

**Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee
Communities & Tackling Poverty Evidence Paper – 19 June 2014**

Introduction

1. The Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio is driving a coherent, cross-government approach to tackling poverty. It works to improve outcomes for children, families and deprived communities and to secure that action on jobs, skills, education and health reaches those who might otherwise be the last to benefit. Prevention and early intervention are key. The portfolio covers:
 - Tackling poverty and promoting community resilience including Communities First;
 - Co-ordinating the Welsh Government’s response to welfare reform;
 - Increasing financial and digital inclusion, including the Discretionary Assistance Fund, Advice Services and Credit Unions;
 - Supporting families and children, in particular through Flying Start and Families First;
 - Increasing the availability of quality, affordable childcare and play provision;
 - Promoting the rights and participation of children and young people;
 - Promoting equality and inclusion;
 - Supporting the development of the Third Sector and enhancing its strategic relationship with government; and
 - Promoting sustainable development into the work of the Welsh Government and its partners.
2. Responsibility for the portfolio is split between the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty and the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty. Day to day responsibility for the core delivery programmes of Communities First, Families First and Flying Start rests with the Deputy Minister. Detailed questions in relation to areas of responsibility falling to the Deputy Minister may be responded to in writing as necessary.

Funding

	2013-14 (Supplementary Budget) £000	2014-15 (Final Budget) £000
Revenue	175,891	192,246
Capital	27,200	20,450

TOTAL DEL	203,091	212,696

3. The budget for the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio in 2014/15 includes:

- £39.450m for Communities First;
- £72.094m Revenue and £8m Capital for Flying Start;
- £46.908m for Families First;
- £ 0.901m for Credit Unions;
- £12.363m under the Discretionary Assistance Fund (Grant and administration);
- £ 1.500m for Gypsy and Traveller sites;
- £10.950m for the Community Facilities Programme.

Tackling Poverty Action Plan (Deputy Minister has day to day responsibility)

4. Implementation of this Plan is focusing on six priorities: early years; the educational attainment gap; young people not earning or learning; reducing the number of workless households; ensuring equal access to high quality healthcare; and housing and regeneration.
5. In addition to internal monitoring and co-ordination through the Implementation Board chaired by the Deputy Minister, engagement with external partners is encouraging local authorities, local health boards, public health professionals, third sector organisations and the managers of our key tackling poverty programmes to work together on these priorities.
6. We will publish a report on the Tackling Poverty Action Plan in July 2014. This will provide an update on progress for our commitments in the Action Plan, as well as outline key developments in relation to tackling rural poverty and in-work poverty in Wales.

Flying Start (Deputy Minister has day to day responsibility)

7. The expansion of Flying Start is now well underway.
8. We are committed to double the number of children benefiting from the programme from 18,000 to 36,000 by the end of this Assembly term.
9. Based on the unvalidated management information received for the 9 months to December 2013, we are on track to meet the target number of Flying Start beneficiaries for 2013-14, with over 27,000 children benefitting in these first 9 months of the year. This data is currently undergoing validation and data for the entire year will be formally published in July 2014.
10. Officials in Communities and Tackling Poverty are continuing to work closely with local authorities to monitor the expansion of the programme and to ensure that the additional resources are focused on the most disadvantaged children within those communities. Links with midwifery are also an increasing focus.

11. Through the expansion of the programme, Flying Start has created a range of jobs in communities across Wales. These range from construction jobs to childcare workers, healthcare professionals and admin staff.
12. Flying Start is subject to a robust, independent programme of evaluation and a series of reports were published at the end of 2013. The findings presented evidence that families in Flying Start areas received more visits from health visitors and had higher awareness and take up of parenting programmes than families in similar, non Flying Start areas. Parents interviewed also reported positive impacts upon their children's development.

Flying Start Capital Programme (Deputy Minister has day to day responsibility)

13. The Welsh Government has made a significant investment in infrastructure to support the delivery of the Flying Start programme. To date, over £28million of funding has been made available to capital projects across Wales.
14. By the end of 2015-16, the Welsh Government will have funded the development of settings to provide nearly 9,000 high quality, part time childcare places across Wales. It will also have created a range of accommodation for the multi agency teams that are delivering Flying Start services on the ground, as well as venues for delivering parent courses and language and play sessions.

