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Evaluation of Cymorth

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Cymorth Fund

1. Cymorth was introduced in 2003/04 by the Welsh Assembly Government with a commitment of £235 million over five years (and extended subsequently) to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people (up to 25 years of age) within a framework of universal provision by subsuming and building on five previous funding streams - Sure Start, Children and Youth Partnership Fund, National Childcare Strategy, Youth Access Initiative and Play Grant. Its coverage was broadened to cover the 4-10 year age bracket not previously targeted by the legacy funding streams. The Fund was to be delivered through the partnerships for young people that were being set up at that time (2002) and the children's partnerships that were then being considered. Flexibility was granted to the Partnerships in the ways in which funding could be targeted on deprived areas, groups and/or families (although a specific focus on Communities First areas was required).

The evaluation

2. The evaluation of Cymorth was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2007/08 to address the following issues:

- Did Cymorth funding enable a partnership infrastructure to be established and developed that could support the provision of services in a holistic way to children and young people in disadvantaged areas?
- Did it provide for innovative, preventative services and support designed to improve the prospects for disadvantaged children, young people and their families/communities in later years?
- Were the services funded by Cymorth additional to those provided by mainstream service providers and, insofar as they were and they were successful, did this prompt any change in the priorities/practices of the mainstream service providers?

Cymorth resources and projects

3. The allocation of the Cymorth budget (per head of the eligible population) across Local Authority areas was consistent with the Welsh Assembly Government's intention to focus the funding on the most deprived areas, where there was a real risk of deprivation becoming transmitted across the generations to the children and young people living in the areas.

4. The budget allocation amounted to £60 per head of the eligible population (0-25 year olds) in 2006/07 for Wales as a whole. Figures prepared by the Welsh Assembly Government suggest that the outturn government expenditure on health/social services and on children, education, lifelong learning and skills that was devoted to 0-17 years olds in the same year was £1,600 per child. The Cymorth allocation was 3.8% of this figure and this is an over-estimate because the

government spend figure only covers 0-17 year olds and excludes local authority self-financed expenditure. So, the Cymorth Fund allocation was probably less than 3% of total government expenditure on 0-25 year olds. This is a very small share of the total and, when the outcomes from the spend are distributed across such a wide age range, it is unlikely that their impact will be discernible in the national statistics relating to different age categories of children and young people.

5. Cymorth funded projects were also many and various. On average, some 890 projects were funded each year over 2004/05 – 2007/08 with average Cymorth funding of about £55k per project per year. The small scale of the initiatives, their large number and local variations do not appear to have diminished over time even though integration of the previous five funding streams might have been expected to see a reduction in the number of projects and an increase in their scale. There was also no reduction in the proportion of central and evaluation costs in total funding that might have been expected from integration although some allowance needs to be made for the additional costs associated with setting up and running the Partnerships.

Partnership working

6. Cymorth partnership working has become effective which is a significant achievement when account is taken of the limited nature or lack of local partnerships in this policy area at the outset in 2003. The Partnerships were particularly effective with regard to:

- identifying and reaching out to target groups;
- multi-agency team working - joint strategic planning; co-location; regular joint training;
- high staff retention rates and high levels of job satisfaction;
- innovation and flexibility in the approach to modify and extend services; and
- delivery through a mix of venues, access points and flexible times and with a welcome that extended into the communities.

7. Partnership planning and delivery was largely responsive rather than driven by strategic priorities and a commissioning approach to funding allocation and project selection. The result was a profusion of relatively small scale projects with many of them inherited from the previous funding streams. This changed around 2007 – 2008 to meet the requirements of the Single Plan (the holistic strategy for children and young people that was required by The Children Act 2004) when a more strategic, commissioning approach began to be adopted.

8. The conclusion of the evaluation is consistent with the views of some of the partners and stakeholders that a transition could be seen taking place between:

- '*Old Cymorth'* projects - rolled over and largely unchallenged from the previous funding regimes - where the effectiveness of the projects was assumed rather than assessed.

- '*New Cymorth'* activities – re-commissioned because of their fit with the Single Plan's strategic purpose – and/or because their effectiveness had been assessed as warranting continued funding.

Cymorth practices, outcomes and mainstreaming

9. Cymorth funded projects were generally compliant with the requirements of the Fund in the sense that they were additional to mainstream service provision and focused on interventions designed to reduce later claims on remedial and crisis services especially in disadvantaged areas. There are many examples of projects that brought about improvements in service delivery amongst specific target groups (especially amongst young people excluded from school or at risk of dropping out). The potential for influencing mainstream services has been identified by the evaluation from amongst these kinds of projects. This mainstreaming influence is claimed by the Partnerships particularly with respect to early preventative interventions, use of integrated centres and partnership building.

10. More recently it has become evident that many of the activities funded by Cymorth have been developed further by the Flying Start Partnerships. Indeed some Flying Start Partnerships have reported that establishing the Flying Start offer would have been more difficult if Cymorth hadn't already developed multi-agency approaches and activities.

11. Yet, the evidence remains limited for changes in mainstream service provision being brought about by the influence of Cymorth funded activities and the benefits this might have generated. This was, in large part, attributable to two factors. First, the intention of moving such activities into mainstream funding had not been declared explicitly and/or generally understood so that this was not always sought or planned. Secondly, mainstream service providers were operating under budget and capacity constraints that made it difficult for them to accept the case for changes to services that often required increased expenditure and resources.

12. More recently, the impact of the requirements of the Single Plan has been to make the Partnerships and the service providers take the mainstreaming potential of Cymorth activities more seriously through the development of business cases for continued funding. Since 2007-08 there have been an increasing number of examples of 'mainstreaming' of Cymorth funded projects.

Value for Money

13. Cymorth supported a large number of relatively small and diverse projects – many of which were inherited from the previous funding regimes in the early phases of the Fund. In these circumstances – and when the priority was to get the Partnerships up and running, there may not have been much incentive to consider value for money (VfM) issues.

14. Moreover, some aspects of the way the Fund was set up may not have been conducive to VfM assessments based on the 3 E's - the economy with which resources are used, the efficiency with which benefits are achieved and the overall effectiveness of the project. A narrower definition of VfM was adopted in which the

emphasis was placed on the need for Cymorth funded projects to be additional to mainstream service provision and responsive to locally identified needs. The focus, particularly in the initial period of the Fund's operations, was on delivery and outputs rather than on outcomes and the balance of costs and benefits.

15. The evaluation was unable to be conclusive on the VfM of Cymorth projects and activities in the 3 E's sense because of lack of evidence. Only a limited number of evaluations (85 reports in all) were made available to the evaluation team that contained evidence relating to VfM. Amongst these, the strongest evidence was available on the effects on services. The evaluated Cymorth projects generally met local needs and added value to mainstream services with potential benefits for children and young people. However, the evidence was partial and qualitative, self-reported and focused on project delivery. There was limited evidence with regard to the economy, and efficiency of the projects and virtually none that was quantitative with respect to outcomes.

Conclusions

16. The overall conclusion of the evaluation was that Cymorth achieved its role in improving local partnership working in support of services for disadvantaged children and young people, helped to put preventative services in place and on the agenda of the mainstream service providers, and introduced innovative ways of working.

17. This must be regarded as a major achievement when contrasted with the weak or non-existent local partnership arrangements prior to 2003/04. Furthermore it was generally considered to have helped provide the foundations for the successful launch and implementation of the Flying Start programme. However, there has only been a limited number of attempts to demonstrate the extent to which the Partnerships and their Cymorth funded projects improved the outcomes for children and young people and to achieve widespread adoption of the practices that might have secured such outcomes.

18. There are now more systematic efforts being made to do this – largely as a consequence of Single Plan requirements. This is a process that needs to be encouraged by:

- ensuring that the innovative and preventative rationale of Cymorth funded activities is clearly and widely stated and understood – especially among the mainstream service providers who might be expected to adopt them if they can be demonstrated to work;
- focusing Cymorth funded activities on critical areas of local need where preventative services and innovation are most required – rather than being spread across a diversity of age ranges and themes; and
- providing strong support at the national level to ensure that Cymorth funded practices with mainstreaming potential are identified, evaluated and, where appropriate, disseminated and adopted.

1. The aims and objectives of Cymorth

1.1 The Cymorth Children and Youth Support Fund[1] was introduced in 2003/04 by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide targeted support for children and young people (up to 25 years of age) from disadvantaged families within a framework of universal provision to improve their life chances. It was designed:

> 'to use partnership working and targeted investment in disadvantaged communities to promote those aims, and to impact positively, in the medium term, on the indicators of well-being for children and young people[2].'

1.2 The need for this support was founded on concerns about the prospects for children and young people in Wales (and especially in its more disadvantaged areas) as revealed by the available data. For example:

- In the mid to late 1990s 37% of children in Wales lived in households in relative income poverty3 compared with 34% in England and 33% in Scotland.
- The proportion of dependent children living in lone parent families was 25% in Wales in 2001 compared with 23% in England and 25% in Scotland but with that figure reaching about 30% in Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.
- Teenage conception rates (females under 16 years age) were 8.0 in Wales (per 1000 women aged 13-15) in 2002-04 compared with 7.8 in England but with the rate being over 10.0 in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Wrexham.
- In 2001 Wales had a higher proportion of young people with no qualifications (20%) than in England (17%) and Scotland (12%) and in some parts of Wales the proportion was close to 30% (Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent).

1.3 Cymorth was to subsume and build on five previous funding streams – Sure Start, Children and Youth Partnership Fund, National Childcare Strategy, Youth Access Initiative and Play Grant. Its coverage was broadened to cover the 4-10 year age bracket not targeted by the funding streams it inherited.

1.4 The rationale for establishing the integrated Fund was essentially three-fold:

- The integration would contribute to the Welsh Assembly's aspirations to reduce the number of programmes it supported.
- Available research indicated that the most effective interventions in support of the development of children and young people integrated all the dimensions relevant to that development.

[1] "Cymorth" is defined as "assistance, aid, backing, relief, succour", and is used more generally for "support."
[2] Cymorth, *Children and Youth Support Fund: Guidance,* 2006.
[3] Defined as households with less than 60 per cent of 1996/7 median income held constant in real terms (after housing costs).

- Partnership working could bring together statutory social services, education, and health specialists with the voluntary sector to develop new local strategic plans or frameworks setting out the aspirations, key objectives and targets for all services that affect children and young people.

1.5 As well as integrating the previous funding regimes, the intention was that the Fund would be delivered through the partnerships for young people that were being set up at that time (2002) and the children's partnerships that were then being considered. Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government to the partnerships directed them to give due weight to the whole age span from 0–25 years. To help ensure this and to cover the 4-10 year old age range not addressed by the previous funding regimes, minimum investment requirements were also set down for the proportion of the allocated budgets that was to be spent on 4-10 year olds as well as 0-3 and 11-25 year olds.

1.6 The six themes that Cymorth was intended to address and an example of the minimum allocation requirements across the age bands are set out in Table 1-1 along with some other aspects of the guidance provided by the Welsh Assembly Government with regard to the use of the funding.

Table 1-1: Cymorth investment requirements, themes and other guidance

Cymorth investment requirements (2007/08)

	Minimum investment %	All Wales (£m)
Services for children aged 0-3	34	19.196
Services for children aged 4-10	11	6.210
Services for young people aged 11-25	31	17.502
Local discretion	22	12.421
Evaluation	2	1.129
Total	**100**	**56.459**

The Cymorth Themes

- Theme A – Family Support: Projects to ensure families have access to support that will foster positive relationships between parents and children.
- Theme B – Health Promotion: Projects promoting the healthy development of children (including before birth) and young people by providing more intensive community health support or to break down barriers to mainstream health services.
- Theme C – Play, Leisure and enrichment: Projects that develop play opportunities appropriate to age and thus assist with emotional, physical, social, intellectual and creative development.
- Theme D – Empowerment, participation and active citizenship: Projects that develop and sustain forms of support to children and young people that empower them to participate fully in their local and wider community.
- Theme E – Training, mentoring and information: Projects that reach out with training, mentoring and information to maintain the engagement of children and young people and re-engage with those who are in danger of or who have dropped out of training, education or employment.
- Theme F – Building childcare provision: Projects building the quality, affordability, diversity, and accessibility of childcare provision, especially but not exclusively within the Cymorth target areas.

All services funded by Cymorth must be additional to and distinctive from mainstream services provided by the local authority or other partners. Of the four tiers in the standard model of service provision, the Welsh Assembly guidance was that Tier 2 was likely to be most appropriate for Cymorth funding – "*Information or support into universal services or specialised services as appropriate; additional services to users within Cymorth target areas without specialised assessment of need but preventative of higher tier interventions*".

At the outset, the Welsh Assembly wanted to see a net addition in the number of childcare places from Cymorth funding. Mechanisms to achieve this were to include support for the start-up costs of new places, sustainability funding where essential and support for development workers. The childcare requirement was shifted into the RSG in 2008/09.

Source: Cymorth Guidance 2006.

1.7 Cymorth was introduced with a commitment of £235 million over five years (with subsequent annual extensions of over £50 million). The funding was allocated to all local authorities in Wales based on local needs and managed locally byan overarching Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnership[4] in each localauthority area. The Welsh Assembly Government had laid out the structure of partnerships that it required within all local authorities to draw up an overall Framework for Children and Young People. This included two subgroups:

- Children's Partnerships that made detailed plans for children aged up to 10.
- Young People's Partnerships that planned for young people aged 11 to 25.

1.8 Each had the task to consider the needs of all the children and young people in the authority area and to draw up, manage, monitor and evaluate a local plan for the deployment of Cymorth funding. The Cymorth plan for the whole age span was ultimately submitted to and owned by the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership.

1.9 During the initial five year period of the funding commitment, it was the intention of the Welsh Assembly Government that Cymorth would aid "*the creation of broad-based and innovative partnerships that bring forward integrated local approaches to the many challenges facing children, young people and families*[5]."

1.10 Flexibility was allowed in the ways in which funding could be targeted on deprived areas, groups and/or families (although a specific focus on Communities First areas was required). Projects within the Cymorth plans could benefit from Cymorth funding alone or combine with other sources of finance, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) or Lottery Funds. Overall the aim of the new fund was to make targeted services more effective in breaking the cycle of deprivation that affected children and young people's life chances. This included the enhancement of early years' development, play opportunities, parental support and mentoring in adolescence to prevent problems such as school exclusion, early parenthood, low skills, offending behaviour and unemployment.

1.11 The most recent Cymorth Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government[6] reflects the changes that have taken place since The Children Act 2004. This requires each Children and Young People's Partnership (required to be established by statute[7]), led by its local authority, to publish a Children and Young People's Plan

[4] The Partnerships were introduced in 2002 as part of the Children and Young Peoples Framework Planning Guidance, WAG, 2002 and are referred to in the rest of this report as the Partnerships.
[5] Welsh Assembly Government (2004), Cymorth: Funding For a Better Childhood, Youth and Family Life in Wales A Review of the inaugural year of the Cymorth Fund 2003-04 - http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgovernment/strategy/publications/childrenyoung/935818/;jsessionid=yhzwK8TJr0c39GvHLfbdrwKNyQXR6CdQX9FpL1mmd616FFH9qsx7!-973892656?lang=en
[6] Welsh Assembly Government (2008), *Cymorth: Children and Youth Support Fund Guidance* - http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/100223cymorthguidance0910en.doc.
[7] New statutory Children and Young People's Partnerships replaced and built on the existing Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships. They were to be responsible for services for all children and young people from the ante-natal stage to the age of 18 years, together with those

(CYPP or the Single Plan) setting out the Partnership's strategy for improving outcomes for all children and young people in its area.

1.12 The Children and Young People's Plan (Wales) Regulations 2007 came into force on 1 September 2007 and statutory guidance *Shared Planning for Better Outcomes* describes it as a 3 year strategic plan that:

- provides a strategic vision;
- states the agreed priorities that directs the work of all partners;
- sets agreed joint targets; and
- provides a basis for the joint commissioning of services.

1.13 It is the key statement of planning intent for children and young people to which all other plans must have regard. It reflects the Partnership's strategic process in developing the use of Cymorth to support its overall priorities. There is no longer a requirement for a stand-alone narrative Cymorth Plan "*but the Welsh Assembly Government intend to request details of proposed inputs and funding and anticipated outcomes (pen pictures)*[8]."

