

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Children and Young People Committee

Parenting in Wales and the delivery of the  
Parenting Action Plan

May 2009



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**National Assembly for Wales**  
Children and Young People Committee

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## **Committee Membership**



**Helen Mary Jones**  
**Chair**  
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**Plaid Cymru**



**Angela Burns**  
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Pembrokeshire  
**Welsh Conservative Party**



**Christine Chapman**  
Cynon Valley  
**Labour**



**Lynne Neagle**  
Torfaen  
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**Kirsty Williams**  
Brecon and Radnorshire  
**Welsh Liberal Democrats**

## CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



Parenting would be so much easier if children came with instructions. Unfortunately, they don't!

I believe that parenting is the most demanding but rewarding of all jobs. The impact it has on each child is profound and lasts a lifetime. So often, however, the value of parenting is overlooked by society and only receives media attention when problems occur or something goes wrong.

As Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, I feel passionate about recognising the work of parents in Wales. I was pleased to hear, in 2005, that the Welsh government had published a 10 point Action Plan which set out its efforts for supporting parents. The Parenting Action Plan ended in 2008, however, and one year on it seems that little has been done to progress the Welsh Government's strategy for parenting.

The Committee felt that this subject warranted investigation and has discovered that, while some action points have been implemented, the progress against others was patchy or non-existent. We, as a Committee, call upon the Welsh government to recognise the diverse nature of families in Wales, champion the rights of parents and raise the profile of positive parenting by introducing a refreshed Parenting Strategy and Action Plan which puts the child and parent at the centre of services.

I am grateful to all those who gave evidence to the Committee and who helped us with our inquiry. In addition, I would like to thank Ann Jones AM who has acted as a regular substitute for Lynne Neagle AM and Eleanor Burnham AM, a former Committee member.

Particular thanks go to the parents who took time out to meet with the Children and Young People Committee members. Their experience and honesty was invaluable in helping the Committee to assess the effectiveness of support and services available to parents in Wales in line with the Parenting Action Plan. In fact, it is fair to say that their evidence has hugely strengthened this report.

As one mother said "you never ever stop being a parent", so we urge the Welsh government to take the recommendations contained in this report seriously for the sake of our children who will, in turn, become parents themselves one day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Mary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Helen Mary Jones AM**

Chair, Children and Young People Committee

## INTRODUCTION

**Helen Mary Jones AM** - "It [parenting] is like housework - you only notice it when it 'is not done".<sup>1</sup>

In April 2008, we announced a focused inquiry into parenting and the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's three year Parenting Action Plan (2005-2008).

Why parenting? It is essential that we get parenting right. As Gail Bennett, Parenting Strategy Coordinator, Flintshire County Council, put it:

"It is about the promotion of parenting, and seeing it as being as valuable as the work on children and young people".<sup>2</sup>

We decided to highlight parenting and support for parents and carers because we believe that this is a vitally important area of policy which has not received as much attention as it should, and which touches on all our lives. We support the sentiment expressed by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning at the launch of the Parenting Action Plan in 2005:

"It is my intention to provide the best support possible for those engaged in one of the most demanding and rewarding of occupations being undertaken in Wales - raising children".<sup>3</sup>

Yet as the National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People Committee, we have heard recurring concerns about the support available to parents and carers in Wales. Unlike England, Wales has not had a specific fund to support developments in parenting,<sup>4</sup> despite the fact that, as one of our Committee Members, Christine Chapman AM, said:

"...if we sorted parenting out, we could resolve many issues but the problem is...that it is not always a priority".<sup>5</sup>

As a Committee, we are of the view that good, positive parenting can help prevent or ameliorate many of the difficulties faced by children and young people as they grow up. This, in turn, benefits our communities in the longer term. A former member of the Committee, Eleanor Burnham AM, commented that there is a need to:

"turn around the thinking to say how much will be saved at the other end rather than the programmes being seen as a cost".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RoP p14, 23 October 2008, [Children and Young People Committee](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.13

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government Press Release, [Minister announces groundbreaking plan for parents](#) 13 December 2005

<sup>4</sup> Wales Audit Office, (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan*, paragraph 48, p.12

<sup>5</sup> RoP p.14, 23 October 2008, [Children and Young People Committee](#)

<sup>6</sup> RoP p29, 27 November 2008 [Children and Young People Committee](#)



We believe that parenting is not given as high a priority as it deserves in UK society. As a result, local and central government's funding of support programmes for parents may be influenced by a culturally low prioritisation of parenting in the UK. The ways in which we as a society value parenting has practical implications, such as the relatively low wages and status accorded to childcare professions.

The Parenting Action Plan came to an end in March 2008 and there has subsequently been little indication from the Welsh government about how work to support parenting will be taken forward. The One Wales programme of government for Wales makes no explicit reference to parenting. In evidence to the Committee, Tony Ivens, the Children in Wales Development Officer for Fatherhood, told us that:

“This March (2008) was the end of the three-year period of the plan, and we had a meeting with Jane Hutt, who was very positive and made a commitment to an ongoing parenting action plan. However, in the subsequent meeting that we had with officials, it became apparent to us that there was a pretty much total lack of resources available to deliver anything.

We took the view that the best interests of children and young people would not be served by producing a document without any resources to back it up. Bearing in mind that this committee was new and was about to sit, we thought it best if we took a gap year, effectively, and looked at the findings of this committee. That was done in the hope that some resources would be available in the next financial year, and so we are looking to move it forward in 2009. At the moment, we are in a state of stasis, and we have no parenting action plan”.<sup>7</sup>

We, therefore, decided to carry out a retrospective inquiry into the delivery of the Parenting Action Plan and to use this as the prism through which we could scrutinise parenting support more broadly.

The Plan itself had not previously been evaluated so there was little information available about what it had achieved. To this end, the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee asked the Auditor General for Wales' Office to assist us by carrying out a focused piece of work, reviewing the Parenting Action Plan. The Wales Audit Office examined relevant documents, interviewed Welsh Assembly Government officials and conducted a survey of Children and Young People's Partnerships in Wales. This report therefore draws upon the Wales Audit Office work as well as the evidence we received directly.

Having taken evidence and carried out our inquiry, we are now able to provide a set of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations to the Welsh government and to relevant others. A summary of our recommendations is detailed at Annex 1.

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<sup>7</sup> RoP p 6, 9 October 2008 [Children and Young People Committee](#).

During our inquiry, we took evidence from a wide range of witnesses including: the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; local authorities; voluntary organisations that work with parents, children and young people; parent network groups; and parenting skills facilitators. We also discussed the emerging ideas of our inquiry at an informal meeting with around 30 parents, facilitated by Children in Wales. Ann Jones AM, as a substitute member of the Committee, also undertook a rapporteur visit to meet informally with various parent groups in Flintshire, at a meeting facilitated by Flintshire County Council and the Flintshire Parenting Strategy Group.

We also received over 30 responses to our call for written evidence, detailed at Annex 2. A schedule of the four Committee meetings in which oral evidence was taken is also detailed at Annex 2.

During our inquiry, we heard of a number of examples of good practice in supporting parents, which are detailed at Annex 3. Several examples of good practice are also quoted in this report.

### **Terms of reference for the inquiry**

The Children and Young People Committee agreed the following terms of reference for this inquiry:

1. To scrutinise the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan (Dec 2005-March 2008).
2. To scrutinise what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to continue and develop its work on parenting and the resources available to do so.
3. To take evidence on what works and what doesn't and on what action needs to be taken to move the agenda forward.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT'S PARENTING ACTION PLAN**

The Parenting Action Plan<sup>8</sup> was produced in 2005, having been developed with the input of a Working Group comprising representatives from the Welsh government, local government, the voluntary sector, the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Children's Information Service (recently renamed the Family Information Service). The Action Plan sought to ensure that:

“a more coherent approach is taken to the development of parenting support services in Wales, so that parents and carers are better informed and better supported”.<sup>9</sup>

The Action Plan was meant to be a “living document” with four specific aims to:

- raise the profile of parenting among policy makers and service providers in Wales;
- further develop policies and services which support mothers, fathers and carers;
- link with other policies and activities which are relevant to parenting; and,
- identify a set of key actions to be taken by the Welsh government to support parenting.

The Plan therefore contains 10 action points, most of which were to be delivered by the Welsh government and some by local authorities and was broadly welcomed when it was published. The evidence taken by the Committee and the work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office has demonstrated that whilst some of the action points were achieved, many have been only partially delivered or not delivered at all and the Plan had no additional ring-fenced resources for its implementation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2005) [Parenting Action Plan](#)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>10</sup> Wales Audit Office (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan*, paragraph 8, p. 4

## **THE WIDER POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

Parenting is not a discrete policy area and there have been many new policy developments since the Action Plan was published. By using the Parenting Action Plan as the focus for our inquiry, we heard about a wide range of other policies, programmes and services that impact upon parenting.

There has been increased activity in relation to parenting support particularly targeted at geographical areas of deprivation, identified through Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Grant, Communities First and Flying Start initiatives.

The final stage of the production of the Parenting Action Plan coincided with the development of the Flying Start programme and influenced its composition. Flying Start is a specific grant which complements Cymorth and is targeted at children aged 0-3 living in the most deprived areas of Wales. Interventions include free childcare for 2 year olds, additional health visiting and parenting programmes. Such programmes are based on both the universal and specific, individual needs of parents and their children and are delivered by trained, professional personnel. Flying Start guidance on parenting was produced in support of action point 4 of the Parenting Action Plan. We found in our evidence that Flying Start is broadly acknowledged as providing an upsurge in provision for 0-3s in targeted geographical areas.

Similarly, Cymorth funding has been used to ensure increased support for parenting than might otherwise have been available. Cymorth is a grant scheme which aims to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people, again targeted specifically at disadvantaged areas. It is administered through Children and Young People's Partnerships within each local authority.

Other policies and programmes which impact on parenting include the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (the NSF) which includes a "Parenting Standard". The NSF standard asks local authorities, Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts to work together to ensure that parents and carers have access to a range of services to help them nurture the physical, social and emotional growth of children and young people in their care. The NSF was referenced in some of our evidence, but was not a strong feature.

There are a number of initiatives at a local level which support parents and provide information and advice. These include Children's Information Services (now Family Information Services); Flying Start initiatives; Community Focused Schools, the Childcare Strategy and Integrated Children's Centres. These centres are based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support and health services is a key factor in determining good outcomes for children and their parents, ensuring the best start in life. Each centre provides Early Years Education, Childcare, Open Access Play, Community Education and Training.

The Children and Young People's Partnerships are seen as being well placed to pull together the policies that relate to parenting and, through the Children and Young People's Plans, ensure that local authorities can respond to need and deliver parenting support and services. Many local authorities also have parenting strategies and parent networks which support parent participation in the planning of services. We heard evidence about the role of Parent Networks, with positive evidence from the Caerphilly Parent Network about the profile it has in Caerphilly. Anne Fritter told us:

“People come to us for consultations, to discuss parenting issues and to ask us to feed into their work. I represent the parent network on the children and young people's framework partnership, so the fact that we are engaged at the highest strategic level in Caerphilly in terms of children and young people is an indication of the work that is being done around parent participation and our profile in the county”.<sup>11</sup>

Specific support for parents is also provided through schemes such as Genesis Wales, which aims to assist individuals back to work and training. Genesis Wales is widely acknowledged in our evidence as a flexible and non-threatening way of helping parents into further training, volunteer and employment opportunities.

The voluntary sector plays a key role in supporting parents and we received evidence about a lot of good practice. Local authorities contract a range of service providers such as Home Start, an independent registered charity that supports local families, to make initial contact with families, develop relationships, gain trust, and support families use of other professionally provided programmes.<sup>13</sup>

As well as national and local policies, initiatives and services, we heard about a range of parenting programmes such as Incredible Years - a set of research based programmes, developed at the Incredible Years Centre, Bangor, for assisting parents in managing children's behaviour problems and aggression, and for increasing children's social competence at home and at school. Action Point 4 of the Parenting Action Plan included funding for Incredible Years programmes.

#### **Examples of Good Practice:**

##### *Genesis Wales*

“Over 500 parents in Wrexham, including a significant number of Lone Parents, have been provided with advice, support and guidance to enable them to take up training and employment opportunities through the Genesis Cymru.Wales project. This is replicated across Wales...

Many of the beneficiaries accessing training attended the hugely successful 'Making Choices' childcare taster course and many of their children had their first experiences of childcare in the free creches.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> RoP p25, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>12</sup> Wrexham Children's Information Bureau on Behalf of Children's Information Service Wales- written evidence.

<sup>13</sup> Home Start estimate that they are contracted by 85% of local authorities across the UK. Written Evidence from [Home Start](#)

There have also been legislative developments which will impact as parenting work is taken forward in Wales with the powers that have been granted to the National Assembly in relation to child poverty and vulnerable children.<sup>14</sup> The Welsh government indicated to us that they would bring forward legislation in the form of an Assembly Measure<sup>15</sup> which would include:

- A child poverty duty on public agencies;
- A duty on local authorities to provide free childcare places and other early years' services in specific places;
- Duties on local authorities that will match the guidance under which the Cymorth grant is provided; and,
- Support to families through an Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS), and to strengthen regulatory enforcement in a children's setting.

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<sup>14</sup> These powers are derived from the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty Legislative Competence Order (LCO) (*The National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Social Welfare and Other Fields) Order 2008* (April 2008))

<sup>15</sup> The Proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure was introduced to the National Assembly for Wales by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on 2 March 2009.

## **DELIVERY OF THE PARENTING ACTION PLAN**

### **The overall effectiveness and impact**

The Parenting Action Plan is just that - an Action Plan. It is not and was not intended to be a full blown strategy, although some stakeholders might have wished to have seen a fuller strategy.

