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**Updated Response to the Children and Young People's Committee
16 November 2010
Huw Lewis, the Deputy Minister for Children**

Many of the recommendations in the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee's 2008 Report were accepted as they directly reflect current or proposed Welsh Assembly Government policy. In particular, in response to Recommendation 3 relating to a call for a new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government's draft Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan was issued for a three month period of public consultation between May and August 2010. A revised Child Poverty Strategy for Wales will be published in early 2011.

The responses to the report's recommendations have been updated and are set out below.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Assembly Government increase internal resources dedicated towards co-ordinating policies that impact on child poverty. This should include greater staffing facility for its Child Poverty Unit to co-ordinate policies tackling child poverty. It should also include a senior policy lead official, within each Department, responsible for the delivery of relevant departmental targets within '*Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*'.

Response: Accept in principle

The Child Poverty Unit, situated within the Social Justice and Local Government Department, is responsible for co-ordinating the Assembly Government's policy response in relation to tackling child poverty, and supports the Deputy Minister for Children in his cross Department lead on child poverty. In addition, the Unit is responsible for mainstreaming child poverty issues across Assembly Government policy and strategy. The Child Poverty Unit also supports the work of the Child Poverty Ministerial Advisory Group. This was originally established as the Child Poverty Expert Group, as a result of a '*One Wales*' commitment in April 2008.

The Assembly Government fully acknowledges the importance of joined up policy development and delivery. The Assembly Government has taken steps at national level, through setting up a Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People (chaired by the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills) to make sure that cross-cutting responsibilities for children and young people, including in respect of child poverty, are coordinated effectively across Government. A support group of senior officials from the relevant policy departments with a Ministerial Chair has been established to support the work of the Cabinet Committee.

To oversee the delivery of the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, Ministers have agreed that new arrangements should be established to strengthen the internal governance across Assembly Government Departments, in relation to tackling child poverty. A new Child Poverty Programme Board has been established to drive progress on achieving the Assembly Government's three new strategic objectives for tackling child poverty – that are set out in the new Child Poverty Strategy. These objectives relate to tackling in-work poverty, out-of-work poverty and improving the health, economic and educational outcomes of children and families living in low income households.

Specifically, the cross-Departmental Child Poverty Programme Board will monitor delivery of the policy commitments set out in the Strategy's accompanying Delivery Plan. The Programme Board is chaired at Director/Director General level and comprises senior policy leads from across Departments responsible for key aspects of the new strategy. Its main responsibilities and tasks are:

- To ensure that the policies and programmes that are contained in the Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan are delivered in a way that will achieve the Assembly Government's three new strategic child poverty objectives;
- To monitor the Assembly Government's progress in meeting its cross-cutting child poverty targets set out in 'Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales: Measuring Success (2006)';
- To ensure that sub-programme working groups on individual work-streams are prioritising and delivering policy action that will improve the lives of low income families in Wales in line with the Child Poverty Strategy;
- To facilitate cross-Departmental action on child poverty as part of a cohesive strategy to reduce levels of child poverty in Wales; and
- To review the progress of the Child Poverty Strategy based on the evaluation framework and agree its future shape and direction – every 3 years.

The Programme Board succeeds the Child Poverty Delivery Group which was formerly chaired by the Minister for Social Justice.

In addition, the head of the Child Poverty Unit chairs a multi-disciplined Child Poverty Analytical Team which has a key role in monitoring the Assembly Government's child poverty targets and ensuring a strong evidence base for the Assembly Government's ongoing child poverty work. This group has played a key role in supporting the development of the Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy, which is required under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

Although the Child Poverty Unit itself is small, it seeks to secure additional analytical and policy resource from across the Assembly Government as

necessary. For example, a central resource from the Priority and Legislation Project Team was secured to co-ordinated the work to support the Children and Families (Wales) Measure – which received Privy Council approval on 10 February 2010.

An additional post has also been created within the Child Poverty Unit to support the delivery of the work required as a result of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, particularly in relation to the development and ongoing review of the new statutory Child Poverty Strategy. The post holder also contributes to other policy areas through participation in Policy Gateway reviews and by working with Assembly Government officials to child poverty proof Welsh Assembly Government policies. All strategic Assembly Government policies must complete the Policy Gateway process before submission to Cabinet. The Policy Gateway Tool was revised to reflect the priorities set out in the ‘*One Wales*’ document. Child Poverty Unit officials liaised with colleagues in the Strategic Policy Unit to ensure that the final version of the Tool continued to include specific questions to assess impact on child poverty. It is also worth noting that child poverty is one of the specific cross-cutting issues highlighted in the Gateway Tool and the officials in the Child Poverty Unit are part of the list of suggested individuals that should be invited to take part in the Policy Gateway process.

Furthermore, an external secondment post also exists within the Child Poverty Unit to support the Child Poverty Expert Group, which promotes increased collaboration and sharing of knowledge with the wider public sector, as well as providing a valuable resource to the Unit.

Future staffing in the Child Poverty Unit will be subject to review in the light of additional burdens in the usual way.

There has also been action taken by other Assembly Government departments to mainstream policies to tackle child poverty through their work. For example, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills have appointed a Child Poverty Lead in their Strategy Unit to coordinate action on child poverty across the department.

Financial Implication: Current staffing for the Child Poverty Unit can be met from the SJLG Departmental Running Cost budget. Running costs for future years will be decided in the usual way.

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Assembly Government ensure participation of front line professionals (including teaching unions) at the earliest possible stages in policy development, rather than only through formal consultation following policy development.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to working closely with the teaching unions as it develops policy.

