



## **Oxfam Cymru: Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into the Future of equality and human rights in Wales**

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### **1. Introduction**

Oxfam works with others to overcome poverty in three ways:

- by developing projects with people living in poverty that improve their lives and show others how things can change
- by raising public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change
- by working with policymakers to tackle the causes of poverty.

For further details about Oxfam's work, see [www.oxfam.org.uk/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/).

### **2. The impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on human rights in Wales**

In relation to this inquiry, it is important for the Committee to take into account the work of the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee in this area in 2013.<sup>1</sup> The evidence presented by Dr Simon Hoffman for example is particularly relevant if, following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is not fully transposed into UK legislation. In his evidence, Dr Simon Hoffman explored the issue of human rights accountability, stating that:

“Welsh Human Rights Law is an emergent possibility. Section 81 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (GWA 2006) provides that the Welsh Ministers have no power to do anything which is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); similarly, ECHR incompatible legislation is beyond the competence of the NAW. Human rights compliance therefore goes to the legality of action by WG and the NAW in a way that does not apply to the UK Government or UK Parliament.”

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<sup>1</sup> The Future of Equality & Human Rights in Wales (August 2013) National Assembly for Wales; Communities, Equalities & Local Government Committee:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s19915/The%20future%20of%20equality%20and%20human%20rights%20in%20Wales%20Report%20August%202013.pdf>

Based on this and other evidence received, the 2013 Committee recommended that:

‘The Welsh Government should seek further powers in the field of equality and human rights to build on the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.’

This recommendation was accepted in principle by the Welsh Government and so it is important that the existing Committee clarify what action was taken, the result of this action in terms of the Wales Act 2017 and any further work that needs to be done.

### **3. Human rights and poverty**

Oxfam believes that respect for human rights will help lift people out of poverty and injustice, allow them to assert their dignity and guarantee sustainable development. When we speak about having a rights-based approach, this is what we mean.

Oxfam believes that everyone should have the right to:

- A livelihood
- Basic services
- Be safe from harm
- Be heard
- Be treated as an equal

Research by the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) in 2016<sup>2</sup> indicated that human rights/equalities based approach could help to focus attention on ensuring that mainstream services address the needs of the most vulnerable groups effectively.

Contributors to the PPIW research saw the Welsh Government as being a leader in championing human rights in a developed country context and recognised that human rights are built into the governance in Wales through statutory frameworks. However, they highlighted uncertainty about the link between human rights and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and suggested that there was a case for monitoring how human rights are reflected in the policies of the Welsh Government and other public bodies.

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For more information please contact

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<sup>2</sup> Alternatives approaches to tackling poverty & inequality: Existing evidence and evidence needs (June 2016)  
PPIW <http://ppi.wales.gov.uk/files/2016/11/Alternative-approaches-to-poverty-reduction.pdf>