Families First (Deputy Minister has day to day responsibility)

15. The Welsh Government's Families First programme is creating an integrated, whole-family approach to supporting families in Wales. It aims to develop effective, multi-agency support for families in order to improve their outcomes, particularly those living in poverty, or at risk of poverty. It has a clear emphasis on early intervention and prevention, on starting from a strengths-based approach and on bringing together organisations to work with the whole family to help stop problems from escalating towards crisis.
16. Two key features of the programme are the requirement for local authorities to develop increasingly family-focused assessment and engagement processes through the 'Joint Assessment Family Framework' (JAFF), and to improve coordinated support through 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) models. The JAFF assesses the families' strengths and needs in a number of areas and is used to design a tailored plan of interventions to help families overcome the problems they face. TAF is a model which brings together a wide range of professionals to work together with a family in order to help them address the breadth of challenges they are facing.
17. Families First is subject to an independent programme of national evaluation. The second year report is scheduled for publication on the 12th June 2014. It provides an update on programme delivery and includes family case studies that present their experiences and reported early impacts of the programme.

Communities First (Deputy Minister has day to day responsibility)

18. The Communities First programme focuses on tackling poverty with three strategic outcomes: Prosperous, Healthy and Learning Communities. We have continued our commitment to the programme, which will be maintained for the life of this Government. A first evaluation report on the reshaped Communities First programme is due in July.
19. Funding arrangements for all 52 new Communities First Clusters were agreed by January 2013 with £75 million allocated for the period to 31 March 2015. The programme now covers a larger proportion of the population, with approximately 24% of the population of Wales being included.
20. Performance is monitored and measured against an outcomes framework which allows comparisons to be made across the programme and demonstrates the impact on tackling poverty at a local and national level. As a Tackling Poverty Programme, Communities First features heavily in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and has a number of key targets to report against by 2020. Communities First monitors the areas where improvements have been made in the circumstances of an individual, therefore any single person may have more than one "better off". Better off covers a broad range from securing a qualification, re-entering activity to find employment, securing a job and measures such as improved mental well being, parenting skills and increased physical activity.

Prosperous Target:

- 45,000 interventions with people, 26,250 better off (58 per cent).
- Actual as of 31 March 2014:
- 53,895 interventions with people, 13,947 better off (26 per cent).
- Interventions under this theme include getting people back into work through skills programmes, training initiatives, jobs clubs and projects to improve the economy and entrepreneurship in the area.
- In the first 12 months of the Programme, numbers indicate that 26 % of interventions have resulted in a significant improvement in circumstances, such as entering employment.
- The number of interventions under the Prosperous theme has been exceeded by 9,000. This increase in participants affects the relative percentage of those considered better off. However, the percentage of those 'better off' (26%) already exceeds the half way point of the 58% target at only 12 months into the Programme. As the programme progresses we would expect to see this percentage increase as the long term impact of the interventions come into fruition.

Learning Target:

- 30,000 interventions with people, 18,750 better off (63 per cent).
- Actual as of 31 March 2014:
- 39,858 interventions with people, 13,345 better off (33 per cent).

- Projects under the learning outcome include initiatives to help people learn new skills, learn basic skills, become digitally included as well as initiatives particularly focussed on improving educational outcomes for young people and children, addressing family literacy and attendance.
- The figures show that learning projects have exceeded their anticipated intervention level by nearly 10,000 and 33% of those involved are better off as a result. This is good progress towards meeting the target, demonstrating that the half way point has already been exceeded just 12 months into the new Programme and the *number* (not percentage) of people better off is only 5,000 off the original target at this early stage of the Programme.

Health Target:

- 26,250 interventions with people, 16,875 better off (64 per cent).
 - Actual as of 31 March 2014:
 - 45,273 interventions with people, 22,364 better off (49 per cent).
 - Health Interventions include initiatives around healthy eating, healthy and independent lifestyles, growing and cooking healthy food, exercise, smoking cessation, pre and post natal health and alcohol awareness.
 - The figures show that the target number of interventions has been exceeded by 20,000, almost doubling the target number. This inevitably affects the percentage figure of those feeling better off, meaning that only 49% of participants (against a target of 64%) were better off. However, when looking at the numbers of people better off, there are over 5,000 more people better off than expected as a result of these initiatives.
21. There is a high level of interventions within the Communities First Programme and the percentages of those better off are very encouraging as the Programme's new Cluster structure has only been established since January 2013 and many were not fully staffed until late in 2013. As the Programme proceeds into its next second full financial year we would expect to see the percentage ratio increase, particularly as the results of some of the longer term projects are yet to bear fruit. Many of the people the Programme works with are from groups who are hard to engage and work with, so improvements in circumstances are likely to happen over a longer period. We expect future figures to reflect that.
22. Welsh Government officials are working closely with Clusters to manage the number of interventions and participants to ensure that we are making a real difference to the most deprived within our communities and ensure that people are better off as a result.
23. Improving alignment between Communities First, Families First and Flying Start, as well as other programmes, and ensuring that there is consistent, systemic join-up will reduce duplication in areas of programme overlap and ensure maximum use is made of resources. The development of a combined outcomes framework for Communities First, Families First and Flying Start is fundamental to this

