

**Rights, Indicators & Outcomes
Children in Wales Annual Conference
24 November 2009**

Round Table Discussions

Questions

Session 1 (10.40am)

What are the most important aspects of what you have heard from the European perspective for improving the well-being of children in Wales?

Brown Table

- Discussed the advantages and challenges of having local or Europe wide indicators.
- Own indicators can capture local issues, and will have sense of ownership but common indicators allow comparison and benchmarking.
- All agreed that any data is useful as long as it is current and not old and outdated information.
- Many examples of data being collected and not distributed or shared, "if we collect it let's not waste it".
- How do we help move these issues forward?
- There is a need for services to work together (health, social care, education, police etc).
- There is a need for a central hub to coordinate data, and then agreed data set used by all.
- Locally partnership and single plan should be focus of common data hub.

Yellow Table

- Information should be gathered on "outcomes". A rounded view should be taken of what "outcomes" are. Information should not be confined to financial aspects;
- More detailed research of the Nordic experience is required. What lessons can be learnt for Wales?
- A body needs to be established to "debunk" statistics.

Purple Table

- Evaluation needs to be value for money, getting something worthwhile for money invested. This will be a big part of Child

Poverty strategy in WAG. Making sure outcomes are relevant. Our reliance is on WIMD and this isn't enough.

- Service poverty is a real problem in rural areas, hidden poverty and pockets of poverty still exist and need addressing. Gentrification of poorer areas can mask severe deprivation.
- No one mentioned resources. Can't deliver without resources (no reference to inputs which includes resources/money).
- Outcomes - not really outcomes, they were outputs.
- Too much technical detail, could have come up with a few key punchy points that would have enabled a more helpful understanding and debate.
- Problem over rights and outcomes, they are not the same thing and conflating the two is problematic. It is possible to enable a child to access their rights without their being any better off in terms of outcomes. Rights are critical and are the starting point and outcomes focused work is how we improve well-being, this can then be linked back to rights.

Olive Table

- EU indicators/methodology gives a framework for work in Wales.
- How do we measure wellbeing? Now included in Estyn Inspection Framework.

Blue Table

- Benchmarking - Shouldn't be afraid of being compared. Share good and bad practice - what works and what doesn't.
- Would have been nice to see Wales not just UK.
- Policies in WAG need to be clearer. Funding to achieve these not available yet.
- Suite of indicators - absolute and relative poverty.
- Local targets and local interpretation - plenty in Wales - children and young people.
- Targets - drive how people act. International comparator too simple. Just GDP - not meaningful.
- Wales - measure success by children's wellbeing, not GDP.
- Targets have huge impact on peripheral projects. Unintended consequences (Swansea example).
- Interesting to see more info about UK - where UK is doing better.
- C&YP Plans - how does it work into national plan.
- Positive to have a European perspective - raise awareness of and raise priority at local level.
- Recognise value of harmonized data in EU.
- Breakdown of data: by country; by age and sex; by disability; as well as poverty. Nothing at EU level re: child protection and poverty - very variable practice in EU countries.
- Can't have too small numbers in each 'box'.

- DG research of ERC may cover several countries re: child poverty.
- Key issues in 2007 - child wellbeing and child poverty. To develop typology for EU. No commitment to repeat exercise regularly. Follow-up - being outsourced - would have been better to involve countries directly.

Session 2 (12.20pm)

Drawing on what you have just heard, which priorities do you think will achieve the most improvement for children's wellbeing in Wales and what are the key challenges?

Brown Table

- Need to support families from the start through a cohesive and holistic approach
- Challenges of different agencies having different thresholds
- There is a need for preventative services to meet the needs of families that fall below the threshold
- Many challenges in sharing budgets and need to pull together
- Question from presentations - given the emphasis on how Wales is doing it differently, how are the numbers worse in Wales than in the other parts of the UK? Lots of money has been spent but how is it making a difference?
- We need to work **with** families not **to** families.
- No children and young people or parents on my partnership.

