

Lesley Griffiths AM
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

24 November 2015

Dear Minister

Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Community-based approaches to tackling poverty

Thank you for agreeing to attend the Committee's meeting on 27 January to discuss issues relating to the second phase of our inquiry into poverty; community-based approaches to tackling poverty.

As part of this inquiry, the Committee issued a call for evidence earlier this year, and received a number of [responses](#). Those responses highlighted that, while targeting poverty reduction programmes towards high poverty areas is seen to be a rational approach, there needs to be a more sophisticated understanding of the demographics of these areas, as well as the people in poverty who live outside these targeted areas. For convenience, I have attached a brief summary of the key points from the responses in the annexe to this letter.

Ahead of the meeting on 27 January, and in addition to any other general points you wish to make, I would be grateful if you would consider and respond to the questions set out below. The Committee would like to return to consultees for an update prior to the meeting, and to share your response with them. To this end, it would be helpful if we could receive your response by **7 January**.



Question 1

In your [response](#) to our first report (Poverty and Inequality), you said that officials were planning further analysis of the indicators underpinning the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. You noted that this will provide small-area data on different types of deprivation for children and young people and will also be published for larger geographical areas including local authorities. You also said that the Economic and Social Research Council, in partnership with Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW), has funded four projects as part of the What Works in Tackling Poverty Centre.

- 1.1 As a result of this work, how do you intend to review the Welsh Government's place-based approach to anti-poverty programmes to ensure that it is the most effective way to reduce poverty?
- 1.2 How do you respond to the evidence we have received suggesting that, while a place-based approach to reducing poverty is rational, a more sophisticated understanding of the demographics of local areas is needed to make it more effective?
- 1.3 How will you ensure that people in poverty living outside Communities First areas are able to access anti-poverty programmes and services?

Question 2

The Bevan and Joseph Rowntree Foundations have highlighted evidence showing that area-based approaches are most successful for improving housing and local environmental issues and in achieving 'soft' outcomes, but less effective in addressing problems in health, education and employment.

- 2.1 How has the Welsh Government built these considerations into its poverty reduction programmes?
- 2.2 How does your primarily place-based approach to poverty reduction align with the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?
- 2.3 We note the Welsh Government's proposal to include 'people living in poverty' as a national indicator as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. How will the Future Generations



Commissioner hold the Welsh Government and Welsh public authorities to account on efforts to reduce poverty?

- 2.4 What other data will be tracked under this indicator, for example in-work poverty, fuel poverty, food poverty?

Question 3

In your response to our first report, you outline a number of outputs from your key anti-poverty programmes, including over 32,000 children benefitting from Flying Start last year and, through Families First, more than 2,700 Team Around the Family Action Plans closed with successful results.

- 3.1 What are the overall outcomes of each of these programmes, for example how many children were lifted out of poverty as a result of Flying Start?

Question 4

You noted in your response that you have “significantly increased Pupil Deprivation Grant funding and the Supporting People Programme”. However, Community Housing Cymru and Cymorth Cymru claim that the Supporting People budget has been cut by £10m to £124.4m in 2015–16 – 7.6% of the overall Supporting People budget.

- 4.1 Can you clarify the position of the Supporting People budget?

Question 5

Recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that, in comparison to ten years ago, there are now more people of working age in poverty (particularly young adults), and fewer children and pensioners in this position. It has also shown that poverty has risen in working families and fallen in workless families; there has been no reduction in the extent of low pay in Wales for a decade, with the proportion of jobs that are low paid remaining at around 25 per cent. In total, 270,000 jobs, mainly held by women, are paid below two-thirds of the UK median hourly wage; and the introduction of the national living wage will only partially offset the cuts in tax credits: some families with children in particular will be worse off. Rural Wales will be disproportionately affected.



5.1 You told us that there are no immediate plans to revise the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. Considering the increase in poverty among in-work families, and the reduction in child and pensioner poverty, how will this be reflected in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan (rather than the Child Poverty Strategy) in future?

Question 6

The Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2015 committed to investing specifically in improving the position of women in the workforce, by aiming to help over 5,000 female workers to work towards qualifications and an improved labour market situation.

6.1 Can you provide us with more information on this commitment, and tell us how you have engaged directly with “representatives from the private and business sectors in Wales to identify opportunities for collaborative working” as noted in the report.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Christine Chapman AC / AM

Chair



Annexe: summary of key points from written evidence

Those who responded to our call for written evidence told us:

- Welsh Government poverty reduction programmes are heavily targeted towards specific places, and there is a presumption that the population within these areas is homogenous;
- many people in poverty miss out on services and support because they live outside targeted areas;
- people in rural areas are likely to live outside targeted areas;
- the Trussell Trust highlighted the growth in foodbanks in affluent areas, such as Monmouth and Brecon. These areas do not benefit from Communities First funding, but the rise in food poverty demonstrates that there are still significant pockets of deprivation;
- place-based programmes are most successful in improving housing and environmental issues, and in achieving 'soft' outcomes, but less effective at addressing problems in health, education and employment;
- the Equality and Human Rights Commission noted that disabled people, minority ethnic groups, lone parents and older people may experience high levels of poverty but won't necessarily benefit from place-based approaches because there is no 'flex' built in to accommodate their needs;
- Dr Peter Matthews at the University of Stirling found that anti-poverty policies focused on deprived neighbourhoods rarely take into account the gendered experience of poverty; that women are entering a different labour market from a different starting point, often with care responsibilities;
- co-ordination is poor between Communities First, Families First, Flying Start, Enterprise Zones and regeneration programmes. Also, the geography of these programmes is not always aligned;
- a recent evaluation of Communities First found considerable variation in performance between areas, and while the programme has improved, there are still issues in evaluating impact and progress.

