



Ein cyf/Our ref: JM/00433/20

21st May 2020

Dear Alison,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 April 2020 regarding the the capacity of the social work profession in Wales, in light of the current and ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I fully recognise and appreciate the critical role social workers play in supporting some of our most vulnerable people. I also recognise the particular challenges this key group of workers are facing at this difficult time and that the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic will extend long after the current crisis.

Growing and supporting our social worker and social care workforce is a key priority for the Welsh Government and our partners. As you will be aware prior to the current pandemic Social Care Wales had established a work stream to look at the future of social work and this will continue as we look at the short, medium and long term planning for the sector.

I am also aware that the number of students taking up the social care bursary has been slowly shrinking over the past few years and my officials are working with Social Care Wales to understand the reasons behind this and what action can be taken to reverse this. We are also working across the Welsh Government with colleagues in education to understand if there is any support that can be given to help support those undertaking social work studies in higher education.

My officials continue to work very closely with local authorities and are gathering data regarding current capacity and future need in relation to social workers and social care more generally. Surge capacity modelling is taking place to help local authorities to plan for continued safe operation of key social care services during the pandemic.

In relation to children's services, the returns we have received to date from local authorities state that while there are some staff absences, cover is being provided for most services. In relation to adult services, none of the local authorities that have replied have reported significant numbers of staff absence.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

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.

We are receiving weekly returns from our local authorities on a core data set to help us understand capacity for the sector at this difficult time and we will continue to closely monitor these and respond accordingly where risks are identified.

As of 10 May 2020 we have tested 17,398 healthcare workers for Covid-19, my officials are currently working with Public Health Wales and local authorities to gain accurate, up to date data on how many of these are social workers.

We recognise that there has been a slower response to the emergency register than originally anticipated with only 66 (as of 14th May) returning social workers being placed on the register. The link below provides a break down of numbers on the temporary register for each area of Wales:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMTJIMmE2OTQtMTQ0OC00MGMyLWJiMTItNmQyYzZiYzk1NzU1IiwidCI6IjRiYzJkZTIyLTliOTctNGViNi04ZTg4LTlyNTQxOTA3NDhlMiJ9>

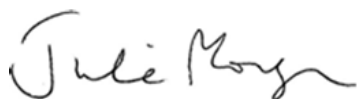
Social Care Wales has been working with regulators from across the UK and understand that a similar picture has been seen UK-wide in relation to social work returners.

We also understand that in terms of recruitment of social work returners, there has been limited demand from employers so far in relation to the pandemic. However we expect that this could change going forward as workers begin to feel the effects of working throughout the current crisis. Social Care Wales is currently contacting individuals that have joined the register to understand what support can be provided. Despite this initial slow response, I am sure you will agree that it was necessary and appropriate that the Welsh Government took these powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020, as well as the additional provisions relating to social care, health and education. Collectively, we have ensured that the workforce in Wales is equipped and empowered to respond in the professional and positive manner they have demonstrated throughout this pandemic.

In terms of the WeCare Wales campaign, Social Care Wales are currently analysing the data around this, we will provide further information when it is available. You will be interested to see the latest Covid-19 resources developed in partnership with practitioners to supplement the existing resources on the Direct Payments Hub:-
<https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/flexible-use-of-direct-payments-during-the-pandemic>.

I know that officials are in regular contact with professional bodies and trade unions and I will ask them to continue to keep in contact going forward.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services