There was a consensus in the evidence we received that the Plan itself had helped to raise the profile of parenting education and support, and that it did act as a catalyst for greater support. Indeed, in her written evidence, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills said that:

“Support to parents is now embedded across a number of portfolios and parenting is being mainstreamed across a range of policies and programmes. The Parenting Action Plan has provided the catalyst for this”.<sup>16</sup>

However, other evidence we received indicated that the Action Plan was modest in its ambitions and the success of some of the action points has been limited, inconsistent and patchy, with many not completed or only partially completed. The Minister’s written evidence to us highlighted a number of actions which have yet to be carried forward. As a Committee, we find this disappointing and we asked the Minister why it is that a three-year action plan, which ended in March 2008, still has outstanding action points that have not been delivered or have been only partially delivered.

The Action Plan was not underpinned by a comprehensive analysis of the support needs of parents, nor was it subject to evaluation during its existence. A number of outputs have been produced - for example, the publication and distribution of three booklets - but there is very limited information on what the Plan has achieved in terms of outcomes and the impact it has had on standards of parenting.

### **Level of priority and co-ordination at government level**

We were concerned to hear that the Action Plan seemed to have been pitched at a low level within the Welsh government and there was no clear lead to carry forward some of the action points and to co-ordinate work.

Lucy Aktar, Parenting Development Officer from Children in Wales told us that,

“We hoped that the Parenting Action Plan would help to achieve more co-ordination, but that, largely, has not happened”.<sup>17</sup>

She said that even within different Welsh government departments there is not always co-ordination and that, whilst departments do “bits” of parenting work, there is no cross-departmental co-ordination.<sup>18</sup> This was supported by Tony Ivens who gave the following example:

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<sup>16</sup> Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(3)-17-08 (p2), *Inquiry into the Parenting Action Plan*, Written evidence from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 27 November 2007

<sup>17</sup> RoP p.6, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>18</sup> RoP p 20, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

“I would like the Assembly Government to ensure that this all comes under a single umbrella. Lucy just gave the example of social justice - we had lobbied, as part of the parenting action plan, for other programmes in addition to Incredible Years to be evaluated. Although everyone supported that view, there was no money in the pot to do it. Then, completely out of left field, we were told that Strengthening Families<sup>19</sup> was being evaluated by the social justice department. The officials in DCELLS knew nothing about it; the left hand was not talking to the right hand.”<sup>20</sup>

## Funding

A key issue to come out the evidence has been the lack of resources that have been directed - by both central and local government - to the implementation of the Plan. One consultee said that implementation of the Parenting Action Plan is restricted at a local level due to competing demands for resources, and that “parenting support is not a service that can be operated effectively on a shoestring budget.”<sup>21</sup> Many respondents mentioned shortfalls in provision due to the way funding is targeted.

Tony Ivens told the Committee that anecdotal feedback on parenting support indicated that parenting professionals in Wales saw themselves “as the poor relations when compared with England”.<sup>22</sup> He indicated that many parenting professionals believe there to be a far higher level of resources made available to support parenting in England than are made available to support parenting in Wales.<sup>23</sup> The Wales Audit Office Review found that there has been no specific fund to support developments in parenting in Wales and that, in contrast, the 2002 Spending Review established a three year Parenting Fund of £25 Million for England (2003-06).<sup>24</sup>

The Welsh government has funded central expenditure in relation to the Plan through budgets that have been top-sliced from the total Cymorth Fund. Expenditure recorded against these budgets shows that the Welsh government spent £390,000 on activities related to the Plan over the three years to March 2008, but the Wales Audit Office concluded that:

“While some additional resources have been provided to increase support to parents, it is impossible to be precise about the overall level of expenditure on parenting support through local Cymorth funding”.<sup>25</sup>

The Welsh government’s response to us was that many of the Parenting Action Plan’s deliverables were being taken forward via programmes that it has already designated funding to.<sup>26</sup> Flying Start, for example, had a parental support element worth £1.7million in 2007-08.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Strengthening Families Programme aims to reduce and prevent substance misuse and other problem behaviours in young people, by helping parents to improve their parenting skills.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.21

<sup>21</sup> Rhonnda Cynon Taff County Borough Council- Early Years and Family Support Service, Written Evidence

<sup>22</sup> RoP, p 20, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p 18

<sup>24</sup> Wales Audit Office (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government’s Parenting Action Plan*, para 48, p.12

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. para 6, p.4

<sup>26</sup> RoP, p20, 27 November 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>27</sup> Wales Audit Office (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government’s Parenting Action Plan*, para 50, p.13



## Provision of information

Whilst there is a consensus that more information is available to parents, it is difficult to say how effective and meaningful it is.

Local authorities currently provide information to support parents and carers through services such as Family Information Services (formerly known as Children Information Services, CIS), with many securing satellite points in integrated children's centres and secondary schools. In their written evidence, Flintshire County Council described examples of work undertaken by the CIS, commenting that:

“the CIS also distribute Easter and Summer Fun Booklets which incorporate information about activities for children and information to support parents such as top tips, parenting programmes, access to Parentline Plus. In addition the next development will be to utilise a text messaging alert system which will bring information about parenting directly to the attention of parents”.<sup>28</sup>

The Welsh Local Government Association told us in written evidence that,

“the role of the CIS/FIS in Wales is crucial in ensuring that parents and carers know how to access services that are on offer in the local area. However many CIS/FIS lack the resources necessary to extend their services beyond their statutory duties, which were enhanced by the *Childcare Act 2006*”.<sup>29</sup>

From April 2008, the allocation of Cymorth funds ascribed to Family Information Services was transferred to the Revenue Support Grant.<sup>30</sup>

At our informal meeting with parents on 25 February 2009, we found that the majority of parents were not aware of Family Information Services or Children Information Services. We understand that the Welsh government intends to launch a national advertising campaign on Family Information Services in the future.

In our inquiry, we also found that there is a need to pilot different ways of communicating with parents, taking account of factors such as literacy levels, access to technology, and preferred forms of communication, so that all parents can access meaningful advice and support when they need it. For example, Sara Vaughan from Home Start, an organisation working with hard-to-reach families, observed that such parents were often:

“not ringing helplines. We have set up some text-buddy schemes, where parents can text for help and support, which is working well. That might be a more appropriate way of supporting families than telephone helplines”.<sup>31</sup>

We believe that there is a need for a single source of Wales-specific information for parents on services available for them, linked to locally relevant information. This could have been delivered through the

<sup>28</sup> Flintshire County Council, on Behalf of the Flintshire Children and Young People Partnership, Written Evidence.

<sup>29</sup> Welsh Local Government Association, Written Evidence

<sup>30</sup> Wales Audit Office (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan*, para 13 p.

<sup>31</sup> RoP p9, 11 December 2008, Children and Young People Committee

establishment of the Parentsnet website, which was a Parenting Action Plan action, but this has not been delivered. This issue is exacerbated, as the Caerphilly Parent Network commented, because it is difficult to tell if the information available on other websites, such as the Family and Parenting Institute, and Parentline Plus, applies in Wales. The Caerphilly Parent Network commented that as a result:

“it can be difficult for organisations such as ours to get the information out there, even if it is not first-hand experience, and sharing information can be difficult because there is nothing available”.<sup>32</sup>

### Lack of delivery on specific action points

The written evidence we received was clear about the areas of the Action Plan which have been delivered, have not been delivered, or have only partially delivered.

We found it useful to have the information we received summarised in a table format which shows the extent to which each of the 10 action points have been delivered, according to the evidence we received. Responses from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills to the Committee’s consideration of each Action Point’s delivery are also included in the table.<sup>33</sup>

Summary of Action Points	Has it been delivered ?	Details
1. Develop a National Bilingual helpline for parents.	No	<p>Put on hold because of a dispute between the Welsh government and the Westminster Government Department for Children, Schools and Families about funding.</p> <p>At our informal meeting with parents groups, many parents expressed strong support for a confidential, free, well-publicised bilingual helpline that could signpost them to local parenting support services, including ante-natal workshops and local parenting networks. They emphasised that the helpline should be promoted as non-stigmatising, with an emphasis on it being there to help parents. One parent also suggested this helpline should be available in languages other than English and Welsh.</p>

<sup>32</sup> RoP p24, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>33</sup> Responses made in Children and Young People Committee Paper CYP(3)-17-08 (p2), *Inquiry into the Parenting Action Plan*, Written evidence from the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 27 November 2007

		<p><b>Minister's response:</b></p> <p>“There is an obvious need to establish a bi-lingual helpline in Wales and we are keen to implement this action to assist parents.</p> <p>I have noted the concerns from various bodies and can confirm that my officials are currently looking at how we can progress with this, and also establish resources that will result in a positive outcome.</p> <p>Negotiation with the Department for Children, Skills and Families is being pursued with a view to obtaining funding to support this development. In the meantime, Parentline Plus continues to take calls from Wales.”</p>
<p>2. Develop and distribute a series of booklets for all new parents.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Three booklets have been published but we received some evidence that there have been problems with distribution, with people querying how to obtain further copies.</p> <p>Many people at our informal meeting with parents did not recognise the booklets. Parents suggested that the booklets should be provided as part of the ante-natal process, and that children could be sent home from school with relevant booklets. Parents also commented that there was a lack of information for parents in dealing with teenagers. One parent commented that “teenagers push boundaries, and parents don't know where to get help from”.<sup>34</sup> One parent suggested that the English and Welsh language versions of booklets should be separated, to avoid booklets being heavy and cumbersome.</p> <p><b>Minister's response:</b></p> <p>“We intend to continue with the distribution of these booklets to ensure that parents are reached and receive support.</p> <p>A major reprint last year means that booklets are available to all new parents for the next</p>

<sup>34</sup> Children and Young People Committee's informal meeting with parents, 25/2/09

		two years, during which recipients and the professionals involved will be consulted over their value with a view to issuing them further.”
3. Set up a working group in the autumn 2005 to consider the Beth Johnson Foundation Report on grandparents and propose an outline programme of action.	Partially	<p>A working group was set up and made 17 recommendations, but there is a lack of clarity about if and how these have been implemented.</p> <p><b>Minister’s response:</b></p> <p>“There are still some issues that are ongoing from our work on grandparenting and the recommendations of the Working Group on Grandparenting. A summary of these actions follows:</p> <p>We recommended a survey be undertaken of the use made by local authorities of family and friends care, and of the arrangements in place to provide financial support. This is being pursued through the Children and Young Persons Bill that proposes to provide a framework for family and friend’s care.</p> <p>Guidance to local authorities clarifying the use of family and friends care, to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements and to ensure parity of treatment, will link into the work pursued by the Children and Young Persons Bill.</p> <p>It was recommended that the use of the Toolkit produced by the Family Rights Group be used. The Assembly Government has funded production of a Welsh language version of the Family Rights Book and toolkit that is due to be published in March 2009.</p> <p>Recognition of the role of grandparents in supporting parents is included in guidance on the role of intergenerational approaches in strengthening the family being developed and planned to issue in December 2009.”</p>
4. Fund training to extend the Incredible Years programmes and commission the Social Care Institute	Partially	Some respondents questioned whether parents are seeing the benefits of the extension of the Programme. Incredible Years has a good evidence base, but there have been some problems with delivery. For

for Excellence (SCIE) to produce information on other evidence-based programmes used in Wales that can inform decisions on future investment.

example, the Wales Audit Office found that the outcomes from the Incredible Years Programme are clear in that people are trained and training materials purchased, but the Welsh government has not evaluated the impact of the training at local levels.<sup>35</sup> NCH (renamed Action for Children) said that those who have been trained in the programme have “not always gone on to deliver”; and that it does not meet the needs of all parents, particularly the hard to reach.<sup>36</sup>

An initial meeting between Welsh government officials and SCIE was held but this has not been progressed.

At our informal meeting with parents, we heard mixed experiences of the Incredible Years programme, with a number of parents commenting that the materials used looked dated and were culturally more appropriate to parents based in the United States of America, rather than Wales. Some felt that the techniques taught were silly, while others were more positive about them, one parent commenting that the techniques taught should also be utilised in schools.

**Minister’s response:**

“We continue to provide funding for research and evaluation of parenting programmes, recognising the need for a sound evidence base which can inform future development. This includes:

*Incredible Years Wales* - receiving £100,000 over three years to evaluate a new intervention for parents of infants and toddlers from birth to 36 months that promotes positive parenting and reduces the risk of children developing behavioural and emotional problems including conduct disorder.

