

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00446/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk



April 2017

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 15 March in which you request further information on the support available to successful schemes and projects currently being delivered through Communities First, along with information on Families First and Flying Start support.

In reaching the decision to phase out Communities First, I listened and considered very carefully the responses to the engagement exercise. There has been evidence of much success at individual level, and I pay tribute to the hard-working Communities First workforce and delivery partners for their role in this. However, Communities First has not had an impact on overall poverty levels in Wales, which remain stubbornly high. I, along with Welsh Government colleagues, will take forward a new all-Wales approach to deal with the root causes of poverty. There was widespread support, throughout the engagement, for this approach.

This approach will involve a Welsh Government-wide commitment to building Resilient Communities across Wales as well as supporting the wider Employability Plan. The Valleys taskforce, the North and South Wales Metros, promoting financial and digital inclusion, the Better Jobs closer to Home project and the new childcare offer are part of a significant cross-Government investment in our communities.

I have recognised however that there will be an impact of phasing out Communities First and to mitigate this, I announced that there would be a year-long transition period to March 2018, providing budgets at 70% of the 2016-17 allocation. From April 2018, there will be a £6m Legacy Fund to preserve some of the most effective projects from Communities First across Wales. I have also made available a £4m capital budget to help protect valuable community assets.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400
Gohebiaeth.Carl.Sargeant@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Carl.Sargeant@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

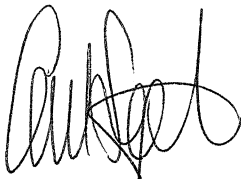
The new approach to building resilient communities will be a cross-government, all-Wales approach focused on helping people into work, giving children the best start in life, and ensuring people's voices are heard in the design of local services.

To support the delivery of one of my key priorities, employment, an additional £12m will be invested to support Communities for Work and Lift programmes and provide a community-based programme focussed on those furthest from the jobs market.

To address your questions about the support available from other programmes, unfortunately Flying Start is an Early Years programme and its funding would have no official role in supporting core sustainability of youth centres. With regard to Families First, delivery of the programme takes place at a local level and each local authority commissions services which respond to the identified needs of local populations. From April 2018 the strategic services commissioned through Families First will be refocused around parenting and support for young people, however, this does not mean that Families First funding could be used to support open access youth centres as part of this, as funding will need to be used to provide targeted support for young people.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure all 11-25 year olds have access to the services they need to achieve their potential. In delivering services which support young people, Families First will be seeking to build on this core provision to ensure it can add value to services which are already available rather than funding it.

Yours sincerely



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