

First Witness Statement of Alwyn Jones
Current President of the Association of Directors of Social Services (“ADSS”) Cymru
15th September 2023

IN THE MATTER OF MODULE 2B OF
THE UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY REFERENCE FOR REQUEST –
M2B/ADASS/01

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF
ALWYN JONES
ON BEHALF OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES (“ADSS”) CYMRU

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Introduction

1. I am the current President of the Association of Directors of Social Services (“ADSS”) Cymru of Ty Antur, Abercynon, CF45 4SN. I took up this office in December 2022. My substantive role is Chief Officer, Social Care, Wrexham County Borough Council.
2. On 24 February 2023, the Lead Solicitor for Module 2B of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry (“the Inquiry”), wrote on behalf of Baroness Heather Hallett, the Inquiry Chair, with a draft request for documentation and witness evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 - Reference for Request - M2B-ADASS-01. I am grateful to the Inquiry for granting an extension to the deadline for the submission of my statement.
3. I am authorised by ADSS Cymru to make this statement on its behalf. While I have an overview of the work of ADSS Cymru, I do not have first-hand knowledge of everything that it does. Accordingly, in making this statement I have had to rely from time to time on information provided to me by its members. It is my belief they have diligently and fairly undertaken this task. My statement should therefore be read as representing a statement concerning the collective understanding and knowledge of ADSS Cymru for the period to which Module 2B refers.

A. Role, structure, people, and processes

4. ADSS Cymru is the national professional leadership organisation for social services in Wales. It seeks to represent the collective view of all twenty-two local authorities’ social services departments. It is a non-statutory, non-charitable, incorporated body.
5. Formerly a branch of the Association of Directors for Social Services UK, ADSS Cymru was established as an independent body on 1 April 2007. The change reflected legislative changes in England and the increasingly diverging political and legislative landscape in Wales.
6. ADSS Cymru works with the Welsh Government and other partners and stakeholders, including the Welsh Local Government Association, Social Care Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, NHS Wales, and independent and third sector organisations to ensure effective implementation of national policy. It has played, and continues to play, a pivotal role in the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and in the development of integrated working between the NHS and social care.

7. It aims to ensure children and adults in need experience well-being and achieve what matters to them by accessing the right care and support at the right time in their communities, and vulnerable children and adults are safeguarded.
8. ADSS Cymru comprises:
 - (i) Board of Directors
 - (ii) Leadership Group
 - (iii) All Wales Adults Service Heads
 - (iv) All Wales Heads of Children's Services
 - (v) A small secretariat.
9. As an organisation, ADSS Cymru does not have a statutory role or any statutory responsibilities. Its membership includes Directors of Social Services, which are statutory appointments by each of the 22 local authorities in Wales under Section 144 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It also includes the Heads of Adults and Children's Social Services, and business support. In Wales, the statutory director is responsible for both Adults and Children's Services.
10. ADSS Cymru has received grant funding from the Welsh Government annually since 2016. Through its heads of services and professional leadership groups, it has developed and implemented work programmes which help address the extremely challenging agenda of change in social care, assist in the transformation of health and social care, and improve outcomes through the effective implementation of new legislation. Its members provide experience and expertise covering all aspects of social services, which informs and influences legislation, policies and practice in the sector, and strategic decision-making.
11. The Board of Directors is responsible for all company-related matters. It meets every three months and consists of:
 - President
 - 2 Vice-Presidents

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Immediate Past President

12. The Leadership Group is the decision-making body for ADSS Cymru on all non-company related matters and is accountable for its work. The Group meets four times a year and consists of:

- 22 Directors of Social Services
- Chair of All Wales Heads of Children's Services
- Chair of All Wales Adult Services Heads
- Chief Executive of Social Care Wales
- Director of Social Services and Housing, Welsh Local Government Association

13. The members of the Board of Directors are also members of the Leadership Group.

14. The All-Wales Adults Service Heads Group consists of heads of adult services from all local authorities. It meets quarterly to discuss issues relevant to the effective delivery of services for adults, particularly older people, and the provision of domiciliary care and residential care.

15. The All-Wales Heads of Children's Services Group comprises heads of children's services from all local authorities. It meets quarterly, leading and advising on all aspects of children's services. The work of the Group is aligned to the work of the Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Children.

16. Both groups allow senior staff to share best practice and to consider how services are changing and need to change to meet the identified needs of the population. They formulate the ADSS Cymru response to policy consultations and articulate the voice of local authority professional leaders who deliver care and support.

17. The following table provides details of the key office holders of the Leadership Group and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the all-Wales Heads of Service Groups. The names of current office holders are provided together with, if different, the name(s) of office

holders during the period determined by the Inquiry for Module 2B, namely January 2020 to May 2022.

