

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Y 1,000 diwrnod cyntaf | First 1,000 Days

CYPE (5) FTD 34

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin

Response from: Carmarthenshire County Council

We will provide a response against the 7 areas included in the document with a focus on the family support/preventative agenda within which the Local Authority has a role and responsibility to provide services. The Family Support Service sits within Children Services and as such has a focus on tackling child poverty by **targeting** services to vulnerable families and delivering services in geographical areas of deprivation. Apart from these targeted services we also provide **universal** services in the form of a Family Information Service which provides a wide range of information to enable families to access appropriate support: undertake Childcare and Play Sufficiency Assessments and address issues raised within these assessments, such as identifying gaps, promoting access and opportunities within these fields.

- Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of children **from pregnancy** (for example through positive parenting, high immunisation rates and tackling smoking in pregnancy).

The focus of our intervention has largely been once the child has been born, offering opportunities for 'parent and baby' activities in targeted communities. Within Flying Start areas we have been able to engage women in pregnancy as part of this Programme due to the nature of working to a specific cohort. Resources are extremely stretched within the community element of supporting families for working with families from pregnancy onwards. It does happen in some settings but is not universally available, nor indeed in areas of known deprivation where we would wish to engage with pregnant women. There are opportunities to build on midwifery services where need for additional

support is identified but currently the preventative services have very limited resources to address this area of work. In view of increased knowledge within baby brain development and research on ACE's, the level of resource targeting holistic work from pregnancy is minimal and therefore seems inadequate.

- Deliver improved child health outcomes across Wales (for example prevention of obesity and the promotion of health-enhancing behaviours for every child such as eating a well balanced diet, playing actively, and having an appropriate weight and height for their age and general health).

Our services (both within the home and within the community) support improved child health outcomes by way of regular inclusion of healthy eating/ eating on a budget activities on every curriculum/timetable. These include practical sessions with both adults and children. The families with whom we work tend to have significant issues with maintaining health enhancing behaviours and therefore this is a regular and ongoing area of work that is reaching a targeted group of families. Funding to maintain these services are limited and always difficult to secure on a long term basis.

In addition our Play Strategy promotes the importance of play and challenges the LA and partners to actively consider children's opportunities to play across all areas of business e.g. within the planning process.

- Tackle child health inequalities, with a specific focus on child poverty and disabled children.

Our services exist to tackle the effects of poverty of which health inequalities is an inherent element of our focus. We work and engage well with disadvantaged families as we support their needs in a holistic manner, ensuring that we give families a voice in developing the services that they feel are helpful. We believe that tackling child health

inequalities is best undertaken by supporting the holistic needs of the family.

We agree with the need to have a specific focus for disabled children within our target group as universal services are even less available for them to access.

- Reduce child deaths and injury prevention, particularly in the most deprived parts of Wales where infant mortality is much higher than the least deprived.

Again this is a regular area of focus within our service, frequently delivered in partnership with e.g. Fire service, Road Safety etc

- Support effective child development and emotional and social well-being – specifically interventions that are delivered outside the health service which can help to detect and address developmental delays. Promoting attachments and parent and baby bonding is prioritised across our service area. The Flying Start Programme is able to undertake this in a consistent, structured manner due to the nature of having a specific cohort. Families tend to respond extremely positively to early input with their new babies and Baby Massage classes are almost always oversubscribed.

Positive parenting practises and messages are always promoted within our service within the ‘normal’ routines of all the activities e.g. parent & toddler groups will have a format to always include a song, a creative activity, a healthy snack etc

Supporting parents to understand and accept ‘normal’ childhood behaviours is a significant element within our interventions.

- Focus on improving learning and speech and language development through the home learning environment and access to early years’ provision (including childminders, preschools and day nurseries).

Improving learning and speech and language development is a key target to enable deprived children to be school ready. We work hard to ensure sufficient early years provision within deprived areas, but know that where sustainability is not subsidised by public money such as in Flying Start areas, this will not be possible. The cost of childcare is prohibitive to families on low incomes.

- Reduce the adverse impact on the child of psychosocial issues such as poor parenting, disruptive family relationships, domestic violence, mental health issues and substance misuse through effective safeguarding.

Effective safeguarding is everybody's business, the preventative services within the community supports the safeguarding of children within that community. The most effective way of safeguarding children is engaging parents within family support activities within their community.

To effectively provide family support activities and engage with those in greatest need of the service requires sufficient resources. There is a tension between deploying resources on targeted community support services against those services that respond to identified individual need. The introduction of the SSWB Act has placed more emphasis on prevention and early intervention which in turn, has meant that social care services are utilising the non –statutory preventative services far greater than ever before. Consequently the level of need and demand for the non statutory preventative service is also far higher than ever before. The result of this is that the non– statutory preventative work is becoming increasingly more targeted leaving less and less resource to cover the holistic family support activities undertaking the areas of work highlighted within this consultation and in particular engagement within the first 1,000 days.