The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning regularly meets all teaching unions as part of his ongoing strategic engagement with key stakeholders. These meetings provide the opportunity for the Minister to engage in pre-consultative dialogue with front line professionals. The Foundation Phase Task and Finish Group provided a model of working that ensures professionals at the sharp end are represented both in policy development and implementation. This model has been replicated by the 14-19 Implementation Group, which also included representation by front line professionals.

There is agreement that the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) will engage with the unions on a similar basis and that, wherever practicable, policy development will be carried out in partnership at an early stage.

The Head of Learning Improvement and Professional Development Division also regularly meets all teaching unions to discuss and seek their involvement in ongoing policy development.

Financial Implication: None. This is met through existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Assembly Government produce an updated and refreshed Child Poverty Strategy and Implementation Plan, taking into account new initiatives, and changes within existing programmes, such as Communities First and Communities Next.

Response: Accept.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to doing all within its power to support the UK Government goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it (against the 1997 rate) by 2010. This commitment was included within "*One Wales: A progressive agenda for the Government of Wales*".

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which received Privy Council approval on 10 February 2010, requires Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a new strategy in 2010 for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales. This strategy will build on the Assembly Government's existing strategy, "*A Fair Future for our Children*", published in 2005. It will also build on previous action to set the strategic direction for tackling child poverty in Wales, and meeting the challenging 2020 target.

The Assembly Government has adopted seven core aims based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child for all its work on children and young people. The Assembly Government remains committed to

ensuring that the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales is founded on the basis of the UNCRC, and that delivering one is crucial to delivering the other. In line with this, the Child Poverty Strategy's Delivery Plan is structured around the UNCRC and the seven core aims.

The framework for the policy commitments set out in the Child Poverty Strategy and its accompanying Delivery Plan is provided by the 13 Broad Aims of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. These Broad Aims are considered those most important to the aim of eradicating child poverty by 2020. They encompass a range of different policy areas, reflecting that the causes and effects of poverty are complex and multi-faceted. A number of these Broad Aims relate specifically to improving the educational attainment of children and young people living in poverty. They include commitments "to reduce the inequalities in educational attainment between children" and "to help young people participate effectively in education and training". The Strategy's accompanying Delivery Plan sets out specific policy commitments that will allow us to delivery these Broad Aims.

In addition, the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires Welsh Ministers to choose objectives relating to each of the Broad Aims. In accordance with this duty (set out in Section 1 of the Measure), the draft Child Poverty Strategy suggests that the following three strategic objectives should drive policy action at the Wales level to reduce poverty and support low income families:

- To reduce the number of families living in workless households.
- To improve the skill level of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment.
- To reduce the inequalities that exist in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

The draft Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan was issued for a 3 month consultation on 12 May 2010. The framework for the new Child Poverty Strategy and its accompanying Delivery Plan is provided by the Broad Aims set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

As part of the consultation period, the Assembly Government held events in north and south Wales, as well as specific workshops with children and young people; members of the End Child Poverty Network in Wales; and with CYP Partnership Coordinators. We also held events with Communities First Partnerships. This has helped us to ensure that Communities First is appropriately integrated into the Strategy and Delivery Plan. The Child Poverty Unit continues to work closely with the Communities First Unit in the Welsh Assembly Government, as the latter works to consider a future programme after the end of the current programme in March 2012.

In addition to the feedback received at these events, the Child Poverty Unit has received in excess of 160 written responses to the consultation – which includes responses from individual AMs, organisations working to tackle the

causes and impacts of child poverty in Wales, the UK Government and devolved administrations.

Consideration is currently being given to these responses and a summary report will be published shortly. The Child Poverty Unit will be working with colleagues from across the Assembly Government to re-draft and strengthen the Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan over the coming months. A revised Strategy and Delivery Plan will be published in early 2011.

The Communities First programme has now been moved from its capacity building phase to an “Outcomes Focus” with a stronger emphasis on Programme Bending. The Outcomes Fund was established in 2009. At this time Child Poverty was also included in the programme as a specific element of the vision Framework, additional guidance was issued for Communities First Partnerships which includes guidance on closer working with education providers.

To support this move the Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan specifically highlights the need to consider the role of place and the high demand on services in areas of multiple deprivation. Both the Children and Young Peoples Plan Interim Guidance 2011 -14 and the Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy Guidance 2010 highlight consideration of Communities First areas in the planning process.

The Assembly Government is continuing to ensure policies are joined up and delivered across departments to support improved outcomes for children and young people. This work will inform the development of any successor programme in 2012.

Analytical support for the development of the new Child Poverty Strategy has been provided by the Child Poverty Analytical Team (CPAT), whose members include Welsh Assembly Government social researchers, statisticians and economists, as well as lead child poverty policy officials.

Internal analysis was undertaken by members of CPAT to identify the policy areas (that lie within the remit of the Welsh Assembly Government) that are most likely to have an effect on reducing the number of children living in poverty in Wales. This analysis was used to identify a series of policy priorities for the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

Financial Implication: Finalisation and implementation of the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales can be met from agreed resources for the Child Poverty Unit within SJLG.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Assembly Government demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring the child poverty proofing of all its policies. This should include:

a) publication of specific annual targets for each Ministerial Portfolio, to

address Child Poverty;
b) annual publication of each Ministerial Portfolio's progress towards meeting these targets; and,
c) a scheduled annual debate, in Government time, on the Welsh Assembly Government's progress towards meeting these targets.

Response: Accept in principle

In October 2006 the Assembly Government published its own cross cutting child poverty 2010 milestones and 2020 targets in *'Eradicating Child Poverty – Measuring Success'*. The targets, based on 31 indicators, span a number of Ministerial portfolios covering Income and Work, Education, Health and Housing.

