

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P-LG-1447-15

Christine Chapman AM, Chair
Communities, Equalities and Local Government
Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

21 December 2015

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2015 regarding the second phase of your Inquiry into Poverty around community-based approaches to tackling poverty.

I have not been able to provide detailed responses to all questions within the time constraints, however, I will provide more detailed evidence on the Welsh Government's community-based approach to tackling poverty through my formal written response to this strand of your Inquiry and my appearance before the Committee on 27 January.

Question 1

I believe both place and non-place based approaches to tackling poverty are required, which is reflected in the range of programmes funded by the Welsh Government. However, I recognise there are always opportunities to strengthen and potentially improve our approach.

I am in the process of reviewing the Welsh Government's principal tackling poverty programmes, which include place and non-place-based models of delivery. I have recently undertaken a piece of work to identify actions to bring closer alignment between the four tackling poverty programmes – Flying Start, Families First, Communities First and Supporting People.

Question 2

The Welsh Government is taking significant action to improve housing and regenerate local communities. Health, education and employment outcomes are likely to be poorer for people living in low income households, so are rightly central considerations for all tackling poverty programmes.

I do not accept the Welsh Government has a 'primarily place-based approach to poverty reduction'. Community-based approaches are an important part of a range of policies and programmes, along with those open to people from all parts of Wales, regardless of where they live, such as Families First, Supporting People and the Pupil Deprivation Grant. A community-based approach to tackling poverty forms part of our ambitions for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. One of the seven well-being goals is 'A Wales of cohesive communities' and community-based approaches (amongst other approaches), can contribute to meeting all of the other goals.

The Future Generations Commissioner has the power to conduct reviews into how a public body is taking into account the long-term impact of what the body does under their well-being duty. They will be able to review the steps a public body is taking to meet its well-being objectives, the extent to which it is meeting its objectives and whether they have set well-being objectives or taken steps in accordance with the sustainable development principle. It will be a matter for the new Commissioner to decide the manner in which she will discharge her new duties and powers.

The draft indicators which are part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act include two measures around poverty. The first is the percentage of households in relative income poverty, measured separately for children, working age and those of pension age. We have also recognised poverty is multi-layered and are therefore proposing a second indicator on material deprivation. This measures whether households can afford necessary goods and activities through a series of questions on the National Survey. Other data will continue to be monitored to understand how we are tackling different kinds of poverty, including in-work, fuel and food poverty.

Question 3

The impact evaluation of Flying Start suggested outcomes for families living in Flying Start areas may now be on a par with outcomes from families in less disadvantaged areas. Qualitative evaluation data also found evidence of all anticipated immediate outcomes of the programme. This includes children's language skills and their social and emotional development. Researchers concluded that "experiencing the Flying Start programme has been life-changing for some high need families".

As with many early intervention programmes, some outcomes from Families First and Flying Start, may not be realised for a number of years. A recent report published by the Early Intervention Foundation highlighted the fiscal cost of missed opportunities to provide early, targeted support to children and young people. The report concluded "early Intervention is the smart and realistic choice for using ever scarcer public money". Current evaluation activity includes developing an approach to track outcomes for Flying Start children as they move into and through education. We will also continue to monitor a range of health outcomes including immunisation take up, healthy child weight and children's development.

Question 4

I am sorry if there was any ambiguity in my written response to the Committee, the Supporting People Budget was reduced in 2015/16 by £9.9 million.

To date, we have protected the Supporting People Programme Grant as far as possible in the face of the successive cuts to our budget. However, cumulative cuts from the UK Government, coupled with rising demands and pressures, meant in the 2015/16 budget we made the difficult decision to reduce Supporting People funding. We have maintained the budget of £124 million for the programme in 2016/17.

Question 5

I use the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report to constantly refresh our approach to reducing poverty in Wales. I fully recognise the changing characteristics of poverty. This is why, for example, in the 2014 Annual Report we included actions to address in-work poverty because we recognised it was a growing and significant issue. Following consultation with partners and the publication of the Child Poverty Strategy in March, the 2015 Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report reflected new priorities identified and included new commitments in areas such as food poverty and childcare.

Question 6

The commitment in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report to support 5,000 women relates to actions under the specific gender equality theme within the 2014-20 ESF programmes. Thus far the Welsh European Funding Office has approved one project which will specifically contribute to this target – Agile Nation 2, led by Chwarae Teg. This programme, along with others which will be approved in due course, will contribute to the achievement of the target.

Other broader programmes will also contribute to improving the position of women in the labour market, even if this is not the sole focus of the project. Training projects for employed people, including ESF-supported apprenticeships, under the 2014-20 ESF programmes are expected to benefit over 90,000 female employees. All of the skills and employment programmes being delivered and developed by the Welsh Government will also play a role, including Communities for Work and the Traineeships Programme.

In October, I held a Tackling Poverty Summit which included representatives from the public, private and third sectors. This was an extremely positive event which has led to stronger relationships with organisations and individuals in the private sector. My officials are looking at tangible ways in which we can work together moving forwards and held another Summit to maintain momentum on 6 January this year.

I will elaborate and provide more detail in some areas in my formal written response to the Committee.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Cymunedau a Threchu Tlodi
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty