

Vaughan Gething AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Trechu Tlodi
Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref:

Ann Jones AM
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee
Ty Hwyl
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

26 March 2014

Dear Ann

Thank you for inviting me to attend your Committee in February, and for giving me the opportunity to explain how the Welsh Government is delivering its anti-poverty policies and programmes.

At the meeting I agreed to update the Committee on a number of points. I am therefore writing to provide you with the further information and, where appropriate, clarification of issues discussed in Committee.

I agreed to provide the Committee with further information on the work carried out by Professor Edward Melhuish for us on the evaluations of Flying Start.

As you know, Flying Start is subject to a robust, independent programme of evaluation, and a series of reports was published between October 2013 and January 2014.

Professor Edward Melhuish was commissioned to:

- provide an independent, expert overview of findings from the National Evaluation of Flying Start reports;
- present an informed commentary on Flying Start as a social intervention within a UK policy context, paying particular attention to Sure Start; and
- consider implications for future delivery and practice.

His findings are currently being reviewed by officials. Once they have completed their review, Professor Melhuish's commentary will be published on the Welsh Government

website as a supplementary document alongside the Flying Start evaluation reports by the end of May 2014.

I also agreed to provide the Committee with information concerning the uptake of all four elements of Flying Start. The methodology for data collection which we have agreed with local authorities does not facilitate the collection of data on the number of children benefiting from all four entitlements. I have asked my officials to further investigate the potential for this.

I also agreed to provide the Committee with more information on how we were progressing with the work aimed at improving programme join-up across the Flying Start, Families First, and Communities First programmes.

I have made it very clear that I want Communities First, Families First and Flying Start to work more closely and in a more joined-up way across Wales. Coherence between the three programmes is a clear Ministerial priority and it has been the theme of the four regional events we have organised to bring together staff, not just from these three programmes, but also from appropriate areas of local government, the health service and the Third Sector. I am pleased that to date there has been a positive buy in from all partners about the need for, and benefit to be gained from, a greater level of coherence. The move from coincidental joint work to a more consistent and coherent approach is consistent with the focus on work between local government, health, the voluntary sector and other partners on anti-poverty action.

It is also worth noting that in ESF Convergence areas, this alignment between the three programmes is being taken forward by the Communities First and Family Programmes Integration Project, which is led by a manager based with Welsh Government and four Regional Integration Officers whose posts are hosted by Carmarthenshire, Torfaen, Gwynedd and RCT local authorities.

With regards to the Families First programme, I said that I would provide the Committee with the outcomes for children and families that the Families First evaluation process will measure, and I am pleased to provide this at Annex 1.

Additionally, I said that I would provide the Committee with details of when the first set of data, measuring progress in these Outcomes, would be published.

Families First is still in its early stages and the first two years of the programme have focused on systems change. The first evaluation report was published in December 2013 and provides vital feedback about the implementation and delivery of the programme.

The first report concluded that national and local stakeholders endorsed the design of the programme. Families First was reported to drive better coordination and deeper integration of services for children and families through multi-agency working. Findings suggest the programme is addressing gaps and inefficiencies in previous ways of working. Local authorities reported that strategic commissioning promotes better multi-agency working and an outcome based culture.

I can also advise that all local authorities in Wales have now developed and embedded a 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) approach. Data that we have collected for the first two quarters of 2013 – 14 show that between March and September 2013, 1,492 Joint

Assessment Families Frameworks were conducted and at least 727 TAF action plans were in place for families across Wales. The TAF action plans detail the interventions that will be offered, along with details of the multiple agencies that will come together to provide a coherent service to the family.

We are keen to capture the impact on families. Therefore, a Family Outcome Tool has been developed which will provide information on the impact the whole family approach is having on these families. Details from this tool, including consideration of distance travelled measures for families will form part of the next phase of evaluation. The forthcoming evaluation report also incorporates case studies with families about the difference Families First has made to their lives.

I also discussed with the Committee the collaboration between primary and secondary schools for play based facilities.

Welsh Government policy and legislation, including that for play, are taken into account in the consideration of business cases for the 21st Century Schools Programme to ensure joined up implementation programmes. The programme focuses resources on the right schools in the right places, from early years through to post-16 (<http://21stcenturyschools.org>).

Creating a Play Friendly Wales, the statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing for sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas, requires them to assess the extent to which schools provide a good quality play environment for children both during and outside the school day.

Wales: A Place Where Children Can Play, the draft statutory guidance on securing sufficient play opportunities, which opened for consultation on 10th March 2014, gives examples of how local authorities and partners are increasing play opportunities available on school premises. These include:

- Projects to enable children and young people to experience richer play opportunities within the school day through the provision of play pods or storage containers and “loose parts” from a range of recycled material that can be used for active, imaginative and constructive play, during school breaks and after school.
- Accredited training for lunch time supervisors and teaching assistants so that children can be supported to use these resources at play/lunch time.
- The use of the Play Wales toolkit *Use of School Grounds for Playing out of Teaching Hours* to raise awareness and practical advice on improving school premises for play. (<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schoolstoolkit>).

I hope that this fully addresses those issues where I agreed to provide more information. As ever, if you should require further clarification or information, please let me know and I will ensure that this is provided to you.

Yours sincerely



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Annex 1 - Children, Young People Committee

Families First Outcomes and Population Indicators

The outcomes for children and families that the Families First evaluation process will measure

Attached below are outcomes and indicators for children and families. We will monitor data against these measures to assess the impact of Families First.

Outcome 1

Working age people in low income families gain, and progress within, employment

PI 1 The proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% of median income

PI 2 Percentage of Year 11 leavers not in education, employment, or training

PI 3 The proportion of 18 – 24 year olds claiming JSA

Outcome 2

Children, young people and families, in or at risk of poverty, achieve their potential

PI 1 Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (in teacher assessments) compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals

PI 2 The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Core Subject Indicator at KS2, compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals

PI 3 The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English/Welsh and Maths, at the end of KS4 compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals

PI 4 Percentage of half day sessions (overall absence) missed by pupils of compulsory school age attending maintained primary schools and eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM

PI 5 Percentage of half day sessions (overall absence) missed by pupils of compulsory school age attending maintained secondary schools and

eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM

Outcome 3

Children, young people and families are healthy and enjoy well-being

PI 1 Percentage of children fully immunised by their 4th birthday

PI 2 Percentage of live births with a birth-weight of less than 2500g

PI 3 Numbers of conceptions under age 16 years per 1000 female residents aged 13 to 15

PI 4 The proportion of children in reception class who are overweight or obese

Outcome 4

Families are confident, nurturing resilient and safe

PI 1 The number of households with dependent children accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need

PI 2 The number of homeless households with dependent children in temporary accommodation at the end of the period

PI 3 Children in need by parental capacity (domestic abuse)

PI 4 First time entrants into the criminal justice system