

CMMC01 Professor Pedr ap Llwyd FLSW

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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Ymateb gan: Professor Pedr ap Llwyd FLSW | Evidence from: Arthro Pedr ap Llwyd FLSW

Please see below in English and Welsh my comments on this subject:

1. Acknowledge the Importance of Transparency

Transparency in government is crucial for public trust. While some internal documents, such as the Welsh Government's Cabinet Handbook, are restricted, transparency about processes and principles guiding such areas as unauthorised disclosures is important. A balance must be struck between confidentiality on sensitive government matters and the public's right to know how government operations are managed.

2. Limited Accessibility of Guidance on Leaks

The Welsh Government's confirmation that its Cabinet Handbook does not include specific guidance on unauthorised disclosures and that they instead rely on UK Government Cabinet Office guidance, which is also unpublished, raises concerns about accessibility. Without access to these documents, it's difficult for the public to understand how such cases are handled. While it is understandable that certain guidance may need to remain internal to ensure effective operations, greater transparency on the general principles and safeguards in place would enhance public confidence.

3. Need for Published Policies or Frameworks

The publication of at least a high-level overview or framework of the processes for investigating leaks would be beneficial. This would provide clarity to the public on how the government ensures accountability and prevents unauthorised disclosures without revealing operational details that could hinder investigations.

4. Contrast with the UK Government's Practices

While the Welsh Government follows the UK Government Cabinet Office guidance, which is also unpublished, it has to be asked to what extent does this practice align with or diverges from broader trends toward transparency in governance. If the UK and Welsh Governments are not releasing these documents, it raises a question about whether more could be done across all levels of government to demystify the handling of sensitive issues like leaks, even if only through the release of summary documents.

5. Public Assurance on Internal Safeguards

I would argue that even if the guidance itself remains unpublished, the government could do more to reassure the public that robust mechanisms are in place to handle unauthorised disclosures fairly and thoroughly. This could involve periodic reporting or summaries of how such cases are resolved, as long as individual confidentiality is maintained.

6. Ethical Implications

Unaudited or untransparent systems may inadvertently create opportunities for inconsistent application of guidelines. Publishing information about investigative processes (even in general terms) would signal a commitment to fairness, consistency, and accountability.
