

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd	Marc Wyn Jones
Meeting date: Thursday, 21 January 2016	Committee Clerk 0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 09.00	SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales

09.00 – 09.15 – Private Pre-meeting

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(09.15)

2 Follow-up inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales – Evidence session 1

(09.15 – 10.15)

(Pages 1 – 20)

Adoption UK

Ann Bell, Development Manager Wales

Eileen Griffiths, Chair of Adoption UK Wales' Advisory group

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(4)-02-16 – Paper 1

3 Follow-up inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales – Evidence session 2

(10.15 – 11.15)

(Pages 21 – 26)

Wales Adoption Cohort Study – Cardiff University

Katherine Shelton, Senior Lecturer – School of Psychology

Attached Documents:

CYPE(4)-02-16 – Paper 2



4 Paper to note

Letter from the Minister for Education and Skills – Follow-up to adoption services in Wales

(Pages 27 – 29)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(4)-02-16 – Paper to note 3

12.15 – 12.30 – Private Pre-meeting

5 Scrutiny of Welsh Government draft budget 2016-17 – Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

(12.30 – 14.00)

(Pages 30 – 77)

Welsh Government

Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

Alyson Francis, Deputy Director Families Division

Owain Lloyd, Deputy Director Childcare and Play Division

Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(4)-02-16 – Paper 4

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the remainder of the meeting.

(14.00)

7 Scrutiny of Welsh Government draft budget 2016-17 – consideration of evidence

(14.00 – 14.15)

Document is Restricted

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

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

Gwaith dilynol ar Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru | Follow-up to Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales

CYPE(4)-02-16 - Paper 1

Ymateb gan : Adoption UK Cymru

Response from : Adoption UK Wales

Overview Question

What are your views in the Welsh Government's progress in respect of the 16 recommendations and the 25 'detailed actions' set out on pages 5-11 of the [Committee's report](#).

Good progress been made and the National Adoption Service has been established and is beginning to perform as planned. This has been an enormous piece of work for all concerned and the achievement merits recognition. Whilst it was not done in the way the committee originally recommended, there has been considerable effort made to ensure the governance arrangements of the new service are fit for purpose and that they support the desire of Welsh Government to ensure that both the statutory sector and voluntary sector are integrated into the new arrangements. The Directions Powers were drafted in such a way that there was plenty of opportunity for the voluntary sector to be fully engaged which was very helpful. The voluntary sector has been fully engaged and involved in the development of policy and practice throughout. The sector has welcomed and contributed fully to that work, even though there has been little or no funding to support the time given.

The roles of Director of Operations and Independent Chair of the Advisory Group have been very effective in ensuring the oversight and direction of the NAS as a whole. The joint working and ongoing discussions between all the stakeholders including social services, education, health, academics and the voluntary sector has resulted in a much more shared understanding of the challenges faced by adoptive families when they take on the rewarding but far from easy task of parenting children who have experienced abuse, loss and grief.

The strength and effectiveness of the new arrangement was fully tested in August when it was announced that BAAF Cymru was going into administration and the National Adoption Service was able to take over the Wales Adoption Register in a very short time frame and help support St.David's to take over the other BAAF functions.

Despite this positive progress in developing the structure of the new NAS there has been slow progress in the areas of Adoption Support, recruitment of parents for older children and sibling groups and service user engagement. The main reason for this slow progress has been the very limited capacity of the central team and the reluctance of regions to pool their individual resources to strengthen the work of the national team.

What seems to be happening instead is that each region is using their local resources to develop local models and policies for adoption support, recruitment and marketing in the hope that they will fit within a national picture rather than starting with the national framework and then adapting where necessary to fit local differences. A recent development grant from Welsh Government for development work in this financial year is helping to address this difficulty.

Question 1

What are your views on the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopter parents?

There have been a number of improvements in the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adoptive parents as a result of the National Adoption Service. The regionalisation of services has improved the availability of adopter training and preparation and there has been some reduction in the timescale from enquiry to approval and increased consistency in service during this period. There are signs that we are now moving into a situation where more prospective adopters are recruited who are willing to take a single young child, than there are children waiting who match that description.

How could this be improved?

A National Marketing Strategy which is currently being prepared will help in the recruitment of parents who can take the harder to place children and sibling groups currently waiting in the system. However improved marketing will not, on its own, achieve this and adopters will need to be confident that adequate support is available if they are going to commit to these challenges in the numbers needed to meet the needs of the children who are waiting.

Question 2

What is your experience of and view of the matching process and support for the transition?

The National Adoption Service has taken some steps to develop a best practice model for 'family finding'. This has happened along side changes in the family finding systems available (the loss of BAAF and the start of Adoption Link) but it has been very helpful to have some capacity to provide a national overview. This is still a work in progress.

The support for transition from foster care to adoption has not yet been the focus of the NAS and is an area where there still needs to be improvement and a best practice model developed.

How could this be improved?

The lessons which are currently being learnt through the Adoption Cohort Study undertaken by Cardiff University will be very helpful in informing this work on transitions, but it is hard to see how the very small national team will have the capacity to take the information gathered and progress it to the point where practice is changed unless additional resources are available to them in the future.

Question 3

Do you think there is sufficient information and support for children and young people including access to quality life-story work?

It is clear that access to good quality life story work is very poor at the moment, although there are one or two areas of good practice across Wales. There is still much to be done to ensure that meaningful life story information is passed on to adopters in a timely fashion and indeed to agree what 'a timely fashion' means!

Support for adopted children and young people is also very poor with only TALK Adoption run by After Adoption and funded only by small short term grants.

How could this be improved?

Without a secure source of funding to progress these services at an all Wales level it is hard to see how things can be improved.

Question 4

What post-adoption support for children, young people and families (including from social services, education, health and mental health services) is available and what more could be done in this area?

Adoptive parents tell us that there has been little progress in this area. Parents look at the Adoption Support Fund and Pupil Premium Plus investment in England and question why similar provision is not available to their families in Wales. Many families continue to struggle to cope with very, very difficult situations and receive assessments of need carried out by social services intake teams who do not have specialist knowledge of adoption and often do not provide appropriate support. In some cases this assessment route makes things worse for the families instead of helping them.

Having said that, there has been progress in a number of areas:

- All new adoptive parents in Wales will receive free membership of Adoption UK for the first year of their adoptive journey this year.
- There is now a calendar of support groups and family days visible to all on the NAS website.
- Adoption UK is currently being funded by Welsh Government to deliver workshops across Wales to raise awareness about Child to Parent aggression.
- The Pupil Deprivation Grant is now available to support both LAC and adopted children in school and Adoption UK has been involved in raising awareness of the support adopted children may need to access education.
- Work is underway to develop an adopter data base which will allow ongoing communication with adopters after the adoption order is granted.
- Adoptive parents and adopted children and young people are being consulted more frequently and plans are being developed to engage them more fully in the service going forwards.
- Other developments such as the development of a model of best practice in

adoption support, a review into the use of financial allowances for adoption and a consideration of best practice model for the assessment of need when historic adoption support cases present, are underway and will help to achieve more consistency in adoption support across Wales.

How could this be improved?

The new arrangements regarding assessment under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act have yet to be tested in regard to adoption support.

Adoption UK remains of the view that some mechanism is needed to ring fence some funding for adoption support on a pan Wales basis. This would allow the establishment of, multi disciplinary centre(s) of excellence in adoption support which could be used to support families where ever they are. It could be a wider service which addresses the needs of all children who have experienced early trauma, grief and loss since their needs in family support, education and health will be similar.

Question 5

Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee's attention?

We believe that whilst there is still a long way to go, the last three years since the committee undertook its first inquiry have seen some really positive developments in the adoption system in Wales. We commend the vision of the Welsh Government in starting this work and their ongoing commitment to continuing the work. We know that austerity in public services will continue to challenge the ability of services to change and develop but we are committed to doing all we can to ensure that adoptive families are able to guide and contribute to the solutions.

Agenda Item 3

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Gwaith dilynol ar Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru | Follow-up to Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales

CYPE(4)-02-16 – Paper 2

Ymateb gan : Astudiaeth Cohort Mabwysiadu Cymru
Response from : Wales Adoption Cohort Study

Overview Question

What are your views in the Welsh Government's progress in respect of the 16 recommendations and the 25 'detailed actions' set out on pages 5-11 of the [Committee's report](#).

Our research team is conducting a Wales-wide research study of all families who had a child (or children) placed with them for adoption between July 1st 2014 and July 31st 2015. The study involves collection and analysis of all Child Adoption Reports for children placed in that period (over 350 records) together with a sample of over 100 adoptive families who are participating in a prospective, longitudinal survey of their views and experiences of the adoption process (at four months post-placement and again 12 months thereafter). The survey includes two questionnaires and, for a subsample of 40 families, an interview component. We anticipate that, once finalised, our findings will be able to inform an evaluation of progression for several of the 16 recommendations described in the 2012 report (specifically, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15). We have completed some preliminary analysis in order to respond to the Committee inquiry into adoption services in Wales. We would welcome the opportunity to feed our findings back to the committee at a later date, once our analysis is complete in the spring of 2016.

