

# Joint CPG - Children and Families and Children in Poverty

Minutes 08.05.2024 10:45-11:45am

## Attendees

<b>Attending (in person)</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Attending (virtually)</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
John Griffiths MS	Welsh Labour	Hannah Williams	Social Care Wales
Jayne Bryant MS	Welsh Government		
Andrew Bettridge	Senedd Support Staff	Sabiha Azad	Welsh Refugee Council
Sean O'Neil	Children in Families	Amy Dutton	CAB Cymru
Joel Davies	Bevan Foundation	Tina Foster	Travelling Ahead
Amy Bainton	Barnardos Cymru Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (Wales)	Daljit Kaur Morris	NYAS Cymru
Sarah Williamson	Early Years Wales	Mary van den Heuvel	NEU
Dave Goodger	Welsh Liberal Democrats	Jamie Insole	UCU
Jane Dodds MS	Plaid Cymru Support Staff	Yasmin Zahra	Plaid Cymru Senedd Support
Niamh Salkeld	Plaid Cymru	Elizabeth Bryan	Fostering.Net
Sioned Williams MS		Manel Tippet	British Psychological Society
		Katie Till	Trussel Trust
Emma Musgrave	Purple Shoots	Professor Samantha Baron	BASW Cymru
Mark Carter	Barnardos Cymru	Izabella James	Home-Start Cymru
Eleri Griffiths	Plaid Cymru Support Staff	Bethan Phillips	Mind Cymru
Catrin Glyn	Carers Trust	Jayne Drummond	Home-Start Cymru CEO Ferret Information Systems
		Gareth Morgan	Samaritans UK
		Emma Gooding	
		Karen McFarlane (speaker)	Children in Wales
		Fatmanur Aksoy (speaker)	Former Youth Parliament
		Catherine Rees	Save the Children
		Bethany Howells	CH Cymru
		Pearl Costello	Food Sense Wales
		Sarah Rees	Oxfam Cymru
		Phoebe Jenkins	Senedd Support Staff
		Cecile Gwilym	NSPCC

- 1) Welcoming and opening remarks – Jane Dodds MS and John Griffiths MS (5 minutes)

Jane opened the discussion with introductions, highlighting the focus of child poverty.. Explanation of Children and Families CPG and the four themes – Edge of Care, First 1000 Days, ACEs, Child Poverty. Janes background - child protection worker. Great to have Minister, Jane Bryant, and Sioned Williams. Hand over to John Griffiths.

John Griffiths chair CPG on Poverty. Gave background history in poverty and highlighted how it's a poverty is a debilitating problem and how families are surviving during the cost of living crisis. Difficult few years since COVID. How can we make progress and make challenges?

Jane – mixed representation of organisations; Barnardos, Bevan Foundation, Carers Trust, Social Justice, Early Years Wales, new Minister Jane Bryant, Senedd representation cross party.

**2) Presentation from Children in Wales – Poverty in Wales (10 minutes)**

Karen McFarlane, Senior Policy Officer. Child Poverty & Vulnerable Children. Annual child poverty survey – new introduction this year of parental survey. Asked children about the impact of poverty – overwhelmingly spoke about the impact of poverty on mental health. Also impacted on school performance and poverty related bullying, and impact on mental health. School uniform cost and impact on mental health. Issues around uniform and punishment of non-conforming and penalties on public acknowledgement in front of peers. Schools that were happy were saying that there was a huge difference in schools that were adjusting policies on uniform. “Treat everybody equally. We all deserve respect and to be treated with kindness, whatever our circumstances.” Children in Wales have resources to help schools mitigate poverty bullying. 2024 report available 1<sup>st</sup> week in October. Supporting Change: School Uniform, launching June 5<sup>th</sup>.

**3) Fatmanur Aksoy (former Welsh Youth Parliament) – Experiences of Poverty (5 minutes)**

Not present.

**4) Presentation from Bevan Foundation – What the stats and figures show about poverty in Wales (5 minutes)**

Poverty in children and families, Ben. 670,000 people in Wales live in relative income – 21% of the population. 29% of children. 16% of pensioners. Over half of those in poverty are from working households. Children are not shielded from the impact of poverty. October 23, 23% of children were worried about being cold. 16% worried about not having the right materials to do homework. 15% worried about not having the right clothing, including a warm coat. 13% worried about being hungry. 6% worried about washing/cleaning teeth. Children reporting that they are unable to go out and take part in specific activities, such as playing an instrument, sports clubs, school trips, birthday parties, youth club. Impacting mental and physical health, and 1 in 10 reported being bullying. Financial pressure appears more when there is a child under 4 in the house. These points show that it is more important than ever for the government to take action immediately.

5) Reflections from Minister Jayne Bryant - Minister for Mental Health and Early Years (5 minutes)

Jane Bryant – lovely to join and see everybody. Thank you to Jane Dodds and John Griffiths for holding this joint group. Looking forward to being involved and how we can be part of this progress. First 1000 days part of the governments programme, and we know we need to tackle getting children out of poverty as soon as possible. Very happy to come in future to further meetings, and hear about good practice that needs to be shared. First PP - respect and kindness – such a key point. Stats around bullying, and presenting from Bevan Foundation – hearing from young people themselves is invaluable and important.

John Griffiths – very useful when practical information comes through.

Sioned Williams – first slide really struck me; this is an issue that a lot of us have been raising around school uniform. The suggestions that were in the powerpoint were minimal cost, and easily effective. I've been asking why the guidance on uniform can't be put on a statutory footing. Trauma induced poverty. Would you (Jane Bryant) and the FM be willing to address these issues around school uniform?