1.14 The commissioning process is now written into Cymorth guidance and advice and requires that projects in receipt of Cymorth funding must, amongst other things, demonstrate that:

- the funding provides the only realistic prospect for sustaining a service;
- the projects will offer good value for money;
- they have outcomes, targets and impact based on SMART targets;
- targets are to be measured, analysed and evaluated for future planning within a robust performance management system; and
- the projects have a clear exit strategy or development plan in place that indicates how they will be sustainable post-2011, when the current funding ceases[9].

Concluding observations

1.15 The rationale for Cymorth was to integrate previously prevailing funding regimes and to use partnership working and increased investment to improve the life chances of children and young people in disadvantaged communities. It was to provide a minimum level of investment for different age categories within the age range of 0-25 years and to address a defined set of themes (such as family support and health promotion). All services funded by Cymorth were to be additional to, and

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participating in or receiving youth support services up to the age of 25, and care leavers (up to 21 or 25 if in education or training).

[8] Cymorth Children and Youth Support Fund Guidance, December 2008 - http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/100223cymorthguidance0910en.doc.

[9] Taken from the Background Summary to Cymorth Commissioning 2009/10 published by the Denbighshire Partnership.

distinctive from, mainstream services provided by the local authority or other partners and designed to be preventative of higher tier interventions.

1.16 Within these broad parameters, flexibility was given to the largely new Partnerships in the ways in which funding could be used and targeted on deprived areas, groups and/or families (although a specific focus on Communities First areas was required). However, following the requirement in The Children's Act 2004 for the preparation of a Single Plan, the use of Cymorth funding had to become an integral part of Partnerships' strategies for improving outcomes for all children and young people in their areas. This has been associated with increased use of a commissioning process to ensure Cymorth funding contributed to the strategic objectives of the Single Plan.

2. The evaluation of Cymorth

The purpose and method of the evaluation

2.1 The national evaluation of the Cymorth Fund was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2007/08 to assess:

- the implementation of the Fund in terms of its effectiveness in meeting identified needs in a manner that was flexibly adapted to local circumstances;
- the effectiveness of the local Partnerships in analysing local needs, auditing mainstream service provision and developing complementary projects to meet the identified needs; and
- the extent to which Cymorth achieved its aims with positive outcomes for the lives of children and young people.

2.2 The evaluation was combined with an evaluation of the Flying Start programme because of the close complementarity of their policy objectives, common governance and management arrangements and the potential for mutual learning about what works well (and less well). Emphasis was given by the Welsh Assembly Government to the learning possibilities afforded by the integrated evaluation. For that reason, the evaluation was planned over a number of years and delivered in ways that facilitated:

- Evidence to be generated on 'what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and why'.
- Learning and knowledge transfer between delivery partners on how to make service delivery more effective in securing the desired outputs and outcomes.
- Action to enhance the capacity and performance of partners in the design and delivery of their interventions – not only generating evidence on 'what works' but also ensuring that it is put to use.

2.3 The method adopted for the evaluation of Cymorth was essentially qualitative. It relied on:

- baseline studies to set the scene and track relevant secondary data sources;
- a review of background and current policy documentation;
- an assessment of monitoring data, reviews and evaluation studies;
- a census of the Partnerships over two years to assess capacity building and programme implementation;
- consultations with partners and stakeholders in the Partnership areas and at national level;
- area case studies to cover all the Partnerships over two years; and

- a study in the third year of the evidence on the costs and benefits from the use of the Cymorth Fund.

2.4 The use of quantitative evaluation methods was not deemed to be appropriate. This was because of limitations with regard to secondary data and monitoring data sources. The same conclusion was reached in earlier evaluations of the use of the Cymorth Fund by the Welsh Assembly Government and York Consulting (see Figure 2-1).

Earlier Evaluations of Cymorth

2.5 Reviews and evaluations of Cymorth were carried out or commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006 (or earlier) and the relevant reports are listed in Figure 2-1[10].

Figure 2-1: Reviews and evaluation reports on Cymorth commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government

Welsh Assembly Government: A Review of the inaugural year of the Cymorth Fund 2003-04.

York Consulting: Issues of Effectiveness: First Stage Evaluation of Children and Young People's Frameworks, Early Entitlement and Cymorth (2006).

York Consulting: Detailed Findings: First Stage Evaluation of Children and Young People's Frameworks, Early Entitlement and Cymorth (2006).

York Consulting: First Stage Evaluation of Children and Young People's Frameworks, Early Entitlement And Cymorth - Forward Plan: Impact Evaluation of Cymorth (2006).

Source: Welsh Assembly Government.

2.6 In addition, reviews and evaluations were commissioned by some of the Partnerships – a large number of which were carried out by Third Sector First over the period since the Cymorth Fund was introduced. These previous studies concluded that qualitative research methods at the national level were the only feasible way of evaluating Cymorth because:

- there was insufficient spatial detail and comparability across time in the relevant secondary data sources (such as teenage conceptions); and
- the monitoring data reflected the particular mix of Cymorth funded activities at Partnership level and their different monitoring practices and was not consistent enough to allow aggregation to the national level.

2.7 Figure 2-2 sets out the conclusions of the previous evaluations on these matters.

[10] Welsh Assembly Government, *First Stage Evaluation of Children and Young People's Frameworks, Early Entitlement and Cymorth* - http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgovernment/strategy/publications/childrenyoung/935818/;jsessionid=yhzwK8TJr0c39GvHLfbdrwKNyQXR6CdQX9FpL1mmd616FFH9qsx7!-973892656?lang=en.

Figure 2-2: Limitations on the use of quantitative methods for the evaluation of Cymorth

Third Sector First – in a variety of evaluation reports for the Partnerships **–** emphasised two general difficulties in the use of secondary data:

- its timeliness - data relating to 2001-02 not being available until 2007; and
- the lack of comparability in the data - one report focusing on teenage conceptions amongst15 year olds and another on 13 year olds.

They observed that "*these difficulties are apparent in the majority of data sets associated with Cymorth interventions*" and questioned how relevant national comparative data was ever likely to be to the conception and planning of local services.

York Consulting considered and rejected the option of undertaking national surveys of Cymorth users, children and young people. The key constraint was access to contact information. Consultations with Partnership Co-ordinators and Monitoring and Evaluation Officers suggested that there were no consistently employed methods amongst Cymorth projects or at a Partnership level for collating information about Cymorth project users and beneficiaries and that such records are not available for many projects.

Source: Third Sector First (2007)[11] and York Consulting (2006)[12].

Implications for the evaluation focus and issues

2.8 In designing and carrying out the current evaluation, we encountered the same difficulties reported by the earlier evaluations with respect to the availability of relevant secondary and monitoring data and the feasibility of using quantitative evaluation methods. Bearing in mind that it is four years on from the York Consulting first stage evaluation, we questioned whether these difficulties were caused by the nature of the Cymorth funding itself and, if so, how this should be taken into account in the evaluation.

2.9 We concluded that, in part, the difficulties had indeed arisen from the nature of Cymorth as it was originally designed – i.e. in terms of the following characteristics:

- The Cymorth Fund was introduced at a time when there was little formal or no partnership working between the agencies providing services in support of the development of children and young people and their families in disadvantaged areas or, indeed, more generally. The Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnerships had only just been introduced. Therefore, building operationally effective partnerships largely from scratch was part of the requirement laid on Cymorth. The extent to which this was achieved is not something that can be evaluated by reference to secondary or monitoring data sources.

[11] Third Sector First (2007), *The impact of Cymorth funded projects in Torfaen 2003-2007.*
[12] York Consulting (2006), *Forward Plan: Impact Evaluation of Cymorth.*

- Cymorth sought to integrate five separate funding streams each with a legacy of different procedures and practices and its own portfolio of projects. The process of integration would not, therefore, have been straightforward and would have taken time. Again, quantitative methods would not be appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness with which this was accomplished.
- Within the broad prescriptions laid down by the Welsh Assembly Government (i.e. the themes, the minimum investment requirements and the focus on disadvantaged areas and families), the local Partnerships were prompted to assess local needs and provide flexible and innovative responses. These local needs were likely to vary considerably between areas across the wide spread of ages (0-25 years old) and themes that Cymorth was designed to address. So, the patterns of activities funded by Cymorth – and the outputs - were inevitably different between the Partnerships. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult and arguably inappropriate to apply a monitoring regime consistently across all local areas and projects. This was the view taken by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- The services Cymorth funded had to be additional to and distinctive from mainstream services. The role of Cymorth was to 'make space' to test the design and delivery of preventative interventions. This was likely to lead to relatively small scale, innovative and, in some cases, pilot initiatives and projects. This, and the inheritance of projects from previously prevailing funding streams, gave rise to an average project size not large enough to warrant intensive evaluation effort across the piece – on the grounds that the costs involved would be disproportionate to the benefits generated. The national evaluation was not, therefore, able to draw on systematic impact evaluations.
- Cymorth was expected to be used to fund preventative support to reduce crisis or remedial interventions at a later date. This could mean that, whilst the costs of Cymorth interventions were short-term and certain, some of its preventative benefits would be longer term and uncertain. This poses a problem for any evaluation in assessing the value for money of the interventions funded by Cymorth because a lot of the benefits were yet to materialise whilst most of the costs had already been incurred.

2.10 In our view, these characteristics make it difficult to monitor and evaluate Cymorth as if it were a national programme. The York Consulting evaluation[13] suggested that:

> *"the current templates for monitoring and evaluation should be reviewed and revised into a clear analytical framework … so that the information collected can be used more effectively for the dual purposes of local and national evaluation."*

2.11 This recommendation is entirely understandable if Cymorth is seen as equivalent to a locally delivered national programme. But we are not convinced that

[13] York Consulting (2006).

this is appropriate. A view that emerged from the consultations carried out for the evaluation was that Cymorth could be seen as an investment in partnership capacity building and in policy research and development with responsibility devolved to local Partnership levels to respond to local and neighbourhood needs or even 'communities of interest' (i.e. not necessarily spatially bounded). As some of those partners consulted for the evaluation suggested, it acted as "*the R&D of young people's services*".

2.12 Seen in this light, the appropriate policy and evaluation issues were couched in the form of the following questions:

- Did Cymorth funding enable a partnership infrastructure to be established and developed that could support the provision of services in a holistic way to children and young people in disadvantaged areas?
- Did it provide for innovative, preventative services and support designed to improve the prospects for disadvantaged children, young people and their families/communities in later years?
- Were the services funded by Cymorth additional to those provided by mainstream service providers and, insofar as they were and they were successful, did this prompt any change in the priorities/practices of the mainstream service providers – and with what effect?

2.13 This view of the evaluation issues is, we think, entirely consistent with the purpose of the Cymorth Fund. It means that the scope of the evaluation had to be different from that which would be appropriate for a national programme or mainstream service provision. It required the evaluation to assess Cymorth in terms of its impact on partnership capacity building, innovative and preventative service delivery, and influence on the design and delivery of mainstream services. It is this view that was adopted for the purposes of the evaluation.

2.14 However, it must be emphasised that the results from our evaluation and previous evaluations suggest that Cymorth's purpose was not widely disseminated or understood in these terms among the Partnerships and agencies involved – certainly not in the early years of the Fund. The Cymorth guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government included a section devoted to '*adding value to mainstream services'* which opened by declaring that "*all services provided by Cymorth must be additional to and distinctive from mainstream services provided by the local authority or other partners*". It then went on to identify Tier 2 as the most appropriate for Cymorth funding within the widely recognised 4 tier model of provision, namely:

> *Tier 2 – Information or support into universal services or specialised services as appropriate; additional services to users within Cymorth target areas without specialised assessment of need but preventative of higher tier interventions.*

2.15 This suggests strongly that Cymorth was to be used to fund activities that were additional to mainstream services. It does not indicate that they might at some time need to be considered for inclusion in the mainstream.

2.16 The guidance also set out the objectives for monitoring and evaluating the use of the Fund and these did not include an objective about providing evidence on which mainstream providers might consider the case for integrating Cymorth funded practices into mainstream service provision. It was only recently that guidance on the Cymorth commissioning process included the advice that Cymorth funded projects should have a clear exit strategy or development plan in place that indicates how they will be sustainable when the current funding ceases.

2.17 Therefore, the third question that was asked of the national evaluation – the one about the extent to which Cymorth funding prompted changes in the priorities/practices of the mainstream service providers – was not one that the Partnerships asked of their projects or that the Welsh Assembly Government asked of the Partnerships or, at least, not until recently. Therefore, it was unlikely that systematic, comprehensive evidence on this question would be available to the national evaluation team from the Partnerships or the Welsh Assembly Government.

Concluding observations

2.18 Cymorth was designed as a flexible resource to develop local partnerships between the service providers responsible for improving the life prospects of children and young people in disadvantaged areas and to supplement their mainstream services across a wide range of ages and service themes. This made it difficult to monitor and evaluate Cymorth as if it was a nationally designed and locally delivered mainstream service. It was arguably more appropriate to assess it as if it was the R&D of children and young people's services and in terms of its impact on the local partnership infrastructure, on the development of locally responsive preventative services, and on the priorities and practices of the mainstream service providers. However, Cymorth's purpose was not widely disseminated or understood in these terms among the Partnerships and agencies involved – especially in the early years of the Fund. As the national evaluation and earlier evaluations found, this meant that monitoring and evaluation evidence was not consistently and systematically available at local levels to inform an evaluation of the Fund as a whole.

3. Cymorth funding and projects

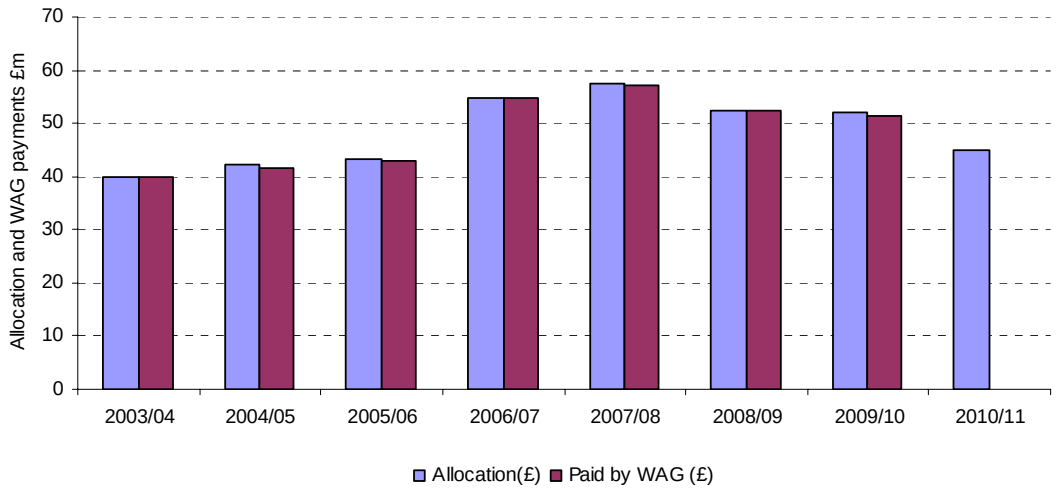
Introduction

3.1 This chapter reviews the allocation and use of Cymorth funding since 2003/04 and paints a picture of the portfolio of projects that have been financed from the Fund. It considers the extent to which funding has been allocated across areas of deprivation and between the six Cymorth themes and has been carried out in ways that engaged different partners.

Total and thematic Cymorth funding allocations

3.2 The budget allocation for Cymorth over time and the total amount of payments by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of the Fund is presented in Figure 3-1. It demonstrates that allocation and funding was broadly the same and increased in 2006/07 following the announcement of the Welsh Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy in 2005[14]. It declined from its peak in 2007/08 with the move of £5.7m for childcare into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The budget at this point was flat lined over the three years of the budget planning round (2008-11).

