

Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair  
Petitions Committee

14 January 2022

Dear Jack

**Petition P-05-1078 Increase funding for mental health services and improve waiting times for people needing help in crisis. We need a change!**

Thank you for your letter dated 2 December 2021 regarding the above petition, in which you asked the Health and Social Care Committee to consider this petition and associated correspondence in any future scrutiny work regarding mental health services.

**Priorities for the Sixth Senedd**

As a member of the Health and Social Care Committee, you will be aware that mental health and tackling the waiting times backlog were priority areas emerging from our [consultation](#) on the Committee's [priorities](#) for this Senedd. We subsequently identified both matters in our [strategy](#) for the Sixth Senedd as priorities for consideration within the first year of this Senedd.

**Mental health inequalities**

In line with our strategy, we launched an [inquiry](#) into mental health inequalities on Monday 10 January. We will be looking in particular at which groups or communities are most likely to be disproportionately affected by poor mental health, what barriers they face in accessing services, whether current policy sufficiently addresses these issues, and what further actions might be needed to improve mental health and outcomes, and reduce mental health inequalities in Wales.

Further information regarding this inquiry, including details of how to submit written evidence by the closing date of Thursday 24 February, is available on our [website](#). The petitioner would be welcome to share their views with us.

**Impact of the waiting times backlog on people in Wales who are waiting for diagnosis or treatment**  
We are currently undertaking an inquiry on the impact of the waiting times backlog on people in

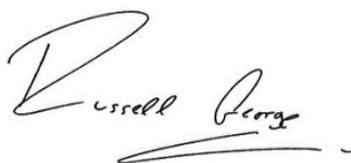
Wales. In addition to exploring issues relating to waiting times for mental and physical health diagnosis and treatment, it includes consideration of access to psychological therapies and emotional support for people who may be experiencing anxiety or distress as a result of long waiting times.

To inform our inquiry, we have held oral evidence sessions with key stakeholders across the health sector, in addition to issuing a call for written evidence. While this work is still in progress, and we have not yet reached any conclusions, one of the themes emerging is the impact that the waiting times backlog is having on people's mental health. In addition to having to wait to access mental and physical health services, people are also facing challenges in accessing support to help them manage their physical and mental health while they are waiting for diagnosis or treatment.

Further details about our inquiry, including the evidence that we have heard to date, are available on our [website](#).

I hope that this information is of assistance to your Committee and the petitioner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell George". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Russell George MS

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.