

Senedd Cross Party Group on Human Rights

Meeting, online, 3rd July 2024, 12 pm

In attendance:

In line with previous CPG practice only speakers, the secretary and Senedd Members or their staff are expressly noted as having attended the meeting.

- Sioned Willaims MS - Chair
- Professor Simon Hoffman -Secretary
- Kate Ewing – JustFair

The meeting was attended by various representatives of civil society organizations and networks working in Wales.

Matters Arising

From meeting in March 2024

- Letter to University VCs re signing the University Code on supporting working class academics. Sent to all eight VCs on 18th March. So far we have received only two replies: from Cardiff and Wrexham. Neither will adopt the Code.
- Letter to Minister For Social Justice re establishing a minimum level of socioeconomic entitlements in Wales, and removing the discretion of local authorities in Wales over whether to support children from families with no recourse to public funds. Letter sent on 18th March. Letter gives rather bland general recap of some of the policies currently in delivery.

Doesn't address the issue of minimum provision.

Points to guidance for local authorities on supporting those with No Recourse to Public Funds. Welcomes Bevan Foundation report on the issue and states that Welsh Government will explore what actions can be undertaken to help those who have NRPF in Wales.

Action: The meeting agreed to invite an update from the Bevan Foundation at the next meeting (18th September).

Presentation: Kate Ewing JustFair

The meeting received a presentation from Kate Ewing, Research Office at JustFair. JustFair is a not-for-profit organisation which campaigns for better recognition and compliance with socioeconomic rights in the UK, in accordance with the UK's obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The UK is currently undergoing a process of examination by the

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Kate provided the CPG with an explanation of the process, and how civil society can provide evidence for consideration by the Committee.

The presentation was very well received by attendees: several commented that the presentation was clear and informative and would assist greatly with Wales' Civil Society preparations of submissions to the Committee.

Following the presentation there was a very lively discussion and Q&A. Points discussed included:

- UK government likely to be examined between 6th and 10th February 2025.
- Kate informed the meeting that the reporting process had reached the stage where the Committee has released a 'List of Issues' on which it wishes to receive evidence. She suggested that civil society organisations might wish to use the List of Issues as a thematic starting point for submissions of evidence.
- Evidence submitted can raise new issues, but the Committee's starting point will be the List of Issues.
- The Committee is interested in disaggregated data and 'regional' distinctions. Kate suggested this may be an opportunity to raise issues particular to Wales.

Update on Progress on Incorporation

The Chair invited Charles Whitmore, Chair of the Legislative Options Working Group, to comment on developments on incorporation of human rights treaties in Wales.

Charles noted that he sensed a 'cooling' of enthusiasm for incorporation, in particular of ICESCR, with some pressure on LOWG to consider non-legislative alternatives to implement socioeconomic rights in particular.

Simon Hoffman noted that JustFair had written to the new First Minister to – in terms – urge him to expedite progress on incorporation, but that the response had been 'underwhelming'.

Action: The Chair agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary with portfolio for Social Justice to clarify that Welsh Government remains committed to incorporation and stood by its acceptance of the recommendations from the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights research; and, that as the UK is being examined by the Committee on ICESCR, that Wales would continue to take a progressive approach to incorporation of socioeconomic rights, as previously recommended by the Committee.

Date of next meeting

18th September at 12 pm.