



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Taking Action on Child Poverty

Consultation Paper

PLANT A PHOBL IFANC - GWEITHREDU'R HAWLIAU
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - RIGHTS TO ACTION



ISBN 978 0 7504 4736 2

© Crown copyright June 2008

CMK-22-04-045(068)

D1020809

Taking Action on Child Poverty Consultation Paper

- Title of document:** Taking Action on Child Poverty
- Audience:** Local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, NHS Confederation, Local health boards, the Children's Commissioner and other organisations with an interest in child poverty.
- Overview:** This consultation document presents the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals for taking action on child poverty. This includes making new legislation to introduce a duty on public agencies in respect of child poverty, to provide free childcare places and other early years' services in specific places, to match the guidance under which the Cymorth grant is provided and to introduce a strategy to support vulnerable children. The document also includes a voluntary draft Joint Agreement on child poverty which sets out the commitment of public agencies to helping the Welsh Assembly Government with its child poverty objectives.
- Action Required:** Responses to the consultation should be sent by **30 September 2008** to the address provided below. The Welsh Assembly Government may publish a summary of responses to this document. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the author are published along with the response. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please state this expressly in your response.
- Further information:** Responses, enquiries and requests for hard copies of the consultation should be directed to:
- Joanne Glenn
Child Poverty Unit
Welsh Assembly Government
Merthyr Tydfil Office
Rhydycar
Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ
- Tel: 01685 729320
Email: Joanne.glenn@wales.gsi.gov.uk
- Related documents:** Children Act 2004, Shared planning for better outcomes, Welsh Assembly Government circular 31/2007, September 2007.

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Proposals for a Joint Agreement on Child Poverty.....	5
The draft Joint Agreement on Child Poverty	7
The child poverty duty on public agencies	13
The free childcare places duty	15
Cymorth	17
ANNEX	20
Consultation questions.....	33
The Joint Agreement on Child Poverty	33
The child poverty duty on public agencies	33
The free childcare places duty	33
Cymorth	33
List of Organisations Consulted	35

Introduction

1. Eradicating poverty and improving the life chances of our children and young people is at the top of the list of priorities for the Welsh Assembly Government. The Assembly Government is committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it (against the 1997 rate) by 2010. Many of the means of achieving this ambitious goal lie in the hands of the UK Government. Evidence shows that good progress has been made in reducing child poverty in Wales in recent years. Child poverty rates have reduced to below the GB average for the first time. The number of children in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the 1998/99 median income (after housing costs), held constant in real terms, fell by around 100,000 in Wales between 1989 and 2006. However, 28% of children in Wales still live in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the median and we know that there has been less progress on the downward trend very recently.
2. Assembly Government child poverty policy has been set out in the report of the independent Child Poverty Task Group¹ (June 2004); the Child Poverty Strategy, *A Fair Future for our Children*², February 2005) and by the proposals set out in the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan*³ (May 2006). Many of those proposals have been taken forward. These include publication of specific cross cutting milestones and targets on child poverty, child poverty proofing of strategic policies and programmes for their impact on child poverty and reviewing the role of the Cymorth grant programme. The *One Wales*⁴ document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals to create a fair and just society and underlines the need for cross-cutting policies and programmes to tackle child poverty. This sets out further child poverty commitments, some of which have been taken forward, including the setting up of an expert group. An assessment of the Welsh Assembly Government's progress on tackling child poverty is provided in a Written Statement which was issued by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in February 2008. The Statement, which is found in the Annex to this paper, also sets out the Assembly Government's ongoing policy programmes with regard to child poverty.
3. The main piece of legislation that is currently in place to drive forward the child poverty agenda is the Children Act 2004. *Shared Planning for*

¹

² [://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/1133404/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/1133404/?lang=en)

³

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childreneyoungpeople/publications/strategicplans/implementplannphase1?lang=en>

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childreneyoungpeople/publications/strategicplans/measuresuccess?lang=en>

⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/strategy/strategies/onewales/onewalese.pdf?lang=en>

Better Outcomes guidance published in 2007⁵ sets out the role of Children and Young People's Partnerships in developing local action to address child poverty. Local authorities and their partners are required to work together to write a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) that sets out their strategic vision for children and young people's services, priorities and targets. Their agreed priorities in respect of action on child poverty are set out in the CYPP under core aim 7.

4. The Welsh Assembly Government will gain new legislation-making powers through the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty legislative competence order (LCO) when it comes into force.
5. This consultation paper sets out proposals to make legislation on three areas which will contribute to the Assembly Government's programme to end child poverty:
 - A duty on public agencies to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty.
 - 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.
6. The paper also includes a proposal for a non-statutory agreement on child poverty between the Welsh Assembly Government and public agencies.

5

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/sharedplanningforbetteroutcomes?lang=en>

Proposals for a Joint Agreement on Child Poverty

7. We propose that the Welsh Assembly Government and public agencies demonstrate their commitment to ending child poverty through the signing of a Child Poverty Agreement. This will provide a context to the proposed legislation on a child poverty duty. It will also allow public agencies in Wales, who will not be affected by the duty on public agencies, to sign up to demonstrate that they too are prepared to work with the Assembly Government to tackle child poverty.
8. We propose that all public agencies to which the child poverty duty would apply should be invited to sign the Joint Agreement:
 - County and county borough councils
 - Fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue services
 - National park authorities, where established
 - Local health boards
 - NHS trusts
 - Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies (AGSBs)
9. In addition we propose that the following organisations are also invited to sign the Agreement:
 - Non- devolved organisations (for example JobCentre Plus, the Forestry Commission, Police forces)
 - Third sector organisations
 - Town and community councils
 - Communities First Partnerships
 - Members of Children and Young People's Partnerships if they have not already signed up to the Agreement
10. The Joint Agreement sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's commitments in relation to child poverty and a number of ways in which organisations can assist the Welsh Assembly Government in tackling child poverty.
11. The Joint Agreement has been developed over the past nine months through extensive discussions with interested organisations. It has also

been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People.

12. We do not propose to monitor the Joint Agreement. This is because it is voluntary and therefore it is not expected that organisations should report on child poverty related activities.
13. We propose that the Agreement is signed in October or November. Discussions with stakeholders have suggested that it may be convenient for it to be signed by overarching organisations where appropriate, for example the Welsh Local Government Association on behalf of local authorities, the NHS Confederation on behalf of NHS trusts and local health boards.
14. The child poverty Written Statement of 20 February 2008 can be found in the Annex to this consultation paper. It provides further context to the child poverty policy currently being delivered by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The draft Joint Agreement on Child Poverty

Objective

1. The objective of the Joint Agreement is to demonstrate high level agreement from both the Welsh Assembly Government and other organisations to the shared goal of eradicating child poverty.

Policy Context

2. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it (against the 1997 rate) by 2010. Many of the means of achieving this ambitious goal lie in the hands of the UK Government. However there remains much that can be done to tackle child poverty in Wales through action across the Welsh public sector. It requires strong partnership working within the Assembly Government itself and with its external partners.
3. The *One Wales*⁶ document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals to create a fair and just society and underlines the need for cross-cutting policies and programmes to tackle child poverty. The Assembly Government's agenda for improving the lives of children and young people has been set out in a number of key documents. *Children and Young People: Rights to Action*⁷ (January 2004) sets out a commitment to the UN Convention on the rights of the Child which has been translated into seven core aims. Core Aim 7 reflects the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment that no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty.
4. The Assembly Government's *Child Poverty Strategy* (February 2005)⁸ identified three aspects of poverty around which action should be focused – income poverty, participation poverty and service poverty. Policy has also been shaped by the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan*⁹ (May, 2006) and the associated 2010 milestones and 2020

⁶ <http://wales.gov.uk/strategy/strategies/one-wales/one-wales.pdf?lang=en>

⁷ http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance_and_information/Children_young_people_action?lang=en

⁸ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypublications/1133404/?lang=en>

⁹ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/strategicplans/implementationphase1?lang=en>

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/strategicplans/measure-success?lang=en>

targets paper, *Eradicating Child Poverty – Measuring Success*¹⁰
(October 2006)

5. The Children Act 2004 provided legislation for Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) and guidance¹¹ sets out the role of Children and Young People's Partnerships in developing local action to address child poverty. Local authorities and their partners are required to work together to decide on strategic vision for services, priorities and targets to improve the lives of children and young people. Agreed priorities in respect of action on child poverty are set out under Core Aim 7 in the Plan but actions in other sections of the plan which also have an impact on child poverty are cross-referenced to Core Aim 7.
6. *The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales*¹² (February 2006) aims to contribute to the achievement of the seven core aims for children and young people by improving quality and reducing variations in service delivery through the setting of national standards. These standards have been set not just for health and social care but also for other local government services which have a strong influence on the health and well-being of children, such as education, housing, leisure and transport.
7. Other key strategies which play a role in defining the Assembly Government's approach to tackling child poverty are the *Appetite for Life Action Plan*¹³ (February 2008), *Local Vision, statutory guidance on developing and delivering community strategies*¹⁴ (March 2008), *Spatial Plan* (March 2006)¹⁵, *Designed for Life – a World Class Health Service for Wales*¹⁶ (April 2005), *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy*¹⁷ (June 2004) and *Extending Entitlement, support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales*¹⁸ (July, 2002). In addition the *Public Health Strategic Framework for Wales* which is currently under development has a Task and Finish group on Children and Young People.

¹⁰

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/childpoverty/strategy/measuresuccess/?lang=en>

¹¹

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/sharedplanningforbetteroutcomes?lang=en>

¹²

http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/schools/339214-wag/key_documents/referred_throughout/nsf_children?lang=en

¹³

http://new.wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/policy_strategy_and_planning/schools/2028741/appetiteforlifeactionplan2-e.pdf?lang=en

¹⁴ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/localgovernment/publications/localvisionguidance/?lang=en>

¹⁵ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/935751/?lang=en>

¹⁶ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/935760/?lang=en>

¹⁷ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypubs/935794/?lang=en>

¹⁸

http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/extending_entitlement/eepublications/youngpeopledirection?lang=en

8. An assessment of the Welsh Assembly Government's progress to date on tackling child poverty and its future direction is outlined in a Written Statement (February 2008) which was issued by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.¹⁹ The Written Statement sets out a three strand approach to tackling child poverty:

Strand 1 – Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people;

Strand 2 – Financial inclusion initiatives;

Strand 3 – Encouraging greater uptake of the UK Government tax and benefits support.

9. From November 2008 progress on cross-cutting child poverty targets will be measured by a three yearly Child Well-being Monitor.

Funding

10. The funding of the Welsh Assembly Government's commitments below has already been agreed and will be delivered as part of existing programmes. Similarly public agencies will use existing budgets to deliver their actions on child poverty.

Welsh Assembly Government's commitments

11. The 2008 Written Statement asserts that eradicating poverty and improving the life chances of our children and young people is at the top of the list of priorities for the Assembly Government but acknowledges that tackling child poverty in all its forms is both complex and cross-cutting. The Written Statement sets out the detailed work programme that the Welsh Assembly Government has put in place to tackle child poverty.
12. To assist in reaching the 2020 goal of eradicating child poverty and to provide strategic direction to other organisations in Wales on child poverty, the Welsh Assembly Government commits to:
 - Provide leadership and strategic direction to the public sector in Wales towards the aim of tackling and eventually eradicating child poverty.
 - Maintain the Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People to make sure that cross-cutting responsibilities for children and young people, including in respect of child poverty, are co-ordinated effectively across government.
 - Work closely with other UK Government departments to explore shared solutions to reach our child poverty objectives through the work of the Four Nations Forum on Child Poverty.

¹⁹ <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-written-min-state.htm?act=dis&id=76410&ds=2/2008>

- Implement the Child Poverty Strategy, *A Fair Future for our Children* by focusing policies and programmes on combating income poverty, participation poverty and service poverty.
- Ensure that the policy proposals set out in the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* are taken forward as part of the wider action to tackle child poverty.
- Monitor progress against milestones and targets in *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success* through the Child Well Being Monitor for Wales from 2008.
- Support the Child Poverty Expert Group to monitor the targets and provide the Assembly Government with evidence based advice on further and wider policy requirements necessary to meet the targets drawing on national and international evidence.
- Deliver a financial inclusion strategy to ensure an integrated approach to family income maximisation.
- Develop and implement a coherent set of policies, programmes and individual grant schemes which contribute to the reduction of poverty and work with partners to ensure continued effectiveness when funding is mainstreamed as part of ongoing grants.
- Ensure the challenges and needs of children and young people in rural areas are considered and addressed.
- Ensure that a coherent Assembly Government approach and local joint action are reflected in Children and Young People’s Plans that effectively demonstrate progress against Core Aim 7 outcome measures, some of which are yet to be developed.
- Monitor, evaluate and provide a strategic overview of the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales*.
- Support the ongoing learning from the Save the Children-led project established to support action to reduce child poverty at the local level.
- Work with non-devolved agencies which operate within Wales to influence their policies in order that they also prioritise work to eradicate child poverty.

Other organisations’ commitments

13.A wide variety of organisations work with the Welsh Assembly Government and other partners to reduce child poverty in Wales including local authorities, NHS trusts, local health boards, the police, fire and rescue services, town and community councils and third sector organisations. Many of these work together through Children and Young People’s Partnerships, Communities First Partnerships, Local Service Boards or Community Planning Partnerships to ensure a holistic approach to child poverty. A number of organisations are already committed to existing statutory duties that impact on tackling

child poverty.²⁰ The aim is to ensure that all public organisations that shape the outcomes of children living in poverty co-operate to prioritise their needs.

14. Signatories agree that the following activities provide a means for organisations, where appropriate, to assist the Welsh Assembly Government to take forward the 3 strand approach to child poverty outlined in the 2008 Written Statement.

