

Date: Wednesday 6 February 2002

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Children and Young People - A Framework for Partnership

Purpose

1. To invite the Committee to note the summary of the responses to consultations on the paper *Children and Young People - A Framework for Partnership*.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That the Committee notes the summary of views set out in the document at Annex 1.

Background

4. The paper 'Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership,' was issued for consultation in December 2000, following consideration in Committee in October. The document set out proposals for the Assembly's strategy for all children and young people.

5. Consultation was carried out to July 2001. During this time four regional consultation events were held across Wales. A separate consultation process for children and young people took place in July, also in four venues, at which both *Framework for Partnership* and *Extending Entitlement: support for young people* were discussed.

6. Copies of written responses to the consultations are available in the Members' Library.

Consideration

7. The themes addressed in *Framework for Partnership* are being taken forward in a number of ways in the light of the consultation. Draft guidance on the overall Framework plans to be produced by the local partnerships was issued for consultation in the autumn. In addition to written responses, there was discussion at four workshops involving an invited audience representing local authorities (primarily education and social services interests), health services and the voluntary sector. It is intended that final guidance will issue in April.

8. *Framework for Partnership* also proposed amalgamation of the existing children's partnership programmes (Sure Start, Children and Youth Partnership Fund, Play Grant, Youth Access Initiative and National Childcare Strategy). A new funding programme, to be known as *Cymorth*, encompassing the schemes outlined above, will begin operation in April 2003. It is proposed that *Cymorth* should operate for five years as a specific grant, after which the funding will be amalgamated in Revenue Support Grant. Local partnerships will be given indicative allocations for the three years of the budget planning round in which to plan their activities.

9. In respect of participation, a consultation paper *Moving Forward - listening to children and young people in Wales* was issued in July 2001. The paper proposed the establishment of a representative body for the whole of Wales, entitled *Llais Ifanc/Young Voice*, made up of representatives from local children and young people's forums and national and local peer-led groups. Responses to the consultations are included in the summary document and raised a number of practical issues that are currently receiving consideration. *Llais Ifanc* aims to recruit a co-ordinator in the spring and hold a first meeting of the new body early in the summer.

10. In implementing *Framework for Partnership*, Children and Families Division is working very closely with colleagues in the Youth Policy Team responsible for *Extending Entitlement*. Locally, the Framework partnership will draw up the overall plan setting out overall priorities and targets for children and young people aged 0-25. The *Extending Entitlement* partnerships and plans will work within the overall context of the local Framework plans and will draw up more detailed proposals for the 11-25 age range.

Timing

11. The final guidance for local partnerships, both on the production of the local Framework plans and applications for *Cymorth* funding, is planned for April. The first plans and accompanying applications for funding should be submitted by October, allowing local partnerships to have adequate notice of approval before the new arrangements begin in April 2003.

Compliance

12. There are no new compliance issues.

Financial Implications

13. Finance to support local planning partnerships and participation has been provided in Special Grants 16 and 16A agreed by the Assembly in Plenary on 4 December 2001. Subject to the Assembly's decisions during future Budget Planning Rounds, expenditure during 2002-03 will be accommodated within the corresponding budget approved by the Assembly. There are no new financial issues raised in this paper.

Cross-cutting themes

14. This paper is being present to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee meeting on 7 February 2002, in view of the wide relevance of the Frameworks proposals.

Action for the Health and Social Services Committee

15. The Committee is invited to note the paper.

Jane Hutt
Minister for Health & Social Services

Contact Point:

Chris Burdett, Children and Families Division, Ext. 3936

Annex 1

FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION EVENTS & WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. **Children and Young People: a Framework for Partnership** received responses both in writing and following discussions at local events in Wales. These events also considered the **Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales** document. Meetings held for young people looked at both Extending Entitlement and wider issues of participation. The main messages from responses received to these consultations are set out below.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in Decision-Making - Basic Principles

2. Overall aim is a change process that needs to affect all areas of the lives of children and young people. Participation is power sharing and this cannot be avoided. It will take time and require support, some of

which could come from the Assembly:

- principles and guidance, perhaps a charter for participation;
- statement of intent or a mission statement in schools for all school councils.

3. Training in involving and listening will be needed for professionals, including in health and education sectors.

Avoid tokenism by providing results that will feed and validate the process.

Start children as early as possible. Benefits of establishing expectations early and experience helps to develop skills and self-confidence.

