

Update on Welsh Assembly Government Initiatives

At her meeting with DCMW Campaign Members on 1st June 2009, The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills agreed that her briefing notes on specific Welsh Assembly Initiatives could be shared with those attending.

- **Key Working**

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving Key Working services across Wales. There are specific key actions within the Children's NSF which state that a Key Worker should be made available to all children who require more than two services above universal services. The performance of the responsible organisations against these key actions is monitored on an annual basis using the SAAT tool, which shows that there has been steady improvement across Wales.

Care Co-ordination Network UK (CCNUK) are developing, under the auspices of early support, key worker training which will reflect the Welsh context and requirements. There are also important developments in Transition Key Working.

- **Transition Key Working Pilot Schemes**

In order to facilitate the development of transition key working in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has allocated £500,000 in each of the three years from 2008/09 to establish a number of pilot projects across Wales.

The Assembly Government has secured the services of Care Co-ordination Network UK (CCNUK), the leading key worker charity across the UK, who will work with us to support the development of the pilot sites and to help take forward the transition key worker agenda in Wales. CCNUK is also an active member of the Welsh Assembly Government led Transition External Reference Group.

After a competitive bidding process and rigorous assessment by a multi-disciplinary team led by Assembly officials, the available funding was allocated in September 2008 to five LEA areas namely:

- Anglesey
- Ceredigion
- Gwynedd
- Monmouth (as part of a regional collaboration with Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Gwent Healthcare trust)
- Pembrokeshire

The five transition key worker sites are now operational and each has established a project/implementation board to set the direction of and oversee the development of transition key working within each pilot site. Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion have also established a reference or stakeholder group for consultation purposes and have mechanisms in place to

consult with young people and their families. All pilot sites now have recruited to the agreed staff complements and all have commenced their employment. In addition, a cross section of disabled young people, taking into account difficulty or need, and age, as well as demographic and geographic issues will take part in each of the five pilot sites.

Following a successful bid under the “Reaching the Heights” European Social Fund initiative we recently received confirmation that we have secured an additional £1.6m of match funding. Officials are still in discussion with CCNUK and other key partners as to how best to distribute this additional funding, but the aim will be to ensure that it is used to recruit as many additional key workers as possible in order to increase coverage within the convergence areas across Wales and thereby supporting as many young people as possible.

The pilot projects are financed to run for 3 years and so we are still in the early stages of development. Officials are considering the need for an external evaluation of each of the sites on a case study basis.

Revised key worker standards are being developed by CCNUK to reflect transition (up to the age of 25) and later this year the pilot sites will complete a revised self assessment tool audit. This, together with regular progress reports should help give an early indication of their success. CCNUK will also develop a transition key worker framework to provide guidance on developing and sustaining transition key working in Wales.

- **ASD Strategic Action Plan**

- The Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan for Wales was launched by the Deputy Minister for Social Services in April, 2008. Funding of £1.8m was made available for 2008-09 to support local authorities to map the services already available across all statutory, voluntary and independent provision, and to identify any service gaps and how these could be addressed.
- This money was in addition to the recurrent sum of £1.7m which has been made available to local authorities from 2007-08 specifically to develop specialist services for children with autism.
- During 2008, an ASD lead was identified within each local authority and assumed the responsibility of overseeing the mapping of needs and existing services, the production of local action plans and the formation of local stakeholder groups. They have submitted their local action plans together with data from their mapping exercise to the Welsh Assembly Government, and these are presently being collated and analysed.
- Working in partnership with the WLGA, funds have been identified to enable the appointment of three regional support officers, together with a regional co-ordinator, who will be in post at the end of May. The regional co-ordinators will provide mentoring/networking support to the

local ASD leads and inform regional planning priorities and multi-agency commissioning structures.

- Taking forward the key action points within the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan for Wales, to publish the final version of Quality Standards in Education for pupils with ASD, further discussions have taken place with Autism Cymru to update original draft documents to ensure congruency with the ASD plan itself, and linking it to recent relevant documents.
 - National and local prioritisation of funding will take place in the next month. A letter giving details of funding for 2009-10 has been issued to local authorities. The development of a consistent structure to improve access to assessment and diagnosis across the age range in Wales will be a key national action for this current financial year.
 - A further priority will be the development of awareness raising materials aimed at the range of practitioners and agencies who work in the field, and will also be of help to families/carers. There will also be a focus on the recommendations arising from the work of the Adults ASD Task and Finish group, who looked at specific issues relating to adults with ASD. Their report will be submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government shortly.
- **Benefits Awareness Raising Campaign for the Families of Disabled Children**

The following press release was issued on 12th May 2009:

The £500,000 pilot scheme will look over the next two years at the best ways to increase the household incomes of families with disabled children. Citizen's Advice Cymru will deliver a campaign to increase benefit uptake as part of their existing Wales wide Better Advice Better Health initiative.

Families with disabled children are much more likely to be in poverty because of the higher costs involved in bringing up a child with a disability and the loss of income associated with either being a lone parent or in two parent families the need in many cases for one of the parents to give up work.

