

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

CYPE SP 91

Ymateb gan: Elinor Crouch-Puzey, Grŵp Swyddogion Polisi Plant Cyrff Anllywodraethol

Response from: Elinor Crouch-Puzey, NGO Children's Policy Officer Group

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education

Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education

Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people

Submitted by NSPCC Cymru/Wales, with and on behalf of the National Children's Charities Policy Group

Introduction

This response brings together the overarching priorities of the contributing third sector children's charities (listed below). Primarily our response asks the committee to consider the importance of improved provision of family support and early intervention, which could help mitigate the impact of poverty and poor mental health in the family. Stressors in the family, while not a cause or excuse, may increase the risk of abuse and neglect and so our asks will also consider the importance of appropriately resourced support to meet safeguarding concerns, as well as the needs



of children on the edge of care and children who are care experienced. We ask the committee to consider these intersecting themes within the context Covid-19 and the impact the lockdowns had on children and their families and the ongoing legacy of the pandemic.

Our asks must be considered within an intersectional framework, that any work by the committee considers the specific experiences and barriers faced by Black, POC, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, migrant, refugee & asylum seeker, children, young people and families who continue to experience high levels of inequality and discrimination in Wales. We particularly call on the committee to scrutinise Welsh Government's post-Brexit strategy to ensure EEA children and young people have equal access to education, healthcare, culturally appropriate accommodation and employment.

We refer the committee to the response from the UNCRC Monitoring Group and ask all decisions are made within a children's rights framework, where the importance of children, their rights and voices are central to any work carried out in their name.

We particularly note the following from the UNCRC response;

That the Committee;

- Undertake a follow-up review of the previous CYPE Committee's inquiry into 'Children's Rights in Wales' (2019-20) and the progress made by the Welsh Government to deliver the report's recommendations.
- As a core component for all future inquiries, to take account of the duty placed upon Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC in all of their actions, and to ensure that effective and meaningful Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA) have been undertaken on all policy and legislation relevant to children.
- Work with other relevant Senedd Committees to ensure that cross-committee mechanisms are in place for sharing issues impacting on children, and that consideration is given to all UN Treaty recommendations relevant to progressing their human rights.

Poverty

Whilst the economic impact of the pandemic has hit people across Welsh society, it is the poorest households, and especially those with children, who have been hardest hit. The Bevan Foundation's 'Snapshot of poverty in Winter 2020'¹ showed nearly a quarter of Welsh households have seen their income fall. This will only be compounded by the end of furlough and removal of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit. Research shows that poverty can have a similar impact on children as Adverse

¹ <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/A-snapshot-of-poverty-in-winter-2020.pdf>



Childhood Experiences, such as parental substance misuse or child abuse² and socio-economic disadvantage has an impact across a range of health indicators and educational attainment.

We ask the CYPE committee to support the following calls through their workplan;

- Support the call from our colleagues in the End Child Poverty Network for Welsh Government to publish a revised statutory Child Poverty Strategy with Delivery Plan, with clear measurable and ambitious milestones, supported by transparent monitoring arrangements. We ask the committee to undertake an inquiry into child poverty in Wales as part of this.
- Support our calls for an enhanced Flying Start service for all parents of 0-4-year old across Wales.
- Finally, we want to see an increase in the eligibility threshold for Free School Meals to ensure that all children whose parents are in receipt of Universal Credit are entitled during the school term and throughout the school holidays, and take steps towards universal entitlement for all.

Mental Health

We welcome the recognition from Welsh Government of the impact of covid on children, young people and families' mental health and its commitment to tackle it. We are clear this work must be long-term, it must both mitigate the wider impacts of the pandemic and ensure early intervention and timely support is provided going forward.

We suggest the committee focus on the important role the Regional Partnership Boards can play in this field. Pre-pandemic integrated health and social care services for children were at the back of the queue in terms of RPB priorities. Part 9 guidance on partnership arrangements under the Act have been recently updated to include a focus on early intervention and prevention services for children and families, as well as integrated services for children with complex needs³. An inquiry by the Children's Commissioner for Wales reported on the issue in 2020.⁴ In it the commissioner made recommendations for Welsh Government and RPB's relating to the provision of services for children with complex needs and the need for accessible, 'No Wrong

²<https://www.ncmedicaljournal.com/content/79/2/124#:~:text=Poverty%20is%20a%20strong%20reinforcing,adulthood%20%5B3%2C%204%5D.&text=Such%20cumulative%20exposure%20to%20adversity,developing%20brain%20of%20a%20child.>

³ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/part-9-statutory-guidance-partnership-arrangements.pdf>

⁴ https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NoWrongDoor_FINAL_EN230620.pdf



Door' early support services, which Welsh Government subsequently accepted.⁵ This should lead to a timely, clearer focus on the needs of children and families as we emerge from the health and social care challenge of a generation.

