

Countryside Council for Wales
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Dear Ms Glenn

Taking Action on Child Poverty Consultation Paper

The Countryside Council for Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on *Taking Action on Child Poverty*. CCW supports the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it (against the 1997 rate) by 2010. In line with this commitment, CCW supports the proposal to introduce a general legislative duty on public agencies to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty i.e. to take account of the issue in exercising their functions. We also see this as an integral part towards achieving sustainable development in support of the legislative duty under section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

In order to address issues of poverty in rural and urban areas, any approach to tackling child poverty could usefully be informed by the work of the Wales Rural Observatory (<http://www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk/eng/main-e.html#>) and information from the revised Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Assembly's Rural Development Sub Committee recently undertook an inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales which included consideration of children and young people. The inquiry report and its recommendations could also be used as a resource in informing the development of policies and strategies relating to child poverty in Wales (See Annex 1).

Yours sincerely

Roger Thomas
Chief Executive

Annex 1: Rural Development Sub Committee inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales

The report is available at:

http://www.assemblywales.org/poverty_and_deprivation_in_rural_wales.pdf

The recommendations from the report are as follows:

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Committee therefore recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government works with the childcare sector to develop structured career paths and training to encourage recruitment and retention in the profession, taking particular account of Welsh language needs.

Recommendation 2: The Committee urges the Welsh Assembly Government to consider the issues facing rural areas and the role of childcare in developing the rural economy when progressing the *One Wales* commitment to increase the provision of affordable childcare in the areas of greatest need.

Recommendation 3: The Committee believes that there is a need for a robust economic strategy in Wales which seeks to develop a more varied economy in rural Wales. The Committee therefore recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government provides targeted resources, including business support, to create a more varied rural economy beyond the current base.

Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends that as part of the Financial Inclusion Strategy the Assembly Government recognises the importance of the voluntary sector, particularly the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and local authorities in encouraging benefit take-up and ensures that both sectors are adequately resourced to continue providing these essential services.

Recommendation 5: The Committee welcomes the free bus pass scheme for older people but is concerned that older people in rural areas are not able to take sufficient advantage of this scheme. The Committee therefore urges the Welsh Assembly Government to broaden the free bus pass scheme to allow concessionary travel for older people on other forms of transport, such as trains and community transport, where adequate bus provision is not available.

Recommendation 6: The Committee also urges the Welsh Assembly Government to encourage and support the development of community transport schemes that meet the needs of those living in rural areas.

Recommendation 7: The Committee acknowledges the transport difficulties faced by young people in rural areas and recommends that the Assembly Government assesses the potential of rolling out free transport for children and young people across Wales, as already piloted in Wales.

Recommendation 8: The Committee recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government develops stronger planning guidance to enable the development of affordable housing in rural areas, and to assist local planning authorities to make more land available for affordable housing in rural area

Recommendation 9: Whilst the Committee welcomes the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on housing in rural areas³¹, it is concerned as to the lack of urgency at which the shortage of affordable housing in Wales is currently being addressed. In the context of the above consultation, the Committee urges the Welsh Assembly Government to:

- develop key worker schemes in rural areas
- encourage increased use of shared equity schemes
- make efforts to break down the barriers to enable local people to buy homes in their local areas.
 - increase the supply of affordable housing beyond the 6,500 homes committed to within the One Wales document.

Recommendation 10: The Committee recommends that the Post Office Development Fund includes the provision of free ATM services in rural areas as part of the range of services Post Offices provide.

Recommendation 11: The Committee recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that the forthcoming Rural Health Plan will look at the flexible delivery of services for those individuals and communities who are located far from mainstream health provision.

Recommendation 12: The Committee recognises the disadvantages caused by lack of broadband provision and recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government brings forward proposals to remove any barriers to its provision in rural areas as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 13: The Committee recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government encourages the development of social enterprises as means of providing community-owned facilities in rural areas.

Recommendation 14: The Committee recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government's One Wales commitment to review existing anti-poverty programmes includes an evaluation of their progress and impact on the lives of people and communities in rural Wales.

Recommendation 15: The committee would like to receive an annual report on the progress of the Welsh Assembly Government's anti-poverty initiatives in rural Wales.