



Wales Safer Communities Network response to: Consultation on the draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2023

Closed 11 September 2023

Response submitted via the online survey.

Name: Sarah Capstick

Organisation (if applicable): Wales Safer Communities Network

Questions:

Q1. Do you agree that the introduction to the draft strategy is clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on the introduction to the strategy?:

The information is clear and accessible to professionals working in community safety. However, we do think it could be improved by making sure the length of time the strategy will be in place for is made clear. We understand from the workshop we ran with community safety leads that it is a ten year strategy this did not appear to be specified in the introduction or the title which we think would assist with clarity.

Q2a. In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 1 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Q2b. Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 1 clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on content related to Objective 1?:

We agree with the objective and the benefits of maximising income whilst also reducing costs, however many of the examples provided of what is being done are



things that apply across the whole population and therefore are not necessarily specific to alleviate child poverty. For example, the roll out of free school meals to all primary school children during term time will benefit all children irrelevant of their socio-economic status, whilst the stopping of assistance during school holidays only impacted on those living in low income and poverty.

It has the potential to help reduce crime, if we look at the element of poverty with children and young people. The Strategy will work well with the Serious Violence Duty and also have a good impact on ASB. For example, children who otherwise would feel they didn't have the money to go with their peers to do different activities, they end up bored and using graffiti etc.

Q3. Do you agree that Priority 1 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say we will do to take forward work under Priority 1?:

We agree with the wording describing priority 1 but concern has been raised about the use of the singular 'entitlement' which is sometimes heard in regard to community safety incidents. At the workshop we ran with community safety practitioners there was a suggestion that the plural 'entitlements' could resolve this and be more accurate as the priority involves three parts.

Q4a. In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 2 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Q4b. Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 2 clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on content related to Objective 2?:

We would like to see some reference to legal pathways out of poverty. County lines and other forms of criminal activity or exploitation may provide a route out of poverty, but it is not a healthy or safe pathway and which can have a long term detrimental effect and potentially enable a cycle of poverty.



Q5. Do you agree that Priority 2 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say we will do under Priority 2?:

We agree with the principles of Fair Work but think there could be more crossover between this strategy and the LGBTQIA+, Anti-Racism and Learning Disability Action Plans. Fair work should include the right not to be harassed, bullied or subject to violence due to the role you undertake. Anecdotally we are hearing of increased verbal and physical attacks on retail, hospitality and delivery staff which may result in them needing time off work which may impact the wages being earned. Lost hours or days of work may also impact on support services therefore impacting other areas of the strategy.

Q6a. In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 3 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Q6b. Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 3 clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on content related to Objective 3?:

For many there are concerns about housing, adequate housing which does not involve overcrowding and is not subject to damp and other issues that can impact on physical and mental wellbeing. Community Safety practitioners have told the Network that a child concerned about housing is less likely to engage with support services, this is exasperated for those living in temporary accommodation.

Therefore, without housing issues being resolved it is likely that the pathway under objective 2 is more likely to fail.

Whilst the majority of criminal justice is a reserved matter there are clear crossovers with youth offender services and many of the prevention services and support are devolved and will link with parts of this strategy. The concern raised through our workshop was around the plethora of policy, programme and legislative drivers that create a complicated landscape for people to navigate. The willingness is there, and



this could be an incredibly helpful Strategy, but the time and space needed to work out how all of this can come together isn't always available across the public sector. It may therefore be helpful for more detail about the interconnectedness between devolved and reserved bodies in delivering the strategy may be beneficial.

Q7. Do you agree that Priority 3 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say we will do under Priority 3?:

We think that this priority could be extended to incorporate active travel with good foot and cycle pathways that improve access and safe access especially for children and young people. People living in poverty are less likely to have access to a car and more reliant on public transport, walking or cycling.

The provision of green spaces that can be used for play, sport or other activities and hobbies that improve wellbeing should be part of all planning applications for new buildings. Including how people will access them safely.

Q8a. In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 4 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Q8b. Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 4 clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on content related to Objective 4?:

Whilst we think that the information included is clear and accessible, we also think there may be something around safeguarding that could be included under either this or objective three. Child abuse is not a direct impact of poverty. However it is known that those with access to economic independence have more options for escaping from domestic abuse and other safeguarding incidents, so poverty may extend the time a child is exposed to witnessing abuse of an adult in the home. This then has links with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

This needs to be everybody's responsibility and it shouldn't be polarised to one area such as the Public Service Board or Education. It needs to be everybody's business,



so that it is not individual services and support that delivers with dignity and respect but a whole holistic approach that delivers with and for children and their families.

Q9. Do you agree that Priority 4 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say we will do under Priority 4?:

We are pleased to see pupil poverty included but think there may need to be some reference to technology advancements or the need for access to public WiFi as more homework requires completing online or online research. Poverty can be a cause for digital exclusion which then has an impact on education outcomes. There have been some examples especially during Covid restrictions around enabling digital inclusion whilst ensuring technology is accessed in a safe and protected way.

