



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**        **Rapid Review of the Welsh Government's Support for the Legal Sector in Wales**

**DATE**        **22 July 2019**

**BY**            **Jeremy Miles AM, Counsel General and Brexit Minister**

At the beginning of the year, in collaboration with the Minister for Economy and Transport, I launched a rapid review of the Welsh Government's support for the legal sector in Wales. I am pleased to be able to tell members that the review is now complete and the report is being finalised for publication. I will make it available for Members as soon as practicable. I would like to place on record my gratitude to Tony Williams of Jomati Consultants LLP and his team for carrying out the review.

The review was instigated as part of the consideration of a number of inter-related issues both by the Government and the Commission on Justice in Wales. The findings of the review are being shared with the Commission and I hope they will inform their consideration of the future of the justice system in Wales.

The review has been wide ranging, considering among other matters the further development of commercial law activities, the importance of the bar, innovation in light of developments in technology, the impact of public procurement and the potential implications of the creation of a Welsh legal jurisdiction. The short timescale for the review and its broad terms of reference have, however, inevitably meant there are some areas in which it has not been possible for the consultants to provide firm recommendations. This is particularly the case in relation to how lawyers play such a vital role in providing legal services in local communities, and how we can build on emerging good practice in offering legal apprenticeships. I will be giving further thought to these issues.

We will need to consider the findings of the review in detail, together with the recommendations of the Justice Commission, before providing a more detailed response. However, it is clear to me from my initial consideration there are some immediate actions we can take to help support the legal sector.

Whilst the report concluded the purchasing power of the Welsh Government was unlikely to have more than a marginal effect on the sector, it did make recommendations for improving

the way in which we procure legal advice especially from the Bar. I have asked officials in the Legal Services Department to review the arrangements for determining the make-up of our panel of counsel with the aim of making greater use of locally based barristers so as to support the development and capability of the Welsh bar.

The report also outlines how we can encourage inward investment. Of interest in particular are certain recommendations concerning the 'nearshoring' of multi-disciplinary service centres for legal and other firms. We appreciate service centres do not necessarily help the resilience of the legal sector because nearshorers operate remotely, serving global businesses. But we see value in such inward investment providing more vibrant employment market opportunities which could help to retain more of our legal talent in Wales. Officials in the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group are considering how best we can engage with the sector at both official and Ministerial levels to develop opportunities in this area.

There is clearly much more work to do. I am determined that we should do all we can to encourage a vibrant and sustainable legal sector capable of meeting the demands of today as well as preparing for the requirements of a potential future Welsh jurisdiction. Once we have been able to consider the report fully, together with the recommendations of the Justice Commission, I will provide Members with more information about how we are taking this work forward.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.