

Tracey Burke
Director General
Education and Public Services Group
Welsh Government

30 July 2018

Welsh Government's Supporting People Programme

Dear Tracey,

Thank you for your response to the recommendations made in the Public Accounts Committee's report on the Supporting People Programme. The Committee considered the response at its meeting on 17 July 2018 along with the Auditor General's advice on the response.

The Committee welcomes that the Welsh Government has accepted 11 of the Committee's 13 recommendations and noted the Welsh Government's reasoning for the rejection of two recommendations. Overall, the Committee deems the detail of the responses to be satisfactory. However, as the Auditor General noted, progress against the actions set out in our recommendations will depend very much on the evidence base and engagement that underpins any future decision-making. Drawing in part on the Auditor General's advice, we have set out our observations on the Welsh Government's response below.

Recommendation 1: We expressed concerns about a delay in the production of refreshed guidance for the Supporting People Programme. The guidance scheduled for spring 2018 has still not been published. We note that Welsh Government has attributed this delay to wanting to avoid undue confusion as it moves forward with its flexible funding pathfinders. However, we believe that the guidance could have helped clarify expectations and the risk of confusion has somewhat passed now.

We are concerned that should the Welsh Government move forward with its plans to introduce the new integrated grant from April 2019, the delay in the publication of the Supporting People guidance may diminish its value.



As such the Committee seeks clarification of the reasons for the delay and its impact. We also seek details of the timetable the Welsh Government would look to work to in terms of publishing fresh guidance for any new integrated grant.

Recommendation 2: The focus of this recommendation was to ensure effective and meaningful engagement with stakeholders in evaluating the impact of the flexible funding pilots and to determine the scope and timing of any further grant integration affecting the Supporting People Programme beyond 2018–19.

Although we note the Welsh Government’s extensive approach to engaging stakeholders, the feedback received informally by Members of the Committee from those within the sector, is that this engagement has not been productive. We have heard from some stakeholders that they do not feel listened to and there are concerns the views of the sector are being met with negativity. We understand that some stakeholders do not feel able to raise their views with Welsh Government Officials.

The Committee has some concerns about this feedback. In order to better understand these, we would like an explanation of how the Welsh Government is seeking to ensure, through its engagement, that stakeholders can make their views known in an open environment where they feel able to speak their mind without potential repercussions.

Recommendation 7: The Welsh Government has rejected this recommendation indicating that it cannot discharge the work required on its own. However, the Committee believes that the Welsh Government has a key role in its oversight of the flexible funding pilots, and to support its decision making, the Welsh Government has a role in gathering the type of evidence the Committee was describing in its recommendation.

We take assurances from the response that relevant work is underway, but we wish to clarify the reasons for the Welsh Government’s rejection of this recommendation. We also seek details of the extent of the evidence about potential efficiencies that the Welsh Government believes it will have available to support its decision making.

Recommendation 8: The response refers to discussions that have taken place about the role of Regional Collaborative Committee’s (RCCs) in the context of the flexible funding pilots. The Committee would welcome further detail on how the Welsh Government expects the RCCs to engage with the flexible funding pilots.



Recommendation 13: We would like an indication of relevant timescales for the actions set out in response to this recommendation. In particular, we would like to confirm whether the Welsh Government would expect to have developed a suitable outcomes framework for any new integrated grant from the outset.

Finally, the Committee welcomes the Welsh Government's commitment to sharing with us the interim evaluation report and we may wish to return to this topic in late 2018 once the proposals for grant funding arrangements in 2019 – 20 are confirmed. This will be subject to the consideration of this matter by other committees as part of their budget scrutiny.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Ramsay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Nick Ramsay AM
Chair

