

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb,  
Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau  
Priorities for the Equality,  
Local Government and Communities Committee  
Ymateb gan: Plant yng Nghymru  
Response from: Children in Wales

## **Introduction**

Children in Wales is the national umbrella organisation in Wales for children and young people's issues, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. One of our core aims is to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) a reality in Wales. Children in Wales campaigns for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, with special attention for children in need and works to ensure children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

For further information on the work of Children in Wales, please see [www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk) and [www.youngwales.wales](http://www.youngwales.wales)

## **Our Response**

Children in Wales welcomes the opportunity to aid the Committee with its planning by sharing our views on some of the areas the Committee has already identified for inclusion in its longer term programme.

### **EU funding of tackling poverty programmes**

The result of the EU referendum has opened a period of uncertainty.

Following the result of the referendum, Children in Wales issued a joint statement along with Eurochild, Children in Scotland, Children in Northern Ireland and Children England. This was published in The Guardian and can be accessed online at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/03/supporting-our-young-people-after-brexite>. The statement highlighted the importance of children's rights and the need to tackle social division and poverty following the vote, as well as expressing disappointment that 16-and 17-year olds were not able to take part in the referendum.

We also issued a press release individually from Children in Wales, which is published on our website at <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/news/press-releases/eu-referendum-result/>.

Tackling Poverty is a priority theme within the 2014-20 programme period which we and our partners campaigned for and welcomed. With over 200,000 children living in poverty, Wales can ill afford to do without the significant level of funding enjoyed through the current and previous European Structural fund programmes. We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead but would not wish to see progress in

tacking child poverty in Wales being seriously undermined through a lack of replacement funds after the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

### **In Work Poverty**

The annual Children in Wales Child and Family Poverty Survey for Wales ([2015 report](#)) identified in-work poverty, alongside low pay and insecure employment as significant challenges in lifting and keeping families out of poverty. The End Child Poverty Network Cymru have also identified the need to address in-work poverty as a key priority ([report](#)). Many employees, including young people, are disproportionately likely to be paid less than the average wage ([link](#)). The current Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy for Wales has identified in-work poverty as one of its *'five key priorities for supporting families here and now'*. We would welcome an inquiry into this, which could also encompass discussion around the Living Wage.

### **Poverty and Welfare Reform**

We would welcome the Committee's consideration of an enquiry focused on the implications of welfare benefit changes on poverty in Wales and the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's response. Again, our Child and Family Poverty Survey for Wales recognised this as a significant issue for households with children, and a number of our member organisations have also identified this as an issue.

In June 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published their [Concluding Observations](#) on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom. During the inquiry, the UN Committee raised concerns around the cumulative impact of welfare reform on children, particularly for those most vulnerable and young people with a protected characteristic. The UN Committee made a number of Recommendations in respect of child poverty and welfare reform (pp17-18) which could help inform the basis of an enquiry.

We also support the Committee giving further consideration to including the other areas listed in the consultation document within its longer term work programme.

### **Other issues**

We have also identified a number of other areas which the Committee may also wish to consider.

### **Asylum seekers and refugees arriving and living in Wales**

As members of the Welsh Refugee Coalition, we would welcome the Committee undertaking an inquiry into this policy area. There are a number of significant barriers to inclusion that exist here in Wales that the Committee could examine.

On the 3 June 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a series of [Concluding Observations](#) to the UK and devolved governments which set out ways in which they can better meet their obligations in respect of implementing the UNCRC. The UN Committee made a number of Recommendations in respect of asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children (pp20-21) which could help inform the basis of an enquiry.

With the commitment to resettle Syrian refugees in Wales through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme it is essential that new arrivals, alongside resident asylum seekers and refugees, receive the welcome, support and quality services they deserve, to enable them to be safe and to flourish, and to have their human rights secured. The Committee may also wish to review the current Welsh Government Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan to ascertain its efficacy in meeting the needs and universal rights of asylum seekers and refugees arriving and living in Wales (our [response](#) to the Welsh Government consultation)

**British Bill of Rights** – The UK Governments plan to replace the Human Rights Act 1998 with a British Bill of Rights will have implications for Wales which the Committee would be well placed to consider.