



Press Release

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We need to get the basics right for our children: Children's Commissioner for Wales' call as he publishes his Annual Report and Accounts 09|10

Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales, will today (28 September) call on Welsh Government, local authorities and other public bodies to focus on getting the basics right for our children as pressures mount on shrinking budgets.

Ahead of the publication of his third Annual Report & Accounts, the Commissioner highlighted areas that are fundamental to a child's development where progress is lacking. He said:

"It seems to me that a time of financial uncertainty we should be focusing efforts and budgets on getting the basics right for children; from making sure there are systems in place to protect children from harm and abuse to making sure we show school pupils dignity and respect by providing them with adequate toilet facilities."

He added:

"I hoped that last year would be the last time for me to speak out about the state of school toilets. Regrettably, children and young people continue to raise issues around the state of school toilets with me.

"Despite Welsh Government's clear vision in creating a generation of 21st century schools, I'm seeing inequality across the country, with pupils in new schools benefiting from great facilities and others still having to use inadequate toilet facilities. It's really not good enough that we find ourselves in 2010 where children are forced to use toilets with no seats or doors on the cubicles, with inadequate washing facilities, and feel so strongly about it that they avoid using the toilet during the school day. It's about dignity and respect. Surely, a fair society for children would show more respect."

Whilst welcoming some key developments in what has been a significant year for children's rights in Wales, including some comprehensive actions to address child trafficking and the new guidance which requires local authorities to seek and take account of children's views on school reorganisation, Keith Towler's report also highlights the need to examine resources at a national and local level to ensure services are adequately reflecting the needs of children and young people. He says:

"The current budgets and forthcoming spending review and settlements mean that it is more important than ever that accurate and detailed budgeting for children is carried out on a rights-based approach. Only in this way can we ensure the most vulnerable children are protected. There has been a commitment by Welsh Government to develop a system which should improve budget forecasting but I'm fearful of the loss of momentum."

The Annual Report & Accounts also covers the main areas of work for his organisation over the last twelve months, which included the publication of a report about the learning experience of

children and young people, Listening and Learning the handling of individual cases ranging from issues within the youth justice system to the environment.

Keith Towler will be appearing in front of the National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee on Tuesday, 28 September where Assembly Members will be scrutinising him on the content of his Annual Report 09|10.

A copy of the Annual Report can be downloaded from www.childcomwales.org.uk

Ends

To arrange an interview with the Children's Commissioner for Wales please contact Sara Young on 01792 765638 or sara.young@childcomwales.org.uk