Office	Current Office Holder	Office Holder(s) January 2020 – May 2022
President	Alwyn Jones Chief Officer, Social Care, Wrexham County Borough Council	Sue Cooper (January 2020 – March 2020) Nicola Stubbins (March 2020 – March 2021) Jonathan Griffiths (March 2021 – December 2022)
Vice-President	Lance Carver Director of Social Services, Vale of Glamorgan Council	Nicola Stubbins (January 2020 – March 2020) Jonathan Griffiths (April 2020 – March 2021) Alison Bulman (April 2021 – March 2022) Alwyn Jones (April 2022 – May 2022)
Vice-President	Claire Marchant Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing, Bridgend County Borough Council	Alwyn Jones (April 2021 – March 2022) Lance Carver (April 2022 – May 2022)
Honorary Treasurer	Dave Street Corporate Director of Social services, Caerphilly County Borough Council	Dave Street
Honorary Secretary	Neil Ayling Chief Officer Social Services, Flintshire County Council	Neil Ayling

Office	Current Office Holder	Office Holder(s) January 2020 – May 2022
Immediate Past-President	Nicola Stubbins Corporate Director, Social Services and Education, Denbighshire County Council	Nicola Stubbins
Chair of the All-Wales Adults Service Heads Group	Jason Bennett Head of Adult Services and Vale Alliance	Gill Pratlett (January 2020 – March 2021) Claire Higgins (April 2021- July 2022)
Vice-Chair of the All-Wales Adults Service Heads Group	Jackie Davies Head of Adult Social Care, Bridgend County Borough Council	Claire Higgins (January 2020 – March 2021) Jason Bennett (April 2021 - July 2022)
Chair of the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services Group	Jan Coles Head of Service: Children and Families	Marianne Parry Hughes (January 2020 – March 2021) Annabel Lloyd (April 2021 – May 2022)
Vice-Chair of the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services Group	Taryn Stephens Head of Children's Social Services, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Annabel Lloyd (January 2020 – March 2021) Jan Coles (April 2021 - May 2022)

18. The President of ADSS Cymru led the engagement with the Welsh Government. For the significant part of the period January 2020 to May 2020, this was Nicola Stubbins.
19. Practice Solutions Ltd. is contracted by ADSS Cymru to manage its Business Unit. The objectives of its data retention policy are compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and best practice, maintaining data in a way which facilitates legal and audit requirements, protecting the rights of its employees, associates and clients, and operational efficiency. Data retention periods are based on data classification and legal or regulatory requirements [AJ/93 – INQ000273685]. Microsoft Office 365 is the standard suite of operating software with cloud-based storage of data. The ADSS Cymru Business Unit has its own channels and folders on Microsoft Teams, which are

used to store documents prepared in the course of its business e.g., papers of its Leadership Group, documents and reports. Folder access permissions are managed by Practice Solution's administration team. Staff in the Business Unit have dedicated ADSS Cymru email address to conduct business. Officer-holders of ADSS Cymru use their own local authority email address to conduct ADSS business given the interrelationship between national and local, policy and operational, matters in social care. Each local authority has their own data retention policy which officers are required to comply with.

20. The ADSS Cymru Business Unit does not routinely retain copies of documents produced by other organisations e.g. the agendas and minutes of meetings organised by the Welsh Government.

B. Liaison and communication with the Welsh Government

21. Prior to the pandemic, there were regular, formal, meetings between ADSS Cymru and Welsh Government officials and Welsh Ministers. Discussions covered all matters relevant to social care with a particular focus on the challenges, opportunities and developments affecting the delivery of services. As the national professional leadership organisation, one of ADSS Cymru's strategic priorities is to engage with the Welsh Government to ensure the voice of senior leaders is heard in policy discussions, the development of legislation, budget setting, and matters relating to the workforce and organisational development.

22. The liaison included:

- Quarterly meetings between the President and Vice President of ADSS Cymru and the Deputy Minister for Social Services
- Quarterly meetings between the Head of the ADSS Cymru Business Unit and the Welsh Government's Director of Social Services
- Directors of Social Services, on behalf of ADSS Cymru, working with officials as members of a variety of advisory and task and finish groups for the development of policies, legislation, strategies, and guidance.
- Occasional direct contact between the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services Group and Welsh Government officials.

