

# National Assembly for Wales

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYP(4)-07-14 - Paper 1 - CaST Cymru

### Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households

#### A brief outline of CaST Cymru's parental engagement work

CaST Cymru is developing and delivering parental engagement work in the following 4 areas by providing materials, resources and training to schools/staff to deliver the programmes in their own schools/communities. This also includes 'train the trainer' models:

- **SmoothMoves** - This is a light touch support programme for year 5 and 6 parents to help them to be confident to support their child's transition to secondary school. It is suitable for general use (all parents) or for use with selected parents. It can also be used to support parents in other situations of transition, ie moving from one school to another, those with foster/Looked After Children, etc. SmoothMoves is a 5 week course usually delivered by trained staff, either teachers or teaching assistants, from primary, secondary or a combination of both.
- **Pyramid 4 Parents** - linked to our delivery of Pyramid Clubs for shy, withdrawn children lacking in self confidence, this 6 session programme provides parents with ways of building their child's self-esteem and emotional resilience. Pyramid 4 Parents is usually delivered by trained staff, either teachers or teaching assistants, from primary, secondary or combination of both. It is suited for use with parents of children in years 3 to 6.
- **FastForward** - is a nurture based intervention for families in years 5 and 6 who are identified as being vulnerable, in preparation for the challenges/additional stress associated with transition to secondary school. It has been developed in conjunction with schools and families. FastForward runs after school, once a week for 6-8 weeks and provides a nurturing space for a small group of year 5/6 children and their parent/carers to spend time together. Although structured, the focus of this "non-intervention, intervention" is to provide a protected nurtured space for parents and children alike to be together and as a group share and address their worries and concerns. FastForward works with a maximum of 6 families and is delivered by a team of 3 trained staff (minimum), one from each of primary, the 'receiving' secondary and CastCymru, or designated partner. This programme has been successfully piloted in Conwy over the past 2 years.
- **Consultancy** to individual schools to support their development of specific areas of parental engagement. This is often as part of a broader 'package' of support to an individual or cluster of schools and also as part of Communities First priorities.

The above work is beneficial to all schools but can have significant benefit for schools wishing to better address the needs and outcomes for children from low income households. There is some growing interest in developing this work as part of school Pupil Disadvantage Grant (PDG) and Communities First PDG Match Fund and includes CaST Cymru providing advice on the creation of new Family Engagement Worker type posts within schools/clusters. We have provided (without any funding) some networking opportunities for such posts and have identified this as an area for further support/development.

#### What worked well

**SmoothMoves:** Has been run extensively in England and is relatively new to Wales. There is growing interest as it simultaneously supports both transition and parent engagement.

- ✓ Can be PDG funded
- ✓ Low-cost
- ✓ Train the deliverer and train the trainer model so can be replicated within individual school settings

**Pyramid for Parents:** Has been run extensively in England and is relatively new to Wales. There is growing interest as schools are increasingly aware of the importance of both well-being and parent engagement and Pyramid for Parents supports both.

- ✓ Can be PDG funded
- ✓ Low-cost
- ✓ Train the deliverer and train the trainer model so can be replicated within individual school settings
- ✓ Supports Pyramid Clubs

**FastForward:** Has been extremely well received in its pilot phase in Conwy. Working with the child and parent together is an innovative approach.

- ✓ Families First funding has enabled this project to be piloted and developed in Conwy
- ✓ Delivering by a multi-partner team – primary, secondary and CaST Cymru
- ✓ Requirement for close working between primary and secondary
- ✓ Different approach to many interventions working with vulnerable families, a ‘non-intervention, intervention’

- ✓ Works with small groups of parents and their year 5/6 children together

**Consultancy:** This works very well with schools who have the foresight to enter into this type of arrangement with CaST Cymru. Unfortunately there are many schools that are still sceptical of working with third sector partners to effect change.

### **The challenges in taking forward work on parental engagement;**

**Funding/resourcing:** Unfortunately, there are many schools that still see PDG to fund numeracy and literacy and for maintaining support staff levels.

**Addressing the needs and outcomes for children from low income households:** Unfortunately there are many schools that still do not understand the differences between raising standards for all, addressing poverty and narrowing the gap, and the role that family and community engagement can play.

**Disjointed working :** There is the need for a forum to share good practice and develop skills and experience of teaching assistants/support staff in these new roles in parent/family engagement.

**Workforce development:** CPD and accreditation routes need to be established for staff (teaching and non teaching) working in this area.

**Evidencing impact:** Schools are still struggling to evidence the impact of their parent engagement work.

**Mixed messages:** There are mixed messages regarding the responsibility of engaging parents/families and mixed understanding of terminology – family engagement, family support and family learning.

### **The outcomes for pupils, especially any evidence of impact on educational attainment**

Children and young people need the support of families if they are to reach their potential. For some children and young people that support is still lacking for a range of reasons. Schools involved in delivering our projects and programmes report that parent/family engagement does make a difference, not only through building confidence, self –esteem and emotional well-being but by the impact that this has on educational achievement. This is particularly evident in addressing the needs and outcomes for children from low income households.

