

The Child Poverty Review - Summary of the methodology

The Child Poverty Review sought to explore what more Welsh Government can do to reduce costs for families, boost incomes and ensure the investment in programmes and services which contribute to tackling poverty is, as far as possible, improving outcomes for children and young people, both in the short term and in the long term. The first stage of this Review involved the compilation of a 'factsheet' which provided details of cross Government contributions to tackling poverty and outcomes¹. The latest version of the factsheet, covering the first quarter of 2020, can be found at Annex E.

The Review has drawn on the current evidence base of what works in tackling poverty, as well as a range of relevant Welsh Government evaluations and external research. In reviewing evaluation evidence we have largely focussed on the reported outcomes and impact on individuals or families who received support from particular interventions.

We have also conducted a significant programme of engagement with external stakeholders, representatives across Government and children and young people directly. Activities have focussed on: a) support aimed at addressing the short-term or immediate needs of children, young people and their families i.e. keeping money in people's pockets and, b) support with a focus on preventative action i.e. investment in programmes aimed at developing skills, supporting people into work, preventing homelessness and improving health. External engagement has included a call for written evidence (47 responses were received from local authorities, third sector organisations and others with a particular interest in tackling poverty), a series of 1-2-1 meetings, and four workshops across Wales (with around 100 attendees).

Over 100 children and young people also participated in events facilitated by Race Council Cymru and Children in Wales. The former event involved young people from the National BAME Youth Forum. A total of 78 young people from across Swansea, Cardiff and Newport took part in this event. Additional consultation with 30 young people also took place as part of a Young Wales session. Our consultation with young people was tailored to their needs and focussed mainly on day-to-day living. This included perceived barriers to accessing services and/or support linked to keeping a home, attending school or college and taking part in activities within their communities outside school.

The Review findings have been grouped under the following categories:

- what programmes/initiatives are having the most beneficial impact, and
- what programmes/initiatives are not working so well.

During our engagement activities we also asked respondents/participants their views on what would make the most difference to families to help improve their situation both on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term, and what, in their view, would be the best way to achieve this.

¹ [Child Poverty Strategy 2019 Progress Report: Annex](#), December 2019

The Child Poverty Review – Summary of main findings

Programmes/initiatives having most beneficial impact

Our evidence review confirms the positive impact certain programmes are having on children and families. Findings from our engagement activities also show the majority of this support is highly valued and many respondents noted the real positive difference some interventions are having on children, young people and their families.

Cutting the costs of everyday essentials:

Many respondents to our consultation noted the valuable contribution of both in and out of school support, including Free School Meals (FSM), Pupil Development Grant (PDG) -Access, the Free Breakfast and Period Dignity Schemes, the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) and Holiday Hunger Playworks. These interventions are thought to be particularly important as they're amongst those which directly benefit children and young people. The recent evaluation of Holiday Hunger Playworks supports the value of such programmes. Nearly half of children (43 per cent) said they felt less hungry attending the holiday play provision than on days they were at home².

Early intervention (Flying Start and Families First):

The majority of parents who have engaged with the Flying Start programme believe it has benefitted both them and their children³. This has been in relation to their child's development (school-readiness, social skills/behaviour, and their speech/language development), as well as to their own skills and knowledge as a parent. Data and case study evidence from families supported through the 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) model of Families First also shows this approach is having a transformative effect on many of their lives. Over half of families (56%) report successful outcomes against their own objectives when they exit the programme. This rises to two-thirds among families affected by disability⁴.

The benefits of early intervention programmes such as Flying Start and Families First were highlighted throughout our consultation, and included child development and education, parental guidance, broader family support and the ability of such programmes to provide a 'front door' service to other support and community services.

Supporting people into training and employment:

During our engagement activities the Childcare Offer Wales was said to have been well-received by working families. Some respondents reported parents saying it has given them more flexibility in their work patterns and more opportunities to progress in the workplace. This reflects the Year 2 evaluation findings, where almost six in ten parents (57%) who had accessed the offer said work-related decisions were now

² [Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot 2019 Evaluation](#)

³ [Qualitative research with Flying Start Families: Wave 3 Summary](#), July 2018

⁴ [Evaluation of Families First Year 3 Report Executive Summary](#), September 2015

more flexible, and 45 per cent reported more opportunities for training, learning and development⁵.

