



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Title: Independent Commission on Social Services

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By: Gwenda Thomas , Deputy Minister for Social Services

Social Services are a crucial part of Welsh life. 150,000 people a year use these services often at the most difficult points in their lives. 70,000 people devote their lives to meeting these needs. We spend almost £1.2 billion a year. Day in and day out across Wales high quality services are delivered. This is not to deny, of course, that at times services are not at the standard that are required.

In June, at the Wales Social Services Conference, I announced the Government's intention to establish an independent commission to consider how best social services and social care can meet the needs of the citizens of Wales over the next decade. I am now pleased to announce the appointment of the Chair and members of the Commission.

I have appointed Professor Geoffrey Pearson, Emeritus Professor of Criminology, Goldsmiths College, University of London, to Chair the Commission. Professor Pearson is a qualified social worker with a forty year career lecturing in social work including a post in Cardiff. He has also served on a number of UK Government working groups and bodies.

I have also appointed Julie Jones OBE, Chief Executive of the Social Care Institute for Excellence and Rhian Huws Williams, Chief Executive of the Care Council for Wales as additional members of the Commission.

Julie Jones has some thirty five years experience in social services latterly as a Director of Social Services and Deputy Chief Executive of Westminster City

Council, including a year as President of the Association of Directors of Social Services, before taking up her current role as Chief Executive of SCIE in 2007.

Rhian Huws Williams worked as a social worker and training officer within the then Clwyd Social Services Department before taking up an appointment with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Workers working on mental health, practice learning and the development of its Welsh language policy. She has been Chief Executive of the Care Council for Wales since 2001.

I am confident that together these individuals have the knowledge and expertise to consider how we should respond to the challenges we face.

As I indicated in June I have asked the Commission to consider the provision of social services and social care over the next decade and in particular how the Assembly Government can

- support the further development of professional practice
- build inclusive social services based on the contribution of all partners who work in social care
- effect a step change in collaboration between social services and with other key services
- ensure integrated social services capable of meeting the needs of children, young people and adults and older people in the most effective way

In considering these issues the Commission will be asked to have regard to the impact of changing public expectations, demographic changes and a range of resource scenarios that ensure a sustainable service. The Commission will also be asked to have regard to the wider policy context including

- The principles set out in *Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities*
- The Assembly Government Green Paper on Paying for Care and the outcome of the consultation on the Green Paper
- Ministerial commitments to review the future funding of social care and social services
- The Task Group on the future of the social work and social care workforce
- The Assembly Government led public service reform programme, including the evolving arrangements for local government and health services
- The community and primary care framework

I have already made clear my commitment as Minister to the centrality of local government in social services planning, design and delivery. However I have also made it clear that we must embrace all those involved in the provision of social care including our partners in the independent sector. We cannot aspire

to inclusive and integrated services without listening to everyone with an interest. I have therefore asked the Commission to give the opportunity to all interested parties likely to be affected by its recommendations to give their views on the issues within the terms of reference.

I am particularly concerned that the voices of service users and carer are central to the work of the Commission and I shall ensure that proper arrangements are in place to make this a reality.

I have agreed that the Commission will be able to take its work forward without interference from the Assembly Government and I have put arrangements in place to protect the Commission's independence.

The Commission is an opportunity for all of us to contribute to shaping the direction of these crucially important services. I know of the importance we all place on social services and would like to encourage colleagues across the National Assembly to take every opportunity to make your views known and help shape the future of social services.

The Commission now begins its work and will be asked to report to me by next November.