The Assembly Government is committed to monitoring progress against the cross-cutting targets and has put in place robust arrangements to achieve this. On 25 November 2008, a new blended report and Statistical First Release was published on the Assembly Government's *Statistics Wales* website, which reports on progress in meeting the child poverty targets. The Statistical First Release is updated on an annual basis, and provides an ongoing opportunity to assess Assembly Government progress in relation to tackling child poverty. The Assembly Government's Statistical Directorate has recently conducted a review of the child poverty milestones and targets – with a view to setting a common baseline for all indicators, and ensuring a greater focus on the outcomes of children and young people living in poverty (as opposed to all children regardless of household income). The next update on the Assembly Government's Child Poverty Milestones and Targets will be published on 25 November 2010.

In addition, the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales reports on the child poverty targets – but importantly, places them within the wider context of child wellbeing. The first Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales was published in November 2008. A second edition will be published in early 2011.

The agreed terms of reference for the Child Poverty Expert Group include a responsibility to provide the Assembly Government with advice on the wider policy requirements necessary to meet the child poverty targets set out in *'Eradicating Child Poverty – Measuring Success'*.

Furthermore, a Child Poverty Programme Board has been established in order to oversee delivery of the new Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan for Wales. With representation by senior level Assembly Government officials (from all Departments), the Programme Board will monitor progress – in terms of delivering the three new strategic objectives for tackling child poverty in Wales.

Assembly Government Ministers are fully aware of the importance of monitoring progress against the agreed child poverty milestones and targets, and are able to report on progress through the Cabinet Committee for

Children and Young People which has overarching responsibility for all policies affecting children and young people. The Assembly Government considers that there are robust arrangements in place to ensure its accountability relating to the child poverty targets. During the scrutiny process on the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and in the context of the new child poverty strategy, from 2010 onwards the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government agreed to provide the National Assembly Children and Young People Committee with an annual update of progress on the targets. Given the change in Ministerial portfolio since this was agreed, the Deputy Minister for Children will now be providing this update (following the publication of the next Statistical First Release).

The new Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 makes statutory provision, through a legislative framework, to take forward the Assembly Government's commitment in relation to child poverty. This will increase the importance and profile of child poverty across public agencies. To implement the Measure, regulations and guidance are currently being developed in order to support a common understanding of the duties within the Measure.

Financial Implication: None. All costs can be met from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Assembly Government should review and rationalise its funding of local agencies with the intention of enabling coherency throughout its funding regimes.

Response: Accept

In 2008 the National Assembly's Communities and Culture Committee published a Report on the Welsh Assembly Government's funding of the Third Sector in Wales. One of the recommendations was that the Welsh Assembly Government should review the various funding streams provided, either directly or through its agents, to identify the scope for consolidation; and to assess whether the balance between revenue and capital funding achieves the most efficient use of resources.

Officials are currently implementing this recommendation. The Welsh Assembly Government's IDEAS Team have recently initiated a study on grant funding which will include best practice guidance on grants management. Third Sector Unit officials will be kept updated and have input into this.

The Assembly Government acknowledges that it should be approving grants which enable the third sector to undertake work which will help meet its wider strategic objectives set out in One Wales. This includes those which the Assembly Government cannot take forward directly itself.

In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Scheme includes the 'Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector', which is published as a separate document. The Code sets out the key principles which underpin Assembly Government funding for the sector, to ensure that best practice is applied in the administration of its grant schemes and those of agencies which manage funds on its behalf. A revised version of the Code was published in January 2009 and now includes chapters on procurement and full cost recovery, amongst other changes and updates necessitated by the Strategic Action Plan. Since publication, a section on the Welsh Language has also been added to the online and electronic versions. The code is a living document and is frequently updated as required.

Assembly Government Departments, sponsored public bodies and health bodies are required to adopt and comply with the Code, and urge local authorities and other public bodies to do likewise.

Coherence of funding regimes is effective programme management and should potential overlaps be identified, the Assembly Government agrees that these should be removed. The recommendation does not restrict itself to child poverty and it should be noted that where multiple government objectives are being addressed, this may bring a necessary complexity. The majority of local funding is the responsibility of local authorities and the Assembly Government seeks to work in partnership with all of its delivery partners.

Financial Implications: None. Removing overlaps in funding where they exist could release revenue.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that, when applying for any 'non recurrent funding' as opposed to core funding, local authorities should be required to demonstrate how money granted will impact on the authority's ability to tackle child poverty.

Response: Accept in principle

Around 80 per cent of local authority revenue funding comes from unhypothecated revenue support grant (RSG) paid by the Assembly Government. The formula for distributing RSG between authorities includes indicators that take account of a local authority's relative need to spend to address child poverty related issues (for instance, the number of school pupils entitled to free school meals; dependent children in out of work households and dependent children in lone adult households).

All hypothecated or specific grants are already subject to grant terms and conditions which prescribe monitoring arrangements and set out outcomes required from the grant funding. A key element of the development of Outcome Agreements is the development of funding flexibilities linked to the delivery of the Assembly Government's strategic outcomes, including those related to child poverty. Not all grant schemes (for instance, some forms of

capital equipment grants) will have direct relevance to child poverty issues. Where appropriate, however, the Assembly Government will consider ways in which monitoring arrangements and outcome setting can better reflect the impact of grant funding, thus helping to eradicate child poverty.

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 makes statutory provision to take forward the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment in terms of child poverty, and to take forward its strategy for vulnerable children. The Measure will require Welsh Authorities, including Welsh Ministers, to prepare and publish a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales, thereby increasing the importance and profile of child poverty related action amongst local authorities and their partners.

