

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

**Date:** 21 January 2016

**Time:** 12.30pm to 14.00pm

**Title:** Evidence paper – Children and Young People Draft Budget Allocations for 2016-17.

### 1. Introduction

This paper provides comments and information to the Committee regarding Children and Young People future programme budget proposals outlined within the Draft Budget which was laid on 8 December 2015. The budget for this area sits within the Communities and Tackling Poverty (CTP) MEG.

### 2. Background

Compared to the 2016-17 Budget Baseline the total DEL allocation for the CTP MEG has increased by £65.289m to £677.323m.

This includes a decrease in Resource DEL of £3.022m to £333.592m, and a net increase to the Capital budget of £68.311m to £343.731m.

The following summary financial tables show the overall effect on the CTP Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) baseline budget.

#### Summary Financial Tables:

| <b>CTP MEG</b> | 2015-16<br>Supp.<br>Budget<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Budget<br>Baseline<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Changes<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Draft<br>Budget<br><br>£000 |
|----------------|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Resource DEL   | 341,514                                | 336,614                                   | -3,022                         | 333,592                                |
| Capital DEL    | 395,420                                | 275,420                                   | 68,311                         | 343,731                                |
| DEL Baseline   | 736,934                                | 612,034                                   | 65,289                         | 677,323                                |

Within the CTP MEG, the specific impact on the Children, Young People and Families (CYP&F) budget is summarised in this separate table.

| <b>CYP&amp;F</b> | 2015-16<br>Supp.<br>Budget<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Budget<br>Baseline<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Changes<br><br>£000 | 2016-17<br>Draft<br>Budget<br><br>£000 |
|------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Resource DEL     | 125,384                                | 125,384                                   | -946                           | 124,438                                |
| Capital DEL      | 6,950                                  | 0   | 3,000                          | 3,000                                  |
| DEL Baseline     | 132,334                                | 125,384                                   | 2,054                          | 127,438                                |

The Capital baseline is zero for 2016-17 as the 2015-16 funding of £6.950m was all non-recurrent funding for the Flying Start Programme, of which £4.950m was found within the MEG to support the Flying Start programme as it expanded to provide support for double the number of children, from 18,000 to 36,000.

### **3. Budget Overview**

The overarching aim of the Communities and Tackling Poverty Department is to unite the work of the Welsh Government and its partners in tackling poverty and achieving a fairer, more sustainable and better quality of life for communities, families and individuals, both now and in the long term.

The portfolio works to prevent poverty, help people out of poverty and help build resilient communities where families and individuals can access the support they need.

We are helping children to get the best start in life and supporting families. We aim to ensure that one of the most basic well-being needs - for a good home - is met, especially for people who would otherwise be excluded from the housing market. We are investing and working with communities in our most deprived areas, to improve their social, economic and environmental well-being. We are taking action to embed equality, including the rights of children and young people, across the Welsh Government and the public sector; and supporting the third sector to play its part in achieving the outcomes we are working for and want to see in Wales.

The Department has a number of specific priorities which reflect and support the delivery of the Programme for Government, many of which also have a direct impact on children and young people:

- supporting families and children, in particular through Flying Start and Families First;
- tackling poverty and promoting community resilience including Communities First;
- providing affordable, safe and warm housing for children and families through our Social Housing Grant Programme;

- improving the quality of the social housing stock in Wales through our Major Repairs Allowance programme;
- regeneration of our towns and communities through Vibrant and Viable Places;
- providing assistance through our Supporting People programme to enable people to live in their own homes for longer;
- mitigating the impact of welfare reform;
- increasing financial and digital inclusion, including Discretionary Assistance Fund and Credit Unions;
- increasing the availability of quality, affordable childcare and play provision;
- promoting the rights and participation of children and young people
- promoting equality and inclusion; and
- supporting the development of the Third Sector and enhancing its strategic relationship with Government.

#### **4. Detail of Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) Allocations**

A summary of the Children, Young People and Families budget allocations at Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) level is attached at Annex 1. This provides a breakdown of:

- 2016-17 allocations;
- 2015-16 allocations - projected outturns for 2015-16, at this point in the financial year, are to budget; and
- 2014-15 final outturn figures.

To note, there were no changes between the final budget December 2014 and the first supplementary budget June 2015 other than for the transfer out of the Advocacy budget to the Health and Social Services MEG.

The changes between the 2016-17 baseline budget and the revised draft budget for 2016-17 are as follows:

- Families First reduction of £1.074m
- Children's Commissioner reduction of £0.172m
- Childcare & Play strategies increase of £0.3m
- Flying Start Capital increase of £3.0m

The impact of these changes is fully documented within the supporting Integrated Impact Assessment document.

#### **5. Children's rights and equalities**

The Children & Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places the duty to have due regard to the UNCRC on all Ministers when they exercise any of their functions.

To enable Ministers, and their officials, to comply with this duty, there are robust processes in place set out in our Children's Rights Scheme, including the CRIA process which prompts consideration of the UNCRC, the impact on children and young people, how it will further children's rights, how the positive impact can be maximised and the negative impact negated or mitigated.

An Integrated Impact Assessment Approach has been undertaken for the 2015-16 budget which incorporates consideration of all duties and mandatory impact assessments. Children's rights and the impact of budgetary decisions on children, young people and their families have been considered as part of this Integrated Impact Assessment Approach.

The role of the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (BAGE) is to provide advice and to share expertise and best practice on equality issues to support the continual improvement of the Impact Assessment (IA) undertaken of the Welsh Government Budget. We work with BAGE throughout the year to improve our approach and shape our decisions.

In addition, the Support for Children's Rights budget within the Children, Young People and Families Action is specifically aimed at taking forward children's rights and the Rights of Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure 2011, supporting Ministers and officials to comply with the duty on Ministers to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC and further promoting knowledge and understanding of children and young people's rights. This includes:

- maintaining the contract for training professionals in children's rights,; including lecturers, social work trainers, teachers, youth workers, health professionals, police etc.;
- the continuation of the promotion of children's rights in line with Section 5 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 by using (and developing) existing promotional tools including the Welsh Government website pages, the UNCRC Getting it Right website, the on-line training package, the CYP Complaints Procedure, the App and the YouTube clip; and
- Implementation of the findings from the independent evaluation of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) process.

In applying sustainable development to the budget process within Communities and Tackling Poverty, decisions have been made that reflect the five ways of working of sustainable development:

- Collaboration – recognising that many of the solutions to the 'sustainability' challenges Wales faces cannot be solved by one organisation. Maintaining our support for advice on sustainable development to all sectors will help in identifying opportunities for collaboration. We will also continue to pursue opportunities for collaboration across Government and with other partners,

including the third sector, in order that programmes and services reach into the communities that most need them.

- Integration – our Flying Start, Families First and Communities First programmes have shared outcomes promoting prosperity and employment, learning and fulfilling potential, and health and well-being. They also help deliver objectives in our Strategic Equality Plan. These outcomes are being brought together into a Common Outcomes Framework, which is aimed at promoting greater alignment of delivery across all three programmes.
- Long term –We have taken account of the potential **long term** impacts of our decisions and balanced this against our short-term needs. This has enabled us to plan on the basis of recognising challenges before they arise so that we are able to balance short-term pressures with long-term needs. In particular through investing in early years and family support, since the evidence is that this will have greater benefits in the long term.
- Prevention – seeking to tackle problems at source, rather than tackling the consequences of these problems at a later date. Prevention and early intervention is an approach which not only benefits people and communities but has the potential to generate long term cost savings. This approach is at the heart of our tackling poverty programmes, in particular Families First, and in our approach to tackling the inequalities experienced by those with protected characteristics.
- Involvement– recognising the importance of involving people in the decisions that affect them: for example community involvement is a key feature of the Communities First programme.

Prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those who are most disadvantaged and most vulnerable is critical, particularly in the current economic climate. The Strategic Equality Plan and Tackling Poverty Action Plan provide an important framework for these efforts. In particular, action to tackle poverty and action to reduce inequalities not only complement, but also build on one another.

Evidence shows that people with certain protected characteristics are at greater risk of living in low income households and initiatives that tackle poverty will therefore have a positive impact on those groups. We also know that certain ethnic minority groups, disabled people, lone parents (who are predominantly women), and younger people who are not in employment, education and training are more at risk of living in low income households. In particular, disabled people are disproportionately represented in both economically inactive and workless households. We will continue to identify opportunities to “dovetail” the Welsh Government’s Strategic Equality Plan with the objectives in the Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, and support those children and families with certain protected characteristics. There is already a greater emphasis on monitoring the outcomes of those groups at risk of living in poverty

and those with protected characteristics within the programmes within the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio.

## 6. Other Information

### Monitoring, Evaluation & Value for money

A range of activity is currently underway to allow us to build on the findings of the independent national evaluation of Flying Start. The first strand of work involves qualitative research following 72 families on their journey through Flying Start over three years. The first annual report is due to be published on 18 January 2016 and will be circulated to Committee Members on the day of publication. The second strand of work entails utilizing existing datasets to monitor and evaluate Flying Start. We are conducting some work with the new Administrative Data Research Centre for Wales. Independent researchers will be exploring differences in education and health outcomes for those living in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas. Thirdly, we are conducting additional analysis of the Flying Start developmental assessments. In addition, we are working with Local Authorities to update our approach to monitoring the future outcomes of children when they leave Flying Start. In relation to Families First, we will continue to collect data from Local Authorities. This will be used to monitor performance, assess outcomes for families and drive the future improvement and delivery.

### Programme for Government

In 2011, we put forward the most ambitious and comprehensive **Programme for Government** since devolution, which now includes 547 separate commitments covering the breadth of the services we are responsible for. We did so in the knowledge that the outlook for public finances was challenging.

Dealing with austerity has been a major test for the Welsh Government and devolution as a whole, but we have delivered by maintaining a firm focus on delivery and supporting those most in need. We have done this through setting four overarching priorities on behalf of the people of Wales, on health and health services, educational attainment, growth and jobs, and supporting children, families and deprived communities. On each of these key priorities, we have focused our resources in order to make a difference to people's lives.

As a Government we have also remained committed to the principle of transparency so this Government can be judged on its record. Since 2011 we have published an annual report to provide a transparent account of what is being done and what is being achieved against our 547 commitments measured by 336 outcomes and performance indicators.

We published the final Programme for Government annual report in June 2015 which showed that more than 95 per cent of our commitments have either been delivered, or are on track to be delivered.

In preparing for future financial restraints, we have sought to target investment to maintain the focus of our spending plans on our main priorities of: health and health services; growth and jobs; educational attainment; and supporting children, families and deprived communities.

Despite the challenges presented by the late timing of the UK Spending Review, we have used planning for the Draft Budget 2016-17 as an opportunity to look ahead to target investment in sustainable outcomes and adopt the five key ways of working established by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Act provides public bodies with a shared purpose through the establishment of seven well-being goals for Wales, and the five key ways of working ensure that public bodies take a long-term perspective when making decisions; that they consider what actions are required to prevent problems arising in future, or to prevent current problems from getting worse; that they take an integrated and collaborative approach to decision making; and that they involve users in the planning and delivery of services.

### Preventative Spend

Preventative spend remains a key theme of the family support programmes. Families First has been subject to a three year independent evaluation. The final report was published in September and highlighted the potential large cost savings the programme can make through helping families avoid poor long-term outcomes. Flying Start is an early intervention programme informed by the growing international body of evidence that supports the positive role of interventions in early years in improving the development of children and young people and their prospects in adulthood. A report published in February 2015 by the Early Intervention Foundation highlighted the fiscal cost of missed opportunities to provide early, targeted support to children and young people. The report concluded “early Intervention is the smart and realistic choice for using ever scarcer public money”.

The Children’s Commissioner’s role in scrutinising the government and ensuring that legislation, policies and decisions provide the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families again very much focuses on **preventative measures**. Likewise our funding allocations for Advocacy and Supporting Children’s Rights have a strong focus on **preventative spend** – informing, reassuring and empowering children to make positive changes in their lives, and resolving issues without the need for undue and stressful escalation.

In drafting our budget proposals for 2016-17, we have adopted an outcomes-based approach, ensuring that our proposed funding allocations reflect our overarching Priorities for Wales, with an emphasis on tackling poverty by working collaboratively with our partners to improve the futures of communities across Wales. It is preventative in nature, taking a long term view and working with communities.

Specifically, the Children, Young People and Families Action supports a number of key programmes including Flying Start and Families First, both of which focus on supporting children and their families. In 2016-17 we will be investing £119.472m (revenue spend). The Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) detail is attached at Annex 1.

### Legislation

Potential legislation affecting Family Support is unknown at present.

## 7. Specific areas

### Flying Start

The Flying Start Budget has been fully protected and will be maintained at almost **£77 million**. This will ensure the good work on making sure children get the best start in life continues.

Grant allocations to Local Authorities are not disaggregated into Flying Start entitlements. Local Authorities are expected to submit, discuss and agree an annual work plan which will identify how the grant will be spent.

