

**P-05-877 Children's used uniform scheme, Correspondence – Children in Wales to Chair, 09.07.19**



**Children in Wales**  
**Plant yng Nghymru**

Janet Finch Saunders AM  
Chair - Petitions committee.  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

09 July 2019

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders AM

**Petition P-05-877 - Children's Used Uniform Scheme**

Thank you for your letter of 12 June regarding the petition submitted by Rachael Mackay and Topaz Class at Monnow Primary School, and for providing us with an opportunity to inform your considerations.

Children in Wales have been requested by the Welsh Government to produce a suite of guides designed for schools across Wales. The Price of Poverty Guides will identify many of the challenges poverty presents for learners in respect of their education and well-being, and sets out a number of interventions schools can adopt to help ameliorate the impact of poverty by taking a whole school approach. The Guides cover a number of themes, including understanding the key drivers and impact of poverty for pupils in low income families, food insecurity and hunger, school uniforms and clothing, participation in the school day and home-school relationships. The Guides have been developed with input from the End Child Poverty Network Cymru and other key stakeholders. This work is due for completion this summer, with the Guides anticipated to be ready for the next school term in September. We will be delighted to share these resources with you and Committee members upon their release.

The resource we are producing in respect of School Uniform and Clothing pays particular regard to the concerns raised in respect of affordability and availability of uniform items, and the additional financial barriers many families from low income backgrounds can face. For children living in families who struggle to afford the correct uniform, school can be a particular source of worry and anxiety.

There is much that schools can do to help lift the barriers for children from low income families in respect of the cost of school uniforms. This can include initiating recycling schemes for uniforms in schools, making available spare uniform and sports kit that learners can borrow, and organising end of term 'pre-loved' uniform swaps, sales or pop-up shops.

As well as reducing the costs for parents, such schemes can also positively contribute to the broader environmental agenda, by helping to avoid clothing waste, promoting the concept of recycling and encouraging the re-use of items which may otherwise be disposed of.

All actions taken by schools to help learners to access a school uniform should always be done in a sensitive, non-stigmatising and dignified manner, ensuring that items are always in a presentable condition, clean and undamaged.

We would wish to draw your attention to the Revolve Project lesson plan<sup>1</sup> which has been developed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales to encourage children and young people to set up uniform re-use shops in their schools.

However, some parents and children may prefer, and be better able, to access pre-used uniforms in a different location in their community other than within a particular school. Engagement and consultation with parents is therefore critical in helping to establish and identify the most convenient and accessible location(s) with a locality. This will be of particular relevance, although not exclusively, to parents residing in rural areas some distance away from their child's or children's school.

Local authorities would have a role in working with the schools in their area, as well as with local third sector clothing outlets and civil society/community groups, to help ensure that there is a choice of locations where possible, particularly important in enabling parents, including working parents, to access pre-used items outside of school opening hours and holiday periods. The Denbighshire Uniform Recycle Scheme is the often quoted practice example in Wales of what can be achieved where

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/a-charter-for-change-resources/>

cooperation between several partners has enabled parents to access used clothing items at a reduced price<sup>2</sup>

We are therefore of the position that used school uniform schemes should be available in all local authority areas in Wales. Such schemes should be accessible for, and be inclusive of, all parents and carers and be delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified manner. Re-usable items should be affordable, with particular consideration given to the needs of low income families, including those in receipt of free school meals and where need is greatest. Schemes should be well promoted.

We hope that our response is of help to inform your deliberations, and would wish to thank the children of Topaz Class at Monnow Primary School for bringing this important matter to your attention. Should you require any addition information, we would be only too happy to help.

Yours Sincerely

Sean O'Neill  
Policy Director

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.denbighshirefreepress.co.uk/news/16689304.uniform-recycle-scheme-provides-about-900-children-with-school-uniforms/>