



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

# Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024: engagement report

Report of what we heard from people before we consulted on the updated Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

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# Introduction

The **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010** places a duty on Welsh Ministers to set child poverty objectives and to report every 3 years on progress towards achieving those objectives. The Welsh Government's child poverty objectives are rooted in what the evidence tells us about where we can have most impact in terms of improving outcomes for children, young people growing up in low-income families.

The Welsh Government has a proud history of working to ensure that the views of the people of Wales are at the centre of our decision making. The duty of due regard to the UNCRC that is placed on Welsh Ministers through **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011** means ensuring the voices of children and young people is integrated into the process for the policy decisions we make.

This meant that when we decided to develop a draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales for consultation we wanted to hear from children and young people, their families and the organisations that support them. We wanted to know what matters to people with experience of poverty and where they think we can make the biggest difference.

We worked with our partners (see Annex 1) to hold engagement events in the communities where people live, delivered by organisations that people know and trust. This was especially important in relation to engaging people with protected characteristics, including Black, Asian and minority Ethnic people, disabled and neurodivergent people, LGBTQ+ people and women receiving support because of gendered issues.

The engagement activity has involved engagement with 3,272 people. 1,953 of these people engaged via work targeted at those with protected characteristics. Of the total, 1,402 were children or young people, 1,329 were parent/carers and

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319 were grandparents and great grandparents. This has included care experienced young people and kinship carers. We also engaged with 222 representatives of organisations directly or indirectly.

We asked people to talk about 4 areas and to tell us if there was anything else we needed to think about (see Annex 2). The 4 areas we asked about were selected because of evidence from the Wales Centre for Public Policy, **Poverty and social exclusion: A way forward** suggested that these were the areas where the Welsh Government should focus.

The information gathered through this engagement activity had a direct impact on our decisions about what to include in the draft Child Poverty Strategy on which we have consulted.

This report shares more detailed information about the things that children and young people, their families and the organisations that support them told us through the engagement events. The quotes included are direct quotes from the evidence that was returned to us by the organisations who facilitated engagement activity.

The evidence gathered has had a direct impact on the decisions we have made about what we included in the draft Child Poverty Strategy for consultation and what to include in the final Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. The information gathered is relevant for many policy areas and has been shared across the Welsh Government.

## What children and young people told us

The Welsh Government is very grateful to the 1,402 children or young people who gave their time to go to events and talk about what matters to them.

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Organisations facilitating the engagement on our behalf worked with children and young people in a number of different ways:

- We commissioned Children in Wales, Save the Children and Voices from Care who worked with 102 children and young people through schools and existing groups, including care experienced young people.
- We commissioned EYST and Women Connect First to offer engagement events to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families and as part of that work they engaged with 68 children and young people through focus groups.
- Community groups and organisations who were awarded small grants to engage families with protected characteristics, engaged with 1,070 children and young people including disabled and neurodivergent young people, LGBTQ+ young people, young people with experience of homelessness, young parents and Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma young people. This work was carried out in a variety of ways, with existing groups, through standalone engagement events and as part of play and family activity sessions.
- Local Councils for Voluntary Services were awarded Welsh Government grants via a scheme administered via the WCVA on our behalf to engage with families and community members and as part of this work they engaged with 162 children and young people.

A young person's version of a Framework for Discussion (Annex 3) was shared with these organisations and the organisations used various approaches to sharing the 4 areas for discussion with children and young people.

## **1. Reducing costs and maximising the income of families so that children and young people have enough financial and material support for what they need**

There were a number of common themes in the evidence that children and young people contributed through the engagement activity, in relation to

reducing costs and maximising incomes.

Cost of living: Children and young people spoke about the cost of food, fuel and 'bills. They talked about the need for low-cost and free food and reductions in energy prices. Food poverty was most likely to be raised by children and young people from Refugee and Asylum-seeking families.

Digital exclusion related to the costs of access and equipment was raised as an issue. The cost of transport was also an issue, especially for children and young people from Refugee and Asylum seeker families. Housing and rent costs were also raised as an issue putting financial pressure on their families.

Children and young people are very aware of the financial pressures on their parents and spoke about protecting their parents from requests for things that cost money and trying to help out.

“ And, like, you're given a tenner and your mother says, right, this needs to last you the week, so you've gotta be more aware of your money because as well as giving you money for the school, they've gotta buy things in the house as well.

“ So then, once you know that, you've gotta be, more aware so, maybe if you get, 2 pieces of toast, you may be hungry but then you go down to one and then you have more breakfast in the house. So then, it's helping your mother out and it can, sort of, be helping you out as well. ”

## Cost of school

Food in school was a major theme for children and young people who wanted Free School Breakfasts and Free School Meals to be available to more children and young people. Young people also spoke about the cost of food in secondary

school. They said that their parents don't have enough money to cover the cost of them eating in school every day. Some children and young people talked about going hungry in school.

“ Make sure everyone has had breakfast otherwise they can't learn properly. ”

The cost of school uniform and school equipment, including basic equipment like pens, pencils and course books was also raised by many children and young people. Young people recognised the costs associated with school uniforms and identified this as a financial pressure on their parents.

Similarly, children and young people said the cost of school trips was too high and that their families can't afford the costs.

“ Cheaper school trips to make it inclusive, children who need it most don't get it otherwise.

“ Children and young people from Refugee and Asylum seeker families also spoke about a lack of free transport to get to school. ”

## Income and advice

Children and young people talked about the need for jobs with a decent wage and changes to the tax system to benefit those on lower incomes. They also spoke about their parents needing access to free childcare to enable them to work.

Some children and young people spoke about the complexity of the benefits system, difficulties in getting information about and accessing entitlements and benefit levels (financial value). Care experienced young people spoke about this

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and their own difficulties with understanding and accessing financial support.

Children who had parents who have English as an additional language talked about how difficult it is to understand forms and the importance of having information and claims forms available in different languages.

“ ‘Support people who do not understand English and Welsh with benefit forms.’ ”

Roma young people spoke about the need for more government support with providing job opportunities, food, money, and advice.

Care experienced young people talked about the complexity of financial support systems and that accessing straight forward advice can be difficult.

“ One phone call, one face, one relationship to build, in order for us to access what you need, stop making us navigate complicated systems. ”

Children and young people also spoke about the need for financial education and budgeting advice to be taught in schools to prepare them for the future, some children and young people wanted their parents to be able to access financial education.

## **2. Creating pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have enough financial and material support for what they need and reach their potential**

Children and young people talked about what they thought would make a difference to help them reach their potential, but they also told us about the

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support they think would help their parents.

## Education

Children and young people also talked about the cost of education when thinking about pathways out of poverty. They identified investment in education as important in developing pathways out of poverty.

“ ‘Education being free....A lot of children won't manage to get out of their families poverty. A lot of companies want good education for good universities but that is very expensive, and they may get discriminated against at school.’ ”

Young people spoke about wanting a broader offer of ‘practical,’ vocational and ‘essential for life’ education. They felt that too much emphasis is put on traditional and more academic subjects and that there should be parity for practical and vocational learning.

“ Education should emphasise transferable skills which are relevant to employability, e.g. Maths should cover finances and self-employment not just algebra!

“ Not pushing specific subjects. Creative subjects are viable and do get young people jobs. It's disheartening to be pushed away from creative subjects.

“ Some subjects taught in school are unnecessary, and instead, schools should focus on teaching skills that are relevant to daily life, such as budgeting, staying safe on the internet, and managing money.

“ Financing and budgeting support in schools maybe. It's now a big thing

that they don't tell you much about. ”

Children and young people wanted more financial education in school. They thought it was important to learn more about how to manage money in adulthood, how to budget and save. Children and young people said that those growing up in low-income households need more support with financial literacy.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people said that there needs to be more educational support for those newer to the UK and joining the curriculum at later ages as well as those with lower qualification levels within their wider family network.

Gypsy Roma Traveller young people participated in the engagement work and Roma young people spoke about the need for more government support with providing job opportunities, food, money, and advice.

As part of the engagement with Gypsy Roma Traveller young people, Roma young people spoke about the need for more government support with providing job opportunities, food, money, and advice.

Roma young people raised the issue of more support in school for Roma pupils so that they could grasp the learning material and be successful in getting a qualification as well as access to English classes for all Roma.

Disabled young people, neurodivergent young people and young people with additional learning needs said they didn't always get the support they needed in school. Some young people did not receive a diagnosis until they were older, which made it challenging for them to navigate the education system. Others felt that teachers were not well-educated on learning difficulties, and there were not enough resources available to test if someone was neurodivergent.

Some young people talked about the need to maintain one-on-one support for children with disabilities, but that funding was an issue, particularly when

children transitioned to secondary school. They also mentioned that there were not enough wheelchair-accessible schools, and some students with disabilities were taught in spare rooms because they could not access the upper levels of the school.

Young people also spoke about the need for access to training and lifelong learning for themselves and their parents so that people are inspired and can build skills to improve their employment prospects.

## Careers and aspirations

Children and young people talked about wanting more careers advice and support. They also said they would value more contact with adults who could act as role models for them and help them to believe they could have and meet aspirations.

“ With the Careers Wales thing, I remember I had to do a survey thing and based on the survey, they advised us. And we did that in Year 9 and now that I’m coming up to, like, going to college, we had, like, an assembly on it but it’s not until I got an appointment with him that I ever really knew that those resources were there. ”

They highlighted the importance of providing young people with the knowledge and resources they need to pursue their desired careers, as well as support and guidance to help them achieve their goals. This could include providing career advice, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities to help young people connect with professionals in their desired fields.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people told us that there are many visible and invisible barriers for young people in accessing and understanding new options/opportunities. Barriers can include not having networks, not feeling

opportunities are meant for them and financial barriers to connecting to new opportunities.

Young people felt that parents from lower-income families are unable to share knowledge about career paths with their children as they did not have career experience themselves. They believed that services and charities would be able to help bridge the gap by providing role models and workshops for young people to learn more about what was needed to enter the career field of their choice.

Gypsy Roma Traveller participated in the engagement activity and Roma young people said that they want to be able to access a wider range of practical, hands-on, work opportunities. They also felt that hands-on learning for adults should be available so that they could upgrade and upskill their previous work experiences.

Lots of young people talked about wanting earlier access to vocational training in areas like hospitality, land management, construction, and entrepreneurship. They felt that there should be a greater array of apprenticeship programmes available and better links with business and workplace placements across Wales.

One young person said they had failed their exams because of learning difficulties and that this was now a barrier to them, as they would have to pay to gain the qualification needed to work in the job that they wanted.

“ I can't get the job I want because I don't have the qualifications for it. Then you're stuck in minimum wage jobs, that don't even pay your rent. ”

## Enabling parents to work

Many children and young people said that their parents needed access to free

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childcare so that they could train or work. They talked about fulltime childcare and the need for free breakfast clubs and after school clubs.

“ Another thing, problem, sitters because some single parents, they have to go to work, obviously, and when someone doesn't... when a child doesn't have an older sibling. For example, like, my sister, I always had her to care for her when my mum was working.

“ There needs to be ...reduced or support with childcare costs to support parents to go back into work.

“ Free childcare for people on benefits so they are able to access training and education opportunities and move out of poverty. ”

Children and young people also said that their parents need access to free training and skills to get into work or to progress in work. They spoke about the need for decent jobs and wages and support for parents to get them.

“ Free adult learning such as free training for jobs and driving lessons. ”

“ There needs to be more job opportunities for parents, especially single parents. ... Indirectly children suffer when parents do not have a paid job. ”

## Transport

Access to low-cost or free transport was identified by children and young people as important for them and their parents to access education, training, and employment. Young people also said that free transport would allow them to access social, sporting, and cultural activities.

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Children and young people also spoke about the availability and reliability of public transport, especially in rural areas. Some young people living in rural communities told us that subsidised or free driving lessons should be available to allow them to access training and commute to areas where jobs are available.

Gypsy Roma Traveller participated in the engagement work and as part of that Roma young people also said that public transport was difficult to access with the nearest bus stop a 20-minute walk from the site where they lived.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people told us about the need for subsidised transport to access education and training.

Disabled young people told us about issues with accessible public transport, especially if they used a wheelchair.

### **3. To support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across the Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes.**

The key themes that emerged here were focussed on communities, trusted relationships, easier access to support for health and wellbeing and inclusivity. Children and young people also spoke about their experience of education, much of this reflected what was covered in response to other areas of discussion.

## **Communities**

Children and young people told us that they want access to safe communities to grow up in with more green spaces, places to play and things to do.

“ Children in poverty don’t have access to fun activities.

“ There is lack of inspirational diversionary activities for young people. The youth service/ local hubs for us is the key to this.

“ We have a right to play but we have nowhere to play. ”

Some young people talked about schools as a community hub that could offer support and access to activities. They also spoke about the importance of libraries and similar services in their communities.

Gypsy Roma Traveller children and young people took part in engagement activity and as part of that Gypsy Traveller children and young people spoke about a lack of quality outdoor space to play on official sites and poor transport links to access other activities. Roma children and young people want safe community spaces.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people, especially those who were from Asylum seeking families talked about feeling marginalised and isolated in their communities. Racism was also raised as an issue that impacts on children and young people and needs to be challenged and addressed.

Disabled and neurodiverse young people spoke about the need for inclusive activities and play opportunities in their communities.

LGBTQ+ young people felt that there needs to be better awareness and understanding at the community level to promote inclusivity and make them feel less marginalised.

“ We could create our club. Something like you could create a club where they can fund the kits, so we don’t have to pay for it. ”

Some children and young people also spoke about the need for information, advice and support for parents and families in the community. Some also spoke about the need for stable housing and nice homes to live in but the main focus was on the communities in which they live.