Local Authorities submit data on a termly basis. This data is used to assess how the programme is performing, to identify areas of good practice and where performance could be improved. A Quality Improvement Plan is agreed with each Local Authority to drive improvements in performance and delivery. The programme has also been subject to a range of evaluation activity.

Costs per child of the childcare offer for 2015-16 are not yet available. Therefore, estimates used for cost per child are based on figures for the year 2014-15 and are as follows:

- Cost per childcare session contracted: £23.02
- Cost per childcare hour contracted: £9.21

The take up of the language and play entitlement now referred to as Speech, Language and Communication provision continues to be defined as a course offered to an individual parental figure who attended the first session. The delivery and implementation of this entitlement of the programme is monitored in the same way as the other elements in terms of submitting relevant data which is then subject to the analysis referred to above.

Evaluative evidence suggests that children benefitting from Flying Start Childcare provision and the Speech, Language and Communication provision are seeing improved outcomes in their social development and are better prepared for school and for learning. Investment is targeted in the communities with the highest proportion of households with children aged 0-4 who are on income benefits.



The evidence provided in evaluation reports commissioned by the Welsh Government shows the Flying Start programme has resulted in greater engagement with family services than would have been the case without the programme. This is vital for the early identification of need and encouraging families to take up other Flying Start entitlements and other early years services. Awareness of, referral to and take-up of parenting programmes and Language and Play was also higher amongst parents in the Flying Start group. Greater engagement with early years services is important for building the medium and long term impacts that the programme is expected to deliver in the future.

The evidence also shows that local family services have a stronger reputation among families in Flying Start areas than in areas where the programme is not operating. For example, families in the Flying Start group were more likely to have noticed an improvement in local services over the last two years. Satisfaction with local childcare provision was also higher amongst Flying Start families in terms of quality and its ability to help children learn and develop.

Information from annual progress reports, inspection reports and stakeholder interviews, taken alongside the number of families who are now accessing childcare, the improved qualification levels of staff and available trend data on Stages of Growth (SoGs) data and teacher assessments, suggests that there are firm indications that Flying Start has had a positive impact on the quality of childcare provision.

Value for money of childcare within the programme is assessed on an on-going basis. Costs are compared across Local Authorities, take up of places purchased is monitored and childcare budgets agreed as part of annual work plans.

Every family in a Flying Start area should have ongoing access to an appropriate language and play group. From this, a more targeted approach based on assessment and referral can be taken where there is evidence of additional need. In some local authorities, speech and language therapists are employed as part of the core Flying Start team. Where this approach can be linked to evidence of local need and impact on outcomes, it will be supported by the Welsh Government

### *Other support for families*

Families First is an innovative programme that promotes the development by all local authorities of effective multi-agency systems and support for families, with a clear emphasis on **prevention and early intervention** for families, particularly those living in **poverty**. The Welsh Government has committed to support the Families First programme during this Assembly term and we will be investing **£42.6m in 2016-17**. This is a reduction of £1.074m compared with 2015-16 budget allocations. However, by the end of this Assembly term we will have allocated **£226.5m** to Families First.

Funding for the Families Information Services in Wales is part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). It is for each Local Authority to decide the proportion of its RSG it will allocate to its Family Information Service.

The Welsh Government is committed to Wales delivering an unrivalled Family Information Service (FIS). A contract is in place which will provide a central source of support to the FIS network. It will promote quality and consistency of FIS in Wales by promoting the Welsh Government's '*Delivering Quality Information for Families Together – A guidance document for the Families Information Services in Wales*'.

### *Children and Families Delivery Grant*

The high-level aim of the Children and Families Delivery Grant is to reduce inequalities in health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. The grant supports families in practical, measurable ways, with particular emphasis on building family resilience and capacity to become less reliant on persistent interventions.

Since applications were approved there has been no change to the overall budget for the programme which remains at £10.1m. Changes have occurred to annual budgets within the programme as underspends due to slow start ups have transferred to later years. This has resulted in costs for 2016-17 increasing by approximately £13k from £3.3598m to £3.372m.

One project run by Children in Wales was commissioned to undertake additional work on children and young peoples participation during 2015-16 as part of the CFDG project and an additional £80k was awarded to undertake the work. The £80k was provided by Fairer Futures Division with Families Division budgets not affected.

Progress to date is considered good on all 5 projects funded under the programme. For example the CWLWM partnership has with some minor exceptions achieved all its targets within the 10% variance. Project partners are currently working together on a pilot to develop partnerships between registered child-minders and playgroups. This will support an integrated approach between childcare and funded early years foundation phase education in Wales. The aims of the project are to achieve more positive outcomes for children, improve sustainability of the setting, develop partnership working and support the needs of working parents. A comprehensive research study is also under way to identify parental needs.

### *Child Poverty*

Tackling child poverty is a key priority for the Welsh Government. In our Revised Child Poverty Strategy, which we published in March 2015, we reaffirmed our

commitment to ambition of eradicating child poverty by 2020. We recognise the huge challenges we face in delivering this outcome, particularly in light of the impacts of Welfare Reform and their disproportionate impact on families with children. Nonetheless, setting this strategic direction is critical. We want to support parents to ensure children are provided with the best possible start in life. We want to break down those barriers which prevent many children and young people from achieving success and reaching their full potential. Furthermore, we want to mitigate the impacts of poverty through a continuing emphasis on access to services and support. Child poverty in Wales remains stubbornly high, with 31 percent of children in Wales living in low income households, during the three year period ending in 2013/14. By maintaining the ambition to eradicate child poverty, we are sending a strong message to all partners that we need to continue our focus on child poverty.

Our Revised Child Poverty Strategy maintains the three objectives of the 2011 Strategy, which are focussed on reducing worklessness, increasing skills and reducing inequalities in health and educational outcomes. It also includes two new objectives, which focus on using all available levers to create a strong economy which supports the tackling poverty agenda and supporting households to increase their income by mitigating the impacts of welfare reform and tackling the poverty premium. These new objectives reflect the key findings from the 2014 evaluation of the Child Poverty Strategy, which recognised the ongoing importance of investing in programmes and policies which prevent poverty, as well as supporting households “here and now” to achieve better outcomes.

Through the Welsh Government’s Revised Child Poverty Strategy and Tackling Poverty Action Plan, we are continuing to measure the outcomes of low income households, on an ongoing basis. We are also evaluating our tackling poverty programmes and are using evidence on “what works” to inform our decisions on future investment.