Strand 1: Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people

- Ensure that, as far as possible, the policies and initiatives developed by the organisation make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people living in poverty.
- Develop, monitor and evaluate initiatives that will improve outcomes for those children and young people living in poverty in line with existing policy requirements.²¹
- Monitor and improve on the numbers of children and young people who live in poverty and participate in schemes or initiatives that are open to all children and young people.
- Provide training and development to appropriate staff involved in outreach work so that they are able to understand the needs of children and young people living in poverty and respond to those needs.
- Ensure that organisations are visible and accessible to the community, thereby encouraging integration with children and young people living in poverty and encouraging them to take-up the opportunities provided by the organisation.
- Involve children and young people in the development and assessment of appropriate strategies in order to ensure such strategies are 'fit for purpose' and that the children and young people themselves benefit from their participation.
- Prioritise Communities First areas in annual programmes whilst recognising there are pockets of deprivation elsewhere in the local areas
- Ensure that children and young people can access services that promote health and well-being and prevent ill-health.
- Reduce the number of children and young people who are homeless or living in inappropriate accommodation.
- Take action as an organisation and work with the families of children and young people living in poverty to help them lead safer lives.
- Support partners to help them meet their child poverty objectives.

²⁰ For example Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies; Local Safeguarding Children Boards; Local Development Plans; Children and Young People's Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships

²¹ For example in their personal development; by helping them learn skills that will improve their future life opportunities; that will help prevent ill-health and maximise the potential of existing statutory plans.

Strands 2 & 3: Financial inclusion & greater uptake of UK Government tax & benefit support

- Promote the take-up of benefits and tax credits.
- Ensure that administration processes relating to benefits for families with children are efficient and effective, drawing on best practice available elsewhere.
- Ensure the provision of free structured activities for all children and young people which will particularly benefit those living in poverty²²
- Train relevant professionals²³ to identify when children and young people are living in income poverty and to advise families (via an informal signposting system) which agencies will be able to help reduce the level of poverty.
- Promote initiatives that will help the financial well being of families including ensuring that people have appropriate skills in place and providing training to help increase skill levels.
- Develop recruitment methods and provide working opportunities that will benefit the parents of children and young people living in poverty.
- Encourage and publicise initiatives to reduce the costs of education.²⁴
- Undertake research and evaluation into how children and young people can be lifted out of poverty thereby producing an evidence base that could be used to influence policy development.

The following organisations have signed this agreement [to be completed following consultation]

²² For example summer holiday play schemes, homework clubs, youth clubs, access to sporting and other activities.

²³ For example doctors, dentists, social care workers, health visitors, youth workers, teachers.

²⁴ Initiatives could include stating that voluntary contributions only are required for school trips, making grants available to cover material for course work and uniform.

The child poverty duty on public agencies

15. In line with the commitment in *One Wales* we propose to introduce a general duty on public agencies to require them to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty. We propose to require public agencies to take child poverty into account when they are carrying out their functions. We acknowledge that the Children Act 2004 already requires local authorities, NHS trusts, local health boards, community safety organisations and voluntary organisations to work together to produce a three year CYPP which sets out local action to tackle child poverty. The intention of this legislation is to ensure that **all** public agencies in Wales have a legislative duty to take child poverty into account when they carry out their functions. There is no intention to introduce additional duties in relation to child poverty on those organisations that are already required to take action under the CYPP.
16. The National Assembly for Wales's powers would allow this duty to apply only to public agencies. It could not apply, for example, to third sector organisations or private-sector bodies. At this stage we propose that it would apply to the following organisations as a minimum:
- County and county borough councils
 - Fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue services
 - National park authorities, where established
 - Local health boards
 - NHS trusts
 - Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies (AGSBs)
17. We acknowledge that many public bodies in Wales already do a great deal to combat child poverty in their areas. We believe that placing the child poverty duty on a statutory footing for these organisations will create greater clarity and consistency across such bodies for the Welsh Assembly Government and the public to be able to assess how each has demonstrated its commitment to ending child poverty. We do not intend to prescribe how the duty is carried out. This is because the Joint Agreement on Child Poverty, which we hope will be signed by public agencies affected by the Measure, will provide a framework of activities which enable organisations to demonstrate their commitment to ending child poverty. A Welsh Assembly Government funded pilot scheme is developing an online resource which will help local authorities deliver their child poverty priorities.
18. We are considering placing a broad framework around this duty, for example ensuring that public agencies promote equality of opportunity

between children living in poverty and those which do not; the need to promote positive attitudes towards children living in poverty and the need to encourage children living in poverty to participate in services provided by the public agency.

19. We also propose to introduce, as part of the child poverty duty legislation, a reserve power to make regulations to ensure public agencies take account of child poverty while carrying out their functions. This would allow the Welsh Assembly Government to introduce more specific legislation, if, for example, it was considered that a particular public agency required a tighter legislative framework because it had failed to take account of child poverty in its work. The power to make regulations could also be used if, over time, the Welsh Assembly Government wanted to introduce more specific duties than were allowed for in the first legislation, for example to direct a particular public agency to undertake certain actions in terms of tackling child poverty. Similarly the power could be used if the Assembly Government decided to award additional funding to a particular public agency and could then use this power to set out how the funding should be used in relation to child poverty.
20. We also propose to introduce a reserve power to issue guidance to public agencies to advise them on how to carry out their functions to take account of child poverty.
21. We propose to monitor the effectiveness of the child poverty duty in line with inspection of the CYPPs. *Shared Planning for Better Outcomes* proposes that relevant inspectorates and regulatory bodies will work together to develop protocols and plan work to inspect and evaluate the effectiveness of services for children and young people. The duty would also involve a requirement to monitor and evaluate activities and to report on delivery to Welsh Ministers in line with existing requirements for CYPPs.
22. No additional funding will be made available to public agencies for them to carry out this duty. This is because we do not intend to place further demands on public agencies that already have a duty under the Children Act to take action on child poverty and have already received funding to carry out this work. Similarly AGSBs are also currently required to take action on child poverty although this has not previously been on a statutory basis.

The free childcare places duty

23. *One Wales* carries a commitment to progressing provision of universal affordable childcare and in particular free high quality childcare for two year olds in the areas of greatest need.
24. The first of the Assembly Government's seven Core Aims for children and young people, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a commitment to ensure that all children have a flying start in life. The Assembly Government recognises the powerful evidence that high quality early years' services can have a significant impact on children's outcomes, and thus provide a route out of poverty.
25. The Flying Start programme is our delivery mechanism for the commitment to free childcare for two year olds. The childcare places we are currently making available in specific disadvantaged areas sit alongside health visitor support with low caseloads, access to well evaluated parenting programmes and Language and Play programmes.
26. Flying Start is a programme which is funded through a specific grant to local authorities. We have no current plans to alter the funding arrangement, but we wish to demonstrate our long term commitment to the scheme by making legislation which supports it.
27. We therefore intend to legislate to place a requirement on local authorities to secure provision of free childcare for two year olds. This requirement would be similar to the arrangements providing for free education places for three year olds, though the childcare places for two year olds would not be provided universally. Changes to primary legislation would enable the Assembly Government to prescribe in secondary legislation the criteria for providing free childcare in disadvantaged target areas: the number of hours each week, term times, the ages of children and how local authorities should set target areas for this provision. At present, within the Flying Start guidance the childcare is provided for children from the term following their second birthday for three terms; 12.5 hours per week, 42 weeks per year, within disadvantaged target areas agreed with the Assembly Government.
28. The other services provided by Flying Start will be similarly underpinned: we wish to ensure that in specific areas health visiting services are maintained with a maximum ratio between health visitors visiting the 0-3 age group and the children they serve (currently 1:110), and that in these areas parenting classes are provided along with early support for literacy.
29. New legislation would need to incorporate arrangements for the Assembly Government to issue guidance on the delivery of these high

quality early years' services, and arrangements for the inspection of local authorities' performance of the duty.