23. ADSS Cymru has enjoyed a close working relationship with the Welsh Government for many years. Over and above the means of working described above, ADSS Cymru has well-established access to officials at all levels, which results in frequent dialogue via small meetings or one-to-one discussions. The working relationship has benefits for both ADSS Cymru and the membership it serves, and the Welsh Government.
24. In the period between January 2020 and May 2022, liaison with the Welsh Government intensified. Meetings were considerably more frequent, and the level of email correspondence was considerably greater. The working arrangements were not set out in any specific concordat or guidance. The arrangements were a natural extension of an existing strong working relationship.
25. The first prime contact about the pandemic was in early February 2020. On 14 February 2020, Albert Heaney, Deputy Director General, Health and Social Services Group, emailed Sue Cooper, the then President of ADSS Cymru thanking her for discussion about preparations for responding to Covid-19 [AJ/01-INQ000183653]. He asked ADSS Cymru to nominate a lead Director of Social Services to work with the Welsh Government. Nicola Stubbins, who took over as President of ADSS Cymru shortly afterwards in March 2020, was nominated.
26. The Welsh Government did not at that point in time ask ADSS Cymru to provide any information or research on the potential impact of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (“NPIs”) on at-risk and vulnerable groups including those with a protected characteristic. The discussion was about the Welsh Government’s plan to publish a specific advice note for the social care sector about Covid-19. The note would include guidance concerning the virus including work arrangements if people have recently returned from specified countries, advice on preventing the spread of respiratory viruses, when self-isolation may be appropriate, and the necessary work arrangements if this applies.
27. The Inquiry asked about key meetings with the Welsh Government. I consider the key meetings to be:
- (i) The weekly (online) meeting between Nicola Stubbins, Corporate Director, Social Services and Education, Denbighshire County Council, and President of ADSS Cymru and Albert Heaney, Deputy Director General, Health

and Social Services Group in the Welsh Government, or one of his Deputy Directors.

- (ii) The National Health and Social Services Covid-19 Planning and Response Group and its sub-group for social care. ADSS Cymru was represented at both by Nicola Stubbins and Alison Bulman, Director of Social Services for Powys and, for part of the period defined in Module 2B, ADSS Cymru Vice- President.
- (iii) Occasional meetings with Welsh Ministers, some of which were combined with the weekly meetings.
- (iv) After April 2021, the Social Care Recovery Group, the purpose of which was the develop a plan for the sector. This group evolved from the sub-group mentioned in “(ii)” above. ADSS Cymru was invited to be a member.

28. The arrangements for setting agendas and for records of the different types of meetings varied. I explain the main differences in the following paragraphs.

29. The weekly meetings with the Welsh Government in 25(i) above focused on a review of the previous week and a forward look with horizon scanning. They were informal in nature, with no agenda other than perhaps an email exchange in advance highlighting matters to be discussed [AJ/02 – INQ000183654]. No minutes were produced. The ADSS Cymru representative(s) made contemporaneous notes on some matters as an aid to providing feedback to members at the weekly Covid-19 Leadership Group or via email [examples: AJ/03 – INQ000183655; AJ/04 – INQ000183656; AJ/05 – INQ000183657].

30. ADSS Cymru established a Covid-19 Leadership Group, chaired by its then President, Nicola Stubbins. It met for the first time on 24 March 2020. Meetings were weekly until June and fortnightly or monthly from July to December. Weekly meetings recommenced in January 2021 and fortnightly in February and March 2021, which reflected another peak in Covid-19. Between April and May 2022, the pre-pandemic quarterly meetings of ADSS Cymru’s Leadership Group resumed.

31. The Group met a few days before each weekly meeting with the Welsh Government, thus allowing ADSS Cymru to gather views from the field to inform discussions with officials and the agenda [example of notes: AJ/6 – INQ000183658]. After meetings with Welsh Government officials, feedback was provided to members via email, creating a cycle of two-way flows of information and exchange of views [AJ/07 – INQ000183659]. The Group was also a key channel for ADSS Cymru to disseminate information to its members between meetings when information was received from the Welsh Government or from other stakeholders.
32. The regular meetings between ADSS Cymru and Welsh Government officials in paragraph 27 (i) were pivotal to liaison with the Welsh Government. The frequency of meetings tended to reflect the curve of the pandemic, with periods when meetings took place 2-3 times a week and weekly or less at other times. The regular meetings were supplemented by frequent, ad-hoc, email and telephone contacts [AJ/08 – INQ000183660; AJ/09 – INQ000183661; AJ/09a – INQ000183662; AJ/09b – INQ000183663].
33. The National Health and Social Services Covid-19 Planning and Response Group and its sub-group for social care, and the Social Care Recovery Group (points 25(ii) and 25(iv) refer) were run by the Welsh Government. ADSS Cymru does not hold all the agendas and minutes, which would be held by the Welsh Government. However, I can offer an example of each [AJ/10 – INQ000183664; AJ/11 – INQ000183665]. The ADSS Cymru representative(s) on the Group provided feedback to colleagues e.g. via the Covid-19 Leadership Group [AJ/12 – INQ000183666].
34. For meetings attended by a Minister or Deputy Minister (point 25(iii) refers) and for examples of meetings listed in the following paragraph, it is my understanding officials would have prepared an agenda for briefing purposes and made notes of the meeting and/or the action points.
35. Examples of meetings with Ministers include:
- 19 March 2020: Health and Social Care Minister (joined a meeting with the Welsh Local Government Association).
 - 30 April 2020: Deputy Minister for Social Care.

