

CYP(3)-16-10 (P2)

A- Introduction

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 42 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 19 of the 22 local authorities, supporting over 8,000 children, young people and families in the last year.

Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

B- General Comments

As a major children's charity and a principal Third Sector provider of services to the most vulnerable children, young people and their families in Wales Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the significant measures the Welsh Assembly Government has taken to protect frontline services for vulnerable groups within the context of a substantially reduced settlement.

The Welsh Assembly Government decision to protect the social services element of the Health and Social Services budget is significant and crucial in light of rising demand on social care services in Wales.

Barnardo's Cymru also welcomes the recognition within the Draft Budget of the current challenges facing the Third Sector. However we would like to draw attention to the insecurity caused within planning for services for children, young people and families as a result of a lack of communication on likely budget settlements combined with changes in grant funding programmes. This has meant that many of our local authority partners have been unable to offer firm arrangements for future planning in the short term while some have gone so far as to indicate their intention to decommission all non-statutory children and young people's services. This has made it difficult for the Third Sector to effectively plan for the retention of services and staff to deliver on providing for the most vulnerable families.

Tackling child poverty is a core element of the work Barnardo's Cymru undertakes in Wales and across the UK. We have already welcomed the prioritisation of child poverty as an area of policy action by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010) and the Draft Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan (2010). However, although many of the policy areas for action contained within the Delivery Plan are reflected in the Draft Budget explicit references to redistribution through targeting and cross cutting actions to tackle child poverty are absent from the Draft Budget. We are concerned that this gives the wrong message to those challenged with implementing policy within the context of reduced or static budgets. The clear message on the need to prioritise action and programme bend to tackle child poverty contained in other recent Welsh Assembly Government policy documents needs to be restated within the Budget.

Barnardo's Cymru is also concerned that actions in relation to early intervention support to children and vulnerable families will be sidelined as the language of 'frontline' and 'essential' services is interpreted at a local level as the provision of statutory services only. This is discussed in more detail below.

The cross-cutting nature of child poverty means that Barnardo's Cymru could provide comments in relation to each policy area covered in the Draft Budget. However in order to maintain clarity and identify priority areas our comments in relation to the most central policy areas that affect our work are set out below.

C- Specific comments by policy area

Health and Social Services

The Welsh Assembly Government commitment to 'ensure the provision of essential social services' is welcomed. However we remain concerned that in light of rising demands on statutory social services and a -6.3 % loss to the Health and Social Care budget in real terms over the next three years this represents a real threat to early intervention and prevention solutions.

We are aware that ADSS Cymru has already provided Assembly Members with evidence on substantial increases in demand for statutory services. There has been a 11% increase in the number of referrals to children's social services in the last 3 years, an 8% increase in the number of children placed on the child protection register in the last year and a 10% increase in the number of looked after children in the year up to April 2010. ADSS Cymru have called for the protection of early intervention services from cuts to avoid increasing the need for statutory intervention. The emphasis on protecting the budgets of 'essential' services contained within the Draft Budget and a lack of reference to the importance of early intervention services is therefore of concern. This is likely to lead to an increased resource demand and an unacceptable human cost in the longer term.

For example, the Webster-Stratton/Incredible Years Programme for children diagnosed with disruptive behaviour costs £1,344 over a six month period Edwards, R T, et al, (2007) "Parenting programmes for parents of children at risk of developing conduct disorder: cost effectiveness analysis", www.incredibleyears.com/Library/items/parenting-programme-bmj-cost-effective_3-9-07.pdf

. Research suggests estimates that by the age of 28 years an individual with conduct disorder costs an additional £60,000 to public services. Scott, S et al, (2001) "Financial Cost of Social Exclusion: follow up study of anti-social children into adulthood, "British Medical Journal, 323

While we acknowledge that the Intensive Family Support Services is designed to address the issue of prevention the WLGA has already signalled that this may not be achievable in its full form in the current financial climate. The policy intentions of the new Families First initiative are also essentially concerned with early intervention and prevention. However we are concerned that the growing burden on statutory services will have a knock on effect leading to higher thresholds for Families First in practice.

