

PIW 24

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into: Poverty in Wales: Strand 1

Response from: Equality and Human Rights Commission



Christine Chapman AM

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

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September 16 2014

Dear Chair,

Response to Inquiry into poverty in Wales

We welcome the opportunity to provide advice to inform the Committee's Inquiry into poverty in Wales.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's How Fair is Wales? report (2011) set out the most significant inequalities in Wales. The report shows that the inequality dominating Wales is socio-economic - because of the scale of its impact, the breadth of its influence and how it affects major quality of life determinants including: health and life expectancy; educational attainment; job and income; access to power. Alongside, and interwoven with, socio-economic inequality there are other inequalities based on the "protected characteristics".

Our [How Fair is Wales?](#) and [An Anatomy of Economic Inequality](#) reports provide useful information for the Committee, as they explore the link between inequality and poverty. Our research shows that:

- **23% of people in Wales live in poverty, including:**
48% of lone parents, of which 9 in 10 are women

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- 46% of disabled people
- 43% of ethnic minority people
- 27% of 16 - 25 year old people
- Over a third of Pakistani women have no qualifications (34%). Women of Indian, Mixed Race, and Chinese origin are more likely to have a degree than white women.
- Three quarters (74%) of disabled people - excluding those in education - are not employed.
- Almost half (46%) of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are not in employment or full-time education. For Bangladeshi and Pakistani women this rises to 72%.
- People living in white households have a median income of £289 a week whilst black households have a median income of £218.

Addressing inequality and poverty through a single strategy

The EHRC was interested in looking more closely at how these inequalities interrelate. We wanted to look at the situation in schools, in particular, as educational attainment is such an important gateway to future success. We decided to work with Swansea Council to improve our understanding as it has given high priority to developing a strategy to improve educational attainment for all pupils focussing on both inequality and poverty. Its single strategy encompasses inequality and poverty and focusses on capacity building, inclusion, and changing culture. A report of this work is enclosed. The report's statistics show that the average Key Stage 4 attainment varies greatly depending on equality and poverty factors - and it is likely that gaps in Swansea are smaller than in many parts of Wales.

The Welsh Government has acknowledged that policies to tackle inequality and poverty should be more closely aligned. The Welsh Government has set ambitious targets to eradicate poverty, but progress towards these targets is proving difficult to achieve. The Public Sector Equality Duty provides a strategic approach to the promotion of equality, requiring public authorities to pay due regard to equality in setting priorities, making policy and resource allocation. The time may be right to adopt a linked approach in relation to tackling socio-economic disadvantage.

I trust this will assist the Committee's work. If you have any queries, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

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