- 7 October 2020: First Minister meeting with the care home sector.
 - 3 March 2021: Ministerial event, Children and Young People.
36. In the early days of the pandemic, discussion was often determined by the rapidly changing circumstances around Covid-19, the immediate action required, and planning and preparation for future action which would, or could be necessary. However, officials were open to other matters being discussed and these would be collated by Nicola Stubbins after discussion with Directors of Social Services at the ADSS Cymru Leadership Group and passed on to the Welsh Government for the weekly meeting, which took place a couple of days after the Leadership Group.
37. ADSS Cymru's role in meetings with the Welsh Government multi-faceted. Key features were:
- Open and frank discussion and exchange of information and views on Covid-19 and its impact, and plans and developments, including legislation.
 - Raising important matters on behalf of its members on the front line of managing local responses to the pandemic and delivering services to people in need of care and support, which would have included vulnerable people and people with protected characteristics.
 - Providing feedback on matters on which the Welsh Government had asked ADSS Cymru to comment.
 - Professional advice and/or a viewpoint on further action to respond to the pandemic.
38. Discussion at the meetings was supplemented by frequent email correspondence from the Welsh Government advising ADSS Cymru in advance of developments and often requesting views and comments [AJ/13 – INQ000183667; AJ/13a – INQ000183668; AJ/14 – INQ000183669; AJ/14a – INQ000183670].
39. Social services have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare and wellbeing of vulnerable adults and children. They exist to help adults and children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to support themselves or in need of extra support. This includes individuals with and without protected characteristics. Similarly,

the social care workforce includes individuals with protected characteristics e.g. with a disability or from an minority ethnic background. For this reason, many discussions between representatives of ADSS Cymru and Welsh Government officials will have included some reference to at-risk and vulnerable groups on a variety of matters including, but not limited to, PPE, vaccinations, and service and support delivery during lockdowns. I do not have a record of those discussions and therefore I am not able to provide a chronology. While I am unable to recall all such discussions and thus provide a chronological list, my statement does include significant examples of interaction with the Welsh Government about vulnerable individuals.

40. I understand Welsh Government officials produced notes of meetings of the National Planning and Response Group and the social care sub-group, although I am unable to say whether notes were produced for every meeting. The notes were primarily a list of action points [AJ/15 – INQ000183671]. These were circulated to members of the Group. Discussions did on occasions reflect differences in opinion or concerns e.g. the provision of, and access to, PPE [AJ/16 – INQ000183672; AJ/17 – INQ000183673]. Such issues would often be followed up in correspondence or further discussion. I cannot recall any disagreement being recorded in the notes of meetings.
41. In the period January 2020 to May 2022, ADSS Cymru contributed to four Senedd committees which held meetings and took evidence. Written evidence was submitted in advance of three of the meetings:
 - (i) Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, 9 December 2020 [written evidence: AJ/18 – INQ000183674; agenda: AJ/19 – INQ000183675; minutes: AJ/20 – INQ000183676]; transcript: AJ/61 – INQ000273640]
 - (ii) Health and Social Care Committee, 10 February 2022 [written evidence: AJ/21 – INQ000183677; agenda: AJ/22 – INQ000183678; minutes: AJ/23 – INQ000183679]; transcript: AJ/62 – INQ000273641]
 - (iii) Children, Young People and Education Committee, 18 May 2020
[written evidence: AJ/24 – INQ000183680; agenda: AJ/25 – INQ000183681; minutes: AJ/26 – INQ000183682]; transcript: AJ/63 – INQ000273642]
 - (iv) Children, Young People and Education Committee, 18 March 2021
[agenda: AJ/27- INQ000183683; minutes: AJ/28 – INQ000183684];