*Family Links* - £100,000 over 3 years towards the cost of evaluating the Family Links Parent Nurturing Programme. The evaluation has been commissioned in conjunction with three local authority areas (Cardiff, Newport and Torfaen) through their

<sup>35</sup> Wales Audit Office (October 2008) *Review of the Assembly Government’s Parenting Action Plan*. para 56, p. 15

<sup>36</sup> NCH Cymru, Written Evidence

		<p>Children and Young People's Partnerships. The evaluation evidence will inform a decision whether this programme, currently being run in these local authority areas, can be included among the Flying Start approved programmes.</p> <p><i>Cardiff University</i> - £136,021 has been awarded to Cardiff University over 3 years to extend the research being carried out by Dr Gordon Harold into the effects of inter-parental conflict on children. This research will assess the efficacy of a parent-education programme with a particular focus on the impact of family relationships on a child's emotional and behavioural wellbeing during the transition stages from primary to secondary school...</p> <p>In addition, we are now in the second year of evaluation of Cymorth and Flying Start by a consortium lead by IPSOS MORI and SQW. One of the themes of the study in 2008-09 is the delivery of parenting programmes within Cymorth and Flying Start."</p>
5. Strengthen parental participation within the Framework Partnerships planning process from summer 2006	Improved but patchy	A Practice Guide has been circulated, but more work needs to be done around parent participation.
6. Early in 2006, commission work to produce a good practice guide for Partnerships on parental participation and empowerment.	Yes	Practice guide distributed in September 2006 but there are no mechanisms for reporting on how or whether the recommendations are being implemented.
7. Framework Partnerships will be required to consider the needs of parents and carers in their planning and how agencies will work together to meet these, including relevant actions from the NSF for Children,	Unclear	<p><b>Minister's response to delivery of action points 5, 6 and 7</b></p> <p>"The importance of participation by parents and carers in local Children and Young People's Partnerships and in the preparation of their Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) is emphasised in our guidance documents, 'Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes' (August 2006) and 'Shared Planning for Better Outcomes' (September</p>

<p>Young People and Maternity Services</p>		<p>2007). We also issued a Parent Participation practice guide for Partnerships in September 2006 as part of this action.</p> <p>There is clear evidence in draft CYPPs issued for consultation earlier this year, that the Parenting Action Plan has succeeded in raising the profile of parenting and increasing the priority given to supporting parents locally, and that the Partnerships are increasingly engaging parents and carers in planning and review of their services.</p> <p>The draft Plans suggest that three-quarters of Partnerships either have local Parenting Action Plans in place or are developing them, whilst the remaining quarter report as a priority action to increase the level of parental support provided in the area.</p> <p>Additional resources have been provided to increase support to parents through local Cymorth funding, and Plans clearly evidence the use of Cymorth and Flying Start funding for this purpose.”</p>
<p>8. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and Children’s Information Service to pilot CIS satellites in primary, secondary and community-focused schools and in integrated children’s centres.</p> <p>(The Children’s Information Service has subsequently been renamed the Family Information Service).</p>	<p>Patchy</p>	<p>Pilots have taken place but overall the picture is patchy and needs evaluation.</p> <p>At our informal meeting with parents, no parents recognised the names of either the Children’s Information Service or the Family Information Service.</p> <p><b>Minister’s response:</b></p> <p>“In October 2006 the Assembly Government wrote to all Directors of Education, Children and Young People’s Partnerships and Children Information Services to invite Local Education Authorities and the Children’s Information Services to pilot CIS satellites in primary and secondary schools, in conjunction with community-focused schools and in the new integrated centres. We requested information about satellites already in operation and asked each local authority to consider their current and future capacity to pilot satellites in a range of settings. We received a positive response and will continue to explore with the National</p>

		<p>Association of Family Information Services opportunity to take this forward in the context of the marketing campaign</p> <p>We are committed to increasing access to suitable information by parents. The DCELLS Participation Team has been working closely with representatives of Family Information Services in raising their profile in Wales. This will result in a national advertising campaign to raise public awareness of their services. Its main objectives will be to develop a national website and telephone number and review the current Welsh Assembly Government information guide for parents, 'The Choosing Childcare' booklet. A single telephone number will ensure that callers are automatically put through to their nearest FIS centre, depending on where they made the call and allow the implementation of national marketing campaigns without having to list 22 different phone numbers.</p> <p>With the wider marketing campaign and change of name to Family Information Service we aim reach those parents not previously aware of the services. We will also continue to work closely with the Family Information Services and re-evaluate the next steps for this action. “</p>
<p>9. Work to continue with LEAs, Estyn and school governing bodies to promote parental participation in schools.</p>	<p>Patchy</p>	<p>The Welsh government has not identified a lead to take this forward and some respondents were unaware of any progress being made. The WLGA said that whilst schools are also beginning to actively engage with parents and carers there is currently no guidance on this.</p> <p><b>Minister's response:</b></p> <p>“Whilst there has been to date limited progress on this action, the Parenting Action Plan has raised the profile of parenting within the schools policy and is increasingly being addressed.”</p>
<p>10. Undertake further development of Parentsnet to ensure its suitability for all</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Website discontinued.</p> <p>The general value of a website of parenting information was questioned by some parents</p>



<p>parents.</p>		<p>at our informal meeting. One parent commented: "I'm not being funny, but we don't all have computers".<sup>37</sup> Another parent observed that "when you've got a family crisis and things are kicking off, the last thing that people want to do is to log on to a computer and search for information".<sup>38</sup> However, other parents - particularly fathers - were supportive of a dedicated website providing information about parenting skills for parents, and which linked them to information about local services.</p> <p><b>Minister's response:</b></p> <p>"Work is currently under way to provide information for parents on the Education pages of the Welsh Assembly Government website. Previous content relevant to parents is being rewritten and new content added with a view to completion by the end of December 2008. The content will then be expanded drawing from wider sources from across the Assembly Government."</p>
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<sup>37</sup> Children and Young People Committee's informal meeting with parents, 25/2/09

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

## TAKING PARENTING WORK FORWARD

Our evidence highlights a number of areas where parenting work could be taken forward most effectively.

### Gaps in service provision not addressed by the Parenting Action Plan

During our inquiry, we were concerned to find that significant gaps in service provision exist. There has not been any all-Wales mapping or needs analysis undertaken to identify the gaps in service provision and to identify what services are available and where.

We have received consistent evidence identifying significant gaps in service provision which were not addressed as part of the Parenting Action Plan. This includes support for: fathers; parents of older children/teenagers; parents and parents with partners in prison or custody; fathers on pre-release programmes from prison; young parents; parents substance misusing; parents within black and minority ethnic communities; disabled parents; or, parents of disabled children.

For example, the Plan did not specify how disabled parents or parents of disabled children might be supported, so it is not surprising that we found that there was "no evidence" that

the Action Plan: "has had any impact on the support needs of parents of disabled children".<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Advocacy Action Wales and Mencap said:

"there is no evidence that the Parenting Action Plan has had a significant positive impact on parents with learning disabilities".<sup>42</sup>

The written evidence also pointed to variability in the availability of services in rural areas.

The Parenting Action Plan made a specific recommendation about grandparents, who often offer crucial support in parenting. However, although a working group was established to consider the Beth Johnson Foundation

#### Examples of Good Practice:

##### *Preventative Services*

"Conwy have won an Excellence Wales award for preventative services which included a parent support team in social services which provides support to the most vulnerable families based on mentoring and practical support; DARRT which assists parents to improve parenting by managing their addictions and provides 24 hour support if needed; and the Tigers group, a parenting programme for parents of adolescents which engages well with fathers as well as mothers.

Conwy also run a Caring Dads schemes for domestic abuse cases and Butterflies which offers the same support for mothers."<sup>39</sup>

##### *Anti-bullying booklet*

"Part of the campaigns legacy in Wrexham has been to develop a 'Top tips for Parents on bullying' booklet which could be used as an example of good practice across Wales."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The Children's Services Group (Association of Directors of Education in Wales/Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales)- written evidence

<sup>40</sup> NSPCC Cymru/Wales- written evidence

<sup>41</sup> Disabled Children Matter Wales, Written Evidence

<sup>42</sup> Advocacy Action Wales and Mencap Cymru, Written Evidence

Report on grandparents, and it made a number of recommendations, it is unclear whether the group's recommendations are being implemented. As Committee member Angela Burns AM commented: "what is the point of setting up the working group if you are going to take no notice of it?"<sup>43</sup>

The Minister for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills, acknowledged to us that there is still some work to be done in providing support to grandparents.

### **Overcoming the barriers for parents to access information and services**

We received a lot of evidence about barriers which can prevent parents and carers from accessing the information and services and support they may require. We found that parents were sometimes not aware of the support services available to them, or how to access them, and that factors such as limited literacy skills or learning disabilities could be barriers for parents trying to access support, particularly if information was provided in unsuitable formats.

We were told of some of the practical difficulties parents face in accessing services such as the expense of child care and there is a lack of capacity in crèche support to accompany parent groups. We were also told that the costs of room hire, lunches, refreshments, transport and childcare can be significant barriers to service delivery.

The locations and places where parenting support takes place are important in the context of overcoming fear and stigma and enabling better access. The evidence we received indicates that there is potential for developing services for parents on school sites, with money available to support this through the Community Focused Schools grant. Such activities would need the support of the Head Teacher and governing body and appropriate space to work with adults. However, we consider that a range of community facilities need to be utilised for providing services to parents, as some parents may have had unhappy experiences at school in the past which may put them off using school buildings. School sites should not be the only option and other facilities should be used to support parents too.

There are particular issues in relation to perceptions about parenting support which can create a barrier to certain groups of parents accessing the services they need. There is a gender distinction in the take up of services, and although there are good-practice models for working with dads, many fathers perceive that services are aimed at mothers, rather than both parents, and that services are "overly feminised". For example, Tony Ivens told us that the Incredible Years programme has been evaluated as being effective with mothers, but that there is no data on how effective it is with fathers".

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<sup>43</sup> Rop p.9, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

## Workforce issues

The issue of the gendered take-up of services also relates to the reality of the fact that the childcare workforce is predominately made up of women. Addressing workforce issues and the feminised nature of childcare and related professions was not addressed by the Parenting Action Plan. With over 99% of people who work in childcare being women, we heard from our witnesses that many people think that childcare is not a job for men.<sup>44</sup>

We consider that further work should be undertaken to examine how men, as well as women, can be encouraged to work in the childcare profession, which will require better access to training and remuneration.

## Non-stigmatising and universal services

There was wide consensus amongst our witnesses about the value of non-stigmatising and universal services. The written evidence we received indicated that some parents did not want to ask for help in parenting, because they were embarrassed, or afraid. For example, we heard that some parents were afraid of social services intervening if they tried to ask for help. At our informal meeting with parents on 25 February 2009, parents described mixed experiences of working with health visitors and social services, several complaining of feeling “judged, not supported”.<sup>45</sup> Concerns were also raised about some health visitors not effectively signposting parents to local support services, such as Home Start. Some participants also commented that they knew of other parents who were afraid to mention problems (such as depression or domestic abuse) to official services (such as doctors, the police or social services) because they were afraid information would not be kept confidential and social services would take their children away.

Other parents - particularly at the rapporteur visit to Flintshire on 2 March - commented that they had been afraid to admit problems, such as post natal depression, even to their own families because they didn't want to be seen as having “failed” as parents. It was suggested that fathers could find it particularly difficult to ask for help, particularly on issues such as supporting their wife/partner in parenting, or making the most of sometimes limited time with their children.

We also heard that many parents felt that working with voluntary sector organisations was less stigmatising, one parent commenting that “Barnardo’s are my lifeline”.<sup>46</sup> The On Track projects were given as evidence that support to parents is effective when a range of universal and targeted services are provided to meet the individual needs of parents and children.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A Care Council for Wales mapping exercise showed that 99 per cent of the childcare workforce is female. Care Council for Wales, Scoping and Mapping of the **Early** Years and Children’s Services Workforce in Wales, p.25

<sup>45</sup> Informal meeting of Children and Young People Committee Members with Parents, 25/2/09

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Twenty four On Track Projects were originally established across the UK in 2000 as part of a national research project, to work with children who were considered to be at risk of becoming offenders in their later life. However, those in Wales have since extended, to offer services, support and expertise for all the community to ensure they make the best of any life opportunities they are offered. Of the projects originally established across the UK, academic evaluation has found that those projects which provide both mainstream and targeted support for young people are the most effective.

However, many witnesses said that current service provision for parents is not based on a universal system, but is targeted on specific geographic areas of disadvantage. We were told that some parents can feel excluded because certain services are only available if you live in particular places. Several witnesses were concerned that parents of children with behaviour problems, who did not live in designated Flying Start areas, might not be able to get help because Flying Start provides services in certain geographic areas. These witnesses were also concerned that there are few services to help parents of primary age or teenage children. One parent told us that they would like there to be a central facility in all local communities, with appropriate play areas for children, to facilitate informal meetings of parent groups.

### **Examples of Good Practice:**

#### *Carmarthenshire - network of Family Centres*

“In conjunction with Plant Dewi and local groups, a network of 12 Family Centres have been developed across the County that offer support and advice to families. The family centres are in local authority owned housing so they are placed exactly where the families are living including in more rural areas.

They are also small which is more practical when the population is small and also reduces fuel bills etc. A range of activities and courses are provided for the children to help them develop socially, emotionally and academically.

Support, advice and courses are also provided for their parents. There are also regular outreach groups for parents and their children, which are held in schools and community centres in the vicinity of the family centre.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Better strategic co-ordination of parenting at national and level**

There needs to be greater strategic co-ordination of parenting support. In evidence to our Committee, the Minister alluded to the role of the Cabinet Sub-Committee for Children and Young People as being the forum through which the Parenting Action Plan had been assessed and monitored in light of ministerial responsibilities. However, our evidence found that there needs to be stronger links within the different Government departments which deal with parenting. As former Committee member Eleanor Burnham AM commented, a co-ordinated approach would enable parenting services to “work smarter and much more effectively and probably reduce costs as well as raise effectiveness”.<sup>49</sup>

At a local level, both the WLGA and ADEW/ADSS Children Service Group said that the Children and Young People’ Partnerships are well placed to pull together policies that relate to parenting. In oral evidence, a Welsh government official told us that:

<sup>48</sup> Children in Wales- written evidence,

<sup>49</sup> RoP p21, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

“Critical to us is the role of the children and young people’s plans in taking a lead on parenting action locally. Although the final plans are just coming in, the evidence from the draft plans is that the majority—three quarters—of children and young people’s partnerships already had a parenting strategy in place or proposed to develop one as a priority. We still need to look at the children and young people’s plans in their final versions in detail, but they should provide us with a good set of evidence of the actions that have been planned locally. They should also give officials an opportunity to monitor progress on those actions over time as well as an opportunity to disseminate examples of good practice”.<sup>50</sup>

However, we also heard that services can sometimes seem to compete against each other and that there is little coordinated strategy between the service providers, local authorities and the Welsh government.

