

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Sixth Senedd Priorities Consultation

July 2021

In order to help inform our strategic planning and forward work programme, we are asking for your views on what you think, at this stage, our **main priorities should be during the Sixth Senedd (2021-2026)**. Where overlaps between committee remits exist, we will ensure that relevant issues are shared with other committees.

We are keen to start this work as soon as possible, to make sure our plans take account of your views. We know people take a well-earned break over the summer, and many education institutions also pause for a holiday, so we will run this consultation until **Friday 17 September 2021** to make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute when they return to work. Please be aware that it may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.

A key priority for us is to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard in our work. To do this in a meaningful way, we know that we need tailored and appropriate ways of engaging. In light of that, **this consultation is not aimed at children and young people. Instead, we will run activities with children and young people in the autumn to help us understand their priorities for the Sixth Senedd.** We will share the findings of this work with all Senedd committees. If you are – or your child is – under 16 and interested in being involved in this activity, please email us on SeneddChildren@senedd.wales to let us know. You can also use this mail address to send us your ideas on how you would like to see us engaging with children and young people – we have lots of ideas ourselves, but we're also interested in yours!

Information about consultations, which you should consider carefully before submitting a response, is available in our [privacy notice](#). Please answer questions 6-8 at the end of this proforma to enable us to process your response appropriately.

The Senedd has two official languages, Welsh and English. In line with the [Senedd's Official Languages Scheme](#), we request that you submit your response in both languages if you are able to do so. If your response is not submitted bilingually, we will publish in the language submitted, stating that it has been received in that language only. We expect other organisations to implement their own standards or schemes and to comply with their statutory obligation.

If you have any queries about this consultation, please contact the Committee team on SeneddChildren@senedd.wales.



1. Name:

Steffan Evans

2. Email address:

Steffan.evans@bevanfoundation.org

3. Please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation (Please select one answer only.):

Individual responding in a personal capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding in a professional capacity (go straight to question 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual responding on behalf of an organisation (please answer question 3.1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3.1. If you are an individual responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation you are representing and your job title:

Bevan Foundation, Policy and Research Officer

4. Would you like to be added to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's contacts list in order to receive updates about our work? (Please select one answer only.)

Please note that you can unsubscribe by emailing SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>



5. What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

Please answer in relation to as many of the themes below as you are able.

Please keep your response to no more than 2000 words in total.

Theme 1: School-age education

The Bevan Foundation are pleased that the Welsh Government are currently undertaking a review into the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM). There is now a broad body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impact expanding provision would have for children living in poverty and that expanding provision is both affordable and practically possible.

We were delighted to see that there was cross-party support for enhancing current FSM provision during the Senedd election campaign. Given this cross party support and the potential significant impact of expanding provision we believe that the committee should make scrutinising the Welsh Government's decision in this area a priority. We believe that there is value in the committee prioritising FSM even if the Welsh Government do decide to proceed with expanding provision. Consultation is needed with local authorities and schools to maximise the benefits of any reforms, and the Committee could play a valuable role in facilitating this process.

Theme 2: Further and higher education

We believe that exploring the financial support available to learners in further education from low income families should be a priority for this committee over the coming Senedd term.

The Bevan Foundation's [*Learning a living, better support for post 16 learners*](#) report highlighted that the value of support provided through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has not increased since the scheme was introduced in 2004/05. We calculated at the time that had EMA increased in line with inflation, it would have stood at £45 per week in 2020 a significantly higher than the £30 young people are actually entitled to.



It is not just the value of the support provided that has been cut in real terms. The income thresholds for EMA and the Welsh Government Learning Grant (Further Education) have not increased in over a decade. A student's family must therefore be over £4,000 poorer in real terms to receive EMA today than they were a decade ago.

The pandemic has heightened the need for the current support system to be reviewed. The economic impact of the crisis disproportionately affected industries where there are a high proportion of workers are young people, whilst there remains considerable uncertainty about the future of the labour market.

Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)



Theme 4: Children and young people

We believe that the Committee should undertake a review into the Welsh Government's childcare offer. Whilst the childcare offer is highly valued by thousands of families all over Wales, the Bevan Foundation and others have unearthed a number of shortcomings with the policy as it is currently implemented.

Our research has shown that the scheme as currently designed is not flexible enough to support parents working non standard hours or shift work, whilst many parents who are trapped in poverty are denied access to any support at all as they do not work sufficient hours. The fact that the scheme is restricted to 3 year olds also severely limits the effectiveness of the programme.

We believe the committee should undertake an inquiry to better understand the limitations of the current system and to consider options for reform.



USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

In order to enable us to handle your information in accordance with our [privacy notice](#), please complete the questions below. We will be unable to process your response if these questions are not completed.

6. We have stated our intention to engage meaningfully with children and young people, in tailored and appropriate ways, in the autumn. However, if you are responding using this proforma and are under 13 years old, we will only be able to accept your response if your parent or guardian has confirmed that you can participate. They can do this by sending us an email to SeneddChildren@senedd.wales.

Are you under 13 years old?

I am under 13 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am 13 or over	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

7. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you would prefer that your name is not published alongside your evidence.

We will not publish the names of people under the age of 18.

I am aged 18 or over and I am content for you to publish my name alongside my evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I am aged 18 or over and I would prefer that you did not publish my name alongside my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am under the age of 18	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you have agreement from any third parties referred to in your evidence that you can share information that may be used to identify them and that they understand that it may be published.

I confirm that any third party I have referred to in my evidence has agreed that I can share information that may be used to identify them, and that they understand that it may be published.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I do not have the agreement of one or more of the third parties I have referred to in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have not referred to any third parties in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>