42. At the request of the Chair of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, attendance at its meeting on 9 December 2020 was followed by the submission of an explanatory note as supplementary written evidence on 7 January 2021 [AJ/29 - INQ000183685]. The letter clarified points raised by Members of the Senedd during the evidence session on hospital discharge, weekly staff testing, and the collection and availability of data.
43. The Welsh Government sought ADSS Cymru's views on plans for a formal lockdown in Wales for 4-6 weeks from 28 December 2020, whether action should be taken before Christmas, and what support would be needed. On 11 December 2020, Nicola Stubbins wrote to Albert Heaney to express concerns about the impact of the increasing prevalence of Covid-19 on the social care system, expressing ADSS Cymru's professional opinion that urgent interruption of transmission was necessary to prevent further widespread community transmission [AJ/30 - INQ000183686]. I am not aware of a written response from the Welsh Government.
44. I do not recall precisely when the Welsh Government asked for ADSS Cymru's views on plans for a formal lockdown. However, on 9 December, Alison Bulman had written to Albert Heaney with feedback after a meeting of the ADSS Cymru Leadership Group, thus indicating plans had been shared before this date. The email reflected thoughts there was general support for further action from 28 December and highlighted some key issues [AJ/65 – INQ000273644].
45. On 19 December, Nicola Stubbins received a telephone call from Albert Heaney to say that the Welsh Government intended to impose a full lockdown, which could start that night if the regulations could be passed in time or if not, the following day. It also referred to changes to rules for Christmas. The main changes expressed to colleagues by Nicola Stubbins were the impact on informal carers and on children who had arrangements to see family on the other days of the Christmas relaxation (of rules) [AJ/66 – INQ000273645].
46. ADSS Cymru had previously been consulted on the relaxation of Covid-19 related restrictions. For example, on 8 December, the Welsh Government asked for ADSS Cymru's views on information in respect of Supported Living accommodation, which houses vulnerable people [AJ/67 – INQ000273646]. Shortly after this, on 11 December, the Welsh Government had sought ADSS Cymru's views on hospital discharge and the duration of outbreaks in care homes. The views of ADSS Cymru colleagues were

sought and feedback provided to the Welsh Government [AJ/68 – INQ000273647]; [AJ/69 – INQ000273651]; [AJ/70– INQ000273652]; [AJ/71– INQ000273653]; [AJ/72 – INQ000273654]; AJ/73 – INQ000273655].

47. I am unable to comment on all the occasions when the Welsh Government sought the advice of ADSS Cymru on matters relating to the UK Government. However, by way of an example, I can confirm that on 9 April 2020, the Welsh Government provided information on changes being considered by the UK Government's Department for Health and Social Care to guidance on the Mental Capacity Act 2020 and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards during the pandemic together with the means of commenting via an email address [AJ/31 - INQ000183687]. ADSS Cymru also corresponded with the Welsh Government officials about the UK Coronavirus Bill [AJ/32 – INQ000183688].
48. Some policy developments by the UK Government in England were developed slightly ahead of Wales. On such occasions, it was common for Welsh Government officials to ask for the views of ADSS Cymru on a policy and its application. One such example was about the definition of vulnerable children. In March 2020, after the UK Government had announced its definition of vulnerable children, the Welsh Government adapted the definition for Wales and sought the views of ADSS Cymru. ADSS Cymru advised the Welsh Government to remove the reference to those with statements of special educational needs [AJ/33 – INQ000183689]. This was because many children who have such statements are for learning needs, which are not critical, and those with complex needs will already be supported elsewhere. ADSS Cymru's concern was that Children's Services would be inundated if additional learning needs was included. I cannot recall if the Welsh Government took the advice and made the suggested amendment.

C. ADSS Cymru's work relating to the Welsh Government's response to Covid-19

49. Over the course of the pandemic, ADSS Cymru liaised with numerous organisations. Key ones included Social Care Wales on matters related to the workforce, with Care Inspectorate Wales on inspections, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, and the Welsh Local Government Association on a variety of issues, including PPE, testing, and funding for local authorities and for care providers.
50. The Welsh Government commissioned ADSS Cymru to undertake research into the impact of Covid-19 on several groups of vulnerable people. I address this under part G.