Sara Vaughan, from Home Start, also told us that she was concerned about a move by local authorities in Wales towards tendering and procurement, which meant that schemes such as Home Start were now competitively tendering for their services. She commented that such processes took up Home Start managers “time and energy”, and that “it is also taking the manager’s eye off the work...they are worrying about their future funding in a way that they have not had to worry for some years”.<sup>51</sup>

We consider that, where parenting services are providing a quality support to authorities, there should be realistic potential for their contracts to be extended without need for tendering exercises, to encourage the ongoing development and improvement of services.

Sara Vaughan also told us that “there are different limits on the competitive tendering”.<sup>52</sup> We consider that, where competitive tendering processes are engaged, there should be a reasonable degree of consistency between the tender limits of local authorities.

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<sup>50</sup> RoP p17, 27 November 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>51</sup> RoP, p.5, 11 December 2008. Children and Young People Committee

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.6

## Good Practice Examples

### *Parent Networks*

“In Caerphilly, Neath and Cardiff there are formalised Parent Networks which can help develop parents’ involvement in services and a formal mechanism for consultation. The Parent Network in Caerphilly has a full time Project Co-ordinator in post. Parents are actively invited to sit on local planning groups relating to children and families. Parents’ views are fed to and from these meetings, with support of the Project Co-ordinator. The Network meets approximately once every six weeks. Issues that are relevant to parenting in Caerphilly are discussed, and all parents are encouraged to have their say. Guest Speakers are also invited to come along to these meetings to inform parents of services and new initiatives that are relevant to them.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Parenting Support Co-ordinator*

“Locally we have employed a parenting support coordinator for about 8 years. The purpose of the post is to coordinate parenting support activity across the authority and was developed following an audit of RCT parenting support carried out in 1999, which demonstrated over 100 organisations and individuals were providing parenting support in an ad hoc fashion with no one agency taking lead responsibility. Our aim is to provide some quality control mechanisms and to ensure provision is more targeted.”<sup>54</sup>

## Promoting positive parenting

The Children are Unbeatable! Cymru campaign told us that, while there have been positives to the Parenting Action Plan, it felt that there had been a missed opportunity to put key building blocks in place to support positive parenting and begin to enable cultural change around non-violent discipline. A Parenting Action Plan Steering Group, which included Children are Unbeatable!, were not able to take on the role of steering a public education strategy, around the physical punishment of children, because they had no resources to implement the plan or to develop and implement a public education strategy.

Anne Crowley, representing the Children are Unbeatable! Campaign, said:

“The Assembly Government and the National Assembly have taken a good, positive stance as far as we are concerned on the issue of equal protection, and stated that they want to concentrate on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot, which is great. However, on promoting positive parenting and supporting parents to develop alternative ways of disciplining, they are not doing as much as they should be”.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Children in Wales- written evidence.

<sup>54</sup> Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council- written evidence.

<sup>55</sup> RoP p9, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee

Simon Jones also representing the Children are Unbeatable! Campaign found it particularly concerning that the lifespan of the Action Plan has now expired and that:

“we are kind of left hanging; there is nothing to replace it. Therefore, the question is where do we go from here, and how will the Welsh Assembly Government make that commitment to positive parenting and equal protection for children and young people a reality when we currently do not have a strategy”.<sup>56</sup>

Anne Crowley said:

“We would like, within any new action plan, a specific point about communicating public education, which I do not think has to cost that much. There is much more that the Assembly could do across all departments and divisions to support parents in general and to behave in particular ways. It would cost some money, but I do not think that it would be an awful lot”.<sup>57</sup>

Promoting, communicating and providing support for positive parenting and alternative ways of disciplining must be an integral part of taking parenting work forward.

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<sup>56</sup> RoP p.8, 9 October 2008, Children and Young People Committee.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p 9



## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Leadership to deliver**

We believe that parenting support has not been given a high enough priority.

Much good work is being undertaken on parenting at a local level and by various agencies. However, we lack a coherent national strategy for co-ordinating parenting activity, across different government departments, to pull together parenting work and take it forward.

The priority given to parenting by local authorities is crucial, as the Welsh government considers Children and Young People Partnerships, and their associated Plans, to be the key vehicle for delivery. There needs to be greater mainstreaming of parenting issues across Welsh government departments and policy areas. This needs to happen at local authority level too. This would show that good parenting is valued in Wales.

To promote parenting in Wales, we think that the Welsh government should appoint a senior figure, who wouldn't be a civil servant or a government Minister, who would work with the Welsh government to co-ordinate parenting support. We think they should be called the "parenting champion".

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

The Welsh Assembly Government should appoint a "parenting champion" to:

- raise the profile of parenting.
- ensure stronger leadership and better-co ordination across government departments.
- eradicate stigma associated with parents asking for parenting support and advice.
- develop a recognised 'National Parenting Brand' for all activities undertaken to support parents, including a national bilingual helpline for parents, a free standing, national website with parenting advice for parents run in partnership with voluntary sector organisations, and a positive parenting information campaign. NHS direct provides a model for such branding.

## **Outstanding actions from the Parenting Action Plan**

The evidence we received clearly illustrated that some areas of the Parenting Action Plan have been only partially delivered or not delivered at all. The Plan ended in March 2008, yet there is a lack of clarity from the Welsh government about which action points they will still deliver and which are no longer considered necessary because they have been overtaken by time.

We consider that a number of these action points are particularly pressing. For example, at our informal meetings with parents, we heard strong evidence that a bilingual telephone helpline for parents would be valuable. It would need to be available to parents on an 24 hour basis, would need to be free to call and would need to be a confidential service. We also heard that such a helpline would need to be well promoted and be able to provide parents with information about parenting services - including those run by the voluntary sector - in their local area.

A number of parents suggested the helpline should be developed and operated in partnership with a voluntary organisation because parents could find calling an official government helpline to be stigmatising and would not trust it to keep information confidential. By contrast, they considered that parents would be more confident in calling a helpline that was staffed by people working on behalf of a voluntary sector organisation and who had experience of parenting themselves.

Similarly, we consider that the Welsh government should establish a stand-alone website, with information on parenting skills for parents, which could link parents to information on locally available parenting services. The Welsh government told us that advice and information about parenting services will be made available as part of the main Welsh government website, as part of the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills' internet pages. We are not clear how these internet pages will be advertised and promoted and are concerned parents that won't think to look at this website for information.

We consider that there is great value in parents being able to access a single and universal portal of Wales-specific information but have doubts as to whether developing the Welsh government's own website would be effective in achieving the aim of better and more accessible information for parents. As Committee Chair, Helen Mary Jones AM commented:

“if I were a parent who was having trouble with my child's behaviour, the Government's website would not be the first place that I would go to look for advice”.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> RoP, p19, 27 November 2008, Children and Young People Committee

We also recognise that, as Sara Vaughan from Home Start pointed out, many hard-to-reach families do not have a computer. We, therefore, believe that the Welsh government should establish a dedicated website with information on parenting skills for parents but consider that, if funding is limited, this would be of lesser priority than the establishment of a bilingual helpline for parents.

We conclude that the Welsh government should consider how it is going to complete the action points in the Plan that have not been achieved and, if the action points are not being taken forward, then the reasons for this should be clearly set out.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2**

2.1 The Welsh Assembly Government should say whether there are any outstanding actions from the Parenting Action Plan that it no longer intends to take forward and give reasons why they will not be taken forward.

2.2 For those actions the Government does intend to take forward, from the original Parenting Action Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government should set out clear timescales for their delivery. These should, in particular, include:

- A national, confidential, 24-hour, well-publicised, positively promoted and free bilingual parenting telephone helpline developed in partnership with voluntary organisations. This should provide a confidential service. It should be able to provide parents with information about parenting services in their local area and should, at a parent's request, be able to refer parents on to a particular service. The bilingual helpline should be branded with the National Parenting brand.
- Distributing parenting booklets developed through the Parenting Action Plan (including "From Breakfast to Bedtime" "Over the Top Behaviour in the Under Tens" and "Help at Hand") through the ante-natal process, and at a child's first day at school. Booklets should be branded with the National Parenting brand.
- A dedicated, stand-alone website, which is not part of the Welsh Assembly Government's own website, with information on parenting skills for parents. This website should contain the bilingual parenting helpline's number. It should contain information on local parenting services. It should contain simple signposting, without a requirement that users have to go through multiple pages to get to information. It should be branded with the National Parenting brand.

## **Future direction**

We conclude from our evidence that, in addition to implementing the outstanding actions of the original Parenting Action Plan, an overarching parenting strategy for Wales needs to be developed which should include groups of parents not considered in the original Parenting Action Plan. This strategy, and a refreshed Action Plan, should be more ambitious and fully, and appropriately, resourced. They should have expected outcomes and outputs clearly identified; a time frame for each action/recommendation and responsibility/accountability. They should be regularly reviewed and evaluated.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

**3.1** The Welsh Assembly Government should produce an overarching Parenting Strategy and a refreshed Parenting Action Plan.

**3.2** The refreshed Parenting Action Plan should incorporate the outstanding actions still to be completed in the Parenting Action Plan (see Recommendation 2).

**3.3** The strategy, and refreshed Action Plan, should also take into account new policies to draw parenting work together.

**3.4** The refreshed Action Plan should also set out specific actions to provide support to fathers; grandparents; parents of older children/teenagers; disabled parents; parents of children with disabilities; parents and partners of parents in prison and custody; young parents; parents involved with substance misuse; and, parents from black and minority ethnic communities. It should also include foster carers as appropriate.

## **Funding**

We consider that there is a need for the Welsh government to determine whether extra resources are needed to implement outstanding, and any new, actions. For example, we understand that the Welsh government is engaged with the UK Government on the delivery of a bilingual helpline. We support the Welsh government on this and would urge it to maintain efforts to deliver a bilingual helpline for Wales. However, we also recognise that the delivery of such a helpline may require specific resources.

We are also concerned that any future action points in a Parenting Strategy and Action Plan, including those which are expected to be taken forward by local authorities, must have clearly identified funding.

We also consider that the Welsh government needs to clearly identify its overall expenditure on parenting support.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that the overarching Parenting Strategy and refreshed Parenting Action Plan are fully and appropriately resourced, with a clear identification of the sources of funding for action points' delivery.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

The Welsh Assembly Government should identify the overall level of expenditure on parenting support and ensure there is greater transparency and clarity about spend across departments at national and local level as part of the yearly budget setting and allocating process.

## Promoting positive parenting

The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh government have held a long standing principled stance against the physical punishment of children. A review carried out by the Department for Children, Families and Schools in 2007, for example, found that attitudes and behaviour amongst parents are changing, with younger parents less likely to use smacking as a method of discipline than older parents as more parents recognise that there are more effective and acceptable methods of disciplining children.<sup>59</sup>

We welcome the Minister's reiteration, in evidence to us, that the Welsh government remains totally committed to the aims of the Children are Unbeatable! campaign, to give children and young people the same protection in law as adults, and that the Welsh government will continue to raise awareness among parents of alternatives to physical discipline. We believe this needs to be done in a co-ordinated fashion with a consistent message reiterated by both central and local government. As Committee member, Angela Burns AM commented:

“there is a good feeling that the Welsh Assembly Government is taking ‘Parenting Positively’ as a key way forward. However, there is a slight disappointment that, perhaps, some of the local organisations have not taken it on as a strong product that they could use”.<sup>60</sup>

We urge the Welsh government to build consensus and momentum on this issue and to build on changes to public attitudes. We consider that a public education strategy could promote positive parenting and non-violence towards children and young people. This could be usefully framed as a public health issue in the same way as we talk about putting on your seatbelts and not drinking and driving.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

The Welsh Assembly Government should conduct a major public information and education campaign required to promote positive parenting and non-violence towards children to the wider population. This should signpost parents to information on practical support services for parents in their local area. This should be branded with the National Parenting brand. It should also clearly publicise the bilingual telephone helpline.

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<sup>59</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) [Review of Section 58 of the Children Act 2004](#)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p23

## **Better and more accessible information for parents**

There appears to be more information available to parents, but it is difficult to say how effective and meaningful it is to parents. We support the provision of information through the newly renamed Family Information Service (FIS) but are concerned that funding is limited for FIS to promote themselves and communicate with parents about the different services available to them. We were impressed by the examples Sara Vaughan gave us of Home Start using mobile phone and text messaging as a preferred and effective communication tool. It is clear that different parents have different preferences and that services such as FIS need to be able to provide a range of options to parents for getting advice, including texting, and communicating through written formats, over the phone, in person, through the internet and via DVDs.

We understand that the Welsh government intends to launch a national advertising campaign on the Family Information Service. The Welsh government told us that this work will include the development of a national FIS website and telephone number, to ensure callers are put through to their nearest FIS centre. We support this campaign and consider that its effectiveness should be monitored.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

7.1 Following a national campaign to raise awareness with parents and carers about the information available to them through Family Information Services across Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government should monitor awareness of Family Information Services amongst the public of Wales.

7.2 The Welsh Assembly Government should also enable Family Information Services to be branded with the National Parenting brand.

## **Parental involvement in schools**

There have been improvements but there is still a need for more parents to be involved in schools' decision making and in wider strategic co-ordination of services. Parents may need to be afforded the opportunity to develop their ability to communicate in a strategic setting, to enable them participate effectively.

We conclude that the Welsh government should provide clearer direction to schools and authorities on the need to involve parents, particularly in terms of working with fathers and harder-to-reach groups. Local services should still, however, have the flexibility to develop processes that suit their local needs.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

The Welsh Assembly Government should provide clear, statutory guidance, giving direction to local authorities and schools about involving parents in schools, taking account of many parents' daytime working patterns.



