

Via email



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

ATISN 14037

15 June 2020

Dear Cllr Etheridge,

ATISN 14037 – Care Groups

Thank you for your email received by Welsh Government on 19 May and we are responding to your following requests under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Following the recent announcement for staff employed in care home sector to receive £500:

Define what discussions and agreements are in place with Unite union, and the Independent Care Group and any minutes or decisions made by working groups here in Wales between the WAG, Local Authorities etc. that have been held with decisions reached.

We do hold information that falls into scope of your request but are withholding this under the following Freedom of Information exemptions:

- Section 35 - information relating to the formulation and development of government policy.

Further information regarding these exemptions can be found in annex 1 of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
CARDIFF,
CF10 3NQ
Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.
You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
CHESHIRE,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Any information released under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 will be listed in the Welsh Government's Disclosure Log (at <https://gov.wales/about/open-government/freedom-of-information/responses/?lang=en>).

Yours sincerely

Section 35: Formulation of Government Policy

The information captured by your request amounts to a meeting that took place on 14 May with stakeholders. A discussion paper was shared with the group prior to meeting and notes taken of that meeting. This information is only held for the purpose for formulation and development of policy. The policy for Welsh Government in this area is currently developing and evolving in response to changing circumstances and is therefore incomplete. It is likely that disclosure of this information would add uncertainty rather than clarity and would not aid in our effective delivery for staff employed in care home sector.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

The Covid-19 pandemic is the greatest public health threat to the World in a hundred years and has resulted in major changes to everybody's lifestyle as governments around the World try to control the outbreak and keep their citizens safe and healthy. We recognise that there is a very strong public interest in the public understanding the decisions and actions taken by the Welsh Government.

Staff employed in social care sector play a key role in management of the Covid-19 pandemic and in recognition. The Welsh Government recently announcement that staff employed in the care home sector will receive £500 in recognising of the work they do. Consequentially there is a very strong public interest in the understanding of how this will be implemented.

The Welsh Government has endeavoured to ensure we are as transparent as possible, in particular through the media, publication of documents, Ministerial Written Statements and public statements in the Senedd along with ministerial press conferences and interviews. We recognise that transparency and openness in the Welsh Government's policy-making process improves public trust, leading to greater compliance with the measures introduced to bring the outbreak under control and thus reducing the overall impact of the virus on the people of Wales.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding:

We consider that it is important for Welsh Government officials to be able to have a safe space to undertake key discussions with third parties freely and be able to formulate proposals with regard to how the detail of the payment. Disclosure of any early discussions etc. will not provide the clarity that the public require and could prejudice the formulation of future government policy going forward.

It is important that such plans and proposals are worked through and are in, at least, a near final state before being made public.