

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1241
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/10671/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

5 January 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 13th December where you set out the petition from Mike O'Brien asking Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers. Responsibility for unpaid carers sits within my portfolio and I am pleased to say that I continue to welcome hearing the views of unpaid carers and look to meet with them wherever possible.

On 25th November - Carers' Rights Day - I had the opportunity to meet virtually with two groups of unpaid carers, one from Swansea and one from Powys. The carers very kindly talked openly about their circumstances but also offered their thoughts as to what can be improved, and what they see as being the critical issues affecting them during the pandemic.

With regards to more formal engagement with carers, since 2018 the Carers' Ministerial Advisory group has provided information and advice to ministers. It meets at least four times each year with members including statutory bodies such as local authorities and health boards, the independent Commissioners, Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales, national carers' organisations, young people's organisations and officials. The group played a vital role in helping us to develop the Strategy for Unpaid Carers published in March of this year, as well as the recently launched Delivery Plan.

Alongside the MAG, since 2019 we have funded Carers Trust Wales to support a Carers Engagement group which enables us to engage directly with unpaid carers, social care and health sector professionals. Members of the group have worked with the MAG members and officials on both the strategy and delivery plan. One specific group is continuing to work with us to co-produce a new Carers' Charter which we aim to launch in early 2022.

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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.

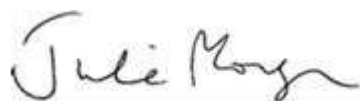
Following recent discussions and feedback the Engagement group is now undergoing a review of its remit so that it will support wider engagement with carers as we take forward the actions in the Delivery Plan. This will include the addition of young carers to the group. I was pleased to accept the recommendation from the Children's Commissioner's annual report which called for the Welsh Government to have more direct engagement with young carers. We will be looking to build on previous work such as the carers' engagement week sessions held in October 2020 examining a range of different topics for example, communication between carers and social care staff, what affects older carers or parent carers. A decision will be made in early 2022 on the new format for the refreshed Engagement group.

Following the success of the two day Carers Summit held in early 2021, we have provided funding via our Sustainable Social Services Third Sector grant scheme for Carers Wales to host a 5 day Carers' Summit in February 2022. Expanded from last year, it will involve a series of discussion sessions for carers, concluding with an expert panel question and answer session which I will be attending and observing. I have also asked officials to identify suitable opportunities for me to meet again with young carers in early 2022.

I appreciate Mike O'Brien taking the time to create this petition and his previous correspondence to me asking for the voices of unpaid carers to be heard. I wish to assure both him and the committee that whether or not a carer is linked with any government or formal network, their views are equally valued and important. I have asked my officials in Social Services and Integration Directorate to put him in contact with Carers Trust Wales so that he, and the carers he represents, can discuss the refreshed engagement group and framework.

On a final point, with the publication of the new Carers' Delivery Plan setting out a range of actions for government, the third and public sectors, it remains vital that we continue to proactively engage with carers to better understand their needs and involve them in identifying and developing solutions.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

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