Jane Hutt AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf/Our ref
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Helen Mary Jones AM
Chair
Children and Young People
Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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9ᵗ November 2009

Dear Helen Mary,

Thank you for inviting me to the Children and Young People's Committee on 13 October 2009 to provide evidence on the Draft Budget for Children, Education, Lifelong Leaning and Skills. A number of actions arose upon which I agreed to write to you. My response is set out below.

I can confirm that there will be ring-fenced money for children and adolescent mental health services in the 2010-2011 budget allocations, separate from funding for adult mental health services. The final budgets have yet to be agreed by the Minister for Health and Social Services.

I am advised by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government that the funding available for the Inclusion Grant has not been reduced for 2010-11. In the previous budget the Inclusion BEL showed a budget of £1.3m for 2010-11. This budget covered two discrete areas; the Inclusion Grant of £1.0m and funding for Community Cohesion work of £0.3m. In the current draft budget these funding streams have been aligned to separate Actions - £1.0m for Inclusion and £0.2m for Community Cohesion.

From April 2008, childcare has been supported by statutory duties - the childcare theme transferred out of Cymorth and into RSG on 1st April 2008 to coincide with the duties of the Childcare Act 2006. Therefore, the transfer of £7million from Cymorth to Flying Start does not represent a reduction in funding for childcare provided through the Cymorth grant.

Flying Start was funded initially on an assumption that half the existing investments in Cymorth for the 0-3 age group would be adapted to support the delivery of Flying Start. In order to ensure that Flying Start is adequately funded to deliver its objectives the Assembly Government is therefore transferring £7 million (around 13.5% of Cymorth allocations) from Cymorth to Flying Start for the 2010-11 financial year. The objective of this is to ensure the

required intensity of investment per child, not to expand the programme. This should not cause significant changes to services where local authorities have been following the original guidance.

Approximately 16,000 children under 4 years old are being reached by this scheme in Wales and there is provision of £93.1 million revenue funding for 2008-11. From this group, those aged 2-3 are able to access the free part time quality childcare. The free part-time quality childcare for 2-3 year olds is at the centre of the programme and is available in 2.5 hour daily sessions, 5 days a week, 42 weeks a year. Recently submitted monitoring reports from authorities show that during the first quarter of 2009-10 the Welsh Assembly Government funded over 184,000 childcare sessions for more than 3,600 2-3 year olds. The data for the second quarter is currently being submitted by Partnerships and will be available in November 2009.

Partnerships have been asked to submit plans to the Welsh Assembly Government to draw down Flying Start funding in 2010-11. These are due later in November 2009 and will include details on the number of children partnerships plan to provide childcare for during the year. As such, I am unable to provide figures for 2010-11 Flying Start childcare until these have been received and approved. However, the 10% increase in the like-for-like Flying Start budget between 2009-10 and 2010-11 will allow for an expansion of the scheme in 2010-11 and from 1 April 2010 Flying Start will reach approximately 17,600 children. The transfer of £7million from Cymorth to Flying Start will not fund this expansion but will ensure that partnerships can provide the required level of investment in the entitlement.

I trust this provides a comprehensive response to the out-standing action points arising from the committee meeting of 13 October.

Best wishes,

Jane