## **Developing an evidence base for a wider range of parenting programmes**

Our evidence clearly demonstrates the need for a wide variety of support for parents. We think that the Welsh government should continue to recognise and support parenting programmes which have a proven track record. This view was expressed by the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, who commented that there was a need to “embed our resources in the robust delivery of programmes that have been evaluated and show delivery”.<sup>61</sup>

However, we are concerned that creative and innovative programmes for supporting parents, which may not have such a substantial evidence base, should also be encouraged. For example, we received evidence about the use of volunteers in providing support to families. We heard that volunteers were sometimes “accepted” by families, who might not have accepted a professional person, such as a social worker. We heard that families knew a volunteer was there for the family, not a pay cheque. We were also struck that:

“a family that would not accept a professional coming into the house will accept someone who they know is choosing to be there, and who they also know that they can kick out”.<sup>62</sup>

We received mixed evidence regarding the delivery of Incredible Years’ programmes, despite its substantial evidence base. NCH (renamed Action for Children) Cymru said that that, due to costs and limited resources, those who had been trained in the programme have “not always gone on to deliver”, and that the programme does not meet the needs of all parents, particularly the hard-to-reach.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, at our informal meeting with parents, we heard mixed experiences of the Incredible Years programme with a number of parents commenting that the materials used looked dated and were culturally more appropriate to parents based in the United States of America, rather than Wales. Some felt that the techniques taught were silly, while others were more positive about them, one parent commenting that the techniques taught should also be utilised in schools.

We conclude that any further expansion of parenting support should consider evaluating a range of parenting programmes that are being used by different agencies across Wales. To help to achieve this, a set of standardised evaluation tools and techniques should be developed to support service providers in developing an evidence base on the effectiveness of their activity. The value of preventative work is difficult to evidence, but our evidence shows there to be a clear need for more robust evidence to inform programmes and policy which includes long term qualitative studies of parenting programmes’ impact, with a greater recognition of story telling as evidence. As Committee member, Christine Chapman AM commented:

“there needs to be a warning that any research needs to be qualitative—we need to talk about stories, as opposed to just statistics.

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<sup>61</sup> RoP p16, 27 November 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>62</sup> RoP, p.20, 11 December 2008, Children and Young People Committee

<sup>63</sup> NCH Cymru, Written Evidence

That is the danger sometimes—it might look good on paper, but you need those stories”.<sup>64</sup>

### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

The Welsh Assembly Government should commission long-term, qualitative studies about a range of parenting programmes. It should use the same criteria to evaluate and compare parenting programmes. In particular, it should put resources into evaluating Home Start projects in Wales.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p.9

## **Good Practice**

We heard a great deal of evidence about good practice and the work being undertaken to support parents and carers. We support the sharing of good practice amongst parents and carers, and have detailed specific examples of good practice in this report and at Annex 3. We believe good practice could be identified and shared from international examples. For example, we heard evidence that England's National Parenting Academy could potentially provide examples of good practice. However, we recognise that differences in the policy frameworks for children and young people in Wales and England may mean that not all good practice will be immediately transferable.

### **RECOMMENDATION 10**

The Welsh Assembly Government should explore strengthening arrangements for sharing good practice across Wales and identifying and sharing good practice from international examples.

## Confidentiality

At our informal meeting with parents, we heard evidence that a large number of parents were afraid to report problems to official services, such as health or social services, because they were afraid it would not be kept confidential. We considered this issue to be particularly concerning and, to relate to concerns raised earlier in the written evidence received in our inquiry, regarding stigma associated with parenting support services.

The Welsh government has previously produced guidance for official services regarding the duties in balancing confidentiality with the best interests of a child.<sup>65</sup>

However, we consider that in making decisions about whether a child is at risk of serious harm, professionals should be aware that they must set aside preconceptions, based on parents' economic or social backgrounds, and make decisions on a case by case basis. We consider that the Welsh government should reiterate this message.

### RECOMMENDATION 11

The Welsh Assembly Government should make a clear statement that, in determining whether to breach confidentiality to protect the child or other children from a risk of serious harm, professionals should set aside preconceptions, based on parents' economic or social backgrounds, and make decisions on a case by case basis.

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<sup>65</sup> For example, the Welsh Assembly Government's guidance on '*Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004*' currently states that:

"Many professionals are under a duty of confidentiality. This is important in maintaining confidence and participation in services and thereby helping to protect children's health and wellbeing. But, as relevant guidelines make clear, the duty of confidentiality is not absolute and may be breached where this is in the best interests of the child and in the wider public interest. If professionals judge that disclosure is necessary to protect the child or other children from a risk of serious harm, confidentiality may be breached. Where professionals judge that there is a need to share confidential information with children's social services or the police:

- They should attempt to support the child, where the child is the source of the information, to agree to a disclosure of information within a reasonable timescale.
- They may initially discuss the case anonymously with others, such as a colleague with suitable competence in child protection work or with children's social services.
- The child should be informed, unless to do so would seriously jeopardise their safety.
- Any decision whether or not to share information should be properly documented.
- Decisions in this area may need to be made by or with the advice of, people with suitable competence in child protection work, such as named or designated professionals."

## Summary of Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 1

The Welsh Assembly Government should appoint a “parenting champion” to:

- raise the profile of parenting.
- ensure stronger leadership and better-co ordination across government departments.
- eradicate stigma associated with parents asking for parenting support and advice.
- develop a recognised ‘National Parenting Brand’ for all activities undertaken to support parents, including a national bilingual helpline for parents, a free standing, national website with parenting advice for parents run in partnership with voluntary sector organisations, and a positive parenting information campaign. NHS direct provides a model for such branding.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

2.1 The Welsh Assembly Government should say whether there are any outstanding actions from the Parenting Action Plan that it no longer intends to take forward and give reasons why they will not be taken forward.

2.2 For those actions the Government does intend to take forward, from the original Parenting Action Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government should set out clear timescales for their delivery. These should, in particular, include:

- A national, confidential, 24-hour, well-publicised, positively promoted and free bilingual parenting telephone helpline, developed in partnership with voluntary organisations. This should provide a confidential service. It should be able to provide parents with information about parenting services in their local area, and should, at a parent’s request, be able to refer parents on to a particular service. The bilingual helpline should be branded with the National Parenting brand.
- Distributing parenting booklets developed through the Parenting Action Plan (including “From Breakfast to Bedtime” ”Over the Top Behaviour in the Under Tens” and ”Help at Hand”) through the ante-natal process and at a child’s first day at school. Booklets should be branded with the National Parenting brand.
- A dedicated, stand-alone website, which is not part of the Welsh Assembly Government’s own website, with information on parenting skills for parents. This website should contain the bilingual parenting helpline’s number. It should contain information on local parenting services. It should contain simple signposting, without a requirement that users have to go through multiple pages to get to information. It should be branded with the National Parenting brand.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

**3.1** The Welsh Assembly Government should produce an overarching Parenting Strategy and a refreshed Parenting Action Plan.

**3.2** The refreshed Parenting Action Plan should incorporate the outstanding actions, still to be completed in the Parenting Action Plan (see Recommendation 2).

**3.3** The strategy, and refreshed Action Plan, should also take into account new policies to draw parenting work together.

**3.4** The refreshed Action Plan should also set out specific actions to provide support to fathers; grandparents; parents of older children/teenagers; disabled parents; parents of children with disabilities; parents and partners of parents in prison and custody; young parents; parents involved with substance misuse; and, parents from black and minority ethnic communities. It should also include foster carers as appropriate.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

4. The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that the overarching Parenting Strategy and refreshed Parenting Action Plan are fully and appropriately resourced, with a clear identification of the sources of funding for action points' delivery.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

5. The Welsh Assembly Government should identify the overall level of expenditure on parenting support and ensure there is greater transparency and clarity about spend across departments at national and local level as part of the yearly budget setting and allocating process.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

6. The Welsh Assembly Government should conduct a major public information and education campaign required to promote positive parenting and non-violence towards children to the wider population. This should signpost parents to information on practical support services for parents in their local area. This should be branded with the National Parenting Brand. It should also clearly publicise the bilingual telephone helpline.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

7.1 Following a national campaign to raise awareness with parents and carers about the information available to them through Family Information Services across Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government should monitor awareness of Family Information Services amongst the public of Wales.

7.2 The Welsh Assembly Government should also enable Family Information Services to be branded with the National Parenting Brand.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

8. The Welsh Assembly Government should provide clear, statutory guidance, giving direction to local authorities and schools about involving parents in schools, taking account of many parents' daytime working patterns.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

9. The Welsh Assembly Government should commission long-term, qualitative studies about a range of parenting programmes. It should use the same criteria to evaluate and compare parenting programmes. In particular, it should put resources into evaluating Home Start projects in Wales.

### **RECOMMENDATION 10**

10. The Welsh Assembly Government should explore strengthening arrangements for sharing good practice across Wales and identifying and sharing good practice from international examples.

### **RECOMMENDATION 11**

11. The Welsh Assembly Government should make a clear statement that, in determining whether to breach confidentiality to protect the child or other children from a risk of serious harm, professionals should set aside preconceptions based on parents' economic or social backgrounds and make decisions on a case by case basis.

## **Schedule of oral and written evidence**

### **Terms of Reference**

The Children and Young People Committee agreed the following terms of reference for this inquiry:

1. To scrutinise the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan (Dec 2005-March 2008).
2. To scrutinise what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to continue and develop its work on parenting and the resources available to do so.
3. To take evidence on what works and what doesn't and on what action needs to be taken to move the agenda forward.

### **Oral Evidence was taken as follows**

#### **9 October 2008**

- Lucy Akthar, Children in Wales
- Tony Ivens, Children in Wales
- Ann Crowley, Children are Unbeatable!
- Simon Jones, Children are Unbeatable!
- Ann Fritter, Caerphilly Parent Network
- Sian Northey, Caerphilly Parent Network
- Jacqui Donovan, Caerphilly Parent Network

#### **23 October 2008**

- Gail Bennett, Parenting Strategy Co-ordinator, Flintshire County Council

#### **27 November 2008**

- Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
- Professor Judy Hutchings, Incredible Years, Bangor University

#### **11 December 2008**

- Sara Vaughan, Home Start

#### **25 February 2009**

- Informal meeting with various parent groups, facilitated by Children in Wales.

#### **2 March 2009**

- Rapporteur visit to meet with various parent groups in Flintshire, facilitated by Flintshire County Council and the Flintshire Parenting Strategy Group.



**Written evidence was received from:**

Advocacy Action Wales/MENCAP  
Blaenau Gwent  
Barnados Cymru  
Cardiff Children & Young People's Partnership  
Carmarthenshire Women and Children's Services  
Caerphilly County Council Parent Network  
ContinYou Cymru  
Children are Unbeatable!  
Children's Partnership Pembrokeshire  
Children Services Group, Welsh Local Government Association  
Children's Commissioner for Wales  
Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team  
Cwm Taf National Health Service Trust  
Children in Wales  
Disabled Children Matter Wales  
Early Years & Family Rhondda Cynon Taff  
Family Planning Association  
Flintshire County Council Children and Young People Partnership  
Hywel Dda National Health Service Trust  
Incredible Years Wales Centre, Bangor University  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
National Autistic Society Cymru  
NCH Cymru (re-named "Action for Children" since evidence received)  
Newtown Powys Children Young People Partnership  
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
Play Wales  
Rhondda Cynon Taf  
Swansea Children and Young People Partnership  
Torfaen Children and Young People Partnership  
Wales Audit Office  
Wrexham Children Information Service  
Young Women's Christian Association, Young Women changing lives

## Good practice examples in responses to the Committee's Call for Written Evidence

### 1 Genesis Wales

*Response from Wrexham Children's Information Bureau on behalf of Children's Information Services Wales:*

The Genesis Wales project has provided many examples of innovative practice in making services and information accessible. No other organisation provides the in-depth support that Genesis has been able to provide.

Over 500 parents in Wrexham, including a significant number of lone parents, have been provided with advice, support and guidance to enable them to take up training and employment opportunities through the Genesis Cymru.Wales project. This is replicated across Wales.

The project in Wrexham was managed by the CIB from 2005- 2008. Of the 501 beneficiaries supported by Genesis, 170 received further training and 189 entered employment, taking many children and families in Wrexham out of poverty. 27 took up voluntary work.

Many of the beneficiaries accessing training attended the hugely successful 'Making Choices' childcare taster course and many of their children had their first experiences of childcare in the free creches.

Genesis 2, expected to commence mid 2008, will have similar aims and objectives to the original Genesis project and will support parents who find it hard to reach services to address barriers to employment and training.

The success of Genesis Wales can be attributed to the dedicated team of advisors and support staff and to the numerous partners in the voluntary, private and statutory sector who supported the many activities of the project.

*Response from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

Genesis Wales has been an excellent example of how parents have been supported in Merthyr Tydfil. Engagement of hard to reach parents has been excellent through this programme and has helped move parents, mostly women, into further training, volunteer and employment opportunities. This approach has worked as the services have been non-threatening and flexible to the needs of individuals. Genesis Wales has offered parents one to one advice and support often in their homes as a first step. The balance of advice, guidance and support, informal training opportunities and childcare has been a success.

*Response from Children in Wales:*

The Genesis Wales project has provided childcare support for many parenting education programmes which has been absolutely invaluable and has made it much easier to make services accessible to parents.

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

Genesis Wales Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) has provided immeasurable support to parents wishing to build a better life for themselves and their children. Through the network of Family Support Services, Genesis is able to identify individuals and groups of parents who want support to change their lifestyles and realise their aspirations. Genesis provides a range of confidence building activities before supporting beneficiaries into more formal learning activities and/or work. In addition, the project will meet childcare, transport and training costs as well as any other costs/barriers which may impede their access to learning or developmental opportunities. Whilst this is seen as a “Welfare to Work” initiative for funding purposes, it was originally created in RCT by the author of this report, to alleviate the effects of poverty on families and children.

