of the shared areas of interest between our Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee, in particular in relation to mental health. We believed that a joint request would help ensure requests were being made in a coherent and streamlined way, better supporting the sharing of the same information between the Government and two Committees, with different remits but clear areas of shared interest. We felt that such co-ordination would help reduce the burden on the Welsh Government in terms of duplicated requests for similar types of information. As mental health is a cross-cutting Welsh Government priority, so it is that committees across the Senedd have an interest in this important issue.

It is the job of Senedd committees to scrutinise the Welsh Government. Obtaining information from the Welsh Government is a basic necessity for us to perform this important role. With that in mind, we reiterate our request for an update on the implementation of the recommendations made in our predecessor Committee's landmark report Mind Over Matter. This was an important report which demonstrated the positive impact of scrutiny, and the important role it can play in improving the lives

of children and young people in Wales. Our predecessor Committee's determination to follow up on progress after the publication of the initial report set an important benchmark which we wish to build on.

We made two requests for information in the joint letter, one on perinatal mental health which has been received, and one on Mind Over Matter, which remains outstanding. Your letter outlines two opportunities where the outstanding issues could be discussed, however these were sessions with the Health and Social Care Committee. They did not afford our Committee an opportunity to explore these issues with you. We also note that the issues raised during oral evidence sessions have to be prioritised to make the best use of limited time. Sometimes written information is a far more effective way to share information for both the Committee and the Government. You will note that we have not taken oral evidence from either the Health Minister or Deputies since the budget scrutiny in January 2021. This further underlines to us the reasonableness of our request.

There is a process that is usually followed when there are issues around a request made by a Committee. Usually, Welsh Government officials will speak to the Clerk where further clarification can be provided, and a revised deadline agreed. We note that in this instance this did not happen. As far as we understand it, there was no indication that the deadline would not be met, and no update was provided as to why the outstanding response had not been received. In fact, it was over five weeks later before we received your response, which refused to provide the outstanding information.

In your letter you state that there is no commitment to provide periodic written updates on the outstanding issues. As I am sure you will know there does not need to be such a commitment to provide written updates; if a Senedd committee wishes to request an update on a particular area of policy, it is within its gift to ask and it should, within reason, be expected that the Welsh Government provides this information.

We are currently looking at mental health support in higher education. The update on Mind Over Matter is material to our consideration of this important issue. We therefore would ask that this information is provided to us no later than **Monday 14 November**. This will enable us to take account of it before we take evidence from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, and the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing on 23 November.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.