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Cyflwyniad ar y cyd gan Barnardo's Cymru, Cymdeithas y
Plant, Plant yng Nghymru, NSPCC Cymru, Achub y Plant a
Home-Start Cymru / Joint submission from Barnardo's
Cymru, The Children's Society, Children in Wales, NSPCC
Cymru, Save the Children and Home Start Cymru

26th November 2021

Dear Peredur Owen Griffiths MS,

Re: Welsh Government Draft Budget Consultation

We write to you as a collective of organisations (listed below) working to improve the lives of children, young people and their families in Wales, in response to the consultation on Welsh Government's Draft Budget.

Central to recovery from Covid-19 must be resourced support across Wales for children and young people living with poverty, mental ill health, violence and abuse and those children on the edge of care or care experienced. It is crucial as we continue our recovery from the pandemic that children and young people are at the centre of this recovery.

Below, we have submitted joint recommendations for a budget that delivers for children and young people.

Ending Child Poverty

The cost of living and children living in poverty is an increasing concern for the families that we work with. It is our concern that this will intensify in the coming months due to the increase in inflation, fuel prices and as the impact of the Universal Credit uplift removal is felt. In addition to this, the negative impact that poverty can have on mental health is well known and can cause considerable problems within families. We maintain our call (alongside the End Child Poverty Network) for a Child Poverty Strategy with a delivery plan and assigned budget which would allow for clear scrutiny of Welsh Government's action in this regard.

We welcome the 2021 Cooperation Agreement between Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru which commits to extending free school meals to all primary school pupils as well as expanding free childcare to two-year olds. We look forward to supporting the implementation of these policies, and would also encourage Welsh Government to consider a number of other key areas to support children, young people and families in the upcoming budget, aligned with the priorities identified in the Programme for Government

It is well-recognised that the first 1000 days of a child's life are critical for their future development and wellbeing, we welcome the planned expansion of Flying Start but want to see an enhanced service for all parents of 0-4-year-olds across Wales, as well as a focus on the impact poverty can have on families, so practitioners can support them in a non-stigmatising way.

Mental Health

Like all of us, children and young people have been through an incredibly traumatic period since the pandemic began.

Mental health will continue to be a major issue as we seek to recover from the pandemic, and we would recommend the following priorities for Welsh Government around children and young people:

- Ensure CAMHs are better resourced so all children and young people can access support when needed and children have access to long-term recovery after initial interventions.
- Ensure care experienced children receive the consistent mental health assessments and support they need.
- Increase community-based, therapeutic support for children and their families, providing support for those children who are pre-CAMHS
- Ensure that there is a sufficiently resourced, genuine 'no wrong door' approach with tie-in between services across the board which include where appropriate a whole-family approach.

Introduce a specific fund aimed at providing training on evidence-based approaches to dealing with inter-parental conflict for children's social care staff statutory and voluntary sector.

Children's Rights

It is our hope that each government minister will prioritise children's rights within their departments, and we back the call made by the Children, Young People and Education Committee for Welsh Government to publish a Children's Rights Impact Assessment as part of the budget, to ensure there is full compliance with the UNCRC.

The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 requires Welsh Government to ensure that all decisions which impact on children, including financial decisions, comply with the UNCRC. There has been a lack of CRIAs published in respect of previous draft budgets which has prevented a full analysis of whether the 'maximum level of available resources' obligation has been applied. A published CRIA would aid openness, transparency and accountability, and enable us to better understand how budgetary decisions are taking account of children and whether allocations are sufficient.

We would urge Welsh Government to ensure that all local and regional structures, including the Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards are sufficiently prioritising children and young people's distinct issues.

Sustainable funding of vital services

The specialist VAWDASV sector offers life-saving support, but mapping of services has demonstrated the urgent need for better funding and resources to meet the needs of children and young people. These services often suffer from the pitfalls of year-to-year funding which creates endemic challenges for

sustainability of specialist services. It is also essential to identify the link between parental wellbeing and child wellbeing when targeting investment to specialist areas. Parents must be able to access comprehensive, non-judgemental emotional and practical support for issues that may otherwise be dismissed as struggles of the everyday, such as financial pressures, feelings of isolation and social pressures, in order to prevent decline to deeper crises and support parent-child bonds.

Our recommendations to Welsh Government are:

- Address the shortfall in specialist service provision for children and the need for sustainable funding
- Back our calls on the importance of early intervention and that an element of funding for specialist support is ringfenced for prevention and early intervention work
- Support the vital work of volunteers delivering important preventative services to families in the home.
- Recognise emotional and practical support for parents as an important preventative service and the associated need for investment in this area'

Ensure that budget allocations for children are transparent and that reporting is sufficiently accessible

We note the request from the Children, Young People and Education Committee in a letter to the Minister for Health and Social Services, that emphasised the need for transparency in how the budget is presented for scrutiny and agree with the need for clarity.

This should include a focus on spending for children facing ACEs, including, but not limited to poverty. This should be used to identify gaps in support and assess expenditure in relation to impact. Accessibility also requires information on the budget to be made available in a format in which children and young people can engage with (Article 13 UNCRC).

Care-experienced children and young people

We urge Welsh Government to use this budget as an opportunity to increase provision and support for care-experienced children and young people, both for young people going through the assessment and pathway planning process, and for young people after they have left care.

Our recommendations are:

- Guarantee that transitions between services for different ages happens seamlessly, that no child with a continuing support need is left behind, and that support continues for care-experienced young people to help them as they transition into independence.

- Provide training and support for statutory staff and those working within organisations to support care leavers with financial management.
- Understand the financial support requirements of care leavers and build provision of financing and budgeting support.

We welcome the opportunity to feed into this consultation and would be happy to provide more information if this would be of use.

Yours sincerely,