Figure 3-1: Cymorth funding allocations over time

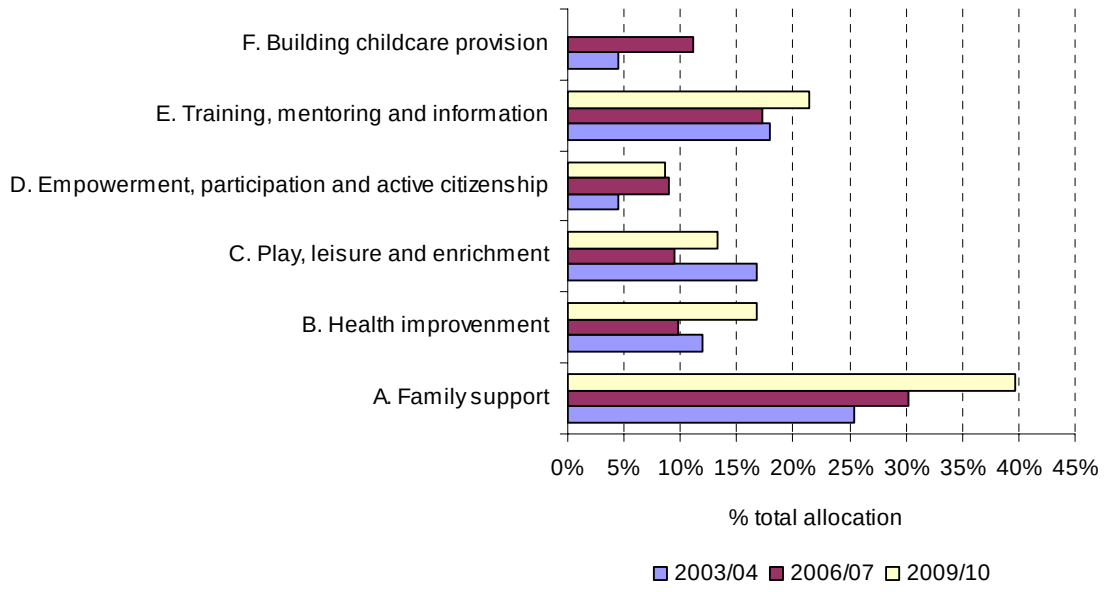


Source: Welsh Assembly Government.

3.3 The allocation by theme is shown in Figure 3-2 for 2003/04, 2006/07 and 2009/10. This reveals the importance that has been attached across the Partnerships as a whole to funding family support and training/mentoring which received nearly half the planned expenditure in two of the three years shown and 60% in the final year. It also suggests that there was a broadly similar allocation across the themes over time with the exception of the increase in the share of funding going to family support and the reduction in the childcare allocation because of its shift into the RSG.

[14] Welsh Assembly Government, *A Fair Future for our Children* (February 2005).

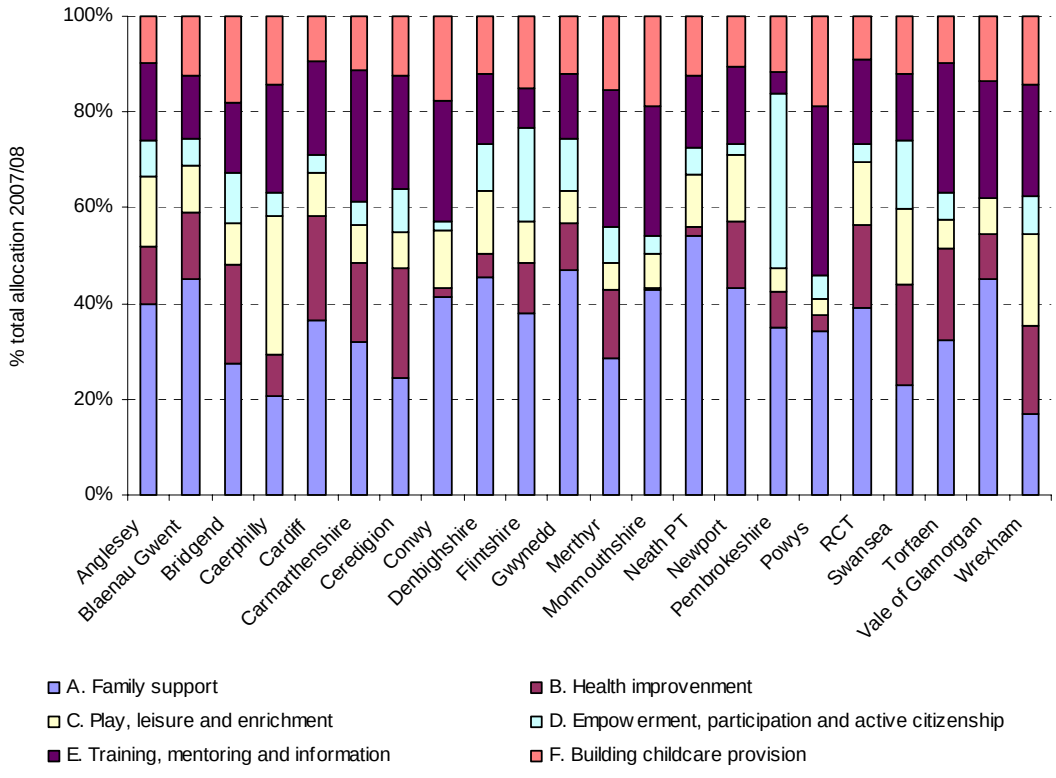
Figure 3-2: Cymorth planned expenditure by theme (2003/04, 2006/07 and 2009/10)



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

3.4 The budget allocation across themes is varied between Partnerships as illustrated in Figure 3-3 for the allocations in the peak year of spend in 2007/08.

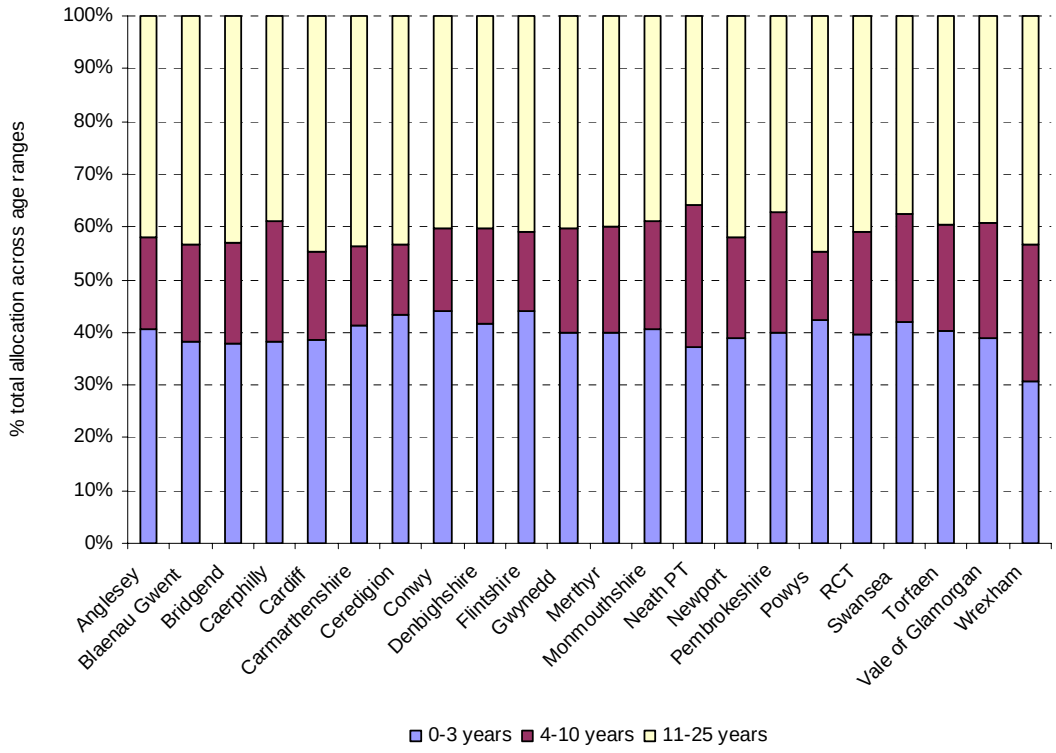
Figure 3-3: Cymorth budget allocation across themes and Partnerships (2007/08)



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

3.5 For example, while some Partnerships had 20-25% of their total allocation committed to family support in 2007/08, others were double that. Some allocated 10% or less to training and mentoring whilst others allocated more than 20%. There was clearly significant local variation in the Partnerships' allocations between themes even if their allocation across the three age band ranges was much the same (Figure **3-4**).

Figure 3-4: Cymorth budget allocation across age ranges between the Partnerships (2007/08)



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

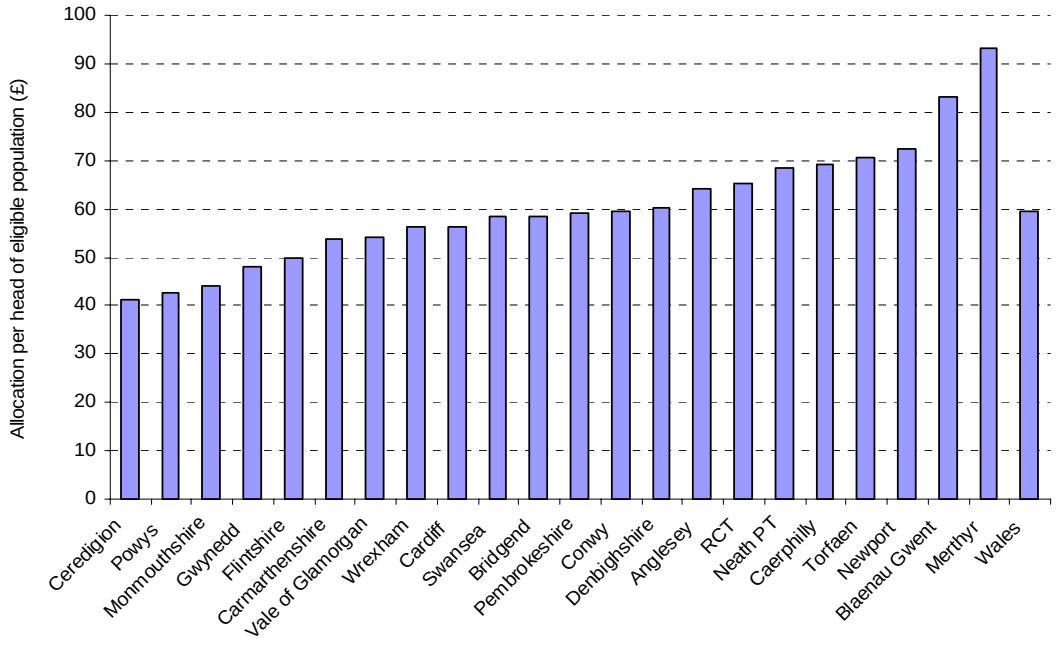
Cymorth allocations per head of eligible population

3.6 The Cymorth allocation can be expressed in terms of the allocation per head of the eligible population[15]. The range of allocations in these terms is wide – from £41 (Ceredigion) to £93 (Merthyr) per head of eligible population in 2006/07 (Figure **3-5**). The allocation of budgets across Local Authorities was carried out by the Welsh Assembly Government on the basis of the Children's Personal Social Services Standard Spending Assessment Formula. The methodology behind the formula was recommended by York University for use in resource allocation in social services. It drew on four indicators relating to children in out of work families, children in electoral divisions where densities were above average, children in social rented housing and children in overcrowded housing. The chart in Figure 3-6 does not use such a sophisticated index but still demonstrates the extent to which Cymorth budget

[15] Average Cymorth spend per head was calculated for each Partnership for 2006/07 using planned expenditure and the 0-25 years population count sourced from the ONS Mid-year population estimates.

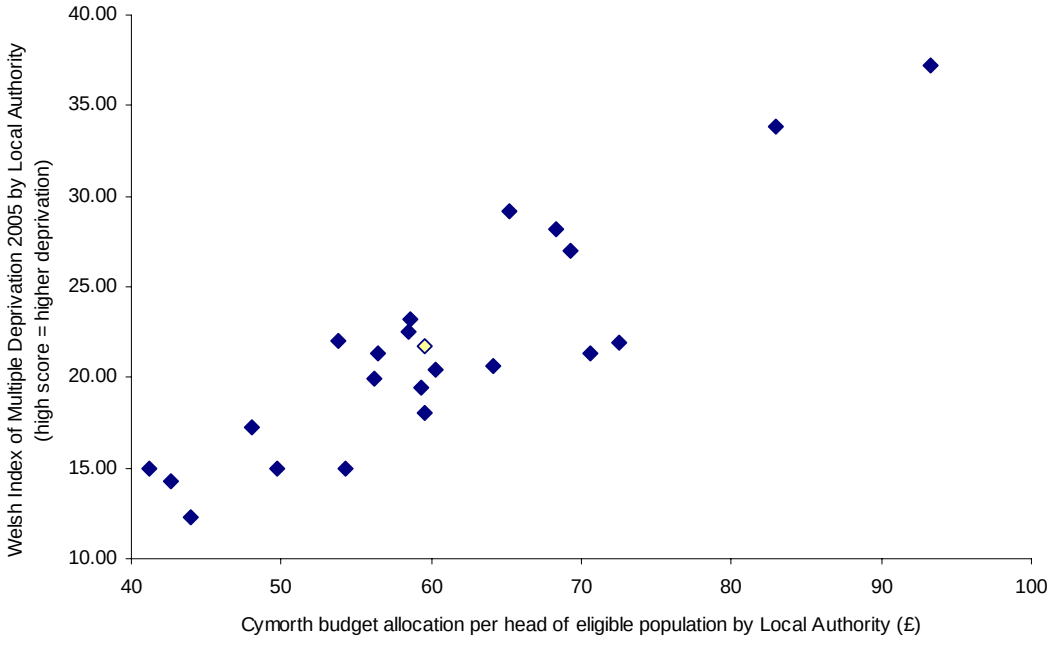
allocations per head of the eligible population correlated with the scores of the areas on the Welsh Index of Deprivation (2005). Each point on the chart represents the position of each local authority in terms of Cymorth budget per head relative to the level of multiple deprivation.

Figure 3-5: Cymorth allocation per head of eligible population (£) 2006



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

Figure 3-6: Cymorth allocation per head of eligible population (2006) and the Welsh Index of Deprivation (2005)



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government – Note the observations are for individual Local Authorities except the light shaded observation which is for the Welsh average.

3.7 The budget allocation to the Cymorth Fund in 2006/07 amounted to £60 per head of the eligible population (0-25 year olds) for Wales as a whole. The assessment of the relative scale of this allocation would require it to be benchmarked against total public expenditure on the mainstream services for children and young people which Cymorth was intended to complement. Estimates were published in a statistical article from the Statistical Directorate of the Welsh Assembly Government[16] which suggested that the outturn government expenditure on health/social services and on children, education, lifelong learning and skills that was devoted to 0-17 years olds in 2006/07 was £1,600 per child. The Cymorth allocation was 3.8% of this figure. This is to over-estimate the relative importance of Cymorth funding because the government spend figure only covers 0-17 year olds and excludes local authority self-financed expenditure. So, the Cymorth Fund allocation was probably less than 3% of total public expenditure on 0-25 year olds of the kind that Cymorth was designed to supplement.

3.8 This comparison puts the Cymorth funding into context and suggests that, when the relatively small scale fund is distributed across 22 areas, 6 themes and three age bands between 0 and 25 years, it is unlikely that its influence will be discernible in any changes in the national statistics relating to the prospects for children and young people in Wales.

The Cymorth project portfolio

3.9 The number of projects per annum funded by Cymorth over 2004/05 – 2007/08 was about 890 with an average annual allocation over the same period of about £55k per project per annum. The range of allocations per project pa across the Partnerships in 2007/08 was from £35k (Ceredigion and Monmouthshire) to about £80k (Caerphilly and Newport) and in the number of projects from 24 (Powys) to 100 (Cardiff and Rhondda).

3.10 Both the numbers of projects and their average size in terms of spend increased over this period respectively from about 850 to 950 and from £50k to £60k. The plans for 2009/10 suggested that the number of projects might fall back to less than 800 and that the average allocation per project pa might continue to increase – towards £70k.

3.11 The distribution of projects and funding across the Cymorth themes in 2009/10 continued to place the emphasis on family support and training and mentoring that was revealed in the spend allocation for previous years.

3.12 The small scale of Cymorth funded projects adds emphasis to the earlier point that the Fund could only be expected to exercise a marginal effect on outcomes for children and young people where mainstream service provision will be the most dominant influence.