30. Flying Start grants to local authorities total £27 million in 2008-9, and are projected to rise to £31 million in 2010-11. We envisage that this funding will be sufficient to meet the legislative requirements that will be put in place.

Cymorth

31. Cymorth – the children and youth support fund is one of the Assembly Government’s main levers in tackling child poverty. It recognises that good quality work with children and families can mitigate the experience of poverty and change outcomes for the better.
32. It was introduced in 2003 to replace a number of predecessor initiatives. Cymorth is administered through the Children and Young People’s Partnerships in each Local Authority area and funding is distributed to meet local needs and priorities. £51.7 million per annum is provided to the local authorities.
33. Cymorth has acted as a catalyst, supporting Partnerships in working together in innovative ways for the benefit of children and young people, especially in disadvantaged communities. Cymorth projects include early years work, health promotion, play, supporting the engagement of young people and participation.
34. The Assembly Government announced in 2006 its intention to use the Assembly’s new powers to introduce primary legislative change, which could underpin the principles that Cymorth supports. This would build on the Childcare Act 2006, which replaced Cymorth activities in the fields of childcare and family information with statutory duties. Our understanding of Cymorth’s impact is also informed by a major evaluation taking place. The evaluation will also influence the shape of legislative change.
35. The legislative changes are intended to move the best of Cymorth practice into the mainstream. Once the legislation is in place Cymorth funding will move into the local government revenue settlement, in three stages over the three years beginning April 2011.
36. Cymorth guidance requires work to fit into five themes (a sixth, childcare, is no longer part of Cymorth). These are:
 - Family support
 - Health improvement
 - Play, leisure and enrichment
 - Empowerment, participation and active citizenship
 - Training, mentoring and information
37. The guidance also sets out “process themes” – underlying principles for the work. These are:

- Focus on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and particularly Communities First areas
- Partnership working
- User involvement
- Adding value to mainstream services
- Early preventative intervention
- Delivery from integrated centres and networks
- Inclusion
- Evidence based practice

38. The guidance also sets out that projects should especially target children and young people that have needs above universal requirements, but below the thresholds for crisis intervention, so as to prevent the need for the latter interventions.

39. We propose three new duties on local authorities, unique to Wales, to support these themes:

- A new duty to take action that will reduce inequalities of outcome for all children and young people.
- A new duty to ensure adequate access to play for all children and young people.
- A new duty to promote children and young people's participation.

40. The first of these, to reduce inequalities of outcome, would embed the principles of the family support, health improvement, and training, mentoring and information themes. Each of these themes is "preventative" but we wish to see the legislation founded on promoting positive, as well as avoiding negative outcomes.

41. This new duty can therefore support the Assembly Government's work in designing a cross cutting Outcomes Framework.

42. Cymorth has required project work to be focused on disadvantaged areas, and especially Communities First areas. Cymorth guidance has required Children and Young People's Partnerships to work closely with local Communities First partnerships. Communities Next envisages that Communities First Partnerships will continue to play a key role in tackling child poverty and local authorities should work with them in devising and taking forward initiatives. However, the geographies of each local authority are distinct and in framing legislation for the long term it is appropriate to acknowledge the need for local authorities to adopt a targeting strategy that works in their area, though based on evidence such as the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and the new Child Poverty Index. We therefore propose that the legislation will require local authorities to assess how poverty and inequality is spatially concentrated, and to take such concentration

into account in reducing inequality of outcome for children and young people.

43. Cymorth play and participation projects take forward children and young people's rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
44. A new duty to ensure adequate access to play may go wider than providing play facilities such as fixed equipment or staffed schemes. Our Play Policy Implementation Plan showed how the promotion of play may have implications for land use, education, or street design. It would be unrealistic for us to legislate that all community aspirations for play provision must be met. However, we can embed Cymorth's excellent work in developing an understanding of children and young people's play, auditing play provision and creating local strategies. We will require local authorities to take reasonable steps within available resources to remedy local deficits in play provision highlighted by the audit. They should especially ensure that disabled children are included in access to play. This legislation will help address the top priority of children and young people when they are consulted – to have better opportunities to play.
45. The Welsh Assembly Government has been a leader in championing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them. Cymorth funding has enabled workers to be employed that can support the involvement of children and young people, in school, in contact with other statutory agencies, in the development of community policies, and in service planning. It is available to support the introduction of local Participation Strategies, for which Guidance has been produced for implementation with effect from 1st April 2008.
46. In the promotion of play and participation our new legislation will allow for the creation of statutory guidance and national minimum standards. We are already developing guidance and national standards for play, and have already published, on a non-statutory basis, guidance on the development of participation strategies, and national participation standards. We would envisage that regular audits against national minimum standards will strengthen the relevant sections of the CYPPs required under the Children Act 2004.
47. Secondary legislation would set out the more detailed arrangements for the development of these strategies.

ANNEX

Written Statement of 20 February 2008 on Child Poverty by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

The Assembly Government is driving forward a cross cutting agenda for improving the lives of children and young people, based on partnership working and implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All our policies and programmes for children and young people are required to contribute to seven core aims that summarise these rights. Core aim 7 states that we must ensure children and young people in Wales are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Eradicating poverty and improving the life chances of our children is at the top of the list of priorities for the Assembly Government Cabinet and for me in my capacity as Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.

Tackling child poverty in all its forms is complex and cross-cutting. It requires strong partnership working with our external partners – in the UK Government and with our external partners in both the public and the private sectors, as well as within the Welsh Assembly Government itself.

The UK Government's targets to halve child poverty by 2010/11 on the way to eradication by 2020 remain. Significant progress has been made with 600,000 fewer children in relative poverty in the UK in 2005/06 than in 1998/99. The package of reforms to the personal tax and benefit system outlined in the UK Budget 2007, will help lift a further 200,000 children out of poverty by 2008/9. Additionally, the measures outlined in the October 2007 PBR/CSR will reduce the numbers of children in poverty by an additional 100,000.

Although a substantial number of the key levers to meet the child poverty targets are reserved to Westminster, I am determined that the Assembly Government must continue to do whatever it can to help achieve our shared child poverty objectives so that we can go on making a significant contribution to improving the life chances of our most disadvantaged children, and building on that further.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Evidence shows that we have made good progress in recent years. Poverty rates for children here have come down to below the GB average for the first time. An analysis of child benefit statistics tells us that the number of children in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the 1998/99 median income (after housing costs), held constant in real terms, fell by around 100,000 in Wales between 1989 and 2006. However, there is no room for complacency

with 28% of children in Wales still living in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the median and we know that there has been less progress on the downward trend very recently.

