

Q1. Debra Davis Russell - Co-ordinator, Jig-So

Working within the voluntary sector I feel that we are constantly expected to provide services without appropriate funds which rival or exceed those provided by the statutory services. Do organisations such as ours have a place in the new Families First programme, if not is there any designated funding provided by the WG for the essential services that the voluntary sector provides?

A1. Financially, these are difficult times for the third sector, **and** for local and Welsh Government. Against that backdrop, our commitment to the child poverty and family services agenda can be seen in the fact that we are **increasing** our funding for Families First, which is being rolled out across Wales from April next year.

All Local Authorities have seen more funding when set against current Cymorth levels – both for next year and the year after. The impetus is not making cuts – it is driving forward service design and delivery. Of course, the third sector has an important role to play in the delivery of this important support for our families. This is a message that I hope is made clear in our Families First guidance. Local Authorities must consider how the third sector is represented in governance and delivery arrangements.

We have also been very clear that we expect to see that our increased investment will be worthwhile. Local Authorities have been told that they must take a more coherent approach to commissioning services and projects. That means that we need to be able to see how projects fit together, what outcomes they are trying to achieve and that they are meeting locally identified needs in a proportionate and effective way.

The third sector often provides a wealth of experience, local delivery expertise and knowledge, as well as not carrying the same sort of stigma that can attach – rightly or wrongly – to statutory services.

But, it is necessary for the sector to think deeply about how you can collaborate more effectively with other organisations to help deliver and how, together, we can achieve the outcomes not only for Families First, but those of the Programme for Government.

That is also a message we have given clearly to local government. It is Local Government after all that commissions local services, but if you can demonstrate effectiveness in the right areas, offer value and are joined-up in terms of the Families First approach, you will put yourselves at a significant advantage.

The Welsh Government also provides funding to the Third Sector as well as to Local Authorities. An example of this is the funding we have provided by the way of the Children and Families Organisational Grant (CFOG). On the 1st of September, I was pleased to announce the launch of a new funding round for CFOG, which means that this programme will continue until March 2014.

The CFOG programme aims to develop preventative support services for children and their families to help avoid family breakdown. The unique element of this programme is that only Third Sector organisations are able to receive funding through CFOG, which helps them to continue their good work supporting children and their families.

To further encourage the collaborative agenda, we have advised that joint bids for CFOG funding will be weighted higher than non-collaborative bids when they are assessed.

Q2.Amanda Aldridge - CAMHS

Research shows correlation between poverty, mental health, drug use and children on the at risk register. In what way can initiatives like the integrated family support team's better support these families and are there plans in place to increase community services around mental health for families in the future?

A2. We know that social circumstances, changes in lifestyle trends and current socio-economic climate are also taking its toll on families who are feeling the strain and have contributed to increased numbers of children living in families with complex problems. We recognise the need therefore for a whole service approach to respond to the needs of both children and families. We are not only committed to expanding Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) but with other complementary programmes such as Flying Start and Families First we will provide a more effective integrated response to meet the diverse needs of children and families and address complex problems in a more efficient way. I am pleased that within the coming months IFSS will be available to families across 10 local authority areas, working in partnership with their local health boards, including a new IFSS regional consortia IFSS area of Hywel Dda and Powys Health Boards. These will work in partnership with their respective authorities including Pembrokeshire.

The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 will also be commenced during 2012. Part 1 of the Measure will require the establishment of local primary mental health schemes that will support improvements to the delivery of mental health primary care. Part 2 requires that all people using secondary mental health services are provided with a care and treatment plan and that practitioners should, in formulating plans give consideration to parenting or caring relationships. This makes the consideration of parents needs to parent more effectively a statutory duty for the first time.

Therefore, having a range of protective, preventative and remedial services through these programmes is playing a central role in tackling issues faced by complex families sooner.

Q3. Sara Humphreys - Hafan Cymru

Hafan Cymru works across Wales supporting women, men and children specially those affected by Domestic Abuse. It is well known that Domestic

Abuse is one of the main factors relating to children being taken into the Care of the Local Authority, and that Domestic Abuse is one of the main causes of children experiencing homelessness. In an attempt to prevent DA we are convinced there is a need to educate children throughout their childhood, looking at healthy relationships from primary schools through to year 12 and beyond.

What plans does the Welsh Government have to address these issues within schools, particularly in rural community areas, which are often the only places through which children can be accessed?

A3. This question does not fall within my portfolio of responsibilities but given the advance notice of this question I have had the opportunity to explore this with the relevant officials.

Yes it is well known that Domestic Abuse is one of the main factors relating to children being taken into care of the local authority and, that Domestic Abuse is one of the main causes of children experiencing homelessness. In an attempt to prevent Domestic Abuse we are convinced there is a need to educate children throughout their childhood, looking at healthy relationships from primary schools through to year 12 and beyond.

The Welsh Government has a range of measures in place to address this issue. Within the school curriculum, personal and social education (PSE) provides a context for schools to teach about all aspects of healthy relationships including domestic abuse. To support practitioners, the Department for Education and Skills also have developed on-line guidance and links to voluntary organisations on their PSE guidance website.

