

Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

Whitehead-Ross Education  
137 New Road  
Skewen  
SA10 6HL

26<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Dear Chair and committee members

**Committee's draft report on Welsh Government's Draft Child Poverty Strategy**

I understand that the committee are in the process of considering its report on Welsh Government's Draft Child Poverty Strategy.

As an organisation that has been delivering social welfare and education support in Wales since 2012, Whitehead-Ross Education would like to take this opportunity to detail our experience of delivering the Families First programme.

Since 2022 Whitehead-Ross Education has been delivering a new Young Carers service on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council as part of the Families First programme. Through this we support children and young people who have a caring responsibility for a disabled parent or sibling. This includes providing weekly one to one support, issue-based workshops, a youth club with social activities, and opportunities for young carers to gain life skills qualifications.

From August 2022 to July 2023 Whitehead-Ross Education supported 57 young carers through this programme, while our recent young carers family fund day saw 156 participants engaged and supported throughout the day.

This programme is key to supporting many young people and their families who are experiencing poverty.

While the programme has seen success to date, our experience of delivering this programme at Whitehead-Ross Education has shown that the funding decisions by Welsh Government must change in order to ensure this programme continues to be a success and has a lasting impact on communities and young people.

Families First is funded through the Children and Communities Grant which sees Local Authorities receive annual funding allocations. This results in Families First funding only being awarded on a year-by-year basis.

The yearly allocation of Families First funding makes it extremely difficult for organisations to plan support for families and communities, with significant uncertainty being experienced by both families, and employees, at the end of each financial year.

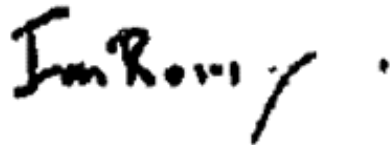
Not only are the participants themselves left uncertain about whether they will be able to continue to access this vital service, staff delivering the programme also left

uncertain. Some providers across Wales see staff leave due to this uncertainty, which puts a strain on those organisations delivering the programme and also has an impact on those young people who are supported.

Whitehead-Ross Education's experience of delivering programmes across Wales to support communities and young people and to alleviate poverty has led us to **recommend that Welsh Government move from a one-year funding allocation cycle to a three-year funding allocation cycle. This would ensure stability for both communities and organisations.**

Whitehead-Ross Education can provide further information about our experience of supporting communities in Wales over the last ten years if the committee would like this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Ross". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

**Ian Ross** FEIP, Chief Executive Officer  
Whitehead-Ross Education