4. Important to see children and young people as actors in the process, as able to advocate, train, run meetings, facilitate discussion groups, participate in research and evaluation and in writing and preparing documents.

Decisions are made that affect the lives of children at all levels and in many different organisations. Opportunities exist to work both through other structures, via local authorities, schools, youth clubs, after-school clubs, as well as through voluntary organisations, community groups, tenants associations, community councils, and community health councils.

Participation in Schools - School Councils

5. Not an ideal time for introducing further elements of change in the school environment - discontent and tension, children and young people stressed by exams.

Careful preparation needed and cannot be imposed on schools. Initial planning and support will be important. Participation is an issue for the whole ethos of the school and desired outcomes for participation and citizenship are reflected in the objectives and targets for the education service and the curriculum. Need for space in the curriculum to promote participation.

6. Danger that school councils will neglect the marginalised in favour of the very bright. Need to ensure that the councils engage not only for the prefects and achievers - but also non-attendees. Hold elections, for example.

Outside support available from the Youth Service. External facilitators may be needed to avoid tensions between pupils and teachers.

Training will be needed for staff, school governors and parents in communicating and negotiating to build self-confidence and develop negotiation skills.

Schools can be contact points on the Internet for disseminating information and for giving views and opinions. Other outlets are available more publicly, for example, in libraries.

How we listen to all children - involving the marginalised and disengaged

7. Support will be needed for some individuals to engage in the process and training in self confidence and communication skills will be particularly important. For children and young people with disabilities, participation is linked to the amount of power they have in their own lives - many children and young people are not involved in the decisions that affect them personally - e.g. via case conferences.

Advocacy and personal support will be needed. Expertise in the voluntary sector can be drawn through interest groups e.g. Voices from Care, youth group in RNIB and local projects.

Other marginalised groups include rural children and young people and their particular needs should be recognised. Language and communication are important factors.

Families

8. Important to get families and carers on board also. Participation has not been a positive experience for many adults. Parents need choices too. Need to take families on board in school councils' development as stakeholders. Parents also have expertise and many have common cause with their siblings on service issues. In other areas there will be traditional tensions between generations. Developing negotiation skills in young people and their self-confidence can improve relationships in the family.

Attitudes and Culture

9. The key factor in promoting participation lies in the need to change attitudes and perspectives of a wide-range of agencies and institutions, developing a culture of negotiation and involvement. People are not used to talking to children and young people, nor to listening to their views and taking these on board when decisions are taken. This will be a factor in the change process. Agencies need to embrace and own participation activities, developing appreciation of the principles and how they can be put into practice. Examples of good practice can demonstrate the value of participation and giving awards can create a climate in which practice is valued and celebrated.

Ages

10. Participation is regarded as a practical option for children and young people across the age ranges. Experience quoted of groups of 8-18's working collectively. Participation can take place from the earliest ages e.g. decision-making in playgroup. Different methods may be appropriate to children as opposed to young people.

FOCUS IN STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Children and Young People's Frameworks

11. The idea of an overarching strategy in each local authority area was welcomed as a means of reducing duplication and streamlining planning. The Framework should provide clear, child focused objectives shared across all agencies and sectors, based on the UN Convention and Human Rights Act.

It must be needs focused rather than service focused, and the starting point must be a comprehensive audit of need and provision from which priorities should flow. Respondents felt there should be an increased emphasis on outputs, outcomes and performance indicators although quantitative assessment should not totally overshadow qualitative assessment.

The Framework should identify broad themes such as parenting and ensure that links are made on these themes across existing service plans. It must cover core services as well as targeted initiatives.

Partnership Arrangements

12. Frameworks Partnerships should map and build on existing structures and partnerships using examples of good practice. Respondents, particularly in the voluntary sector, were worried about their ability to service 22 new partnerships and felt that if a single overarching partnership were to work, it could not be just another layer of bureaucratic planning.

A single partnership covering ages 0–25 would be too broad and unable to balance the demands of such a varied client group. There would be a continued need for groups below the overarching partnership.

All agencies involved need to feel properly represented and to achieve this without the partnerships becoming unwieldy it would need to operate on both operational and strategic levels. It should comprise an executive group whose members could make strategic decisions on behalf of their organisation/ sectors supported by wider reference groups to tap into grassroots knowledge and ensure that strategic decisions were reflected on the ground. Each sector could establish networks to broaden representation, though these are currently undeveloped in the voluntary sector.