We remain fully committed to investing in the early years of a child’s life, recognising its key role to preventing poverty in the longer term. We will continue to invest in programmes such as Flying Start and Families First to deliver on this agenda. We also recognise the importance of supporting people into employment and increasing employability, given that work provides the most sustainable route out of poverty. Tackling poverty programmes such as Communities First will continue to play an important role.

Whilst we are making important progress on a number of key indicators, such as improving educational outcomes in the Foundation Phase and reducing the percentage of children living in workless households to its lowest level (14.6% as at the end of 2014), we know we need to do more. In particular, reducing educational inequalities remains a key priority. Programmes such as the Pupil Deprivation and Rewriting the Future are key to ensuring an ongoing focus on improving educational outcomes and raising aspirations amongst pupils from low income households.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Welsh Government does not have all the levers available to influence poverty levels. Some of the most important levers, such as changes to the tax and benefits system, are the responsibility of the UK Government.

The UK Government confirmed within their Autumn Statement 2015, £12 billion of annual welfare cuts to be delivered by 2019-20. These will hit low income households and those with children, and will add to the losses already incurred from welfare cuts implemented by the UK Government over the last few years.

Our latest report (produced by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, IFS) was published on 19 November 2015. This covers the UK Government's tax and benefit changes announced up to and including the July Budget, to be introduced between 2015–16 and 2019–20. Since this report was published, the Autumn Statement announced further changes including a reversal of the main cuts to tax credits, which were due to be implemented from April 2016. However, this protection will only provide short-term relief because tax credits will be phased out by 2018 and the planned cuts to Universal Credit were not reversed. This means the longer term impact remains broadly the same, as outlined by previous analysis.

Overall, the IFS expect the tax and benefit changes to increase the numbers of households below both absolute and relative poverty lines, relative to a scenario where these changes had not been introduced. On average, households in low income groups lose up to around 7% (or £1,461) of net income compared to a small gain (0.5% or £321) for households in the richest income groups (who benefit from the single tier pension and tax-free childcare).

The greatest losses will not be felt by the very poorest (either in cash or percentage terms), but by households in the lower middle of the income distribution. These households (which are particularly affected by the cuts to in-work support under Universal Credit) are located around the poverty line.

Taking into account the tax and benefit measures, as well as the introduction of the national living wage, the Resolution Foundation estimate up to a further 600,000 children in the UK will fall into poverty once all the UK Government's Summer Budget policy measures have taken effect. Two-thirds of this increase is among children in working households.

The Welsh Government cannot make up the significant shortfall of these cuts. However, mitigating the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales is part of the Welsh Government's wider strategy on tackling poverty. Investing in programmes such as Flying Start, Families First, Communities and Supporting People will all make an important contribution to the tackling poverty agenda in Wales.

We have based our spending decisions on an analysis of demands and needs in key public service areas which are of particular importance to those who need it most. In the challenging financial climate we have sought to focus resources on priorities based on an assessment of greatest positive impact and mitigate the effects of austerity where its impact is unavoidable.

### *Children's and young people's rights and entitlements*

The budget for Children's and Young People's Rights has been protected for 2016/17. There is clear evidence that awareness of children's rights is increasing through the Children's Omnibus survey and that Government legislation, policies and programmes are having due regard to children's rights. While there has been significant progress, as set out in the Compliance Report published in June, momentum needs to be maintained. This will focus on internal training, external sector specific training, implementation of the independent evaluation, raising awareness of the UNCRC,

### *Children's Commissioner for Wales*

We continue to support the Commissioner with significant funding in 2016-17. This demonstrates our on-going commitment to ensure that the rights of children and young people are represented by the Commissioner and their particular focus on promoting and championing children's rights, tackling poverty and advising and influencing government and other public bodies on this matter can continue. The Commissioner's substantial reserves has been raised as a concern in both the Public Accounts Committee and in Dr Shooter's Independent Review of the Children's Commissioner. The reduction in the Commissioner's budget can be offset by the Commissioner's reserves with little or no impact directly on children and young people. With such significant financial challenges, we have been consistent in our approach that priority must be to front line services that impact directly on children, young people and their families.

It is not for the Welsh Government to comment on the recommendations for the Children's Commissioner or for how the Commissioner allocates the budget made available to her. The Commissioner has however been very open and willing to keep me informed of her intentions in relation to the recommendations and we are aware that she has implemented some, has work in train in relation to some and is still considering others.

### *Advocacy*

The responsibility for universal advocacy was transferred from the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio to the Health and Social Services portfolio in late 2014. This change was to help ensure cohesive and informed discussions on the development of a national approach to the provision of advocacy for children and young people. In light of this change, it is the Minister for Health and Social

Services who now leads on this area and has responsibility for any budgetary decisions.

### Childcare and Play

In recognition of the role of carers and barriers to education we have provided funding to establish a targeted further education childcare pilot scheme to remove the barriers to education and tackle intergenerational deprivation. This is intended to provide an opportunity for those with caring responsibilities to be able to access further education without having to worry about the costs of childcare. In particular this pilot is intended to focus on positively impacting protected groups who would potentially see the greatest benefits, particularly on gender.

An additional £300k has been awarded in 2016-17 as part of a two year Budget Agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats in 2014 to look at this. A tendering exercise to identify a suitable contractor to undertake a feasibility study is currently underway. The feasibility study will determine what further support is required for young parents to help them return to Further Education, where childcare is a barrier. The feasibility study will be used to inform the proposed pilot in 2016-17. The remaining budget for Childcare and Play is being maintained at £2.7m in 2016-17 given its importance as a significant policy driver in relation to growth and jobs and in terms of tackling poverty.

In addition to the £2.7m Childcare and Play budget, we are also progressing a number of ESF operations. Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) was launched on 13 October 2015 for parents aged over 25, with a total budget of £10.9m up to 2018. When PaCE is extended to parents aged 16-24 the total cost of the operation will be £13.5 million. The Welsh Government is the lead beneficiary with DWP as joint beneficiary. DWP will employ 43 Parent Employment Advisers who will mostly be based within Flying Start settings, Families First and other family based centres. It will target almost 8,000 economically inactive parents over the life of the operation and support lone parents, parents from a workless household or assist a second earner in a working household. It will operate outside Communities First Clusters and will complement the Communities for Work ESF operation. No additional allocation has been made to the Childcare and Play budget in order to support PaCE but the necessary match funding is being provided via the Families First Budget.

The other ESF operation we are pursuing is Progress for Success (PfS) which has been developed alongside the draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. The main purpose of PfS is to increase the quality of provision accessed within registered maintained and non-maintained settings by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and play qualifications held by the existing Early Years, Childcare and Play workforce. PfS for West Wales and the Valleys is currently awaiting WEFO approval and we are continuing discussions with WEFO with regards to East Wales to enable a national program.

