

Wales Race Forum – Food Poverty Meeting
14:00 – 15:00, Wednesday 16 November 2022

Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Jane Hutt Minister for Social Justice (Chair)
Paul Webb, Welsh Government
Sally Hunt, Welsh Government
Anirban Mukhopadhyay - KIRAN
Lisa Evans Welsh Government
Faith Walker – Friends of Cymru Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia C.I.C
Riaz Hassan - Welsh Government
Laura Kent – Race Equality First
Sue Leake - Welsh Government
Molly Sexton - BAWSO
Robert Moore, NWREN
Jess Williams Welsh Government
David Willis - Welsh Government
Isaac Blake – Romani Cultural & Arts Company

Apologies:

Sue Vincent Jones – Welsh Government
Emma Bennett – Welsh Government
Steven Macey – Welsh Government
Heather Payne – Welsh Government
Huw Ostrom – Welsh Government
Roon Adam
Shehzad Malik
Chris Dobbs – Race Equality First
Aled Edwards

Ali Abdi
Alicja Zalesinka
Daniel Hurford
Iolanda Banu
Kay Denyer
Laura O'Keefe
Maria Mesa
Abyd Quinn-Azize
Shahien Taj
Shavannah Taj
Sunil Patel
Suzanne Duval
Uzo Iwobi – Race Council Cymru

Item 1 – Welcome and introductions

1. Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice (MSJ), introduced colleagues from the Poverty Team and mentioned statistics on the disproportionate impact of food poverty on BAME families
2. We have held a Food poverty round table to consider the many ways of tackling the issue. Gathering feedback is very important.
3. Many families are struggling with energy costs. We called on the UK Government to go further than the latest price cap with targeted support for those who need it most, support for bills and benefits.
4. Prices of low cost items have increased the most, particularly impacting on low income households with the biggest rise in bills.

Item 2. Presentation, Sally Hunt, Welsh Government

5. Inequality in food insecurity has increased, BAME households are affected more than White households
6. The Welsh Government has invested £90 million in a fuel support scheme, with £200 non repayable payments, £15 million for a discretionary assistance fund. The £150 cost of living payment scheme is closed but reached 1 million households. There is a fund for children receiving free school meals.

7. The First Minister announced the third national Claim What's Yours campaign, with support for advice services, training for frontline workers, £1 million to develop warm hubs
8. Since 2019 actions to tackle food poverty include Free School Meals during school holidays, cross sector food partnerships, tackling root causes of food poverty, support for food banks, buying baby milk etc., social supermarkets, lunch clubs, baby banks and school uniform banks.
9. On 10 November the MSJ launched the third Cost of Living summit. The Welsh Government can't tackle the crisis alone, there must be a national effort with local authorities, social partnership, third sector, stakeholders.
10. How can we better meet the needs of communities? Feedback is welcome:
prosperousfutures@gov.wales
TacklingPovertyAndSupportingFamilies@gov.wales

Item 3 - Feedback

11. The MSJ said we need a culturally appropriate approach to cost of living crisis, part of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP). Officials are happy to meet people. Mosques and temples distribute food hampers. The MSJ invited examples of good or bad practice.
12. In Cardiff the Gypsy and Traveller community's choice is between paying for food or energy. Sites' energy bills are paid via the council so people aren't getting reductions, the community need to connect directly to supplier.
13. The MSJ said this was very concerning as people on sites are entitled to all discounts etc. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Policy team are aware and in touch with the Local Authority.
14. Anirban gave feedback from community members:
 - Syrian refugee families receive food vouchers every 2-3 months from the Star Centre in Splott but are unable to buy Halal meat.
 - Afghan families are reporting that it's difficult to buy biscuits, they have been told some items are luxuries.
 - Families taken to Cardiff Central Library said staff are helpful in giving advice.
 - There is a strong community intention to help, people are willing to donate money for vouchers for Halal meat.

ACTION - Officials from the Poverty team to discuss cultural dietary requirements with the Food Division and Lesley Griffiths MS.

15. Culturally appropriate food is difficult to find for refugees and asylum seekers in sparsely populated areas in north Wales. NWREN is looking into this.
16. Another general point is that poverty is a UK Government Policy that doesn't have to exist based on bogus economic arguments.
17. WG could ease the burden on families by instructing schools not to have uniform policies, simply that children should be clean and decent. This could reduce pressure on thousands of families.
18. The MSJ said the Education Minister recently introduced a rapid consultation on school uniforms which ends on 28 Nov, and Changes to Statutory Guidance on uniform and appearance

[Changes to statutory guidance on school uniform and appearance policies | GOV.WALES](#)

19. At the Cabinet Subcommittee on Cost of Living we had a presentation from the Children's Commissioner and a response to a survey by Children in Wales. The Education Minister promised to consider these issues.
20. The MSJ said she has also heard issues about school shoes, this is being considered. The MSJ said she looks forward to hearing more from NWREN about these issues.
21. The Head of HR for BAWSO she heard a staff member had to choose between new shoes for their child or food. The issues affect support workers as well as service users.

ACTION: Officials from the Poverty team to discuss further with BAWSO

22. Extra money is needed for parents with children in hospital, owing to expensive food, lack of social workers, no transport etc. Faith Walker will take up issues with Sally Hunt and David Willets.
23. Riaz Hassan spoke about a recent meeting with Mark Isherwood MS and Altaf Hussein MS about the cost of living, culturally sensitive food provision in terms of the food banks, and in hospitals and schools. In terms of free school meals, children may go hungry rather than eat non-Halal etc.

Item 4 – Closing remarks

24. The MSJ said that this is cross gov work, all contributions valuable. Sally Hunt said officials will be in touch with those who commented.
25. The MSJ had to leave at this point to respond to an urgent Senedd question, as the meeting came to a natural end.