

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 114

Ymateb gan: Steffan Evans, Swyddog Polisi ac Ymchwil, Sefydliad Bevan

Response from: Steffan Evans, Policy and Research Officer, Bevan Foundation

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

The Bevan Foundation are pleased that the Welsh Government are currently undertaking a review into the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM). There is now a broad body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impact expanding provision would have for children living in poverty and that expanding provision is both affordable and practically possible.

We were delighted to see that there was cross-party support for enhancing current FSM provision during the Senedd election campaign. Given this cross party support and the potential significant impact of expanding provision we believe that the committee should make scrutinising the Welsh Government's decision in this area a priority. We believe that there is value in the committee prioritising FSM even if the Welsh Government do decide to proceed with expanding provision.

Consultation is needed with local authorities and schools to maximise the benefits of any reforms, and the Committee could play a valuable role in facilitating this process.

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



We believe that exploring the financial support available to learners in further education from low income families should be a priority for this committee over the coming Senedd term.

The Bevan Foundation's [*Learning a living, better support for post 16 learners*](#) report highlighted that the value of support provided through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has not increased since the scheme was introduced in 2004/05. We calculated at the time that had EMA increased in line with inflation, it would have stood at £45 per week in 2020 a significantly higher than the £30 young people are actually entitled to.

It is not just the value of the support provided that has been cut in real terms. The income thresholds for EMA and the Welsh Government Learning Grant (Further Education) have not increased in over a decade. A student's family must therefore be over £4,000 poorer in real terms to receive EMA today than they were a decade ago.

The pandemic has heightened the need for the current support system to be reviewed. The economic impact of the crisis disproportionately affected industries where there are a high proportion of workers are young people, whilst there remains considerable uncertainty about the future of the labour market.

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

We believe that the Committee should undertake a review into the Welsh Government's childcare offer. Whilst the childcare offer is highly valued by thousands of families all over Wales, the Bevan Foundation and others have unearthed a number of shortcomings with the policy as it is currently implemented.

Our research has shown that the scheme as currently designed is not flexible enough to support parents working non standard hours or shift work, whilst many parents who are trapped in poverty are denied access to any support at all as they do not work sufficient hours. The fact that the scheme is restricted to 3 year olds also severely limits the effectiveness of the programme.

We believe the committee should undertake an inquiry to better understand the limitations of the current system and to consider options for reform.