Financial Implication: None

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Assembly Government should review its extant statutory guidance in Circular 23/02, issued July 2002, in order to require that proposals for school reorganisation, or the rationalisation of school places, include an impact assessment statement detailing how the proposal will impact on the authority's ability to help eradicate child poverty.

Response: Accept in principle

The guidance on School Organisation proposals, to which local authorities must have regard when bringing forward statutory proposals for changes to schools, has been reviewed. The Communities Directorate contributed to that review, emphasising the importance of tackling child poverty.

The revised guidance, which was published in September 2009, and which fully replaced circular 23/02 from 1 January 2010, places greater emphasis on child poverty issues than the current circular. The Assembly Government took the Committee's view into account as part of the consultation process.

The revised circular sets out, as a key background policy, which has a bearing on the organisation of schools, the Core Aims for Children, which includes the aim that children should not be disadvantaged by poverty.

In preparing proposals to change school provision, local authorities and others will need to consider whether a proposal contributes to "A Fair Future for Our Children" and any successor strategy. This would include consideration of whether a proposal would have an impact on raising educational attainment amongst children from economically deprived backgrounds.

The circular also states that "the interests of learners should override all others and inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups and individuals must be narrowed in the interests of all".

The circular indicates that in considering changes to schools, authorities should consider the impact on the communities affected, and that consideration should be given to means of reducing impacts prior to proceeding with proposals. It emphasises the need to take account of the views of the community council, any Communities First partnership and any voluntary groups with an interest in the community.

In addition, local authorities will need to carry out community impact appraisals when bringing forward proposals. Whilst the guidance on appraisals is not prescriptive, it suggests, for school closures, that considerations should include how pupils' engagement with an alternative school could be supported. An example would be a consideration of how pupils, particularly less advantaged pupils, will be helped to participate in after school activities.

On 10 November 2009, the National Assembly for Wales passed the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. The Measure makes statutory provision to take forward the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment in terms of child poverty, and to take forward its strategy for vulnerable children. The Measure will require Welsh Authorities, including Welsh Ministers, to prepare and publish a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales thereby increasing the importance and profile of child poverty related action amongst local authorities and their partners.

Financial Implication: None.

Recommendation 8

The Welsh Assembly Government introduce more effective monitoring and evaluation of policies' impact, including longitudinal studies. Monitoring should be a key requirement of local authorities when applying for grant funding, with RAISE funding linked to monitoring of the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals, for example. Monitoring should not focus exclusively on educational attainment, but rather should also include targets related to pastoral care, such as numbers of permanent exclusions from school.

Response: Accept in principle

A programme of research is in place to evaluate key Assembly Government programmes in the area of children and young people. All studies are carried out independently and managed by the Social Research Division of the Assembly Government with increasingly greater focus on the evaluation of policy impact in relation to a range of outcomes for children and young people on a longitudinal basis wherever possible. All such studies are published on the Assembly Government's research webpages in accordance with the Government Social Research (GSR) Publications Guidance. Examples of recent publications include:

- Interim Evaluation of Flying Start
- Evaluation of Cymorth
- Evaluation of the Learning and Skills Measure

Work is also being undertaken to evaluate the following key WAG policies:

- The Foundation Phase
- The School Effectiveness Framework
- The Families First Pioneers
- The National Literacy Plan
- The Basic Skills Strategy
- The Welsh Medium Education Strategy
- The Child Poverty Strategy

WAG has also commissioned further analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) in relation to data about Welsh children from the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the Institute of Education in London; the MCS is the primary source of longitudinal data on children's development in the UK.

Financial Implication: None

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure better dissemination of good practice amongst schools and other formal and informal education settings in tackling the effects of poverty.

Response: Accept

The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that tackling child poverty is at the forefront of the work of schools and other education settings. In order to achieve this aim it is important that the Assembly Government works closely with its delivery partners in local authorities and other public sector partners. Accordingly, in 2007, the Assembly Government agreed to fund a two year child poverty local authority pilot project.

The project commenced in October 2007, initially running for a period of two years, supported by a dedicated staff resource at Save the Children and the WLGA. The work of the child poverty solutions project is overseen by a National Steering Group, drawn from the wider public and voluntary sectors, including the Assembly Government.

On the 25 November 2009, at the Children in Wales Annual Conference, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government announced continued funding of £187,014 over three years to extend the Child Poverty Solutions project in to a second phase.

The first phase of the project included the creation of the "Child Poverty Solutions Wales" online tool kit (www.childpovertysolutions.org.uk), launched in October 2007 and development of two local authority pilot projects.

Local authority pilot projects were carried out in Gwynedd, focusing on financial literacy and in Rhondda Cynon Taf, focusing on building employability skills with young people at a local school and to developing child poverty scrutiny within the local authority.

The second phase of the project will focus on developing the online tool kit further and broadening its appeal. The fully bi-lingual tool kit is the first of its kind in Wales and has consistently attracted around 400 unique visits a month.

Another key task for the second phase will be supporting the introduction of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, which was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 10 November 2009, and received Privy Council approval on 10 February 2010.

The Measure makes statutory provision to take forward the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment in terms of child poverty, and to take forward its strategy for vulnerable children. The Measure will require Welsh Authorities, including Welsh Ministers, to prepare and publish a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales, thereby increasing the importance and profile of child poverty related action amongst local authorities and their partners.

The second phase of the project will be key to implementing the Measure in terms of providing of help and advice to assist public bodies in meeting their obligations under the new legislation.

