

# Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Children's Commissioner for Wales

## Keith Towler

National Assembly for Wales  
Chair of the Children and Young People's  
Committee  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff. CF99 1NA

22.02.2011

Dear Chair

### National Assembly for Wales' (NAfW) Children and Young People's (CYP) Committee Legacy Report

First of all I would like to congratulate the CYP Committee on four years of hard work and effective scrutiny. The Committee has developed an understanding of the issues facing children and young people over this period, as well as an understanding of how best to use the committee to hold Welsh Government to account. It was pleasing to see the committee revisit specific policy areas where implementation of policy and strategy was in question. I have made numerous public statements regarding the practice implementation agenda and have welcomed the opportunity to debate these points with you.

I would also like to put on public record my praise for the way in which the CYP Committee has engaged directly with children and young people. Your direct engagement with them has had a real impact on your work programme and the content of your reports. The Committee has shown itself to be a pioneer in the participation of children and young people within our national legislature. I would like to pay tribute to the chair and members of the Committee for your collective commitment to the participation agenda.

I often speak to my counterparts across Europe about the way in which the Committee engages with children and young people and as Members will be aware, I hosted a visit from the Flemish Commissioner's office. They were impressed by the work, including the role undertaken by the NAfW education outreach team and planned to take their learning back to the Flemish Parliament.

I will want to see the successor Committee building on the practice established over the last four years. Indeed the model should be shared across all committees of the NAfW so that the voice of children and young people is heard across the legislature. I will be more than happy to contribute to this agenda during the next Assembly term.

#### Looking Forward:

In terms of looking at particular policy areas for scrutiny, it is very difficult to comment at this stage and I imagine the CYP Committee's work programme will be influenced by the activities of other committees, such as the successor to the Health, Wellbeing and Local

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Government Committee.

I have looked at all the inquiries undertaken by the CYP Committee during the third term, and it would be wholly appropriate to revisit each of the government responses to those report recommendations to measure progress. It would also be useful to assess whether or not the new Welsh Ministers are committed to those recommendations. Ministers' responses to Committee recommendations are a key element in holding government to account so establishing whether or not past statements apply is important.

Looking forward, a future committee may like to consider:

- a periodical assessment of the development and implementation of the Welsh Government's UN Convention on the Rights of the Child action plan – *Getting it Right*;
- monitoring of the implementation of the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 in relation to young carers. Perhaps this could be undertaken as part of a wider remit on young carers issues. Committee members may find a report that we published in 2009 – *Full of Care* – useful: (<http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/en/publications-list/?offset=0>)
- the implications of the Social Services reforms paper, '*Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A framework for Action*' could result in substantial changes in a range of different policy areas. If the principles outlined in the document are accepted by the new Welsh Government, the attention afforded to children and young people within the reforms, as well as the voice of children and young people within the process, merits detailed scrutiny; and
- monitoring of the implementation of the Rights of Children and Young People (Wales) Measure.

As you will be aware, my annual reports are a source of information which seek to assess the performance of those delivering public services for Wales' children and young people. The annual reports also outline where I believe there to be potential issues relating to access to services and where children's right are not being upheld as they should.

Whilst accepting that there have also been a number of positive and progressive developments in Wales, I could well produce an extensive list of concerns, but it may not necessarily assist a future committee in developing their work programme. I am sure much of that will depend on the relevant programme of government as well as the activities of other committees. You may, however, find it useful to be reminded that within my five year corporate plan, I have noted my particular concern about the following:

- children and young people who are looked-after;
- children and young people with disabilities;
- gypsy traveller children; and
- young people caught up in the youth justice system.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation of the CYP Committee's contribution in attempting to ensure that children and young people's rights, and the issues they raise, are given appropriate exposure within the National Assembly for Wales. I therefore hope

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the Committee will be maintained and that we will continue our positive working relationship as the NAFW progresses into its fourth term.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Towler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Keith Towler

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