13. Concern was expressed about how to achieve balance in partnerships since local authorities easily become dominant partners. The voluntary sector felt that there should be a stronger mechanism for ensuring that they are involved and the 3 thirds model as used for European funding was suggested. While local authorities would have a corporate responsibility for the partnership, members should be able to choose the chair/leader.

14. Children, young people, their families and the wider community must be full partners in the process and partnerships should be accountable to children and young people. National organisations such as RNIB could represent particular 'interest' groups.

Making it work

15. Partnerships need infrastructure support – people, resources and time to bed in. Cultural change and training/education would be crucial in this.

Information needs to be shared more freely among organisations, decision making processes need to be transparent. Agencies can learn from each other and planners must learn one another's language and understand the relevance of different service priorities to overarching objectives. Multi-disciplinary training and good personal relationships will be key to effective partnership working.

Geographical/regional networks should be fostered as a means of sharing best practice.

The partnerships should be free to outline needs and priorities for core funding and the objectives should be supported by joint commissioning which would eliminate competition for resources and foster co-ordinated working.

16. Some respondents felt that the partnership, and its membership, needs to be statutory to make it work.

Publicity for each local Framework would raise the profile of children's issues. This could link into the role of Children's Commissioner

The Role of Assembly

17. Respondents saw a clear leadership role for the Assembly. The Assembly should issue guidance on partnerships but opinion was divided as whether this should be prescriptive or flexible in order to take account of local variation. The Assembly should monitor and audit the performance of partnerships to ensure service improvement on ground.

18. Guidance should provide clarity on the relationship between various planning systems and how the Framework fits into them, possibly including a model. The Assembly should set consistent and related priorities for all sectors, as a means of co-ordinating strategy and planning at both a local and national level. Realistic national baselines for services must be established, allowing flexibility for local needs.

19. Joint strategic planning will only be successful if funding streams are also rationalised and made strategic. The Assembly needs to move away from initiative-based planning and put an end to short term specific bids for grants.

FOCUS IN FUNDING - A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT FUND-

Is a Unified Fund welcomed?

20. There is a broad welcome to the proposals to unify and refocus funding streams: the current regime multiplies administrative effort, yet the range of programmes has gaps in its coverage. However, some concerns were expressed. Many groups wanted a measure of ring fencing for particular themes or age groups, possibly in transition, to make sure partnerships did not have an unbalanced portfolio of projects. It will also be important to ensure that we do remove administrative burden rather than add to it. The burden would increase if a new strategic partnership is created without removing any others.

Longer term view

21. Strongest and most consistent message from the consultation was the need for a long term vision, that can encourage planning of provision beyond three years. Otherwise effort is wasted, staff cannot be retained, and communities are disappointed. One comparison raised was the Welsh Mental Handicap Strategy which was a ten year vision, despite the budget and political cycle.

22. There were differing views about whether the proposed Unified Support Fund should remain outside the mainstream Local Authority Revenue settlement – the voluntary sector in particular tended to view the direct Assembly funding as a counterweight against the perceived power of local authorities. Some local authorities argued that the projects delivered by the Unified Support Fund should be moved to mainstream funding once the principles had been established.

Objectives for the Support Fund

23. Many consultees noted the gap in provision between ages 3 and 8, the end of Sure Start and the beginning of some provision from the Children and Youth Partnership Fund. "Prevention" was seen as the main theme for the Unified Fund – interventions that can avoid the crises which require mainstream services.

24. One workshop proposed the following list of themes:

- Parenting support and health promotion
- Play, leisure and enrichment
- Participation and consultation
- Community development
- Training and information
- Joint commissioning
- Inclusion and access

25. An option discussed in the workshops was to use an "entitlement model" throughout the age range. The entitlement might be specified in terms of age bands: eg 0-4, 5-10, 11-18. There was also discussion in workshops of provision through integrated children's centres within communities.

The Voluntary Sector

26. Voluntary sector bodies participate in partnership working with local authorities, but are rarely funded specifically to do this. This creates a problem of capacity, and of relative power within the partnership. Many bodies expressed concern that the funding regime address this, either through capacity funding or a ring-fenced component for voluntary sector-led projects.

Area-based targeting

27. The current Sure Start and Children and Youth partnership programmes require partnerships to focus on disadvantaged areas. Views differed on the value of this; often project providers felt their benefits were universal, and that the children in need of the benefit could be in any locality. There was a danger that disadvantaged areas become stigmatised. On the other hand there was concern over dilution.

