

Child poverty has been at the top of my agenda recently in the National Assembly. I raised questions in relation to public service delivery, and the recommendation in the recently released report by Save the Children and the Bevan Foundation about the importance of local authorities working together in delivering the child poverty agenda effectively.

I also raised concerns during business questions about the fact that the Westminster Government has yet again stalled the announcement of data on housing below the average income to June this year, as it may well suggest that the interim child poverty targets are far from reachable in the current climate.

I had a useful meeting with Brian Gibbons AM, the Minister for Social Justice recently, also on the child poverty strategy. It is useful for me to have such meetings as the spokesperson on this particular issue so that I can keep up to date with Government actions, and any representations that may be made to Westminster colleagues.

I am deeply concerned that the DWP are looking to privatise service provision with regard to benefit take up and I will be keeping an eye on developments in this field. It just seems ironic that while the One Government in Wales wants to decentralise service provision and support public sector positions, the Westminster Government is taking a very different approach altogether - purely for the sake of financial savings.

On a happier note, I am delighted by the news that the Big Lottery Fund is set to provide £800,000 to support sufferers of eating disorders in Wales. The bid was won by the charity b-eat, and it will be monitored and administered by the All Wales Eating Disorder Special Interest group.

It is among 19 projects across Wales to receive funding worth £14m from the lottery's Mental Health Matters scheme., and believe the money allocated to supporting sufferers of eating disorders will go a long way in providing the resources needed to deal with such a task.

As Chair of the Cross Party Group on Eating Disorders at the National Assembly, I have focused on the support capacity of groups in Wales, and I'm sure members of the group will be very pleased by this news. It is important that those suffering from eating disorders, and their families, have access to support groups in their own communities, and I am confident that this funding will assist in making this a reality in Wales.

My recent meeting with the Children's Commissioner, Keith Towler his office in Swansea, was another opportunity for me to raise issues affecting young people. I expected it to be a brisk meeting introducing himself and his priorities, but he devoted over an hour with me to discuss various issues regarding young people- from criminal justice to child poverty to child mental health services, to the general need for people to understand and to accept that yes, young people have rights!

He was very open about his work, and even though he has only been in post for seven weeks, he seems to have a clear idea about what the Children's Commissioner's office should be doing for the children and young people of Wales.

It was encouraging to learn that he is more than ready to voice his opinions to those who are decision makers both in Wales and in England. When we discussed the criminal justice system it was a matter of when, and not if, the criminal justice system is devolved.

It's vitally important that children and young people across Wales are fully aware of who the Children's Commissioner is, and how it can help shape their lives.