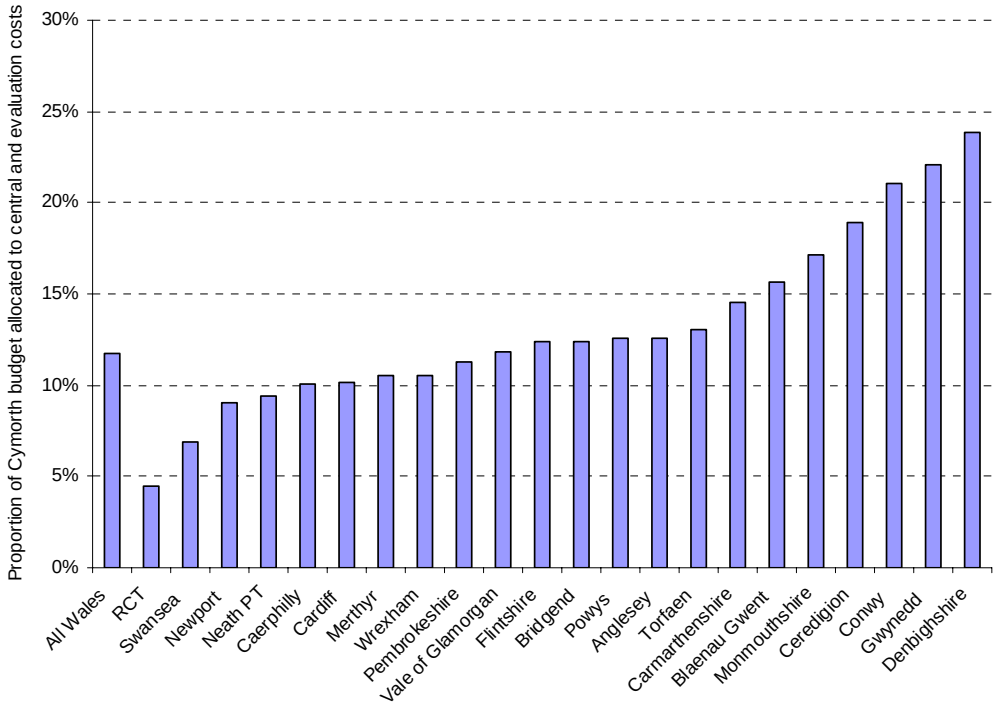
[16] Statistical Article, Financial *Provision For Children Within The Welsh Assembly Government Budget,* (March 2009) - http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/090310sa26aen.pdf.

Central and evaluation costs

3.13 The proportion of total Cymorth budgets allocated to central and evaluation costs stayed at 12% over the period 2003/04 – 2007/08 and seemed likely to stay at around that figure according to the plan for 2009/10. The variation in this proportion was considerable across the Partnerships as shown in – ranging from less than 4% (Rhondda) to nearly 25% (Denbighshire). However, any such comparisons must be treated with caution because practice varied between the Partnerships in terms of their treatment of central costs – with some Partnerships using projects to code administrative and other overhead costs.

3.14 Whilst some of these overhead rates may seem high, even the highest bear comparison with the 26-28 per cent overhead rate estimated in the Sure Start evaluation for fully operational Sure Start local programmes. However, it has to be acknowledged that these levels of non-service expenditure are higher than would normally be expected in public services – i.e. between 10-20%[17]. The majority of the Partnerships fall within or below that range.

Figure 3-7: Proportion of Cymorth planned spend allocated to central and evaluation costs:



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

Engagement of partners

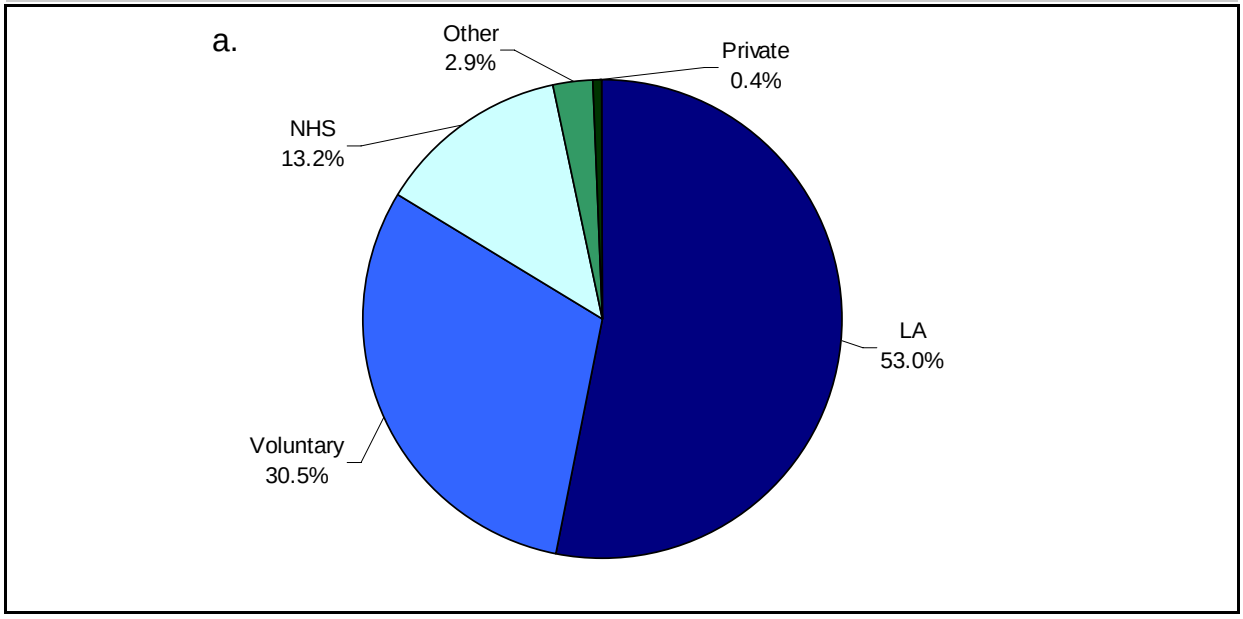
3.15 The latest guidance issued to Partnerships with regards to the Cymorth Fund states that there should be *"a spread of investment between the local authority,*

[17] Netten, A. and Curtis, L. (2003) *Unit Costs of Health and Social Care*, Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Kent.

health providers and the voluntary sector[18]*".* It is evident from the chart in Figure **3-8** that Partnerships' most significant partner (in financial terms) were going to be the Local Authorities (LAs) - receiving over 50% of the total amount of funding allocated to partners. The voluntary sector also had a large role to play in assisting the Partnerships (over 30%), in contrast to the private sector which was allocated just 0.4% of funds dispensed to partners.

3.16 At the LA level the degree to which engagement with partners and agencies occurred was fairly consistent with that at the all Wales level. Indeed, each of the Partnerships had allocated some funding to their LA, the voluntary sector and the NHS. However, it was notable that only in the LAs of Caerphilly, Powys and the Vale of Glamorgan did engagement with the private sector occur. Similarly, only a handful of Partnerships (those in Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Powys) stated that any funding had been allocated to 'other' organisations.

Figure 3-8: Allocation of funding to partners (proportion of total allocated to partners) across all Wales, 2009/10



Source: Data provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

3.17 Any proposals for use of the Cymorth fund are required to take account of the activities of Communities First Partnerships. A total of 16 Partnerships noted that they had taken account of Communities First Partnerships in their Cymorth proposals. In the case of those Partnerships who did not state that they had accounted for Communities First activities, this was because engagement was occurring in part. In some cases a review of the degree to which engagement with Communities First Partnerships was occurring was underway, or would soon be. Further, 19 out of the 22 Partnerships stated that they were meeting at least annually with representatives from Communities First Partnerships within the LA and would continue to do so in the future.

[18] Welsh Assembly Government, 2008, *Cymorth: Children and Youth Support Fund Guidance Issued December 2008.*

3.18 Cymorth funded projects and activities are delivered in a variety of settings by a wide range of organisations. Settings can be formal as in school and health settings, and informal such as playgroups, youth centres, open play areas and leisure centres. The range of organisations involved in delivery includes mainstream services such as health visitors, midwives, youth workers and probation services; and the voluntary sector including youth clubs, playgroups, childcare development organisations and other support services.

Concluding observations

3.19 The local flexibility that was anticipated for the programme – and built into its procedures –clearly resulted in a large number of relatively small scale projects being funded with significant variation between areas in terms of themes, delivery focus and methods. The small scale of the initiatives, their large number and local variations do not appear to have diminished over the period to 2007/08, even though there might have been some expectation that integration of the previous five funding streams might have seen a reduction in the number of projects and an increase in their scale. There was also no reduction in the proportion of central and evaluation costs in total funding that might have been expected from integration of the previous funding regimes although allowance should be made for the costs associated with setting up and running the Partnerships.

3.20 The scale of Cymorth funding – at an average of £60 per head of the eligible population – is small compared with mainstream funding provision (less than 3%). This, when taken together with the diversity of small scale projects funded by Cymorth, makes it unlikely that its influence will be discernible in any changes in the national statistics relating to the prospects for children and young people in Wales.

4. Partnership working, planning and delivery

Introduction

4.1 This chapter considers the way that the Partnerships have evolved and developed in their governance and management arrangements and in their planning and delivery operations. It draws on the evaluation case studies and from an evaluation 'census' that was carried out of all the Partnerships in 2007 and 2008.

Partnership Working

4.2 The Cymorth Fund is administered by the Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYPP or the Partnerships) and in most cases is managed by CYPP/Framework Co-ordinators (or their equivalent) who are accountable to the CYPP Board. Ninety percent of CYPPs[19] had Cymorth Steering Groups in places, engaging partner representatives[20]. Their role is to advise the Partnership team on the Cymorth Plan, carry out project appraisal and approval and make independent recommendations to the Partnership on investment decisions. About 80% of these Steering Groups also have subgroups in place charged with particular strands of activity.

4.3 Some 70% of Partnerships reported in the 2007 and 2008 Evaluation Census that they had a 'clear' or 'fairly clear' vision/purpose for Cymorth. It was to facilitate partnership working and multi-agency operations, improve understanding and co-peration between statutory and voluntary sectors and strengthen community and voluntary sector (CVS) networks. It was to be directed at early intervention and prevention of later acute specialised needs. And it was to be additional and complementary to mainstream services.

4.4 A key positive of Cymorth reported in the earlier York Consulting evaluation was "*its use as a vehicle to engage partners and foster collaboration*". It concluded that Cymorth funding had acted as a catalyst to kick-start the process of partnership working with this translating into joint decision-making in most areas and action in some cases.

4.5 The evidence from the case studies carried out for the national evaluation supported this earlier conclusion - and the self-assessment by the Partnerships themselves - that there was a consistency of purpose and professional proficiency in Partnerships' functioning and in the way they delivered Cymorth funded activities. This achievement should not be under-estimated when it is considered that '*Framework Partnerships'* were originally established only under advisory guidance and did not become a requirement until the Children's Act 2004.

4.6 The strength of the Partnerships was particularly marked with regard to the identification of, and communication with, target children, young people and their families (with some creative methods being deployed to enable those most in need

[19] Based on 20 partnership responses to the Census of CYPPs 2007.
[20] The remainder adopted other arrangements – e.g. Cymorth being the responsibility of a Partnership sub-group.

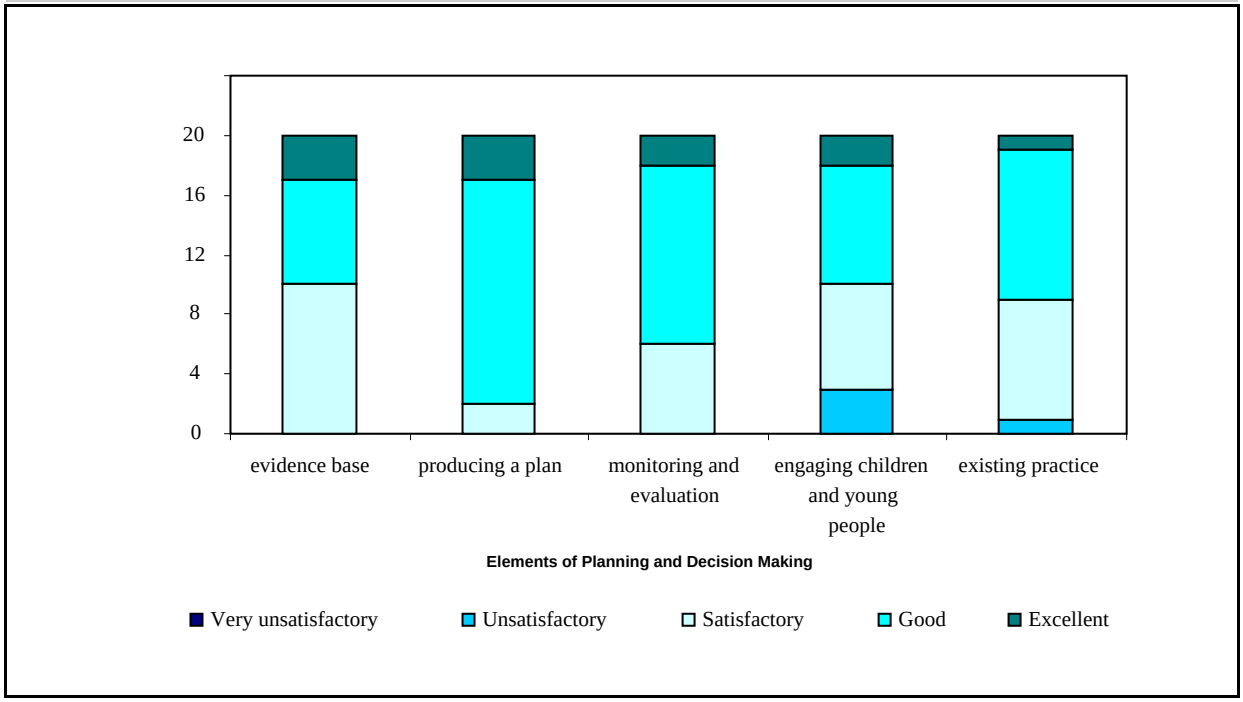
to access the services they required). There was also a steadfast commitment by the Partnerships to multi-agency team working (joint use of premises and multi-partner projects assisted the delivery of effective targeted projects), service flexibility, and innovation in response to identified local needs and mainstream service 'gaps'. Partnership working provided a focus for the CYPPs and improved co-operation and understanding between statutory and voluntary sectors and strengthened community and voluntary sector (CVS) networks.

Cymorth planning

Planning proficiency

4.7 The 2007 Census asked Partnerships to provide a self-assessment of their performance with regard to their planning and decision making against five dimensions as shown in Figure 4-1. This demonstrates that most respondents assessed the planning of their Cymorth funded activities as having been accomplished well if not excellently.

Figure 4-1: Performance on planning and decision making



Source: Census data 2007.

4.8 The self-assessment suggested that the aspects of planning should be placed in the following descending order of accomplishment by the Partnerships:

- producing a plan;
- monitoring and evaluating activities;
- looking at existing practice of what works, and building on that (reviewing previous research); and
- developing the evidence base and understanding need (for example through audits of need, mapping exercises, local statistics);
- engaging the participation of children and young people.

4.9 The 2008 Census showed improvements on this self assessment with the exception of engaging children and young people and monitoring and evaluation.

Funding allocations and project commissioning

4.10 The use of Cymorth funding was not, for the majority of the fund's lifetime, generally determined according to a commissioning process based on strategic priorities. The predominant method of allocation of funding was in response to bids from providers (mainstream services and community and voluntary sector agencies) rather than as a consequence of a coordinated commissioning strategy. Moreover, partners and stakeholders canvassed for the evaluation recognised that there was a tendency for projects funded under the previously prevailing funding regime to be rolled over by use of Cymorth funding. This largely bottom-up and legacy approach perpetuated and even increased the diversity of projects and providers funded by Cymorth.

4.11 The introduction and implementation of the Single Plan prompted the Partnerships to carry out reviews of Cymorth funded projects on 2008/09 and to adopt a more strategic commissioning process informed by the needs analysis under-pinning the Plan. The extent to which re- or de-commissioning of projects could be carried out in an evidence-based way was limited by weaknesses in the prevailing performance management procedures. In many cases, this required a step-change in approach and the adoption of more robust monitoring and evaluation.

4.12 The need for effective evidencing of project achievements against clear outputs and outcomes will become increasingly important as a more pro-active approach is adopted by Cymorth in commissioning of projects in pursuit of Single Plan objectives. In many cases, this is likely to require a step-change in approach where Cymorth activities were previously funded with limited monitoring of outputs and assessment of their outcomes.

Cymorth delivery

4.13 An assessment was made during the course of the national evaluation on the effectiveness of the Cymorth programme service delivery. The assessment was informed by the views of those consulted and documentation provided in the first round of case studies[21] and involved 'scoring' the Partnerships against a number of criteria relating to partnership proficiency. Subsequent case studies with other Partnerships did not use the same approach because they were designed to move on from issues of proficiency and focus on the extent to which the Partnerships were delivering project outputs and outcomes. Nevertheless, they confirmed the picture painted from the first case studies of generally effective partnership working.