Assembly Government policy in this area has been shaped in recent years by the report of the independent Child Poverty Task Group in June 2004; our Child Poverty Strategy, 'A Fair Future for our Children', published in February 2005 and by the proposals set out in the Child Poverty Implementation Plan, published in May 2006. Many of those proposals have been taken forward. These include publication of specific cross cutting milestones and targets on child poverty, child poverty proofing of strategic policies and programmes for their impact on child poverty and reviewing the role of the Cymorth grant programme. Other proposals have been reflected in our 'One Wales' agreement and work is ongoing.

My Cabinet colleagues and I are fully aware of the need to continue to build on the impetus to our efforts in Wales. We have already provided a range of policies and programmes in place across the Assembly Government aimed at tackling child poverty and investment in the early years continues to be a strong feature of this third Assembly Government. However, we need to be sure that these policies are working and that they are proofed to deliver the further improvements necessary.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Future action will focus on three strands:

- Strand 1 - Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children;
- Strand 2 - financial inclusion initiatives; and
- Strand 3 - Encouraging greater uptake of the UK Government tax and benefits support.

STRAND 1 - IMPROVING LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

In tackling child poverty we recognise children and young people are rarely disadvantaged in just one parameter of their life experience. To give our most vulnerable children and young people the best start in life we must identify those who are at greatest disadvantage and intervene effectively and early in life to promote their opportunities and mitigate the barriers to a better life.

The Assembly Government itself is determined to utilise all the tools at its disposal in tackling child poverty. Using our new powers we have already begun the process of reforming the law in relation to vulnerable children in Wales, including action on child poverty.

A draft Legislative Competence Order giving effect to this commitment was laid in the Assembly on 9 July 2007. The LCO will seek to allow the Assembly to have broad powers to make Measures across a wide spectrum of social welfare for children and young people in Wales. It will provide us with the powers to take forward some of our early actions in tackling child poverty and to bring greater accountability at national and local level to this agenda, building on existing anti-poverty programmes such as Flying Start, Cymorth and Communities First. The LCO will also allow the Assembly Government to rationalise and consolidate the law and to bring forward coherent policies that are best suited to Wales for children in care, those leaving care and other children living in vulnerable families.

Evidence shows that a high number of children in care are from socially disadvantaged families with complex needs and where poverty is frequently an associated causal factor. Building on the Children First programme we will consult later this summer on a strategy for vulnerable children to provide greater support to children and vulnerable families so that those children can live in safety and good health in their family home.

Early Years and Education

Our 'Flying Start' initiative is targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, recognising the evidence that children within areas of multiple deprivation suffer additional effects of disadvantage. It builds on and complements existing valuable work done under the Sure Start theme of the Cymorth grant scheme. There is provision of £31 million for Flying Start in 2007-08. The Budget provides for a 10% increase in the scope of the programme over the next 3 years. This will mean an extra 1,600 children will benefit from the programme – 17,600 children in total.

The programme is based on international evidence of the interventions that support improved outcomes for children in the long term and includes free, good quality childcare, additional health visiting, and parenting programmes. The programme is currently targeted at a deliberately limited number of school catchment areas in order to invest intensely but may be widened in future years in the light of evaluation.

We will be introducing the Foundation Phase from September which recognises that each child is different and it is vitally important that the opportunities they are given foster a positive attitude to education. The Foundation Phase encourages children to become self-reliant, enjoy challenge and acquire positive attitudes to learning. It is about developing children's aspirations, motivation and socialisation. The future benefits of the Foundation Phase will lead to a reduction in disaffection and support those children facing disadvantage and poverty of opportunity.

Raising educational attainment levels and, in particular, narrowing the gap in performance between those children from low income families and their contemporaries is a fundamental component in the fight to tackle child poverty and reduce the effects of disadvantage. The RAISE programme is specifically targeted at disadvantaged pupils in order to raise levels of performance. £16m

has been allocated to tackle the link between social deprivation and underachievement in Wales in each of 2006/07 and 2007/08. Of this, £14.6m has been allocated to schools each year with £1m set aside to support the education of Looked After Children.

As a further benefit to our most disadvantaged children our free school breakfasts programme began in Communities First areas and is now available to all schools wishing to participate.

Provision of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is crucial. Total expenditure on SEN provision by LEAs in 2007-08 is budgeted to be £307 million. This represents an increase of 6.5% on the previous year's budget. A further £7.7m was allocated through the local government settlement this year in recognition of the increasing costs of providing for the complex needs of children with SEN, of which £1.7m is particularly to support provision of specialist services for children with autism. In addition, substantial additional support has been made available to Local Authorities through a number of specific grant schemes that can be used to support pupils with SEN and disadvantaged groups.

Rather than introduce a compulsion to participate in learning beyond the age of 16, our vision, as set out in One Wales is to transform learning provision for young people by providing attractive, flexible learning options matched by enhanced support and guidance. If enacted, our proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008, will make this a legal entitlement for all learners. We believe that by increasing the quantity and quality of the options available to young people they will want to continue to participate in learning and training and will be able to see the value in doing so.

To underpin 14-19 Learning Pathways, we also need a strengthened set of obligations on providers. Our Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008 proposes placing a duty on local education authorities, schools and further education institutions to cooperate in the delivery of a local options menu for young people.

We will also shortly introduce a consultation document aimed at reducing the proportion of young people outside of the system - those not in education, employment or in training (NEET). This will be the first in a series of themed papers making proposals to address issues identified in Skills that Work for Wales - our draft skills and employment strategy. The paper will propose changes so that we have efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging young people who become NEET; a full range of learning options to meet demand – to engage young people through sufficient provision at every level and in every style of learning and more targeted and intensive learning and personal support as well as careers advice and guidance to make sure young people know how to access education, training or employment and to enable them to overcome sometimes significant personal barriers to participation.

Improving both basic and work related skills are important elements in our child poverty strategy. The policies already set out in the Assembly

Government's basic skills strategy, 'Words Talk, Numbers Count' and in the 'Skills and Employment Action Plan 2005' aim to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. A new Skills and Employment Strategy for Wales has recently been published for consultation.

Employment Support

Acknowledging the crucial role of childcare in reducing disadvantage and increasing employment rates we have made a commitment to progressing provision of universal, affordable childcare, with additional budget support during this Assembly term, including extended free, high quality childcare for 2yr-olds in areas of greatest need. The Childcare Act 2006 will require local authorities to secure sufficient childcare places for parents who want to work or train, as far as is reasonably practicable, with particular reference to the parents of disabled children, those wishing Welsh-medium provision and those in receipt of Working Tax Credit.

The affordability of good quality childcare is a critical factor and assistance is provided through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Overall, the number of childcare places registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales has increased by 13,000 since 1999. The Inspectorate registered 795 new settings in 2006-7, compared with 612 new childcare settings in 2005-6 and 517 settings in 2004-5.

