

**BARNARDO'S CYMRU**

**WRITTEN EVIDENCE**

**TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES**

**LCO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**LCO 3**

**VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND CHILD POVERTY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the invitation to provide both written and oral evidence to the Vulnerable Children LCO Committee.

### **The work of Barnardo's**

As one of the UK's leading children's charities, Barnardo's works directly with over 110,000 children, young people and their families every year. Barnardo's has been running services in Wales for over 100 years and Barnardo's Cymru currently runs 41 services across Wales, working in partnership with 19 of the country's 22 local authorities.

The vision and purpose of the organisation is as follows:

- Barnardo's vision is that the lives of all children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination.
- Barnardo's purpose is to help the most vulnerable children and young people transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

Barnardo's believes in children regardless of their circumstances, gender, race, disability or behaviour. We believe in the abused, vulnerable, the forgotten and the neglected. We will support them, stand up for them and bring out the best in each and every child. We do this because we believe that every child deserves the best start in life and the chance to fulfil their potential. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. With the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

Barnardo's Cymru currently provides a wide range of services across Wales to over 7,500 vulnerable children, young people and their families. These services include:

- Family centres and play schemes
- Fostering and adoption services
- Care and community projects for disabled children
- Parenting courses (including for parents serving sentences in Welsh prisons)
- Support for young carers
- Counselling for children who have been abused and who self-harm
- Advice on substance misuse
- Help for young people who are being sexually exploited
- Support to families in temporary accommodation
- Practical help for young people leaving care and the young homeless
- Assessment and treatment for young people with sexually harmful behaviour
- Support in schools for children with behavioural problems

- Support to black and minority ethnic families
- Help and support to young people with mental health problems

### **General comments**

Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the LCO and is pleased to see the new Welsh Assembly Government committing itself to improving the lives of vulnerable children so early within the new legislative framework brought about by the Government of Wales Act. As can be seen from the information about our organisation above, we are also committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and feel the LCO would be a major tool for ensuring that all agencies across Wales carry some responsibility and accountability for achieving this aim. Due to the complexity and wide ranging nature of policy and practice affecting children and young people, we also support the broad approach taken by the LCO and believe that all of those who will need services and support would fall under its current remit.

Barnardo's Cymru has campaigned hard on the issue of child poverty in Wales so, again, we are particularly pleased to see the subject given due credence in the title of LCO and we support the WAG's commitment to eradicating child poverty and its intent to place duties on public bodies to demonstrate their contribution to its reduction/eradication at a local level.

We are disappointed that the Westminster Government has recently taken the decision to not change the law to provide children with equal protection from assault. We think this is very much a missed opportunity and, given the WAG's previous commitment to ending the physical punishment of children, we would support any further exploration to see if a ban on smacking could be introduced in Wales via the LCO for Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty.

### **RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

- I. Would the terms of the proposed order allow for the implementation of the policy agenda on Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty by means of measures? If not, how would the proposed order need to be re-drafted and why?**

From our understanding of the drafting of the LCO we believe that yes, the terms will allow for the implementation of the policy agenda on Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty by means of measures. We particularly welcome this, as whilst we believe the Welsh Assembly Government has introduced many progressive social care strategies, unfortunately these have not always been fully implemented on the ground. Measures under the LCO should lead to much greater accountability at a local level which, in turn, should convert WAG strategies into real and positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- 2. Are the terms of the proposed order drafted appropriately, too narrowly or too broadly? If necessary, how should the proposed order be re-drafted and why?**

We welcome the broad nature of the terms proposed. We believe this broad approach to be essential to ensure all the varied and complex areas of policy and practice for vulnerable children fall within the remit and future measures of the LCO.

- 3. Are the definitions of “well-being” and “social care” in the proposed order appropriate? If not, how should they be drafted and why?**

We believe the “well-being” definition to be thorough and comprehensive. All of Barnardo’s Cymru’s current service users across Wales would fall under one or more of the categories listed.

Similarly, we support the broad definition of “social care” which encompasses all agencies which provide services to children, young people and their families.

- 4. The proposed order includes a table setting out certain exceptions from the scope of matters 15.1 to 15.8. Are these exceptions appropriate? If not, how should they be drafted and why?**

We accept that the excepted matters outlined in the table are legitimately beyond the remit of the Welsh Assembly Government as they apply to predominantly non-devolved areas.