

Annex B

Child Poverty Strategy consultation responses

1. Introduction

- 1.1. HEFCW published its draft Child Poverty Strategy consultation in February 2012, as part of our statutory duty to consult with Welsh Ministers, local authorities, and other interested parties, and to engage the sector and others in the Strategy's equality impact assessment processes¹.
- 1.2. Our consultation sought views on:
 - i. the extent to which the Strategy would contribute to the Welsh Government's intentions to eradicate child poverty in Wales by 2020:
 - ii. the extent to which the Strategy would encourage cultural change and proactive approaches, thereby ensuring that actions contributing to the eradication of child poverty are fully integrated into our own and the higher education sector's policies and priorities:
 - iii. the extent to which our proposed strategic objectives and priorities would help young people participate effectively in education and training; and
 - iv. whether there are any aspects of the Strategy, or its implementation, that might impact negatively on, or have unintended consequences for, individuals with protected characteristics or individuals under-represented in higher education.
- 1.3. We received seventeen consultation responses by the submission date from: Aberystwyth University; Bangor University; Cardiff Metropolitan University; Cardiff University; Cardiff and Vale University Health Board; Child and Young People's Partnership, Vale of Glamorgan Council; Children and Families Services; Chwarae Teg; Countryside Council for Wales; Glyndŵr University; North and Mid Wales Reaching Wider Partnership; Swansea Metropolitan University; Swansea University; South East Wales (First Campus) Reaching Wider Partnership; University and College Union; University of Wales, Newport; and Velindre NHS Trust.

2. Strategy endorsement and responses

- 2.1. All responses welcomed and supported the strategy, confirming that it conformed to the principles set out in the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and HEFCW's *Strategic Approach for Widening Access to Higher Education*. Responses agreed that draft Strategy did not impact negatively on individuals with protected characteristics and would contribute to the Welsh Government's intention to eradicate Child Poverty in Wales by 2020. Two organisations queried the anticipated rate of cultural change that might be achieved by HEFCW and universities, in the required timescale.
- 2.2. While questions i to iv were not specifically addressed, respondents commented more generally or suggested the following improvements to the Strategy:

Equality and diversity-related issues

- i. one organisation encouraged HEFCW to make reference to its actions, including monitoring of, gender imbalances in certain disciplines;

¹ HEFCW Circular [W12/06HE](#)

- ii. two institutions' responses focussed on issues of ethnicity and individuals with protected characteristics and recognised that poverty impacts on groups and individuals differently;
- iii. one organisation recommended that women should be identified as a priority group, given that they are more frequently the second householder earner, in two income households, and their employment outcomes contribute to improving poverty levels;
- iv. one organisation encouraged the Strategy to recognise higher education's role in improving women's employment outcomes and promoting enterprise;
- v. one organisation recommended a focus on gypsies, travellers as well as refugees and asylum seekers;
- vi. one institution recommended that the Strategy encourage universities and the Student Loans Company to address issues of inclusion, equality and diversity in marketing and communications;
- vii. one institution recommended that the Strategy encourage universities to provide equality and diversity-related staff development.

Social mobility and employability

- viii. two organisations raised issues in regards to higher learning and its potential to promote social mobility, thereby advancing careers and improving living standards.

Geographical focus

- ix. three organisations raised Communities-First area-related issues, including recommending a wider strategic focus including actions to address disadvantage and workless households outside Communities First and Heads of the Valleys areas, recognising the potential contribution that higher education can make to community regeneration;
- x. two organisations recommended that the Strategy take account of rurality issues and recommended that it be 'rurality proofed', while another drew attention to rural poverty issues, which were not recognised by the Communities First Programme.

Alignment with organisations, strategies and policies

- xi. four organisations recommended that the Strategy should promote increased collaborative working, including with 14-19 Partnerships, regional higher education partnerships and with Agored Cymru to promote progression to HE;
- xii. two institutions considered that the reconfiguration of higher education student numbers in 2013/14 may impact negatively on universities' ability to meet the needs of every learner;
- xiii. one institution noted that Welsh universities should be incentivised to maintain part-time student numbers;
- xiv. one organisation recommended that HEFCW require universities to evidence their contribution to reducing child poverty to inform national and local strategies.

HE provision and funding advice

- xv. one organisation welcomed the focus on flexible delivery recognising that this could include condensed delivery opportunities;
- xvi. one institution recommended that the Strategy should set out how HEFCW plans to sustain and develop subject-specific learning opportunities, including STEM and MFL, recognising that MFL enrolment figures are not representative of the spread of social structures in the Welsh population;
- xvii. one organisation considered student finance required more emphasis in the Strategy.

3. Actions to take account of consultation responses

- 3.1. In this Strategy we want to take account of those responses which most reflect what higher education can do specifically to contribute to the eradication of child poverty. A number of the equality and diversity-related consultation responses had broader policy implications than for just this Strategy. Therefore, we will take these forward through our HEFCW Equality Action Plan.