Yellow Table

The priorities are -

- Making children - and those who work with them - aware of their rights;
- A better focus on joint working in order to achieve agreed outcomes;
- A better focus on the timeliness of service outcomes; and
- A better focus on the right to education.

The challenges are -

- To ensure that direct participation with children is important at all levels - including senior and middle management - not just participation officers and other "front line" staff;
- To embed the listening to and respecting of children as the top priority in policy making and service delivery. Even in the "Seven Core Aims", listening to and respecting children is "ranked" fifth!!
- To reduce the number of "buzz" words and phrases. What does a phrase like "service transformation" really mean?

Purple Table

- UNCRC LCO - what is it going to look like, how will it work? How will it fit?
- NSF - not outcomes focused - it's service focused.
- Too many strategies get in the way of delivery outcomes.
- Not replacing silo agency working with silo partnership working critical.
- Importance of it being about outcomes for children and young people and not service focused.
- Outcome agreements could be a real step forward.

Olive Table

- Priorities: Bring together all sources of funding for children and young people's partnerships.
- Challenge: How schools/organizations who just miss out on a Communities First/Flying Start funding etc can make a difference in similarly challenging areas.

Blue Table

- Impact of NEETs very concerning.
- Keeping children in school - not as many pupil referral units and more funding to keep children in school - more to it than implied by speakers.
- Concerns about funding and effects on existing programmes.
- Achieving a multiagency approach in a more localized geographical area e.g. a school - likely to be interesting.
- Partnership working helps to buffer financial cuts.
- What evidence is there for what works and gives value for money - not enough evidence in the presentations.
- Third sector under close scrutiny - how do we measure success?
- Outputs and outcomes - challenging for smaller vol orgs and community groups - hard to attribute success as so many other agencies involved - measure outcomes of the Team. Also, effects of catalysts.
- Measuring effects over a long time - e.g. 20 years. Difficult to find out what works.
- Bullshit Bingo!
- Very big statements.
- Would have helped to have some practical examples - too theoretical in presentation.
- Sharing at a delivery level is of more practical help rather than broad policy - when you get back to the 'day job'
- Would have been useful to find out if anything mentioned in the first two presentations could have been identified in Wales and effectiveness measured.

Session 3 (2.50pm)

Taking into account the presentations you have just heard, what are the key issues for improving the wellbeing of vulnerable children in Wales?

Brown Table

- Partnership - communication is key. Needs an open forum to include a whole range of vol sector organisations involved in discussions. Many examples of vol sector services being bought in but not included in the plans or discussions.
- All participants echoed the urgency of addressing the issues raised in the CAMHS report.
- Request for stronger/more power behind guidance.
- Challenge of engaging the hard to reach, many barriers for vulnerable children and we do not engage their parents, this needs to change - we need to challenge the culture e.g. break cycle of children who do not engage with school whose parents did not engage with or have a negative view of school.

Yellow Table

The key issues are:

- Funding;
- Better training of all staff to support parenting;
- Challenging the lack of motivation in vulnerable people e.g. by engaging advocates;
- Regular client contact to ensure that they are aware of the rights they really have; and
- Making children aware of their rights at the earliest opportunity e.g. in playgroups and other early learning provision.

Blue Table

- Family support
- Partnership working
- Early Intervention
- Shaping the service round the people not vice versa.
- Will to work in partnership more important than funding?
- Important to develop programmes to support individual needs.
- Bidding for funding - 1 year ahead! Can't change once you find out that not necessarily what we should be doing.
- Activities that young people want to do sometimes don't get into funding priorities.
- Strengthening Families - funding in Cardiff pulled??

- No incentive to get communities “better” as lose funding as “Communities First” status - benefit trap applied to communities - need to keep communities going.
- Health needs assessments - data to inform decisions and direction of travel - NPHS becoming more involved past 2-3 years.