Dear Bethan,

I am writing following the Business Statement of 1 October and your question to the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd about the social services complaints procedure.

The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and accompanying guidance, a 'guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services' provides a straightforward and citizen-centred approach to the resolution of complaints about social services. It also enables a more consistent approach for citizens across public services and means that complaints involving more than one public authority are handled in a co–ordinated way.

In particular, the guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services states that where a complaint is not resolved at Local Resolution stage it moves to a Formal Investigation stage whereby the local authority must appoint an Independent Investigator.

In addition, the Citizen Voice body proposed under the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Bill currently before the Assembly will be able to provide assistance with a complaint to a local authority about social services provided or arranged by the local authority.

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied they then have recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Everyone who makes a complaint about social services in Wales has a right to be listened to and to have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Local authorities must learn from these concerns and use the experience to improve services for everyone who uses them.
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.

You will be aware that the Social Services Complaints (Wales) Regulations were made under powers contained in the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003. The accompanying guidance set out the Government’s intention that the Regulations would be re-made following the enactment of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

It is my intention that we will begin that process next year and consult thoroughly with stakeholders as to what changes are needed to make the Regulations even more effective.

Julie Morgan AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services