In addition, Genesis Wales deployed European Social Funds to support 10,000 beneficiaries, with advice, confidence building and childcare to remove barriers to work and training. The Assembly Government is currently preparing a successor project to Genesis Wales. If approved, it will be firmly rooted in the Lisbon Agenda to increase employment and reduce economic inactivity.

Work is the best route out of poverty for most poor people and increasing economic activity levels by helping more people into jobs remains a key priority. That strategy is evidenced by the successful work we have carried out with Jobcentre Plus to scope and develop the Want2Work initiative. The programme, which provides help to those people already on benefit to voluntarily move into sustained employment, has already exceeded its target to help a thousand people into work this year; by October 2007 the programme had already helped over 1,750 people into work. Building on this we are now working with Jobcentre Plus to expand Want2Work into other areas across Wales where there are higher rates of disadvantaged people who want help and support to find work.

Since many children living in poverty are in families headed by a lone parent it is therefore vitally important that lone parents are helped and supported throughout the transition to employment and training. By working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, this Assembly Government is supporting the New Deal for Lone Parents which offers work focussed support, financial

incentives and childcare advice and provision. This environment of help and support must continue as we strive to attain our targets for lone parent employment and as the UK Government's Welfare reform programme is implemented in Wales.

The Assembly Government has also worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on a project to tackle worklessness in some of the most deprived wards in the UK. The 'City Strategy' project aims to deliver a significant improvement in the working age employment rate, particularly for disadvantaged groups. It will provide the help these people need to find and remain in work, and to improve their skills so that they can progress in employment. The 'Cities Strategy' pathfinder areas in Wales are the Heads of the Valleys and Rhyl, both of which are now delivering against challenging targets set by DWP to reduce worklessness, benefit dependency and child poverty.

Health Interventions

The link between poverty and poor health is well established. One of the most effective ways of setting all our children on the road to good health is by giving them the opportunity to have a strong nutritional basis for the future. Breastfeeding provides the best first food for babies. Research shows that women who leave education the earliest and who have the lowest incomes are the least likely to breastfeed their babies. The Assembly Government's Breastfeeding Strategy, "Investing in a Better Start", has been established to increase the breastfeeding rates in Wales. We have funded 22 Breastfeeding Peer Support Schemes to focus on the needs of the youngest mothers across Wales and health professionals and volunteers are working together in areas of greatest social need.

The Children's National Service Framework will contribute to the achievement of the Assembly Government's seven core aims for children and young people by improving quality and reducing variations in service delivery through the setting of national standards. These standards have been set not just for health and social care but also for other local government services which have a strong influence on the health and well-being of children.

The Assembly Government is working closely with the National Public Health Service to identify actions which will assist in the achievement of the health related milestones and targets in 'Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success'. Action plans relating to low birth weight/infant mortality and teenage conceptions are under preparation for Ministerial consideration.

We know that there is considerable variation in the prevalence of dental decay across Wales but the situation is worse and deteriorating in deprived areas. On 13 November 2006 the Minister for Health and Social Services announced the development of a National Oral Health Action Plan for Wales. This will set out to provide a long-term plan of action designed to improve oral health with a range of actions designed to achieve that goal. It will encourage individuals

to take better control of their oral health, guide dental practices to focus more on preventive care and enable commissioners to tackle long standing oral health inequalities. In doing so it will also work toward achieving the Assembly Government's child poverty targets.

Smoking rates are highest among disadvantaged groups and are one of the main determinants of health inequalities. Therefore, we have put in place a co-ordinated programme of smoking prevention initiatives. We are funding 'Stop Smoking Wales' an initiative which provides advice and support to smokers who want to give up and focuses particularly on the needs of disadvantaged groups when developing and delivering its services. The Assembly Government is also supporting the roll-out across Wales of the ASSIST peer support programme, which aims to educate young people in Year 8 about the risks of smoking and encourage them not to smoke. The programme is initially targeting schools in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. In addition, Smokebugs is a club for 9-11 year-olds who pledge to remain smokefree and the Smokefree Class Competition is targeted at 11-13 year olds in all secondary schools in Wales.

Improving Life Chances

We are committed to working across Government to improve service delivery and outcomes for children with disabilities. A newly established Task Group comprising members of the Disabled Children Matters Campaign and senior officials has been set up to advise Ministers and take work forward in this important area. In addition, the Children and Young People Cabinet Committee will play a vital role in co-ordinating policy and programmes for disabled children and will help to tackle issues of fragmentation and complexity of service provision, which can be particularly acute for families of disabled children.

Young carers face particular disadvantage and need additional help and support. This is one of the five priority areas for action under the Assembly Government's Carers' Strategy. Our young carers' policies are based on the general principle that young carers should not be expected to undertake inappropriate levels of caring that have an adverse effect on their personal development. Through the establishment, in 2006, of a new participatory structure the Assembly Government is able to listen to young carers themselves so that they have a say in what the priorities should be and to ensure that they can participate in the development of policies that affect them. There are young carers' projects in every local authority area in Wales, operated by voluntary sector organisations, with places for over 1,500 young carers. And we are currently reviewing our "Caring for Young Carers" training resource for schools and will be publishing a report in the Spring. Improving access to sport and physical activity for disadvantaged children is key and we fully recognise the importance of ensuring the availability of adequate play facilities. Our new network of integrated children's centres incorporates free open access term time play facilities in all local authorities in Wales.

'Planning Policy Wales' aims to protect playing fields from development, except where this would enhance existing provision, where alternative provision can be made, or where there is excessive provision in a particular area. Local authorities should set out policies for sport and recreation in their local development plans. They must also consult the Sports Council for Wales before granting planning permission where development affects a playing field, or land used as a playing field in the last 5 years. We are working to strengthen the safeguards already in place.

The Assembly Government will also continue to invest £5m a year to provide free access to local authority swimming pools for children and young people during school holidays and will explore extending the scheme to other activities and at weekends to encourage easier access to sport and physical activity.

Recognising the links between child pedestrian casualties and poverty, we have provided funding to local authorities to implement schemes that help children walk and cycle to and from school safely. In 2007-08 we allocated £5.1 million to projects across the country. This takes our support for the programme to £27 million since its inception in 1999-2000. A new Safe Routes in Communities programme will be operational from April helping to improve road safety and develop walking and cycling links within local communities.

Children and Young People's Participation

The Assembly Government's approach to children and young people's participation is based on the principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 sets out the right of all children and young people to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure which affects them. "Rights to Action" sets out the Assembly Government position in more detail.

In order to take forward participation at a national level in Wales, we are supporting a Participation Consortium which is facilitated by Save the Children Cymru and involves representatives from children and young people's umbrella organisations throughout Wales. There are also many initiatives taking place to raise awareness of participation within Assembly Government departments and to train children and young people on how to become involved in our work.

Extending Entitlement aims to promote access to 10 entitlements for young people across Wales. Each Entitlement for young people within this agenda aims to ensure that young people aged 11-25 have the opportunity to access a range of support and services as and when they need them in order to make informed life choices. During the past three years, through ESF funding, partners across Wales have undertaken additional work with over 40,000 young people to improve their access to entitlements and improve skills.

