

Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Children's Commissioner for Wales

Keith Towler

Jocelyn Davies AM (Chair)
National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

19 February 2015

Dear Chair

Inquiry into the Consideration of Powers: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Thank you for your letter dated 9 February. Please find below our response to your specific questions. For your information, we do intend on responding to the consultation, a copy of which we'll share with you in due course.

- **Could 'own-initiative' investigations by the Ombudsman conflict with the role of independent commissioners?**

I am broadly in favour of supporting 'own initiative' investigations by the Ombudsman. However, I would wish to reinforce the need for the Ombudsman to consult with the Children's Commissioner for Wales in relation to any investigation involving a child or young person, as outlined in the current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both institutions. This MoU has been established to protect the institutions' independence and I would wish to ensure that 'own initiative' investigations by the Ombudsman do not adversely impact on the scope and remit of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

This perhaps offers an opportunity to firm up arrangements between ourselves and the Ombudsman in legislation – currently outlined in the MoU – as well as our working relationship with other similar institutions in Wales.

- **Is there a need for a co-ordination role between independent commissioners, the Ombudsman and the Auditor General for Wales to help their investigations and recommendations to improve public services?**

I already work closely with the Older Person's Commissioner, Welsh Language Commissioner and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and have established a Memorandum of Understanding on joint work and the sharing of information. Also established are Memoranda of Understanding with Welsh Government, Care Council for Wales and CAF/CASS Cymru. I meet with the other independent commissioners and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on a quarterly basis. I also have meetings with the Auditor General for Wales.

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It would be useful to explore further what is meant by a 'coordination role'.

- **Would the proposed reforms of the Ombudsman's role be better carried out in advance of wider public sector reforms, or after?**

We do not believe that the proposed public sector reforms have a bearing on the Public Services Ombudsman's ability to look into complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales, although regard must be given to the financial constraints of the public sector when considering increasing the resources of the Ombudsman.

Your Inquiry into the consideration of powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales coincides with my calls to strengthen the role and remit of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, discussions which I'm sure my successor and the team would be happy to pursue with you at an opportune time.

I wish you well with the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Towler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Keith Towler
Children's Commissioner for Wales