Jane Dodds – really easy, tell all schools to ban all non uniform days. Doesn't take anything at all – it makes perfect sense and is easy to do. Look at wider issues of poverty: children are hurting and suffering here, the number has gone up to 29%. What can the Welsh Government do to really try and reduce that figure? We hear that they don't have the powers over the benefit system, of course, but what can we do here in Wales? We would like to hear the abolishment of 2 child limit in Westminster.

Jane Bryant – give us a chance to reset to address these issues. Important to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Justice Lesley Griffiths. Would like to be kept in the loop with the work that we are doing.

Sioned – will you be making a statement around what you will be addressing on the First 1000 days?

Jane Bryant – a lot in the portfolio, but this is a real focus and we will address in due course. Keen to come to the first meeting to show keen engagement with the meetings.

**Actions – send presentations and slides to Jane Bryant.**

**Actions – send updates to Jane Bryant on a regular basis, including the First 1000 days especially.**

6) Question & Answer session – co-chaired by Jane Dodds and John Griffiths MS Gareth Morgan, Ferret Interfacial Systems. Looking at Bevan and Children in Wales survives – was there any differentiation in the size of families? Bigger families need bigger support. Is there any kind of evidence around the size of families impacting levels of poverty. Also interested in the generality of issues, eg, schools – creating awareness of support in Wales. Positive work that Scotland has done – not as provisional advice, but signposting individuals to support; using schools as a channel for awareness on available support.

Sarah Rees, Oxfam Cymru. Still conversation about cost of living being a crisis – we've been in it for years now, no longer a crisis, this is a terrible way of life that people are facing. We really do have to prioritise tackling poverty. We could prioritise equitable access to flying start, because the current form doesn't address that the roll out is unfair. Postcode lottery and childcare.

David Godger, Early Years Wales. 40% of families under 4 children in poverty – disproportionately higher. Aware that the disproportionate impact of children on this crucial point in their development (0-4). But we're not hearing their voices. Anyway that we can get that child voice (0-4) – how do we hear these voices? If not, can we consider that, to hear their lived and living experience. Children in Wales survey.

Karen McFarlane – responding to the Q – if we had the capacity and resources to include an additional survey for the 0-4, then we would be very happy to do this as part of the survey. Responding to the Q from Gareth Morgan – didn't have this in previous finding, but because we are analysing parents this year we will be able to track responses around family sizes – will know more from October.

Joel, Bevan foundation – response to Gareth Morgan. We saw that where there were 3 or more children in the last size years, gone from 28% to 43% of children in poverty. These increases do seem to be linking to the cap of 2 children for benefits.

Dr Liz Gregory – Parent infant foundation. Music to my ears that the first 1000 days is going to be a priority. Babies are disproportionately at risk of poverty and the impact of poverty on their growth. Very interested in the voice of babies and children if anyone would like to link up.

Jame Insole, University and Colleges Union. Fall in participation of Welsh children going into FE and HE. Growing attainment gap, accelerating post covid, between those in receipt of FSM and those that aren't. We know that family learning can make a big difference, particularly from single parents. Potential in the early years to get families working together. Barriers preventing parents from accessing education. A social model of education so parents could learn while they're in school? WE as a union think that occupational therapists could be used in the school system.

Jane Dodds – voices of young children and how that has moved forward. Dave Godger, Karen Macfarlane. Liz Gregory, Cecile Gwilym – connect to share together.

Sioned Williams – capacity and resource from Children's Commissioner – it would be a good idea to link up to hear what they are doing.

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**Actions – set up a small sub group around babies to 4 years voices and issue an invitation to everybody to get involved, but also to include a representation of young people. Link this into the ACEs group work?**

Karen MacFarlane – community works in schools.

Mark Carter, Barnados – seeing in terms of pressures on childrens and families in terms of poverty, interparental health, additional pressure, homelessness

Amy, Barnados – working with the Bevan foundation on the issue of children under 4. I think we need to look at short, medium and long term actions that we could do.

John Griffiths – a lot we can do on culture and sanctioning etc. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Senedd, John chaired the Equalities, Local Government and Communities committee, which did a report on Benefits in Wales – one of the main recommendations was for the administration of the welfare system to be devolved to Welsh Government - <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12832/cr-ld12832%20-e.pdf>

Jane Dodds – those of us that are on the ESJ have been pushing for a Welsh Benefits Charter. Big policy for me has to be Universal Basic Income; we really need to think about the transformation that this would make for the society.

Cecile Gwiliym, NSPCC – come back on Barnardo's; completely agree with Aimee for short term, medium term, long term priorities, which is why it is important for the child poverty strategy to be so detailed and to be driven. Poverty increasing intake into social care. Changing the culture, developing a system, creating a strong workforce.

Sean O Neil – Children in Wales – reinforce the point that Sarah made very early on around flying start – why are families still not able to access this? This is within our remit to fix. So we could focus in on this to do stronger and better. We've had flying start for 10-15 years.

John Griffiths – could we have a further meeting? We could focus on what is in WG responsibility and how we might respond to them.

Sioned and Jane agreed that this is a good idea. Lets get 3 to 5 things that we can all get behind.

Sioned – can we propose that one of those first actions would be to write a joint letter from both CPG if they would consider implementing actions in the Children in Wales Poverty Guidance.

**Actions – Andrew and Phoebe to liaise to set up a follow up meeting.**

**Actions – joint letter to minister of education on the information we heard at the beginning from Children in Wales on their poverty strategy. Share with Johns team, then share with the joint CPG.**

John Griffiths and Jane Dodds thanked everyone for their involvement and lets get ideas and go forward from there.