



To: Please see Annex 1

Dear Colleagues

22 January 2021

Outcome of the Rapid Review to Retain or Suspend the Operation of Section 15 of, and Part 2 of Schedule 12 to, the Coronavirus Act 2020

Purpose

I am writing to thank you for participating in our recent rapid review of the social care provisions within the Coronavirus Act 2020 (the 2020 Act) and to provide you with an update on next steps.

Close to 100 responses were received from individuals and organisations across Wales, including a small number which, whilst arriving after the deadline, have been considered as part of the breadth of evidence provided.

Summary of Responses

A key theme throughout the responses focuses on concerns about how the pandemic has impacted on people's rights. Shared examples include the increased demands on unpaid carers and families; the absence of services generally, but specifically day services and clubs which act as vital support mechanisms and respite. Similarly, responses identify the impact of wider national measures such as social distancing, lockdown and shielding resulting in cancellation of visits to care accommodation and supported living arrangements as well as the associated opportunities to take family members out.

Those identifying as older carers for adult sons and daughters highlight the impact of the absence of respite and day services on their resilience and well-being. Similarly, single parents and parents of severely disabled children, young carers and those caring for parents and spouses, all highlight the continuing absence of "normal" services that have been unable to operate as a result of the wider national measures required to address the pandemic. Whilst recognising and accepting the need to prioritise care, responses suggest there is a need to enhance communication with individuals and families.

Social Care Impact

It is clear from the evidence, that the range of measures it has been necessary to put in place to manage and mitigate community infection throughout the pandemic, are having an impact on people's access to the range and scope of support within communities. This is having a direct consequence for both individuals themselves but also all of the unpaid carers and families across Wales.

We also know that the pandemic is having an unequal impact across our communities. That is why we must continue to safeguard people and ensure that we minimise any adverse effects on those accessing social care including older people, disabled people and their families.

The latest advice from Public Health Wales is clear. The number of cases remains extremely high in Wales and are cause for serious concern, due to the impact on NHS Wales services and the prevalence of the new, more infectious variant. In order to avoid adding to the current severe pressure on hospitals and care services, it is extremely important that everyone continues to remain vigilant, by staying at home and sticking to the rules.

The current environment is extremely challenging and the First Minister has confirmed that we are seeing levels of coronavirus in some parts of the country that we haven't experienced at any point before in this pandemic. This pandemic is putting our public services under intense and sustained strain. It is positive that local authorities have not had to implement the modifications so far and is further evidence of the incredible response made by all within the social care sector during the height of the pandemic earlier in the year.

The impact of the pandemic has surpassed the levels we have experienced with the resultant challenges this places on the NHS and all partners who support them to help people recover from the virus. The number of coronavirus-related patients in our hospitals has exceeded double the peak we saw in the first wave. The number of people in critical care beds with coronavirus is almost same as the number of intensive care beds we would normally have available for the whole of Wales and we have continually had to increase capacity to respond to demand.

Next steps

The Deputy Minister has noted that a majority of responses were in favour of suspending the social care provisions of the 2020 Act and has asked officials to prepare the necessary legislation to suspend the modifications to the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014. The Deputy Minister has asked that this work is progressed as soon as reasonably possible with the clear expectation that the regulations suspending the modifications will be laid in the first quarter of 2021.

The Deputy Minister, on behalf of the whole Welsh Government, wishes to once again pay tribute and recognise the role played by practitioners and leaders across social care for their work in maintaining care and support arrangements during this time. In addition, more than ever before, unpaid carers have helped our health and social care system cope with the unprecedented public health crisis we continue to experience.

Yours sincerely



Albert Heaney
Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol
Deputy Director General

Albert Heaney
Dirprwy Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol
Deputy Director General
Y Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Health and Social Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Annex 1

Recipients of this letter include:

Individual Respondents to the Rapid Review

Assoc. of Directors of Social Services Cymru

Care Forum Wales

Care Inspectorate Wales

Chair of Age Alliance

Chairs, Vice Chairs and Leads of Regional Partnership Boards

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Disability & Equality Forum Members

Directors of Social Services

Equality & Human Rights Commission Wales

National Independent Safeguarding Board

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Safeguarding Board Business Managers

Social Care Wales

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Welsh Local Government Association