Consultees from rural areas noted that pockets of rural disadvantage may be very small, and also the current funding formula does not recognise the additional costs of projects in rural areas.

The programmes to be merged into the Support Fund

28. There was not substantial dissent from the list of programmes within the Framework document. Some correspondents were concerned variously at the exclusion of Children First, of early years learning, youth work, schools partnership, housing voluntary sector grants, and health funding streams. One respondent suggested that since childcare and early years learning were closely linked, they should either be both excluded or both included.

"VOICE IT" - WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

29. In July 2001, Llais Ifanc/Young Voice undertook four consultations across Wales to which over two hundred young people came along to have their say about **Extending Entitlement and Children and Young People - A Framework for Partnership**. The morning was spent in workshops and in the afternoon Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, took questions. Workshops were split into five areas: participation, advice and information, health, education and careers. Young people were asked how they could be involved in changing services.

Key messages_

- Services need to meet up, share ideas and listen to one another so they know what is going on in the local area.
- More money needed for services and opportunities for young people and there need to be more youth workers in schools and information shops.

- All ages should have the opportunity to have their say and make changes.
- Every school should have a school council and every local authority should have a local youth forum that is effective, gets things done and has real powers.
- The Assembly should support this by setting aside money for involving young people and make local authorities involve young people in decisions.

Participation

30. Youth forums were needed and every local authority should have one. They must be supported financially; people must be committed to them, and must listen.

Forums need to have power and be taken seriously so they can make a difference. Local councils should have to listen to what young people say and consult on decisions that would affect them.

Advice and Information

31. Advice and information needed on various subjects, from health to training opportunities. Needs to be easy to access in an environment that is friendly and non-judgemental. Services should be just for young people in an appropriate environment. People should be able to phone for advice and be able to talk to somebody they did not know, in confidence.

It would be easier if everything was in one place like an information shop. The people working there should have knowledge of what was going on in the area. As well as youth workers, this might include doctors and other professionals.

Workers need to be young people friendly and this could be achieved by young people themselves being involved in their training.

Health

32. Suggestions covered advice and information, and also how young people could be involved in making health services better.

33. Sex education in schools was poor and often only basic information is given. Ideas for improvement included giving out a wider range of information, for example more on sexually transmitted infections, not just HIV/AIDS. Sex education could also be more peer-led, but the young people delivering such sessions would need to be properly trained.

34. Drugs were still a big issue and there needs to be a more sustained campaign about the dangers of

drugs. Campaigns in the past had worked but then they were just forgotten - young people should be involved in their design and delivery and they should be run more often.

35. Some felt health education should start at an earlier age and should be about changing lifestyle. Young people-only clinics would be a good idea, where professionals took them seriously and everything was confidential.

Health services generally need to be made more approachable and more information about them is needed. Involving young people in their design and delivery would help to achieve this.

Education

36. A lot of discussion about how the new AS levels were not working and all the problems being faced by young people taking them. There were too many exams and they started too early. Exams are not necessarily the worst form of assessment.

Some people felt they were being asked to make choices too young, sometimes without the support of teachers.

37. Lessons were often described as being boring and the curriculum in general not relevant to life. More variety in teaching methods and more informality in lessons would help but this would mean taking some of the pressure off teachers. For those young people who do not like school there should be more options to take up vocational courses.

38. Young people should be involved in the training of teachers and the appointment of new teachers, which could be done through a school council.

School councils generally a good idea as long as not tokenistic and had real responsibility and power. They should also be representative and not just pick the best pupils. There should be youth workers in schools and one of their roles could be to support school councils and support the young people in making a difference.

Careers

39. Experience of careers advice varied greatly - generally careers advice in school is not good and after leaving school it is harder to access careers advice. Careers advice in school is fine if you know what you want to do but if you do not, choices are not offered. Lots of young people felt careers advice had given them opportunities and helped to build up their confidence. It had also helped to offer choices they would never have thought of before.

40. Careers libraries in schools could be improved and there should be more information about what is available outside school. Careers advisors could have training from young people and there could be

more young advisors.

41. Work experience needs to be made more valuable and not just two weeks spent doing nothing. Day release would be more useful, as would being able to try out a variety of working experiences.

Contact for further information on this Consultation:

Susan Sky

Children's Framework Team

National Assembly for Wales

Cathays Park

Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Email: susan.sky@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 029 2082 3875

Fax: 029 2082 3142