

8th April 2020

Dear Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, John Griffiths AM

We are writing on behalf of the Wales Civil Society Human Rights Stakeholder Group (HRSG) and the Equalities Organisations funded by Welsh Government.

As we are all aware, the current international pandemic has resulted in the speedy introduction of legislation in Wales which impacts directly on people's human rights and on people with a protected characteristics. Emergency legislation in response to a national crisis is not per se a violation of human rights. However, as a group we feel that democratic institutions such as civil society and national parliaments should be particularly sensitive to the risk that such legislation may not pay sufficient attention to human rights considerations when introduced or may be implemented in a manner which raises human rights concerns.

In terms of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on those with protected characteristics we are concerned as it is likely that they will be more significantly impacted by the crisis and we urge the Committee to scrutinise and collect evidence on what those impacts are both in the immediate term, and potentially revisit in 6-9 months time when the emergency legislation could be lifted and the crisis is over. I am sure you are aware that the Women and Equalities Committee at Westminster has launched an inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on people with a protected characteristics.

I am sure you will also be aware that the UK Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights has commenced an inquiry into the human rights implications of 'Government' response to Covid-19.

With the above in mind, and in order to properly and fully address issues which arise for Wales, the HRSG and the Equalities organisations respectfully requests that the ELGC Committee **give urgent consideration to an immediate inquiry into the impact of the Welsh Government's response to the pandemic – both in terms of Human Rights and in terms of the impact of Covid-19 on people with protected characteristics.**

Yours sincerely

Simon Hoffman

Chair, HRSG

Catherine Fookes

Director, WEN Wales