At a national level the Clic project has been the information and advice project for young people aged 11-25 and has provided information for young people on a range of topics of interest linked to wider resources. Amongst other topics this has included information on money and includes links to other sources of advice and information.

Community Based Intervention

The spatial element and the value of targeting resources cannot be ignored. To that end, addressing child poverty is one of the key priorities for Communities First as the Programme moves into its Communities Next phase. We are now consulting on our vision for Communities Next and we will be working with partners to ensure that initiatives to address child poverty work with and through the Communities First Partnerships as much as possible. Communities Next also envisages a greater emphasis on income generation and improving job prospects. This will make an important contribution to the fight against child poverty; improving these circumstances for families is recognised as the most effective way of lifting children out of poverty.

As with all our citizens, the accommodation needs of children and young people are an integral element of our National Housing Strategy, 'Better Homes for People in Wales' and strands of the Strategy focus specifically on children and young people's accommodation needs. In terms of the quality and appropriateness of homes, the linkages to academic attainment and well-being of our children are recognised and influential factors like overcrowding and 'unfitness' are being tackled through the measures introduced by the Health and Safety Rating System.

Our agenda to prevent homelessness and improve the conditions of people in temporary accommodation as set out in our Homelessness Strategy has secured dramatic improvements in the numbers of families in Bed and Breakfast establishments. From September 2006 to September 2007 the numbers of families in B&B dropped from 134 to 32, a fall of 76%.

In addition, our Supporting People programme provides assistance to tackle the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable groups such as young single homeless and young offenders. In 2001 the Assembly Government introduced the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order which extended the protection of homelessness legislation to young people who are aged 18-20 and who at any time in their lives have been in care. The Order also obliges local authorities to secure housing for people in this age group who are at risk of sexual or financial exploitation, as well as all 16 and 17 year olds.'

The commitment to tackle overcrowding in households with dependent children forms part of our child poverty targets outlined in '*Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*' and we have recently consulted on overcrowding in Wales seeking views on how the current space standard and bedroom standard might be amended. This has been followed up by a more

targeted approach to individual authorities. Supporting families coping with disability is paramount and the Assembly Government abolished the means-test for Disabled Facilities Grants for disabled children in September 2005 in order improve the application process and access to these grants.

STRANDS 2 & 3: FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND UPTAKE OF UK GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Maximising family income is crucial. It is true that many of the issues involved in over-indebtedness and the potential solutions are not devolved but we will continue to work across Government to ensure that Wales benefits from UK level resources and initiatives. The recently announced Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed that the Financial Inclusion Fund for 2008-11 will contain £130 million. Wales has previously benefited from the Fund to the tune of almost £4.4 million and we will ensure that we receive the appropriate proportion of this new funding to tackle financial exclusion across Wales.

The Assembly Government is itself able to make significant in-roads to address financial exclusion and we will publish a comprehensive Financial Inclusion Strategy later this year to bring all this work together. We will build on the foundations laid by the Review of Over-indebtedness and will include activity to bolster financial literacy in schools, support the credit union movement, improve access to debt advisers and challenge illegal money-lending.

'One Wales' commits the Assembly Government to ensuring that comprehensive benefit advice is available in all local authority areas. Work to identify the gaps in advice provision has begun and this will also take into account the future delivery of advice services, as outlined in the Legal Services Commission/Assembly Government policy document "Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales".

We will build on the work already undertaken in partnership with local authorities in Wales and the Third Sector in successfully increasing uptake of Council Tax Benefit, and will extend this to include Housing Benefit. We will ensure that an integrated approach is taken to income maximisation to ensure people, including low income families with children, take up the benefits to which they are entitled. We will build stronger relationships and clearer referral systems between local authorities and JobCentre Plus by building on the good practice of existing initiatives such as Link Age and Better Advice, Better Health. We will also seek to ensure that improvements in benefit uptake should be a priority for all programmes that interact with vulnerable families.

Recognising the importance of early intervention, improving financial literacy education in schools is a priority. The changes we plan for our curriculum in Wales will outstrip and exceed in scope those recently announced by the UK Government. By September 2008 financial literacy will be formally taught to

all children – under both the personal and social education and mathematics frameworks for all children from ages 7 to 19 and 7 to 16 respectively.

Credit unions make an invaluable contribution to increasing access to financial services for disadvantaged social groups. We are committed to establishing this form of social enterprise throughout Wales . We have already invested £1.75 million in the credit union movement in Wales including £250,000 in 2007-2008. Credit unions now operate in 21 of our 22 local authority areas. There is, of course, work still to be done in developing the capacity of credit unions to expand the vital services they provide and in moving them towards financial sustainability.

Many credit unions in Wales have already developed partnerships with local schools and are contributing to the provision of this essential part of the curriculum. All credit unions offer junior membership which allows young people access to secure savings accounts and advice on money management. We are committed to extending this involvement and will invest a further £1.25 million over the next three years in developing credit unions and enabling them to provide credit union access for all secondary school pupils by 2011.

The Child Trust Fund provides every child with a valuable asset. Parents and guardians need to have a wide variety of account options to encourage as many as possible to deposit the voucher. We are already delivering, with local authorities, a Child Trust Fund Reimbursement Scheme for ‘looked after’ children, which reimburses authorities up to £50 per year per child in their care. We will also invest £2.5m from 2009/10 via a Welsh premium to the Child Trust Fund which will provide an additional payment of £50 to every child, rising to £100 for the most disadvantaged, as they enter full-time education. We also intend to build on the work of Assembly Government funded pilots to encourage as many credit unions as possible to begin offering Child Trust Fund accounts.

DELIVERING CHANGE

Acknowledging the importance of joined up policy development and delivery, we have taken steps at national level, through setting up a Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People, chaired by the Minister for Children, to make sure that cross-cutting responsibilities for children and young people, including in respect of child poverty, are coordinated effectively across Government.

A support group of senior officials from the relevant policy departments with a Ministerial Chair has been established to support the work of the Cabinet Committee. This will ensure that Government action in respect of poverty is fully coherent and focussed. This responds to the comments of the Deputy Children’s Commissioner in her latest report, published last October, in which she urges full and coherent implementation across all our programmes that focus on child poverty.

Ensuring that tackling child poverty is a top priority across the whole of the Welsh public sector is also key. When the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty LCO comes into force, we will seek to introduce a Measure to establish a duty on public agencies to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty by consolidating existing legislation and ensuring that all public bodies in Wales operate under consistent statutory duties.

I am aware that the new legislative process is lengthy and so in the shorter term the Assembly Government will work collaboratively to develop a voluntary agreement, in full consultation with the sectors concerned, to confirm existing statutory requirements and highlight areas where a number of organisations are tackling child poverty. This will help to ensure that public agencies prioritise child poverty. A number of public agencies have already been working to take action on child poverty. For example, using Assembly Government funding two local authorities – RCT and Gwynedd – are taking part in a 2 year pilot project led by Save the Children and the WLGA to ensure that action on child poverty is at the top of the list of priorities for local government.