Turning to Play, we are continuing to deliver our manifesto commitment to improve opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety, and in particular to support improved access to play for children with disabilities. Wales a Play Friendly Country – Statutory Guidance has been published to support Local Authorities in complying with their duty to secure sufficient play opportunities and implementing their Play Action Plans. Local Authorities have been reminded of their responsibility to undertake and submit a Play Sufficiency Assessment and Play Action Plan to the Welsh Government by 31 March 2016. The Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit has been revised and has been circulated. In terms of funding for Play Wales, we previously granted funding of up to £401,620 for the period 1 October 2014 to 31 March 2015. I am currently considering an application from Play Wales for financial support to continue beyond 31 March 2016. I hope to be able to make a decision before the end of 2015 and will update the Committee in the New Year.

**Lesley Griffiths AM**  
**Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty**

| RESOURCE BUDGET - Departmental Expenditure Limit |                                     |                               |                    |                                    |                               |                    |                         |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| SPA  | Actions                             | BEL Title                     | 2014-15<br>Outturn | 2015-16<br>Supplementary<br>Budget | 2016-17<br>Baseline<br>Budget | 2016-17<br>Changes | 2016-17<br>Draft Budget |
| Children, Young People and Families              | Children, Young People and Families | Children's Commissioner       | 1,715              | 1,715                              | 1,715                         | -172               | 1,543                   |
|  |                                     | Families First                | 46,450             | 43,652                             | 43,652                        | -1,074             | 42,578                  |
|  |                                     | Flying Start                  | 69,555             | 76,894                             | 76,894                        | 0                  | 76,894                  |
|  |                                     | Childcare & Play Strategies   | 4,271              | 2,766                              | 2,766                         | 300                | 3,066                   |
|  |                                     | Support for Children's Rights | 518                | 357                                | 357                           | 0                  | 357                     |
|  |                                     | <b>SPA/ACTION Total</b>       | <b>122,509</b>     | <b>125,384</b>                     | <b>125,384</b>                | <b>-946</b>        | <b>124,438</b>          |
|  | <b>Total Resource</b>               |                               | <b>122,509</b>     | <b>125,384</b>                     | <b>125,384</b>                | <b>-946</b>        | <b>124,438</b>          |

| CAPITAL BUDGET - Departmental Expenditure Limit |                                  |                         |                    |                                    |                               |                    |                         |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| SPA   | Actions                          | BEL Title               | 2014-15<br>Outturn | 2015-16<br>Supplementary<br>Budget | 2016-17<br>Baseline<br>Budget | 2016-17<br>Changes | 2016-17<br>Draft Budget |
| Communities and Tackling Poverty                | Communities and Tackling Poverty | Flying Start            | 10,892             | 6,950                              | 0                             | 3,000              | 3,000                   |
|   |                                  |                         |                    |                                    |                               |                    |                         |
|   |                                  | <b>SPA/ACTION Total</b> | <b>10,892</b>      | <b>6,950</b>                       | <b>0</b>                      | <b>3,000</b>       | <b>3,000</b>            |
|   | <b>Total Capital</b>             |                         | <b>10,892</b>      | <b>6,950</b>                       | <b>0</b>                      | <b>3,000</b>       | <b>3,000</b>            |
|   | <b>Total DEL</b>                 |                         | <b>133,401</b>     | <b>132,334</b>                     | <b>125,384</b>                | <b>2,054</b>       | <b>127,438</b>          |



# **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) on the Budget 2016-17**

## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES (within the Communities and Tackling Poverty MEG)**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PORTFOLIO**

The overarching aim of the Communities and Tackling Poverty Department is to unite the work of the Welsh Government and its partners in tackling poverty and achieving a fairer, more sustainable and better quality of life for communities, families and individuals, both now and in the long term.

The portfolio works to prevent poverty, help people out of poverty and help build resilient communities where families and individuals can access the support they need. Tackling child poverty (which remains stubbornly high in Wales) is a key priority. We are helping children to get the best start in life and supporting families. We aim to ensure that one of the most basic well-being needs - for a good home - is met, especially for people who would otherwise be excluded from the housing market. We are investing and working with communities in our most deprived areas, to improve their social, economic and environment and cultural well-being. We are taking action to embed equality, including the rights of children and young people, across the Welsh Government and the public sector; and supporting the third sector to play its part in achieving the outcomes we are working for and want to see in Wales. We recognise poverty is a key barrier to children and young people realising their rights. By focusing on improving outcomes and tackling poverty, we can make a fundamental contribution to delivering on children's rights in Wales.

The Department has a number of specific priorities which reflect and support the delivery of the Programme for Government, the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, many of which have a direct impact on children and young people:

- supporting families and children, in particular through Flying Start and Families First (but also through Communities First);
- tackling poverty and promoting community resilience including Communities First;
- providing affordable, safe and warm housing for children and families through our Social Housing Grant Programme;
- improving the quality of the social housing stock in Wales through our Major Repairs Allowance programme;
- regenerating our towns and communities through Vibrant and Viable Places;
- providing assistance through our Supporting People programme to enable people to live in their own homes for longer;
- mitigating the impact of welfare reform;

- increasing financial and digital inclusion, including Discretionary Assistance Fund and Credit Unions;
- increasing the availability of quality, affordable childcare and play provision;
- promoting the rights and participation of children and young people
- promoting equality and inclusion; and
- supporting the development of the Third Sector and enhancing its strategic relationship with Government.

## SPEND PROFILE

| Fiscal Resource DEL Limit                  |                                    |                               |                    | £000                       |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| SPA  | 2015-16<br>Supplementary<br>Budget | 2016-17<br>Budget<br>Baseline | 2016-17<br>Changes | 2016-17<br>Draft<br>Budget |
| Children, Young People and Families        | 125,384                            | 125,384                       | -946               | 124,438                    |
| Communities and Tackling Poverty (Capital) | 6,950                              | 0                             | 3,000              | 3,000                      |

### KEY CHANGES TO SPEND

#### Children, Young People and Families SPA

- Flying Start – remains cash flat
- Support for Children’s Rights – remains cash flat
- Families First - reduction of £1.074m
- Children’s Commissioner reduction of £0.172m
- Childcare & Play strategies increase of £0.3m

#### Communities and Tackling Poverty SPA (Capital)

- Flying Start - increase of £3m from the baseline budget

## IMPACTS

In applying sustainable development to the budget process within Communities and Tackling Poverty, decisions have been made that reflect the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle:

- *Collaboration* – recognising that many of the solutions to the ‘sustainability’ challenges Wales faces cannot be solved by one organisation. Maintaining our support for advice on sustainable development to all sectors will help in identifying opportunities for collaboration. We will also continue to pursue opportunities for collaboration across Government and with other partners, including the third sector,

in order that programmes and services reach into the communities that most need them.