4.14 Figure 4-2 summarises the assessment by shading those partnership proficiency aspects that were scored for one or more Partnerships and with darker shading for those aspects that were scored for the most number of Partnerships. The

[21] This approach was not repeated in the year 2 case studies as such the table draws on the experiences of 10 areas.

assessment suggested the following broad conclusions from the national evaluation case studies with respect to the delivery functions of the Partnerships:

- **Identifying users** - agencies are working together to cross refer users for projects.
- **Communications** - the programme is well advertised and publicity materials are sensitive to local cultures and languages.
- **Empowerment** - some user involvement and some staff training, but not yet extended to make connections for volunteers and users on pathways to work.
- **Reach and reach improvement -** there is general confidence that a high proportion of the target group is being reached and some areas are using creative methods to recruit hard-to-reach groups.
- **Multi-agency team work** – is happening in terms of joint strategic planning and co-location, but it should be noted that this is possibly simplified by the low number of agencies involved in project delivery.
- **Staff turnover** - there is sufficient stability in programme staff and this assists internal and external relationships with partners.
- **Service innovation -** is taking place in some projects (and to a significant degree in some cases) with regard to extension to mainstream service delivery.
- **Service flexibility –**may be a refection of the diversity of projects rather than of intentional design - but partners clearly appreciated the flexibility to fund a diverse range of services in different settings and locales and facilitate 'risk' taking.
- **Ethos of service delivery** – is generally welcoming but is targeted at direct users and not yet extended to local communities.
- **Evaluation use** - varies significantly between areas and is not generally embedded in the culture of project planning and management – suggests that there is some confusion across areas about what is required.

4.15 The Third Sector First evaluation[22] concluded that the programme achieved a high level of overall policy compliance (80 per cent of the fifty six projects reviewed and much the same proportion when couched in terms of budget allocations). This was largely because there were very few breaches of the additionality requirement (i.e. that projects should supplement mainstream services). However, it found that only 36 per cent of the projects it reviewed involved the use of output targeting. The 22 area case studies carried out in 2007/08 and 2008/09 for the National Evaluation similarly suggested that a relatively high proportion of Partnerships and projects operated with a very limited set of output targets or none at all.

4.16 A minority of the case study Partnerships were able to report achievements against output targets (which, in some cases, were extensive - nearly 60 targets in

[22] Third Sector First, *Policy compliance and impact measurement in Cymorth* – this can be found at http://www.awardresearch.org.uk/documents/Mike_Nugent.doc - it is undated.

one case study). Where targets had been established and progress monitored against them, the number of targets exceeded as a proportion of all targets ranged from 55% to 75% (i.e. more targets were met than were not met). One case study was of a Partnership that scored achievements against targets (with a maximum score of 20) – the average score over the 21 targets was 13 and the score was 15 or more for 55% of the targets.

Concluding observations

4.17 The findings of the evaluation are that Cymorth partnership working has become effective which is a significant achievement when account is taken of the limited nature or lack of local partnerships in this policy area at the outset of Cymorth. The operation of the Partnerships was effective across a wide spectrum of proficiency characteristics – particularly with regard to:

- identifying and reaching out to target groups;
- multi-agency team working - joint strategic planning; co-location; regular joint training;
- high staff retention rates and high levels of job satisfaction;
- innovation and flexibility in the approach to modify and extend services; and
- delivery through a mix of venues, access points and flexible times and with a welcome that extended into the communities.

4.18 However, planning and delivery by the Partnerships was largely responsive rather than driven by strategic priorities and a commissioning approach to funding allocation and project selection. The result was a profusion of relatively small scale projects, many of which were 'legacy projects' inherited from the previous funding streams. This changed around 2007/08 with the requirements of the Single Plan. The conclusion of the evaluation is consistent with the views of some of the partners and stakeholders that a distinction could be drawn between:

- '*Old Cymorth'* projects - rolled over and largely unchallenged from the previous funding regimes - where the effectiveness of the projects was assumed rather than assessed.
- '*New Cymorth'* activities – re-commissioned because of their fit with the Single Plan's strategic purpose – and/or because their effectiveness had been assessed as warranting continued funding.

Figure 4-2: Assessment of the effectiveness of Cymorth service delivery

Dimension	1 = Weak	2	3	4	5 = Strong
A. Identifying users.	Evidence of no system in place to identify new users.	Some strategies in place for identifying users (3 areas).	Centralised database; identifies user types (e.g. people with disabilities or special educational needs); some exchange with other agencies about user needs (2 areas).	Record keeping and referral systems in place; systematic and routine exchanges of information between professionals about potential users (e.g. new babies born, families moving into the area etc) (5 areas).	Regular contact by Programme staff with users in the local area to identify new users as well as user needs; balance between the need to monitor and support.
B. Communications.	Programme visibility is low; no acknowledgement of diversity or characteristics of the local community.	Poor attempts to make programme delivery visible; publicity in main (dominant) languages of the local community – or acknowledge why this may not be possible (1 area).	Programme delivery is visible; publicity reflects and respects the characteristics and languages of the local community (5 areas)	Programme delivery is visible; employs translation services regularly and demonstrates creative ways of meeting language needs (4 areas).	Programme has high profile in local community; publicity is sensitive to those with special needs (people with disabilities, learning difficulties); employs innovative methods to reach wide audience.
C. Empowerment.	No sense that users are involved at all in service planning or delivery.	Token mention of parents but services dominated by professionals.	Some staff training; Some user involvement (e.g. young people involved in decision-making on Cymorth) (9 areas).	Regular staff training; volunteers are trained and users are supported into further employment and training (1 area).	Whole environment empowers users to be part of a learning community; opportunities exist for users to get involved in delivery; opportunities for staff to change roles/responsibilities and access CPD.
D. Reach and reach improve-ment.	Delivery not yet operational.	Delivering to some of the target group; minimal strategies to improve reach.	Delivering to a high proportion of the target group; Systems in place to improve take-up (5 areas).	Delivering to a high proportion of the target group; creative processes to increase and sustain take-up from hard-to-reach groups (5 areas).	Delivering to the whole of the target group; innovative approaches to sustaining take-up.

Dimension	1 = Weak	2	3	4	5 = Strong
E. Multi-agency team work.	Evidence of absence of multi-agency team work.	Lack of commitment from partners to integrate agencies in service delivery.	Multi-agency teamwork is well established; some shared staff training (4 areas).	Joint strategic planning; co-location, where possible; regular joint training (6 areas).	Highly joined up delivery beyond standard (Programme) requirements.
F. Staff turnover.	Chaotic and erratic staffing and high turnover in staff.	Number of problematic vacancies due to difficulties within the Programme.	Acceptable levels of turnover relative to the local area (2 areas).	Acceptable levels of turnover; strategies in place for recruiting and retaining staff (6 areas).	High retention and high levels of job satisfaction among staff (and volunteers) (2 areas).
G. Service innovation.	Replicating traditional service delivery models.	Some indication of attempts to reshape standard service delivery models (1 area).	Delivering at least one innovative feature in each core element (4 areas).	A range of innovative features across core elements; signs of flexibility in approach to modify and extend services (4 areas).	A range of innovative features across both the nature of the services and the way in which they are delivered; imaginative approaches to modify and extend services (e.g. links with wider ABIs or mainstream service delivery) (1 area).
H. Service flexibility.	Evidence that users have difficulties with access.	Open working hours in a range of venues.	Some extension of access and availability to evening/ telephone/internet access etc (3 areas).	Delivery through a mix of venues, access points and flexible times (7 areas).	Users have been involved in identifying preferences and services have accommodated the needs/preferences of a wide range of users.
I. Ethos (as demonstrated through venue, marketing and promotional work).	Minimal publicity materials; bureaucratic language; unwelcoming venues.	Over-reliance on commercially produced standard leaflets (2 areas).	Friendly and welcoming publicity materials; awareness of need to be welcoming (3 areas).	Welcome extends beyond venues and into the community; culturally sensitive publicity materials (5 areas).	Overall has a welcoming and inclusive ethos for a wide range of users and invites local people to get involved/contribute their views.

Dimension	1 = Weak	2	3	4	5 = Strong
J. Evaluation use.	Evidence of absence of evaluation; evaluation confused with monitoring.	Has undertaken limited local evaluations but not responded to them; understands difference between monitoring and evaluation (1 area).	Has commissioned local evaluations and responded to findings (4 areas).	Staff or parents participate in evaluation process; evaluation feeds into long-term strategic planning (2 areas).	Has embedded evaluation into the culture of the Programme; understands processes and their application to service improvement (3 areas).

Source: National Evaluation on the basis of case study authors' assessments informed by the views of those consulted and documentation provided. The light shading denotes those proficiency aspects scored for one or more Partnerships and the darker shading for those aspects that were scored for the most number of Partnerships in the view of the evaluators based on Partnerships self-assessments, consultations with partners and stakeholders and review of relevant documentation.

5. Cymorth practices, outcomes and mainstreaming

Introduction

5.1 Previous chapters demonstrated that Cymorth funded an average of 890 projects per annum over 2003/04 – 2007/08, the projects are relatively small scale (£55k per project per annum over the same period) and they cover a diversity of age ranges and themes. They have also shown that the projects were generally selected in response to bids from providers (mainstream services and community and voluntary sector agencies) and that monitoring and evaluation was not well embedded in Partnership systems and operations. As a consequence, it is not easy to provide a summary overview of Cymorth practices and outcomes other than by way of example – as is done in this chapter.

5.2 One of the tests of the effectiveness of the Cymorth Fund is the extent to which it prompted mainstream service providers to adopt the successful practices it had funded. This chapter considers the potential for and practice of 'mainstreaming' and its drivers and barriers.

Cymorth practices with positive outcomes

5.3 Examples are given in Figure 5-1 of Cymorth funded projects that demonstrate effectiveness in generating outputs and outcomes consistent with the Fund's longer term aspirations to work with children and young people to reduce the need for later remedial or crisis action by taking preventative actions now and so improving their life chances.

Figure 5-1: Examples of Cymorth funded projects with positive outcomes

Area	Projects with positive outcomes or the prospect of positive outcomes
Bridgend	• **Restorative Justice in Schools project:**- Helped tackle exclusion, suspension, bullying, pupil to pupil conflict, pupil to teacher conflict and anti-social behavioural problems in schools through a mediated conflict resolution process.
Torfaen	• **SMARTT project:**- Demonstrated a reduction in the number of inappropriate referrals to social services. Overall school attendance increased from 86% in 2005/06 to 92% in 2006/07. For one family, multi-agency intervention resulted in the children's school attendance increasing from 35% to 96% as well as many other positive outcomes, including the mother learning new life and parenting skills. • **Youth Access project**:- Community-based alternative education with the majority of young people having been expelled from school. Most of them said that they preferred it to school because it is: more laid back, they don't have to wear a uniform, they are more respected, there are more staff than at school and: "*Better behaviour, they [the staff] don't shout like teachers at school*."

Area	Projects with positive outcomes or the prospect of positive outcomes
Vale	• **Comprehensive School: Behaviour Support Programme**:- To date, 300 young people have gone through this programme on school exclusion prevention and supporting opportunities for learning. Many have gone on to sixth form or successful jobs or careers. 10 boys were interviewed for the area case study and said the project prompted them to stay on, study for GCSEs and face challenges at school, home and in their local communities.
Newport	• **LDI project** :- Youth workers in schools to support disadvantaged young people has lead to a reduction in the number of temporary and permanent exclusions and increased attendance. • **Streets Ahead project**:- Reduced evictions from council houses – and recorded video of beneficiary stories e.g. young people who have gone on to pursue careers. • **Young carers project:**– Worked with 50 young carers each year (200 since project was set up). Around eight young carers a year who participate in the project and receive support re-engage in education or employment. • **Outreach case-holding midwifery service:-** Increased take-up of ante-natal care, increased birth weights and increased numbers of healthy pregnancies.
Anglesey	**Sure Start** (Cymorth) funded parenting class:- Attendees quoted the following benefits: • "Really enjoyed the class as it has covered lots of useful things – like first aid, feeding tips and sleep routines." • "It's given me confidence to go out and make friends again." • "I found the baby resuscitation session brilliant. My baby caught something in her throat a few weeks later and I was able to put what I had learned into practice."
Carmarthen-shire	• **Family Group** short courses facilitated by Plant Dewi:– Parent attendees reported improved self-esteem and confidence: • "it helps me make friends with other parents as well." • "it is helped me with other things in life such as filling in forms and doing my CV." • "the group has made my child gain a lot of confidence and he's now comfortable around other people and not just hiding away."
RCT	• **School-based programmes**:- Statistics show a reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions in five of the six schools where alternative curriculum programmes have been funded via Cymorth from 2004/05 to 2005/06.

<table>
<tr><th>Area</th><th>Projects with positive outcomes or the prospect of positive outcomes</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>• Youth Offending Service projects (Partnership for Youth, Remedy and VALREC – Race equality officer):- Statistics show there has been a year on year reduction in the number of crimes committed by young people in RCT from 3419 total crimes in 2002/03 to 886 in 2006/07.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cardiff</td><td>• Purposeful Learning – Somali Achievement - The homework clubs secured high levels of attendance in 07/08 with over 350 young people attending. Further benefits were gained through provision of family support to encourage Somali families to value and engage in the education provided at school.

• Parent Plus interventions have been completed with 43 families and between April 2008 and December 2008 a sample of 19 interventions were asked to evaluate the progress of their child. In each case the Early Years Home Liaison Officer (HLO) and parent were asked to rate the child in terms of play, relationships and behaviours both before and after the intervention out of a scale from 1 - 5. The table below tracks the average level of improvement in the children helped and the impact that Parent Plus interventions have had as measured by the professionals and the parents.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Average improvement in Play</th><th>Average improvement in relationships</th><th>Average improvement in behaviour</th></tr>
<tr><td>HLO</td><td>1.7</td><td>1.5</td><td>1.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parents</td><td>2.4</td><td>1.9</td><td>2.7</td></tr>
</table>

Note: Parent Plus is a psychology service for pre-school children with behavioural and developmental issues that was available under the sure start programme and has been reconfigured for delivery across the sure start and Flying Start areas.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Blaenau Gwent</td><td>• BAG 57 - Reach Out for Sexual Health: C-Card Scheme User Consultation 2008 (275 responses) key findings: 88% agreed that a visit to a C-Card centre provided them with what they needed; 88% said the staff had given them good advice; and 86% said they understood the information they were given. Overall young people felt the service is OK to excellent (86.9% of users rated the service at least 7/10).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Swansea</td><td>• Swansea Young Single Homelessness Project: 80% of clients with risky behaviours engaged in the project demonstrated a reduction in the severity and frequency of risky behaviours as a result.</td></tr>
</table>

Area	Projects with positive outcomes or the prospect of positive outcomes
	• **STORM**: Reduced the number of referrals to CAMHS as it was said to have helped change children's emotional well being and behaviour; made children ready for nursery school; enabled parent to develop skills to recognise socially acceptable behaviour; and improved parenting skills.
Denbighshire	• **Rhyl Integrated Children's Centre:** Services delivered through the Centre provide good value for money by providing accommodation for multiple agencies enabling parents to access activities for ante-natal care, babies, young children and pre-school childcare as well as training and employment opportunities. 80% of service users agreed that '*the provision made a positive difference to my family.'*
Powys	• **Social Inclusion:** measurable improvements in attendance and reduced exclusions and school refusers and amongst project beneficiaries permanent exclusions were reduced from 21 to 17 in 2006/07.

Source: Area Case Studies Overview Reports 2007/08 (ten case studies) and 2008/09 (12 case studies).

5.4 The examples above reveal the often small scale of the projects and the low absolute numbers of children and young people benefitting from them. There was enough information from a few of the examples to enable their benefits to be estimated (at least on the basis of certain assumptions[23]). The calculations demonstrated that, in these few examples, Cymorth funding was likely to have generated benefits that exceeded the costs by a significant margin. However, there were few examples where the information necessary to estimate such cost-benefit ratios was available.

5.5 Moreover, it has to be remembered that Cymorth funding represents less than 3% of total personal, social services and community expenditure on children and young people in Wales. Therefore, even if all the funding had the cost-benefit ratios of the small number of cases where this could be estimated, it would be likely to make a relatively modest contribution to addressing the problems that disadvantaged children and young people in Wales as a whole have to face. The significance – and a test - of its influence must, therefore, be in persuading mainstream service providers with the resources to make a real difference to adopt the successful innovations that it has tried and tested.

