

Mark Drakeford AM/AC
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid
Cabinet Secretary for Finance



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-L/MD/0882/17

John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

20 December 2017

Dear John

I am looking forward to my evidence session on the scrutiny of the Finance Committee's Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill on 11 January 2018. In advance of that session the Committee might find it helpful to know my views, and those of the Welsh Government, on key elements of the Bill.

Subject to having an opportunity to study the conclusions of the Committee, the Government is happy to support the elements of the Bill which provide the Ombudsman with powers to receive oral evidence, and to investigate the private healthcare element of a patient's treatment, where this forms part of a mixed public and private healthcare pathway.

The Government reserves its position on the other two key elements of the Bill. As far as own initiative investigations are concerned I look forward to reading the Committee's assessment of the merit and de-merit of this aspect of the Bill.

It will also reserve its position on the adoption of a model complaints policy across the Welsh Public Service, based on Public Services Ombudsman for Wales guidance. I will be especially interested to study what the Committee will have heard from other commissioners and regulators, such as the Auditor General for Wales and the Health and Social Care Inspectorates have to say on this matter.

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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.

Finally I have concerns about the accuracy of the financial information set out in the Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment. In order to ensure that there is sufficient time for this aspect of the Bill to be further explored I am unlikely to table the financial resolution for the Bill immediately after the Stage 1 debate in Plenary on the general principles of the Bill.

On a separate matter I am clear the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill will not be the vehicle through which the issue of Welsh Language complaints will be dealt; that is rightly a matter for a Welsh Language Bill. This is also the view of the Ombudsman.

I will review the evidence taken by the Committee to inform the Government's view on the elements of the Bill on which it has reserved its view, and I look forward to responding to the Committee's questions on 11 January.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Mark Drakeford AM/AC

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Cabinet Secretary for Finance