Q10a. In considering the requirement under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure for the Welsh Government to set objectives for the contribution towards the eradication of child poverty, do you agree that Objective 5 should be an objective of the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Q10b. Is the information about what we have heard and what the Welsh Government doing in relation to Objective 5 clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on content related to Objective 5?:

There does not appear to be a separate 'what we are doing' section as for the other objectives which may make it clearer. The landscape of regional and local Boards involving a range of devolved and reserved public bodies can add to the complexity, as can the legislative landscape. Increasing numbers of duties and new legislation without additional resource is impacting on capacity. Community Safety is delivered throughout partnership approaches across Policing in Wales, Councils, Fire and Rescue Services, Probation, third sector and private organisations and bodies. Co-location is known to improve partnership working and improve the opportunities to pool resources and therefore we think it may be something that could be strengthened within the strategy and assist in the one-stop holistic approach advocated for support and services.

Funding was raised as an ongoing issue at the workshop. Short term within year funding which has to be competed for can stifle collaboration and has a possible



negative impact on staff retention which then could negatively impact on earlier objectives. Funding for innovative and new projects is often not long enough to set up, run and evaluate leading to short term projects that come and go and are not able to provide the consistency and leads to a postcode lottery for what is available to a child or family in poverty depending on where they live.

Q11. Do you agree that Priority 5 should be a priority for the draft strategy?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say we will do under Priority 5?:

Community safety does not operate in silos and therefore anything that enables and promotes collaboration and the breaking down of barriers is appreciated, providing it is supported by action. We were surprised that the Wellbeing of Future Generations was not mentioned within this priority especially in light of the five ways of working. Some of those who attended the workshop identified that they have tried to tackle child poverty on multiple occasions as individual organisations, and it hasn't worked. Which is why holistic ownership is critical – poverty is everybody's business. This priority and strategy should help colleagues across Councils and partners to understand how pieces of work can impact poverty. Third sector partners may assist in the understanding of what lived poverty looks like and the knowledge they have used to influence thinking moving forward. It is important that the partners take a "poverty" perspective, focusing on how to build prosperity, ambition, and aspiration.

Q12. Do you agree that the section setting out how we will monitor and report on our progress is clear and accessible?

Yes

Unsure

No

Do you have any comments on what we say about how we will monitor and report on our progress?:

There is a reliance on reporting against wellbeing plans which may not specifically focus on child poverty, but on wider poverty or not have poverty within its priorities in some local areas or regions. Some have taken poverty as a separate strategy as it was felt to be lost within the wellbeing plan, this is an issue we also find with community safety.

There are people who live in poverty who understand that things are hard, but don't necessarily say they live in poverty which may make them harder to identify and support as they may not think the strategy is for them.



Q13. Does the Child Poverty Strategy adequately respond to the intersection between child poverty with protected characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, disability and sexuality) and the experience of socio-economic disadvantage?

Yes

Unsure

No

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?:

There is evidence that those living in poverty are likely to have more health issues and take longer to access health services than those who are more affluent. This may be due to the need to keep working, housing issues or carer responsibilities. There does not appear to be anything to tackle health discrepancies and ensure fairer access, without which more days may be missed of education or being able to access services. We note that mental health is included as one of the areas where action is being taken, but as community safety practitioners the shortage in mental health services provides additional challenges. This shortage or gap could have a detrimental impact on the overall outcomes of the strategy.

We also think that there could be something not currently included about loan sharks and organised crime groups who may fill or try to fill the void caused by poverty.

Whilst the strategy will not stop these from operating if people are lifted out of poverty then these options may not be as appealing and people may have alternatives or not been drawn in by them at all.

Youth offending and those at risk of offending aren't clear in the Draft Strategy. This is broader than just the protected characteristics noted in the Strategy and may need to include vulnerabilities that leave children and young people more exposed.

Q14. We would like to know your views on the effects that the Child Poverty Strategy proposal would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?:

We are not aware of any positive or negative effects that the strategy may have on the Welsh language use.



Q15. We would like to know your views on the Integrated Impact Assessment. Are there any specific areas where you feel further detail is required, or any specific issues you wish to highlight which may have an impact on a specific group?:

As the Wales Safer Communities Network we would like to see some reference to the positive impacts that could happen for individuals and communities in regard to community safety. For example, acquisitive crime has been raised with us as a possible impact of the cost of living crisis due to the lack of funds to pay for items. If children and young people are unable to access activities due to them being out of financial reach then this may result in them feeling separate from their communities which may lead to an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour and other activities.

Q16. We would like to know your views on the Child Rights Impact Assessment.

Are there any specific areas where you feel further detail is required, or any specific issues you wish to highlight which may have an impact on children?:

We have none to raise as part of this response.

Q17. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Community safety works across devolved and reserved areas to make people and communities feel safer. In a similar way the delivery of support and services and collaboration as laid out in this strategy will also need to work across devolved and reserved areas and between public bodies operating in those spheres and it may be an area that could be strengthened within the strategy itself.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a community of practice element, where people were going above and beyond to get the messages out to people what support was available to them. Need to continue doing this 'scaffolding support' going forwards as good practice learning.

It was identified at the workshop that the long term plan is critical, because years have been spent working in this arena, and we've almost come back full circle as a direct correlation to Cost of Living, Covid-19 and poverty. This Strategy, if we work together on it, we believe will have an impact, but it needs to be embedded in all of our strategic and considerations going forwards, and we can't do it alone, we have to do it together, and that needs to be the key message.

The Welsh Local Government Association have provided a separate response which holds detail on behalf of Local Authorities which we support and covers the wider breadth of work they undertake. This response focuses on community safety and takes into account a wider range of partnership organisations not just Local Authorities.