

APPG on Children in Wales

Meeting Minutes – 22 October 2025

Guest Speaker: Rocio Cifuentes, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

1. Attendance

Chair: Gill German

Llinos Medi

Andrew Ranger

Ruth Jones

Sean O’Neill (Children in Wales - Secretariat)

Rocio Cifuentes

2. Child Poverty in Wales

Recap from our previous meeting. Members discussed the Bevan Foundation report on child poverty, which identifies four key drivers of poverty among families with younger children:

- The financial impact of newborns
- Employment challenges
- Social security system limitations
- Rising living costs

The report highlights that more than half of children living in poverty in Wales are in families with younger children, underscoring the need for a more tailored policy approach.

Key recommendations noted:

- Reform of the current social security system
- Additional Welsh Government support to ensure benefits meet essential family needs
- Tackling high living costs, particularly housing, which disproportionately affects families with young children
- Greater targeting of support to children and families

Members agreed on the importance of pressing Government to prioritise direct, child-focused anti-poverty measures.

Members agreed to write to the UKG in respect of the impact of the Two Child limit on children and families in Wales ahead of the pending announcement.

3. Children's Commissioner's Manifesto for Children and Young People

Rocio Cifuentes presented key priorities from her recently published manifesto. She cautioned against the normalisation of persistently high child poverty rates in Wales, stressing the urgency of structural reform.

3.1 Safeguarding

- Establishment of a Child Protection Authority, as recommended by IICSA
- Closing safeguarding loopholes to ensure independent oversight of religious organisations and unaffiliated sports clubs

3.2 Child Poverty

- Introduction of a Welsh Child Payment, similar to the Scottish model
- Extension of universal free school meals to secondary schools
- Improved access to Welsh-administered benefits
- Expansion of summer holiday programmes such as Food & Fun to support families in deep poverty

3.3 Education

- Comprehensive review of School Governing Bodies (including recruitment, training, support, skills auditing and potential remuneration)
- Improved support for families navigating the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system

3.4 Transport

- Free public transport (bus and rail) for under-18s
- Full review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and its guidance
- Rocio further emphasised that housing is a major driver of child poverty, alongside transport barriers, childcare costs and low wages.

4. Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Work

- Gill German highlighted positive work at Christ the Word Catholic School in Rhyl, where an anti-discrimination group is actively engaging pupils in:
 - Structured meetings
 - "Environment walks" to identify and address discrimination
 - Workshops promoting diversity, inclusion, and challenging hate
 - These initiatives foster dialogue, understanding and community cohesion.

Gill observed that while Welsh Government policy increasingly focuses on community cohesion, immigration considerations are often treated separately, despite the interconnected nature of these issues.

The group referenced the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: annual report 2022 to 2023, noting ongoing implementation challenges.

Andrew Ranger and Gill discussed with Rocio the merits of establishing a children and young people's anti-racist advisory group to ensure lived experience informs national strategy.

5. Safeguarding Governance

Gill raised concerns about whether current safeguarding governance arrangements are sufficiently robust. It was suggested that engagement with the Children's Commissioner for England may be beneficial to compare oversight systems and identify best practice.

6. Agreed Actions / Next Steps

- Consider engagement with the Children's Commissioner for England regarding safeguarding governance.
- Follow up with Welsh Government officials regarding targeted anti-poverty measures for families with young children.
- Write to the UK Government in relation to the impact of the Two Child Limit on children and families in Wales

Meeting closed.