51. I believe ADSS Cymru made a significant contribution to the Welsh Government's decision making over the course of the pandemic. I provide examples in the following paragraphs and under sections "E" and "F."
52. On 23 March 2020, the Welsh Government asked ADSS Cymru for advice and agreement on communications for signposting safeguarding approaches. [AJ/34 - INQ000183690; AJ/34a - INQ000183691; AJ/34b - INQ000183692; AJ/34c - INQ000183693]. On 24 March, the Welsh Government confirmed it has adjusted the wording on documents because of ADSS Cymru's feedback [AJ/35 - INQ000183694; AJ/35a - INQ000183695; AJ/35b - INQ000183696; AJ/35c - INQ000183697].
53. ADSS Cymru also contributed to the rapid review of the social care provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020. In its letter of 22 January 2021 [AJ/36 - INQ000183698], the Welsh Government reflected comments it had received on how the pandemic impacted on individuals, unpaid carers, and families, and on people's rights. It also recognised comments about the impact of wider national measures such as social distancing, lockdown and shielding resulting in the cancellation of visiting to care homes and supported living accommodation. The letter explained the Deputy Minister for Social Care noted the majority of responses were in favour of suspending the social care provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and had asked officials to prepare the necessary legislation to suspend the modifications to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
54. As part of its national leadership role, ADSS Cymru and its members prepared a Prioritisation Framework for Children's Services to assist in the planning and implementation of local action. Early contact was made to seek the views of Welsh Government officials who responded with some suggestions. [AJ/37 - INQ000183699; examples of correspondence AJ/38 - INQ000183700; AJ/39 - INQ000183701; AJ/40 - INQ000183702].
55. Guidance and briefing for the Welsh Government took many forms including discussions in scheduled and ad-hoc meetings and telephone calls of the type illustrated in paragraphs 27 and 32. I do not know of every such occasion when the then officers of ADSS Cymru provided such guidance or briefings. However, drawing on the records of the ADSS Cymru Business Unit, I can furnish the Inquiry with examples of information provided to the Welsh Government. Documents are set out in

the table below.

Date	Subject	Exhibit Ref:	INQ Ref:
March 2020	Brexit preparedness sheet -example of contact arrangements om Powys	AJ/74	INQ000273656
April 2020	Response Proforma - Rapid Engagement	AJ/75	INQ000273657
April 2020	PPE Decision making tree and Risk Assessment	AJ/76	INQ000273658
April 2020	ADSSC response to the Welsh Government re PPE	AJ/77	INQ000273660
April 2020	Email to Welsh Government re Care at home	AJ/78	INQ000273661
April 2020	ADSSC Report - Rebalancing Care for Adults	AJ/79	INQ000273663
April 2020	Email string with comments on discharge guidance	AJ/80	INQ000273664
June 2020	Support for commissioned providers	AJ/81	INQ000273665
July 2020	ADSSC response to Rapid Review of Care Homes	AJ/82	INQ000273669
July 2020	Email to Welsh Government with ADSSC documents	AJ/83	INQ000273670
July 2020	Guidance for Workers Visits Policy	AJ/84	INQ000273674
July 2020	PPE Decision making tree and Risk Assessment	AJ/85	INQ000273675
August 2020	Support for Commissioned Guidance Webinar FAQs	AJ/86	INQ000273677
November 2020	Response proforma - Rapid engagement Coronavirus Act.	AJ/87	INQ000273678
January 2021	ADSSC Response to consultation on National Carers Plan 2021.	AJ/88	INQ000273679
May 2021	Day Service Matrix - Information requested by the Welsh Government	AJ/89	INQ000273680

Date	Subject	Exhibit Ref:	INQ Ref:
June 2021	Rebalancing Care and Support - response to Welsh Government White Paper	AJ/90	INQ000273682
September 2021	Letter to Welsh Government re System pressures	AJ/91	INQ000273683
November 2021	ADSSC Position statement - Key action required for sustainable social care	AJ/92	INQ000273684

56. I am aware of some broad differences in the approaches taken by the Welsh Government and the UK Government e.g. lockdowns, hospital discharge guidance, and the childcare offer. I cannot say whether the difficulties and challenges of delivering services caused by Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions such as lockdowns and local restrictions were due to differences in the approaches or simply the effect of such measures on individuals who needed care and support and on how, if at all, services could be delivered.

D. Data on the impact of Covid-19 on at-risk and vulnerable groups including those with a protected characteristic

57. I understand there was a Technical Advisory sub-group of the National Planning and Response Group. ADSS Cymru was largely a recipient of modelling and scenario data from, for example, the Welsh Government and the NHS Wales Delivery Unit Analytical Team.
58. The Welsh Government required local authorities to provide data. For example, on 15 April 2020, the Welsh Government asked ADSS Cymru to cascade a request for a template to be completed with information for use in modelling surge capacity in social care [AJ/41 – INQ000183703; AJ/41a – INQ000183704; AJ/41b – INQ000183705; AJ/41c – INQ000183706; AJ/41d – INQ000183707; AJ/41e – INQ000183708; AJ/41f – INQ000183709; AJ/42 – INQ000183710]. On 16 April 2020, an email from the Welsh Government asked Heads of Adult services in local authorities to complete a questionnaire and explains a Social Care data workstream had been set up [AJ/43 – INQ000183711; AJ/43a – INQ000183712].
59. In May 2020, ADSS Cymru's members expressed concern about the volume of data

local authorities were being asked to produce on a weekly basis. However, the Welsh Government insisted on the need for data to be provided. This was discussed further, explaining that local authorities were not being unhelpful, but needed to be convinced of its usefulness at a time when capacity was precious with the need to prioritise resources [AJ/44 - INQ000183713]. I cannot recall any reduction in the data requirements as a result.

