

John Griffiths MS
Chair Local Government and
Housing Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Thursday 16 November 2023

Dear Chair,

Subject: Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Wales Fairer? 2023

I am writing to bring to your attention our landmark report into the state of equality and human rights in Wales in 2023. This report focuses on the Welsh context and sits alongside our report on Britain which we have laid in the UK Parliament and published today (16 November) In particular, we would like to highlight findings and recommendations relevant to you as Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee.

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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Following on from our last “Is Wales Fairer?” report in 2018, the Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Wales Fairer 2023 draws on the comprehensive data outlined in our to assess progress on equality and human rights over the last five years across Wales.

Overall, we have found that there have been significant challenges to equality and human rights over the last five years including:

- the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- the UK’s departure from the European Union
- the period of high inflation as well as the economic impact of the war in Ukraine

These events have exacerbated some persistent, long-term inequalities. For example, the data shows that whilst more young people have been reporting mental health conditions since 2010, the numbers rose further during the pandemic and remain high.

These events have also been a catalyst for new trends. For example, the increase in home working has benefitted parents, older and disabled people,

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and those with caring responsibilities.

You can read the full report on our website. I would particularly like to draw your attention to some of our findings where we have seen that:

- The education attainment gap at foundation phase level between disabled and non-disabled children has widened and disabled adults are less likely to be employed than non-disabled adults.
- There has been a drop in the proportion of rape offences recorded against women that result in charges. Black or mixed ethnic people are more likely to have experienced sexual assault in the past year than other ethnic groups.
- There are significant equality and human rights data gaps in Wales, particularly for the protected characteristics of religion, gender reassignment, and sexual orientation in all areas of life and additionally for race in the areas of tertiary education and health.
- The proportion of public appointments of people from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased in recent years and women's representation in local government and as chief executives in public appointments has risen.

Our report also sets out recommendations to address these findings, including for:

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- The Welsh Government, local authorities and schools should address the widening attainment gap between disabled and non-disabled children and the under-representation of disabled people participating in and completing apprenticeships.
- The Welsh Government, police forces and other members of the Wales Criminal Justice Partnership Board should better understand ethnic disparities in experiences of sexual assault and ensure that charge rates for hate crimes, sexual assault, and rape are appropriate to reported and recorded levels.
- We recommend that the Welsh Government and all public bodies identify how they can better understand issues and fill evidence gaps by the protected characteristics of religion, gender reassignment, and sexual orientation to meet the needs of their communities.
- To increase diversity in political representation and to ensure that diversity data is collected, the Welsh Government and the Senedd Commission should call on the UK government to commence section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to Senedd elections, to transfer the powers to do so, or to legislate for the Senedd electoral arrangements.

As you will be aware, public authorities are required under the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) to publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

Our recommendations are designed to support the development of these objectives and help ensure that this legal obligation can be performed in a way

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that is strategic and focused on the most significant equality challenges identified by the data.

I would encourage you to consider how our findings and recommendations can inform the work of the Committee and support scrutiny of the actions and progress of Welsh Government and public bodies in Wales to address inequalities.

We would be keen to discuss these findings and recommendations in more detail and would be delighted to offer you a meeting at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Rev Ruth Coombs

Head of Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission

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