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of opportunities for them to inform decisions being made about developing things in their communities.

“ Communication with different groups when you’re trying to get ideas, like we would do with you in youth club.

“ They should strive towards building a better community. ”

## **Cost of activities, play and sports**

Children and young people talked about not being able to access activities including art and music, play and sports because of costs. These were sometimes described as extra-curricular activities. Children and young people wanted to be able to access these opportunities in the same way as their peers. They spoke about wanting free activities, play and sport in their communities as travel costs can also be a barrier to accessing low-cost/free activities.

“ Shouldn’t only focus on ‘basic’ needs, children have the right to play, leisure and fun too! ”

## **Support for physical and emotional wellbeing**

Children and young people said that it can be difficult to access support for their wellbeing. Where they are part of a group/receiving support from a service they

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spoke about wanting more local services that listened to them, recognised their needs and were inclusive, this was especially true for those attending a specialist group/service related to a protected characteristic.

Some young people spoke about the importance of trusted relationships in the services that they access, often third sector services. Care experienced young people told us that they often feel that this is not available to them, but where they had a positive relationship with a worker, they were able to describe it:

“ They took time to build a relationship with ME a relationship I could trust, they always did what they said they would and always checked in with me with updates. I felt cared for, valued and respected. ”

Young people also spoke about waiting lists and barriers to accessing more formal mental health services.

Children and young people also said that access to green spaces, play, social and sporting activities is important for their physical and emotional wellbeing.

#### **4. To ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty**

Children and young people spoke about the ways in which their families' financial circumstances impact on the ways in which they feel other people see them, that their situation is poorly understood and that they can be treated unfairly because of this.

Some children and young people also spoke about the way in which they feel marginalised or discriminated against because of a protected characteristic.

Education and training on children's rights, discrimination and treating people with compassion were identified as ways that things could be improved.

## Feeling stigmatised by poverty

Children and young people also spoke about feeling embarrassed and stigmatised outside education because of poverty. This was focussed on feelings that their family's economic situation was very visible.

“ Like having to buy discounted things in supermarkets, because it's often very obvious.

“ Using food banks and buy cheap things, it doesn't feel good, and people can be judged on it.

“ In some places there is a lot of difference between how much money people have and then it's really noticeable and people are treated differently.

“ Certain products were marked a specific colour, and the bright colour made it feel like 'hey, look at me, I'm poor.

“ I suppose some people are just too afraid to access it (financial support) 'cause they don't want the embarrassment. ”

## Feeling stigmatised in education and that poverty is poorly understood

Children and young people gave us clear messages about feeling stigmatised and excluded in the school community. Some of this was related to the cost of the school day (uniforms, school trips) and the cost of the school year, including

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non-learning activity such as non-uniforms day, school proms etc.

Related to this was the ways in which children and young people feel judged and stigmatized because of the way in which support for learners from low-income households is managed. Children and young people felt that poverty issues are often poorly understood by school staff and that some learners are embarrassed or bullied by other learners because they need financial support.

“ In this school, like, you get looked down on if you have free school meals for trips and stuff.

“ I asked for period products (in the school office), and they told me that I couldn't because I had been on my period 2 weeks ago. They asked me 'Why have you got it again?' They didn't understand that I was asking for a friend, and I wasn't given the help. ”

Some young people reported being sanctioned for not having the correct uniform or the right stationery because they cannot afford it. They also spoke about being sanctioned for arriving late, while not being given the opportunity to explain why.

They spoke about teachers not understanding the pressures they are under. One young person said that “just being in school was an achievement” on some days but that teachers didn't understand this.

Children and young people told us that people working in education and other services need training so that they better understand the impact that poverty has on learners. Some of them also spoke about the need for education for other learners so that they better understood poverty issues.

“ Education and training for teachers and professionals working with

families. Workshops with service workers.

“ There’ll always be judgement behind it, I think it should be taught in schools. because normally, there’s younger people who bully others for it. ”

## Discrimination

Children and young people also spoke about discrimination and a lack of understanding of issues including ethnicity, sexuality, neurodivergence or because they are care experienced.

Some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people talked about racism and discrimination. Asylum seeking children and young people talked about being made to feel that they don’t belong to Welsh society.

“ Don't treat people differently because of their skin colour and religion. ”

Gypsy Traveller Roma young people talked about stigma and discrimination in school and in communities.

Some young people who have dyslexia, autism or ADHD talked about their anxieties in dealing with agencies and asked for a better understanding and more flexibility. They wanted conversations with people instead of forms of fill in.

“ There should be better public awareness and understanding of autistic and neurodiverse children and young people. It has improved, but it is not 100%, so neither is the level of respect. There should also be better understanding of girls

with these characteristics. Information needs to be made more prominent. ”

Young people expressed their discomfort with being labelled as ‘in need’, whether it was due to poverty or having additional learning needs. They shared that it made them feel belittled and ashamed and that it affected their self-esteem and ability to speak up for themselves.

LGBTQ+ young people talked about being discriminated against because of their sexuality.

To be heard more, and not be labelled as something that they don’t want to be labelled as. They shouldn’t be judged for the way they feel and if they’re gay or lesbian, they should feel good about it.

Young people with experience of homelessness and substance misuse also felt that they were stigmatised and treated poorly by services because of their experiences.

Care experienced young people spoke about being judged and labelled.

“ I feel like I’m not worth the effort, then I get labelled as difficult to engage. ”

Children and young people spoke about the difference it can make when they do feel heard and respected.

“ When people feel valued, they find the value in themselves. ”

## **Education and awareness raising to support staff understanding of**

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## the issues

Children and young people felt that much of the stigma around poverty results from the way in which people working in services speak and act. This was the case in all services but as many children and young people spend much of their time in education settings there was an emphasis on experiences in schools.

Children and young people told us that they think people working in services should have training, workshops, and information so that they better understand equality and discrimination issues better, the impact of child poverty and the way this can impact on children and young people accessing their rights.

“ Respect families backgrounds and try and help families in poverty instead of disrespecting them.

“ Educate everyone on how to treat people.

“ Don't treat people differently because of their skin colour and religion.

“ Give them training on children's rights. ”

Children and young people also spoke about the need for work to support them to be heard and have a voice as a way of overcoming embarrassment and stigma about asking for help.

“ Use participation and children's rights as a way to empower young people. ”

# What parent, carers and grandparents told us

The Welsh Government is also very grateful to the parents, carers and grandparents who gave their time to go to events and talk about what they think would make the biggest difference for them and their families.

Organisations facilitating the engagement on our behalf worked with children and young people in a number of different ways.