60. I do not recall all requests to ADSS Cymru for surveys. However, I can provide an example of a response to a request from an analysis of conditions in the social care market post-Covid-19 [AJ/45 - INQ000183714].
61. The level of information available regarding transmission and mortality rates on ethnic minority groups and those with protected characteristics was insufficient to be able to make reasonable judgements. Although there was some local intelligence on deaths in care homes, I am not aware of any data sources locally that detail this information. Data was available from different sources e.g. Office for National Statistics, Public Health Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales for deaths in care homes, but because there were differences in the numbers, it raised questions on what the data was telling us. This, and the lack of a 'whole system' approach to hospital discharge data, was behind the "paucity of data" point ADSS Cymru gave in evidence to the Senedd's Health, Social Care and Support Committee in December 2020.
62. Local authorities knew some groups within the population e.g., the frail elderly in care homes, were at risk from Covid-19 but relied on Public Health Wales for the scientific advice on who i.e. which groups of people, with or without protected characteristics, were most at risk from the virus and therefore where the potential impacts were greatest. Local authorities used data they received about vulnerable groups and information on people who were shielding to take appropriate steps. Staff from across local authorities and volunteers reached out into communities with help for vulnerable people e.g., with collecting medication and for shopping.
63. I believe that the consideration of data gaps was driven by our colleagues in Health. Therefore, as an organisation that focuses on the delivery of social care services, we are unable to comment on whether adequate steps were taken regarding gaps in data.
64. I am unable to provide detailed information about the group which considered death rates. ADSS Cymru does not hold the information and despite best

endeavours, the information has not been provided.

E. Public health communications and public confidence

65. The close working relationship between ADSS Cymru and the Welsh Government provided a channel for information to be received, in advance on occasions, about public communications on measures taken to respond to Covid-19. On some matters, the communication would be direct to ADSS Cymru. On others, ADSS Cymru would be a "cc" recipient. Communication included a variety of methods e.g. via the regular liaison meetings, ad-hoc meetings, emails, and telephone calls.
66. On a small number of occasions, ADSS Cymru had concerns about, or offered a different view to, information received. While the following example is not a Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention, it illustrates a difference of opinion and a resolution.
67. In February 2021, ADSS Cymru received a jointly signed letter from Albert Heaney, Deputy Director General, Health and Social Services Group for the Welsh Government and Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer (dated 2 February 2021) about vaccination. Concerns were raised about some of the wording in the letter and the definition of front-line staff for prioritisation for vaccination [AJ/46 - INQ000183715]. The concerns were escalated, and a meeting held between ADSS Cymru, the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales where the role of front-line social care workers was explained and how they were exposed if they did the job they were required to do. After the meeting, the letter was amended, and re-issued on 4 February 2021 [AJ/47 – INQ000183716; AJ/47a – INQ000183717; AJ/47b – INQ000183718; AJ/47c – INQ000183719; AJ/48 - INQ000183720]. The case put forward for foster carers to be included as part of the front-line social care workforce was not accepted, and they were excluded. I understand the reason given was that foster carers were not considered to be "staff".

F. The public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations

68. From February 2020, ADSS Cymru's Business Unit provided fortnightly bulletins to the social care sector, later becoming weekly. The circulation included Heads of Children's Services, Heads of Adult Services, and care providers. The bulletins [examples: AJ/49 - INQ000183721; AJ/50 - INQ000183722; AJ/50a – INQ000183723; AJ/50b – INQ000183725; AJ/50c – INQ000183726; AJ/50d – INQ000183727; AJ/50e – INQ000183729; AJ/50f – INQ000183731; AJ/50g – INQ000183733] were drafted in

partnership with, and with contributions from, other stakeholders e.g. the Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales, Social Care Wales, and Health Education and Improvement Wales, all of whom also received a copy of the bulletins. ADSS Cymru was the point of contact for those receiving the bulletin in case of queries.