Around 29,000 families with disabled children in Wales are not claiming the Disability Living Allowance they are entitled to. This means that 62 per cent of those who are eligible are not claiming a potential £109.50 per week, the equivalent of over £160m of lost benefit across all of Wales

Citizens Advice Cymru will work closely with disability organisations to ensure that appropriate, expert advice is made available to families with disabled children.

Families will be referred to the project in a number of different ways including through GP's, health visitors and social workers, specialist schools, integrated children's centres, carers organisations and disability groups.

The project will be promoted at a local and national level with organisations that support children and young people with disabilities. Citizens Advice

Cymru will also produce publicity material about the campaign, benefit entitlements and the services that Bureaux can offer within Wales.

The Minister said:

“Disability should not stop any child from fulfilling their potential and realising their ambitions but we must acknowledge that children, and their families, need increased assistance and aid.

“Helping families to maximise their income is an important element of our work to tackle child poverty. Many parents find out about their benefit entitlement by chance or several years after their child has been diagnosed with a disability and may be missing out. Helping families to understand and claim the benefits they are entitled is absolutely key. “

A full external evaluation of the two year pilot will be carried out; the findings of which will inform the future delivery of the scheme.”

At previous Task Group meetings, it was agreed with the policy lead that DCMW campaign members would be involved in the benefits awareness campaign. They received the press release via another source and have not been updated on developments in this area. Policy officials have confirmed that letters were drafted to both the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and DCMW campaign members prior to the press release. These should have been issued in the first week of May, but, due to an oversight this was overlooked. (The office of Minister for Social Justice and Local Government has confirmed that the letters were issued on 2nd June 2009).

- **Inclusive Play**

Further to the announcement that £250,000 per year for three years had been identified to provide play opportunities for disabled children, DCMW campaign members have asked if a decision has been reached with regard to the use of the funding. They have previously recommended that the money be used to provide pre-school play referral scheme places for young disabled children.

Since the meeting on 1st June, the Minister has made a decision regarding the use of the funding as follows:-

The Minister has agreed to a combination of options. Funding is intended to extend pre-school play opportunities for disabled children. However, other options for funding will be considered where Children and Young People's Partnerships identify comprehensive gaps for play provision for disabled children in other areas. This should be identified within the Play Sufficiency Assessments carried out by the Play Infrastructure Projects for the Child's Play Big Lottery Fund.

Each Children and Young People's Partnership is to submit a brief plan, an outline of how they propose to deploy their element of the £250,000 funding and the extent of the contribution by the Local Authority, to supplement the allocation.

- **Cymorth**

In December 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government announced £1million to support more play facilities for disabled children. Children and Young People's Partnerships received this as an addition to their Cymorth funding in 2007-08. Funding within Cymorth for inclusive play continued in that the total allocations for 2007-2008 were carried forward to the following three years. Although this is not ring fenced, spend in this area is monitored with Cymorth plans identifying such activities. The activities funded by this money are diverse and include, for instance; dedicated inclusive play project officers; summer play-schemes; music & performance workshops; specialist disability support workers and after school clubs.

- **Changing Places**

Funding of £225,000 has been provided to Mencap Cymru to set up Changing Places facilities. The project consists of 2 phases. Phase 1 provided 2 mobile facilities which are already in use at major events across Wales. Phase 2 will enable a number of existing cultural venues to install Changing Places facilities. The locations for the permanent facilities will be announced imminently.

A revision of Technical Advice Notice (TAN) 12 will be published in basic WORD format on 1st June. A full version, including images, will follow shortly. Those seeking permission to build new public and commercial buildings are encouraged to incorporate changing places facilities.

- **Short Breaks**

The Minister for Health and Social Services has now agreed to release £1.5million of funding to be distributed to Local Authorities to promote short break services for disabled children and young people in Wales. Officials are currently in the process of drafting the terms and conditions of the grant, along with the offer letter. It is anticipated that these will be sent out to Local Authorities next week. The funding will be distributed based on the Children and Young People's Personal Social Services Standard Spending Assessments most recent figures.

Local Authorities should work in partnership with Children and Young People's Partnerships, voluntary organisations and involve disabled children and their families in the type and range of short break services made available under this grant. The grant is subject to the condition that short break service users and providers must be consulted about the services to be made available. Local Authorities and partners should also take account of the Children's NSF and the ASD Strategic Action Plan for Wales to ensure the availability of a range of short breaks to meet need.

- **Wheelchair Services Review**

The first phase of this review is to assess the current pathway for provision of wheelchairs (complex and standard) through the ALAS service and advise on any efficiencies that can be generated to reduce the waiting times. A draft

report is likely to be submitted to the Minister for Health and Social Services in early June.

- **Early Support Programme**

Following a tendering exercise, the contract to take forward the Early Support Programme in Wales was awarded to a joint bid led by Children in Wales and Bevan Associates. Work to translate materials and adapt them for use in the Welsh context is already well underway.

- Awareness raising events to publicise the initiative commenced in March 2009 and two more events are planned for West and North Wales on 10th and 12th June 2009.
- An implementation group made up of key stakeholders has been established and will next meet on 9th June.
- A project steering group has been established and its first meeting was held on 5th May 2009.
- The national launch of the Early Support Programme will take place in Cardiff on 29th September 2009. The Minister for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills and the Children's Commissioner for Wales will both attend.