As well as providing increased support to organisations in finding solutions to tackle child poverty in their areas the second phase will also seek to share the learning gained from the first phase of the project; in particular from the local authority pilot projects.

The RAISE Programme effectively focused the attention of administrators and practitioners more sharply on the implications of deprivation for young people's ability to make appropriate progress in school. During the four years of the programme, the Assembly Government's RAISE team, in conjunction with the RAISE regional co-ordinators, consistently sought to encourage schools to give greater attention to the opportunities provided for producing sustainable outcomes from the funding. As a result, schools gradually gave greater emphasis to capacity building and professional development activity, with a view to effecting change that would make them better equipped to address pupils' needs in the future.

In the final year, 2009-2010, the Assembly Government made £6.29 million available, through the RAISE programme, for schools to engage in collaborative action research initiatives. The aim of the fourth year of the grant was to generate high quality case studies and resources that would enhance school effectiveness and provide a national focus for the 'poverty and under-attainment' agenda. These materials address the key themes

identified as a result of earlier evaluations of the programme and reflect the effectiveness of the strategies that schools have adopted. Significantly, much of the project work for 2009-2010 involved cross-authority collaboration.

The RAISE website (www.raise-wales.org.uk and www.rhagori-cymru.org.uk) provides a very practical vehicle for disseminating the good practice derived from the programme. We have begun the process of migrating this rich resource base to the Assembly Government's School Effectiveness website, as an enduring contribution to enabling schools to achieve excellence with the most disadvantaged of their learners. This material will also be accessible through the DCELLS website.

Financial Implication: None. Assembly Government support for the Child Poverty Local Authority pilot project can be met within existing budgets. Continuing work in relation to RAISE is funded within the RAISE programme budget and the maintenance of the School Effectiveness Framework website will be covered within the budget for that work.

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Assembly Government should swiftly establish the proposed RAISE website to facilitate sharing of ideas good practice.

Response: Accept

The Assembly Government devolved RAISE activity throughout Wales to four consortia of local authorities in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, making £20,000 and £30,000 available, in each of those years respectively, to support the development of a web presence. The consortia worked with NGfL Cymru to initiate the website, which can be accessed at www.raise-wales.org.uk and www.rhagori-cymru.org.uk. This proved to be a challenging initiative and, in order to give even greater impetus and direction to this work, we commissioned a dedicated consultant to co-ordinate and oversee its development. The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning relaunched the much improved website the in July 2009.

As described under Recommendation 9, the RAISE website (www.raise-wales.org.uk and www.rhagori-cymru.org.uk) is now operational and provides a very practical vehicle for disseminating the wealth of best practice derived from the programme.

Financial Implication: None. The above work is funded within the RAISE programme budget.

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Assembly Government ensure increased poverty education within mainstream teacher training and in training of other professionals working with young people in education settings. This education should

encompass the impact of poverty upon children and their education. This should also incorporate teachers' responsibilities to provide pastoral care.

Response: Accept in principle

Over the past year we have worked closely with practitioners and other stakeholders to identify what newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and newly appointed support staff need to know and be able to do in order to be effective classroom practitioners. We are now working on changes to the induction and early professional development programmes for NQTs and on a nationally recognised induction programme for support staff. The new arrangements will ensure that teachers and support staff are aware of priorities such as breaking the link between poverty and low attainment, raising standards in literacy and numeracy, learner inclusion and encouraging positive behaviour, and understand the part they need to play to bring about improvement.

The Welsh Assembly Government is continuing to take forward work on the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Understanding for the Children and Young People's Workforce in Wales. The Common Core is set in the wider context of the Assembly Governments' policies for children and young people, all of which are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A commonly held set of skills, knowledge and understanding is key to delivering this commitment, enabling children and young people to access their rights.

Financial Implication: The cost of these changes will be met from LIPD Division's Induction and EPD and Support Staff budgets.

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Assembly Government undertake a review of interpretation of 'The National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' in relation to teachers' responsibilities to enable provision of pastoral care. This review should determine whether the way in which agreement has been interpreted is militating against teachers, without specific responsibilities for providing pastoral care, offering sensitivity to the needs of pupils in poverty, or who are experiencing other barriers to learning. If the agreement is being so interpreted, the Welsh Assembly Government should put out clear direction to education authorities and schools, clarifying all teachers' enduring responsibility to show sensitivity to issues of social poverty, and other social issues, in their interaction with pupils and to direct pupils to further support if appropriate.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Assembly Government is a signatory to the National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload and supports the adoption of a wide range of models for the provision of pastoral care within schools.

Teachers remain responsible for the learning of their pupils and this includes being able to identify and adopt suitable strategies to overcome a range of barriers to an individual pupil's learning, including those caused by poverty and other social issues. Our response to recommendations 11 and 19 set out our plans to ensure that head teachers, teachers and support staff are well trained and supported to ensure that they know how to mitigate the effects of poverty on learner attainment and wellbeing and know where to find additional support for individuals where this is required and that these requirements are embedded in the professional standards for teachers and head teachers.

Financial Implication: None. Can be contained within existing budgets.

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of the take up of free school breakfasts, among children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, and commission research into the potential benefits of amending timings of breakfast clubs. This should also encompass monitoring of whether schools and local authorities were making free breakfasts available. Monitoring in this fashion would not entail fingerprinting of children and young people.

Response: Accept

Since January 2009, data collection on schools and pupils' participating in the primary school free breakfast initiative has been moved to the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). The latest National Statistics on the Annual Schools Census, showed that, at January 2010:

- 982 schools reported free breakfast data on school census;
- 31 per cent of pupils in schools serving free breakfasts took a breakfast during the survey week;
- 32 per cent of FSM pupils in schools serving free breakfast took a breakfast during the survey week.