5.6 The following inferences could be drawn from the findings presented above:

- Cymorth funding was relatively small compared to total public spending on children and young people in Wales.

[23] See Chapter 6 on Value for Money.

- … and, even where the benefits from the funding might have exceeded the costs, they were likely to remain marginal in terms of improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Wales as a whole.
- … unless mainstream providers could be persuaded to adopt the successful Cymorth funded practices.
- … and, in order for this to happen, it would have been necessary (but not sufficient) to make the case for rolling out Cymorth funded activities by showing the extent to which their benefits exceeded the costs.
- … and this needed to be done more often and more systematically than was the case.

Mainstreaming – the potential

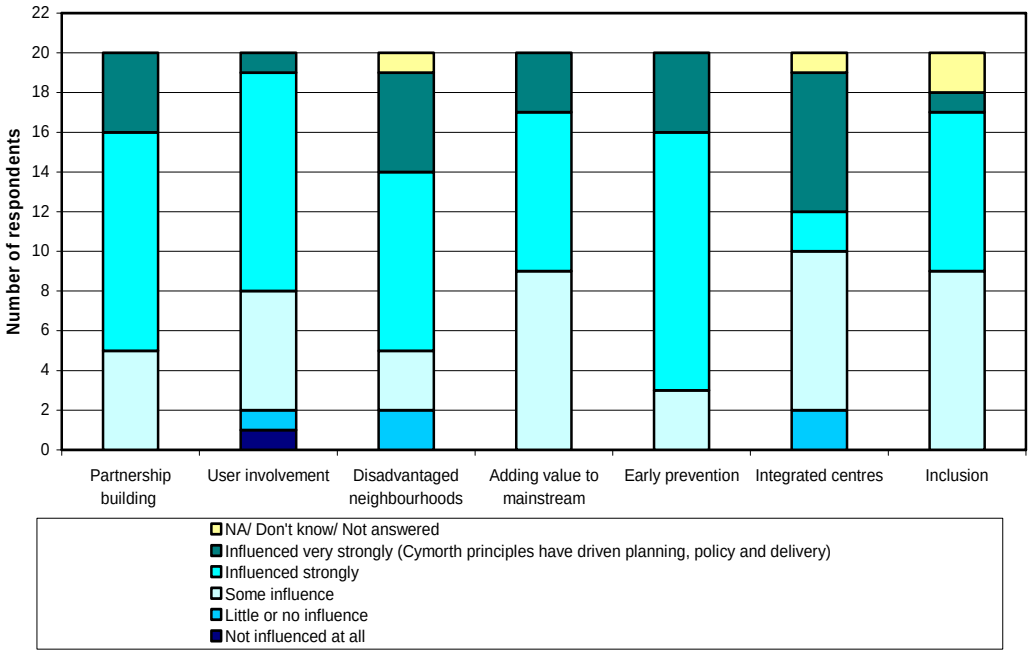
5.7 The 2007 evaluation census, carried out by SQW, asked Partnership respondents to identify the nature of Cymorth's influence on the way mainstream services were designed and/or delivered. They were asked whether Cymorth had influenced planning, policy and delivery through the Children and Young Peoples Partnership in terms of the following aspects:

- partnership building;
- user involvement;
- focus on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and Communities First neighbourhoods;
- focus on early prevention;
- service delivery from integrated centres; and
- service design and delivery to be inclusive of all communities.

5.8 Figure 5-2 shows that the results were overwhelmingly positive – a large majority of respondents felt that Cymorth funded activities had at least some influence on each of these areas of planning, policy and delivery. For example:

- all felt that Cymorth had increased the focus on early prevention – 17 of 20 respondents felt Cymorth had strongly or very strongly influenced this area;
- all respondents also agreed that Cymorth had positively influenced partnership building – 15 felt that Cymorth had strongly or very strongly influenced this area; and
- all agreed that Cymorth had influenced the extent to which the Partnerships added value to mainstream services.

Figure 5-2: How Cymorth influenced the delivery of mainstream services



Source: Census data 2007. Based on 20 responses.

5.9 The 2008 evaluation census also asked Partnership respondents to identify the nature of Cymorth's influence on the way mainstream services were designed and/or delivered. However, the questions in the Year 2 census were different to year 1, so the responses are not directly comparable to the 2007 census. Never the less, the Partnership responses in the 2008 census showed a similar, very positive view of how effective Cymorth has been in influencing the mainstream in terms of:

- Changing corporate policies amongst service providers.
- Re-allocating mainstream resources.
- Re-shaping mainstream services.
- Improving service access to increase take-up.

5.10 A considerable majority of respondents across these four areas felt that Cymorth funded activities have had a positive influence. The Partnerships self assessment in the 2008 census provided the following evidence:

- Six out of 19 Partnerships that responded, reported that Cymorth had already improved co-operation and alignment of other early years intervention programmes and 17 reported that Cymorth has contributed to the alignment of mainstream providers' targets and work programmes. Sixteen also believed that there had been a change in approach as a result of Cymorth, e.g. towards a preventative approach.
- In terms of resource allocation, there was a view amongst a majority of 15 that Cymorth was influencing the re-allocation of mainstream resources

driven by a greater focus on needs assessment. Fourteen reported that Cymorth had brought about greater budget pooling.

- The majority of Partnerships also agreed that Cymorth has influenced the re-shaping of mainstream services. E.g. 16 respondents said that Cymorth has influenced mainstream services to address the identified gaps in service provision; and 18 thought it has helped increase the targeting of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Respondents also overwhelmingly took the view that Cymorth has influenced the working practices of mainstream services. For example, 13 said that joint working in mainstream provision has improved and 15 said the number and frequency of partnership events has increased, 12 said Cymorth has helped set up new networks and 14 said that Cymorth has played a key part in the move towards co-locating staff and mainstream services. Information sharing is also improving as a result of Cymorth according to 17 out of the 19 respondent Partnerships.
- All of the Partnerships agreed that Cymorth is encouraging greater participation of young people in the design and governance of services and 13 said that it is improving service access to increase take-up within neighbourhood and locality teams, particularly by raising awareness in neighbourhoods of services available.

5.11 The case study evidence supported the Partnerships self-assessment that Cymorth had demonstrated improvements that could be made to the process and design of mainstream services:

- joint working through multi-agency teams (e.g. a multi-agency team of housing, welfare and education professionals provide a one-stop shop service to young people leaving care);
- setting up of new networks (e.g. Children's Information Service, Flying Start and Genesis projects working together and engaging with mainstream partners);
- co-location of staff providing related services (e.g. centre providing drop in sessions, advocacy, signposting and resources led by the Youth Service, MIND, CAMHS, Streets Ahead, Shelter, Victim Support and BME groups);
- information-sharing (e.g. Youth Workers given PDAs to record information, which automatically connects to the database and enables them to record critical information which other practitioners can access and share); and
- use of Service Level Agreements (e.g. the Youth Service, JobCentre Plus, and Careers Service have an SLA that allows youth workers to access the JobCentre Plus database of clients and identify young people who are NEET).

5.12 Figure 5-3 provides examples of innovative practices across Cymorth projects that were assessed by the evaluation team as having the potential to influence mainstream services or be adopted by them on the evidence of consultations with the Partnerships and mainstream service providers.

Figure 5-3: Examples of innovative Cymorth funded activities with mainstreaming potential

Activities	Innovative aspects
Pilot projects.	Many Cymorth projects are innovative pilots e.g. • Dedicated midwife for teenage parents (**Anglesey, Pembrokeshire**). • NHS Trust led specialist teams (e.g. High Needs Team and the Therapies Team) focus on preventative treatment, rather than just reactive care (**Bridgend**). • Viewpoint on line consultation tool (**Vale of Glamorgan**).
Joint working.	• Supporting the development of new and revised multi-agency strategies and protocols to direct and frame mainstream and discretionary services for children and young people may well be the greatest legacy for the Cymorth programme (**Cardiff**). • Restorative Justice In Schools project - Youth Offending Team has developed a strong working relationship with the two schools in which the project is being delivered (**Bridgend**). • Support into Independent Living - multi-agency team of housing, welfare and education professionals provide a one-stop shop service to young people leaving care (**Torfaen**). • Good working relationships have been developed with Communities First Coordinators and they have been engaged in a number of projects e.g. Ammanford Play Centre (**Carmarthenshire**). • Multi-Agency Working Group - **Pembrokeshire**).
Setting up new networks.	• Local Delivery Networks based in all 5 secondary schools and the Special School in **Anglesey** and Preventative Services Group in **Newport**. Both bring together locality based multi-agency teams of service providers to share information and co-ordinate activities to support individuals. • HYPE is a newly established network of CVS groups working with children and young people. It was established by the Cymorth-funded CVS Development Worker (**Newport**). • Outreach work of Plant Dewi (**Ceredigion**). • Early years funded activity through both Flying Start and Cymorth activities, supported at the strategic level, led to an effective system of referral and broader networking (**Denbighshire**).

Activities	Innovative aspects
Co-location of staff providing related services.	• The Integrated Children's Centre (ICC) and mini-ICCs in Cwmbran, **Torfaen**, provide co-location networking opportunities for SureStart, Children's Information Service, Flying Start and Genesis projects to work together and engage with mainstream partners (e.g. schools). • Projects that have placed youth/alternative education workers in schools to support disadvantaged young people in mainstream education (**Pembrokeshire, Newport, RCT**). • NHS in **Bridgend** has provided a sexual health nurse to work on the Info Direct Bus which is led by the Local Authority and seeks to engage young people in their own localities and help them to make informed decisions about issues that affect their health and wellbeing.
Information-sharing.	• InfoShop – provides drop in sessions, advocacy, signposting and resources for 500+ registered 11-25s. Led by the Youth Service with Newport MIND, CAMHS, Streets Ahead, Shelter, Victim Support and BME groups. Youth Workers are given PDAs to record information, which automatically connects to the database and enables them to record critical information which other practitioners can access and share (**Newport**). • Young people have been funded to produce videos and theatrical performances promoting on specific issues (e.g. young carers, ASBOs) all of which have been praised and used as examples of good practice (**Vale of Glamorgan**). • The CYPP is in the process of agreeing on a Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) which places a particular focus on sharing information between the local authority and with the Local Health Board and the Health Trust (**Merthyr Tydfil**).
Use of Service Level Agreements.	• Streets Ahead - Youth Service, JobCentre Plus, Careers Service have an SLA that allows youth workers to access the JobCentre Plus database of clients and identify young people who are NEET. Outreach workers working with young people on the streets and in estates help them put together a personal development plan (**Newport**). • Learning from the experiences of the Cymorth programme, there is a determination to ensure that the commissioning of services is supported by SLAs that include measureable outputs which link directly to the aims and priorities of the Plan (**Merthyr Tydfil**).

Activities	Innovative aspects
Budget pooling (between services or organisations).	• CIDs Project (**Flintshire**) was a genuine multi-agency approach to provider services for children and young people who have disabilities. Cymorth funded a post to cover the overall co-ordination of activities that were being delivered by mainstream provision. • Preventative Services Group, where social services, education, health and the VCS have pooled budgets to reduce the number of individual contacts (**Newport**). • Some projects (e.g. Tafarn Newydd Children and Families Service and Youth Access) are multi-agency funded in part from mainstream budgets (**Torfaen**).
Devolved decision-making to a more local level.	• Some work undertaken to involve users in service design (**Ceredigion, RCT**). • Neighbourhood teams for youth workers, play workers and sports development workers have featured (**Newport**). • Work of the Trevethin Detached Youth Worker to form a local forum/youth committee that links with and has Trevethin young people active in **Torfaen** Young People's Forum.
Introducing targets/incentives for service provider staff to work jointly with others.	• Through facilitation of Partnerships the mainstream services have been encouraged/supported to work jointly with others (**all areas**). • Commissioning strategy (**RCT**). • SLAs increasingly set targets, and the coordination team have developed monitoring, evaluation and performance management skills linked to the details within SLAs (Ceredigion).
Local evaluation, research and analysis of evidence.	• External evaluations of Cymorth seen as a key mechanism for modifying Cymorth activity to improve future delivery (**Flintshire, Torfaen, Newport**). • Various surveys (e.g. CTC survey, Viewpoint, Childcare needs and provision survey) have been commissioned (**Vale of Glamorgan**).

Source: Area Case Studies Overview Report 2007/08 (ten case studies) and Overview Report 2008/09 (12 case studies).

5.12 The evidence in Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3 is generally positive about the extent to which Cymorth funded activities have already been adopted, or have the potential for adoption, by mainstream providers (or for influencing their practices). However, it needs to be remembered that Cymorth is a funding stream which is highly diffuse and with a large number of small projects across a wide age range of beneficiaries. Consistent monitoring of activities at a programme/national level was not required and as such there is no way of comprehensively reviewing the activities

funded by the programme. The positive nature of the feedback may, therefore, be dominated by a relatively small number of projects – with the more negative aspects of the programme being difficult to locate and specify.

Influencing Mainstream in Practice

5.13 Figure 5-4 provides examples of improvements in mainstream services that have been based on the experience and practice from Cymorth funded activities.

Figure 5-4: Improvements in mainstream services attributable in part to Cymorth

Type of change	Cymorth project-level activity
Changing corporate policies.	• The projects addressing strategic development around issues including NEETs, Young Carers, Anti-Bullying etc have all contributed to shifts in corporate policies **(Cardiff)**. • The Young Families Scheme has influenced the local housing agenda, particularly the allocation of the housing stock in relation to young families (**Swansea)**. • The lessons from the use of project level SLAs throughout the Cymorth programme will be taken forward into commissioning services to deliver on the Single Plan **(Merthyr Tydfil)**.
Re-allocating mainstream resources.	• Implement Play – inclusive play in summer programme is considered to be good value for money and has levered core funding - around one third of the budget is Cymorth and two-thirds leisure services (**Blaenau Gwent)**. • Significant additional funding has been identified from within core budgets of both the LHB and the Council to support improvements identified within Wrexham's CAMHS Strategy which was developed by a multi-agency Task-and-Finish Group within the CYPFWP structure (**Wrexham)**.
Re-shaping mainstream services.	• Through the provision of a central information and advice centre Cymorth has engaged various mainstream partners to operate in and deliver sessions through the centre such as sexual health services and substance misuse drop-in sessions (**Swansea)**. • Through the delivery of a number of Cymorth funded projects the way that out of school work is delivered has been changed and a number of services have created a co-located base on a Secondary School site (**Swansea)**. • Kooth.com School-based on-line counselling is a Cymorth funded extension for 16-18 year olds of the Welsh Assembly funded school-based face to face counselling services for young people aged 11-18. The project brings together Youth Service, schools, LEA Educational Psychology, Social Services and the Trust (Mental Health) **Blaenau Gwent**.

Type of change	Cymorth project-level activity
Improving access to services and take up.	• The pilot of Learning Coach Personal Support for NEET young people drew together good practice and developed the recommendations from the Cordis Bright Research. The 'one to-one' support through a Learning Coach achieved excellent levels of re-engagement and Cardiff's post 16 NEET strategy is now being built around this approach (**Cardiff)**. • Through its outreach work engaging young people with mental health needs the STORM project has enabled mainstream services to reach and work with clients it would not have engaged otherwise (**Swansea)**.

Source: Overview Report 2008/09 (12 case studies).

5.14 More recently it has become evident that many of the activities funded by Cymorth have been developed further by the Flying Start Partnerships. Indeed some Flying Start Partnerships have reported that establishing the Flying Start offer would have been more difficult if Cymorth hadn't already developed multi-agency approaches and activities.

Mainstreaming - drivers and barriers

5.15 The evaluation evidence suggested that there were more cases of Cymorth funded activities that had the potential to be adopted by mainstream service providers than had actually been adopted. This was also the conclusion of the 2006 York Consulting evaluation – suggesting either misplaced optimism in the Partnerships about the mainstreaming potential of Cymorth funded practices or persistent and significant barriers to the adoption of these practices by the mainstream service providers.

5.16 The 2007 evaluation census, carried out by SQW, asked respondents to identify the factors that prompted and hindered the influence of Cymorth funded activities on mainstream service providers (Figure 5-5). The main barriers to changing mainstream services and securing mainstream funding for Cymorth projects were constraints and inflexibilities with regard to mainstream budgets (some of which were also experiencing budget cuts) and staffing complements, as well as other barriers such as different agency priorities and conflicting key performance indicators.