Question 1

What are your views on the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopter parents?

We are in the process of exploring adopter parents' views of their assessment and preparation for adoption in our interview work and will be in a position to comment further about these findings in due course. At this stage, it is clear to us that experiences are varied.

Our initial data analysis from the first questionnaire reveals positive findings with regard to the role of the medical advisors in Wales. Specifically, we asked adopters if they had met with the medical advisor for adoption. Over 97% responded 'yes' and the remainder missed the question. Over 94% of parents reported that they had read the report written by the medical advisor for adoption, or had been told about the content of the report. Finally, over 30% of medical advisor reports had identified support needs for the family and/or child. Approximately 63% had not identified support needs in the area of health and 4% of parents were not sure. Taken together, this suggests that adoptive parents have received, read and can recall key aspects of the work undertaken by the medical advisors.

How could this be improved?

It may be worth exploring how medical advisors have achieved these levels of success with regard to process and practice.

Question 2

What is your experience of and view of the matching process and support for the transition?

Despite the evidence that stable out-of-home arrangements such as adoption play an important part in assuring the well-being of vulnerable children, little research has focused on factors that predict a child being placed for adoption once they have been taken into care. We have used the Child Adoption Report (completed by social workers) to investigate which factors have a bearing on the length of time taken to secure an adoption placement from the time a child becomes looked after.

We examined if organizational factors (initially accommodated under section 20, use of mother and baby placement, child placed as part of a sibling group, viability assessments carried out on family members and if the father was known), child characteristics (gender, health, removed at birth, externalising behaviour problems and attachment difficulties) and adverse childhood experiences (exposure to domestic violence, prenatal exposure to substances and birth parent characteristics) were associated with an increased length of time to placement for adoption.

The number of days between becoming looked after and placed for adoption varied in our sample from 0 to 1,910 (over 5 years). The median number of days was 436 (mean 523 days). Of the variables we considered as part of our analysis, identified developmental delay, child having serious and enduring health problems, child behaviour problems, and exposure to drugs and/or alcohol prenatally, attachment difficulties, confirmed exposure to domestic violence and child being removed at birth were all associated with longer length of time to adoptive placement. The child being removed at birth was associated with a shorter length of time to placement.

How could this be improved?

We believe these preliminary findings point to the value of scrutinising *why* these factors result in longer time to placement. Possibilities include aspects of social work practice and procedure that are invoked in relation to these variables, the current landscape and feasibility of inter-agency working, as well as the interplay with the adoptive family and their support needs (specifically in relation to these factors).

Question 3

Do you think there is sufficient information and support for children and young people including access to quality life-story work?

Our preliminary analysis of parent-reports of child symptoms of psychological distress are consistent with **recommendation 11**, that the *Welsh Government should, as a matter of urgency, work with the Welsh NHS Confederation in respect of provision to adopted children to audit current provision and identify gaps*.

At three-four months post placement, our analysis of a standardised measure of child mental health (the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, Goodman, 1997) revealed that 22% of 2-4 year old children had conduct problem scores that could be classed as high or very high (which contrasts with an estimate of 8% in the general population). This pattern was mirrored in the 4-9 year old age group where 40% of children had conduct problem scores that could be classed as high or very high (compared to an estimate of 10% in the general population). Our findings are similar for emotional problems, peer problems, hyperactivity and low prosocial behaviour. These ratings were made at about 4 months post placement and we will test whether parenting ratings have changed when we follow families up 12 months later. Whatever the factors are that are influencing parent perceptions of children's behaviour and distress, these findings suggest the need for enhanced support for families.

We note that recommendation 8 states that *every adopted child should be offered quality life-story work*. Our preliminary findings present a mixed picture of adopter parents' experiences.

At four months into placement, two thirds of families in our study had not yet been given their child's life storybook. A similar proportion of adopters parenting children over the age of two at placement, did not feel that their child had a good enough understanding of the reasons for their adoption (consistent with their age and developmental stage). On a more positive note, the majority of life storybooks, which had been provided, were thought to be of good quality. Early findings also suggest that some parents lacked confidence in talking to their child about adoption and wanted better advice and guidance on how best to carry out meaningful life story work. Advice that had been given was not always consistent.

How could this be improved?

We will have a clearer sense of ways to improve services once we have a complete data set that includes follow-up information from families at 12 months post-placement. We are engaged in a dialogue with our advisory group (which includes representation from the National Adoption Service, AFA Cymru, Adoption UK and St. David's Children's Society Voluntary Adoption Agency) and will work with them to consider potential improvements that could be made in response to our programme of work.

Question 4

What post-adoption support for children, young people and families (including from social services, education, health and mental health services) is available and what more could be done in this area?

Our preliminary findings converge on the view that adoptive parents and children need early access to a diverse range of support that is flexible, dynamic and responsive to their individual needs.

We are in position to comment on some of the unmet support identified by parents. At four months into placement, nearly one in three said they had needed financial support (either by way of a settling in grant, an adoption allowance, or both). More than a quarter of families were in need of support to help children make better sense of their lives (life story work). Sixteen percent wanted help in working towards improving family relationships - in particular, support to help promote healthy sibling relationships. A similar proportion of parents said they needed further training to better understand and support their child (such as safe base training).

Other less frequently identified unmet support needs at four months into placement, included help to smoothly navigate the legal process for adoption, help to access health appointments (for physical health needs or developmental concerns), provision of therapeutic support, and support for education (including help to address the emotional needs adopted children may have in school).

Most adoptive parents in our study, rated the support shown by their adoption social worker favourably, many of whom were considered to be a good source of emotional support. However the response from their child's social worker was rated more variably, depending on whether they were perceived as having a good understanding of the complex and often uncertain developmental trajectory for many adopted children.

A small number of parents shared anxieties about revealing support needs or complaining about the poor quality support provided by social workers, for fear of ramification. Parents talked about not wanting to '*rock the boat*' before the adoption order had been made. A perceived power imbalance in the adoptive parent / social worker relationship at times was perceived as a hindrance to effective communication.

Previous research by Ottaway and colleagues (2014), investigated the provision and experience of adoption support services in Wales prior to the implementation of the National Adoption Service (<http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/140702researchen.pdf>). Ottaway et al. (2014) highlighted that the adoption awareness of social work staff was variable, particularly in local authority statutory children's teams (where most referrals for adoption support post-Adoption Order were required to be received). As a result, the complex and multi-faceted needs of many adopted children resulting from trauma, loss, the experience of abuse within their birth families and attachment difficulties were being under-recognised. This meant that adoptive parents often felt judged or blamed when approaching their local authority for help and support.

How could this be improved?

We wonder about the possibility of sharing instances of good practice across the country where there is a true sense of partnership working between children's social workers, the adoption social worker and adopter families. There may also be some value in simply communicating with families on a regular basis in a fairly informal way such that they feel the door remains open to support or signposting to support if and when it is needed. We recognise there is a cost and resource implication here, but the psychological, social and financial cost of not providing this support is likely to be greater (certainly in the longer term).

We note recommendation 15 regarding workforce development. Given the significant issues which are continuing to arise regarding the lack of specialist knowledge in relation to the needs of those affected by adoption, specialist learning and teaching around permanence could helpfully be embedded into qualifying programmes and the CPEL framework. This could include, for example, advanced training on child development and well-being; working with trauma and loss; understanding, assessing and supporting the life-long needs of adopted children, adoptive families and birth families (particularly around issues of contact and identity in adoption, and in recognising and reducing child to parent violence). This would, we hope, have the potential to 'normalise' the need for support and therefore increase the likelihood of support needs being recognised and met at an early stage and later on, recognising the life-long impact of adoption.

Question 5

Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee's attention?

With respect to **recommendation 15** relating to *identifying and addressing gaps in respect of knowledge of child development and attachment theory*, we believe there is a clear identified need to better support social workers pre- and post-qualification. Alongside the suggestions noted above, scrutiny of Child Adoption Reports reveals potential discrepancies in the classification and definition of attachment problems (broadly stated) as well as potential medical problems variously described as development delay versus chronic physical health issues. There is also variation in the use of term related to child externalising behaviour. It's unclear to us how these classifications are derived and whether they are derived in a systematic and consistent way across Wales, within and between the regions. We are concerned that the varied use of these labels and terms may stigmatize children, raise anxiety among parents, and hinder the development of appropriate support planning that is specific to the needs of the family and child. We wonder whether (with appropriate training) using short and well validated checklists as part of a holistic and systematic approach to assessment might assist social workers in their day-to-day assessments.

As a research team part-funded by the National Institute of Social Health Care Research (Welsh Government), we are eager to support the work of the Committee and that of the National Adoption Service. We anticipate that in

Spring of 2016 our data collection will be complete and we will have made good progress in distilling the key messages emerging from what is promising to be, a rich dataset. We would welcome the opportunity to offer additional insights on some of the recommendations and action points from the 2012 report with particular regard to post-placement support for families and children.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/HL/1620/15

Ann Jones AM
Chair – Children, Young People
and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

13 January 2016

Dear Ann

Follow-up inquiry to adoption services in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 14 December which follows up the earlier inquiry on adoption services in Wales.