The programme for government includes the aims of 'tackling health inequalities, improving mental health provision and focussing on prevention' and meeting the needs of 'children, young people and families who face the greatest challenges' ⁶ It is imperative that Welsh Government continue to improve governance of RPBs to ensure that excellent, integrated health and social care early intervention and prevention services for children and families are established, going forward, if these aims are to be met. We ask the committee to monitor for this.

We ask the committee to focus on the importance of Advocacy Services for Children and Young People in line with the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy. This will enable all children and young people to have support to access their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to access the best education and health services available, particularly mental health services.

We welcome the previous committee's work on Mind Over Matter and ask the new committee to undertake a review of progress against the recommendations from the previous committee.

Safeguarding against violence and abuse

A holistic response to children who experience violence and abuse is essential. We must see universal prevention and early intervention, crisis support and therapeutic recovery available across Wales. The pandemic spotlighted the epidemic of abuse in the home; risk increased for some children as incidents of violence and abuse became more frequent and severe, while other children became newly vulnerable to abuse in the home. The NSPCC helpline and Childline saw both an increase in contacts from adults concerned about children at risk of domestic abuse/from a child⁷ living with domestic abuse and a 15% increase in referrals to outside agencies in 2020/21 about child sexual abuse, demonstrating a rise in complexity and risk. We cannot underestimate the impact of the past 18 months on this cohort of children, it will likely manifest in the months and years to come, services must be fully resourced to meet this demand.

We ask the committee to;

⁵ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/welsh-government-response-to-annual-report-of-the-childrens-commissioner-for-wales-2019-2020.pdf>

⁶ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>

⁷ The NSPCC Helpline saw 1500 contacts from adults during the national UK lockdown, while Childline delivered over 500 sessions to children worried about domestic abuse.



- Spotlight the shortfall in specialist service provision for children and the need for sustainable funding
- Back our calls on the importance of early intervention and that an element of funding for specialist support is ringfenced for prevention and early intervention work
- Undertake an inquiry into the response to child sexual abuse and what a service standard for Wales should look like, including consideration to what building blocks are needed to enable the roll out of the Child House model in Wales.

Children on the edge of and care experienced children and young people

The impact of the pandemic on care experienced children and young people was and remains significant, in addition, the pandemic created newly vulnerable children who find themselves on the edge of care. We welcome the First Minister's commitment to safely reducing the number of children in care. But are clear this must not result in children being missed and that the best interests of the child must be paramount. The focus must be on ensuring all children that need to be safeguarded are identified, with an understanding that attempts to reduce numbers will be challenging in the aftermath of the pandemic given the added safeguarding concerns of lockdown.

We remain concerned about access to advocacy services and the so called active offer for care experienced children. In addition, we want to see Residential Visiting Advocacy a requirement of Registration and Inspection for children's homes and residential schools in Wales, to act as an added safeguard. This is particularly important in the wake of Covid-19 which has further isolated this vulnerable cohort of children. We ask the committee to consider this within a wider investigation into the experiences of looked after children in Wales.

In terms of young people leaving care. We welcomed the financial support from Welsh Government for young people as they exit care, particularly the recent additional support in response to the financial impact of Covid-19 and the recognition that this cohort of young people, 'may be experiencing financial hardship due to income loss, difficulty with tenancy agreements, food and other basic living necessities'. However, we believe it is appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness of this support; to find gaps in current provision; and to consider how support could be improved as the effects of the pandemic are felt in the months and years to come. Submitted by, and on behalf of the National Children's Charities Policy Group;

- Children in Wales
- Barnardo's Cymru



- NSPCC Cymru/Wales
- Save the Children
- The Children's Society
- Action for Children
- TGP Cymru