## **2 Parents’ involvement**

*Response from Wrexham Children’s Information Bureau on behalf of Children’s Information Services Wales:*

There is more parent participation in planning services. A recent example is the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment undertaken by local authorities across Wales. All parents were sent a questionnaire and focus groups of parents were held to find out about their childcare needs in order to inform the planning and delivery of childcare services in the future.

*Response from Children in Wales:*

In Caerphilly, Neath and Cardiff there are formalised Parent Networks which can help develop parents’ involvement in services and a formal mechanism for consultation. The Parent Network in Caerphilly has a full time Project Co-ordinator in post. Parents are actively invited to sit on local planning groups relating to children and families. Parents’ views are fed to and from these meetings with support of the Project Co-ordinator. The Network meets approximately once every six weeks. Issues that are relevant to parenting in Caerphilly are discussed and all parents are encouraged to have their say. Guest speakers are also invited to come along to these meetings to inform parents of services and new initiatives that are relevant to them.

### **3 Variety of programmes / courses available to parents**

#### *Response from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

Merthyr Tydfil's Family Support Partnership is introducing the Pacific Institute's Steps to Excellence for Personal Success (STEPS) to Excellence programme in September 2008 as a direct result of requests from parents for more self-esteem and confidence building courses following the completion of parenting programmes.

"Parents supporting parents" has also been successful in Merthyr Tydfil. We actively encourage programme participants to volunteer and this provides an additional layer of support.

#### *Response from Children in Wales:*

##### **NPT Parenting Matters**

NPT Parenting Matters, a Barnardo's Cymru service, has been providing parenting courses for over 7 years. It has successfully reached the most disadvantaged parents and offered them an Open College Network (OCN) award at the completion of the course. For many parents this is the first qualification they have achieved. Service users have also been trained to become parent mentors to help other parents overcome their anxieties in attending courses. Some of these users have gone on to gain further awards and be employed as parenting facilitators.

##### **Investors in Families**

Investors in Families has been established to recognise and promote the importance of family-friendly approaches which many schools have already developed. It aims to:

- value and support the role that families play in the life of the child;
- support families in developing their children's achievement and self-esteem;
- help families participate in raising their children's achievement and self-esteem; and,
- promote social inclusion and a sense of well-being through positive participation in family life.

Schools that receive the Investors in Families award will have demonstrated their commitment to working with families to achieve each of the outcomes of the 7 core aims of Rights to Action. 5 local authorities, Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil are piloting the award.

The Steps to Excellence for Personal Success (STEPS) programme is also being used to improve parents' self-esteem before they join parenting programmes. STEPS is used with adults to change their self-image for the

better and helps them to think more positively. It gives them the necessary understanding and techniques to raise their self-esteem and enhance their performance.

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The "Handling Children's Behaviour" and "Living with Teenagers" courses have been accredited by the Open College Network and parents completing the course can receive Level 1 and 3 credits. This is a great motivator to keep parents on board with the programme and our certificate presentation events are so empowering for people who may have never achieved a formal qualification.

*Response from Flintshire County Council on Behalf of the Flintshire Children and Young People's Partnership:*

A book prescription scheme is available to parents and practitioners which makes parenting books and audio available to all parents. This includes books researched by parents for parents. We have also sourced some general books for the library.

*Response from ContinYou Cymru:*

Menter Cwn Gwendraeth has been running Language and Play (LAP) and Numeracy and Play (NAP) for parents and their young children with an emphasis on learning through fun (e.g. through making food and smoothies).

*Parenting classes, Coed Eva Primary School*

The need for the classes has been identified by the school, and parents and funding has been secured from the Local Health Board. A community information evening on a range of parenting issues, and which will involve a number of different agencies offering support in this area, will be held shortly.

*Tynyrheol Primary School and Llangeinor Communities First*

Using the development of high quality play provision as a tool to help ease children's transition into school, and engage with parents, is proving a great success. By linking with Genesis and involving a Learning Broker, parents who have traditionally not engaged with school and their children's learning and who have a range of needs themselves, are now coming into school to take part in a range of support activities including looking at their own learning. This has only been possible by real partnership working.

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf:*

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Parenting Support Co-ordinator has developed a Good Practice Guide when planning and delivering parenting groups in order to

address some of the challenges service providers face when delivering parenting groups. A copy of the practice guide is attached with Rhondda Cynon Taf's response to the Committee's call for evidence along with a paper on supporting parents of teenagers.

*Response from Torfaen Children & Young People Partnership:*

NCH Cymru SMARTT Project

The SMARTT Project is school based, and delivers support services to children, aged 3- 11years old, and their families. The Project works in 3 primary schools across the county of Torfaen.

The Project's services are targeted at children who have a level of vulnerability, under development or challenging behaviour which is of concern but unlikely to have generated any kind of inter-agency support package. SMARTT focuses on the inter-relationship between family and school environments in recognition of the fundamental importance of these to children's development. Project staff address the early onset of difficulties being experienced by referred children, their families and schools, in order to stem escalation of these issues. A holistic approach is taken with the aim of resolving problems.

#### **4 Children's Information Services**

*Response from Wrexham Children's Information Bureau (CIB) on behalf of Children's Information Services Wales:*

Parents' Information Points (touch screen kiosks) are being piloted by the CIB in Wrexham and other CIS in Wales to improve access to services and information. They are proving to be extremely popular to parents who would otherwise be unable to access the service provided by their local CIS. From the kiosks, parents can telephone, free of charge, the CIS for further help and information and can print off information from the screen or email information home. Parents can access information about services at the touch of a button in their own community. The CIB is currently seeking additional sources of funding to roll out this new initiative to rural areas of the County Borough where transport to the main CIB office in Wrexham town centre can be a barrier.

*Response From Children's Services Group - Association of Directors of Education in Wales /Association of Directors in Social Services (ADEW / ADSS):*

During the time frame of the Parenting Action Plan, local authorities have continued to support parents through services and the provision of information. The services offered by the Children's Information Services / Family Information Services (CIS / FIS) are vital in raising awareness of services and support that families can access in the local area. CIS / FIS also

have a number of publications and materials for parents which can help to support them in their vital role of parenting. CIS / FIS in a number of local authority areas are currently piloting satellite points in secondary schools and integrated children's centres to ensure that more parents are able to access the service.

*Response from Flintshire County Council on behalf of the Flintshire Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The Children's Information Service is taking the lead as the single point of contact for information about support for parents in Flintshire. Web-based "Parent Information Points" are being developed. One Point will be portable so that it can be taken to settings where parents gather e.g. health centres, shopping centres, schools and leisure centres. The CIS also distribute Easter and Summer Fun Booklets which incorporate information about activities for children and information to support parents such as top tips, parenting programmes, access to Parentline Plus. In addition, the next development will be to utilise a text messaging alert system which will bring information about parenting directly to the attention of parents.

## **5 Access to services**

*Response from Wrexham Children's Information Bureau on behalf of Children's Information Services Wales:*

Merthyr Tydfil CIS has appointed an Outreach Information Officer aiming to reach parents who would otherwise not access the service.

## **6 Joined-up working**

*Response from Wrexham Children's Information Bureau on behalf of Children's Information Services Wales:*

Ceredigion have used a voluntary agency called "Plant Dewi" which specialises in community development techniques to support the Flying Start programmes, Family Centre Network development and Parent Network to link all elements of parental participation.

## **7 Grandparents**

*Response from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

CIS now records enquiries received by grandparents. Merthyr CIS has appointed an outreach worker. Grandparents will be targeted as part of this outreach work.

In Merthyr Tydfil, all of the parenting programmes and groups are open to grandparents and its marketing positively encourages grandparents. The Family Support Service has purchased Parentline Plus information that is directed at grandparents.

*Response from Cardiff Children and Young People's Partnership:*

A grandparents' forum has been initiated by the CADT, in partnership with the Parent Network, to support grandparents who have care of children.

## **8 Teenagers**

*Response from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

Merthyr Tydfil is developing a Home School Links Project facilitated by the Life Chances Manager funded by Cymorth. She will work with four cluster secondary schools, in collaboration with outside agencies, to reduce the barriers for students to engage in education. Working with parents will be an element of this project.

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The NCH FACT Team runs a project called "Living and Learning Together" that takes parenting courses into 3 secondary schools in Llanelli. Staff run a parenting course for parents and a parallel course for the young people. Evaluations show improved relationships between parents, children and their schools.

*Response from Cardiff Children and Young People's Partnership:*

There is multi-agency delivery of the Strengthening Families programme which is funded through the Community Safety Partnership and managed through the Alcohol and Drug Team. There is a wide range of agencies cooperating to deliver the programme, including schools, and its aim is to help parents to show "love and limits". The programme helps children and young people to resist drug and alcohol use. The ultimate aim would be to make this available to all children at transition to secondary school.

## **9 Parentline Plus**

*Responses from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

Merthyr Tydfil has invested in Parentline Plus as an engagement tool for parents. They offer a rolling programme of taster sessions, Parentline Plus



training on various topics, plus the structured Webster Stratton Incredible Years Programme.

*Response from Children in Wales:*

Parentline Plus' "Parents Together" programme is successfully being used in some authorities in south Wales as a pre-cursor to programmes like Incredible Years. The programme is a curriculum of workshops and short courses for parents covering a range of issues such as tackling bullying, teenage issues and bringing up children after separation. The programme has been found to very useful in engaging parents and sits comfortably alongside more formal parenting programmes like Incredible Years.

## **10 Access to all**

*Responses from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council - Family Support Partnership Report:*

Multi-agency team work in providing support to parents and facilitation of groups has been essential in order to maintain a smooth parenting programme that can benefit all parents. Rather than targeting a particular service, it has been effective to offer parenting programmes to generic groups. This removes the stigma from specific client group courses.

*Response from Cardiff Children and Young People's Partnership:*

Under the Family Support strategy, play and health services have been made available to families living in temporary accommodation, helping them to cope with their levels of stress and giving children a better experience.

## **11 Young parents / Youth services**

*Response From Children's Services Group (ADEW / ADSS):*

The Youth Service, via the *Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales* delivers a number of projects which are educative, empowering, expressive and participative and include relevant life skills such as parenting, budgeting, cookery, nutrition, financial literacy. Many of these are accredited. Many youth services run young mums and young mums and dads projects, educating and supporting young parents in a variety of flexible learning settings. Adult Community Learning (ACL) also offer similar non-formal and informal programmes of support and guidance in community settings.

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People Partnership:*

The focus of the work undertaken by Swansea Young Families is to build the skills needed to create independency and not dependency.

Group and direct support work is offered to provide the preparatory work for expectant young parents that will equip them to adjust to the demands of parenthood and cope with the demands when they arrive.

Practical work is undertaken to enable them to achieve a stable independent lifestyle, and to manage the basic routines involved parenting. Ranges of learning opportunities are offered that build knowledge, skill and confidence in key areas. Examples of these areas might include financial literacy and management; cookery; managing children's behaviour; First Aid; and, the importance of play.

During this period of fast transition and early adjustment to fundamental responsibilities, it is important to support the young parents in their emotional journey. They may well be coping with the emotional surges of adolescence, of dealing with new stages in relationships, as well as the highs and lows of parenthood - and its associated exhaustion and joy. Support in building confidence, motivation, self-esteem and anger management is vital.

Many young parents will have experienced a disrupted education. Parenting work can help signpost to Basic Skills courses and other personal and vocational courses and advice.

*Response from YWCA:*

Wise Up is a participation programme aimed at engaging the most disadvantaged young women, most of whom are not in education, employment or training. Young women can start at a basic level and undertake modules such as "How I Communicate" and "What I am Good at". The course builds women's confidence through an intensive support process.

## **12 Post-natal support**

*Response from Cwm Taf NHS Trust – Obstetric, Gynaecology, Sexual & Reproductive Health Directorate:*

The development of a health care support worker role enables the consistent implementation of pre-agreed parenting intervention with families. The postholder works under the direction of a qualified midwife and with families to help resolve any issues identified on assessment. The service is provided in a community setting in the ante-natal or immediate post-natal period. This development has been successful because introducing skill mix into a team increases that team's capacity to work with more families at greater depth. It also enables greater responsiveness to need expressed by parents.

### **13 Excellence Award**

*Response From Children's Services Group (ADEW/ADSS):*

Conwy have won an Excellence Wales Award for preventative services which included a parent support team in social services which provides support to the most vulnerable families based on mentoring and practical support; Drug and Alcohol Rapid Response Teams which assist parents to improve parenting by managing their addictions and provides 24 hour support if needed; and the Tigers group, a parenting programme for parents of adolescents which engages well with fathers as well as mothers. Conwy also run Caring Dads schemes for domestic abuse cases and Butterflies which offers the same support for mothers.

### **14 Children and Families Organisation Grant (CFOG)**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

Positive parenting is also being promoted through projects funded through the CFOG grant. For example, two posts in Children in Wales have been funded through this grant: a 4 day Development Officer for Parenting and a half time post of Development Officer for Fatherhood. These post holders also convene three professional networks: Fforwm Magu Plant, Parenting Coordinators and Fatherhood Wales. CFOG funding has also been used to employ a coordinator for the 'Sdim Curo Plant!/Children Are Unbeatable! (CAU) Campaign. A toolkit was launched to help change attitudes to smacking. The Help at Hand Toolkit is an online resource, which provides a comprehensive guide to looking at the issues surrounding the physical punishment of children. All these posts have been promoting positive parenting through dealings with the public, other professionals and through the media.

### **15 Anti-bullying**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

Community Focused Schools are another way that some schools are encouraging parents more active involvement in school and Cardiff and Torfaen local authorities have employed Anti-Bullying Coordinators who are taking steps to engage parents in the issue. There are some excellent examples of good practice in schools and local authorities but again the picture is patchy.

