

Lesley Griffiths AM  
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty  
Welsh Government  
Cardiff Bay

26 January 2016

**Draft Budget 2016-17**

Dear Minister

Thank you for attending the Children, Young People and Education Committee's meeting on 21 January to discuss the draft Budget, and for providing the requested information in advance of the budget meeting.

Your priorities across your portfolio are clearly set out in your submission to the Committee. Within these priorities you have identified a number of key areas that have a direct impact on children and young people.

The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government's investment in the early years, in particular support for children from the most disadvantaged households. It is, however, essential that funding decisions are sufficiently evidence based, and unfortunately it is not clear how the decision was reached to allocate what amounts to almost 36 per cent of your total resources on two specific programmes (Flying Start and Families First).

One of the Committee's main concerns is whether there is sufficient monitoring information which can evidence the value for money for investments specifically intended to benefit children and young people. In particular:



- Whether the monitoring systems currently in place can evidence improved outcomes for children and their families, and in turn whether the data you have means you can show you are achieving the intended outcomes and therefore the value for money of the investment.
- That the Department remains in a position where it cannot quantify the number of children benefiting from all four Flying Start entitlements and that the take up rates of the Flying Start ‘speech and language entitlement’ is defined ‘as a course offered to an individual parental figure who attended the first session’.
- Whilst we welcome your decision to include an outreach element to Flying Start, we are concerned that there is no system in place to assess its value for money. An evaluation of this important element would enable informed decisions about whether to scale up the current approach to outreach or whether alternative approaches are needed.
- We also note that there is no system in place to monitor the attainment of the cohort of children who have benefited from Flying Start on their journey through primary and secondary school and in the important transition between the two phases. We would welcome feedback on future discussions you may have with the Minister for Education and Skills to explore the potential for monitoring such individual level pupil outcomes for Flying Start beneficiaries, and the possibility of taking this forward in the short and longer term.

We note the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission’s view in its most recent State of the Nation Report, December 2015, in which it says that it ‘is concerned that there are too many overlapping programmes and that resources are spread too thinly’ and that ‘there are many children and families living on low incomes who do not receive services’.

We also note that there are an increasing number of children in Wales living in families experiencing in-work poverty. More robust monitoring and evaluation is needed to inform whether the Minister is getting value for money from investment in a range of individual programmes across the portfolio.



The Committee believes that there is a need to look at how the range of policies across your portfolio fit together, and how they can be used to achieve the best possible outcome for children and young people. The availability of more comprehensive data will inform decisions to be made in the Fifth Assembly about whether there is a need re-prioritise funding across your whole portfolio to a smaller number of programmes to achieve the scale of change needed.

The Committee has previously welcomed the Welsh Government's stated commitment to children's rights and its incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law in Wales through the Rights of the Child and Young person Measure 2011. As Minister with overall responsibility for children and young people, the Committee wishes to express disappointment that a standalone Child's Rights Impact Assessment for the Draft Budget has not been made available to us.

The Committee appreciates some of the merits of an Integrated Impact Assessment. However the lack of a standalone and transparent Child's Rights Impact Assessment means it is more difficult to identify how the Welsh Government's allocation of resources will impact on all children and young people, and on individual groups within that population.

We welcome your agreement to provide further detail as to the formula which will be used to apportion the reduction in the Families First allocation across the 22 authorities. The Committee would welcome the receipt of this information as soon as possible in order to inform the Assembly's final debate on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2016-17.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Finance Committee to help inform its overarching scrutiny of the Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely



Ann Jones AM  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cc: Jocelyn Davies AM, Chair of the Finance Committee

