

“We cannot allow damaging UK Government policies to plunge 50,000 more Welsh children into poverty” – Huw Irranca-Davies

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recently published its findings on the potential cumulative impact of implemented and proposed UK Government tax and welfare reforms on people sharing different protected characteristics.

The report analyses policy changes made between May 2010 and January 2018, which will have been implemented by the financial year 2021-22. It finds nearly half of all households in Wales will lose out from the reforms, and that the largest impact will be felt by people on the lowest incomes.

The report also shows:

- relative child poverty in Wales will increase substantially – by 50,000 children (or 8 percentage points) by 2021/22 as a result of the tax and welfare reforms analysed
- large families will be particularly hard hit by the reforms with those families that have three or more children losing around £5,600 a year
- the child poverty rate for those in lone parent households in Great Britain is forecast to increase from 37% to over 62%, with lone parents losing an average of £5,250 a year, almost one-fifth of their annual income.

In a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, Leader of the House with responsibility for equalities, Julie James and Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans, have called on the UK Government to reconsider its tax and welfare reform policies, because of the negative financial impacts they will have on the most disadvantaged.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“The Welsh Government’s efforts to tackle child poverty and improve the lives of low income families are being damaged by the UK Government’s package of tax and welfare reforms – in particular by changes to the benefit system such as the freeze in working-age benefit rates, changes to disability benefits and reductions in Universal Credit rates.

“It is entirely unacceptable in a civilised nation to ignore the impacts of these reforms on equality of opportunity. It cannot be right, proper or moral for the incomes of protected groups to be

impacted in such a disproportionate way.

“As a government, we cannot and will not be silent as the UK Government’s damaging tax and welfare reforms threaten to plunge 50,000 more Welsh children into poverty and increase levels of deprivation for our most vulnerable families.

“We have called on the UK Government to take urgent action in relation to these policies, which will result in profound hardship. It is essential that these policies are revisited as a matter of priority and rigorous equality impact assessments are undertaken in order to safeguard the well-being of those who are most vulnerable.”