*Response from NSPCC Cymru/Wales:*

Part of the campaigns legacy in Wrexham has been to develop a "Top Tips for Parents on Bullying" booklet which could be used as an example of good practice across Wales.

## **16 Rural areas**

### *Response from Children in Wales:*

#### Carmarthenshire - network of Family Centres

In conjunction with Plant Dewi and local groups, a network of 12 Family Centres have been developed across the County that offer support and advice to families. The family centres are in local authority owned housing so they are placed exactly where the families are living, including in more rural areas. They are also small which is more practical when the population is small and also reduces fuel bills. A range of activities and courses are provided for the children to help them develop socially, emotionally and academically. Support, advice and courses are also provided for their parents. There are also regular outreach groups for parents and their children, which are held in schools and community centres in the vicinity of the family centre. "The centre has given my children the opportunity to experience various play experiences and the ability to socialise thereby preparing them for school" - Parent at Garnant Family Centre, Ammanford

#### Anglesey - Rural Family Service

The Ynys Môn Rural Family Service targets services to very small populations who may not show up in deprivation profiles and in small rural communities. The Family Service brings together a multi-disciplinary team, working through a range of different approaches. Health visitors also work in partnership with the Rural Family Service. New parents in the Langefni area are given written information about services.

## **17 Telephone support**

### *Response from Children in Wales:*

#### Conwy – planned bilingual telephone support line

A bilingual telephone support line is provided for parents of children aged two plus with a planned programme of support. The aim of the service is to address service access difficulties for parents who experience a range of problems with their children. It is a model of service very appropriate to rural areas because it can overcome some practical and financial difficulties for users. Parents can talk at a time that suits them and there is no need to travel anywhere or make childcare arrangements. It can also be suited to parents who have found traditional forms of support or group work unsatisfactory. This is a tier 2 service, which gives planned advice to parents who have been referred and service users are drawn primarily from low-income and rurally isolated areas. Three NCH social care practitioners deliver it. After an initial assessment an action plan is drawn up and hourly weekly calls are made for around 12 weeks. After each call the service provider draws up an action plan

and a copy of the plan is sent to the client. The following two quotes taken from the published research (below) show how much parents value the service:

"The telephone service goes on and I like that. That's what keeps me going as well. I can load off with what's happened and I can get advice of what to do or how to sort the problem out. Talk about a problem and get advice".

"As well as telephone support, things would arrive by post, like star charts, stickers, smiley stickers, she went to a lot of trouble. Little added extras, also an evaluation of the call work was sent out. Also if you asked a question and (the service operator) didn't know, she would find out".

This service has been evaluated, with research published under: MADOC-JONES, I; WARREN, E.; ASHDOWN-LAMBERT, J; WILLIAMS, E; PARRY, O. (2007) "Planned telephone support for disadvantaged parents in North Wales: perceptions of service users" *Child & Family Social Work*, Volume 12, Number 4, November 2007, pp. 316-325(10)

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

We also operate a free phone service to provide parents and carers with information about local and national services. Our statistical information shows that this service is growing in popularity year on year.

*Response from NSPCC Cymru/Wales:*

NSPCC Cymru/Wales provide a free, bilingual helpline service based in Bangor which is available to all who are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person or would like some advice and support. Parents form a significant percentage of the calls received by the helpline, both highlighting concerns about other children and also seeking advice and support on how to deal with any issues they themselves are facing. From May 2007 to April 2008, 29% of callers to our helpline were parents themselves and 68% of these calls were for advice. This evidence clearly indicates that the helpline provides parents in Wales with an accessible source of support and advice when needed. When asked what they would have done had the helpline service not been available, 33.5% indicated that they did not know.

## **18 Fathers**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

The "Rhondda Cynon Taf Dad Matters" project has been running now for over 5 years. Funded as part of the Surestart programme, the project works predominantly on a one-to-one basis with fathers and families, where there are child protection concerns with a view to increasing safety, so that the children of those families can be removed from the child protection register. The intervention consists of a flexible but time limited piece of work that aims

to identify and address exactly what may be holding fathers back from fulfilling their role as parents. Building on the existing strengths of the individuals and relationships involved, the project adopts a collaborative approach to discussing parenting and is clear about the benefits to mum and the children, as well as those to the father himself. The projects success lies in enabling engagement where little or no engagement has existed previously, and in this way has been able to help hundreds of fathers in the RCT area.

The Bro Morgannwg “Who’s Daddy “ leaflet is unique in that it takes information about being a father away from the social care setting and into the workplace. Originally conceived in 2006, the project has been endorsed by three of Wales’ “sporting greats” : Martyn Williams, Robert Croft and Ryan Day. The leaflet provides basic information on being a father during each of the four main developmental stages. It has gone out, via the pay-packet, to all prospective fathers working for major employers in the Bridgend County area. Currently over 25,000 leaflets have been distributed this way. In 2007, the project received a “Highly Commended” in the Sternberg Awards for clinical innovation by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

The “Carmarthen Dads Group” first started running in the summer of 2003 and 14 fathers attended in that first year. Today, some five years and one move to Ty Hapus later, the group is still going strong. Many of the fathers have issues such as serious criminal records, alcohol and drug misuse, child protection issues, aggression and domestic violence issues, serious health and basic skills needs. All are unemployed. Three of the dads now sit on the East Carmarthen Community Association and are involved in setting up the new community centre. Funded by ELWA as a basic skills project, and then by the Carmarthen Learning Network, the group has attended three sets of healthy living courses. Members of the group have also completed the OCN Accredited course entitled “Cooking for Blokes!” while others have completed their Group Leader Award. As well as the more structured groupwork activities, the centre has also been able to offer One-to-One support for Dads, granddads and stepdads in helping them deal with family issues and parenting problems through a weekly drop in session especially for men. The result of all this is that these men are now fully involved in other activities at the centre and the monthly attendance figures now show that the amount of men who come to family centre is often equal to the number women attending.

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

Since 1999 we have operated a “Dads Matter” project under the auspices of Sure Start. The aim was to work with fathers to enhance their interaction with their young children; however, the two officers employed on the project are receiving an increasing number of referrals for fathers with complex needs including those involved in child protection proceedings, domestic violence and substance/alcohol misuse. In addition, the needs are so great locally that we are unable to cope with the demand and now have an extensive waiting list - many of whom are in crisis. A need has also been identified to work with fathers who are on pre-release programmes from prisons in order that the

relationships with their children (and wives/partners) are sustained during imprisonment and they are taught effective parenting skills in the pre-release period. However, we are unable to meet this need within our available resources.

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The NCH Cymru FACT parenting team has a dedicated Dads Worker who runs Dads groups, co-facilitates parenting groups and does individual work with fathers.

*Response from Pembrokeshire Children's Partnership:*

The development of a dads group, where dads and their children meet together to discuss issues and to promote positive relationships, is ongoing.

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The Early Years Development team has a team of 3 male development workers who offer support specifically to fathers. The team was established in 2002, the Dads Development Workers endeavour to provide a holistic support to parenting. The aim of the support is to foster closer positive relationships fathers and their children. The team currently offers both one to one support and group support. Group support involves 2 community based groups looking at positive parenting and 1 promoting healthy living and healthy eating. Co-working has been established with the basic skills team to offer the men both basic skills training and cooking skills, initial feedback is very positive with the fathers already accessing further opportunities, which will in turn impact on self esteem and their ability to parent effectively.

The team also works in Swansea prison delivering a parenting group to fathers that are due to be released from prison. They support fathers to look at the role of a father, the impact masculinity - values and beliefs - has on their ability to parent positively, meeting the needs of the child, building positive relationships and managing children's behaviour.

## **19 Bibliotherapy**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

Child and Family Bibliotherapy Schemes

Under this scheme, any child who has an emotional and psychological problem can get a "book recommendation" from those working directly with families (local doctor, health visitor, school nurse etc) knowing that both professionals and other parents have reviewed the book. This recommended

book will be available through their local library and the family can work through the self-help book together.

People can also use the recommended reading list as guidance if they wish to purchase the books from a bookshop or online. The recommended books cover a wide range of issues including anger, bereavement, bullying, confidence and self-esteem, divorce, sibling rivalry and managing behaviours. The scheme is being used in a number of authorities including Torfaen and Powys. It can be particularly useful in areas where services are less readily available or parents are unable to access them for whatever reason

*Response from Torfaen Children & Young People Partnership:*

The Child and Family Bibliotherapy scheme aims to respond to the identified need for psychological approaches and support to be made more available to primary care professionals and families. The scheme aims to respond to that need by identifying good quality self help materials focused on promoting the mental health and wellbeing of children and families. This allows professionals to formerly recommend resources to families by writing out a recommendation slip allowing them to borrow the resource from a local library for an agreed length of time.

The scheme has been promoted in Torfaen by the Torfaen Primary Mental Health Team (PMHT). The Torfaen PMHT has a clear role in promoting children and young people's emotional and psychological wellbeing throughout the Borough. The team will support staff working at Tier 1 (primary care) through liaison consultation initial /joint assessment and training. The team facilitate communication across all children's services, at all tiers, clarifying referral criteria in line with the directorate. It is essential that the team works across boundaries to develop a coordinated response to children's mental health needs between agencies. The Primary Mental Health Team currently hosts the Multi-Agency Coordinator Post who also coordinates across all directorates working with parents and their families in Torfaen. The placement of the post within the Primary Mental Health Team has been seen as good practice in line with other Beacon Authorities across the border in England.

## **20 Parenting co-ordinators**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

Some local authorities have employed Parenting Coordinators, which has proved to be very effective. This post holder is able coordinate parenting activity across the county, identify gaps, map services and provide leadership. These post holders have also developed parenting strategies in their area which can dovetail with the Single Plan.



*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

Locally, we have employed a parenting support coordinator for about 8 years. The purpose of the post is to coordinate parenting support activity across the authority and was developed following an audit of RCT parenting support carried out in 1999, which demonstrated over 100 organisations and individuals were providing parenting support in an ad hoc fashion with no one agency taking lead responsibility. Our aim is to provide some quality control mechanisms and to ensure provision is more targeted.

Very recently, the RCT Parenting Support Coordinator, in partnership with other agencies, produced a Good Practice Guide for planning and delivering Parenting Groups.

*Response from Flintshire County Council on behalf of the Flintshire Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The Children and Young People's Partnership utilise funding from the Cymorth Grant to resource the role of a Parenting Strategy Coordinator to oversee the development and implementation of the Parenting Strategy in Flintshire.

*Response from Torfaen Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The Parenting Coordinator post has been in place since March 2006 and achievements include;

- Comprehensive audit of services for parents and their families currently held on the CIS database;
- Parenting Strategy completed;
- Action Plan completed in partnership with Torfaen service;
- Parent Participation in the Parenting Strategy and in the Single Plan process;
- Representation of Torfaen on the National Parenting Forum "Fforwm Magu Plant"; and,
- Coordination and implementation of validated outcome measures pre and post service on a multi agency basis.

## **21 Methods of engaging parents**

*Response from Children in Wales:*

In order to engage parents initially, some projects are offering other leisure or sport activities to parents. For example, in Carmarthenshire, in the family centres parents are offered gym sessions or craft and then parenting work is added on afterwards. In Swansea, women in the Bengali community have been offered aerobics classes (which they had asked for) and this has been

tagged on to more general parenting work. LINK workers have also been employed to engage with this community.

Another effective engagement tool is play. Parents don't feel threatened by play sessions and it is a great opportunity to get parents together and promote the importance of play for their children's social, emotional and cognitive development. Toy libraries and play buses are one way of providing informal support for parents and an opportunity for them to support each other through informal networks.

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

A network of parenting support groups, are established, together with a Parents Forum.

Annually we provide a Teddy Bears picnic in a central location in Pontypridd. An increasing range of organisations concerned with parents, children, early years and childcare, attend the event which usually attracts about 6,000 participants - mostly children, parents and grandparents. The aim of the day is to showcase all of the services available to children and their families, including some national services, whilst giving families a fun day out.

The Education Welfare Service has piloted a number of Parenting Support groups for those having children who have a poor attendance record. This work has had significant positive outcomes for many of the parents as well as the school attendance of the children. However limited resources restrict our activity in this area.

*Response from Barnardos Cymru Cardiff:*

Neath Port Talbot Parenting Matters has emphasised the importance of using service users as volunteers and facilitators in their programmes. This gives credibility to their work with others parents and carers. The service also uses different materials to overcome literacy and gender issues (eg by attracting men as volunteers). All parents are offered OCN accredited awards for their course completion and approximately 70% take up this option. Most of these users have few if any previous qualifications.

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

NCH Cymru commissioned a DVD of the work of the FACT team which showcases its parenting work and is now used as a tool to engage families in the service.

The Parenting Strategy group organises an annual event to celebrate National Parents Week and raise the profile of parenting in Carmarthenshire. Last October the event was held in the National Botanic Garden of Wales and attracted over 1500 visitors.

*Response from Caerphilly Parent Network:*

An example of this was acknowledging that that some parents on the Network enjoy a more “creative, hands-on” approach and, therefore, a group of parents were invited to provide craft activities for children at publicity or information events. This resulted in parents engaging with the service at a level which they felt comfortable with and gave them an opportunity to participate that they may not have had otherwise. Some of these parents have subsequently accessed various training opportunities.

*Response From NSPCC Cymru/Wales:*

In February 2008, NSPCC Cymru/Wales ran an anti-bullying campaign in Wrexham which was aimed to raise awareness of the effective solutions to prevent and deal with bullying, with a particular focus on cyberbullying. Alongside this goal, the campaign aimed to promote a partnership approach whereby teachers, parents and children and young people work together to prevent bullying. We would like to take this opportunity to not only raise awareness of our success in engaging parents in the planning and organisation of our campaign and our significant campaign outcomes in Wrexham, but, to also highlight that many of the parents we spoke to had not been engaged in this type of work before. This clearly demonstrates that more work needs to be undertaken to actively engage parents.