*‘It is my belief that this project has been the most successful in purposefully engaging both parents and pupils in the 16 years I have been a Headteacher. The process was so powerful that the engagement of very difficult parents was both developmental and self developing in*

*nature, the very obvious advantage was that the group dynamics developed empowering the families as the project went on. With parents actually looking forward to the sessions and providing very positive feedback. The attitude of parents has been excellent, some who had only previously had contact with the school on a superficial level now, as a consequence of the project engage more effectively for the benefit of their child....the clear evidence base of the pilot was a resounding success. More so in that I picked the most difficult families to facilitate the pilot. Imagine what could be achieved if further groups were in some way positive towards the learning experiences."*

Mike Mulvaney, head teacher Pendorlan Primary School, Fast Forward pilot with Eirias High School

*I found the team members very friendly, non-judgemental and honest and also good meeting parents in similar situations.* Year 6 Parent who took part in a FAST FORWARD group

*I have been able to discuss individual worries with parents and pupils and have already started to plan strategies to help the pupils when they come for their taster week in the summer term. I have also been able to start coordinating with relevant ALN staff within school to assist in their planning for next year. This information has been so welcomed. I would like to see this scheme extended to other of our feeder schools.*

*Dr Rachel Jones, Pupil Transition Coordinator, Ysgol Eirias*

### **Recommendations for the Committee to consider in terms of how schools can better engage with parents from low income households.**

- **Funding/resourcing:** More proactive encouragement from the Welsh Government to schools re their responsibility for the family support/engagement role and how funding can be identified and used most effectively. Provision of a funded National support service (external to WG) for schools and stakeholders
- **Addressing the needs and outcomes for children from low income households:** Clearer support to schools in understanding poverty/disadvantage and closing the gap, potentially from a national support service
- **Less disjointed working:** Expansion and formalisation of a FESW support network with termly meetings in each of the consortia, for school staff delivering parent engagement, potentially part of a national support service
- **Clearer messages:** A clearer understanding of the terminology around family/parent engagement, support, learning
- **Workforce development:** Consideration given to the workforce development needed for the above - including accreditation routes
- **Evidencing impact:** Immediate need for a guide/survey on how schools can/are evidencing the impact of parental engagement on education attainment, potentially as part of a national support service

Pam Boyd  
Chief Executive  
February 2014

## REDUCING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>Name of Case Study</b> CaST Cymru's Fast Forward Family project: Supporting disadvantaged child and parent at transition to secondary school
<b>Type of Setting (pre-school/ primary school/special school/secondary school/community based/family based/other)</b> Secondary school and primary school working together
<b>Summary of Case Study</b> This project has been piloted by CaST Cymru with a number of schools in a Communities First area in a north Wales LEA.  Fast Forward Family has been developed in conjunction with schools and families to help address the issues that impact on many primary children at transition to secondary school.  The first pilot was undertaken with a large successful secondary school that had identified the need to offer additional support to more vulnerable families as their children moved from primary school. The primary school has high FSM and targeted a group of parents (8) who had remained particularly hard to engage with school despite a number of interventions/approaches over previous years.  The head was the lead within the primary school and head of year 7 and assistant head, fully supported by the Headteacher in the secondary school. The programme was delivered by CaST Cymru trained Teaching Assistants from the secondary and primary school and external input including CaST Cymru staff.  The programme was initially designed for 6 sessions, covering many of the myths and perceptions experienced by both child and parent. The selected child and parent attended the sessions together. In the event, the programme was running so successfully that an additional 2 sessions were provided at the parents request.  . In practical terms this has led to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Member of secondary pastoral support team taking on enhanced links with the primary</li><li>• Teachers and TAs developing skills and expertise in working with families</li><li>• Positive engagement with families that were traditionally the hardest to engage</li><li>• New working contacts and communication routes being established between staff in primary and secondary school</li><li>• New screening procedures being jointly devised to identify those families who could benefit most from such intervention</li><li>• Improved understanding of the transition process for children, teachers, TAs, parents</li><li>• Improved transition process for the children who settled in better than expected to secondary school</li><li>• Removal of many of the negative perceptions of transition</li><li>• Parents changing their secondary school choice to the school involved</li><li>• Increased parent engagement with schools</li></ul> The secondary school aims to introduce the programme for all main feeder primary schools

<p>The secondary school is now providing Pyramid Clubs for year 7 children.</p>
<p><b>Brief description of geographical/community context</b> One secondary and one primary in Communities First area</p>
<p><b>Description of the intervention undertaken.</b></p> <p>Support provided between April 2012 and March 2014.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools identified</li> <li>• Staff identified and trained (school staff and external staff)</li> <li>• Families selected on basis of staff knowledge with FSM targeted</li> <li>• Sessions run in primary school and secondary school including ‘meet the head’</li> <li>• Post club data gathered</li> </ul> <p>Additional pilots have since been undertaken</p>
<p><b>Funding of the intervention.</b> Families First funding</p>
<p><b>Future development of the intervention ( including plans or potential to roll-out to other settings)</b> The current funding ends in March 2014. Additional sources of funding being explored.</p> <p>All schools involved in the pilot wish to continue and looking at PDG funding.</p> <p>Potential to roll out nationally if sufficient funding was available. Needs ‘core’ to complete development and promote.</p> <p>Development of accredited training for staff</p>
<p><b>Evidence of Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved confidence, self esteem and well being in family</li> <li>• Improved transition process including settling in to secondary school</li> <li>• Individual children’s personal success stories</li> <li>• Individual parents personal success stories</li> <li>• Increased engagement of parents</li> <li>• Improved confidence, self esteem and motivation of children – enhancing their learning</li> <li>• Skills development for staff</li> </ul>
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