

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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19 January 2016

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 15 December. I note your comments on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) annual report for 2014/15 which I received in July.

You highlighted the upward trend in complaints about NHS bodies received by the Ombudsman's office over the past five years. I would expect there to be a rise in the number of complaints since the Putting Things Right process was introduced in April 2011 which made it easier for people to have their issues dealt with.

The PSOW annual report also states that there was only a 1% increase in health body complaints over 2013/14. This may be as a result of the publication of the Evans report, "The Gift of Complaints" in 2014 and the ongoing work to implement the recommendations. These include the need to support and empower staff to deal with concerns quickly and at source by 'nipping them in the bud' before they escalate into complaints. This approach should lead to more concerns being managed informally to the satisfaction of the user and eventually to a lower referral rate to the PSOW.

While we wish to encourage a culture in which patients and families feel able to raise concerns, and are supported in doing so, it is nevertheless important to put cases which are raised with the Ombudsman in perspective. During 2014/15, there were more than 22 million planned appointment in primary care, one million attendances at A&E Departments and 756,000 hospital admissions. The Ombudsman received 769 health related complaints.

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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.

New arrangements for handling social services complaints also came into effect in August 2014. This provided for a simplified process and aligns social services with other public services, notably the NHS. These procedures are similarly based on the key principle that everyone who makes a complaint about social services in Wales has a right to be listened to. Their views, wishes and feelings must be heard; and their concerns should be resolved quickly and effectively. For that reason, I would also expect a rise in the number of social services complaint received.

Best wishes,

Mark.

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