*Response from Cardiff Children and Young People's Partnership:*

A directory of family support services has been developed and 2000 copies distributed to agencies and public buildings. The Children’s Information Service will keep it updated.

*Response from Torfaen Children & Young People Partnership:*

Torfaen are able to provide the Language and Play service in groups and on an individual level in order to reach hard-to-reach families. The one-to-one Language and Play service is working extremely well in partnership with the basic skills moving-on worker who is able to work with the parents on their own basic skills. This additional service is meeting a need where families who have not addressed their basic skills in the past can do so in the privacy of their own home before thinking of the next step and moving into a group situation.

Language and Play is now firmly embedded into Sure Start sessions throughout Torfaen, introducing the LAP ideas in an informal manner which aids access to basic skills support. Language and Play, and Numbers and Play, sacks of resources have also been devised and delivered for the use of parents with their children in the home.

## **22 Parenting support network**

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

A Parenting Support Network of providers has been established and is working well together in developing a Parenting Support Strategy for the Authority.

## **23 Community focused schools**

*Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:*

The Family Information Service locally has developed a number of outreach bases in local primary and secondary schools as part of the Community Focused Schools agenda and to help us deliver the service to a wider range of parents and children.

*Response from ContinYou Cymru:*

Community Focused Schools have a real role to play in providing information and services where they are needed, based on local needs and priorities. Recognising that there are often multiple barriers to access and that parents with specific needs are not necessarily a group but individuals with individual needs.

Developing a Community Focused Schools approach is a key part of Newport's Preventative Services Strategy which has involved piloting a multi-agency team around a cluster of schools. The team offers parents a range of support including on parenting. This approach is now being rolled out to a further four clusters of schools.

## **24 Primary school children**

*Response from Barnardos Cymru Cardiff:*

Parent Works operates throughout rural Powys with a partnership approach with local health social care and education professionals who co-deliver the Incredible Years parenting programme. In particular, this work with primary schools has meant that there has been more interest and involvement by teachers, not only in delivering the parenting programmes, but, also in support programmes in classroom management, emotional literacy and social skills.

## **25 Sex and relationship education**

### *Response from Family Planning Association:*

Family Planning Association runs Speakeasy, a community based sex and relationships education programme for parents and carers across the UK, including in Cardiff and the surrounding area.

Speakeasy is a group-based programme which enables parents and carers to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to talk to their children about sex and relationships. It is designed to be fun and relaxed, providing an atmosphere where parents can learn together from their own experiences. It is locally organised and can link with education, community and/or health services in a particular area. An overview of a typical Speakeasy programme is included in Appendix 1.

Independent evaluation of Speakeasy has found that the programme significantly improves parents' confidence and knowledge around sex and relationships. In particular, before the course 60.9% of parents agreed or agreed strongly with the statement "I feel able to talk to my children openly about sex". After the course this had risen to 95.5%. Longitudinal analysis has also shown that the impact of Speakeasy is long-lasting with parents still feeling confident to talk openly to their children several years after completing the programme.

The Family Planning Association Speakeasy programme is currently funded by the Big Lottery Fund and is only available in Cardiff and the surrounding area. By the beginning of June 2008, we had worked with 150 parents by delivering the course in this area. We believe that programmes such as Speakeasy, which support parents to talk to their children about sex and relationships, should be made available across Wales.

A key part of Speakeasy is the training for professionals working with parents to equip them to deliver the programme as part of their work, to date we have trained 20 professionals in Wales. This contributes to the sustainability of Speakeasy and also broadens the reach of the programme. Through the funding we have received from the Big Lottery Fund, we have been able to provide this training to professionals who work with parents free of charge. The FPA strongly believes that it is vital that the parenting workforce has the appropriate skills to provide parents with comprehensive support and we would like the Welsh Assembly Government to secure access to training for these professionals.

## **26 Welsh language**

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The NCH Cymru FACT parenting team has a dedicated Dads Worker who runs Dads groups, co-facilitates parenting groups and does individual work with fathers. The team also has a dedicated worker to take parenting to rural areas of Carmarthenshire and to offer a service through the medium of Welsh. We have had our resources translated into Welsh and a number of families have now benefited from this service.

*Response from Torfaen Children and Young People's Partnership:*

Language and Play and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin Ti-a-Fi:  
Having a Language and Play assistant who can speak fluent Welsh has been a clear advantage in Torfaen. The Ti-a-Fi groups provide a much needed service to Welsh language and/or bilingual families.

## **27 Creche provision**

*Response from Carmarthenshire Family and Community Team on behalf of Carmarthenshire Parenting Strategy and Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The NCH Cymru FACT team has a mobile family centre which is funded through the Cymorth scheme which offers an open access service to families with young children in areas of the County with few other services. The bus is also able to act as a crèche for parenting programmes when a crèche room is not available.

## **28 Children with disabilities**

*Response from Disabled Children Matter Wales:*

Contact a Family organises workshops and conferences for parents based on local interest. These are an opportunity for parents to come together and share their experiences. Previous topics have included the needs of siblings, transition and challenging behaviour.

The Contact a Family Group Action Pack consists of a series of guides for parents' groups on topics such as starting new groups, developing existing groups and setting up websites.

## **29 Parents with disabilities**

*Response from Blaenau Gwent:*

Blaenau Gwent recently engaged 2 partially sighted parents who attended the Incredible Years programme. The programme materials do not include large print or Braille (an audio CD of the book only is available). This situation proved to be very difficult for the parents. To accommodate the parents' needs, the programme handouts were re-typed in large print and transported to the venue. Both parents completed the programme and are keen to access further parenting courses/programmes. The Parenting Co-ordinator is now part of the Equalities Forum for the Borough, engaging disabled service users, specialist agencies etc. in order to provide parenting programmes to meet the needs of individual families.

## **30 Domestic violence**

*Response from NSPCC Cymru/Wales:*

NSPCC Cymru/Wales provides a Domestic Violence Prevention Service across south Wales. The service, based in Cardiff, works with children and young people who are at risk from the direct and indirect effects of domestic violence in order to reduce the impact that their experiences have upon them. However, the service also works with the mothers of children affected by domestic abuse and men who present a risk to children. This aims to highlight the approach of seeing the family as a whole and working with all members as appropriate. Currently, the Domestic Violence Prevention Service is piloting an innovative groupwork programme called "Caring Dads" in several areas across Wales. Since 2007, this programme has received funding from the Welsh Assembly Government in order to pilot and evaluate the service in a range of locations across Wales. We would be happy to inform the Committee of further developments here, as appropriate.

## **31 Information covering children of all ages**

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People's Partnership:*

Work has been undertaken to develop an information booklet for parents, providing advice for a range of topics that parents face daily. A consultation process was followed where both professionals and clients were canvassed to discover the topics that families wanted information on and a list of topics were identified. Two booklets have been developed:

- A Guide for Parents and Carers of birth to eleven years olds in Swansea
- A Guide for Parents and Carers of 12 to 19 years olds in Swansea

The booklets contain basic advice a range of topics but also local and national contact numbers and websites where further information and advice can be sought.

### **32 Easily accessible information**

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People's Partnership:*

A range of information leaflets have been developed by the Sure Start/Flying Start health team to provide basic information to parents of children birth to three years of age. The information contains both pictorial and written information and has been translated into several languages. These have been shared with other agencies involved in parenting in Swansea to ensure that the information provided to parents is coherent across services.

Multi cultural resource packs containing pictorials, videos, CDs and written information in several languages on pregnancy, childbirth and child health information, which are distributed for use by both community and hospital staff. It is planned to build on this resource in the coming year to develop information supporting positive parenting.

### **33 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) provision**

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People's Partnership:*

The Flying Start and Sure Start Health Teams have an established team working with the BME communities in Swansea. Currently there is a specialist midwife and 2 Bengali and Punjabi speaking link workers working with the females within the Bengali community in Swansea. The role of the link workers from the Bengali community is not only to work with the families but also to provide support and advice to professionals working with the BME community. There is also a male health visitor who works alongside the Eyst project with young men aged 11 to 25. Partnership work is being developed to build a multi agency approach to delivering positive parenting within the community.

For example a working group of professionals have been identified who are currently working with the BME community in the Hafod area of Swansea.

The Specialist Midwife for Sure Start has established successful groups, which are engaging women from this community. Women ,in the Bangladeshi community, identified that they had no opportunity to exercise - this information therefore provided an opportunity to actively engage with the identified group of parents and an exercise group was established. In order to address the need to promote positive parenting within the community the multi disciplinary team have looked creatively at topics which are to be delivered, initially, in short half hour sessions at the end of the exercise groups with the ultimate aim of engaging the mothers and grandmothers to attend more structured programmes. The initial focus of the work will be to look at the



value of play, a programme of sessions has been identified and will be facilitated beginning in September by members of the working group. Dates have been set for members of the working group to attend sessions to introduce themselves and consult with parents on topics they would like covered, this information will act as the starting point of the plan.

*Response from Cardiff Children and Young People's Partnership:*

Comprehensive parenting programmes have been set up in Sure Start areas and are now being complemented by Flying Start. There is growing experience in catering for parents who are asylum seekers, refugees or economic migrants, and who may not have much English. There is expertise within Sure Start/Flying Start, Home-start and Barnardos Neville St project, which manages services for BME families and an interpreter service.

### **34 Parents with substance misuse problems**

*Response from Swansea Children and Young People's Partnership:*

Swansea Drugs Project has four full-time workers working with parents who have a substance misuse problem. The team provide a range of services working to the Harm Reduction Philosophy, working to reduce harm to individuals, families and the wider community affected by drugs and alcohol.

They offer one to one, group and community based work, responding to the need of the parent. The team has developed a Positive Parenting programme which looks at the impact on children where there are issues with substance misuse and how the effect can be reduced through positive parenting. This programme is currently being evaluated with the aim to work towards accreditation.

West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse;

The team has two full time workers working with people affected by their own and /or someone else's substance misuse problem. The team provides a range of services working to the 12 Steps abstinence programme. Offering one-to-one, group and community based work, responding to the needs of parents.

These are the two services funded to work with parents and Substance Misuse Issues. Working in partnership with other drug services to provide appropriate packages of care where prescribing is required.

### **35 Smacking**

*Response from Children are Unbeatable!:*

Children are Unbeatable! agreed to take forward its commitment to develop a toolkit of resources that could be used by professionals, parents and

members of the public volunteers to help change attitudes and behaviour around the smacking of children in the home. The toolkit (handbook attached) was launched (to much acclaim) by the Minister for Children in March 2008 and will continue to be revised and updated by Children in Wales on behalf of the Children are Unbeatable! Strategy Group in Wales. The toolkit built on work (funded by the Welsh Assembly Government's New Ideas Fund) to evaluate a pilot programme implemented in Llansawel, Neath Port Talbot in 2006 to support parents to change their attitudes and behaviours around the smacking of children (Help at Hand). The executive summary of that evaluation report is attached as Appendix 2

The CAU Toolkit includes, and references, materials and approaches that work in both changing attitudes and behaviours around the smacking of children and provide more effective means of disciplining children. It includes reference to a number of examples of good practice in supporting parents and what is known about why these approaches are effective

### **36 Autism**

*Response from National Autistic Society Cymru:*

NAS Cymru currently provides a large amount of information to families including a telephone, email and postal helpline; an advocacy telephone line for education related issues; a welfare rights service; a website which includes an Autism Services Directory to support parents to find local services and support; Signpost - a web-based service which tailors advice around an individual's circumstances, for instance ensuring an individual has information about benefits they are entitled to and an information centre, which is able to provide tailored information not only to parents and carers, but also to practitioners on a whole range of issues. Our telephone help lines both have access to Language Line and many of our materials are available bilingually.

### **37 Training the trainers**

*Response from Torfaen Children & Young People Partnership:*

In Torfaen we have parent group leader trainers who provide expertise and support through training and additional support to staff in Torfaen for the Family Links Nurturing programme. In addition the Parenting Coordinator Post is responsible for coordinating a parenting facilitator forum which provides a forum for peer support and information giving and resources for running parenting programmes are distributed centrally by the Parenting Coordinator who also collates a timetable of programmes available, as well as statistics and evaluation information regarding parenting interventions in order to feedback to the CYPP.

### **38 Hearing impairment**

*Response from Torfaen Children & Young People's Partnership:*

Talking Hands which takes place at Cwmbran Integrated Children's Centre once a month for families where either the parent has a hearing impairment or one of the children has a hearing impairment. The group is supported by Sure Start but was set up following an idea from a parent with a hearing impaired child. There are activities for families to join in with as well as time for the parents to get together and catch up over a cup of coffee.

### **39 Co-ordinated working**

*Response from NCH Cymru:*

Carmarthenshire FACT services (managed by NCH Cymru), provides support to parents across Carmarthenshire and the NCH FACT Project Manager also leads the multi-agency parenting strategy and implementation group in Carmarthenshire. Carmarthenshire also should be praised for ensuring that Flying Start Parenting is also delivered from the same team so that the experience of the team has been built upon and used to optimum advantage. The result is that Parenting Services are well co-ordinated across Carmarthenshire.

### **40 Disability**

*Response from Powys Children and Young People's Partnership:*

In order to understand the needs of children, young people and their families living in Powys the Children and Young People's Partnership conducted an Assessment of Need process including a Childcare Needs Assessment

The Audit of Need identified children and young people with a disability as a priority and the Plan addresses disability as a cross cutting issue. However, to ensure that there will not be a loss of focus the CYPP have set up a specific cross sector / stakeholder Disability Reference Group. Its role is to provide support and guidance in relation to the operational delivery of all aspects of the Partnerships work relating to disability. In particular it will help to ensure that the actions outlined in the Plan are achieved.