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Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH-/05458/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM

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13 August 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter and additional information regarding the Petitions Committee P-05-882, "Transforming the response for older people experiencing domestic abuse – a call for action." I am pleased the petitioners recognise Wales's commitment to tackling domestic abuse and the rights of older people. While Wales is seen to be leading the way, we are not complacent about the continuing challenges and will continue to raise awareness, challenge behaviour and hold perpetrators to account.

I recognise there are gaps in awareness, and I outlined in my previous letter some of the work we are doing to address this; such as our most recent communication campaign, 'This is not love. This is control.' The campaign is designed to reflect how diverse and underrepresented groups experience coercive control. The experience of older people and disabled people has been taken into account and reflected throughout this campaign. We will also continue to raise awareness of our guidance materials, such as that on Domestic Abuse: Safeguarding Older People in Wales, and are reaching out to survivors through our survivor engagement work, which is being developed further to understand the lived experiences of those we previously have not been able to reach.

While we are proud of the fact that Wales was the first of the UK nations to introduce legislation and a national strategy to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, we recognise that these are deep and far reaching issues that will take time to change, and the Welsh Government cannot achieve this on its own. That is why we work with partners, and why we have placed a duty on local authorities and local health boards to publish and implement joint local strategies, based on local need.

We have also introduced statutory guidance for regional commissioning of services. These documents may have limited reference to particular communities of interest, but we have deliberately avoided over-prescription in favour of flexibility to meet local need and exercise professional judgement.

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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.

These needs-led approaches are intended to support delivery of appropriate, high-quality services at the point of need. In particular, by encouraging commissioners to come together on a regional basis, we want to move to a more strategic approach to the commissioning of services across the region.

In addition to those services that are delivered by local and regional providers, the Welsh Government funds a free 24-hour confidential helpline, Live Fear Free which can be contacted on 0808 8010 800. There is also a website: www.livefearfree.gov.wales with live web chat, both these services offer support and advice to all victims of abuse and violence, including older people and men. The helpline and website can also be accessed by 'concerned others' such as family members, friends and colleagues, and by service providers. All calls and web chat are confidential and are taken by staff that are highly experienced and fully trained.

We also provide funding to Safer Wales for their men-only service Dyn project and their Dyn male helpline. They can be contacted by phone or email 0808 801 0321 or support@dynwales.org

We will continue to ensure that relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors throughout Wales through our National Training Framework.

Abuse of older people is one of the three key strands of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' work programme and The Welsh Government recently took part in a round table event led by the Commissioner on this issue. We will continue to work with the Commissioner to ensure effective implementation of the Guidance on Domestic Abuse: Safeguarding Older People in Wales, 2017.

The Welsh Government is working with key delivery organisations to agree a first draft of the new Strategy for an Ageing Society. The strategy will go out for public consultation later this year and I encourage Dewis Choice to feed into this process to ensure that their voice is heard.

I note the concern that the five working groups set up as part of the development work did not specifically focus on domestic abuse and older people. Our 'Making Rights Real' working group did consider how to use older people's rights as a practical tool to combat abuse, ageism and inequality and to protect all older people. The Strategy for an Ageing Society will adopt a rights-based approach that promotes equality, social justice and empowerment across a range of policy areas.

We are also working with Social Care Wales to produce practical guidance to support local authorities deliver their duty to have due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older People, as required by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

As part of the review of engagement with older people Welsh Government commissioned Age Cymru to carry out a series of focus groups with older LGBT and BME people. The report that followed highlighted a number of areas for consideration that these individuals face in addition to being an older person. The findings are being considered as part of the strategy development.

As part of our commitment to promoting and advancing equality in Wales, we are helping disabled people to fulfil their potential and live the lives they want to lead. This requires removing both physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent this.

Our new framework – ‘Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living’ will be published later this year. Disabled people have told us that local action is crucial, so the framework is designed to urge Welsh public services, employers and organisations at every level to take note of, and implement the Framework’s principles and commitments. The new framework is accompanied by an action plan to tackle some of the key barriers identified by disabled people themselves, such as transport, employment, housing and access to buildings and places.

We have also committed to include the needs of disabled people as part of the development of a national survivor engagement framework (2019-2020) for survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

I firmly believe that the dedication of our specialist services and support sector has contributed to the fact that Wales is seen as a pioneer in the field of domestic abuse policy and practice with colleagues across the border looking to replicate our initiatives. The work Dewis Choice is undertaking within the pilot is undoubtedly making a difference to older people in Wales and I would be most grateful if my officials could be kept updated on further progress on completion of the pilot phase. The team is contactable on VAWDASV@gov.wales

Yours sincerely,

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

Jane Hutt AC/AM

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