



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to the Children and Young People Committee focused review of child poverty in Wales

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

The stark facts:

- In 2010 1 in 4 children in Wales (180,000) live in poverty.ⁱ
- Youngsters from low-income households leave school earlier and are 6 times more likely to leave without qualifications than those from higher-income households.ⁱⁱ
- Pupils from deprived backgrounds have lower aspirations for their futures.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Children growing up in low income families are more likely to leave school without achieving their full potential.^{iv}
- The low attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is driven more by a combination of factors related to poverty and deprivation than ability.^v
- There is a class divide between rural and city dwellers and indeed within the rural communities themselves.^{vi}
- Child poverty is systematically linked with women's poverty, which in turn is closely correlated with women's family status and disproportionate share of caring responsibilities. Lone mothers or female carers make up 90 per cent of lone parent households and more than two-thirds of these are poor.^{vii}

“Child poverty’s consequences are wide-ranging and long-lasting. Children from low-income families are less likely to do well in school, and more likely to suffer ill-health and to face pressures in their lives that help to explain the association with anti-social behaviours and criminality. These consequences cost society more in money that the government spends in trying to counter the effects of child poverty, and in the economic costs of children failing to reach their potential” (JRF, Eliminating the costs of child poverty)

- The average budgeted spend per pupil on local authority education in Wales in 2009-10 was £5,429. This is £527 per pupil lower than in England.^{viii}
- Once money has been through the LEA and allocated to individual schools many are missing out on funding and pupils.^{ix}
- Money is not targeted at those in greatest need. For example, in 2008/9 seven authorities in Wales were spending less than the average Wales spend per pupil.^x
- ATL Cymru welcomed the First Minister's recognition of the need to spend more, and his commitment to look to increase education spending by at least 1% above the percentage block grant that Wales receives from the UK government. We also welcomed the review of spending commissioned by the Education Minister. At last there seems to be some realism in the Assembly Government about the dire effects of short changing children and schools year on year.

It's more than just the money ...

An increase in spending on education is a necessary but not sufficient way of tackling the effects of child poverty on children's education.

Other issues include:

- **The Curriculum:** Deprived pupils typically have less access to a broad curriculum, and extra curricular activities which pupils from more advantaged areas often take for granted. Disadvantaged pupils often find the curriculum they are taught irrelevant to their future and or unchallenging or disengaging.
- **Lack of support:** Disadvantaged children often need extra support in order to be given the same opportunities as an average child. This support more often than not requires extra resources.^{xi}
- **Clear strategic direction** that seeks to increase the performance of children in Wales year on year, narrowing the gap with their English counterparts, is necessary.

Attainment at 16 is key to future life chances. Without this progression to university the option of a professional career diminishes. Increasing the pass rate of 5 or more GCSE's is an important factor to widening participation in higher education. (The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions. 2009)

Some targets for the Welsh Assembly Government

- Narrow the gap in per pupil spend between Wales and England year on year until it becomes zero or negative.
- Develop national benchmarks and targets for improvements in the outcomes of disadvantage pupils. Local Authorities and schools need to be challenged on the performance of disadvantaged learners.^{xii}
- Involve the profession more on decision making, using professional expertise to decide how money should be spent

- Spend where it makes an impact – target deprivation as the main focus for spending^{xiii}.
- Include a rigorous rural impact assessment in policies and initiatives.^{xiv}
- Encourage Local Authorities to develop a multi-agency working approach. Agencies should work with deprived families co-operatively and share information and resources to enable a single worker to be the point of contact for each family rather than having a worker from each agency.

ⁱ Save the Children Wales website, <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/wales.htm>

ⁱⁱ JRF, *The costs of child poverty for individuals and society: A literature review*, October 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ The Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4*, March 2009

^{iv} As JRF research illustrates, even before the recession the problem of growing up in a low income household was already rising sharply, to the extent that half of the previous improvement in child poverty had already been lost. JRF, *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales 2009*, <http://www.poverty.org.uk/reports/wales%202009%20findings.pdf>

^v The quality of school activity only accounts for 14% variation in pupils' performance and the brightest children in Britain's poorest homes are outperformed by the least gifted children from wealthy homes by the age of seven. ATL, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas*, 2008 [http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%20rural%20areas%20PS%202008.p](http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%20rural%20areas%20PS%202008.pdf)

^{vi} ATL, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas*, 2008

^{vii} ATL's motion to the 2008 TUC Women's Conference: "Conference therefore calls on the TUC and its affiliated unions to:

- press the Government to adopt a joined-up approach to ending child poverty and women's poverty; and
- lead a campaign to address the causes of poverty and inequality within our society through a focus on social justice rather than social exclusion".

^{viii} Local Authority Budgets for Education: Wales and England Comparisons, 2009-10, 27th January 2010, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/localgov2010/0127/?lang=en>

^{ix} In Gwynedd the mean spending in 2009-10 is £3305 per primary pupil and £4277 per secondary pupil. One member reported that in their secondary school the funding per pupil is £3902 per head.

^x These authorities were Torfaen, Denbighshire, Cardiff, Newport, Flintshire, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, Local Authority Budgets for Education 2008-09: Wales and England Comparison, January 2009 <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/090128sb42009en.pdf>

^{xi} JRF, *Estimating the costs of child poverty*, October 2008

^{xii} ATL Cymru agrees with the recommendations proposed by the recent Estyn report into RAISE funding for disadvantaged pupils Estyn, *Tackling child poverty and disadvantage in schools*, January 2010, http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports/Tackling_child_poverty_and_disadvantage_in_schools_January_2010.pdf

^{xiii} Research by the DCFS implies that an increase of £1,000 in the average school expenditure per pupil would raise the number of pupils attaining the expected standard at age 11 by 2.2, 2.0 and 0.7 percentage points in English, Maths and Science. (*Research Brief: Impact of School Resources in Attainment at Key stage 2*, June 2008, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RB043.pdf>)

^{xiv} ATL, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in rural areas position statement*, 2008, <http://www.atl.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/campaigns/rural-poverty-campaign.asp>

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