Barnardo's Cymru welcome a commitment to continue to prioritise spending on mental health services. Within this we would like to see a clear indication that responses to the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office and Health Inspectorate Wales report on "Services for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs" (2009) http://www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/CAMHS_eng.pdf

are adequately resourced. Early intervention, prevention and support for emotional wellbeing are also key to this policy area. Barnardo's Cymru is providing school counselling services in a number of areas across Wales and we acknowledge the significance of a commitment to further funding of this programme within the Draft Budget. However we remain concerned that funding for community based support to reduce the need for or to compliment health service treatment for young people with mental health difficulties will be threatened.

We also welcome the intent to invest in drug and alcohol and other vulnerable groups and the proposed Carers Strategy measures. Barnardo's Cymru believes that young carers services may be under threat as a result of local authority responses to resource restrictions. Investment in carers must include investment in young carers who are among the most vulnerable groups of children and young people. Continued investment in support for substance misusing parents and their families is a crucial element of reducing the burden on statutory services.

We recognise that the term 'vulnerable groups' has been used in the Draft Budget as an alternative to setting out a list of different vulnerable groups. However we are concerned that the Draft Budget does not contain specific reference to the need to strengthen and protect services for disabled children and their families. Families affected by disability are among the most vulnerable families in society and to date this has not been adequately recognised in the resourcing of support and services.

Social Justice and Local Government

Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the commitment to tackle social exclusion and to work in partnership with the Third Sector. We are already working in partnership with Communities First Partnerships in a number of areas. The protection of the Domestic Abuse budget is also significant and we hope that there is some recognition that work in this area must include support to children affected by domestic abuse in their homes. However reductions in the Third Sector budget and Financial Inclusion are of concern in terms of actions to meet the Child Poverty commitment.

Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills

Barnardo's Cymru is already working with pre-school and school aged children and their families across Wales to support the emotional, behavioural and educational development. We recognise the central role that education can play in improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. We therefore welcome the protection of the education budget but are concerned that the Draft Budget does not provide a clear message on the targeting of funding or on specific action under the Schools Effectiveness Framework in relation to child poverty. The Draft Budget simply states that this will be achieved through the prioritisation of budgets 'which impact directly on children'.

Barnardo's Cymru recognises the importance of early years investment and is a provider of programmes such as Flying Start in several areas. At the same time we continue to support the most vulnerable young people aged 16+ in a holistic way and to provide specific support in relation to education, training and employment. We therefore welcome the priority areas of spending set out in the Draft Budget. However evidence provided to the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to the education of 8-14 year olds <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/20100205report8to14firstagerpten.doc>

suggested that the low performance by students in this age group is strongly associated with socio-economic disadvantage. There is a need for adequate funding to support children of this age group within schools and to support them and their families in the community and through school-community partnerships to help mitigate later disadvantage.

Barnardo's Cymru welcomes the inclusion of resources to deliver a 1% protection above the changes to the Wales Departmental Expenditure Limit for schools. We would like to see a clear message within the Budget that these resources should be targeted at children and young people in poverty and Community Focussed School approaches.

Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Barnardo's Cymru is very concerned that there is no specific reference to the prioritisation of resources to prevent and reduce homelessness. As a provider of youth homelessness services and through our support to vulnerable families we are very aware of the negative impact of homelessness on outcomes for children and young people. The proposed changes in Housing Benefit announced by the UK Government will leave many vulnerable people struggling to make ends meet and facing the threat of homelessness. http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk/images/pdf/HB_briefing_August2010.pdf

While the Draft Budget states that there will be targeted support to housing services for vulnerable people and that Supporting People is a priority area we are aware that there is a 1.48% cut in Supporting People funding for the coming year and that Section 180 funding has also been cut by 2.9%. These cuts will present a real danger to youth homelessness services, which provide for very vulnerable young people who often have complex needs.