This information will help shape and inform strategies targeted at improving food and nutrition in schools. It also enables us to undertake an analysis of the numbers attending the primary school free breakfast initiative that are also in receipt of free school meals; this information was collected prior to this school census.

Schools have some flexibility regarding the detail of the timings for their breakfast sessions. Breakfast provision should normally be delivered as a short period (for example 30minutes) with the primary purpose of providing sufficient time to enable those children who attend the session to have a healthy breakfast before the start of the normal school activities.

Financial Implication: None.

Recommendation 14

The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of take up of free school meals, including the monitoring of the nutritional value of such meals.

Response: Accept

Data on take-up of school meals (primary - paid and free; secondary - free) is already collected via Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC).

Currently, the Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches)(Wales) regulations 2001 define the different food groups and sets out the minimum nutritional standards for school lunches for primary and secondary school pupils. These are minimum compulsory standards. Local authorities and schools are free to set higher standards.

The Appetite for Life Action Plan sets out the strategic direction and actions required to improve the nutritional standards of food and drink provided in schools in Wales. Nutritional analysis software has been procured to enable caterers to plan menus using their own recipes and to share their recipes with catering colleagues across Wales. This software is available to all school catering providers. It will enable Local Authorities to monitor how they comply with the more stringent standards proposed in Appetite for Life at a local and at a national level, and identify areas which may need refinement.

Financial Implication: None.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the feasibility of delivering universal free school meals for children of different ages.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Assembly Government's current focus is on improving the nutritional standards of food and drink provided in Wales and this is being supported through our Appetite for Life Action Plan. Four local authorities, one from each region of Wales, have been involved in developing and testing new guidelines for implementing improved food and nutritional standards. The lessons we learn from this project are crucial in improving the health and wellbeing of young people across Wales and in informing future decisions on commissioning work on the feasibility of universal free school meals. The project report, when it becomes available in the next few months, will be made widely available.

School meals and especially the provision of free school meals are an important aspect of the Welsh Assembly Government's anti-poverty strategy. In deprived areas, where many of the meals served are free, these set the standard for the whole service. Our successful Primary School Free Breakfast

initiative is already helping children have a healthy start to the day, with 1,023 (67%) of primary schools participating in the scheme.

We have also made available funding to all local authorities, whose schools are not involved in the Action Research Project, who wish to progress towards the standards in Appetite for Life. In 2010-11, the third year of the grant scheme, grant funding has been very much focussed on delivering improvements to the food, as a means of reducing health inequalities brought about by poor diet.

We will continue to monitor and learn from developments from across all parts of the UK - this will help inform how we take forward our whole school approach to improving food and nutrition in schools in Wales.

Financial Implication: There are currently no financial implications. A review of the financial implications will be required when consideration is given to commissioning additional work.

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Assembly Government consider piloting universal free school meals.

Response: Accept in Principle

A decision to pilot universal free school meals will be taken, following a review of the current work underway in relation to school meals. If the evidence gathered from work currently under way provides justification to introduce this work, consideration would be given to running a pilot.

Financial Implication: See response to Recommendation 15 above.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the effectiveness of schemes to reduce stigma associated with free school meals.

Response: Accept

An initial desk based review of research undertaken in Wales into the take-up of free school meals indicated that limited information was available. In 2009, the School Food Trust published their report 'Please Sir? Can we have some more - lessons from Free School Meal initiatives'. This report summarized the details and findings of FSM initiatives in the UK. We will consider the findings of this report as part of the wider work under way to take forward Appetite for Life. What is clear is that there are a range of reasons why children do not take up entitlement to free school meals. These can include the food on offer, the ability to go off site during lunchtime, commitment to other activities and

problems associated with the whole food experience, such as queuing and the dining room environment.

Financial Implication: None.

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Assembly Government ensures that greater support and training is made available to school governors on the issue of child poverty.

Response: Accept in principle

The Assembly Government recognises the important role of school governors in recognising and responding to child poverty. It is important that school governors are aware of child poverty and its impact on education when setting school policies and evaluating school achievements.

The Assembly Government publishes a large number of guidance documents, many of which are directed at governing bodies. It undertakes to consider what should be said about child poverty, when it is relevant to the guidance topic in future guidance documents. This was illustrated when published guidance about school uniforms was issued in 2008.

Local authorities are duty bound by Section 22 of the Education Act 2002 to provide governors with free training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to discharge their duties effectively. Tackling poverty requires holistic action and the Assembly Government expects local authorities to consider where reference to child poverty would be beneficial in governor training.

The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring Local Authorities are fully supported in their own role in tackling child poverty at a local level and recognises that local authorities and their partners need help and guidance on the issue of recognising and tackling child poverty. Accordingly, in 2007, the Assembly Government agreed to fund a two year child poverty local authority pilot project.

The project commenced in October 2007, initially running for a period of two years, supported by a dedicated staff resource at Save the Children and the WLGA. The work of the child poverty solutions project is overseen by a National Steering Group, drawn from the wider public and voluntary sectors, including the Assembly Government.

On the 25 November 2009, at the Children in Wales Annual Conference, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government announced continued funding of £187,014 over three years to extend the Child Poverty Solutions project in to a second phase.

The first phase of the project included the creation of the “Child Poverty Solutions Wales” online tool kit (www.childpovertysolutions.org.uk), launched in October 2007 and development of two local authority pilot projects.

Local authority pilot projects were carried out in Gwynedd, focusing on financial literacy and in Rhondda Cynon Taf, focusing on building employability skills with young people at a local school and to developing child poverty scrutiny within the local authority.