- We commissioned EYST, Race Council Cymru and Women Connect First to offer engagement events to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families and as part of that work they engaged with 71 parent/carers through interviews and focus groups.
- Community groups and organisations who were awarded small grants to engage families with protected characteristics, engaged with 757 parents and carers including Gypsy Roma Traveller parent/carers, asylum seeking and refugee parent/carers, women who are lone parents and parent/carers of disabled and neurodivergent children or children with additional learning needs. This work was carried out in a variety of ways, with existing groups, through standalone engagement events and as part of family activity sessions.
- Local Councils for Voluntary Services were awarded Welsh Government grants via a scheme administered via the WCVA on our behalf to engage with families and community members 501 parent/carers, 293 grandparents and 26 great grandparents on our behalf.

A Framework for Discussion (Annex 2) and an Easy Read version (Annex 4) was shared with these organisations and the organisations used various approaches to sharing the 4 areas for discussion with people contributing to the engagement.

For each of the 4 areas each of the groups were asked to consider “What did

people think are the 3 things that would make the biggest difference children and their families now and looking to the future?” Their responses ranged from Education, Support for families and children, increased income, public funding, respect, accessible services to diversity and inclusion and stigma to name a few.

## **1. Reducing costs and maximising the income of families so that children and young people have enough financial and material support for what they need**

There were a number of common themes in the evidence that parent/carers, and grandparents contributed through the engagement activity, in relation to reducing costs and maximising incomes. The importance of local initiatives that preserved choice and dignity came through as a clear theme.

Parent/carers and grandparents told us that there were a number of things that make a big difference to them and their families. Increasing both minimum wage and benefit levels consistently and greater support to access in and out of work benefits.

They also talked about the importance of more local schemes that help people to reduce household costs and that these were acting as a crucial lifeline to families who were struggling. Examples given were food projects like pantries, community fridges and other circular economy initiatives. Other suggestions were free meals for children during the school holidays.

### **Cost of living**

Parent/carers and grandparents talked about the difficulties of coping with increased food and fuel prices and about housing costs, transport costs and digital exclusion.



Many parent/carers asked for more direct financial support and free goods to help them cope with the costs of living.

“ What benefits/support is out there for a family where one parent is a student and the other works full time. We're struggling financially as we can't access some benefits (e.g. tax free childcare) because my husband is a student and so gets a childcare grant. However, we're still struggling to cover the £1000+ bill every month.

“ Government should step in force energy companies to bring down the prices of gas and electric – shouldn't be making record profits when we are all struggling.

“ People need more money, funding from services should stop getting cut.

“ As a mother of 3, what I really need is more financial help/support toward clothing, heating and help toward excessive £800 per month rent.

“ What would you rather do, feed your child junk food or nothing? My child will not eat vegetables, because they've not had it much. I struggle with my own weight because I can only afford unhealthy food. ”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parent/carers and in particular Asylum Seeker and Refugee parent/carers told us that it can be very challenging for them to secure money to meet the cost of living and about the need for more financial support.

Parents reported that the additional costs associated with having a child with additional or complex additional needs places an exceptional pressure on household finances. This makes it particularly difficult for them to cope with the cost of living.

People who are kinship carers or have other caring responsibilities talked about

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the impact this has on their ability to meet the cost of living and their need for more financial support.

“ More support for non-traditional families, like families where grandparents/siblings have responsibility for children. Both financial support and guidance, support groups etc. ”

Lone parents, the majority of whom were women, also spoke about financial hardship of being a single head household especially when it comes to things like housing and utilities costs.

“ I am in homeless accommodation with my baby. Homeless life is affordable (no bills), having a home is unaffordable and stability is unachievable, but it should not be like this. ”

## Education costs

Parent/carers talked about the challenges of school costs and the cost of taking their children and young people to activities and digital inclusion.

“ Internet is a right. Devices not enough, you also need Wi-Fi, data, internet, training and support. ”

“ Cheap or free activities for my children in the local area. No access to city centre. ”

The cost and availability of transport to access learning, services and activities was also a theme, especially in rural areas.

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The cost of school uniforms and sports kits was a major theme for working parents/ in work low-income families and the associated stigma that came with it. Parents were mindful that if their children went to school with the wrong uniform, or if it is dirty/unwashed then their children may be bullied, sent home, or excluded. However, the cost of uniform and of running a washing machine, if one was available to the family, means that keeping children in the expected uniform and clean every day can be very challenging.

Parent/carers and grandparents also talked about the importance of Free School Meals, they said that universal provision reduces stigma and that they need support for when their children are in secondary school, not just primary school.

“ Free school meals need to be extended and should include breakfast and lunch. Current limit is not enough for children to have food during breaks. ”

Parent/carers also spoke about the cost of school trips and of special days in school, like non-school uniform day or a day when everyone wore certain clothing (e.g., Christmas jumper day). Some parents said that they keep their children off school on these days as they can't afford to get them the 'right' clothing and they don't want their children to be embarrassed or bullied because of this. Some parents also spoke about the curriculum associated costs.

“ Less pressure from schools on patients for financial commitments, GCSE cooking costs an average of £2 to £3 per week for the duration of the course. ”

## Advice

Parent/carers and grandparents talked about the complexity and challenges of

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negotiating the benefits system, knowing what their entitlements are and claiming them, accessing affordable credit, managing debt and reducing costs. They also talked about how they value face to face advice from those they know and trust.

“ Make benefits easier to access and encourage those who could benefit to take them up.

“ Too much and repeated requests for evidence, once doctor’s provides evidence, this should suffice. People are being scrutinised and this is wasting resources. Couldn’t get PIP although I can’t walk.

“ Better access to better information, improved information would enable people to access their financial support entitlement and make educated decisions as to their financial security.

“ Help support families by doing traditional outreach work and building up trust based on results.

“ Our credit rating is shocking. When we needed a new washing machine, we couldn't get one on finance, and we didn't have any savings put away to cover the cost. I had to ask my parents for a loan. We now have to pay this back. I know so many people in the same situation, your always worried something is going to go wrong. ”

Some of the families who have English as an additional language talked about how important it was for information to be available in other languages as this is critical in building understanding for many families as well as the services that are engaged with the families. Gypsy Roma Traveller parent/carers took part in engagement activity and as part of that Gypsy Traveller parent/carers said that low literacy levels and digital exclusion mean understanding an accessing information and advice in written form on or offline does not meet their needs.

Many parents/carers raised the weaknesses with the current social security system as a factor that prevented them from being able to move out of poverty. Families reported that they currently did not have enough money to cover all the basics and despite wanting to save, they had no financial means to do so.

“ Support comes when nothing left, already entered poverty instead of pre-empting. People may have a good job but struggle; fear to involve local government as no support if earning over a certain bracket whilst they may need other kinds of support.... Assumption that because people work, they aren't struggling. Expectation to use up all savings before being entitled to support. ”

## **2. Creating pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have enough financial and material support for what they need and reach their potential**

Parent/carers talked about the need for the right support into employment, fair work with good pay. They also talked about barriers to employment and to making work pay.

### **Support into fair work**

Parent/carers talked about the challenges for young people and adults in entering and progressing in the labour market.

Some parent/carers talked about the need for a better link between school, college and work. They said that young people need more support with transferrable skills and non-academic learning pathways.

