

Children in Wales

Speaking with One Voice

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Budget Cuts – What Impact will they have on Children and Young People in Wales?

- Interview – Jo-Anne Daniels • Families First
- Children's Rights Training • Child Poverty Manifesto
- Youth Justice Board • Spotlight on Blind Cords
- Substance Misuse Prevention • Early Support
- Members News • Policy News

Welcome from the Chief Executive

Like many across the children’s sector, we at Children in Wales spent much of the Autumn following the various budget announcements and trying to determine what impact they will have on children and young people in Wales. The UK Government Spending Review, announced in October, not only gave the Welsh Assembly Government a huge cut to its budget in real terms, but also introduced welfare changes that will move the focus of benefits away from families with children across the UK. There were big cuts too to some UK Government departments that cover non-devolved issues, and we are particularly concerned about massive cuts to preventative youth justice services, and what effect this will have on services in Wales.



We were, however, relieved that the Welsh Assembly Government budget, published in November, made services for the most vulnerable in our society a priority, with funding for health, social services and education receiving a degree of protection. We very much welcome this approach, however until the details of all the departmental budgets are available we will not be able to tell for sure if any of the commitments made by Welsh Assembly Government in various strategies, relating to children and young people to fall because of the spending cuts.

The Local Government settlement saw Welsh Local Authorities also receiving cuts to their budgets. They are now making the difficult decisions about how to cut spending locally, and we strongly urge them to prioritise services for the most vulnerable families at this time, and make sure that it is not children and young people who suffer because of these spending cuts. We would like to see child impact assessments at both national and local levels. It is essential to ensure that funding reaches the people for whom it was intended and we believe now is a time for an increase in hypothecated funds as we know how successful the previous Children First programme was for looked after children.

We are concerned too about funding for the third sector. Third sector organisations provide such a deep and essential range of services to many families across Wales, however at the moment so many of these organisations are in a position where their funding is uncertain and services are already being threatened. Once lost, some of these services will take years to replace, because they include committed volunteers as well as professionals and also actively involve local communities. We urge both Welsh Assembly Government departments and local authorities to do everything they can to continue support for these services in the coming months.

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Training Professionals on the Rights of the Child

The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned Children in Wales to develop training materials, and related resources, in order to raise awareness about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) with key professionals working with children and young people. Article 42 of the UNCRC states that, 'all adults and children should know about the UNCRC'. A previous mapping exercise identified that not enough is known about the UNCRC among professionals working in the fields of:

- Education
- Social work
- Health, including doctors
- Police
- Youth justice
- People working with refugees and asylum seekers

The focus of this piece of work will be to provide resources identifying practice issues at both the pre and post qualification stages of training for professionals. The

training guidance and resources will identify and explore specific children's rights issues for each of the sectors. These materials will be published as web-based toolkits, freely available to a range of professionals in order to increase their knowledge of the UNCRC and support the implementation of the convention into their practice. The project is being funded by the ESF Reach for the Heights Project.

In order to ensure the success of the work, Children in Wales has been engaging with senior representatives in each of the sectors identified. This advice has been essential to ensure that the materials are produced with a sound understanding of the opportunities and challenges for promoting a rights-based approach into existing training programmes for each of the professional groups identified. Pilots are due to start in early 2011.

Can you help?

Children in Wales would like to hear from anybody who:

- Is working with children and young people who may be interested in helping them to present their experiences of involvement with any of these groups of professionals, either positive or negative. These will be used to build up a bank of case studies exploring children's rights in different situations
- Would like to be involved in the piloting of the training courses. We welcome requests from people working in the identified sectors and those interested in receiving this training through the medium of Welsh.

For more information about this or any other aspect of the project, please contact: Claire Sharp, Training Officer, E-mail: claire.sharp@childreninwales.org.uk

Children in Wales Magazine and the National Assembly for Wales Elections

The Spring 2011 edition of Children in Wales Magazine will be a National Assembly for Wales Election Special. We will be considering the issues that those in the children's sector are calling on the next Assembly Government to prioritise. If you have any issues that you think we should raise please contact: Nell Warner, Magazine Editor E-mail: nell.warner@childreninwales.org.uk



A Manifesto towards eradication

Ahead of the National Assembly for Wales Elections in May 2011, the End Child Poverty Network Cymru have published their Manifesto entitled *Child Poverty: A Manifesto towards Eradication.* Launched at an event in the Senedd, the Manifesto is set out under 12 policy themes and eight overarching priorities for the next Welsh Assembly Government. The focus of the Manifesto is to build on the progress made by the present Welsh Assembly Government in tackling child poverty, and add value to the revised Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan which is expected early next year. Set within a framework of children's rights, the Manifesto is calling on the next Government to:

- Deliver on the Cross Party pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020
- Address the implementation gap between policy and delivery
- Adequately resource, protect and strengthen national programmes and services which have been effectively evaluated and which deliver positive outcomes for our poorest children
- Ensure that existing duties

placed on public sector bodies are subject to robust scrutiny procedures to ensure the delivery of child poverty obligations

- Work with all sectors, including employers, in the national fight against child poverty
- Ensure that all national policies, services and programmes are developed and delivered within a child rights framework
- Engage effectively and consistently with the UK Government at all levels around child poverty matters that are non-devolved
- Provide Wales with an open, transparent and accountable government that ensures equality of opportunity and seeks to free all children from a life of poverty.