I can confirm that the Welsh Government has no plans to extend the remit of the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Coordinators. As you know, local authorities are required to designate a post which has a specific focus on the educational needs of looked after children and care leavers for whom the authority acts as the corporate parent. There is a specific statutory context to that role which focusses on the responsibilities of the corporate parent. I do not believe that it would be appropriate to extend this particular requirement to other learners who are not in the care of the local authority.

I am sure though you will appreciate that I do not under-estimate some of the challenges that face adopted children in education.

You are already aware of my decision to extend the terms and conditions of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) to also include support for adopted children. My officials have discussed the plans to target support for adopted children through the looked after children element of the PDG with a wide range of stakeholders. The new arrangements will allow the regional education consortia and partners – including local authorities, schools as well as adoptive parents and adopted children - to develop interventions which will have a beneficial impact on all children, but our expectation will be that they will have a greater benefit on children who are or were looked after and those who have been adopted from care.

The Committee has asked for some clarification of these arrangements. For clarity, I will deal with each of these as they were outlined in your letter:

- Allocations of PDG funding to education consortia are calculated on the basis of numbers of looked after children only within their area. However, a significant feature of the new grant arrangements is that consortia are in receipt of, and accountable for, a sufficient quantum of resource for them to commission services strategically to better support the needs of both looked after and adopted children, many of whom will experience similar challenges in education. In view of this more strategic approach the PDG funding, unlike that for e-FSM learners, will not be allocated to the school where they are being educated on the basis of £1,050 per learner (in 2015-16, £1,150 in 2016-17).
- Support for adopted children is targeted in the same way as looked after children and other vulnerable learners. Each consortium was asked to provide an outline spending plan for the use of the allocated funding. At the end of this financial year they will be required to demonstrate how they have used the grant to support both looked after and adopted children. They will also need to evidence how the funding has had a positive impact on the educational attainment of these learners.
- The consortia strategic spending plans are broadly similar but do reflect specific regional needs and priorities. The common features in the plans are:
 - An allocation of funding has been set aside for bespoke training such as emotional, behavioural and awareness training packages for schools including foster carers, adoptive parents and school governors.
 - There is funding for the sharing of good practice through school to school collaboration.
 - A proportion of funding has been earmarked as bursary support for specific children – this includes individual and group support packages such as services which are designed to increase learners' emotional and social skills which, as evidence shows, can make a positive impact on school achievement.
- As part of the end of financial year evaluation, we expect consortia to work with local authorities, schools and families to understand the impact the grant has had on the learners it is designed to support. Each consortium will collate information from each of the local authorities in their region and assess progress against comparable criteria which measure the effectiveness of the PDG spend on adopted children. This may include:
 - Details of school attendance.
 - Details of attainment – namely literacy and numeracy scores from national testing.
 - Softer information about the impact of the training delivered to schools obtained through feedback and discussions with school challenge advisors.
- The consortia will endeavour to target support for adopted children alongside those who are looked after, although knowledge about adoptive status is not always shared by parents. Where it is known then bespoke training on specific issues can be addressed at a local, cluster or regional level. Bespoke training may include attachment awareness, mental health awareness and positive classroom management. The funding set aside as bursaries can also be targeted for specific needs of groups or individuals as necessary.

From April 2016, the Welsh Government will introduce a rapid review process to evaluate the effectiveness of the first year of the new funding arrangements.

I am sure that you will also know that we have been working closely with Adoption UK (Wales) – and have had a number of discussions with the National Adoption Service - in the past year to try and understand better how adoptive families can be supported in schools. We have already produced a video for schools to try and raise awareness that moving on from looked after status and becoming adopted does not necessarily mean that the legacy of why the child needed to be adopted in the first place has been overcome.

We are presently working with Adoption UK (Wales) to develop a new bilingual electronic booklet on raising the achievement of adopted children in school. It will be based on two earlier successful, but now out of date, publications with new material added in where appropriate and will be aimed at schools. The new guidance will be available shortly and we will be considering further how we can raise awareness of the booklet, and the issues it covers, with education consortia, local authorities and schools across Wales.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Date: 21 January 2016

Time: 12.30pm to 14.00pm

Title: Evidence paper – Children and Young People Draft Budget Allocations for 2016-17.

1. Introduction

This paper provides comments and information to the Committee regarding Children and Young People future programme budget proposals outlined within the Draft Budget which was laid on 8 December 2015. The budget for this area sits within the Communities and Tackling Poverty (CTP) MEG.

2. Background

Compared to the 2016-17 Budget Baseline the total DEL allocation for the CTP MEG has increased by £65.289m to £677.323m.

This includes a decrease in Resource DEL of £3.022m to £333.592m, and a net increase to the Capital budget of £68.311m to £343.731m.

The following summary financial tables show the overall effect on the CTP Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) baseline budget.

Summary Financial Tables:

CTP MEG	2015-16 Supp. Budget £000	2016-17 Budget Baseline £000	2016-17 Changes £000	2016-17 Draft Budget £000
Resource DEL	341,514	336,614	-3,022	333,592
Capital DEL	395,420	275,420	68,311	343,731
DEL Baseline	736,934	612,034	65,289	677,323

Within the CTP MEG, the specific impact on the Children, Young People and Families (CYP&F) budget is summarised in this separate table.

CYP&F	2015-16 Supp. Budget £000	2016-17 Budget Baseline £000	2016-17 Changes £000	2016-17 Draft Budget £000
Resource DEL	125,384	125,384	-946	124,438
Capital DEL	6,950	0	3,000	3,000
DEL Baseline	132,334	125,384	2,054	127,438

The Capital baseline is zero for 2016-17 as the 2015-16 funding of £6.950m was all non-recurrent funding for the Flying Start Programme, of which £4.950m was found within the MEG to support the Flying Start programme as it expanded to provide support for double the number of children, from 18,000 to 36,000.

3. Budget Overview

The overarching aim of the Communities and Tackling Poverty Department is to unite the work of the Welsh Government and its partners in tackling poverty and achieving a fairer, more sustainable and better quality of life for communities, families and individuals, both now and in the long term.

The portfolio works to prevent poverty, help people out of poverty and help build resilient communities where families and individuals can access the support they need.

We are helping children to get the best start in life and supporting families. We aim to ensure that one of the most basic well-being needs - for a good home - is met, especially for people who would otherwise be excluded from the housing market. We are investing and working with communities in our most deprived areas, to improve their social, economic and environmental well-being. We are taking action to embed equality, including the rights of children and young people, across the Welsh Government and the public sector; and supporting the third sector to play its part in achieving the outcomes we are working for and want to see in Wales.

The Department has a number of specific priorities which reflect and support the delivery of the Programme for Government, many of which also have a direct impact on children and young people:

- supporting families and children, in particular through Flying Start and Families First;
- tackling poverty and promoting community resilience including Communities First;
- providing affordable, safe and warm housing for children and families through our Social Housing Grant Programme;

- improving the quality of the social housing stock in Wales through our Major Repairs Allowance programme;
- regeneration of our towns and communities through Vibrant and Viable Places;
- providing assistance through our Supporting People programme to enable people to live in their own homes for longer;
- mitigating the impact of welfare reform;
- increasing financial and digital inclusion, including Discretionary Assistance Fund and Credit Unions;
- increasing the availability of quality, affordable childcare and play provision;
- promoting the rights and participation of children and young people
- promoting equality and inclusion; and
- supporting the development of the Third Sector and enhancing its strategic relationship with Government.

4. Detail of Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) Allocations

A summary of the Children, Young People and Families budget allocations at Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) level is attached at Annex 1. This provides a breakdown of:

- 2016-17 allocations;
- 2015-16 allocations - projected outturns for 2015-16, at this point in the financial year, are to budget; and
- 2014-15 final outturn figures.

To note, there were no changes between the final budget December 2014 and the first supplementary budget June 2015 other than for the transfer out of the Advocacy budget to the Health and Social Services MEG.

The changes between the 2016-17 baseline budget and the revised draft budget for 2016-17 are as follows:

- Families First reduction of £1.074m
- Children's Commissioner reduction of £0.172m
- Childcare & Play strategies increase of £0.3m
- Flying Start Capital increase of £3.0m

The impact of these changes is fully documented within the supporting Integrated Impact Assessment document.

5. Children's rights and equalities

The Children & Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places the duty to have due regard to the UNCRC on all Ministers when they exercise any of their functions.

To enable Ministers, and their officials, to comply with this duty, there are robust processes in place set out in our Children's Rights Scheme, including the CRIA process which prompts consideration of the UNCRC, the impact on children and young people, how it will further children's rights, how the positive impact can be maximised and the negative impact negated or mitigated.

An Integrated Impact Assessment Approach has been undertaken for the 2015-16 budget which incorporates consideration of all duties and mandatory impact assessments. Children's rights and the impact of budgetary decisions on children, young people and their families have been considered as part of this Integrated Impact Assessment Approach.

The role of the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (BAGE) is to provide advice and to share expertise and best practice on equality issues to support the continual improvement of the Impact Assessment (IA) undertaken of the Welsh Government Budget. We work with BAGE throughout the year to improve our approach and shape our decisions.