The most recent evaluation of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme found nearly all those who had progressed into employment following their involvement with the programme recognised that it had contributed in some way to them making that step. While PaCE was not the only enabling factor the mentoring support provided by advisers was key, as was advisers' help in understanding and navigating the childcare and in-work benefits systems⁶. Likewise with Communities for Work (CfW) the time available to advisers/mentors, the trust and respect they have from participants, and the flexibility of the support provided is seen as a distinct advantage over mainstream employability provision⁷. As with PaCE, participants also reported involvement in CfW had had positive effects upon their sense of well-being and resilience to deal with the barriers to work they faced.

Communities for Work Plus was also praised by some respondents to our consultation. Particular benefits included the ability to provide tailor made support for parents looking to enter the job market; the focus on what people need to achieve their goals and aspirations; as well as the provision of support for the short-term unemployed and those experiencing under-employment.

The interim evaluation for the Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service⁸ recognises that the unique nature of this programme is helping to fill an important gap in provision of employment support for young people recovering from mental ill-health and/or substance misuse. The role of peer mentors were key to the success of the service. While the proportion of participants entering employment after leaving the service was below target, the programme was over-performing in other areas such as job search and qualifications. Many participants also reported improvements to their confidence and self-esteem.

Supporting children and young people:

One of the issues highlighted during our engagement activities was the important role youth services play in supporting vulnerable young people who are experiencing poverty or difficult circumstances at home. An independent evaluation undertaken in 2016 found the vast majority of schools value and recognise the important contribution that school-based youth workers are making to support the formal education of vulnerable pupils. Early intervention and additional support is enabling such pupils to remain engaged with education into secondary school, increasing attendance levels and reducing the number and frequency of exclusions⁹.

⁵ [Evaluation of the early implementation of the Childcare Offer for Wales year 2 Executive Summary](#), December 2019

⁶ [Evaluation of parents childcare and employment \(PaCE\): experience and outcomes](#), March 2020

⁷ [Evaluation of Communities for Work: Stage 3 Emerging Outcomes and Impacts Report Summary](#), June 2018

⁸ [Out of Work Service Evaluation Interim Report](#), October 2019

⁹ [An independent evaluation of youth work in schools in Wales](#), May 2016

During our engagement activities the Legacy Fund was highlighted as enabling the continued provision of vital services to families living in poverty, such as welfare rights and youth workers, and helping young people with the transition from school to post-16 education. The ability to link support provided under the Legacy Fund and Communities for Work Plus was also welcomed.

Ways of working:

Often linked to the programmes themselves (in particular Families First, Flying Start and Communities for Work/Communities for Work Plus), successful multi-agency working at the local level, often with one main referral route, is considered by a number of respondents (local authorities and the third sector) to be vital to building family resilience, and ensuring children and their parents/carers are receiving the right support for their needs and circumstances. Others raised the importance of building trusted relationships with families, as well as involving them in the design of support or linking with well-established and regarded services i.e. basing support services in places where families already go or regularly visit. Areas with examples of successful community hubs included Flintshire, Cardiff (Dusty Forge) and Swansea (Townhill).

A number of local authorities highlighted the benefits of flexible funding arrangements that have been introduced since 2019 under the Children and Communities Grant (CCG). Some local authorities have used this flexibility to bring together services under certain programmes, such as Flying Start and Families First, into one 'family support model'. Examples include the provision of parenting support across the whole local authority area, and expanding the type of support available under Flying Start to include access to broader health specialists (eg. midwives, Educational Psychologists).

Programmes/initiatives not working so well

Our review of evaluation and external research evidence, along with the findings of our consultation, points to some ongoing challenges linked with certain programmes and forms of support.

Barriers to support:

One of the key aims of this Review is to gain a better understanding of some of the barriers to existing cash benefits and services funded by Welsh Government which may be preventing people from getting the support they need and/or are entitled to. During our engagement activity a combination of personal and system barriers were identified. Personal barriers include poor literacy skills, language problems and issues linked with digital literacy/access, as well as stigma, a lack of confidence, mental health problems and pride, all of which can prevent people from knowing about or applying for support.

Many respondents also believed the system of support overall is disjointed and confusing. Different eligibility criteria and thresholds, and the need to apply to different agencies for different types of support, means navigating their way through

the system in order to make a claim(s) can be a complex and off-putting process for families. Low awareness (amongst families and frontline workers), and a general lack of information on the range of support available (including free to all services), was also considered a significant barrier. This can be even more prevalent for some groups for whom service provision may need to be better tailored to meet their needs, in particular families with disabled children or with a disabled adult in the household, BAME families, and families with experience of domestic abuse.