Action is needed at both a national and local level. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities are responsible for taking a lead in local Children and Young People's Partnerships to develop Children and Young People's Plans. These 3 year strategic plans set out the agreed priorities for improving outcomes that direct the work of all partners, including in relation to child poverty.

Local authorities working with their partners can play a significant role in addressing child poverty. Action taken to provide advice on benefits, affordable housing, services for homeless families and, effective support for vulnerable children can increase quality of life for the most disadvantaged.

In addition to these internal arrangements, I have agreed the establishment of an independent Child Poverty Expert Group, to be chaired by Huw Lewis AM. The Group will be asked to provide me with evidenced based advice on the wider and further policy requirements necessary to meet our 2010 and 2020 child poverty targets. This Group is currently being established in accordance with the rules on public appointments and will begin its work in April 2008.

In view of the significant implications for Wales on those issues that are non-devolved the Assembly Government will maintain close contact with the new Whitehall Child Poverty Unit. A meeting of key officials took place on 22 January where it was agreed that a new official level Child Poverty Four Countries' Forum on child poverty will meet quarterly to strengthen the links across the UK Governments as we strive to meet the child poverty targets.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In response to the findings of the UNICEF report earlier this year, our view is that child poverty should be set firmly in the wider context of overall child well-being. A recent review of Welsh data, to check whether the picture in Wales

differs from that being described for the UK as a whole in the report, has demonstrated the importance of us having easy access to up-to-date and reliable data on child well-being in Wales. Therefore, from September 2008, the Assembly Government will be producing a three-yearly Child Well-Being Monitor, to track the quality of life of children and young people in Wales across a range of dimensions, including child poverty. The Monitor will be the vehicle by which progress on our cross-cutting child poverty targets will be measured.

Tackling the scourge of child poverty is a fundamental component of this Assembly Government's social justice agenda. Our new programme of partnership government outlined in the 'One Wales' agreement reaffirms our commitment to doing everything in the Assembly Government's power to assist in reaching the goal of eliminating child poverty by 2020.

Consultation questions

The Joint Agreement on Child Poverty

1. Are you supportive of the partnership approach proposed in the Joint Agreement?
2. Are there any other activities that provide a means for organisations, where appropriate, to assist the Welsh Assembly Government to take forward the 3 strand approach to child poverty?
3. Are there any other organisations that should be added to the list of organisations which will be invited to sign the Joint Agreement?
4. Would your organisation wish to sign the Agreement and is there an overarching organisation that could sign on behalf of you and others?

The child poverty duty on public agencies

5. Do you agree with the broad framework that is proposed?
6. Do you have any comments on when the reserve power to introduce regulations and guidance should be used?
7. Do you have any comments on the proposals for inspecting how public agencies deliver the child poverty duty?

The free childcare places duty

8. Do you agree that new legislation should be made to require provision of free childcare places for two year olds?
9. Do you agree that the legislation should also require the provision of the surrounding menu of services within Flying Start, such as more intense health visiting?
10. Should regulations define the disadvantaged areas served, or should local authorities have discretion in selecting them?

Cymorth

11. Do you agree with the proposal for new legislation to reduce inequality of outcomes?

12. Do you agree with the proposal for new legislation in respect of play provision?
13. Do you agree with the proposal for new legislation in respect of children and young people's participation?
14. Is there any element of the proposals where you would suggest a better alternative?
15. Do you consider that the proposals would draw existing effective Cymorth funded activity into mainstream practice?
16. If legislation was made in these terms, would local authorities be able to fund the new duties from within existing Cymorth provision?

List of Organisations Consulted

Access for Black and Minority Ethnic Children with Disabilities and/or Chronic Illnesses
Afasic Cymru
After Adoption Wales
Aneurin Bevan Foundation
Anti Poverty Network Cymru
Arts Council for Wales
Assembly Members
Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital
Association of Directors of Education in Wales
Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales
Association of Educational Psychologists
Autism Cymru
Barnardo's Cymru
Big Lottery Fund
Bishop's Panel for Child Protection Church in Wales
Bobath Children's Therapy Centre Wales
British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
British Association of Adoption and Fostering
British Association of Community and Child Health
British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
British Medical Association
CAFCASS Cymru
Care Co-ordination Network UK
Care Council for Wales
Care Forum Wales
Careers Wales
CBI Wales
Centre for Applied Community Studies
Cerebra
Chief Executives of Local Authorities (22)
Chief Executives of Local Health Boards (22)
Chief Executives of NHS Trusts in Wales (12)
Chief Officers of Community Health Councils (20)
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services/ Child Psychiatrists (3)
Child Poverty Action Group
Childcare Strategy Co-ordinators (22)
Childline Cymru
Children and Family Services for Boys and Girls Welfare Society
Children and Young People's Partnership Managers (22)
Children in Wales
Children's Cancer Support Services
Children's Commissioner for Wales
Church in Wales
Chwarae Teg
Citizens Advice Bureaux
Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Communities that Care
Community Child Health
Contact a Family Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales
County Voluntary Services (13)
Diabetes UK Cymru
Directors of Education (22)
Directors of Public Health (22)
Directors of Social Services (22)
Disability Rights Commission
Disability Wales
Downs Syndrome Association
End Child Poverty Network
Environment Agency Wales
Equal Opportunities Commission
Fairbridge Cymru
Family Information Services (22)
Federation of Small Businesses
Flying Start Co-ordinators (22)
Forestry Commission
Fostering Network Wales
Frank Buttle Trust
Funky Dragon
Higher Education Funding Council
Home Start
Job Centre Plus
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Lead Director for CYP Services (22)
Lead Member for CYP Services (22)
Learnng Disability Wales
Local Government Boundary Commission
Local Health Board Executive Director for CYP (22)
Local Health Board Non-Officer Board Member for CYP (22)
MENCAP Cymru
Menter Iaith Cymru
Mid and West Fire Brigade
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin
National Aids Trust Cymru
National Day Nurseries Association - Cymru
National Deaf Children's Society
National Foster Carers Association Wales
National Library of Wales
National Museum of Wales
National Public Health Services
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NCH Cymru
NHS Trust Lead Executive Director (14)
NHS Trust Non Executive Member (14)
North Wales Fire Service
One Voice Wales

Oxfam Cymru
Play Wales
Police Chief Constables in Wales (5)
Probation (Wales & Regional) (5)
Prince's Trust Cymru
Relate Central Office
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales
Royal National Institute for the Blind Cymru
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Save the Children
Shelter Cymru
Sports Council for Wales
St David's Children Society
Tros Gynnal
Voices from Care
Voluntary Race Equality Organisations in Wales (7)
Voluntary Services Council
Wales Association of Youth Clubs
Wales Centre for Health
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association
Wales TUC
Welsh Association of ME and CFS Support
Welsh Language Board
Welsh Local Government Association
Welsh Trust for Prevention of Abuse
Youth Forums (22)
Youth Justice Board
Youth Offending Teams (16)
Youthlink Wales