In addition, the Support for Children's Rights budget within the Children, Young People and Families Action is specifically aimed at taking forward children's rights and the Rights of Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure 2011, supporting Ministers and officials to comply with the duty on Ministers to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC and further promoting knowledge and understanding of children and young people's rights. This includes:

- maintaining the contract for training professionals in children's rights,; including lecturers, social work trainers, teachers, youth workers, health professionals, police etc.;
- the continuation of the promotion of children's rights in line with Section 5 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 by using (and developing) existing promotional tools including the Welsh Government website pages, the UNCRC Getting it Right website, the on-line training package, the CYP Complaints Procedure, the App and the YouTube clip; and
- Implementation of the findings from the independent evaluation of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) process.

In applying sustainable development to the budget process within Communities and Tackling Poverty, decisions have been made that reflect the five ways of working of sustainable development:

- Collaboration – recognising that many of the solutions to the 'sustainability' challenges Wales faces cannot be solved by one organisation. Maintaining our support for advice on sustainable development to all sectors will help in identifying opportunities for collaboration. We will also continue to pursue opportunities for collaboration across Government and with other partners,

including the third sector, in order that programmes and services reach into the communities that most need them.

- Integration – our Flying Start, Families First and Communities First programmes have shared outcomes promoting prosperity and employment, learning and fulfilling potential, and health and well-being. They also help deliver objectives in our Strategic Equality Plan. These outcomes are being brought together into a Common Outcomes Framework, which is aimed at promoting greater alignment of delivery across all three programmes.
- Long term –We have taken account of the potential **long term** impacts of our decisions and balanced this against our short-term needs. This has enabled us to plan on the basis of recognising challenges before they arise so that we are able to balance short-term pressures with long-term needs. In particular through investing in early years and family support, since the evidence is that this will have greater benefits in the long term.
- Prevention – seeking to tackle problems at source, rather than tackling the consequences of these problems at a later date. Prevention and early intervention is an approach which not only benefits people and communities but has the potential to generate long term cost savings. This approach is at the heart of our tackling poverty programmes, in particular Families First, and in our approach to tackling the inequalities experienced by those with protected characteristics.
- Involvement– recognising the importance of involving people in the decisions that affect them: for example community involvement is a key feature of the Communities First programme.

Prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those who are most disadvantaged and most vulnerable is critical, particularly in the current economic climate. The Strategic Equality Plan and Tackling Poverty Action Plan provide an important framework for these efforts. In particular, action to tackle poverty and action to reduce inequalities not only complement, but also build on one another.

Evidence shows that people with certain protected characteristics are at greater risk of living in low income households and initiatives that tackle poverty will therefore have a positive impact on those groups. We also know that certain ethnic minority groups, disabled people, lone parents (who are predominantly women), and younger people who are not in employment, education and training are more at risk of living in low income households. In particular, disabled people are disproportionately represented in both economically inactive and workless households. We will continue to identify opportunities to “dovetail” the Welsh Government’s Strategic Equality Plan with the objectives in the Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, and support those children and families with certain protected characteristics. There is already a greater emphasis on monitoring the outcomes of those groups at risk of living in poverty

and those with protected characteristics within the programmes within the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio.

6. Other Information

Monitoring, Evaluation & Value for money

A range of activity is currently underway to allow us to build on the findings of the independent national evaluation of Flying Start. The first strand of work involves qualitative research following 72 families on their journey through Flying Start over three years. The first annual report is due to be published on 18 January 2016 and will be circulated to Committee Members on the day of publication. The second strand of work entails utilizing existing datasets to monitor and evaluate Flying Start. We are conducting some work with the new Administrative Data Research Centre for Wales. Independent researchers will be exploring differences in education and health outcomes for those living in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas. Thirdly, we are conducting additional analysis of the Flying Start developmental assessments. In addition, we are working with Local Authorities to update our approach to monitoring the future outcomes of children when they leave Flying Start. In relation to Families First, we will continue to collect data from Local Authorities. This will be used to monitor performance, assess outcomes for families and drive the future improvement and delivery.

Programme for Government

In 2011, we put forward the most ambitious and comprehensive **Programme for Government** since devolution, which now includes 547 separate commitments covering the breadth of the services we are responsible for. We did so in the knowledge that the outlook for public finances was challenging.

Dealing with austerity has been a major test for the Welsh Government and devolution as a whole, but we have delivered by maintaining a firm focus on delivery and supporting those most in need. We have done this through setting four overarching priorities on behalf of the people of Wales, on health and health services, educational attainment, growth and jobs, and supporting children, families and deprived communities. On each of these key priorities, we have focused our resources in order to make a difference to people's lives.

As a Government we have also remained committed to the principle of transparency so this Government can be judged on its record. Since 2011 we have published an annual report to provide a transparent account of what is being done and what is being achieved against our 547 commitments measured by 336 outcomes and performance indicators.

We published the final Programme for Government annual report in June 2015 which showed that more than 95 per cent of our commitments have either been delivered, or are on track to be delivered.

In preparing for future financial restraints, we have sought to target investment to maintain the focus of our spending plans on our main priorities of: health and health services; growth and jobs; educational attainment; and supporting children, families and deprived communities.

Despite the challenges presented by the late timing of the UK Spending Review, we have used planning for the Draft Budget 2016-17 as an opportunity to look ahead to target investment in sustainable outcomes and adopt the five key ways of working established by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Act provides public bodies with a shared purpose through the establishment of seven well-being goals for Wales, and the five key ways of working ensure that public bodies take a long-term perspective when making decisions; that they consider what actions are required to prevent problems arising in future, or to prevent current problems from getting worse; that they take an integrated and collaborative approach to decision making; and that they involve users in the planning and delivery of services.

Preventative Spend

Preventative spend remains a key theme of the family support programmes. Families First has been subject to a three year independent evaluation. The final report was published in September and highlighted the potential large cost savings the programme can make through helping families avoid poor long-term outcomes. Flying Start is an early intervention programme informed by the growing international body of evidence that supports the positive role of interventions in early years in improving the development of children and young people and their prospects in adulthood. A report published in February 2015 by the Early Intervention Foundation highlighted the fiscal cost of missed opportunities to provide early, targeted support to children and young people. The report concluded “early Intervention is the smart and realistic choice for using ever scarcer public money”.

The Children’s Commissioner’s role in scrutinising the government and ensuring that legislation, policies and decisions provide the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families again very much focuses on **preventative measures**. Likewise our funding allocations for Advocacy and Supporting Children’s Rights have a strong focus on **preventative spend** – informing, reassuring and empowering children to make positive changes in their lives, and resolving issues without the need for undue and stressful escalation.

In drafting our budget proposals for 2016-17, we have adopted an outcomes-based approach, ensuring that our proposed funding allocations reflect our overarching Priorities for Wales, with an emphasis on tackling poverty by working collaboratively with our partners to improve the futures of communities across Wales. It is preventative in nature, taking a long term view and working with communities.

Specifically, the Children, Young People and Families Action supports a number of key programmes including Flying Start and Families First, both of which focus on supporting children and their families. In 2016-17 we will be investing £119.472m (revenue spend). The Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) detail is attached at Annex 1.

Legislation

Potential legislation affecting Family Support is unknown at present.

7. Specific areas

Flying Start

The Flying Start Budget has been fully protected and will be maintained at almost **£77 million**. This will ensure the good work on making sure children get the best start in life continues.

Grant allocations to Local Authorities are not disaggregated into Flying Start entitlements. Local Authorities are expected to submit, discuss and agree an annual work plan which will identify how the grant will be spent.

Local Authorities submit data on a termly basis. This data is used to assess how the programme is performing, to identify areas of good practice and where performance could be improved. A Quality Improvement Plan is agreed with each Local Authority to drive improvements in performance and delivery. The programme has also been subject to a range of evaluation activity.

Costs per child of the childcare offer for 2015-16 are not yet available. Therefore, estimates used for cost per child are based on figures for the year 2014-15 and are as follows:

- Cost per childcare session contracted: £23.02
- Cost per childcare hour contracted: £9.21

The take up of the language and play entitlement now referred to as Speech, Language and Communication provision continues to be defined as a course offered to an individual parental figure who attended the first session. The delivery and implementation of this entitlement of the programme is monitored in the same way as the other elements in terms of submitting relevant data which is then subject to the analysis referred to above.

Evaluative evidence suggests that children benefitting from Flying Start Childcare provision and the Speech, Language and Communication provision are seeing improved outcomes in their social development and are better prepared for school and for learning. Investment is targeted in the communities with the highest proportion of households with children aged 0-4 who are on income benefits.

The evidence provided in evaluation reports commissioned by the Welsh Government shows the Flying Start programme has resulted in greater engagement with family services than would have been the case without the programme. This is vital for the early identification of need and encouraging families to take up other Flying Start entitlements and other early years services. Awareness of, referral to and take-up of parenting programmes and Language and Play was also higher amongst parents in the Flying Start group. Greater engagement with early years services is important for building the medium and long term impacts that the programme is expected to deliver in the future.

