

28 September 2026

Dear

ATISN 27436 - Gender Services

Thank you for your request to Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 29th of August 2026, relating to Gender Services.

You requested the following information:

- 1. All correspondence between Natasha Asghar MS and Welsh Government ministers or officials concerning:*
 - the Welsh Gender Service;*
 - gender-affirming surgery;*
 - surgical referral rates;*
 - referral appropriateness; or*
 - proposals for review, restriction or suspension of services.*
- 2. Copies of any briefing documents, advice, analysis or submissions prepared in response to representations made by Natasha Asghar MS concerning the Welsh Gender Service.*
- 3. Any recorded information identifying when Welsh Government officials first became aware of concerns regarding:*
 - WGS surgical referral rates; or*
 - WGS referral appropriateness.*
- 4. Any recorded information identifying the source of those concerns.*
- 5. Any correspondence between Welsh Government and NHS Wales concerning the decision to pause gender-affirming surgical referrals, assessments or scheduled surgeries.*

Our Response

- 1 a) Please see a link to WQ100405 answered by Cabinet Minister for Health and Care 11/09/2026

[Written Question - WQ100405 - Welsh Parliament](#)

b) A reply to Natasha Asghar MS from Cabinet Minister for Health and Care on Welsh Gender Service is attached

2 The Welsh Government does hold information that falls within the scope of your request. However, this information is being withheld under the following provisions of the FOI Act: Section 35(1)(a) (Formulation of Government Policy)

An explanation of the use of these exemptions is provided at Annex 1 attached.

3 The Welsh Government was informed by the NWJCC on 18/08/2026 that concerns were being discussed at the Quality Safety and Outcomes meeting on 24/08/2026. On

25/08/2026, officials were informed of the outcome of the Committee meeting by the NWJCC. The information relating to the decision has now been published by the NWJCC.

4. The Welsh Government does not have a role in the NWJCC escalation process. The NWJCC has made available information detailing the sources of the concerns on the [NWJCC](#) and [Cardiff University Health Board](#) webpages.

5 Whilst the Welsh Government was informed by the NWJCC of the decision, the Welsh Government does not have a role in this clinical government process. The Welsh Government does hold information that falls within the scope of your request. However, this information is being withheld under the following provisions of the FOI Act: Section 35(1)(a) (Formulation of Government Policy)

An explanation of the use of these exemptions is provided at Annex 1 attached.

Next Steps

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
or 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.

Yours sincerely,

Annex 1

Engagement of Exemptions

When considering the release of information captured by a request we are required to consider the potential effects of disclosure of the information to the wider world. This is because information released in response to a Fol request is released to the world, not just to the person submitting the request. As such we need to take into account how any other individual may use, or misuse, the information if it is placed into the wider public domain. So whilst the request may have a legitimate, and benign, interest in accessing the requested information, we could conclude that the risk that the information could be misused by others is more compelling and thus the information should be withheld.

S35(1)(a) formulation of government policy

Section 35(1)(a) covers any information relating to the formulation or development of government policy. The information requested is information generated to inform the formulation of policies with regards to gender identity services in Wales.

As this is a 'live' issue, we are of the view that the s35(1)(a) exemption is engaged by the information captured by this request.

The use of section 35(1)(a) is subject to a public interest test.

Public interest arguments in favour of release:

We understand that formulation or development of government policy with regards to gender identity services in Wales is of interest to the general public. It is important that public service activities carried out are appropriately transparent to provide assurance to citizens.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding:

We take the view that the section 35(1)(a) is intended to ensure that the possibility of public exposure does not deter from full, candid and proper deliberation of policy formulation and development, including the exploration of all options.

The withheld information relates to Welsh Government policy views on gender identity services in Wales. As part of the formulation of this, we are heavily reliant on Government officials being able to provide advice and exchange views in an open way, exploring various options as part of the normal working process. Officials need to be able to think through and discuss all the implications of different options, be able to undertake rigorous and candid assessments in the knowledge that if different outcomes or conclusions are finally agreed, these assessments will not have more far reaching implications than appropriate. This should include the ability to receive information on a confidential basis or the candour of the engagement will certainly be weakened. Releasing the information that Welsh Government holds at this time may lead to significantly less considered and a less effective policy in this important area.

In addition, the disclosure of the information requested would have a prejudicial effect on engagement between Ministers and their officials, and between the Welsh Government and the commissioning body as it would remove the secure environment which allows Ministers and officials to gather information and discuss. Removing the secure environment in which officials are able to express views openly could result in advice being less robust as it would be likely to result in a reduction in the candour of those involved in the process if they believed discussions and other information would be made public.

Conclusion

We believe that it is within the wider public interest to withhold the information related to this request in order to provide the government with a safe space to consider live policy issues away from external intrusion. The Welsh Government endeavour to ensure they are as transparent as possible, in particular through the media, publication of documents, Ministerial Written Statements and public statements in the Senedd. We take the view that, on balance, this public interest has been satisfied and the information requested has been withheld under section 35(1)(a) of the Act for the reasons set out above.