- *Integration* – our Flying Start, Families First and Communities First programmes have shared outcomes promoting prosperity and employment, learning and fulfilling potential, and health and well-being. They also help deliver objectives in our Strategic Equality Plan.
- *Long term* – We have taken account of the potential long term impacts of our decisions and balanced this against our short-term needs. This has enabled us to plan on the basis of recognising challenges before they arise so that we are able to balance short-term pressures with long-term needs. In particular, investing in early years and family support, since the evidence is that this will have greater benefits in the long term.
- *Prevention* – seeking to tackle problems at source, rather than tackling the consequences of these problems at a later date. Prevention and early intervention is an approach which not only benefits people and communities but has the potential to generate long term cost savings. This approach is at the heart of our tackling poverty programmes, in particular Families First, and in our approach to tackling the inequalities experienced by those with protected characteristics.
- *Involvement* - recognising the importance of involving people in the decisions that affect them: for example community involvement is a key feature of the Communities First programme.

Prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those who are most disadvantaged and most vulnerable is critical, particularly in the current economic climate. The Strategic Equality Plan and Tackling Poverty Action Plan provide an important framework for these efforts. In particular, action to tackle poverty and action to reduce inequalities not only complement, but also build on one another.

Evidence shows that people with certain protected characteristics are at greater risk of living in low income households and that initiatives that tackle poverty will therefore have a positive impact on those groups. We also know that certain ethnic minority groups, disabled people, lone parents (who are predominantly women), and younger people who are not in employment, education and training are more at risk of living in low income households. In particular, disabled people are disproportionately represented in both economically inactive and workless households. We recognise there will be significant challenges to delivering our targets for tackling poverty unless we have a strong focus on supporting disabled people into employment. We will continue to identify opportunities to “dovetail” the Welsh Government’s Strategic Equality Plan with the objectives in the Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, and support those children and families with certain protected

characteristics. There is already a greater emphasis on monitoring the outcomes of those groups at risk of living in poverty and those with protected characteristics within the programmes within the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio.

### **Flying Start (Revenue)**

The Flying Start programme aims to improve outcomes for children in some of the most disadvantaged areas across Wales. This is done through providing four key Flying Start entitlements to children under four years old and their families: enhanced health visiting, parenting support, support for early language development and free, high quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year-olds.

In the longer term the Flying Start programme will improve the life chances of children who have benefitted from the Programme. The independent, national evaluation of Flying Start demonstrated the programme is having a positive impact.

Data demonstrate evidence of all anticipated immediate outcomes of the programme. This includes the language development, social and emotional development and cognitive development outcomes for children. There is also evidence that some parents of children in the Programme benefit from the opportunities available to learn new skills and improve their employment prospects.

The provisional allocation for the Flying Start BEL in 2016-17 is £76,894,000 representing a flat line budget against 2015-16.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

Flying Start has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are Welsh Government Account managers throughout the year, Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss data issues as required and the Families Division Finance team have conducted a series of meeting with Local Authority co-ordinators to help improve finance reporting.

Group meeting for Flying Start Co-ordinators and Health Visitors are organised by Families Divisions to share best practice and discuss any issues of common interest. An annual conference is arranged for the Flying Start Programme. This includes a short award ceremony where individuals who deliver excellent service within the Flying Start programme are presented awards. The individuals are nominated by parents involved in the programme. Parents are also heavily involved in evaluation activities, taking part in surveys and giving their views.

### **EVIDENCE**

In the longer term the Flying Start programme will improve the life chances of children who have benefitted from the Programme. Anecdotal evidence has already shown that

on starting school Flying Start children are more ready to learn, their speech and language skills are better. Evaluation data demonstrates evidence of all anticipated immediate outcomes of the programme. This includes the language development, social and emotional development and cognitive development outcomes for children. There is also evidence that some parents of children in the Programme benefit from the opportunities available to learn new skills and improve their employment prospects.

There are no known negative impacts to the Programme. Those living in Flying Start areas with a child under the age of 4 should benefit from the Programme if they choose to engage and take advantage of the opportunities available to them. If they choose not to engage for whatever reason, the families will be no worse off than they would be if they lived outside of the Flying Start area.

Flying Start is subject to an ongoing programme of evaluation activity. Evaluation activities are commissioned from private sector research teams and the results published on the Welsh Government internet. Findings from the qualitative research have demonstrated positive impacts for parents in terms of parenting behaviour, health and wellbeing and their perceptions of the local area.

### **Flying Start (Capital)**

The Flying Start capital funding provided in previous years has been used to support the expansion of the Flying Start programme and providing the infrastructure needed to double the number of children benefitting from the programme from 18,000 to 36,000. This investment has contributed to developing the 'social infrastructure' referred to in the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan by working at the heart of our most disadvantaged communities and improving the well being and life chances of the under 4's. Flying Start has provided high quality settings essential for the delivery of the programme in areas of high deprivation.

The capital programme is considered to be a success with high quality new builds and conversions taking place across Wales. The building programme/Conversion will conclude in 2015-16 though there will be a requirement to assist with the maintenance of existing premises. A budget of £3m has been allocated for 2016-17 to help maintain and repair facilities already used to deliver the Flying Start programme, there may also be the need to replace some of the 'older' settings. This is essential to ensure the estate remains viable and that the programme can be delivered from high quality settings.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

The Flying Start capital manager has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are held on a regular basis and issues discussed. Flying Start Co-ordinators participate in general Co-ordinator meetings and the annual conference organised for Flying Start Programme.

### **EVIDENCE**

Evaluation of capital expenditure is carried out in two stages. A Capital Expenditure committee within the Communities and Tackling Poverty Division scrutinises bids for funding and agrees capital commitment. The Flying Start Account Manager inspects building work in progress and completed premises ensuring they are built to specification and there is not unauthorised expenditure. Where issues arise expert services with the Welsh Government such as quantity surveys can be called upon for advice.

### **Support for Children's Rights**

In line with feedback from the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (BAGE) and reflecting recommendations of the Finance Committee's Inquiry into Best Practice Budget Procedures we have again taken an integrated approach to our impact assessment. Despite the challenges presented by the late timing of the UK Spending Review we have focused on making informed strategic high level decisions based on our analysis of supporting evidence, particularly in relation to people with protected characteristics. This has enabled us to give full consideration to socio-economic disadvantage, children's rights, Welsh language and sustainable development, in addition to the focus on equality and tackling poverty.

