

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and  
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |  
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 51

Ymateb gan : Ymgyrch dros Gynulliad Plant a Phobl Ifanc Cymru  
(CPPIC)

Response from : Campaign for the Children and Young People's  
Assembly for Wales (CYPAW)

**Question 1** – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

During the Fifth Assembly the Committee should ensure its work is informed as systematically as possible by:

- a. The views and recommendations of children and young people
- b. Regular constructive dialogue with representatives of children and young people affected by the subject matter of the Committee's work
- c. The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the UK State Party's 5<sup>th</sup> periodic examination under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to do this effectively the Committee should consider structural and systemic issues about engagement between decision makers, children and young people in Wales and should develop its own approaches to systematic involvement of children and young people in its work.

We ask the Committee to note we are the co-chairs of the board of trustees of a charitable company registered under the name Funky Dragon. This company ceased to have its own staff and offices in October 2014. However the trustees continue to meet and have adopted the working title of the Campaign for the Children and

Young People's Assembly for Wales. In 2015, the trustees commissioned international comparative research into the best model for a new children and young people's assembly for Wales. The trustees then published a consultation document seeking the views of the general public in Wales, including but not limited to children and young people. The consultation document available here: <http://www.funkydragon.org/en/> It sets out a potential model for a youth assembly established by Welsh legislation. This consultation is ongoing and the trustees expect to publish the results during the autumn of 2016. Early results suggest the majority of young people would like to see the establishment of a youth assembly.

We ask the Committee also to note that despite the loss of all paid staff and offices, the trustees managed to complete their report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the 5<sup>th</sup> periodic examination of the UK State Party, and that two young trustees were able to represent the report and to advocate before the Committee at its pre-sessional hearing in October 2015 and at the State Party hearings in May 2016. The report, FUNC+, included recommendations and areas for improvement based on youth-led research conducted prior to October 2014. These included issues concerning education and training, access to information, safety and protection from harm, participation, rights and discrimination. In addition the report contained a request that the UN Committee issue a clear recommendation that Wales should have a strong, reputable and representative Youth Assembly. A supplementary report, Participate!, submitted by the young trustees to the UN Committee for the State Party hearing in May 2016, provided additional evidence of the need for improved participation structures around Wales.

A children's research report, Little Voices Shouting Out, derived from work which started with Funky Dragon but transferred in October 2014 to the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People at Swansea and Bangor Universities, was also submitted and was represented by our young trustees in this UN process. This was the first ever child-led report to the UN Committee from children under 11. Both the youth and children's reports can be seen to have

influenced the Committee's Concluding Observations published in July 2016. The recommendations include the following:

*'31. With reference to its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party:*

*(a) Establish structures for the active and meaningful participation of children and give due weight to their views in designing laws, policies, programmes and services at the local and national levels, including in relation to discrimination, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful practices, alternative care, sexual and reproductive education, leisure and play. Particular attention should be paid to involving younger children and children in vulnerable situations, such as children with disabilities;*

*(b) ...*

*(c) Expedite the establishment of youth parliaments in all devolved administrations and territories as permanent forums for children's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them;*

*(d) Ensure that children are not only heard but also listened to and their views given due weight by all professionals working with children.'*

We urge the Committee to engage as a priority in the question of how to give effect in its own work to the recommendations regarding 'active and meaningful participation' of children and the establishment of a youth parliament enabling 'effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them'.

Drawing on the sustained experience over more than a decade of Funky Dragon, our experience as a youth-led board of trustees and our experience of the research and reporting processes of the UNCRC, we know how powerful and insightful the collected views of children and young people can be. We believe that improved structures for direct engagement will help the Committee to build on its predecessor's work in the fourth Assembly, as set out at p. 32 of that Assembly's Legacy Report, where it is stated:

*'It has been particularly important for the Committee to engage directly with children and young people and their parents and carers.'*

We note also that the fourth Assembly Commission's Legacy Report (pre-dating the UN committee's Concluding Observations above) recommended that consideration be given to exploring options for a youth parliament.

Turning to other areas, based on our research with children and young people, the collected experience of the research gathered by the many contributors to the UN process, and noting the issues highlighted in the Legacy Report of the Committee's predecessor in the fourth Assembly, we would urge the Committee to prioritise the following:

**Education:** effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in practice; accessibility and relevance in practice to young people of careers advice and personal and social education; availability of teaching on subjects young people want to take; accessibility of peer support and counselling services; accessibility of school nurse services; pupil involvement in choice of sporting activities and curricula; involvement of youth workers in schools; more time for structured and unstructured play.

**Environment:** street safety (lighting, policing, etc), rubbish, dog fouling and smoking in and around play spaces; sufficiency and accessibility of play spaces.

**Discrimination:** mapping levels of discrimination and groups most discriminated against, and responses including non-biased cultural education.

**Information:** accessibility and fitness for purpose of government information aimed at young people

**Voting age and political engagement:** lowering the voting age and encouraging participation by adjustments of schools curricula and

promotion of effective participation (meaning listening and responding not just letting children 'have a say').

**Rights education:** taking section 5 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure together with any steps to implement Donaldson Review to ensure that human rights are embedded in the curricula across all ages; ensuring teachers and all relevant professionals have human rights embedded in their initial and continuing training (not just occasional sessions or add-ons) and making human rights education widely available to parents and those who may or will become parents.

**Mental health and well-being services:** addressing the woeful state of services, re-thinking the bio-medical model and ensuring sufficient understanding of and support for learning disabilities.

**Question 2** – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

For us it is of the utmost importance to work on the structural and systemic issues about effective engagement and listening to the lived experiences and views of children and young people. Our top priority for the Committee is:

**To support and promote the establishment of a permanent, independent, youth-led, democratically elected youth parliament enshrined in law.**

The trustees will be pleased to engage with the Committee to explain the models of co-working and co-operation we would like to see develop between a youth assembly and the Committees of the NAW, and to discuss ways of taking forward the agenda for positive change.