

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

CYPE SP 55

Ymateb gan: Ellie Harwood, Rheolwr Datblygu Cymru (Cost y Diwrnod Ysgol y DU), Grŵp Gweithredu Tlodi Plant

Response from: Ellie Harwood, Wales Development Manager (UK Cost of the School Day), Child Poverty Action Group

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education

[Our research](#) with children, families and schools throughout 2020/21 has shown that children in poverty face significant barriers to accessing education, even without the effects of the pandemic. We have found that:

- Many low-income families in Wales lack all the resources children need to participate in remote or blended learning. As well as a lack of equipment, many homes lack the furniture or space to allow academic learning to take place.
- Digital exclusion remains a significant issue, with many children sharing a single device between family members, and some unable to get online at all.
- Cost barriers in education have a profound impact on children's ability to take part and be happy at school. [Our analysis](#) shows there are 55000 school-aged children in poverty who don't qualify for FSM and PDG support with costs and equipment. Our research with families shows this can lead to considerable hardship for children who cannot access help with the costs of going to school.

With these issues in mind, we believe that it would be worthwhile for the CYPE Committee to investigate the potential challenges child poverty poses to the success of the new curriculum.



Questions could include:

- How will schools work to remove or reduce costs associated with the new curriculum? [There are concerns](#) that some aspects of the new curriculum may exacerbate inequality for certain groups, in part by requiring greater out-of-school learning. What steps need to be taken to reduce or remove this potential inequality?
- What steps need to be taken to ensure full digital inclusion for every learner?
- How could the Pupil Development Grant be re-imagined to offer support to all children in poverty (bearing in mind that 42% of children in poverty don't currently qualify for this support?)

We note with interest that the [Programme for Government](#) also includes a commitment to “invest in the learning environment of community schools, co-locating key services, and securing stronger engagement with parents and carers outside traditional hours”. There are various models of community schools operating across Wales, and it would be helpful to have scrutiny of what works well, and what barriers exist to all schools adopting this model. The Committee may also wish to consider the scope for the provision of welfare rights advice in community schools.

We also note that the programme for Government commits to exploring reform of the school day and the school year. Such change could be beneficial to children in poverty, but there are significant implications to consider. Scrutiny from the CYPE committee could be fundamental to understanding what the potential costs, benefits, and different models of reforms such as extending the school day might be for a wide range of communities of interest, including children and young people themselves.

Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education

Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people



Along with members of the End Child Poverty Network Cymru, we remain concerned that Wales does not have a multi-year child poverty strategy in place. We believe that the Welsh Government should build on the statutory child poverty duties prescribed through the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, in order to publish a revised Child Poverty Strategy with Delivery Plan, with clear measurable and ambitious milestones, supported by transparent monitoring arrangements.

In addition, the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) allowed public bodies who had previously been required to prepare statutory child poverty strategies to instead discharge their duties via objectives in their Well-being plans. We are concerned that, to date, many well-being plans have not lead to child poverty being given the priority it deserves. The CYPE committee could look at whether existing statutory duties placed upon relevant public bodies to tackle child poverty through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act are being sufficiently delivered, and whether robust monitoring arrangements are in place to assess the quality and implementation of local Well-being Plans.

The childcare offer in Wales continues to be piecemeal, with early years access restricted to children living in certain postcodes and in certain households. Overall, the system is not fulfilling its full potential, with barriers prevailing in relation to sufficiency, accessibility, quality and cost. The Committee should investigate what change is needed to ensure that all children have access to high quality childcare, as part of a coherent and integrated system. In particular, whether the eligibility criteria for the Childcare Offer and Flying Start childcare need to be widened to ensure that all children in poverty can access free childcare, in the early years, before and after school, and during the school holidays.

