

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

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Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

14 December 2023

Recent evidence from the Children's Commissioner for Wales: racism and child poverty

Dear Jenny,

We recently held our annual scrutiny session with the Children's Commissioner for Wales. One of the areas we explored was the impact of the Commissioner's influence. We note your current areas of work include anti-racism and child poverty. You may therefore be interested on the Commissioner's evidence to us when asked which areas she felt she had the most influence, she said:

"So, we have, probably, had most traction in relation to education issues. We've been pleased with the response so far to the racism work and earlier conversations have indicated that Government are open to our recommendations and have in fact told us that they would wait to complete their anti-bullying guidance so that they could consider the recommendations of our report, for example.

We've also had good influence, we feel, in relation to the new attendance guidance that's been published and many of our suggestions were taken on board there, including looking at the reduced timetables and making sure that the needs of kinship carers were responded to in that document.

We also had influence positively in the home education space recently. When I came into the role I felt that it was a very polarised issue with a lot of tension on both sides, and perhaps the different groups not necessarily coming together effectively. So, I proposed to convene a forum for home-educating parents so that they could voice their concerns and have their questions answered about the new guidance that was about to come in—it came in in April 2023. And that was



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positively received by Government and, I think, was concluded to be a very beneficial exercise all round.

So, education on the whole is one area where we do feel that there is openness to our input. We have tried a lot to influence the poverty agenda and the child poverty strategy, which we hope to see a final version of very soon. We feel that perhaps we haven't experienced as much openness so far in that dialogue. We have convened and collaboratively very significantly with other bodies on this issue. We hosted a child poverty summit recently and we've put forward recommendations and suggestions, on which there is a great deal of consensus from other groups, and have communicated that as best we can to Ministers very regularly; so, we are hoping that the final strategy will reflect our suggestions, but it's not, you know—. So far, we don't feel as confident about having positively influenced that yet, although, you know, we've done our best.”¹

We wanted to draw to your attention this contrast the Commissioner highlighted.

Since we took this evidence, the Welsh Government have published their **response** to the Commissioner’s annual report. Unlike previous years, the Welsh Government have not clearly indicated whether they have accepted or rejected each recommendation. We note that during the annual scrutiny session, the Commissioner talked about monitoring progress on these recommendations, saying that they would be measuring and tracking “if they’ve been accepted.....”² suggesting that they were expecting the Welsh Government response to follow the format of previous years. Clearly stating whether a recommendation is accepted or rejected is important for clarity and transparency. We will be writing to the Minister for Social Justice on this issue as well.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

¹ CYPE Committee, 6 December, Record of Proceedings paragraphs 180-183

² CYPE Committee, 6 December, Record of Proceedings paragraph 188

