



Eich cyf / Your ref: WAQ76152; WAQ76153; WAQ76154

Mark Isherwood AM
Assembly Member for North Wales
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

18 April 2018

Dear Mark

Re: WAQ76152, WAQ76153 and WAQ76154

I refer to the WAQs detailed above and the subsequent holding reply issued on 19 March. I am now in a position to provide a substantive response.

I welcome the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report which acknowledges those areas where action by the Welsh Government is beginning to make a difference. Levels of worklessness have fallen, employment rates have risen and adult skills have improved significantly.

However, this has been against a backdrop of tax and welfare reforms and reducing budgets. There is no denying the devastating impact of austerity on the least affluent people in our society. It is clear that the UK Government's programme of welfare reforms has had a damaging effect on levels of poverty, especially for people who are working. 61 per cent of children living in poverty in Wales live in a household where someone is working. This is not acceptable.

Welsh Government is taking action to help improve outcomes for low income households. Prosperity for All, our national strategy, sets out our commitment to delivering a healthy, secure and prosperous Wales in which every person is able to contribute and reach their full potential.

The evidence is clear that well-paid work is the best route out of poverty, and the greatest protection against poverty for those at risk. However, if we are to make a real and lasting difference, it is vital that the UK Government commits to targeting more support to help lift people out of poverty and ensuring that work pays.

In December I launched our new Economic Action Plan which sets out how we will work to drive a Welsh economy which spreads opportunity and tackles inequality, ensuring sustainable employment and spreading the benefits of economic growth as widely as possible.

The Plan sets out an ambitious new Economic Contract that ties Welsh Government financial support to the availability of Fair Work and outlines a new model of Regional Economic Development that brings partners together to support inclusive growth in all parts of Wales.

Our Employability Delivery Plan was published this month. It outlines how we will support people to increase their employability, including those furthest from the jobs market. Improving skills and supporting people to enter and progress in employment plays a fundamental role in taking forward the tackling poverty agenda.

We are also taking action to tackle barriers to employment such as childcare. Our Childcare offer will help working parents across Wales to increase their household income by supporting people into full-time employment; supporting people working part time to work more hours and supporting second earners into work.

Our National Strategy, Prosperity for All sets out how we will provide support for people with mental health conditions through the delivery of a social prescribing pilot which will help systematise access and referral to a wide range of care and support for mental wellbeing. We are already supporting two local pilots to trial social prescribing through the Innovate to Save Fund. These are giving local GPs the option to refer patients to community gardens or time credit programmes to help improve their wellbeing and provide more holistic care.

We also recognise the detrimental effect social isolation can have on people in Wales. In Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021 and in our response to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's Inquiry in to Loneliness and Isolation, we confirmed our commitment to developing a national strategy to tackling these issues.

Yours sincerely



Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport

