

CYPE(6)-13-23 - Paper to note 17

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb  
a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol**

**Equality and Social Justice  
Committee**

Elinor Puzey  
NSPCC

Dear Elinor,

**Suggested Committee inquiry into link between poverty and social care involvement**

Thank you for your letter to the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding a potential inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement in Wales. This was noted at our meeting on 27 March 2023. Thank you for flagging up the research by Paul Bywaters and colleagues on the need for social care to address the underlying economic distress caused by the cost-of-living crisis, against a backdrop of austerity and the aftermath of the pandemic, which is driving up rates of referrals to social services for child neglect and abuse.

Senedd committees typically schedule their work many months in advance. At present we do not have a specific plan of work on child poverty, however it is one of the potential priority areas we will be discussing as part of our future work.

Updates on our forward work programme are available on our website and if the Committee's future timetable allows for a focussed inquiry on this important topic or a similar topic, we will write to invite you to submit evidence. Given the relevance to their remits, we have also shared your letter with the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee for information. I am sure they will similarly inform you of any relevant work they may be carrying out.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS  
Equality and Social Justice Committee

cc Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Health and Social Care Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

**Senedd Cymru**

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April 13 2023.

Dear Committee Chair,

I am writing to you to propose that the Equality and Social Justice Committee carry out an inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement in Wales. Research has shown that poverty and inequality affect how the child protection system responds to families who are struggling; An inquiry should:

- Look at the levers Welsh Government has to poverty proof the child protection system.
- Consider to what extent families who experience poverty are supported.
- Consider how the system can recognise when it is the context of poverty itself which is causing harm to the family, rather than intentional neglect.
- Consider the role of the forthcoming child poverty strategy in poverty proofing the child protection system.
- Look at cross-departmental policies, training, regulation and data collection and how they can be truly anti-poverty.

While we welcome the work Welsh Government has undertaken so far to tackle child poverty, NSPCC Cymru is concerned about the increased risk to children as families come under increasing pressure from the cost-of-living crisis. This is against a backdrop of austerity and the pandemic.

Recent research from Paul Bywaters<sup>1</sup> and colleagues highlights a 'contributory causal relationship between the economic circumstances of families and child abuse and neglect'. The authors of the research suggest we should not view poverty necessarily as another factor of abuse, but something that is 'intrinsic to' other factors such as domestic abuse and substance misuse. Poverty has been described as 'the wallpaper of the social care system', in that it is too big to tackle and too familiar to notice. Paul Bywater says supporting families to exit poverty must be core business for children's social care.

NSPCC considers poverty to be a preventable, structural harm which negatively impacts children and can put them at increased risk. A lack of resources can prevent families from being able to provide adequately for their children, and the stress of financial insecurity can overload families, affecting relationships. Living in poverty means parents are not having their needs met, in turn, this can impact their capacity to care for their child.

Within this context, NSPCC Cymru is urging the Committee to undertake an inquiry into the relationship between poverty and children's social care involvement. In these times of financial hardship, creating a social safety net around our most vulnerable families has never been more important.

Yours faithfully,

Elinor Puzey,  
Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, NSPCC Cymru

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<sup>1</sup>[https://research.hud.ac.uk/media/assets/document/hhs/RelationshipBetweenPovertyChildAbuseandNeglect\\_Report.pdf](https://research.hud.ac.uk/media/assets/document/hhs/RelationshipBetweenPovertyChildAbuseandNeglect_Report.pdf)