By implementing the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, we promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage and facilitate consideration of the Convention in the work of Government. The Measure places the duty to have due regard to the UNCRC on all Ministers when they exercise any of their functions.

This in turn has a very positive impact on all 9 protected characteristics. Various articles from the UNCRC reflect the importance of supporting these protected characteristics. For example, article 14 gives children and young people the right to freedom in their religious beliefs, article 23 of the UNCRC gives special protection to children with disabilities and article 30 protects children of minorities.

We promote and ensure effective use of the CRIA (Children's Rights Impact Assessment) process to increase awareness and due regard to children's rights throughout the Welsh Government. From 2012 and 2014, the number of CRIs supported and received increased from 47 to 114. The CRIA process also prompts the consideration of child poverty, especially since several articles in the UNCRC relate to the importance of protecting those who are most vulnerable and those most in need. As CRIs are completed, we are working to ensure children's rights and any implications for tackling child poverty re considered together.

The branch also funds training delivered both internally and externally with great success, raising awareness of children's rights throughout Wales. As a further exemplar case study, prior to May 2014, well over 2000 officials across Welsh Government had undertaken online UNCRC training developed by the branch. From May 2014 to April 2015, a further 562 staff received training.

No negative impacts have been identified on children, the Welsh language or on those with protected characteristics in making the decision to maintain spend on support for children's rights. We contribute in many ways towards the well-being goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act 2015. In the long term, focusing on protection of our younger generations means we have a good start for prosperous future generations. For example, the UNCRC includes articles to protect:

- the health of children, leading to a healthier Wales,
- the equality of children, leading to a more equal Wales,
- the physical environments of children, leading to a more globally responsible Wales, and
- children's rights to an identity, leading to a Wales of more cohesive communities and thriving Welsh language

To this effect, maintaining the budget for children's rights will assure this positive impact is maintained for budgetary decisions both now and in the future.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

The UNCRC includes four main principles, one of which is the Child's right to participate, to have a voice, be heard and influence decisions which affect them. Engagement with children, young people and the stakeholders who work with and represent them, is therefore essential to the work of the branch. Funding has been allocated to Young Wales to enable the Government to hear the views of children and young people and enable them to contribute to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UK Youth Parliament. We have commissioned surveys to measure the impact of our work on children and young people, and for researchers to engage with children and young people. Examples of such research includes the Children's Omnibus Survey Wales, the Independent Review of the Role and Functions of the Children's Commissioner for Wales (from which several recommendations arose relating to the work of the branch) and an independent evaluation led by the Wales Observatory for Children's Rights. We also engage closely with Local Authority officers to enable the participation of children and young people on a local level, and national children's rights stakeholders. The Welsh Government's Revised Child Poverty Strategy specifically recognised the importance of "consulting, listening and acting on the views of children and young people" and included a specific commitment to involve the participation of young people in the development of policies and programmes to deliver the targets in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. Young Wales provides us with an important mechanism for taking this work forward.

Within our own work of raising awareness of children's rights, we have been careful to give equal regard to those with protected characteristics and to the Welsh language. All promotional material and training resources have been developed bilingually and

shared widely through organisations who work in mainstream settings and those who work with marginalised groups.

## **EVIDENCE**

By taking an integrated approach grounded in evidence and evaluation we have developed a wider understanding of the cross-cutting pressures that exist across key service areas, in line with our key priorities, while targeting funding at those who need it most. This has enabled us to gain a broader understanding of the overall impact of spending decisions on key service provision through taking a holistic view of public service delivery in Wales.

While the evidence of increase CRIA use in ensuring due regard to children's rights is clear, the branch is also careful to ensure children themselves are aware of their rights. In November 2015, we received preliminary results back from the Children's Omnibus Survey Wales. The survey was commissioned as a means to engage and question children and young people on their knowledge of the UNCRC and their rights. The results highlight the successes of the branch in promoting and supporting children's rights, but also helps us to identify areas of focus. We have also seen a sharp increase in the demand for promotional UNCRC materials which provides positive feedback and reassurance that awareness of the UNCRC is on the increase.

In addition, the evidence of the positive impact of the support for children's rights has been made clear in the Welsh Government's Programme for Children and Young People (PCYP). It reviews the work of the Welsh Government over the last five years and demonstrates the positive effects Welsh Government legislation, policies and programmes have had on Children and Young People since the inception of the Programme for Government. PCYP demonstrates the importance of our engagement with teams across Government and the far reaching consequences of such engagement. Continued support for children's rights will ensure Welsh Government's commitment to children and young people will continue.

## **Families First**

Families First is an innovative programme that promotes the development of effective multi-agency systems and support for families, with a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention for families, particularly those living in poverty. The Welsh Government has committed to maintain the Families First programme during this Assembly term and we will be investing £42.6m in 2016-17.

The programme is a key response to the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and a significant contributor to the objectives of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

Evaluation evidence shows Families First has delivered a significant change in the way every Local Authority delivers family support. Multi-agency working is now recognised as essential, and the programme has improved the way agencies work together to



support our most vulnerable families. The commissioning of services through the Families First programme now better reflects the needs of families than ever before. The family-focused approach to assessing and tailoring family support is making a real difference to family outcomes and life chances are being improved as a result. Furthermore, the recent evaluation highlighted the potential large cost savings the programme can make through helping families avoid poor long-term outcomes. Evaluation evidence shows services for families affected by disability have improved as a direct result of Families First and positive outcomes are being recorded. Families First has funded new services for families affected by disability and has led to better integration and co-ordination of existing services.

Guidance obliges Local Authorities to deliver services using local discretion and flexibility to meet locally identified needs. Families First delivers to the whole population regardless of race, disability and other protected characteristics.

There is a distinct focus to ensure the specific needs of families with disabled people are provided for and that services and activities take these needs fully into consideration. The programme includes a ring fenced element for disability projects and it is proposed to protect this.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

Families First has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are Welsh Government Account managers throughout the year, Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss data issues as required and the Families Division Finance team have conducted a series of meetings with Local Authority co-ordinators to help improve finance reporting.

Group meetings for Families First Co-originators are organised by Families Division to share best practice and discuss any issues of common interest. An annual conference is arranged for Families First Programme Start at which individuals involved in the programme attend to hear about best practice and future activities. Parents also attend and are heavily involved in evaluation activities taking part in surveys and giving their views.

