

Sarah Rees
Oxfam Cymru

Dear Sarah,

8 April 2024

Little Steps, Big Struggles: Childcare in Wales

Thank you for your letter and your interest in the Committee's follow-up work on childcare. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you. Since noting your correspondence at our meeting on 5 February, uncertainty with regards to our forward work programme has prevented me from responding to you meaningfully until now.

We are grateful to you for highlighting your latest report and for sharing with us details of your engagement work with grassroots organisations including parents and families. In your letter you offer to give evidence formally to our inquiry. While some Members were keen to accept your offer, having considered your request further I have reached the view that we should politely decline on this occasion.

There were several factors that have lead me to this conclusion. They include the status of this work as a follow-up to the original inquiry and the need to ensure that the Committee focuses on potential solutions rather than re-rehearsing the challenges faced by working parents and the sector. These challenges, while valid and of considerable concern, are fairly well-understood and were covered at length by the original inquiry hence our decision to focus on solutions. Furthermore, the decision to postpone most of this inquiry in order to look urgently at shocking allegations of mis-conduct within the Fire and Rescue Service has reduced the amount of time available to us and therefore it would be difficult to accommodate additional panels without delaying the inquiry further.

I appreciate that you and the organisations you work with may be disappointed by this decision. There are, however, other ways in which your report could have an impact and I would be happy to arrange a meeting in person, to discuss your findings in more detail. If you are interested in meeting please speak to the Clerking Team to arrange a convenient date.

Thank you again for your interest in this matter and for bringing this work to our attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