The second phase of the Child Poverty Solutions Wales project will focus on developing the online tool kit further and broadening its appeal. The fully bi-lingual tool kit is the first of its kind in Wales and has consistently attracted around 400 unique visits a month.

Another key task for the second phase will be supporting the introduction of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, which was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 10 November 2009, and received Privy Council approval on 10 February 2010.

The Measure makes statutory provision to take forward the Welsh Assembly Government’s commitment in terms of child poverty, and to take forward its strategy for vulnerable children. The Measure requires Welsh Authorities, including Welsh Ministers, to prepare and publish a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales, thereby increasing the importance and profile of child poverty related action amongst local authorities and their partners. This new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales was published for a three month period of public consultation in May 2010.

The second phase of the Child Poverty Solutions Wales project will be key to implementing the Measure in terms of providing of help and advice to assist public bodies in meeting their obligations under the new legislation.

As well as providing increased support to organisations in finding solutions to tackle child poverty in their areas the second phase will also seek to share the learning gained from the first phase of the project; in particular from the local authority pilot projects.

Financial Implication: None. Assembly Government support for Child Poverty Solutions Wales can be met within existing budgets.

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Assembly Government provide statutory guidance to governors and school leaders on the sort of leadership that they should be giving to address child poverty. This guidance should include practical steps to addressing child poverty such as balancing the educational value of residential trips against their financial cost. This guidance should also be accessible to parents, carers and pupils.

Response: Accept

School governors and leaders need to be aware of child poverty and how to take account of it when making policy and operational decisions. Accordingly, the response to recommendation 18 includes a commitment to take account of child poverty in guidance documents published by the Assembly Government.

In recognition of the educational value of school visits and residential trips but also of the cost pressures they bring, in April 2010 DCELLS published guidance that clarifies the circumstances in which education law permits charging. The guidance is available electronically on the Welsh Assembly Government's website.

Earlier this year, we completed a review of leadership programmes being offered to headteachers and aspiring headteachers and found that some elements of them were outdated or did not develop the leadership qualities needed to drive forward DCELLS' school effectiveness agenda. We are currently working with school leaders and other stakeholders to identify the knowledge and skills a headteacher needs early in his/ her career and will devise a programme that all headteachers will complete upon taking up post. In line with the development opportunities that will be offered to newly qualified teachers and newly appointed support staff (Recommendation 11), the development will reflect national priorities such as mitigating the effects of poverty on learner attainment and wellbeing.

Financial Implication: The cost of developing and implementing the programme will be met from LIPD Division's Education Leadership Programme budget.

The guidance on Charging for School Activities was produced electronically and posted to the Welsh Assembly Government's website.

Recommendation 20

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the reasons why educational progress seems to decline in the early years of secondary school, with particular reference to children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

Response: Accept

With the benefit of advice from Estyn, we have previously identified strengths and areas for improvement in the transition arrangements put in place by secondary schools and partner primary schools. As a result of Wales-only legislation, primary and secondary schools are now required to work together to produce and maintain a Transition Plan that focuses on improving continuity and progression in pupils' learning, as they move into secondary education. We have supported the implementation of Transition Plans with funding from the Better Schools Fund and provision made available to every local authority in the Key Stage 2-3 Transition Grant.

More recently, the 2008 Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales has highlighted "reasons for attainment dropping between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3" as a key information gap. Similar recommendations have been made by the Child Poverty Expert Group and by a Task & Finish group examining 8-14 education provision in Wales.

These recommendations were combined and a Rapid Evidence Assessment was commissioned to investigate the issues raised by the reports. This work is still ongoing and the final report will be available in early 2011. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the importance of improving attainment across these two Key Stages, especially reducing the variation between different groups, and we look forward to receiving the final report and discussing the implications of the key findings.

Financial Implication

Funding has continued to be made available in the Better Schools Fund 2010-11 which can be used to support the development of primary and secondary school partnerships to improve continuity and progression. It is for authorities to allocate funds according to local priorities.

The costs for the REA were met from the DCELLS Research and Evaluation budget and the contract is worth £29,360.

Recommendation 21

The Welsh Assembly Government place a specific duty on all publicly funded schools to promote social cohesion.

Response: Do not accept.

The Community Cohesion Education Programme Board discussed this recommendation at their meeting on 29 March 2010. The prevailing view was that a duty in Wales is undesirable, as it would not aid the effectiveness of policy implementation.

The Board's view is that guidance on the use of appropriate sources of information, institutional awareness, curriculum content, learner support and the strengthening of community links would achieve more without creating additional bureaucracy. Board members also pointed out that there are several existing duties that are open to interpretation, and it would be more sensible to demonstrate links between community cohesion and existing policies such as child poverty, safeguarding and child protection. The Community Cohesion Team will submit a paper to Cabinet in January that will outline this position.

We are also aware that, with the change of government in Westminster, a similar duty in England may be removed. The Community Cohesion Team will continue to monitor developments.

Recommendation 22

The Welsh Assembly Government initiate a study into the costs of education to provide comprehensive evidence to help formulate policy addressing such costs.

Response: Accept

In October 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned BMG Research to conduct a study to gather the views of parents, carers and schools on school uniforms and the wider costs of schooling. BMG Research has completed the research and provided the Welsh Assembly Government with a report of its findings in August 2010. The Welsh Assembly Government is considering the findings and the recommendations in the report.

Financial Implication: The cost of the research was £42k and was met from the DCELLS Education Services and Research budget.

Recommendation 23

The Welsh Assembly Government monitor schools' adherence to its guidance on school uniforms.