To further support teachers in secondary schools, a series of successful conferences, jointly organised by the Welsh Government and the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme (AWSLCP), have been held in 2010 and 2011 which specifically addressed the teaching of domestic abuse. Further conferences are planned for January 2012 which will focus upon the teaching about safe healthy personal relationships.

Q4. Jim Bowen - Care Farming

Baring in mind that poverty and lack of education are so closely entwined does the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services think that the Welsh Government has got its priorities wrong when so much of the literature given to expectant mothers is sponsored by the Welsh Language Board and stresses the benefits of bilingualism, when perhaps it might be better for the unborn child if this literature promoted healthy eating, the dangers of smoking when pregnant and the benefits of breast feeding etc all of which would help to give the unborn child the best start in life with more chance to develop themselves to their true potential and escape the poverty trap? Bilingualism is great, but some might say the WG places this above the physical health and all-round wellbeing of the population. What does the Deputy Minister think?

A4. The Welsh language is an essential part of the cultural activity and character of Wales and the Welsh Government is committed to see the Welsh language thrive and for more opportunities for it to be used in all walks of life. Passing the language from one generation to the next one is one of the most important areas of language planning; therefore, increasing the use of Welsh within families is one of the Government's key priorities for safeguarding the future of the Welsh language.

The Welsh Government's priority for maternity services is clearly articulated in the Strategic Vision for Maternity Services in Wales, launched in September this year. The Minister for Health and Social Services states, in the foreword, that the foundations for health and well being start in pregnancy and acknowledges that health, educational achievement, economic status and happiness are all affected by the months before and the years immediately after birth. The focus of the strategy is to improve health with an emphasis on obesity, smoking and support for parenting. All women in Wales are given 'The Pregnancy Book' which gives women and their families all the basic information they need about healthy eating, the dangers of smoking, advantages of breastfeeding as well as information and advice on preparing for birth and parenting. The book is bilingual in response to the fact that a % of the population use Welsh as their language of choice.

Over the past decade, the Welsh Language Board has directed considerable energy and expertise to language transmission through its Twf initiative. Through its network of field officers it works to convey to parents, prospective parents and the general public the advantages of speaking Welsh at home and the cultural and economic advantages of raising children bilingually.

Q5. Anita Myfanwy - Children in Wales. End Child Poverty Network

A question about the barriers some young people are finding when they're on the Work Programme in Wales because it stops them accessing European funded projects. This is not the case in England as far as I'm aware i.e. a person has to go the Work Programme for two years after they've been on Jobseekers for 12 months. As far as I'm aware, projects such as the Engagement Gateway would be out of their reach for the 2 years if they live in Wales. Is this correct?

A5. This question does not fall within my portfolio of responsibilities but given the advance notice of this question I had the opportunity to explore this with the relevant officials.

Wales and England manage their ESF Programmes in different ways. ESF in England is used to co-finance mainstream employment programmes and is therefore buying extra places on the Work Programme. In Wales organisations have been able to directly bid to the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) for funding support and as a result there are a mixture of projects supporting clients who are unemployed or economically inactive.

ESF-funded projects in Wales help unemployed and economically inactive people looking for work, who are *not* on the Work Programmes as Wales supports projects which can assist people outside of the benefits system and who may need support

pre-Work Programme. If it were to support individuals on the Work Programme there could be duplication of support and that is not permitted by EU regulations.

The Engagement Gateway project operates across Wales is managed by the WCVA and delivered by a variety of delivery agents. It is correct that a young person would **not** be able to take part in both the Work Programme and the Gateway provided support. However this does not preclude an eligible young person from accessing support before they commence the Work Programme. Eligible client groups in Wales are able to access support from an ESF funded project depending upon their personal need and where they live in Wales, but not if they are actively participating in the Work Programme.

Q6. How can the Welsh Government ensure that services such as free swimming and afterschool clubs are rural and child poverty proofed because children and young people in rural areas are not having some of their rights met and many of them face social exclusion as a consequence.

A6. This question does not fall within my portfolio of responsibilities but given the advance notice of this question I had the opportunity to explore this with the relevant officials.

Our policy development process aims to ensure that the needs of children, young people and families living in poverty are considered early on in the design of any *new* policy or programme being developed by the Welsh Government; and that specific questions about how the policy will impact on (and support) families living in low income households are in rural areas of Wales are addressed when delivery options are considered.

In April 2008 the Rural Policy Unit was established to deliver rural proofing across the Welsh Government and to act as a source of advice on rural issues. The unit provides support and advice to all Welsh Government departments across all portfolio areas to assist with the identification of key rural issues relevant to each policy area. We want to make certain the needs of rural communities including children and young people are given full consideration and any issues surrounding policy delivery are adequately addressed. This ensure that people living in rural areas are not disadvantaged due to their remoteness and distance from larger towns and cities with the overall aim of rural proofing being to deliver a high quality, sustainable service to rural as well as urban areas.

The evidence from the evaluation of the free swimming scheme seems to show that children and young people didn't see access to facilities as a significant barrier to non-participation in the initiative. Some of the more rural authorities in Wales such as Pembrokeshire and Powys also have the best participation figures in the initiative and are used as exemplars of best practice.