

Hannah Blythyn AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref : HB/05503/19

Mark Isherwood AM
Assembly Member for North Wales
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Dear Mark,

During Oral Assembly Questions in Plenary on 17 July Julie James AM, Minister for Housing and Local Government, in response to your question relating to the Oxfam Sustainable Livelihoods project, and other programmes run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), made a commitment that I would write to you updating you on Welsh Government's engagement with these initiatives.

I understand that the Oxfam's Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and project operates across all Job Centres in Wales. The SLA is a method of understanding the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. It is a participatory approach that is based on the belief that people experiencing poverty have abilities and assets that can be used to help them manage and improve their lives. The whole ethos of the project is to support the tackling poverty agenda by supporting people to develop the assets they already have in life, rather than focussing on what they don't have. It focuses on people's lives as a whole using the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) to identify through a variety of different tools and individual assets into five key areas, Human Assets (education and skills, health) Social Assets (family, friends, neighbours and groups) Public Assets (local services, facilities and amenities) Financial Assets (wages, benefits, loans) Physical Assets (housing, vehicles, work equipment). This work is currently being delivered by a secondee from the DWP based at Oxfam Cymru.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I understand from the DWP that the project provided training to 608 staff (40% of the DWP Wales workforce) across Welsh jobcentres between June 2016 and September 2017, thus allowing staff to fully understand the needs of their customers, and be better placed to provide the appropriate support and solutions to meet their needs. I recognise that the SLA provides a framework for understanding all of the assets and barriers a person faces, regardless of where the individual initially receives support, and makes partnership working between organisations substantially easier.

Welsh Government officials have been in several discussions with Oxfam with regard to the SLA project to discuss the potential for the project to be embedded into future Welsh Government programmes. One of these areas was with Homes and Places. The Welsh Government supported Cymorth Cymru and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) hub to develop and deliver a series of Trauma Informed Training packages to over 1,000 front line housing/homelessness officers across Wales in early 2018. This training has better equipped staff to work with and support their client group, some of whom will be the most vulnerable people in our society. A second tranche of training is now being delivered and my officials have been liaising with the DWP Wales to extend this training to Job Centre front line staff in Wales, as Universal Credit rolls out.

Working Wales is a new service which commenced in April this year that will deliver efficient and streamlined employability support that is responsive to an individual's needs, and is one of the commitments set out within our Employability Delivery Plan. The service is delivered by Careers Wales and is designed to simplify access, tailor advice and join up available support to help people reduce and overcome barriers to getting into work. Working Wales will be the sole entry assessment and referral point for Job Support Wales, the Welsh Government's new employability support programme which will be launched in April 2020. The Welsh Government and Careers Wales are working very closely with DWP Wales in the implementation of this new service and new employability provision.

Amber Rudd MP, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced on the 18 July 2019 that around 600 DWP staff across the UK are currently undergoing specialist training from expert organisations Women's Aid. These new advisory points of contact will be trained to identify and support the needs of anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and will work closely with local services to share knowledge and signpost women to additional, external support. The Welsh Government are already liaising with DWP Wales to establish closer links with specialist Welsh agencies and support networks to build on this development.

As you are aware I attended an evidence session on 3 July with the Equalities, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) Committee relating to their current Inquiry into 'Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery'. I referred to the Welsh Government's commission to the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) to explore the case for the devolved administration of certain aspects of the welfare benefit system. I know that Oxfam submitted a written response to the ELGC Committee's call for evidence to their Inquiry which makes reference to the SLA, and the WCPP will be speaking with many of the respondents to the consultation, as part of their initial scoping phase for this work.

I hope you will find this information helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Blythyn'.

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