Response: Accept in principle

Welsh Assembly Government guidance on school uniforms is not statutory and it is therefore not enforceable in that sense. The guidance is broadly written because schools have discretion in setting uniform policy and very prescriptive guidance would not fit with that. For these reasons, it would not be appropriate to monitor schools' adherence to Assembly Government guidance as suggested by this recommendation.

However, the Assembly Government has been made aware of certain school uniform issues by the public and is concerned that schools take account of the cost of uniforms and how that can be a burden for low income parents. As stated in response to recommendation 22, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned research in October 2009 to gather the views of parents, carers and schools on school uniforms and associated costs. The Assembly Government received a report on this research in August 2010 and is considering the research findings and recommendations.

Financial Implication: The cost of the research is £42k and was met from the DCELLS Education Services and Research budget.

Recommendation 24

The Welsh Assembly Government enable greater consistency between schools, and across authorities, about minimising additional costs of education. This should involve clear statutory guidance from the Welsh

Assembly Government on minimising such costs and include practical advice on balancing the educational value of such trips against their financial costs. This should enable all children to participate on an equal basis without stigmatisation due to financial or cultural constraints.

Response: Accept in principle

In response to recommendations 19, 23 and 25, the Assembly Government has now provided guidance about school charging and researched school uniform issues including cost and the wider costs of schooling. These actions clarify in what circumstances schools are allowed to charge by law, raise awareness of child poverty and promote greater consistency between schools. The Assembly Government is also committed to ensuring that guidance documents for schools and local authorities contain reference to child poverty where relevant to the guidance topic.

In relation to school meals, local authorities must ensure that lunch is provided free of charge for those pupils eligible to free school meals. The value of a free school meal should be set to enable eligible pupils to have a standard two-course lunch and a drink. If pupils can leave the school premises at lunchtime, there is price competition with local traders, as well as with packed lunches. To encourage pupils to eat a healthy balanced diet, local authorities and schools should aim to offer a balanced meal at an attractive price.

Financial Implication: None.

Recommendation 25
The Welsh Assembly Government ensure that there is greater public clarity and awareness of guidance regarding the costs to parents and carers of school trips and support available to them.

Response: Accept

The Assembly Government published guidance in April 2010 about charging for school activities – recommendation 19 refers. The guidance is available electronically on the Assembly Government's website. Local authorities have been advised of the existence of the guidance and asked to notify their schools.

Financial Implication: None. The guidance on charging for school activities has been published electronically on the Welsh Assembly Government's website.

Recommendation 26
The Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance to schools on training and establishing a member of staff as a school liaison officer for young carers, responsible for proactively identifying and engaging with

young carers and support workers, and liaising internally with other teaching staff.

Response: Accept

Information Document No. 013/03 "Caring for Young Carers" issued in June 2004 provides the current good practice guidance to schools regarding young carers, and includes advice to "Nominate a link teacher with specific responsibility for young carers". A pilots study published on the Assembly Government's website indicates that "the WAG Training pack received very positive feedback from the teachers" who were involved in the study.

The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure has been scrutinised and approved by the Assembly and is due to be approved by the Privy Council during November 2010. The Measure will enable the National Assembly to legislate to introduce a new requirement on the NHS and Local Authorities (the 'relevant authorities') in Wales to work in partnership to produce a joint strategy in relation to carers, including young carers. The strategy will provide for the provision of information to carers and for the relevant authorities to consult with carers on the provision of services. The Measure covers all local authority services including education services.

The powers obtained via the Carers Legislative Competence Order will enable the Assembly and the Assembly Government to introduce further policies in relation to young carers in the future.

Financial Implication: None

Recommendation 27

The Welsh Assembly Government enable the establishment of more appropriately funded, well planned and community focused schools, starting with areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

Response: Accept

Over the past three years local authorities have been given freedom to use the Community Focused Schools (CFS) grant to provide services in the light of local circumstances. We have directed all authorities to pay particular attention to funding developments that support area-based initiatives, such as Communities First Programmes, Heads of the Valley Initiatives and Objective One Programmes.

However, the Assembly Government recognises that some local authorities are more advanced than others in developing the community focused schools agenda. All local authorities have made progress in enhancing the opportunities available within their communities. The Assembly budget for 2010-2011 had an increase in funding, targeted towards building on existing provision and considering what additional services or activities schools and their partners might develop, particularly in the field of childcare. In considering these additional services or activities, local authorities plan on the

basis of a shared vision between all the partners with the net result that its services and activities aim both to raise pupils' levels of achievement, whilst providing all community members with additional learning opportunities.

The findings of the independent evaluation of RAISE by the People and Work Unit have highlighted the importance of schools' developing a community focus, if they are effectively to support the education of young people in the most challenging circumstances. In the light of this evidence, local authorities and their regional consortia have agreed that the development of a community focus in schools should be one of the key themes for RAISE activity in 2009-2010.

In May 2010, we presented a position paper to the Child Poverty Expert Group, setting out the way in which we would seek to mainstream the work of addressing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes through the Community Focused School agenda. The paper established, on the basis of the School Effectiveness Framework, the basic equation that a truly effective school must inevitably be a community focused school. This is a particularly significant factor in Wales, where relative poverty affects the life and educational outcomes of such a substantial proportion of learners. For that reason, we have continued the grant programme in 2010-2011 and are working to clarify, for schools and local authorities, the importance and implications of this way of working. Future decisions on the grant will need to be taken in the light of spending decisions and the work to streamline grants in education.

The twenty-first century schools capital investment programme will, also, place increasing emphasis on integrating public services in community-focused schools, where appropriate.

Financial Implication: None. Already covered within existing programme budgets.