5.17 In the 2008 census, the main challenges to achieving change in mainstream services were similar to the views expressed in the 2007 census:

- Budgetary issues (lack of adequate resources in mainstream) and linked to this a lack of capacity both within Cymorth teams and within partner teams. Although a project may be critical, there is insufficient capacity in core budgets to incorporate Cymorth projects. This major barrier was expressed by several respondents.

- Developing Partners' understanding of the needs of Children & Young People across service areas was the second most common challenge faced by the Partnerships. Mainstream services are beyond the remit of each Partnership and different agencies have their own set of priorities that may not align with the Partnerships' (five responses)
- Recruitment and retention (single response).
- Contradictory Welsh Assembly Government policy and strategy (single response).

5.18 Almost all of the Cymorth projects reviewed during 2007/08 were heavily grant-dependent, with few having explicit exit strategies in place. This was, in large part, because the intention of moving Cymorth activities into mainstream funded had not been declared or understood as part and parcel of the programme. In other words, there had been a tendency to treat the programme as providing continuity and non-time limited funding for projects that had been funded through the previous regimes wrapped up into Cymorth.

Figure 5-5: Factors prompting and constraining Cymorth's influence on mainstream service providers

Theme	Key factors that prompt change	Key factors that hinder change
Family support.	• Delivery from an integrated centre. • Targeting help at particular groups. • Dedicated staff to relate to and manage projects. • Family support strategy. • Building on Sure Start and the wider provider base.	• The capacity of the parenting co-ordinator or lack of a parenting co-ordinator. • Difficulty in maintaining focus on 'anything other than statutory duties'.
Health improvement.	• A good relationship/ involvement and commitment from the Local Health Board and providers. • Joint commissioning.	• Lack of capacity within the Local Health Board. • Pharmacy costs. • Limited budgets. • Targets/focus not aligned.
Play and leisure.	• Targeted funding at children with specific needs • Links to primary schools. • The creation of the open access play scheme. • Working with the community to engage children and young people.	• A shortage of qualified play workers. • Restrictions on funding and resources. • Use of school facilities in holiday time. • Lack of co-ordination of activities and capital works.

Theme	Key factors that prompt change	Key factors that hinder change
	• Recognising the importance of play.	
Empowerment, participation and decision making.	• Strong youth services. • Good links with schools, Youth Councils, VCS. • Participation strategy. • Tools to assist with participation. • Commitment from partners.	• Difficulties engaging with younger children. • Insufficient capacity to respond to demand. • Lack of previous experience in engaging with young children.
Training, mentoring and information.	• Making appropriate use of voluntary and statutory sectors. • Dedicated staff and/or dedicated premises to deliver. • Establishment of a children's information service.	• A need to develop training strategies. • The previously fragmented approach to this area of work.
Building childcare provision.	• Integrated Children's Centres. • Quality of the children's information service. • Strong relationships with providers, umbrella associations and investors. • Creating a childcare development officer post. • Making the most of Flying Start. • Workforce development.	• Capacity to pay for childcare. • Lack of funding. • Fragmentation of provider base. • Disengagement of the private sector.

Source: 2007 Cymorth Census.

5.19 However, the Single Plan induced significant changes to the way in which a majority of the Partnerships are considering and presenting the case for funding of their effective Cymorth projects through the mainstream.

5.20 The 2008 Census revealed this very clearly. Fourteen Partnerships reported having identified Cymorth-funded projects and activities for mainstreaming. Nine of these had identified mainstreaming potential as a short-term priority and seven reported that the potential had been, or was in the process of being, achieved. Five areas claimed to have marshalled and analysed evidence on the costs, benefits and risks of mainstreaming their Cymorth projects and a further four declared that this was currently underway, and another three described it as 'under consideration'.

5.21 However, few examples of mainstreaming business cases or cost-benefit assessments were elicited from Partnerships in response to a direct request for evidence of such material (see Chapter 6). In the absence of evidence on outcomes and value for money, it will undoubtedly be harder for successful Cymorth innovations to be rolled out more widely – especially in the context of the budget, capacity and staffing constraints being experienced by the mainstream service providers.

5.22 This is recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government in recent guidance which emphasises that:

> Cymorth activities should be either founded on research evidence, or recognised as innovative pilots and closely evaluated. The Welsh Assembly Government funds a Partnership Support Unit that is hosted by the WLGA, one of the functions of which is to support sharing of best practice.

5.23 The need for evidence is also being built into the new Cymorth commissioning procedures. For example, background briefing provided by one Partnership makes clear that Cymorth funded projects must offer good value for money, have outcomes based on SMART objectives and have a clear exit or development strategy that indicates how the project will be sustained post-2011.

Concluding observations

5.24 There have been examples provided by the evaluation of improvements in service delivery and outcomes at local levels and amongst specific target groups (especially amongst young people excluded from school or at risk of dropping out). The potential for influencing mainstream services has been identified by the evaluation from amongst these kinds of projects. This mainstreaming influence is claimed by the Partnerships particularly with respect to early preventative interventions, use of integrated centres and partnership building.

5.25 Yet, the evidence remains limited for changes in mainstream service provision being brought about by the influence of Cymorth funded activities and the benefits this might have generated. This was, in large part, attributable to two factors. First, the intention of moving such activities into mainstream funding had not been declared explicitly and/or generally understood so that this was not always sought or planned. Secondly, mainstream service providers were operating under budget and capacity constraints that made it difficult for them to accept the case for changes to services that often required increased expenditure and resources.

5.26 More recently, the impact of the Single Plan has been to make the Partnerships and the service providers take the mainstreaming potential of Cymorth activities more seriously through the development of business cases for continued funding and there have been an increasing number of examples of ‘mainstreaming’ of Cymorth funded projects.

6. Value for money

Introduction

6.1 Previous evaluations and the first phase of this evaluation found limited evidence of quantified outcomes from the use of the Cymorth Fund. This made it difficult to draw conclusions on its value for money in quantitative terms. The final stage of the evaluation was, therefore, used to review how value for money was interpreted in the Cymorth context, to elicit evidence on aspects of its value for money and to propose how this might be developed in future. This chapter reports the results.

Value for money in the Cymorth context

6.2 Assessing the overall value for money (VfM) of Cymorth funding projects was never going to be an easy task given that its 'value' may take several years to materialise and may not benefit the same organisations that bear the original costs. Cymorth is a partnership-based programme and partners may operate under different incentive frameworks, be seeking different outcomes and have different approaches to reporting and collecting information, all potential obstacles to measuring VfM in a consistent and agreed way.

6.3 Moreover, the way Cymorth was set up in its early years was arguably not conducive to an assessment of VfM as defined by the Audit Commission[24] and other guidance[25] as comprising three components – the so-called 3 E's:

[24] http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/aboutus/strategicobjectives/challengingpublicbodies/Pages/Default.aspx.
[25] ODPM (2004) – *3 R's - Assessing the Impacts of Spatial Interventions: Regeneration, Renewal and Regional Development* - http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/146865.pdf.

The 3 E's in Value for Money

- **Economy** – is about minimising the cost of the inputs needed to deliver a project or activity ('Spending Less'). In the case of Cymorth funded projects, the inputs could include the cost of hiring a youth project worker or the cost of hiring a coach to take young people away on a trip.
- **Efficiency** – is a measure of productivity – how much you get out for how much you put in ('Spending Well'). Efficiency considers how well the inputs of a project or activity (e.g. Cymorth project funding, staff time) are transformed into outputs e.g. number of children or young people receiving support on their health development.
- **Effectiveness** - is a measure of the impact of a project or activity as evidenced by the outcomes achieved ('Spending Wisely'). Outcomes are qualitative and quantitative changes in behaviour, capacity and performance of the individuals, businesses, organisations or areas targeted by the project or activity. An example of an outcome in Cymorth is the number of young people who are no longer NEET (not in employment, education or training) as a consequence of a Cymorth funded project.

6.4 The definition of VfM in Cymorth guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government has always been narrower than the above. It has emphasised the requirement for projects to demonstrate that they meet an identified need without duplicating or threatening existing services. The guidance gives discretion to the Partnerships to define how they will measure VfM. Partnerships were not, therefore, explicitly asked to consider the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of projects, the VfM framework adopted for the purpose of this study.

6.5 Cymorth also has not had a common and consistently applied monitoring system and the focus, especially in the early period, tended to be on delivery rather than on evaluating success, and on outputs rather than outcomes. The increased emphasis being placed on outcomes has only recently been reflected in the Partnerships' performance frameworks.

6.6 The characteristics of Cymorth may also not have induced systematic evaluation of VfM. As described earlier in this report, it supported a large number of relatively small and diverse projects. The time and resources devoted to VfM assessments, through evaluation or other means, should be proportionate to the size, complexity and riskiness of projects. With an average project size of around £55k per year, this does not allow much by way of resources to be devoted to evaluation of each project. However, whilst it might be unreasonable to have expected Partnerships to use limited evaluation resources to evaluate the VfM of each and every project, it would have been possible to focus evaluations on bundles of similar projects or to carry out evaluations of target audiences to see if any change in outcomes could be attributed to Cymorth funded interventions.

6.7 For all the above reasons, we did not hold high expectations that there would be a substantial body of VfM evidence on which to draw for this review. This proved to be the case. The request to Partnerships to provide evaluations, reviews,

business cases and other evidence that might have a bearing on the VfM of Cymorth interventions elicited 85 reports from 14 Partnerships. This is the evidence that is drawn on in the rest of this chapter.

Assessment of the 3 E's

Economy – 'Spending Less'

6.8 Economy is concerned with the costs of what goes into producing a service. The review was therefore looking for information on the financial performance of projects and activities and the unit costs of inputs.

6.9 It was evident from the documents reviewed that financial data on project grants and proposed budgeted spend are monitored by Partnerships and reported in monitoring returns to the Welsh Assembly Government and external funders. The monitoring documents ('Cymorth Evaluation Reports') are self-completed by project managers. Where budgeted spend was included in the evidence, it tended to be for one year rather than over the project lifetime.

6.10 The annual project budgets or grant level agreements presented in the returned evidence also tended not to be broken down into different cost headings e.g. staff costs, overheads, delivery costs etc. The exception was that a good proportion of the evidence for projects under Theme E (Training, mentoring and information) had some indication of the number of staff that the Cymorth funding had supported.

6.11 The review found limited data on the actual costs incurred by Cymorth projects. This was in both external evaluation reports and internally produced documents. No examples were provided where the unit costs of the inputs to projects had been calculated or compared to available benchmarks. The information also did not lend itself to this calculation, because of the absence of data on actual project costs broken down by its constituent parts.

6.12 The findings do not mean or suggest that Cymorth projects have not achieved good economy, only that there was limited discussion on economy in the evidence we reviewed. This was despite the fact that Partnerships routinely monitor the financial performance of projects and Partnerships have systems and processes in place to promote economy (e.g. procurement, recruitment, re-commissioning exercises).

Efficiency – 'Spending Well'

6.13 Efficiency is a measure of productivity. Drawing robust conclusions about project efficiency relies on measuring and collating data on both the inputs and the outputs of projects.

6.14 Our review confirmed that Partnerships monitor the direct effects of projects. The output achievements of projects were presented in a reasonable proportion (but not all) of the evidence reviewed. The number and types of outputs varied considerably, reflecting the broadness of Cymorth and the six themes of activity.

6.15 However, outputs and costs were infrequently related. Costs per unit of outputs were reviewed in evidence relating to five Cymorth funded projects (three of the projects fell under Theme E – Training, mentoring and information). In two cases, the unit costs had been benchmarked against comparable projects or activity. Figure 6-1 provides one example where unit costs had been calculated and benchmarked.

Figure 6-1: Project example – Calculation of unit costs of outputs

- An external evaluation was undertaken of an ESF and Cymorth funded project delivering different learning programmes, including some for young people at risk of dropping out of education or at risk of disaffection.
- The evaluation examined the strategic and delivery performance of the project. The methodology included semi-structured interviews with steering group members, referral organisations, tutors, trainers and support workers. Beneficiary surveys and focus groups were also held in addition to a 'live' observation.
- The evaluation calculated the unit cost per beneficiary and the unit cost per accreditation. The evaluation benchmarked the unit cost per beneficiary against similar ESF projects and found it to be broadly comparable. Impacts and outcomes were ascertained through interviews with stakeholders and supported by beneficiary level consultations.
- The project was deemed to be an operational success because it met the needs of most beneficiaries. The evaluation considered additionality by asking beneficiaries the question 'what would you be doing if you had not taken part in [the project]?' For the majority of the respondents the project had generated positive outcomes, such as improving self-esteem, helping to prevent expulsion from school or helping to provide more direction in life. The project had helped some beneficiaries to gain employment or work experience.

Source: SQW Consulting.

6.16 Evaluation of the efficiency of projects ideally should be based on net outputs or benefits – benefits that would not otherwise have occurred – i.e. that were additional. This latter term has a different meaning in the Cymorth context where it is used to refer to the extent to which Cymorth funded activities supplemented rather than duplicated mainstream services or the extent to which the funded project was meeting a local need or service gap.

6.17 The review revealed few instances where the additional, net benefits of projects outputs had been considered. Figure 6-2 provides an example where unit costs were calculated and benchmarked but where the additionality of the benefits had not been considered. This weakens the assessment but it is worth noting that, even if allowance is made for this, the benefit-cost ratio is likely to remain positive.

Figure 6-2: Project example – Assessment of project efficiency

- One evaluation report of a youth outreach project calculated the unit cost of the number of young people supported by dividing the number of beneficiaries (120) by the total project budget. The unit cost was then compared to the cost of a basic Community Punishment Order (CPO) and a custodial sentence. The evaluation concluded that the project had good value for money as the cost per young person supported was less than the cost of a basic CPO or a custodial sentence.
- However, the evaluation assumed that if each beneficiary had not accessed the youth outreach project scheme they would have received either a CPO or a custodial sentence. This may not have been the case and the additionality of the project – what difference it made – has to be analysed by taking account of what otherwise ould have happened.
- Using the same assumptions as the evaluators, it can be demonstrated that, even if only 15 young people were supported through the most intensive activity offered, the project would still provide value for money in comparison to a CPO. This difference is even more pronounced when comparing to a custodial sentence, it requires preventative action for just one individual for the outreach project to be more cost effective than a custodial sentence.
- In other words, the additionality of the project would not have needed to be very high for the project to represent good value for money in efficiency terms.

Source: SQW Consulting.

Effectiveness – 'Spending Wisely'

6.18 Effectiveness is concerned with the extent to which project outputs and outcomes are secured in line with its targets in timing, scale and quality terms. Outcomes are distinguished from outputs in the sense that they capture changes in behaviour, capacity or performance of the target beneficiaries of the project or activity, and can be direct or indirect. Outputs, on the other hand, are measures of what the project provides in order to bring about the outcomes – e.g. training places or family support and advice.

6.19 Of the 3E's, there was more documentary evidence in Partnerships on effectiveness than on economy or efficiency. The information on effectiveness included:

- feedback from beneficiaries that attended Cymorth funded activities e.g. on the quality of the training;
- the assessment of output (and/or outcome) achievements e.g. whether targets were met; and
- the views of stakeholders responsible for delivering and managing the projects and in some cases stakeholders influenced by the projects.

6.20 Many of the reviewed Cymorth funded projects were subject to contracts that included a set of performance targets – mostly couched in terms of outputs (e.g. aspects of delivery such as counts of attendance, sessions held, training

sessions held) rather than outcomes. There were, in fact, very few instances where the outcomes of projects had been clearly assessed and a number of cases where outputs (such as satisfaction ratings provided by beneficiaries with regard to a training course) were confused with outcomes. This weakness was identified in a programme evaluation of Cymorth in a local authority area, which concluded that although Cymorth projects had been monitored efficiently and consistently, projects could and should be linked to the outcomes they were designed to promote.

Figure 6-3: Project example – Outcomes based assessment

- A project which encouraged young people into volunteering built an outcome measure into their project targets. The target was for 50 per cent of young volunteers supported to move into education, training or employment.
- As the evaluation stated, this is an outcome which can be measured. The fourth quarter return for the year 2005/06 indicated that the target was not achieved in that year. However, returns for the subsequent year (after the evaluation was completed) suggested that the target had been met even though it was an ambitious target.

6.21 One aspect of effectiveness that was discussed in a number of the pieces of evidence reviewed was whether the projects had added value to mainstream services. The findings were generally based on the views of project managers responsible for the Cymorth projects. For example, an internal evaluation found that a young carer's project was unique to one area as existing support focused on adult carers. In another example, Cymorth funded a substance misuse project for young people up to the age of 25, which provided therapeutic interventions, training, education and awareness-raising, a holistic package of services not available through mainstream services. The review also identified examples of Cymorth funded sexual health projects adding value by offering early intervention support to hard-to-reach beneficiaries (such as young men) before referring them onto mainstream services.