The evidence also shows that local family services have a stronger reputation among families in Flying Start areas than in areas where the programme is not operating. For example, families in the Flying Start group were more likely to have noticed an improvement in local services over the last two years. Satisfaction with local childcare provision was also higher amongst Flying Start families in terms of quality and its ability to help children learn and develop.

Information from annual progress reports, inspection reports and stakeholder interviews, taken alongside the number of families who are now accessing childcare, the improved qualification levels of staff and available trend data on Stages of Growth (SoGs) data and teacher assessments, suggests that there are firm indications that Flying Start has had a positive impact on the quality of childcare provision.

Value for money of childcare within the programme is assessed on an on-going basis. Costs are compared across Local Authorities, take up of places purchased is monitored and childcare budgets agreed as part of annual work plans.

Every family in a Flying Start area should have ongoing access to an appropriate language and play group. From this, a more targeted approach based on assessment and referral can be taken where there is evidence of additional need. In some local authorities, speech and language therapists are employed as part of the core Flying Start team. Where this approach can be linked to evidence of local need and impact on outcomes, it will be supported by the Welsh Government

Other support for families

Families First is an innovative programme that promotes the development by all local authorities of effective multi-agency systems and support for families, with a clear emphasis on **prevention and early intervention** for families, particularly those living in **poverty**. The Welsh Government has committed to support the Families First programme during this Assembly term and we will be investing **£42.6m in 2016-17**. This is a reduction of £1.074m compared with 2015-16 budget allocations. However, by the end of this Assembly term we will have allocated **£226.5m** to Families First.

Funding for the Families Information Services in Wales is part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). It is for each Local Authority to decide the proportion of its RSG it will allocate to its Family Information Service.

The Welsh Government is committed to Wales delivering an unrivalled Family Information Service (FIS). A contract is in place which will provide a central source of support to the FIS network. It will promote quality and consistency of FIS in Wales by promoting the Welsh Government's '*Delivering Quality Information for Families Together – A guidance document for the Families Information Services in Wales*'.

Children and Families Delivery Grant

The high-level aim of the Children and Families Delivery Grant is to reduce inequalities in health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. The grant supports families in practical, measurable ways, with particular emphasis on building family resilience and capacity to become less reliant on persistent interventions.

Since applications were approved there has been no change to the overall budget for the programme which remains at £10.1m. Changes have occurred to annual budgets within the programme as underspends due to slow start ups have transferred to later years. This has resulted in costs for 2016-17 increasing by approximately £13k from £3.3598m to £3.372m.

One project run by Children in Wales was commissioned to undertake additional work on children and young peoples participation during 2015-16 as part of the CFDG project and an additional £80k was awarded to undertake the work. The £80k was provided by Fairer Futures Division with Families Division budgets not affected.

Progress to date is considered good on all 5 projects funded under the programme. For example the CWLWM partnership has with some minor exceptions achieved all its targets within the 10% variance. Project partners are currently working together on a pilot to develop partnerships between registered child-minders and playgroups. This will support an integrated approach between childcare and funded early years foundation phase education in Wales. The aims of the project are to achieve more positive outcomes for children, improve sustainability of the setting, develop partnership working and support the needs of working parents. A comprehensive research study is also under way to identify parental needs.

Child Poverty

Tackling child poverty is a key priority for the Welsh Government. In our Revised Child Poverty Strategy, which we published in March 2015, we reaffirmed our

commitment to ambition of eradicating child poverty by 2020. We recognise the huge challenges we face in delivering this outcome, particularly in light of the impacts of Welfare Reform and their disproportionate impact on families with children. Nonetheless, setting this strategic direction is critical. We want to support parents to ensure children are provided with the best possible start in life. We want to break down those barriers which prevent many children and young people from achieving success and reaching their full potential. Furthermore, we want to mitigate the impacts of poverty through a continuing emphasis on access to services and support. Child poverty in Wales remains stubbornly high, with 31 percent of children in Wales living in low income households, during the three year period ending in 2013/14. By maintaining the ambition to eradicate child poverty, we are sending a strong message to all partners that we need to continue our focus on child poverty.

Our Revised Child Poverty Strategy maintains the three objectives of the 2011 Strategy, which are focussed on reducing worklessness, increasing skills and reducing inequalities in health and educational outcomes. It also includes two new objectives, which focus on using all available levers to create a strong economy which supports the tackling poverty agenda and supporting households to increase their income by mitigating the impacts of welfare reform and tackling the poverty premium. These new objectives reflect the key findings from the 2014 evaluation of the Child Poverty Strategy, which recognised the ongoing importance of investing in programmes and policies which prevent poverty, as well as supporting households “here and now” to achieve better outcomes.

Through the Welsh Government’s Revised Child Poverty Strategy and Tackling Poverty Action Plan, we are continuing to measure the outcomes of low income households, on an ongoing basis. We are also evaluating our tackling poverty programmes and are using evidence on “what works” to inform our decisions on future investment.

We remain fully committed to investing in the early years of a child’s life, recognising its key role to preventing poverty in the longer term. We will continue to invest in programmes such as Flying Start and Families First to deliver on this agenda. We also recognise the importance of supporting people into employment and increasing employability, given that work provides the most sustainable route out of poverty. Tackling poverty programmes such as Communities First will continue to play an important role.

Whilst we are making important progress on a number of key indicators, such as improving educational outcomes in the Foundation Phase and reducing the percentage of children living in workless households to its lowest level (14.6% as at the end of 2014), we know we need to do more. In particular, reducing educational inequalities remains a key priority. Programmes such as the Pupil Deprivation and Rewriting the Future are key to ensuring an ongoing focus on improving educational outcomes and raising aspirations amongst pupils from low income households.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Welsh Government does not have all the levers available to influence poverty levels. Some of the most important levers, such as changes to the tax and benefits system, are the responsibility of the UK Government.

The UK Government confirmed within their Autumn Statement 2015, £12 billion of annual welfare cuts to be delivered by 2019-20. These will hit low income households and those with children, and will add to the losses already incurred from welfare cuts implemented by the UK Government over the last few years.

Our latest report (produced by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, IFS) was published on 19 November 2015. This covers the UK Government's tax and benefit changes announced up to and including the July Budget, to be introduced between 2015–16 and 2019–20. Since this report was published, the Autumn Statement announced further changes including a reversal of the main cuts to tax credits, which were due to be implemented from April 2016. However, this protection will only provide short-term relief because tax credits will be phased out by 2018 and the planned cuts to Universal Credit were not reversed. This means the longer term impact remains broadly the same, as outlined by previous analysis.

Overall, the IFS expect the tax and benefit changes to increase the numbers of households below both absolute and relative poverty lines, relative to a scenario where these changes had not been introduced. On average, households in low income groups lose up to around 7% (or £1,461) of net income compared to a small gain (0.5% or £321) for households in the richest income groups (who benefit from the single tier pension and tax-free childcare).

The greatest losses will not be felt by the very poorest (either in cash or percentage terms), but by households in the lower middle of the income distribution. These households (which are particularly affected by the cuts to in-work support under Universal Credit) are located around the poverty line.

Taking into account the tax and benefit measures, as well as the introduction of the national living wage, the Resolution Foundation estimate up to a further 600,000 children in the UK will fall into poverty once all the UK Government's Summer Budget policy measures have taken effect. Two-thirds of this increase is among children in working households.

The Welsh Government cannot make up the significant shortfall of these cuts. However, mitigating the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales is part of the Welsh Government's wider strategy on tackling poverty. Investing in programmes such as Flying Start, Families First, Communities and Supporting People will all make an important contribution to the tackling poverty agenda in Wales.

We have based our spending decisions on an analysis of demands and needs in key public service areas which are of particular importance to those who need it most. In the challenging financial climate we have sought to focus resources on priorities based on an assessment of greatest positive impact and mitigate the effects of austerity where its impact is unavoidable.

Children's and young people's rights and entitlements

The budget for Children's and Young People's Rights has been protected for 2016/17. There is clear evidence that awareness of children's rights is increasing through the Children's Omnibus survey and that Government legislation, policies and programmes are having due regard to children's rights. While there has been significant progress, as set out in the Compliance Report published in June, momentum needs to be maintained. This will focus on internal training, external sector specific training, implementation of the independent evaluation, raising awareness of the UNCRC,

Children's Commissioner for Wales

We continue to support the Commissioner with significant funding in 2016-17. This demonstrates our on-going commitment to ensure that the rights of children and young people are represented by the Commissioner and their particular focus on promoting and championing children's rights, tackling poverty and advising and influencing government and other public bodies on this matter can continue. The Commissioner's substantial reserves has been raised as a concern in both the Public Accounts Committee and in Dr Shooter's Independent Review of the Children's Commissioner. The reduction in the Commissioner's budget can be offset by the Commissioner's reserves with little or no impact directly on children and young people. With such significant financial challenges, we have been consistent in our approach that priority must be to front line services that impact directly on children, young people and their families.

It is not for the Welsh Government to comment on the recommendations for the Children's Commissioner or for how the Commissioner allocates the budget made available to her. The Commissioner has however been very open and willing to keep me informed of her intentions in relation to the recommendations and we are aware that she has implemented some, has work in train in relation to some and is still considering others.