Cutting the costs of everyday essentials:

Key areas where current support was felt to be inadequate or failing to reach those in need centred on help to meet everyday living costs – primarily the costs of the school day, as well as inaccessible and unaffordable public transport. Recent research has highlighted how some households in Wales who don't qualify for free school meals (FSMs) are still struggling to feed their families due to other essential costs including housing and other bills. Particular concern has been raised for children from asylum-seeking families who have no recourse to public funds and are therefore ineligible for FSMs. Others report their FSM allowance isn't enough to cover a proper meal at lunchtime¹⁰. The same research found school uniform is the most commonly mentioned burden on families' school-related finances.

Additional research has found the vast majority of local authorities provide the support available to families under PDG – Access as cash payments in advance however, a small number are providing this support to families in arrears. This risks families facing real hardship having to purchase uniforms ahead of being reimbursed¹¹. The availability and accuracy of information on FSMs and PDG-Access, along with the ways people apply for each type of support, also varies across Wales. In some local authorities information is clear, understandable and readily available, and application processes have been simplified. In other authority areas however, information and application methods remain inadequate, confusing and complex¹².

Although highly valued a large number of respondents highlighted the need to review and expand the help available to families to reduce the costs of the school day.

Particular issues raised related to:

- Limited availability and take-up of FSM, meaning many of those in need are not eligible or accessing this help
- Concerns that the current value of FSM allowances in many schools is not enough to adequately cover the costs of a meal/drink. The allowance for FSM is largely set by local authorities although in some areas this is set by schools. The level therefore varies across Wales, from around £2 to nearly £3, but should enable every child in receipt of FSM to afford a main lunchtime meal.

¹⁰ Children's Commissioner for Wales, [A Charter for Change: Protecting Welsh Children from the Impact of Poverty](#), March 2019

¹¹ Bevan Foundation, [Back to school? Local variations in help with costs of school meals and school uniforms](#), September 2019

¹² Bevan Foundation, [Back to school? Local variations in help with costs of school meals and school uniforms](#), September 2019

- Pressures on school budgets meaning many are having to do more with less when it comes to food provision in schools
- Lack of consistency with FSM entitlement for the post-16 age group depending on where young people study (school or college)
- The time limited nature of PDG-Access when uniforms often need to be replaced on an annual basis due to wear and tear or children outgrowing their uniforms
- Programmes such as Holiday Hunger Playworks have huge potential but there was concern that they're doing little to tackle the underlying problem. Some respondents believe benefits to children are greater when activities aren't limited to certain settings eg. school-based provision.

In addition, while the Free Breakfast Scheme is welcomed, and evidence shows the strong link between eating a healthy breakfast and educational attainment¹³, there are concerns that many children in need aren't benefitting from this scheme. Welsh Government's own figures¹⁴ show that less than 20 per cent of users are eligible for FSM (eg. some schools are only providing breakfast for a limited time meaning children who arrive late or those with additional needs are missing out or are finding it difficult to access this provision).

Another consistent theme throughout our engagement activities has been the availability and affordability of public transport. This is making it difficult for children, young people and their families to access work (particularly when working irregular hours or shift work), school/college, social activities, as well as other services and support (eg. food banks). Some felt this is contributing to college dropout rates, and limiting opportunities for women to find or return to work.

Most bus services across Wales are provided in response to bus operators' analysis of demand, cost and profitability. There is currently a Discounted Bus Travel for Young People Scheme for those aged between 16 and 21 years, although operators' participation is voluntary. Bus operators generally offer free travel to under-fives and a reduced fare to those up to age 15 or 16, although this reduced fare varies from one operator to another. This is a separate initiative to the Mandatory Concessionary Bus Fare scheme (which provides free bus travel for those aged 60 and over and those of any age meeting the required disability criteria) and the free weekend travel initiative on the TrawsCymru bus network.

In January 2020 Transport for Wales introduced a series of fare reductions or free rail travel for children and young people travelling within specific areas of their network. This included free travel at all times for children aged 10 and under, and

¹³ [Association between breakfast consumption and educational outcomes in 9 and 11 year old children](#), Cardiff University, November 2015

¹⁴ The most recent figures from the [School Census Day](#) show 61,487 pupils accessed free breakfasts, of which only 10,812 were entitled to FSM. In the week prior to school census day, 80,814 pupils accessed free breakfasts but only 14,143 were entitled to FSM.

during off-peak times for those aged 11-15, when both are accompanied by a fee paying parent or guardian (with a maximum of two children per adult).