### **EVIDENCE**

Evaluation activities within Families First include analysis of data sets collected as part of the quarterly returns from Local Authorities and services commissioned from private sector research companies. Evaluation evidence shows Families First has delivered a significant change in the way every local authority delivers family support. Multi-agency working is now recognised as essential and not optional, and the programme has improved the way agencies work together to support our most vulnerable families.

Support provided by the Families First programme is bespoke and intensive and is based on identified local need. The nature of the Families First programme allows local authorities to commission projects which are focussed on meeting identified needs within their local area, and in many areas projects have been commissioned which are aimed at reducing levels of child poverty in Wales.

JAFF and TAF models are now operational in all 22 Local Authorities in Wales. Evaluation evidence shows families who have received support via a TAF felt there was a tangible difference in the type of support offered compared to their previous experiences. The TAF encourages families to take ownership of their own growth and development to build on their existing strengths. This approach is welcomed by families who feel more empowered and involved in taking control to improve their family outcomes.

Evaluation reports are published on the Welsh Government Website.

### **Children's Commissioner**

We as a Government appoint and fund the Children's Commissioner, as set out in legislation. Beyond this, it is for the Children's Commissioner to decide how to manage the budget as she is a corporation sole and independent from Government. The Commissioner is however expected to provide a budget estimate to Welsh Government and for this to be laid with the Assembly for transparency and scrutiny. As an ambassador of children's rights, funding the Children's Commissioner for Wales will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the rights of children and young people. No negative impacts are anticipated upon those with protected characteristics or the Welsh Language.

The Commissioner's significant financial reserves was raised in both the Public Account Committee and in the Independent Review of the Commissioner. The decision to reduce funding for the Children's Commissioner for Wales is likely to have little to no impact on those with protected characteristics, the Welsh language or children and young people, as financial reserves held by the Children's Commissioner can be utilised to mitigate the reduction of funding.

To this end, continued funding of the Children's Commissioner will play a role in contributing to achievement of several of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being for Future Generations Act 2015. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of Children and Young people and hence, the benefits include:

- improved health of children, leading to a healthier Wales,
- better equality for children, leading to a more equal Wales,
- improved physical environments of children, leading to a more globally responsible Wales, and

- children's rights to an identity, leading to a Wales of more cohesive communities and thriving Welsh language.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

Welsh Government commissioned an independent review of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the results of which were published in 2014. The review was undertaken by Dr Mike Shooter, who was careful to engage with many stakeholders in considering many aspects of the Commissioner's role and functions, including the Commissioner's impact and value for money. This of course included direct engagement with children and young people, significant external stakeholders, as well as the Commissioner and his office.

In his review, Dr Shooter engaged with and considered evidence regarding the role of the Commissioner and her impact of minority groups. A recommendation was made to the Commissioner to take more active steps to improve her accessibility to minority groups. In responding to this recommendation, the Commissioner has challenged her office to reflect on how they engage with all children and young people. The Commissioner reports that she is pleased with the work that her office has already undertaken in relation to many minority vulnerable groups. However, the Commissioner acknowledges that there is no room for complacency and reiterates her commitment to a more strategic, impactful, child focused and purposeful way forward. The Commissioner's response to the recommendations of the Review was published in October 2015.

## **EVIDENCE**

The evidence provided in Dr Shooter's review shows clearly the positive impact the Children's Commissioner for Wales has on children's rights in Wales. The reduction in budget is a reflection on the Commissioner's reserves as identified in the Shooter review, the Public Accounts Committee and in the Commissioner's own Annual audited accounts.

### **Children & Play Strategies**

Childcare and Play provision is important, being a significant policy driver in relation to growth and jobs and in terms of tackling poverty. Successive evaluations have concluded that the availability of quality, affordable childcare is essential to support people who need to work, or acquire skills to enable them to work.

The development of affordable, accessible and high quality childcare is recognised in the **Programme for Government**, the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and the Early Years and Childcare Plan as key to ensuring that parents are able to access training and work. We will be taking opportunities to lever in ESF funding under the current round of European programmes to support Childcare activities as part of our aim to promote social inclusion and **combat poverty**.

Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) was launched on 13 October 2015 for parents aged over 25, with a total budget of £10.9m up to 2018. The Welsh Government is the lead beneficiary with DWP as joint beneficiary. DWP will employ 43 Parent Employment Advisers who will mostly be based within Flying Start settings, Families First or other family based centres. It will target almost 8,000 economically inactive parents over the life of the operation and support lone parents, parents from a workless household or assist a second earner in a working household. It will operate outside Communities First Clusters and will complement the Communities for Work ESF operation. No additional allocation has been made to the Childcare and Play budget in order to support PaCE but the necessary match funding is being provided via the Families First Budget.

The other ESF operation we are pursuing is Progress for Success (PFS) which has been developed alongside the draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. The main purpose of PFS is to increase the quality of provision accessed within registered maintained and non-maintained settings by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and play qualifications held by the existing Early Years, Childcare and Play workforce.

We are supporting the **childcare sector** through assisting national childcare organisations and providing financial support to local authorities to promote and develop wrap around out of schools childcare.

In recognition of the role of carers and barriers to education we have provided funding to establish a targeted further education childcare pilot scheme to remove the barriers to education and tackle intergenerational deprivation. This is intended to provide an opportunity for those with caring responsibilities to be able to access further education without having to worry about the costs of childcare. In particular this pilot is intended to focus on positively impacting protected groups who would potentially see the greatest benefits, particularly on gender.

An additional £300k has been awarded in 2016-17 as part of a two year Budget Agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats in 2014 to look at this. The feasibility study will determine what further support is required for young parents to help them return to Further Education, where childcare is a barrier. The feasibility study will be used to inform the proposed pilot in 2016-17.

We are continuing to deliver our manifesto commitment to improve opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety, and in particular to support improved access to play for children with disabilities. Wales a Play Friendly Country – Statutory Guidance has been published to support Local Authorities in complying with their duty to secure sufficient play opportunities and implementing their Play Action Plans.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

Childcare and Play managers have an annual programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss monitoring and reporting issues as required.

Formal Consultations have also occurred with stakeholders across Wales on future Childcare arrangements in Wales

### **EVIDENCE**

Evaluations takes place as part of normal grant management and project management activities. Evaluations take the form of monitoring reports, annual reports and commissioned research when required. Grant and activities under this programme are relatively small and reporting and evolution is scaled to match the perceived level of risk.

Credit Reference reports are obtained on Third Sector organisation with which we do business both before a grant is awarded and during the life of the project before payments are made.