Advocacy

The responsibility for universal advocacy was transferred from the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio to the Health and Social Services portfolio in late 2014. This change was to help ensure cohesive and informed discussions on the development of a national approach to the provision of advocacy for children and young people. In light of this change, it is the Minister for Health and Social

Services who now leads on this area and has responsibility for any budgetary decisions.

Childcare and Play

In recognition of the role of carers and barriers to education we have provided funding to establish a targeted further education childcare pilot scheme to remove the barriers to education and tackle intergenerational deprivation. This is intended to provide an opportunity for those with caring responsibilities to be able to access further education without having to worry about the costs of childcare. In particular this pilot is intended to focus on positively impacting protected groups who would potentially see the greatest benefits, particularly on gender.

An additional £300k has been awarded in 2016-17 as part of a two year Budget Agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats in 2014 to look at this. A tendering exercise to identify a suitable contractor to undertake a feasibility study is currently underway. The feasibility study will determine what further support is required for young parents to help them return to Further Education, where childcare is a barrier. The feasibility study will be used to inform the proposed pilot in 2016-17. The remaining budget for Childcare and Play is being maintained at £2.7m in 2016-17 given its importance as a significant policy driver in relation to growth and jobs and in terms of tackling poverty.

In addition to the £2.7m Childcare and Play budget, we are also progressing a number of ESF operations. Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) was launched on 13 October 2015 for parents aged over 25, with a total budget of £10.9m up to 2018. When PaCE is extended to parents aged 16-24 the total cost of the operation will be £13.5 million. The Welsh Government is the lead beneficiary with DWP as joint beneficiary. DWP will employ 43 Parent Employment Advisers who will mostly be based within Flying Start settings, Families First and other family based centres. It will target almost 8,000 economically inactive parents over the life of the operation and support lone parents, parents from a workless household or assist a second earner in a working household. It will operate outside Communities First Clusters and will complement the Communities for Work ESF operation. No additional allocation has been made to the Childcare and Play budget in order to support PaCE but the necessary match funding is being provided via the Families First Budget.

The other ESF operation we are pursuing is Progress for Success (PfS) which has been developed alongside the draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. The main purpose of PfS is to increase the quality of provision accessed within registered maintained and non-maintained settings by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and play qualifications held by the existing Early Years, Childcare and Play workforce. PfS for West Wales and the Valleys is currently awaiting WEFO approval and we are continuing discussions with WEFO with regards to East Wales to enable a national program.

Turning to Play, we are continuing to deliver our manifesto commitment to improve opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety, and in particular to support improved access to play for children with disabilities. Wales a Play Friendly Country – Statutory Guidance has been published to support Local Authorities in complying with their duty to secure sufficient play opportunities and implementing their Play Action Plans. Local Authorities have been reminded of their responsibility to undertake and submit a Play Sufficiency Assessment and Play Action Plan to the Welsh Government by 31 March 2016. The Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit has been revised and has been circulated. In terms of funding for Play Wales, we previously granted funding of up to £401,620 for the period 1 October 2014 to 31 March 2015. I am currently considering an application from Play Wales for financial support to continue beyond 31 March 2016. I hope to be able to make a decision before the end of 2015 and will update the Committee in the New Year.

Lesley Griffiths AM
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

RESOURCE BUDGET - Departmental Expenditure Limit							
SPA	Actions	BEL Title	2014-15 Outturn	2015-16 Supplementary Budget	2016-17 Baseline Budget	2016-17 Changes	2016-17 Draft Budget
Children, Young People and Families	Children, Young People and Families	Children's Commissioner	1,715	1,715	1,715	-172	1,543
		Families First	46,450	43,652	43,652	-1,074	42,578
		Flying Start	69,555	76,894	76,894	0	76,894
		Childcare & Play Strategies	4,271	2,766	2,766	300	3,066
		Support for Children's Rights	518	357	357	0	357
		SPA/ACTION Total	122,509	125,384	125,384	-946	124,438
	Total Resource		122,509	125,384	125,384	-946	124,438

CAPITAL BUDGET - Departmental Expenditure Limit							
SPA	Actions	BEL Title	2014-15 Outturn	2015-16 Supplementary Budget	2016-17 Baseline Budget	2016-17 Changes	2016-17 Draft Budget
Communities and Tackling Poverty	Communities and Tackling Poverty	Flying Start	10,892	6,950	0	3,000	3,000
		SPA/ACTION Total	10,892	6,950	0	3,000	3,000
	Total Capital		10,892	6,950	0	3,000	3,000
	Total DEL		133,401	132,334	125,384	2,054	127,438

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) on the Budget 2016-17

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES (within the Communities and Tackling Poverty MEG)

OVERVIEW OF THE PORTFOLIO

The overarching aim of the Communities and Tackling Poverty Department is to unite the work of the Welsh Government and its partners in tackling poverty and achieving a fairer, more sustainable and better quality of life for communities, families and individuals, both now and in the long term.

The portfolio works to prevent poverty, help people out of poverty and help build resilient communities where families and individuals can access the support they need. Tackling child poverty (which remains stubbornly high in Wales) is a key priority. We are helping children to get the best start in life and supporting families. We aim to ensure that one of the most basic well-being needs - for a good home - is met, especially for people who would otherwise be excluded from the housing market. We are investing and working with communities in our most deprived areas, to improve their social, economic and environment and cultural well-being. We are taking action to embed equality, including the rights of children and young people, across the Welsh Government and the public sector; and supporting the third sector to play its part in achieving the outcomes we are working for and want to see in Wales. We recognise poverty is a key barrier to children and young people realising their rights. By focusing on improving outcomes and tackling poverty, we can make a fundamental contribution to delivering on children's rights in Wales.

The Department has a number of specific priorities which reflect and support the delivery of the Programme for Government, the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, many of which have a direct impact on children and young people:

- supporting families and children, in particular through Flying Start and Families First (but also through Communities First);
- tackling poverty and promoting community resilience including Communities First;
- providing affordable, safe and warm housing for children and families through our Social Housing Grant Programme;
- improving the quality of the social housing stock in Wales through our Major Repairs Allowance programme;
- regenerating our towns and communities through Vibrant and Viable Places;
- providing assistance through our Supporting People programme to enable people to live in their own homes for longer;
- mitigating the impact of welfare reform;

- increasing financial and digital inclusion, including Discretionary Assistance Fund and Credit Unions;
- increasing the availability of quality, affordable childcare and play provision;
- promoting the rights and participation of children and young people
- promoting equality and inclusion; and
- supporting the development of the Third Sector and enhancing its strategic relationship with Government.

SPEND PROFILE

Fiscal Resource DEL Limit				£000
SPA	2015-16 Supplementary Budget	2016-17 Budget Baseline	2016-17 Changes	2016-17 Draft Budget
Children, Young People and Families	125,384	125,384	-946	124,438
Communities and Tackling Poverty (Capital)	6,950	0	3,000	3,000

KEY CHANGES TO SPEND

Children, Young People and Families SPA

- Flying Start – remains cash flat
- Support for Children’s Rights – remains cash flat
- Families First - reduction of £1.074m
- Children’s Commissioner reduction of £0.172m
- Childcare & Play strategies increase of £0.3m

Communities and Tackling Poverty SPA (Capital)

- Flying Start - increase of £3m from the baseline budget

IMPACTS

In applying sustainable development to the budget process within Communities and Tackling Poverty, decisions have been made that reflect the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle:

- *Collaboration* – recognising that many of the solutions to the ‘sustainability’ challenges Wales faces cannot be solved by one organisation. Maintaining our support for advice on sustainable development to all sectors will help in identifying opportunities for collaboration. We will also continue to pursue opportunities for collaboration across Government and with other partners, including the third sector,

in order that programmes and services reach into the communities that most need them.

- *Integration* – our Flying Start, Families First and Communities First programmes have shared outcomes promoting prosperity and employment, learning and fulfilling potential, and health and well-being. They also help deliver objectives in our Strategic Equality Plan.
- *Long term* – We have taken account of the potential long term impacts of our decisions and balanced this against our short-term needs. This has enabled us to plan on the basis of recognising challenges before they arise so that we are able to balance short-term pressures with long-term needs. In particular, investing in early years and family support, since the evidence is that this will have greater benefits in the long term.
- *Prevention* – seeking to tackle problems at source, rather than tackling the consequences of these problems at a later date. Prevention and early intervention is an approach which not only benefits people and communities but has the potential to generate long term cost savings. This approach is at the heart of our tackling poverty programmes, in particular Families First, and in our approach to tackling the inequalities experienced by those with protected characteristics.
- *Involvement* - recognising the importance of involving people in the decisions that affect them: for example community involvement is a key feature of the Communities First programme.

Prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those who are most disadvantaged and most vulnerable is critical, particularly in the current economic climate. The Strategic Equality Plan and Tackling Poverty Action Plan provide an important framework for these efforts. In particular, action to tackle poverty and action to reduce inequalities not only complement, but also build on one another.