“ Practical skills/trades being as valued as academic skills/service-based jobs. Opportunities throughout schooling and beyond to develop practical skills and be paid well for them. Clear career opportunities through apprenticeships and work-based learning. ”

The parent/carers of children with additional learning needs, disabled children and neurodivergent children were particularly concerned that their children would not get the education they need to progress into work, as well as facing barriers to work as a result of discrimination.

“ To feel like your child/young person is still valued and understood when creating educational vocational settings. Those above 19 have no access to education if needs are complex with many not qualifying for college at all. ”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parents were concerned about the attainment gap for children and about career pathways, especially for Asylum Seeking young people.

“ Easier to understand and financially better ways to embark on post-16 education pathways. Especially for Asylum Seeking young people without recourse to public funding for education. This leaves many young people in limbo, anxious, worried and depressed at not being able to continue to develop/grow whilst awaiting immigration processes. ”

Parent/carers also told us about the challenges for young people in getting into the labour market because of a lack of experience to demonstrate that they meet job criteria.

“ Lower entry requirements. How can young people get opportunities when

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the opportunities ask for experience? Organisations should take on young people to give them experience without asking for experience. ”

Parent/carers also told us about the need for more support for those who are particularly disadvantaged in getting into and progressing in employment because of discrimination related to their protected characteristics, such as disability or ethnicity.

“ Opening up opportunities, careers and jobs/employment opportunities and educational/ training opportunities are created for people with language or socio-cultural barriers as well as opportunities for those with disabilities. ”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parent/carers also spoke about the challenges and barriers they face in securing fair work with a living wage. This included the need for more opportunities for training and skills to support career progression.

“ There needs to be more job opportunities for parents, especially single parents and reduced, or support with, childcare costs to support parents to go back into work. And more on the job training rather than employers looking for already qualified people with experience. More opportunities for adults who are new to the country to study further that will benefit their job prospects. When parents cannot work, children have limited aspirations as a result they are not motivated to reach their full potential. Indirectly children suffer when parents do not have a paid job. ”

Gypsy Roma Traveller parent/carers participated in the engagement activity and Roma parent/carers talked told us of the need for support to develop skills and get into employment for young people and adults.

“ (Young people need) a wider range of practical, hands-on, work

opportunities. This also applies to hands-on learning so that adults could upgrade and upskill their previous work experiences. ”

Parent/carers also talked about the need for support to build self-esteem in young people and adults, so that they felt more confident about entering work and about the need for support to progress once people are in employment.

“ Employment support to include overcoming barriers such as low self-esteem and confidence and providing the right environment experiences and peer mentoring. To think more outside the box when looking at transferable skills.

“ Employment is meant to be the route out of poverty, but when you're stuck in a job that pays the minimum, your wages are spent on bills and childcare, you have to ask yourself what's the point. I would love the opportunity to learn something new and find better paid more fulfilling work, but it all costs money that we just don't have.

“ Many employment programmes are only accessible for people not in work. This means that parents who wish to develop new skills to progress in the workplace or to change career have very limited opportunities. ”

## Barriers to making work pay

Access to affordable and available childcare and transport were identified as barriers to work, or to making work pay. The need for working conditions and pay that make working financially viable was also raised.

Some parent/carers talked about barriers to entering the labour market and some talked about the challenges of securing work that is well paid enough to lift their families out of poverty.

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Lone parents, the majority of whom were women, in particular told us that it is difficult to secure work that they can balance with caring for their children and that pays enough to lift them out of poverty after costs. They felt that better working conditions with set hours, sick pay and holiday would give them the ability and confidence to work more.

“ I’m a single parent and I think I would be worse off [in work] because of rent, council tax etc., and I’d need more help with mental health.

“ Even if a single parent got a job, we have to pay rent, Council Tax, school dinners, so we end up worse off, even if you have a partner. Unless the jobs are good pay, you’re still in the same position. ”

Asylum Seeker and Refugee parent/carers told us that rules around permission to work have a huge impact on the lives of them and their families.

Parent/carers talked about only being able to access work that was seasonal, low paid, without guaranteed hours (zero hours) and not much flexibility. Single parents found this particularly problematic. They felt that better working conditions such as set hours, sick pay and holiday would give them the ability and confidence to work more.

Other parents talked about the difficulty of making work pay because of the cost of living.

“ I am the only bread winner in my house; part time. My husband can't work but he is not entitled to benefits. We can't find anything to support, we are going through formal tribunal process and it's hard.

“ I am working, I started volunteering and now I work as a support worker, if I increase my hours, it is not worth it because taxes will get it all and I will

be worse off. Electricity and gas support is finishing now, so I don't know how we are going to do it.

“ Expenses are more than income. Life we are living to work and not working to live, this is affecting children’s nurture and development within the family. Bills are high and income low life is tough. Cheaper bills more affordable. Benefits need to be increased if you cannot go back to work. No money to enjoy life.

“ I work 15 hours, can't do more or I am worse off. All the money goes out to pay the bills. We are a family of 7. I managed to be less in debt now, the winter scheme and the energy fund helped but this is finishing now, not sure how we are going to cope. Kids eat a lot so it's difficult to make food last. money goes so quickly! ”

Some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parent/carers talked about working long hours and shift work, to try to earn enough money and how this impacts negatively on the quality of their family life.

## Transport

Many parent/carers and grandparents told us that the availability and cost of public transport could be a barrier to learning, training and working. They spoke about the need to reduce travel costs, especially to and from work.

“ Affordable transport for everyone to make it easier for people to travel around to get to services, employment and training.

“ Free transport for under 18s and families in poverty will help to improve access to opportunities and reduce barriers to employment, particularly for

those living in deprived areas where there are fewer local employment opportunities.

“ More support to working families who do not earn enough to get by. My granddaughter spends most of her salary on bus tickets, taking the bus several times a day, to take kids to school and go to work, and come to see me. ”

## Childcare

Many parent/carers told us that a lack of affordable childcare is a big barrier to going into employment and to progression in employment with parents reporting that, despite their desire to work more hours, they felt they had no choice but to remain in part time work for financial reasons. Parent/carers also spoke about the challenges of finding childcare for older children and the need for ‘wrap around’ care before and after school and in the school holidays.

Childcare costs can make it difficult for parent/carers to make work pay, this was especially the case for lone parents.

“ Childcare is the barrier to help me earn my own money.

“ Low employment opportunities mean low wages; this leads to single parents being better off being off work, cost of childcare and transport means they can’t get back to work. ”

For those parent/carers who were in work childcare costs put a strain on family income and can impede progression out of part-time work.

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“ I am working for nothing; it literally covers my childcare costs. We use that to pay for childcare and my husband's wages just about cover the mortgage and essentials. There is nothing left for anything else. I feel I'm missing out on my child's early years, but I need to keep working as it's important to me.