alignment and a task and finish group, made up of stakeholders from across Wales, has been established to ensure that this is in place by September 2014.

24. A key feature of Communities First is that it employs professional staff in our most deprived communities and provides an infrastructure which others can use or supplement in order to ensure that their programmes reach these communities. Examples of Communities First working in this way include:

- Joint funding with the Pupil Deprivation Grant, to promote family learning in the early years, support young people to do well at school and increase parental engagement in their children's education;
- The piloting of the over 50s health checks in Communities First areas, to help ensure that the scheme would be taken up by those who could most benefit from it;
- Work with Jobcentre Plus to place Parent Employment advisers in Communities First areas;
- Projects supported by the Arts Council for Wales to work with young people not earning or learning;
- The "StreetGames" initiative supported by the Sports Council and others;
- The "Come Outside!" programme, supported by Housing and Regeneration, Big Lottery and Natural Resources Wales;
- The Jobs Growth Wales and Lift Programme initiatives, below.

Jobs Growth Wales

25. The Jobs Growth Wales Communities First project was established in December 2013. As of 10 May 2014, 258 job opportunities have been created. Of those, 128 job opportunities have been filled by young people living in Communities First Clusters. A further 130 are currently going through the recruitment process.

Lift Programme

26. We have also established the Lift programme, which aims to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities to people from workless households by the end of 2017. Lift will operate in nine Communities First Cluster areas across Wales. The programme is now fully operational in six areas, with the three remaining areas set to follow by mid-June. Lift staff have already started working intensively with people from workless households, with over 200 already having taken up opportunities.

27. All Welsh Government Departments have been asked to identify training and employment opportunities that can support the Lift programme and details of Departmental contributions are currently being finalised. The Chief Medical Officer has, though, already written to Local Health Boards indicating that she expects the NHS to make a sizeable contribution – up to 1,000 training and employment opportunities – towards the programme target.

Welfare reform

28. Welfare reform has compounded the impact of recession, which itself has had most impact in our deprived communities and for people with protected characteristics. For example, the Women's Equality Network Wales published research on the issues facing older women in Wales including the impact of the recession in April 2014.
29. We have voiced our concerns consistently about the scope, scale and nature of the welfare reforms. We cannot compensate for these changes, which will impact most heavily on our most deprived communities; on non-working families; and on disabled people and carers. However our understanding of the impacts¹ is enabling us to target our action where it will help most.
30. Within the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio, this has reinforced the importance of our work on digital and financial inclusion, as well as the actions described above in relation to employment for young people and opportunities for workless households.

Digital Inclusion

31. Through our revised Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan and our Digital Inclusion programme, Communities 2.0, we are making good progress in getting more people to improve their lives through the use of digital technologies. National Survey for Wales figures released in May 2014 show a reduction in digital exclusion among adults to 21% from 24% in the previous year.
32. Communities 2.0 has helped to support over 39,000 individuals to get online and has engaged key stakeholder organisations including Age Cymru, RNIB and Shelter, to support the agenda. Digital Inclusion continues to contribute to the delivery of the overarching Digital Wales strategy and will continue to integrate with other strands of Welsh Government's digital work like Superfast Cymru and the emerging Digital First Strategy. In July I will be formally announcing with the Minister for Culture and Sport the extension of Communities 2.0 to the most deprived areas of Newport, Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.

Financial Inclusion

33. The Implementation of the Financial Inclusion Strategy focuses on five themes of access to mainstream financial services, providing affordable credit and savings, improving access to financial and debt advice, increasing financial capability and income maximisation. Work has been implemented under these themes with a range of partners.
34. After the abolition of the discretionary elements of the Social Fund by the UK Government, the Welsh Government put in place the Discretionary Assistance Fund. In 2013-14, the Fund made over 27,000 awards, totalling £7.2m, to support people in a crisis or emergency situation or to help them resettle in the community. There are now over 400 Discretionary Assistance Fund "partners" able to help refer people to the Fund for assistance.