Evidence shows that people with certain protected characteristics are at greater risk of living in low income households and that initiatives that tackle poverty will therefore have a positive impact on those groups. We also know that certain ethnic minority groups, disabled people, lone parents (who are predominantly women), and younger people who are not in employment, education and training are more at risk of living in low income households. In particular, disabled people are disproportionately represented in both economically inactive and workless households. We recognise there will be significant challenges to delivering our targets for tackling poverty unless we have a strong focus on supporting disabled people into employment. We will continue to identify opportunities to “dovetail” the Welsh Government’s Strategic Equality Plan with the objectives in the Child Poverty Strategy and our Tackling Poverty Action Plan, and support those children and families with certain protected

characteristics. There is already a greater emphasis on monitoring the outcomes of those groups at risk of living in poverty and those with protected characteristics within the programmes within the Communities and Tackling Poverty portfolio.

Flying Start (Revenue)

The Flying Start programme aims to improve outcomes for children in some of the most disadvantaged areas across Wales. This is done through providing four key Flying Start entitlements to children under four years old and their families: enhanced health visiting, parenting support, support for early language development and free, high quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year-olds.

In the longer term the Flying Start programme will improve the life chances of children who have benefitted from the Programme. The independent, national evaluation of Flying Start demonstrated the programme is having a positive impact.

Data demonstrate evidence of all anticipated immediate outcomes of the programme. This includes the language development, social and emotional development and cognitive development outcomes for children. There is also evidence that some parents of children in the Programme benefit from the opportunities available to learn new skills and improve their employment prospects.

The provisional allocation for the Flying Start BEL in 2016-17 is £76,894,000 representing a flat line budget against 2015-16.

ENGAGEMENT

Flying Start has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are Welsh Government Account managers throughout the year, Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss data issues as required and the Families Division Finance team have conducted a series of meeting with Local Authority co-ordinators to help improve finance reporting.

Group meeting for Flying Start Co-ordinators and Health Visitors are organised by Families Divisions to share best practice and discuss any issues of common interest. An annual conference is arranged for the Flying Start Programme. This includes a short award ceremony where individuals who deliver excellent service within the Flying Start programme are presented awards. The individuals are nominated by parents involved in the programme. Parents are also heavily involved in evaluation activities, taking part in surveys and giving their views.

EVIDENCE

In the longer term the Flying Start programme will improve the life chances of children who have benefitted from the Programme. Anecdotal evidence has already shown that

on starting school Flying Start children are more ready to learn, their speech and language skills are better. Evaluation data demonstrates evidence of all anticipated immediate outcomes of the programme. This includes the language development, social and emotional development and cognitive development outcomes for children. There is also evidence that some parents of children in the Programme benefit from the opportunities available to learn new skills and improve their employment prospects.

There are no known negative impacts to the Programme. Those living in Flying Start areas with a child under the age of 4 should benefit from the Programme if they choose to engage and take advantage of the opportunities available to them. If they choose not to engage for whatever reason, the families will be no worse off than they would be if they lived outside of the Flying Start area.

Flying Start is subject to an ongoing programme of evaluation activity. Evaluation activities are commissioned from private sector research teams and the results published on the Welsh Government internet. Findings from the qualitative research have demonstrated positive impacts for parents in terms of parenting behaviour, health and wellbeing and their perceptions of the local area.

Flying Start (Capital)

The Flying Start capital funding provided in previous years has been used to support the expansion of the Flying Start programme and providing the infrastructure needed to double the number of children benefitting from the programme from 18,000 to 36,000. This investment has contributed to developing the 'social infrastructure' referred to in the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan by working at the heart of our most disadvantaged communities and improving the well being and life chances of the under 4's. Flying Start has provided high quality settings essential for the delivery of the programme in areas of high deprivation.

The capital programme is considered to be a success with high quality new builds and conversions taking place across Wales. The building programme/Conversion will conclude in 2015-16 though there will be a requirement to assist with the maintenance of existing premises. A budget of £3m has been allocated for 2016-17 to help maintain and repair facilities already used to deliver the Flying Start programme, there may also be the need to replace some of the 'older' settings. This is essential to ensure the estate remains viable and that the programme can be delivered from high quality settings.

ENGAGEMENT

The Flying Start capital manager has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are held on a regular basis and issues discussed. Flying Start Co-ordinators participate in general Co-ordinator meetings and the annual conference organised for Flying Start Programme.

EVIDENCE

Evaluation of capital expenditure is carried out in two stages. A Capital Expenditure committee within the Communities and Tackling Poverty Division scrutinises bids for funding and agrees capital commitment. The Flying Start Account Manager inspects building work in progress and completed premises ensuring they are built to specification and there is not unauthorised expenditure. Where issues arise expert services with the Welsh Government such as quantity surveys can be called upon for advice.

Support for Children's Rights

In line with feedback from the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (BAGE) and reflecting recommendations of the Finance Committee's Inquiry into Best Practice Budget Procedures we have again taken an integrated approach to our impact assessment. Despite the challenges presented by the late timing of the UK Spending Review we have focused on making informed strategic high level decisions based on our analysis of supporting evidence, particularly in relation to people with protected characteristics. This has enabled us to give full consideration to socio-economic disadvantage, children's rights, Welsh language and sustainable development, in addition to the focus on equality and tackling poverty.

By implementing the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, we promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage and facilitate consideration of the Convention in the work of Government. The Measure places the duty to have due regard to the UNCRC on all Ministers when they exercise any of their functions.

This in turn has a very positive impact on all 9 protected characteristics. Various articles from the UNCRC reflect the importance of supporting these protected characteristics. For example, article 14 gives children and young people the right to freedom in their religious beliefs, article 23 of the UNCRC gives special protection to children with disabilities and article 30 protects children of minorities.

We promote and ensure effective use of the CRIA (Children's Rights Impact Assessment) process to increase awareness and due regard to children's rights throughout the Welsh Government. From 2012 and 2014, the number of CRIAs supported and received increased from 47 to 114. The CRIA process also prompts the consideration of child poverty, especially since several articles in the UNCRC relate to the importance of protecting those who are most vulnerable and those most in need. As CRIAs are completed, we are working to ensure children's rights and any implications for tackling child poverty re considered together.

The branch also funds training delivered both internally and externally with great success, raising awareness of children's rights throughout Wales. As a further exemplar case study, prior to May 2014, well over 2000 officials across Welsh Government had undertaken online UNCRC training developed by the branch. From May 2014 to April 2015, a further 562 staff received training.

No negative impacts have been identified on children, the Welsh language or on those with protected characteristics in making the decision to maintain spend on support for children's rights. We contribute in many ways towards the well-being goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act 2015. In the long term, focusing on protection of our younger generations means we have a good start for prosperous future generations. For example, the UNCRC includes articles to protect:

- the health of children, leading to a healthier Wales,
- the equality of children, leading to a more equal Wales,
- the physical environments of children, leading to a more globally responsible Wales, and
- children's rights to an identity, leading to a Wales of more cohesive communities and thriving Welsh language

To this effect, maintaining the budget for children's rights will assure this positive impact is maintained for budgetary decisions both now and in the future.

ENGAGEMENT

The UNCRC includes four main principles, one of which is the Child's right to participate, to have a voice, be heard and influence decisions which affect them. Engagement with children, young people and the stakeholders who work with and represent them, is therefore essential to the work of the branch. Funding has been allocated to Young Wales to enable the Government to hear the views of children and young people and enable them to contribute to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UK Youth Parliament. We have commissioned surveys to measure the impact of our work on children and young people, and for researchers to engage with children and young people. Examples of such research includes the Children's Omnibus Survey Wales, the Independent Review of the Role and Functions of the Children's Commissioner for Wales (from which several recommendations arose relating to the work of the branch) and an independent evaluation led by the Wales Observatory for Children's Rights. We also engage closely with Local Authority officers to enable the participation of children and young people on a local level, and national children's rights stakeholders. The Welsh Government's Revised Child Poverty Strategy specifically recognised the importance of "consulting, listening and acting on the views of children and young people" and included a specific commitment to involve the participation of young people in the development of policies and programmes to deliver the targets in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. Young Wales provides us with an important mechanism for taking this work forward.

Within our own work of raising awareness of children's rights, we have been careful to give equal regard to those with protected characteristics and to the Welsh language. All promotional material and training resources have been developed bilingually and

shared widely through organisations who work in mainstream settings and those who work with marginalised groups.

EVIDENCE

By taking an integrated approach grounded in evidence and evaluation we have developed a wider understanding of the cross-cutting pressures that exist across key service areas, in line with our key priorities, while targeting funding at those who need it most. This has enabled us to gain a broader understanding of the overall impact of spending decisions on key service provision through taking a holistic view of public service delivery in Wales.

While the evidence of increase CRIA use in ensuring due regard to children's rights is clear, the branch is also careful to ensure children themselves are aware of their rights. In November 2015, we received preliminary results back from the Children's Omnibus Survey Wales. The survey was commissioned as a means to engage and question children and young people on their knowledge of the UNCRC and their rights. The results highlight the successes of the branch in promoting and supporting children's rights, but also helps us to identify areas of focus. We have also seen a sharp increase in the demand for promotional UNCRC materials which provides positive feedback and reassurance that awareness of the UNCRC is on the increase.