“ From as early as 9 months old if parents are going back to work or training for work. 2 full days a week and not 2.5hrs a day. It would allow me to start a 16 hour per week job. Childcare is the barrier to help me develop and earn money for my family. I have no family support and I am doing this on my own. ”

Some parent/carers and grandparents also said that over-reliance on family members for childcare is affecting relationships and placing pressure on grandparents.

Parent/carers with disabled children, children with additional needs or health conditions said that accessing childcare is particularly difficult for them in terms of finding a place that meets their child's needs and costs.

“ Childcare settings only go up to age 12, but many children with ALN need to be looked after during the holidays/outside of school hours when they're older than this.

“ Childminders are not able to meet the needs of children with complex needs.’ ”

Parents reported that the provision of free childcare that caters for the needs of disabled children would be extremely beneficial. They also felt that there was a need to introduce free bus passes for children and their carers to ensure that disabled children did not miss out on educational and extracurricular

opportunities, nor miss out on medical appointments.

### **3. To support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across the Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes**

Parent/carers and grandparents told us about the importance of local community services, family activities and access to open spaces. They spoke about the importance of listening to people living in communities to find out what matters to them.

Listening to people: Parent/carers told us that they want services to engage with them in the communities where they live, that they don't always feel listened to, they also spoke about the importance of listening to young people.

“ 99% of people from the county council (and other statutory services) never come to the estate. There needs to be more real in-person engagement and listening, treating people as equals and listening to their experiences.

“ Ensure young people have a voice whilst ensuring we all celebrate the achievements of young people who make a positive difference within their communities.

“ Government/councils asking the community what we want and need. Before today I have never been asked. ”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parent/carers spoke about the importance of listening as the basis of trusting relationships, the need for cultural competence

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and for language barriers to be understood and catered for.

“ Services taking the time to talk and listen to people more. Speaking with people is a much better way to connect and gain trust between people and services. This can include going the extra mile to ensure appropriate communication via interpreters whilst newer people to Wales embark on journeys to learn English/Welsh.

“ Many families are first or second-generation immigrants who have loved ones with learning disabilities. Aside from the cultural stigma around this and getting support, they have come from culture where ‘personal rights are not championed’ so breaking down these barriers take time, trust and respect for the individuality of these communities. Often, non-white communities are unhelpfully labelled under umbrella terms like BAME, which don’t always respect the diversity of opinions within these communities, which doesn’t help in addressing the residing issues of lack of support and poverty. ”

Parent/carers with disabled children or children with additional learning needs also spoke about not feeling listened to when accessing services.

“ Parents often feel that they’re not being listened to and often looked down on when they meet professionals. Parents believe that if there were safe spaces that could be accessed, places that didn’t make them feel threatened, relationships would be improved. ”

## Communities

Many parent/carers spoke about the importance of community-based support and involving the community in developing local offers to support health and

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wellbeing.

- “ More community centres, and wider access. Open 7 days a week. This could help in bringing more people together and encourage the community to be involved in the running of things. Teaching people to problem solve for themselves as long as all the information of help and support is at hand.
- “ More outreach in the community so people are using a neutral front door for services and support.
- “ Local council offices feel very formal and unwelcoming; even if I have a reason to be there I feel like I’m being monitored. We haven’t attended some events they put on for families as they held them there rather than coming out to the community.
- “ Community help, accessible resources and easier communication for resources.
- “ Access to initiatives in local communities that are delivered by people who understand the challenges.
- “ Community centres in every community and encourage more involvement by everyone. Look after where you live. Solve our own problems when we can as a community.
- “ More community hubs for families and children. These hub workers could be more of a point of contact for families and their support. Support our local community centres, they are vital to families. ”

Some parent/carers spoke about feeling isolated in their communities and wanting to be able to meet other parents locally. They also told us that they want access to local services to support mental and physical health and wellbeing.

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“ Parents should be able to meet other parents in similar situations. More effort needs to be made to provide meeting spaces and activities for everyone outside of term time.

“ Improved access to health services, close to home.

“ Health services need to be improved and made closer to home.

“ Some parent/carers talked about some of the things they would like to see in their communities.

“ Food pantries support with food, cheaper food in local communities, prices are going up. At Ramadan we use more heat for food etc.

“ Language courses for me locally. Cooking, anything to help me improve my language.

“ More events for the community to enjoy connecting together. ”

## **Community activities and open spaces**

People told us that they cannot afford transport to travel to free events outside their community.

“ Activities for children and young people. Not enough out there, kids stay home, I can't afford public transport to go to city centre.

“ A local community Centre open for children, where they can go every day, any time and chill out or do activities. There is no affordable activities around, you need to take the bus for everything.

“ Need help with transport costs and activity costs for children, its either pay



gas or do activities. ”

Parent/carers want more local, free or low-cost activities and open spaces for children, young people and families. This was especially true for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic parent/carers.

“ There is a real lack of free things for children and young people to do in local communities. Free events are needed more often.

“ Better, local play parks and green spaces are needed for children to play in safely, close to home. More community activities, lower travel prices and free events.

“ Better access to green spaces; community orchards, community allotment and play parks.

“ More free things everywhere in the community that gets everyone involved and taking part. This will help with everybody’s mental health and well being.

“ Access to sporting / cultural/social / environmental activities, improving the well-being of the child but also the parents within the community. ”

Gypsy Roma Traveller parent/carers participated in engagement activity and Roma parent/carers talked about the need for safe community spaces where children and young people could nurture their interests and grow, rather than wander the streets.

Parent/carers felt a lack of community opportunities was particularly acute for disabled children and young people, and children and young people with additional learning needs who are often offered limited opportunities to mix with children without complex needs through the education system.

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“ There is a lack of sports activities for disabled children to learn new skills, develop confidence and increase fitness. ”

We were also told that parents/carers felt it is difficult for LGBTQ+ people to access local support.

“ Not much support available locally for LGBTQ+ members of the community, especially for people in their late teens / early adulthood. ”

#### **4. To ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty**

Parent/carers told us about feeling that they are not always listened to or treated with respect by the services who support their families. They also spoke about stigma and feeling judged because of their financial situation and about discrimination.

##### **Feeling listened to and treated with dignity and respect**

Many parent/carers said that they can feel dehumanised when seeking support, especially financial support.

“ Don't patronise people who are already vulnerable.

“ A more personal approach versus a tick box exercise like asking 'how are you?'

“ Don’t treat people like numbers. ”

Related to this was the importance of relationships with trusted workers when accessing support.

“ Consistency and continuity of the people offering support; same person should be available throughout the process when dealing with public services. ”

Many parent/carers with disabled children, neurodivergent children or children with Additional Learning Needs told us that they don’t feel listened to or taken seriously by the services that support their children.

“ You shouldn’t need to feel as though you are having to “battle” to get the help you need.

“ Health and Education Practitioners need to acknowledge that parents know their children best. ”

Parent/carers felt that there was a lack of communication between the different services involved with their child and they often don’t know who is who.

