

Jane Hutt AS/MS  
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol  
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

To:

Third Sector Partnership Council  
Wales Race Forum members  
Faith Communities Forum members  
Disability Equality Forum members  
Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights Steering Group members  
LGBTQ+ Expert Panel members  
Period Dignity Roundtable members  
Community Cohesion Officers

1 November 2021

Dear Friends

I remain very grateful to all of you for your ongoing support in our collective efforts during the pandemic. Together we have identified issues affecting our communities across Wales and, together, also identified and taken forward actions to both address these and mitigate the direct and indirect harms arising through the course of the pandemic. We have some way to go before we are clear of Covid 19 and I know that the Welsh Government can continue to rely on your ongoing help and support in the coming months.

We are all too aware that Covid 19 has not gone away. Unfortunately the situation in Wales is again growing increasingly serious. The number of cases of COVID-19 across Wales and the rest of the UK are increasing, in some areas rapidly. Confirmed cases here in Wales have exceeded 700 cases per 100,000 which is our highest ever recorded rate.

Whilst the link between cases of coronavirus and hospitalisations has been weakened by the vaccination programme, it is still there. Sustained high rates in the community will lead to increasing and unsustainable pressure on our NHS. Hospital bed and ICU occupancy as a result of COVID -19 is increasing in all our health boards. As of 18 October, over 700 COVID -19 related patients were occupying hospital beds, including 53 patients in critical care beds. This is against a background of non-COVID-19 urgent and emergency pressures comparable to that normally experienced by the NHS at the most difficult periods during the winter.

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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.

Wales currently remains at alert level zero which means all organisations are able to open as long as they put in place mitigations to minimise the spread of the virus.

It is absolutely critical organisations, and people using them, understand the nature and importance of these baseline measures as a means of making sure they will be able to stay open over the autumn and winter. The measures are clear and should now be well established. They include:

- Businesses, employers and other organisations must continue to undertake a specific coronavirus risk assessment and take reasonable measures to minimise exposure to, and the spread of, coronavirus.
- Adults and children aged 11 and over must continue to wear face-coverings in indoor public places, with the exception of hospitality settings such as restaurants, pubs, cafes or nightclubs.
- People should work from home wherever possible to help reduce the number of contacts between people.

The First Minister and the Welsh Government are very concerned about the many reports we hear that these simple measures are not being taken in an increasing number of places. In order to keep people safe, we are once again having to look at more difficult interventions to limit the spread of coronavirus in Wales. Interventions we would not wish to implement, if at all possible. While many businesses and organisations are continuing with important mitigations, voluntarily requiring the Covid-pass or proof of a negative test, and ensuring face coverings are worn, it is clear many others have returned to more 'business as usual' ways of operating which increases risks of contracting Covid 19 for everyone.

Our aim is to avoid having to close sectors, community centres, or reintroducing restrictions like social distancing or limits on the numbers of people that can meet. Nevertheless we cannot rule out more substantive measures at this stage. We now are in the position of having to consider a range of actions that we might have to bring forward if the current trends in numbers does not abate.

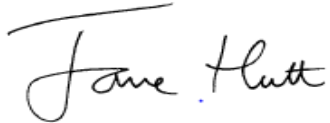
We recognise we need a concerted effort from all parts of Welsh society, including individuals, public and third sector partners along with businesses and other organisations operating across Wales to help bring the rates and pressures on our NHS down in order to avoid further restrictions being implemented.

I am therefore seeking your help and support in ensuring organisations and their members, as well as communities with whom you may work continue to be made aware of, and observe, these current important baseline measures. We really want to avoid reinstating legal restrictions on individuals, communities or organisations inconsistent with alert level zero if at all possible. These can only be avoided if baseline measures in place at level Zero are strictly adhered to. These measures are not onerous and provide protection for all of us from the virus. Any help you can provide in raising awareness and ensuring these measures are adhered to is very much appreciated.

The Welsh Government will maintain a focus on vaccination as our most effective defence – the aim remains to reach as many people as possible with the first, second and booster doses. To support these efforts and to ensure businesses and settings can stay open, it is clearly vital our communities, employees, volunteers and members of organisations are supported as well as encouraged to receive the vaccinations.

We remain very grateful for the support you provide in raising awareness of the impacts of Covid-19 and the actions that can be taken to mitigate them. I know we can trust in you to continue in your important leadership roles in helping to keep Wales safe and open.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first few letters.

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