

Jenny Rathbone

By email

23rd July 2021

Dear Jenny

Congratulations on your election as Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee. We believe that your committee will have a vital role to play in scrutinising the Welsh Government to ensure that they are taking appropriate measures to solve poverty and inequality. We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals.

I am sure you, committee members and the committee team are currently exploring possible inquiries that could be undertaken over the course of the Senedd. We wanted to take the opportunity to get in touch and suggest some policy areas that your committee may wish to focus on in respect of equality and social justice.

Child Poverty

Child poverty remains stubbornly high in Wales. With more than 3 in 10 children living in poverty, we believe that taking action to solve the problem must be a priority for the new Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has already shown that it is willing to take action on child poverty. The Welsh Government's decision to commit to providing support in lieu of Free School Meals over the holidays until Easter 2022 is a very positive step, as is the decision to extend the Pupil Development Grant – Access. There is still much more that could be done, however.

An inquiry by your committee could provide an opportunity to take a holistic review of the measures that have been taken to date to solve child poverty. It could provide an opportunity to identify areas for further action and share ideas for better collaboration. With the ending of furlough and the proposed cut to Universal Credit this autumn, this work would be very timely.

Protecting migrants' rights

Wales' population today reflects more than a hundred years of in-migration from around the world. People who have migrated to Wales make a valuable economic, social and cultural contribution and it is only right they are treated equally with fairness and respect.

Given the recent changes to the immigration system including the ending of free movement there is a real concern about the impact of the hostile environment on migrants living in Wales and on their rights. In our work¹ looking at integration we found that migrants can face hostility, discrimination and barriers. There are concerns that the end of free movement could have an even greater impact on those who live in Wales,

¹ Bevan Foundation (April 2020) Shared ground: integrating migrants in Wales
<https://www.bevanfoundation.org/resources/shared-ground-integrating-migrants-in-wales/>

particularly those who have not applied to the EUSS scheme or have received pre-settled status, and who may face restrictions on their ability to access housing, jobs and education or in some cases deportation.

While immigration is a reserved matter, an inquiry by your committee would provide an opportunity to examine the impact of UK policy and identify possibilities to take further action to support people who live, work and study in Wales.

If you would like to discuss any of our ideas further then we'd be delighted to meet with you and your team.

I hope our work is of interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Winckler". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that serves as a separator.

Victoria Winckler,

Director