## Stigma

Parent/carers told us that they can feel judged and stigmatised because of their financial situation.

“ There is a culture of suspicion from local services if you go back needing help more than once, even our food bank wants to limit how many times

they help, but no one seems willing to help us longer term so we don't need to use them.

“ There's stigma about media coverage of the 'undeserving poor' or an underclass of people who have brought their situation on themselves and are 'lazy' or have their spending priorities all wrong. Poverty isn't just about food, fuel, money etc. There's also poverty of experience and opportunity. There's a lack of kindness and compassion in services, in the system. More empathy is needed in the system.

“ Non-universal schemes should be designed so that they do not identify a person who is receiving means tested support to encourage take up and reduce stigma.

“ Ensuring the services don't single out children, as a mum of a teenager they hate that and I know there are children at comp who need support but won't ask as their peers will then know. ”

Parent/carers said that people working in services need to understand the challenges faced by some families and value their lived experience and knowledge.

Some parent/carers told us that they believe that unpaid caring is undervalued and there is a need for more understanding and respect for the contribution they make to society.

Some parent/carers felt judged when they asked for help with parenting and family support.

“ Places to go to ask for help when I need it and things not lead to crisis point where I am told I am a bad mum, and I am doing things wrong.

“ Teach the people from the services that provide support to children and families that they need to treat everyone with respect and not to belittle anyone. ”

## Discrimination

Some parent/carers and grandparents told us about experiencing discrimination and about the need for services to be more aware of equality and diversity issues.

“ I had a racism experience recently and I wasn't taken seriously. I followed all the procedures they asked me to, spent a lot of time with it and at the end nothing happened. They said there was not enough evidence, what do they want, cameras everywhere? They made the decision it was not enough and that is not fair a jury should decide that. Racism will continue unless they do something about it. It's very difficult to demonstrate. I felt I was not trusted.

“ Make sure staff are well trained in cultural awareness and treat people individually and are aware that they have different needs.

“ Better support and inclusion, less discrimination, for children from migrant families. ”

Some parent/carers and grandparents talked about being excluded from support because services are not inclusive.

“ There are lots of food hubs and community food banks around, but disabled people cannot always access them. This impacts the disabled person themselves, their children and their grandchildren. There should

be ways/money for food hubs to be able to deliver food to families with disabled people in them. ”

## What external organisations told us

The Welsh Government is also grateful to the 222 representatives of statutory and third sector organisations and bodies that attended Welsh Government engagement workshops or engaged via engagement events held by local Councils for Voluntary Services or other organisations who held small grants to undertake the work.

### 1. Reducing costs and maximising the income of families so that children and young people have enough financial and material support for what they need

#### Cost of living

People working in organisations and services told us about the pressure of the cost of living for low-income families. The main issues that were raised were:

- Food poverty: Raising awareness of how to access local foodbanks/ community food providers, stigma of getting help with food.
- Food in schools: Finding a better way to identify families on low-incomes who are accessing universal primary Free School Meals, increasing access to Free School Meals in secondary schools and stigma related to Free School Meals.
- Fuel poverty: Families paying higher costs through pre-payment meters, fuel costs for equipment for disabled family members, rental properties that are

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poorly insulated and cost more to heat.

“ At the moment registering to have free school meals, is quite ridged, parents are proud and do not want to be labelled that they are having free school meals.

“ Fuel allowances are not enough with some people going 3 days without gas/electric people don't have the basic requirements and fuel crisis has increased. ”

People working in organisations and services said that families are living day-to-day, struggling to meet the basic costs of living. Some also spoke about the cost of housing and the rental market and the need for more affordable housing.

## Cost of the school day/year

The cost of the school day/year was a major theme from engagement with people working in organisations and services. The main issues that were raised were:

- School uniforms, sports kit: Uniforms and sports kits are too expensive especially for families with more than one child.
- Clothing: Families struggle with the costs of clothing for non-uniform days, participation in events, Christmas jumper days, school plays, school trips etc. They don't want their children to be judged because of their clothes and sometimes keep their children off school to avoid this. Uniform recycling schemes on the school site can be stigmatising for parent/carers and their children when other people see them accessing the scheme. The cost of school proms was also raised with a call for them to be banned on the basis of costs to families that can exclude children and young people from participating.

- School trips: Families struggle to meet the costs of school trips and are embarrassed about saying they can't afford it. More school trips are now linked to the Curriculum for Wales and schools trying to widen learners experiences but these trips also have a cost attached to them.
- Equipment: Families cannot afford laptops, Wi-Fi, data or course materials to support learning and homework.

“ Schools should have necessities available, so as to avoid embarrassment to a child or family living in poverty, not only free school meals, but uniforms, and also need to think about when a child is participating in the Urdd eisteddfod. It is good that the school give children the opportunities to experience such events, but they may not have access to clothing for the event, parents may not have the money to buy additional clothing etc. School trips/Urdd trips, children are provided with a list of things to take, again funds may not be available to purchase the requested items. This cost should not be passed on to the parents.

“ Reduce the stigma that's related to accessing free school meals, second hand uniforms, families accessing food banks or accessing benefits.

“ How much homework is done online via Hwb? Do we still have families with 1 laptop at home, 3 children, how do we ensure children get access to the internet. The whole balance needs to be ensuring giving opportunities to all children, so they do not feel different to the child next door due to their family circumstances. ”

## **Social activities, sport, play, outdoor spaces**

People working in organisations and services told us that children, young people and families need access to free or low-cost activities and opportunities for sports and play to support their health and wellbeing. They spoke about

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transport availability and costs as a barrier to accessing these opportunities for many low-income families, especially in rural areas. Programmes such as ‘Summer of Fun’ and ‘Winter of wellbeing’ were identified as having had a very positive impact and there was disappointment that the programmes were not continuing.

## **Income and advice**

People working in organisations and services told us that it can be difficult for families to access advice about benefits, debt and access to no or low-cost items.

The Citizen’s Advice Bureau was identified as the main provider of suitable advice but people said that pressure on advice services meant families often have to wait for advice and can find it difficult to access. There was discussion about the need for application processes for financial assistance to be integrated and streamlined.

## **2. Creating pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have enough financial and material support for what they need and reach their potential**

### **Education**

People working in organisations and services felt that education and the Curriculum needs to be more flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of different learners. The importance of offering learning opportunities to parents on issues like financial education was seen as important so that parent/carers can

support their children's learning.

They also spoke about the need for poverty-proofing approaches in schools and training for teachers so that they understand the impact of poverty.

Joined up education, training and to support into work for parent/carers was also seen as important.

“ Better support to parents to access education, training and particularly employment opportunities. Having a one stop gateway for employability rather than various pathways, Job Centre Plus, Communities for Work, Communities For Work Plus etc. Parental Skill session available widely to support Ethnic minority families who have language barriers. ”

## Childcare

People working in organisations and services told us that a lack of affordable and available childcare is a barrier to work for many parent/carers and this impacts on women in particular.