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/people-and-communities/welfare-reform-in-wales/analysingreforms/?lang=en>

35. The jointly funded Welsh Government and WEFO “Access to Financial Services through Credit Unions” project ended in December 2013 – supported by just under £4 million of funding since October 2010. The project was extended until March 2014 with Welsh Government funding alone. It exceeded targets by enabling 33,000 financially excluded people to have access to financial services. Total membership of Credit Unions in Wales is now estimated at more than 78,000.
36. Alongside the Credit Union Project, an additional £1.2 million was awarded to Credit Unions in January 2014 to support their sustainability and reach within communities. In March 2014, Welsh Government announced further Credit Union funding of £1.9m which will be provided until March 2017, on a tapered basis.
37. A Credit Union Conference will take place on 17 July 2014, building on the joint working we’ve seen through the £1.2m collaboration funding. This will give us time to reflect on the support already provided by Welsh Government and to look together at what is needed from this point onwards.
38. We are also ensuring that there is practical support available in the form of front-line advice services to help people who may be facing changes in their benefits or are struggling to make ends meet. An additional £1million is being made available in 2014-15 to organisations providing free advice services on issues relating to welfare rights; housing; debt and money management and discrimination. This is in addition to the support we are already providing through the Better Advice: Better Lives (BABL) scheme, delivered by Citizens Advice Bureau in Wales and the shared outcomes project which provides outreach debt and welfare benefits advice in 36 Communities First Cluster areas across Wales. In 2013-14, BABL alone saw over 20,000 clients and enabled them to claim over £16 million in additional benefits up to December 2013.
39. As well as funding to support front-line advice services, the Advice Services Review, which reported in 2013, identified the need for a more strategic and coordinated approach to the way advice services are planned and delivered in Wales. One of my priorities for this year is to take steps to establish a National Advice Network in order to facilitate this strategic and collaborative approach. The Welsh Government will also be looking to encourage greater consistency in terms of the quality of advice provided by the voluntary and not-for-profit sector.

Remploy

40. Welsh Ministers have opposed the UK Government's decision to close all the Remploy factories. We lobbied the UK Government to devolve responsibility in Wales. This was refused, and the Welsh Government took action to ensure that those Remploy workers affected in Wales could receive assistance through the Remploy Employer Support Grant.
41. The Welsh Government’s Employer Support Grant (ESG), launched in July 2012, has so far provided new employment for over 200 (or around two thirds) of disabled former Remploy staff in Wales, with many more posts approved and still

available. The deadline for ESG applications by potential employers has been extended until the end of September 2014.

Equality

42. Many of those experiencing poverty across Wales are also facing discrimination for a range of issues. We are committed to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
43. The Welsh Government was the first government in Britain to introduce specific equality duties to support implementation of the public sector equality duty in the Equality Act 2010 in listed public authorities in Wales, including the Welsh Government. Amongst others, the specific equality duties include a duty to set equality objectives, report annually on progress, address pay differences, engage people and organisations, to carry out Equality Impact Assessments. Each and every Welsh Government Department has a responsibility to carry out Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that the work that we do takes every opportunity to advance equality, combat discrimination, encourage community cohesion and achieve inclusive outcomes for all the citizens of Wales.
44. The Welsh Government published our first Equality Impact Assessment of the budget in 2010-11, and has focused on improving this year on year. In assessing the impact of the Draft Budget for 2015-16, we will continue to consider the impact of our spending decisions on other areas including children's rights and socio-economic disadvantage. We are still at an early stage in developing an integrated approach, but our aspiration is to provide a more detailed and inclusive impact assessment of our spending plans in future years.
45. Our Framework for Action on Independent Living was published in September 2013. The Framework takes a strategic approach to disability. It identifies and aims to address barriers to independent living, to create an enabling and inclusive society. The Framework was developed in a co-productive way through a National Steering Group of stakeholders, and followed engagement with disabled people and their organisations across Wales. We are confident therefore that we are addressing the issues that are most important to them.
46. It is also important to ensure that people have safe communities in which to live. In May 2014 I launched 'Tackling Hate Crimes and Incidents: A Framework for Action', setting out our approach to tackling hostility and prejudice faced by people because of their protected characteristics of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and age. Alongside this I published a new community cohesion delivery programme and confirmed two years' additional funding for Community Cohesion Coordinators to April 2016.
47. We have maintained our commitment to address the accommodation needs for the Gypsy and Traveller community in Wales, with the first new local authority site since 1997 officially opened in Brecon on 9 April 2014. In addition, six other local authority sites were refurbished in 2013-14. Since 2007-08 we have helped