Summary

6.22 Across the 85 projects covered in the review, there was relatively limited robust evidence on the VfM of Cymorth projects against the 3 E's framework adopted in this study. The effectiveness of projects received the most analysis in the documents reviewed, with evidence that Cymorth projects are meeting local needs - the definition of VfM used in Cymorth guidance. Evidence on the economy and efficiency of Cymorth projects was much weaker – and this was more because of limited evidence on costs rather than missing data on outputs. This conclusion was much the same as reported in the York Consulting and Third Sector First evaluations and reviews. The former reported:

- significant variability in the scope, rigour and validity of evidence relating to output and outcome achievements - making it difficult for Partnerships to use the evidence to inform planning and decision-making;
- difficulties in identifying the added value of outcomes from Cymorth given that there was a legacy of activity from the previous funds;

- limited evidence of significant concrete outcomes for mainstream services; and
- weaknesses in evaluation and monitoring arrangements, stating that data tends to be localised, project-specific and process rather than impact focused.

6.23 Third Sector First published a summary of their experience of being contracted to conduct Cymorth reviews of varying scale and complexity by one half of Welsh authorities[26]. The consultants reported that evaluation of Cymorth is, "severely limited by weak theorisation of interventions, the absence of baseline data, loosely defined target populations and a pre-occupation with sustaining established employment patterns…"

Why VfM is important in the new Cymorth context

6.24 Assessing the VfM of Cymorth projects is increasingly important, for a variety of reasons some of which are being prompted by changes in the wider context. Firstly, the UK is entering a period of austerity in public finances as it recovers from the full impact of the current recession. Although the full details of future spending plans are still to emerge, some budgets will be cut, requiring evidence to be available to policy makers and budget holders on the types of activities that should continue to be supported.

6.25 Secondly, major policy changes are planned for Cymorth. In the 2009/10 funding guidance[27], the Welsh Assembly Government set out its intentions for the future of Cymorth funded activity:

> *The Welsh Assembly Government is consulting on proposals for legislation that will aim to move the best of Cymorth activity into the mainstream. The consultation document "Action on Child Poverty" proposes three new duties on local authorities:*
>
> > *A new duty to take action that will reduce inequalities of outcome for all children and young people.*
> >
> > *A new duty to ensure adequate access to play for all children and young people.*
> >
> > *A new duty to promote children and young people's participation.*

6.26 The new duties on local authorities may be interpreted to mean a continuing need for Cymorth funded activities, but it is likely that Cymorth funded projects will need to demonstrate their value and worth when competing with other priorities for funding post-April 2010.

[26] Third Sector First, n.d., Policy compliance and impact measurement in Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund, Cymorth poster.
[27] Welsh Assembly Government, December 2008, *Cymorth: Children and Youth Support Fund Guidance.*

6.27 Thirdly, VfM assessments can assist in making the case for effective Cymorth projects and activities and ways of working – the 'best of Cymorth' - to be mainstreamed by statutory service providers or third sector organisations. For these reasons, we suggest that advances have to be made in the extent and way in which the VfM of Cymorth is assessed.

Improving the assessment of VfM

Developing and adopting a method for VfM assessment

6.28 Assessing the VfM of the kinds of preventative services funded by Cymorth can be difficult because they are seeking to reduce or prevent the need or demand for a costly service in the future. Costs are short-term and certain, but the benefits are long term and uncertain, and the organisations that bear the original costs may not always be the same as the ones that benefit at a later date. However, the challenges are not insurmountable and this section of the chapter suggests how advances in VfM assessment could be made. Figure 6-4 provides an example of a VfM assessment which builds on an example given earlier.

Figure 6-4: A value for money assessment of a Cymorth project

- Cymorth funded a voluntary sector project to support young people at risk of offending. In one year, the project spend was just under £90,000, of which Cymorth provided £28,500 (32% of costs). The project offered intensive support to young people, providing a twice weekly drop-in centre where the young people could attend training (e.g. Basic Skills, IT Skills), use computers to search for jobs and access general advice and support. An out-reach service was also provided with a mobile bus.
- The project met two main targets in the year, with 125 young people receiving intensive support (output target) and 40% of the young people then moving into training or employment (outcome target).
- A mostly qualitative evaluation was conducted of the project which concluded that the project had been effective in meeting its objectives and feedback from beneficiaries was positive. However, it is possible, making assumptions in the absence of project information, to extend the analysis to show in quantitative terms the VfM of the project. The workings are shown in the table below. The assumptions taken in this example are arbitrary, though we believe not unreasonable.

Preventing youth offending – assessment of costs and benefits		
A	Total project cost (annual).	£88,400
B	Cymorth funding actual.	£28,400
C	Cymorth funding % (B/A).	32%
D	Proportion of Cymorth funding directed to intensive support (assumed as 80% of B).	£22,720

Preventing youth offending – assessment of costs and benefits		
E	Total number of young people receiving intensive support.	125
F	Number of young people receiving intensive support that can be attributed to Cymorth funding (E*C).	40
G	Proportion of F that obtain training or employment within 6 months of project support (assumed as 40%) (F*0.4).	16
H	Proportion of G that would not have secured training or employment without project (assumed to be 50% of G).	8
I	Proportion of H who would have re-offended if they had not received assistance of project (assumed as 50% of H).	4
J	Present Value of benefit of preventing re-offending (£63,040 per offender).	£252,160
K	Benefit-Cost Ratio (J/D).	11.1

- The starting point for the assessment is the 125 young people that received intensive support (row E). Of these, 32% (40) were attributable to the Cymorth funding (row F). Forty percent of the Cymorth supported young people obtained training or employment within six months of receiving the project assistance (row G).
- Of this group, it is assumed that one-half would have found training or employment without the project's assistance, leaving 8 young people (row H). And it is assumed that of this group, 4 young people will have re-offended if they had not obtained the training or employment (row I).
- The benefit to society of the project preventing this reoffending can be valued. Cummings et al[28] valued the monetised benefit that '*preventing young people re-offending'* as £63,040 (2005/06 prices). Four times £63,040 equals a total project benefit of £252,160.
- Dividing this monetised benefit by the proportion of Cymorth funding directed to providing the young people with intensive support (row D), gives a positive project benefit cost ratio of 11.1. In other words, for every pound of Cymorth funding, £11-of benefit was generated by the project.
- A more cautious assumption that the project prevented two young people from re-offending still generates a positive benefit cost ratio of £5.50 of benefits per £1 of Cymorth funding.

Source: SQW Consulting.

[28] Cummings et al (June 2007) – '*Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative: Final Report'* DfES.

6.29 This project example shows the positive benefits that early year interventions can generate. A similar finding emerges from an assessment of the project introduced in Figure 6-2, which provided socially exclusive young people with the skills, motivation and confidence to take advantage of education, training, volunteering and employment opportunities. The project reduced the number of participants that were unemployed or NEET. With conservative assumptions on additionality of 50 percent, the project may have generated £1.7 of benefit for every £1 of cost.

6.30 In both of these examples the benefits were generated for organisations that did not bear the original costs. This is one of the trade-off challenges for preventative or early intervention services. The Partnerships are an ideal mechanism to address the trade-off issues through a multi-agency partnership based approach.

Embedding evaluation and the assessment of VfM

6.31 As well as developing and adopting methods for the assessment of VfM, advances are also needed in embedding evaluation and assessment of VfM within the Partnerships and in the delivery of Cymorth projects. Some proposals with this in mind are set out in Figure 6-5.

Figure 6-5: Proposals for embedding assessment of VfM within Partnerships and Cymorth delivery

Embedding monitoring and evaluation in project delivery

To improve the rigorous assessment of the success of projects, evaluation should be embedded in project delivery from the start, irrespective of the size of the project. The approach to evaluation and monitoring will vary, reflecting the circumstances of each project.

For some projects (smaller projects and those where success has already been demonstrated), the approach to evaluation and monitoring can be ‘light-touch’ and need not necessarily extend to a full VfM impact assessment. Other projects will require a more robust and in-depth assessment, potentially requiring resources to be set-aside for external independent assessment, as has been advised in the Cymorth funding guidance.

An evaluation plan should be prepared setting out the intended evaluation approach for each project for which an evaluation has been agreed as appropriate, detailing:

- Who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation?
- What factors (e.g. costs, outputs, outcomes) will be monitored and how?
- What staff and resources will be needed?
- Who needs to be consulted?
- When monitoring and evaluation will occur?
- How the results will be disseminated?

Prioritising projects which lend themselves to assessment

It is not necessary or desirable to evaluate all types of projects or activities. As well as projects which are particularly strategic, innovative or significant (in scale or influence), priority should be given to projects which lend themselves to VfM assessment. These types of projects are likely to have the following characteristics:

- a clear set of SMART objectives linked through to outcomes;
- a small number of funders (one or two);
- are timebound, with a clear start and end point;
- short-term quantitative and qualitative outcomes; and
- comparable data to benchmark impact.

This does not mean that VfM assessments should not be attempted on other types of projects but that fuller analysis may be possible for projects with these characteristics.

Bundling projects or grouping beneficiaries

Although project evaluations may be regarded as too onerous for some Cymorth projects given their small scale, it would be possible to:

- bundle projects together where they have similar objectives and/or are targeted on the same areas or groups of beneficiaries – this could achieve scale economies for evaluation purposes but may suggest wider benefits as well in terms of joining up projects;
- commission 'goal-free' evaluations in which the focus is not on the Cymorth funded project(s). A typical evaluation will be 'goal based', seeking to determine if the stated goals (and objectives) of the programme or project have been achieved. Goal free evaluation seeks to assess what a programme or project is actually doing, rather than assessing what it was trying to do. At a thematic or programme level, goal free evaluations could assess the extent to which changed outcomes for specific target groups can be attributed to Cymorth funded interventions or other factors.

Drawing on other research evidence

Not every project needs to be evaluated. Where research or evaluation evidence is available to support VfM cases, this should be drawn on, providing that it relates closely to the intervention under consideration (for example, some of the findings reported in Cummings et al (2007)). The research evidence can be used to assist CBA of specific or bundled projects. In some cases it could be argued that where there is strong body of research evidence that a certain type of intervention works, there is less need to focus so heavily on efficiency and instead concentrate on the economy and effectiveness of the service.

Source: SQW Consulting.

6.32 Finally, an important point to note is that, if successful Cymorth funded projects are to be mainstreamed, then the monitoring and evaluation that is done should adopt the assessment framework, methods, language and metrics of the mainstream providers in question. It may be that the providers have a particular way of analysing VfM that does not comply with the 3 E's framework as interpreted and used in this report. This needs to be established with the providers at the time when the Cymorth funding is provided to ensure that monitoring and evaluation plans are consistent with provider frameworks as far as possible.

Concluding observations

6.33 VfM is about obtaining the maximum benefit with the resources that are available and can be difficult to assess for interventions like Cymorth seeking to reduce or prevent the need or demand for a costly service in the future. The difficulty for early intervention interventions is that the costs are short-term and certain, but the benefits are long term and uncertain. An added challenge is that those who incur the costs now are not necessarily the same organisations whose costs may be reduced in the future (because of the reduced need for remedial action).

6.34 Cymorth has supported a diverse range of activities (e.g. in delivery structures, partnership arrangements, beneficiary groups etc) and arguably the way the programme was set up in the initial period may not have aided VfM assessments, with a narrow definition of VfM in guidance and a focus, particularly in the initial period, on delivery and outputs rather than on measuring the outcomes of interventions.

6.35 The evaluation was unable to be conclusive on the VfM of Cymorth projects and activities in the 3 E's sense because of lack of evidence. Only a limited number of evaluations (85 reports in all) were made available to the evaluation team that contained evidence relating to VfM. Amongst these, the strongest evidence was available on the effects on services. The evaluated Cymorth projects generally were regarded to be meeting local needs, adding value to mainstream services and had delivered benefits for children and young people. However, the evidence on the success of Cymorth projects was most often qualitative, anecdotal, self-reported and focused on project delivery, with more limited evidence available on economy, efficiency, quantitative data and the outcomes of activity. Key gaps in relation to assessing VfM included insufficient analysis of financial data, the absence of clear project outcomes and limited consideration of the additionality of project achievements.

6.36 There is now a greater need for VfM assessments to be carried out and to embed evaluation within the Partnerships and in the delivery of Cymorth funded projects in order to secure the future of successful Cymorth practices in increasingly austere times. This will require the development and adoption by Partnerships of VfM assessment methods and the embedding of monitoring and evaluation in their performance management procedures and systems.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Three key questions were specified at the outset of this report to be the focus of the evaluation. The findings of the evaluation with respect to these questions are set out below.

Did Cymorth funding enable a partnership infrastructure to be established and developed that could support the provision of services in a holistic way to children and young people in disadvantaged areas?

7.2 Cymorth funding helped to foster the development of partnerships at local levels with a consistency of purpose and professional proficiency in their functioning and in the way in which they delivered Cymorth funded activities.

7.3 This was particularly so with regard to the identification of, and response to, need amongst disadvantaged children, young people and their families. There was a steadfast commitment by the Partnerships to multi-agency team working, service flexibility, and innovation in response to identified local needs and mainstream service 'gaps'. This provided the foundations for the effective launch of the Flying Start programme.

7.4 However, for the majority of the fund's lifetime, the method of allocation of funding was in response to bids from providers rather than a commissioning process based on strategic priorities. It is, therefore, difficult to claim that Cymorth supported the provision of services in a holistic way until relatively recently following the Single Plan and more emphasis then being placed by Partnerships on projects having well-defined exit or development strategies.

Did it provide for innovative, preventative services and support designed to improve the prospects for disadvantaged children, young people and their families/ communities in later years?

7.5 The qualitative evidence from the evaluation is that the services funded by Cymorth were generally compliant with the requirements of the Fund in the sense that they were additional to mainstream service provision and focused on interventions designed to reduce later claims on remedial and crisis services especially in disadvantaged areas. The very limited amount of quantitative evidence on the benefits and costs of the interventions indicated that they were likely to be positive. However, the projects were many and various and often on such a small scale that made it unlikely that, of themselves, they could be seen to make a difference to the well-being of the children and young people in Wales as a whole.

7.6 Moreover, the performance management systems in place were not robust enough to enable systematic assessments to be made of the benefits for the children and young people directly participating in the projects. This was a serious deficiency for a programme that was seen by some partners and stakeholders as the "*the R&D of young people's services*" and whose rationale was, therefore, to trial approaches that might then be taken up by mainstream service providers with the resources to really make a difference to the life chances of children and young people.

Were the services funded by Cymorth additional to those provided by mainstream service providers and, insofar as they were and they were successful, did this prompt any change in the priorities/practices of the mainstream service providers – and with what effect?

7.7 The services funded by the programme were generally additional and supplementary to mainstream service provision often offering different ways of designing and delivering services that were thought likely to have benefits for both service providers and users. However, limited evidence was forthcoming about the extent to which these different practices gave rise to tangible improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

7.8 Therefore, it is not surprising that there was little evidence of take-up by mainstream service providers especially when the latter were facing tightening budgets and when there was a wide-held presumption that Cymorth funding would continue to be available.

Overall assessment

7.9 The overall conclusion is that Cymorth achieved its role in improving local partnership working in support of services for disadvantaged children and young people, helped to put preventative services in place and on the agenda of the mainstream service providers, and introduced innovative ways of working. This must be regarded as a major achievement when contrasted with the weak or non-existent local partnership arrangements prior to 2003/04. However, there has only been a limited number of attempts to demonstrate the extent to which all these things improved the outcomes or prospective outcomes for children and young people and to achieve widespread adoption of the practices that might have secured such outcomes.

7.10 There are now more systematic efforts being made to do this – largely as a consequence of Single Plan requirements. This is a process that needs to be encouraged by:

- ensuring that the innovative and preventative rationale of Cymorth funded activities is clearly and widely stated and understood – especially among the mainstream service providers who might be expected to adopt them if they can be demonstrated to work;
- focusing Cymorth funded activities on critical areas of local need where preventative services and innovation are most required – rather than being spread across a diversity of age ranges and themes; and
- providing strong support at the national level to ensure that Cymorth funded practices with mainstreaming potential are identified, evaluated and, where appropriate, disseminated and adopted.