People told us that there should be further investment in the childcare workforce and that childcare needs to be available for children with Additional Learning Needs and for older children.

There were also discussions about Flying Start provision and the fact that not all families can access the support, dependent on where they live.

“ To ensure sustainability of childcare, provision needs to be available or activities available in the summer/school holidays.

“ Childcare needs to be affordable for parents, and especially financial help

for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), so that they can access childcare and that this burden isn't an additional one for the parents to have to bear.

“ Childcare is a postcode lottery, if you live in a certain area, you are not eligible for support. ”

## Transport

The availability and affordability of public transport was raised by people working in organisations and services as an issue in terms of access to education, training and employment as well as access to services. This was especially true for rural areas where public transport can be particularly difficult to access.

“ There needs to be equitable access to public services. Lack of affordable/ available public transport has an impact on poverty, shopping, unable to get to school, work, socialise, hospital appointments etc. ”

## **3. To support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes**

### Communities

People working in organisations and services spoke about the COVID-19 pandemic and how the experience of the pandemic highlighted the importance

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of community based support.

They told us that there need to be more community hubs in place and that demand for community spaces to accommodate this is growing.

“ Warm Hubs for support, advice, signposting in the community. Social hubs such as the new homes for elderly may be good for reestablishing communities at all ages. Education is the key link using schools as social hubs, for community cooking sessions and eating sessions, not relying on teachers to teach all aspects of life, using other professionals especially those from businesses who can support communities for example supermarkets, banks, energy companies. ”

Community focussed schools were also discussed.

“ If we build the support model that flying start gives into our schools - free school meals and effective school nursing, speech and language, mental health are key part of this of course but if we have truly community focused schools this wraps around the individual needs of the child and their families. ”

However, people working in organisations and services also said that the rising costs of keeping community spaces open because of things like energy prices or the costs of pairs and maintenance means that many existing community spaces can only operate part of the time.

“ The need to address access community space because the cost of living crisis. Local authorities are saying they just cannot afford to run these facilities because of the cost of living, crisis heating and lighting them is just costing too much money. Something needs to be done to ensure that it is continued but in a sustainable manner with funding provided to ensure

pre-existing community hubs can continue to provide activities such as youth clubs, etc. ”

## **4. To ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty**

### **Children’s rights**

Some people working in organisations and services talked about the need to make sure that children’s rights are at the centre of everything that is done to tackle child poverty. This included suggestion that all schools in Wales should be required to become a Rights Respecting School, to ensure all children know about their rights. This would ensure children’s rights would be an integral part of policies and practice in education.

### **Stigma, respect and dignity**

People working in organisations and services told us that the language used to describe poverty and the way this is used in the title of programmes and funding is stigmatising. Examples such as ‘Holiday Hunger’ ‘Hardship Fund’ and ‘Deprivation Grant’ were given as negative ways of describing support.

The need to take a trauma informed approach and recognise the mental burden of living in poverty was also raised in a number of engagement sessions.

“ Trauma informed need to consider the mental health side of things and

put this at the core. It's a vicious cycle and measures need to be put in place to help people who are overwhelmed, just putting money there is not the solution. We need to respond to get to the crux of the mental burden, it's cyclical as poverty produces the problems. ”

## Discrimination

Many people working in organisations and services felt that more training and support was needed for staff so that they understood anti-racist practice and the distinct needs of families where someone is disabled.

“ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, 70% of those communities don't trust the NHS, 50% feel education is a correctional institute.

“ Disabled children and young people often don't get the education they deserve. ”

## 5. Effective cross-government working at the national level to enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level

Through our engagement with people who work in organisations and services, a cross cutting theme emerged on the need for better integration across Welsh Government policies and programmes to enable better collaboration at the regional and local levels to tackle child poverty.

There were a number of issues raised:

- Things are not joined up: People told us that it can be difficult to grasp a

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good picture of what different organisations are doing in local areas and regions. This works against collaboration and does not lead to the effective use of constrained resources.

- **Competing funding criteria:** We were told that the criteria for programmes, contract or grant funding often has different but very similar criteria. This means that some organisations may be ‘competing’ to work with the same families, rather than working with each other. People said that if partners in different sectors were all working to the same set of high level funding criteria/outcomes monitoring that this would foster stronger collaboration and lead to more effective interventions. They also talked about the need for longer term sustainable funding.
- **Policy integration:** People told us that there needs to be clearer read across between Welsh Government policies, working towards a clear and shared agenda to tackle child poverty.

“ The Welsh Government need to consider streamlining and have better integration and collaboration of service provision funding streams. Initiatives needs to be more joined up with a clear strategy in place as to what funding will be available with a clear timescale to enable companies to plan for the longer term.

“ If we are to alleviate child poverty, due consideration needs to be given to creating sensible targets and strategies which are to be put in place. A real opportunity for the Welsh Government and government sponsored bodies to use this as a strategy to pull that work together and also look at where the cross-government investment can be made.

“ Consider collaboration and partnership working of planning future strategies to avoid conflicting advice and priorities from different departments and different streams of funding. This would ensure a co-ordinated cross sector approach targeting cross-over strategies which is vital to avoid organisations working in isolation. ”

# Conclusion

This document sets out the evidence that was gathered through pre-consultation engagement with children and young people, parent/carers and grandparents with lived experience of poverty and the organisations and services that speak out on their behalf and support them.

Whilst we cannot reflect every view shared with us within the final strategy, the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales has been directly and fully informed by this evidence. Looking forward we have committed to involve people with lived experience of poverty in helping us to understand our progress in delivering the strategy and making a difference to children, young people and their families.

## Annex 1

Organisations who received funding to undertake engagement with children, young people, families, with lived experience of poverty and people who work in projects and services that support them.

- **All Wales Forum**
- **Arts Connection Cyswllt Celf**
- **ALC (Autism Life Centres)**
- **Bevan Foundation**
- **Blossom and Bloom**
- **Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO)**
- **Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC)**
- **Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS)**
- **Community and Voluntary Support Conwy (CVSC)**
- **Children in Wales**
- Crown Factor, Merthyr Tydfil

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- **EYST (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales)**
- **Interlink Rhondda Cynon Taf**
- **Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS)**
- **Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)**
- **GISDA**
- **Heol Chwarae Rol**
- **Mantell Gwynedd**
- **Medrwn Môn**
- **Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service (NPTCVS)**
- **Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)**
- **Race Council Cymru (RCC)**
- **RAY Ceredigion**
- **Romani Cultural and Arts Company**
- **Save the Children**
- **Splott Community Volunteers**
- **Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS)**
- **Swansea MAD**
- **Tanyard youth project**
- **Torfaen Voluntary Alliance (TVA)**
- **Twyn community hub**
- **Valleys Kids**
- **Voices from Care Cymru (VfCC)**
- **Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT)**
- **Wicked Wales**
- **Women Connect First**

## **Annex 2**

**Read annex 2.**

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## Annex 3

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## Annex 4

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