69. The bulletins contained links to current Welsh Government guidance, statements by Welsh Ministers on matters relating to their response to the pandemic e.g. economic support, travel restrictions, minimising risks in the workplace and the vaccination programme. They also included updates from the partner organisations and links to areas of work which they were leading.
70. The bulletins were routinely shared with the Communications Team in the Welsh Government who acted as the principal link for this area of work. I do not know if Welsh Government officials shared the bulletins with Welsh Ministers.
71. By their very nature, social services work with at risk and vulnerable groups including those with a protected characteristic. In considering groups with protected characteristics, I include members of the social care workforce from minority ethnic groups. The following are examples of occasions when the Welsh Government sought ADSS Cymru's advice or views on such matters:
 - On 17 March 2020, a request for information about maintaining food and supplies including specialist dietary supplies and prescription medicines for vulnerable people who are in receipt of care and support [AJ/51 - INQ000183737].
 - On 30 March 2020, ADSS Cymru responded to a request from the Welsh Government for comments on guidance to be issued on Frequently Asked Questions for support and provision available to vulnerable children and their families [AJ/52 - INQ000183738; AJ/52a – INQ000183739].
 - On 30 April 2020, after the definition of vulnerable children had been updated, the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services group was asked to comment on a revised set of Frequently Asked Questions and did so on 5 May 2020 [AJ/53 – INQ000183740; AJ/53a – INQ000183741; AJ/53b – INQ000183742; AJ/53c – INQ000183743; AJ/53d – INQ000183744; AJ/54 - INQ000183745; AJ/55 - INQ000183743].

- On 4 May 2020, the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services group was invited to become a member of an advisory group to the Welsh Government on its response to ensuring the support and safety of vulnerable children and young people during the current Covid-19 crisis [AJ/56 – INQ000183746].
72. The Welsh Government responded to ADSS Cymru's concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on workers from minority ethnic groups, explaining urgent work was being undertaken to address this and confirming a suggested amendment to remove a reference to PPE from a workforce statement had been accepted [AJ/57 – INQ000183747]. ADSS Cymru was represented on the First Minister's Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Covid-19 Advisory Group [AJ/58 – INQ000183748].
73. I am unable to provide information about when concerns were first raised with the Welsh Government. ADSS Cymru does not hold the information on the impact of Covid-19 on workers from minority ethnic backgrounds and despite best endeavors, the information has not been provided.
74. The role played by ADSS Cymru and the contribution it made to the Welsh Government's response to Covid-19 is further evidenced by the following example of communication:
- In the ADSS Cymru Covid-19 Leadership Group meeting on 19 May 2020, the President relayed a message from Albert Heaney, the Welsh Government's Deputy Director General, Health and Social Services Group. He thanked ADSS Cymru and said how he has appreciated the connectivity with it, people attending working groups at short notice, and being the "litmus test" for emerging issues [AJ/59 - INQ000183749].
75. I cannot say whether briefings and advice provided by ADSS Cymru members to Welsh Government officials were shared or discussed with the First Minister and/or Welsh Cabinet Ministers. However, the views of ADSS Cymru would have been heard first-hand on the occasions the Deputy Minister for Social Care joined the weekly meeting between ADSS Cymru and the Welsh Government.

G. Lessons learned

76. The strength of the pre-pandemic working relationship with Welsh Government officials and Ministers was the foundation for an open and effective working relationship over the course of the pandemic when all organisations were tested on their ability to respond to unprecedented challenges. It underpinned the need for a substantially increased level of liaison and communication.
77. The strength of local, regional, and national working was highlighted as one of the positives in a lessons learned exercise undertaken by ADSS Cymru with members in local authorities from all parts of Wales.
78. The strong working relationship with the Welsh Government enabled ADSS Cymru to play an important part in the response to Covid-19, making numerous contributions to developments and their implementation. Individual ADSS Cymru members were stretched, given they were playing a role nationally as well as delivering locally in their day-to-day roles as senior officers in local authorities.
79. Synchronising the weekly meetings of the ADSS Cymru Covid-19 Leadership Group with the weekly meetings with the Director of Social Care in the Welsh Government was an effective mechanism for making representations, for providing professional advice and support to the Welsh Government, and as a channel for the effective dissemination of information to the field.
80. In March 2021, the Welsh Government commissioned ADSS Cymru to undertake a review to explore the impact of the pandemic on several vulnerable groups and to consider what could be learnt from social services' response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The aim was to use learning to support service recovery, to consider the longer-term implications of any such learning on service development, and to learn lessons for use in future civil contingencies.
81. The project gathered evidence of the impact of the pandemic on people who use day opportunities, respite and overnight stay services, their families, and unpaid carers to understand how it affected their wellbeing and the delivery of services to inform service providers and commissioners. The target population groups were people with disabilities and sensory impairments, people with learning disabilities, people with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders, and children with complex needs.
82. ADSS Cymru published its report "The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Day

Services, Respite Care and Short Stay Placements" in July 2021 [AJ/60 - INQ000183750].

I, Alwyn Jones, declare that the contents of this my statement are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed

PD

Dated. 15th September 2023