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National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into: Public Libraries

Response from: Children in Wales



Children in Wales Plant yng Nghymru

Inquiry into public libraries.

Children in Wales the national umbrella organisation in Wales, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. Its role is to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality in Wales. Children in Wales fights for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, and special attention for children in need, as well as ensuring children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

Children in Wales has around 200 organisations in membership, including the major voluntary children's agencies, professional associations, local authorities and health bodies, as well as many smaller community groups. Children in Wales facilitates a variety of forums across Wales and works in partnership with the National Children's Bureau in England and Children in Scotland, and internationally is active in Eurochild and the International Forum for Child welfare.

Children in Wales welcomes this opportunity to contribute to The National Assembly for Wales' Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee inquiry into public libraries in Wales.

The Libraries Inspire Strategy outlines the Welsh Government's plans to ensure that libraries are at the heart of communities, contributing to and supporting people to make a difference to their lives. Library services promote and support the Welsh Government's Programme of Government including child poverty and education.

The priorities of **Libraries Inspire** are to:

- work together to review current models of service delivery in response to the current economic climate, and develop new innovative models of delivery

- develop partnership working in procuring and improving access to resources, including new online services such as e-books
- modernise public library buildings to meet the changing needs of their users
- maximise the contribution of libraries in developing people's skills to help everyone reach their potential, reduce inequality, and improve economic and social well-being
- invest in developing the skills of library staff
- implement a co-ordinated audience development programme across Wales to enrich the lives of individuals and communities
- ensure the provision of a high quality service through initiatives such as the Welsh Public Library Standards.

For Children and young people and their families, libraries are engaging in a range of actions and activities to address these priorities.

Libraries lead through the ensuring access to information, inspiring life-long learning and reading for enjoyment. They work to meet the needs of children, young people and their families through activities for young children, and their parents to support early language development and confidence in reading. In terms of poverty, is not just about income but, vitally for families, also about the effective exclusion of people from ordinary living patterns, customs & activities. Libraries can provide opportunities for children, young people and families to access information via the internet, supported by staff skilled in delivering advice and guidance.

There is a very clear role for Library services in Wales to support child poverty solutions addressing some of the challenges faced by families living in poverty. Access to information and engagement in activities for children, particularly young children can help to break the poverty cycle, and protect children better from the effects of poverty

Parents have a pivotal role in helping children and young people to attain language and cognitive development, health, social and emotional wellbeing, and research has shown that parental stress and consistency are the two variables most associated with child outcomes and that the negative effects of low income are mainly mediated by parenting factors. Access to advice and information can be one element in helping families cope. Libraries, particularly those with established links to their local Family Information service, and Flying Start programme can contribute to supporting parents to support children and young people.

Libraries must be part of the Local Authority education plan, while every child in Wales has the right to realise their potential through education, libraries can have a significant role in supporting children and families to achieve, for example the summer reading Challenge.

Lynne Hill

Children in Wales.