Early intervention (Flying Start and Families First):

One of the main issues raised during our engagement activities was the inability of some families in need to benefit from Flying Start services (and other area-based or deprivation-based programmes such as SHEP) if they live outside the prescribed area. While outreach exists this is often not regarded as sufficient. It was also noted that in some areas the availability of some services (e.g. childcare and health visiting) can be more limited, particularly in rural areas.

The latest evaluation findings for Families First show disengagement of families continues to be problematic, with around a fifth of families starting a TAF plan disengaging before completing it – although it's also been noted that in some cases this could be a result of families achieving their goals quickly. Some families with particularly complex needs can also become dependent on key worker support¹⁵.

Supporting people into training and employment:

Recent evaluations for Communities for Work and PaCE highlight that while people who progress into employment are generally satisfied with the jobs they secured participants in both programmes generally progressed into low level, low or modestly paid, and sometimes precarious employment. There is therefore a danger that these individuals will face on-going in-work poverty or the prospect of alternating between insecure, low-paid work and periods of unemployment^{16 17}.

The evaluation for CfW shows the programme has been most successful in reaching participants who are comparatively work ready, but has yet to address more complex or entrenched barriers to employment. These can include motivational barriers, as well as low confidence levels and mental health issues. The case for more in-work support has also been raised to help sustain job outcomes, specifically in relation to help people progress once in employment or provide ongoing motivational support. Communities for Work Plus has since helped to fill this gap to some extent¹⁸.

The lack of flexibility within employability programmes to respond to individual needs and circumstances was also highlighted during our engagement activities. Examples given included limited scope to provide in-work support at a time when demand is increasing - while there is some provision with Communities for Work Plus this can be dependent on capacity and budgets. EU funding restrictions also mean people can't receive support from more than one programme at a time.

A number of respondents to our consultation felt the limited eligibility of the current Childcare Offer Wales means it's not reaching many children and families living in

¹⁵ [Evaluation of Families First Year 3 Report Executive Summary](#), September 2015

¹⁶ [Evaluation of Communities for Work: Stage 3 Emerging Outcomes and Impacts Report Summary](#), June 2018

¹⁷ [Evaluation of parents childcare and employment \(PaCE\): experience and outcomes](#), March 2020

¹⁸ [Evaluation of Communities for Work: Stage 3 Emerging Outcomes and Impacts Report Summary](#), June 2018

poverty who would benefit the most from such services. Suggestions included extending provision to those in education or training (Ministers recently agreed to such an extension); those working less than 16 hours; younger children (to alleviate issues for families with children of different ages); and school-aged parents (to enable them to continue their education). Some also felt the annual income threshold of up to £99,000 per parent is far too high. The most recent evaluation has found that the vast majority of parents (92 per cent) are using the same childcare provider as they had done before accessing the Offer. This indicates that currently the Offer is mainly attracting parents who were already using some form of formal, paid for childcare¹⁹.

Supporting children and young people:

During our consultation some respondents also highlighted the inadequacy and lack of consistency of support for young people studying in further education colleges.

This included:

- Concerns that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is of insufficient value to provide adequate support, particularly as the level hasn't increased for 15 years²⁰
- Difficulties asylum seekers have in accessing further and higher education. For example, they are currently not eligible for the EMA and are treated as foreign students until their refugee status is decided, which can often take years
- Different thresholds for support under different schemes/Learning Grants. For example both Learning Grants have an income threshold of £18,370 while the income threshold for EMA is slightly higher at £20,817 for a 1-child household and £23,077 for a 2-child household²¹.

Concerns relating to the funding of youth services were raised throughout our engagement activities. An independent evaluation into youth work in schools in Wales found the single biggest threat to the successful development of youth work in schools has been the threat of budget cuts and financial uncertainty. This can leave pupils vulnerable and schools wary of investing too heavily in programmes that may be cut²².

The most common barriers to accessing services and support identified by the young people we spoke to reflected many of those highlighted during our wider engagement activities. This included disability, mental health problems, language problems, a lack of confidence and inclusion, social anxiety, discrimination and low awareness (including free activities). This was in addition to physical and financial barriers such as transport, unemployment and a lack of money. When discussing

¹⁹ [Evaluation of the early implementation of the Childcare Offer for Wales year 2 Executive Summary](#), December 2019

²⁰ According to the Bevan Foundation to be eligible for an EMA a young person's family must be £4,000 worse off today than a young person applying in 2011

²¹ Bevan Foundation, [Learning a living, better support for post-16 learners](#), February 2020

²² [An independent evaluation of youth work in schools in Wales](#), May 2016

accessing activities outside school, some young people also spoke of the lack of time for families to help them with this due to other family or work priorities.