fund the refurbishment of 44 projects across a number of local authority sites in Wales. The Housing (Wales) Bill currently before the National Assembly for Wales also seeks to address the lack of available accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community in Wales by proposing to introduce a new Statutory Duty on local authorities to develop new Gypsy and Traveller sites where there is unmet need.

Diversity in Public Appointments

48. Ministers with responsibility for public appointments wrote to Chairs of key public sector boards in early 2013 asking them to take action to increase the number of women and other under-represented groups in public appointments. Further actions took place throughout 2013 to increase diversity in public appointments. These included:

- highlighting and sharing good practice from the Sport Wales case study with public bodies and sponsor divisions;
- a seminar for Chairs of Public Sector Boards and
- a workshop for sponsor divisions.

49. In Autumn 2013 I asked Ministers to write to Chairs again to reaffirm their commitment to this agenda and to encourage Chairs and Boards to take action to increase diversity. Good practice materials and guidance to support Chairs were included with the letters and are available on the Welsh Government website.

50. Progress reports are expected from Chairs by 30th June 2014. A seminar for Chairs of Public Sector Boards, to share good practice will be taking place on 13th November 2014 at the SWALEC Stadium in Cardiff.

Children's Rights

51. In May 2014 I laid before the Assembly a revised Children's Rights Scheme which reflects the Welsh Ministers' duty, under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when exercising their functions.

52. I will be announcing shortly further details on a review of the Office of Children's Commissioner for Wales, which is something the current Commissioner, Keith Towler, has called for and welcomed.

Third Sector

53. The Welsh Government's relationship with the third sector is one of the distinctive features of our devolution settlement. It is also vital that public services work closely with the third sector to tackle the challenge of increasing need and decreasing public sector finances. I was pleased to publish in January 2014 a revised Third Sector Scheme, co produced with representatives of the sector. It sets out the key principles by which the Welsh Government works with the third sector and includes a Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector.

54. I announced at the same time my intention to move towards more regional working with the third sector infrastructure and to ensure that engagement mechanisms, such as the Third Sector Partnership Council and Ministerial meetings with the sector, are more outcome focused. I have also encouraged local authorities, health boards and other public services to take note of the Scheme and Code of Practice to inform the development and strengthening of Local Compacts with the Third Sector

Future Generations

55. Wales faces a number of complex long-term challenges that we must recognise and address in order to provide for the well-being of Wales. Many of these are a legacy from the past, but it is increasingly recognised that more needs to be done to ensure that the current generations does not leave them as challenges for future generations.

56. This ground-breaking Bill is about our generation taking responsibility for improving the well-being of Wales by providing a sustainable Wales both now and for decades to come. Our Welsh account of sustainable development is an emphasis on social, economic and environmental well-being for people and communities, both now and in the future.

57. This Bill provides a unique opportunity to focus specified public services on addressing the key challenges that face current and future generations. I asked the Commissioner for Sustainable Futures – Peter Davies, to pilot a national conversation on ‘the Wales We Want’, looking forward to what we want our country to look like in 2050. The first phase of this launched in February and over the past few months ‘Future Champions’ from across Wales have been recruited to engage people and communities on the long term future of Wales to feed in to a an interim report on behalf of future generations in Wales. This will be published shortly. The Bill will help tackle the generational challenges Wales faces in a more joined up and integrated way by ensuring specified public services work together to achieve the goals that the Bill will establish. We are on course to introduce the Future Generations Bill (working title) to the Assembly before summer recess.

Sustainable Development

58. As a Government, all our policies and programmes reflect our commitment to sustainability and fairness so that we make sustainable development our central organising principle. This is central to the work of the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio. Our programmes and policies are seeking to make changes now that impact long into the future and ensure that the people and communities of Wales are best placed to address the challenges ahead. We are due to lay the next Sustainable Development Annual Report covering the period 2013-14 on 23rd June.

Jeff Cuthbert AM
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

June 2014