In addition, the evidence of the positive impact of the support for children's rights has been made clear in the Welsh Government's Programme for Children and Young People (PCYP). It reviews the work of the Welsh Government over the last five years and demonstrates the positive effects Welsh Government legislation, policies and programmes have had on Children and Young People since the inception of the Programme for Government. PCYP demonstrates the importance of our engagement with teams across Government and the far reaching consequences of such engagement. Continued support for children's rights will ensure Welsh Government's commitment to children and young people will continue.

Families First

Families First is an innovative programme that promotes the development of effective multi-agency systems and support for families, with a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention for families, particularly those living in poverty. The Welsh Government has committed to maintain the Families First programme during this Assembly term and we will be investing £42.6m in 2016-17.

The programme is a key response to the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and a significant contributor to the objectives of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

Evaluation evidence shows Families First has delivered a significant change in the way every Local Authority delivers family support. Multi-agency working is now recognised as essential, and the programme has improved the way agencies work together to

support our most vulnerable families. The commissioning of services through the Families First programme now better reflects the needs of families than ever before. The family-focused approach to assessing and tailoring family support is making a real difference to family outcomes and life chances are being improved as a result. Furthermore, the recent evaluation highlighted the potential large cost savings the programme can make through helping families avoid poor long-term outcomes. Evaluation evidence shows services for families affected by disability have improved as a direct result of Families First and positive outcomes are being recorded. Families First has funded new services for families affected by disability and has led to better integration and co-ordination of existing services.

Guidance obliges Local Authorities to deliver services using local discretion and flexibility to meet locally identified needs. Families First delivers to the whole population regardless of race, disability and other protected characteristics.

There is a distinct focus to ensure the specific needs of families with disabled people are provided for and that services and activities take these needs fully into consideration. The programme includes a ring fenced element for disability projects and it is proposed to protect this.

ENGAGEMENT

Families First has an extensive programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Local Authority monitoring meetings are Welsh Government Account managers throughout the year, Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss data issues as required and the Families Division Finance team have conducted a series of meetings with Local Authority co-ordinators to help improve finance reporting.

Group meetings for Families First Co-originators are organised by Families Division to share best practice and discuss any issues of common interest. An annual conference is arranged for Families First Programme Start at which individuals involved in the programme attend to hear about best practice and future activities. Parents also attend and are heavily involved in evaluation activities taking part in surveys and giving their views.

EVIDENCE

Evaluation activities within Families First include analysis of data sets collected as part of the quarterly returns from Local Authorities and services commissioned from private sector research companies. Evaluation evidence shows Families First has delivered a significant change in the way every local authority delivers family support. Multi-agency working is now recognised as essential and not optional, and the programme has improved the way agencies work together to support our most vulnerable families.

Support provided by the Families First programme is bespoke and intensive and is based on identified local need. The nature of the Families First programme allows local authorities to commission projects which are focussed on meeting identified needs within their local area, and in many areas projects have been commissioned which are aimed at reducing levels of child poverty in Wales.

JAFF and TAF models are now operational in all 22 Local Authorities in Wales. Evaluation evidence shows families who have received support via a TAF felt there was a tangible difference in the type of support offered compared to their previous experiences. The TAF encourages families to take ownership of their own growth and development to build on their existing strengths. This approach is welcomed by families who feel more empowered and involved in taking control to improve their family outcomes.

Evaluation reports are published on the Welsh Government Website.

Children's Commissioner

We as a Government appoint and fund the Children's Commissioner, as set out in legislation. Beyond this, it is for the Children's Commissioner to decide how to manage the budget as she is a corporation sole and independent from Government. The Commissioner is however expected to provide a budget estimate to Welsh Government and for this to be laid with the Assembly for transparency and scrutiny. As an ambassador of children's rights, funding the Children's Commissioner for Wales will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the rights of children and young people. No negative impacts are anticipated upon those with protected characteristics or the Welsh Language.

The Commissioner's significant financial reserves was raised in both the Public Account Committee and in the Independent Review of the Commissioner. The decision to reduce funding for the Children's Commissioner for Wales is likely to have little to no impact on those with protected characteristics, the Welsh language or children and young people, as financial reserves held by the Children's Commissioner can be utilised to mitigate the reduction of funding.

To this end, continued funding of the Children's Commissioner will play a role in contributing to achievement of several of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being for Future Generations Act 2015. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of Children and Young people and hence, the benefits include:

- improved health of children, leading to a healthier Wales,
- better equality for children, leading to a more equal Wales,
- improved physical environments of children, leading to a more globally responsible Wales, and

- children's rights to an identity, leading to a Wales of more cohesive communities and thriving Welsh language.

ENGAGEMENT

Welsh Government commissioned an independent review of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the results of which were published in 2014. The review was undertaken by Dr Mike Shooter, who was careful to engage with many stakeholders in considering many aspects of the Commissioner's role and functions, including the Commissioner's impact and value for money. This of course included direct engagement with children and young people, significant external stakeholders, as well as the Commissioner and his office.

In his review, Dr Shooter engaged with and considered evidence regarding the role of the Commissioner and her impact of minority groups. A recommendation was made to the Commissioner to take more active steps to improve her accessibility to minority groups. In responding to this recommendation, the Commissioner has challenged her office to reflect on how they engage with all children and young people. The Commissioner reports that she is pleased with the work that her office has already undertaken in relation to many minority vulnerable groups. However, the Commissioner acknowledges that there is no room for complacency and reiterates her commitment to a more strategic, impactful, child focused and purposeful way forward. The Commissioner's response to the recommendations of the Review was published in October 2015.

EVIDENCE

The evidence provided in Dr Shooter's review shows clearly the positive impact the Children's Commissioner for Wales has on children's rights in Wales. The reduction in budget is a reflection on the Commissioner's reserves as identified in the Shooter review, the Public Accounts Committee and in the Commissioner's own Annual audited accounts.

Children & Play Strategies

Childcare and Play provision is important, being a significant policy driver in relation to growth and jobs and in terms of tackling poverty. Successive evaluations have concluded that the availability of quality, affordable childcare is essential to support people who need to work, or acquire skills to enable them to work.

The development of affordable, accessible and high quality childcare is recognised in the **Programme for Government**, the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and the Early Years and Childcare Plan as key to ensuring that parents are able to access training and work. We will be taking opportunities to lever in ESF funding under the current round of European programmes to support Childcare activities as part of our aim to promote social inclusion and **combat poverty**.

Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) was launched on 13 October 2015 for parents aged over 25, with a total budget of £10.9m up to 2018. The Welsh Government is the lead beneficiary with DWP as joint beneficiary. DWP will employ 43 Parent Employment Advisers who will mostly be based within Flying Start settings, Families First or other family based centres. It will target almost 8,000 economically inactive parents over the life of the operation and support lone parents, parents from a workless household or assist a second earner in a working household. It will operate outside Communities First Clusters and will complement the Communities for Work ESF operation. No additional allocation has been made to the Childcare and Play budget in order to support PaCE but the necessary match funding is being provided via the Families First Budget.

The other ESF operation we are pursuing is Progress for Success (PFS) which has been developed alongside the draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. The main purpose of PFS is to increase the quality of provision accessed within registered maintained and non-maintained settings by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and play qualifications held by the existing Early Years, Childcare and Play workforce.

We are supporting the **childcare sector** through assisting national childcare organisations and providing financial support to local authorities to promote and develop wrap around out of schools childcare.

In recognition of the role of carers and barriers to education we have provided funding to establish a targeted further education childcare pilot scheme to remove the barriers to education and tackle intergenerational deprivation. This is intended to provide an opportunity for those with caring responsibilities to be able to access further education without having to worry about the costs of childcare. In particular this pilot is intended to focus on positively impacting protected groups who would potentially see the greatest benefits, particularly on gender.

An additional £300k has been awarded in 2016-17 as part of a two year Budget Agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats in 2014 to look at this. The feasibility study will determine what further support is required for young parents to help them return to Further Education, where childcare is a barrier. The feasibility study will be used to inform the proposed pilot in 2016-17.

We are continuing to deliver our manifesto commitment to improve opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety, and in particular to support improved access to play for children with disabilities. Wales a Play Friendly Country – Statutory Guidance has been published to support Local Authorities in complying with their duty to secure sufficient play opportunities and implementing their Play Action Plans.

ENGAGEMENT

Childcare and Play managers have an annual programme of engagement with principle stakeholders. Welsh Government Monitoring Teams meet with Local Authorities to discuss monitoring and reporting issues as required.

Formal Consultations have also occurred with stakeholders across Wales on future Childcare arrangements in Wales

EVIDENCE

Evaluations takes place as part of normal grant management and project management activities. Evaluations take the form of monitoring reports, annual reports and commissioned research when required. Grant and activities under this programme are relatively small and reporting and evolution is scaled to match the perceived level of risk.

Credit Reference reports are obtained on Third Sector organisation with which we do business both before a grant is awarded and during the life of the project before payments are made.