Suggestions on how to overcome some of these barriers, generally focussed on the need to raise awareness of the support that's available. This included through word of mouth, through schools and other trusted sources (community leaders/peers; GPs; youth workers), using existing local support services, newsletters and social media. Young people also felt there needed to be more support around claiming benefits and helping people with money difficulties, free school meals, uniform grants, as well as the promotion of more free sessions for activities outside school/college.

Ways of working:

Several respondents to our consultation highlighted the difficulties associated with short-term interventions and/or funding which can lead to insecurity for service users and makes planning and the retention of good staff difficult. This was felt to be unhelpful for ensuring successful longer term outcomes. Particular examples provided included Period Dignity and the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant. The benefits of longer term interventions, or having the flexibility to work with families for longer when needed, was also highlighted in the last evaluation of Families First. Cases where families had received Team Around the Family (TAF) support for longer than six months are more likely to record positive movement against 'hard outcomes', such as children's attendance at school or parents moving into employment²³.

It is important to differentiate between the length of interventions and length of funding commitments as Welsh Government's ability to influence both differ. There is much more scope to change the design and implementation of programmes. For example, as referred to above, the value of being able to spend more time working with families is likely to have financial implications in the short term, but the pay-off for investing in preventative approaches could be greater in the longer term. The length of funding commitments however are restricted by the outcome and timing of Comprehensive Spending Reviews undertaken by the UK Government. These set out the overall budget allocated to Welsh Government over specific periods.

What would make the most difference to children, young people and their families

Helping to identify priority areas for change was a key element of our engagement activities for the Review. Views were sought on what people felt would make the most difference to children, young people and their families, and help improve their situation on a day-to-day basis and in the longer term. As expected many of the priority areas identified reflected areas where current support was felt to be lacking or not reaching people deemed most in need of support. Many of these services and benefits are those where children and young people are direct recipients or users.

²³ [Evaluation of Families First Year 3 Report Executive Summary](#), September 2015

A large number of respondents believed the Welsh Government should do more to reduce the costs of education for families. The most common suggestion was the need to expand eligibility for FSM to a wider range of children and young people.

This included:

- Children in families where parents/carers are in low paid work/on Universal Credit (eg. those still in receipt of Working Tax Credit; increasing the earnings threshold for households on UC)
- Asylum seekers/ undocumented children without recourse to public funds
- 16 to 18 year olds attending further education college
- All primary aged children up to the age of 7 (as is the case in England and Scotland), or as a minimum children in the Foundation Phase.

Other frequent suggestions linked to reducing the costs of the school day or further education included:

- Reducing the complexity of the application process for FSM and PDG-Access and addressing other barriers that may be preventing children from taking up their entitlement. Options included having a single point of entry and introducing an auto-enrolment system for both cash benefits if the family is already in receipt of Housing Benefit or a Council Tax Reduction (and eligible for either benefit). A number of local authorities already have such arrangements in place²⁴.
- Further expansion of PDG-Access to cover more year groups
- Reviewing the adequacy of allowances for FSM, EMA and support available under the Learning Grant for Further Education, including the consideration of introducing an 'inflation lock' for Welsh Government funded cash benefits.

Children in Wales have also shared some of the findings of their most recent Child and Family Poverty Survey, undertaken in late 2019. Some of the comments from parents who took part in the study are as follows:

'...move the earnings threshold higher for free school meals... I'm in a full time job yet can't afford secondary school meals and I am not eligible for free school meals. Always living on the breadline with not even enough to buy new work shoes. Have glued my current pair 4 times now as can't afford to buy a new pair.'

"Lower priced school transport, trips and hot meals. I can't afford school dinners for my children."

"Sort out over priced school uniforms. Use of schools more to support families wellbeing especially in holidays."

Transport, uniforms and food were all highlighted as necessities for attending school or college by the young people we spoke to. Many young people also highlighted the importance of other support linked to their education such as having access to the internet and laptops at home, as well as taking part in extra curricula activities, school trips and tuition.

²⁴ Bevan Foundation, [Back to school?](#), September 2019

Free transport was frequently suggested as one way to make it easier for young people to access and participate in activities outside of school. Activities deemed as important for children and young people to take part in included sports/clubs, music, cultural and educational activities. Internship and shadowing opportunities and access to employability support were also felt to be important.

