

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-728
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/05873/16

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

21 November 2016

Dear Mike

You wrote on me on 4 November inviting my views on a Petition (P-05-728) to protect Families First Funding. I am grateful for the opportunity to comment.

The Families First budget for 2017-18 will remain at 2016-17 levels. This is stated in the narrative to the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2017-18 and I recently repeated this message at the Children Young People and Education Committee on 2 November. I am in the process of finalising the allocation of funds within the Families First Budget. At this point I am unable to commit funds to the Families First Programme beyond March 2018 as the Welsh Government is currently working to a one year budget planning period.

Indicative allocations for the Programme will be sent to each Local Authority in accordance with our normal time table for notifying Local Authorities of their indicative allocations for the coming year. Notifications will allow local Authorities time to finalise their delivery plans for 2017-18. It will be for each Local Authority to determine how best to allocate its Families First Programme grant as they are best placed to ensure the interests of the families they serve are best achieved.

The Families First Programme 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. Early intervention and prevention is vital if we are to give children and families the best chances. Following a transition period next year, I have decided to refocus the strategic projects commissioned by the Families First Programme to ensure we are able to address identified gaps in the areas of support for parents and young people and to clearly link the work of the Programme with the prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I have not made a decision on the future of Communities First as yet. We are in a consultation period in terms of that process. My intention is to make ensure we are absolutely sure we are tackling the issues around poverty and that all our programmes are working well and can intervene in the areas where we are trying to see success. I am not yet convinced that the Communities First programme alone is the only programme that can deliver and tackle poverty, and that is why I've asked my team to look at it very carefully. Once I have considered the findings of the review I will then make a decision on whether to exit or not exit. If a decision is made to close the Programme it will not end suddenly on 31 March. Instead I envisage a phased approach to decommissioning thereby allowing a more managed exit for both Programme beneficiaries and the staff delivering services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Carl Sargeant".

Carl Sargeant AC/AM

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