Similar issues were raised during our wider engagement. Along with reducing the costs of education other areas where it was felt the Welsh Government could do more, and where children and young people would benefit directly, included:

- the provision of free and more reliable public transport, particularly amongst the 12 to 18 age group and specialist services for disabled children
- more investment in youth services
- ensuring better links are made across the range of tackling poverty programmes and initiatives with child and adult mental health services, as well as greater support for mental well-being. The latter was felt to be particularly important. A number of respondents reported the rise in numbers of children and young people experiencing mental health problems which don't necessarily need the intervention of specialist mental health services
- In connection with the above, several respondents stressed the importance of building family resilience to help tackle poverty, but also how people often needed to be in the right place mentally and emotionally before being ready to access other types of support/services which they'd benefit from.

Improving financial resilience and well-being is a key aspect of building family resilience. A number of respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring advice services (including debt advice; income maximisation and wider benefits advice) remain integral to tackling poverty programmes. The success of the 'Talk, Learn, Do' (TLD) financial capability intervention in Wales was also raised. The final evaluation of the project²⁵ found the intervention was highly successful in achieving its objectives, with a positive impact on a number of measures, including: parents' knowledge on how to talk to their children about money; children's ability to handle and manage money; and parents' own over-indebtedness.

Other suggested areas where change would make the most difference to families included:

- Extending and/or building more flexibility into the Childcare Offer Wales (as detailed above)
- More advice and support for those who are in work, but living in poverty, to help them progress, gain new skills or find alternative employment
- Continued flexibility in how programmes are delivered so that support/services can be adapted to meet local need, with greater consideration being given to adopting a more needs-based approach more broadly. For example, in the allocation of resources for programmes such as Flying Start. This might

²⁵ Money Advice Service, [Talk, Learn, Do evaluation: a financial capability intervention for parents](#), October 2018

include the ability to 'tier' support based on the needs of the family, moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach.

In terms of the best way to achieve some of the above identified areas for change it was widely agreed that more needed to be done to join up the range of activities being taken forward across government departments in order to maximise budgets and contributions to tackling child poverty. Improving links across key departments such as education, health/mental health and transport, was felt to be particularly important, as well as a need to build on what's working well currently.

Several respondents, including members of the End Child Poverty Network and the Children's Commissioner for Wales reiterated their call for the Welsh Government to develop a Child Poverty Delivery Plan, ensuring the needs and rights of children and young people are central to that plan. It was felt this would help to provide direction and a 'powerful statement of intent' for the further implementation of the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy, at a time when child poverty is increasing and its affects intensifying. It was recommended such a plan should set out, as a minimum, short to medium term actions which will make a tangible difference to children and young people living in poverty, in addition to providing better co-ordination of cross government action to both prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty on children. It was suggested lessons could be learnt from both Scotland and New Zealand.

A number of respondents also believed work should proceed to establish a more coherent and integrated 'Welsh benefits system'. During the workshops we gathered views on what 'values' and 'principles' people believed should underpin an effective benefit system.

The most commonly identified values were:

- inclusive; understanding/non-judgemental; responsive; fair; compassionate; respect/dignity

While the most commonly identified principles (with a focus on delivery/implementation) being:

- accessible; simple/easy to use; non-dependency

The importance of gathering evidence on the impact of programmes and interventions on those experiencing poverty was also stressed. Robust monitoring and evaluation processes, combining longitudinal studies with more qualitative research (eg. 'most significant change' stories), as well as sharing good practice, should be integral to policy work going forward.

As part of the latest Children in Wales Child and Family Poverty Survey 2019 children were asked "*If you were First Minister, what would you do to stop poverty happening?*". A selection of their comments can be found below:

'Have more places for young people to get experience in work; young people find it difficult get jobs because they have no experience.'

'More jobs that will teach you the skills you need, if you don't have the proper qualifications'

'Free school meals for all children'

'Educate people on managing money, spend money on services that can help and not wait until things are really bad'

'Attract businesses to poorer areas to create more jobs'

'Make sure some benefits are paid in vouchers for supermarkets or housing benefit direct to landlords, so that children have a secure roof over their heads and parents have to buy food.'

Similarly we asked the young people we spoke to what more the Welsh Government could do which would make the most difference to children and young people, helping to improve their lives and reach their potential. While the feedback was broad and varied suggestions could be categorised into three main categories:

- Opportunities - through education; developing skills; mentoring/role models; work experience
- Self-belief - having confidence; positivity and good self esteem
- Having an income - free education, access to resources and money
- Being included – ease of access to services/activities to enable participation; respecting cultural requirements and religious observations.