Priorities in relation to policy areas devolved to Wales are presented under the following themes - Health & Well-Being, Financial Inclusion, Education, Family Support, Safeguarding, Housing, Transport, Rurality, Early Years, Play and Income. There is also an additional section on improving monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

NGO Manifestos

The ECPN Manifesto was launched at the Senedd together with the Disabled Children Matter Wales manifesto and a series of briefing papers from five of Wales major children's charities, Barnardo's Cymru, NSPCC Cymru, Save the Children, Tros Gynnal and Action for Children. The briefing papers aim to ensure that vulnerable

children remain a priority ahead of the Assembly elections in May 2011. They cover

- Independent advocacy
- Looked after children
- Young people not in education or training
- Parenting and family support
- Young Carers
- Criminal Justice System

The briefing papers are supported by Children in Wales.



Children in Wales, as the coordinating body for the Network, will be working with our partners to actively promote the Manifesto priorities over the coming months, by working with present Assembly Members and prospective Members.

Fuel poverty project

Children in Wales is holding a launch event for the fuel poverty project in early 2011. This will be the culmination of work consulting in primary and secondary schools across Wales on the impact of fuel poverty and what can be done by children and young people, families, governments and organisations to reduce the problem. A DVD of the project will be screened for policy makers at the event. This will coincide with a report and a children and young people's resource on keeping warm in the winter.

For more information please contact Sean O'Neill, Policy Director at Children in Wales, E-mail: sean.oneill@childreninwales.org.uk

Disabled Children Matter Wales Update



Disabled Children Matter Wales
Plant Anabl yn Cyfri Cymru



Putting Disabled Children First

The Disabled Children Matter Wales Campaign (DCMW) is busily preparing for the elections to the National Assembly of Wales, which will take place in 2011. Representatives of the Campaign took the DCMW manifesto to meetings with each of the main political parties to ensure that the needs of disabled children and their families are included in each party manifesto. The DCMW campaign looks forward to the publication of the manifestos to find out how disabled children have been included.

DCMW is also encouraging supporters to contact their AM to encourage them to safeguard services for disabled children in the present economic climate. A pro-forma letter is available on the DCMW website in the "Get involved" section and supporters are asked to e-mail it to their constituency and regional AMs. Supporters are also asked to contact their lead councillor to ensure that quality disabled children's services are provided in each local authority in Wales, and a sample letter relating to this is also available in the "Get involved" section of the website. Children in Wales would be grateful if any responses to the letters are e-mailed to Catherine.Lewis@childreninwales.org.uk

Visit the DCMW website for more information:
www.DCMW.org.uk

Making Public Transport Accessible

Whenever Children in Wales speaks to disabled children and young people, one of the key issues they identify as a barrier to being able to socialise with their friends and access community activities is accessible public transport. Other consequences of inaccessible transport are limited access to training and employment opportunities and difficulty in accessing healthcare services. We were therefore very pleased when The Equality of Opportunity Committee decided to undertake an Inquiry into the Accessibility of Transport Services for Disabled People in Wales. Children in Wales consulted with individual and groups of young disabled people and members of the Disability Forum before submitting written evidence to the Inquiry.

The negative attitudes of others were identified as a main barrier to using public transport. Many young people with a learning

disability said other passengers bullied them, while a wheelchair user said she had to wait three hours at a bus stop as three buses went past her without stopping. Others said drivers were unwilling to ask people with fold up prams to move them from the space allocated to wheelchair users. Wheelchair users travelling by train

can also experience difficulties. Ramps to enable access to the train have to be ordered 24 hours in advance and this means journeys have to be planned in advance and cannot be made on impulse. Additionally wheelchair users are unable to use stations after the assistants go off duty or where there is no staff at all.

Our recommendations to the Inquiry include:

- All public transport staff to receive disability equality training, delivered by young disabled people, as part of their induction and ongoing development
- The presentation of travel information, including timetables be reviewed to ensure that it is accessible to all
- Travel training to be provided throughout Wales for disabled young people in using public transport
- The usability of bus stops and buses passengers using mobility aids should be reviewed
- All buses to have a visual display of the route on them, like they do on the tubes in London and audio announcements of bus stops
- Ensure that all trains carry ramps on them and that everyone knows how to use them
- All taxi drivers, bus drivers and train providers to receive training about their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010



Children in Wales is a joint sponsor in the Reach the Heights project, supporting young people to gain skills for learning and employment through work experience and community based opportunities.

Together 4 Rights Group meet with the Children's Commissioner

On 19 October 2010, the Children in Wales 'Together 4 Rights' (T4R) Group met with Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Young disabled people from across south Wales were joined by young people from north Wales, via video conference, and they grilled the Commissioner on issues ranging from disability hate crime to what's your favourite film! At the

meeting, the Commissioner outlined his priorities for the coming year which included a commitment to working more closely with disabled children and young people. He said he wanted to hear more from the young people about the issues that matter to them, so that he and the T4R Group can work together to help raise the profile of those issues.

He said, "I can support the work that you do, the things that make a difference to disabled children and young people in Wales." 'Together 4 Rights' will now work with the Commissioner's office to strengthen our links with him so we can ensure that issues affecting disabled children and young people are always at the top of his agenda.

Young people and the Spending Cuts

The Participation Workers' Network for Wales are running a series of consultations with young people on the current economic climate and their priorities for services in their areas. The consultations are being run with youth councils from different parts of Wales to ensure a fair coverage of the country. The consultations included:

- Ensuring that everyone taking part had a baseline knowledge of the topic to be able to fully participate
- Looking at the different services that they currently have and use in their areas
- Identifying which services young people would prioritise in their local authorities

Some of the consultations were carried out ahead of Children in Wales' Annual Conference 2010 and the concerns raised by the young people were discussed by delegates in a round table discussion at the conference. A report will be available early in 2011 on the PWNW website and a young people's version will also be available for young people across Wales. The results will also be fed into and discussed at Children in Wales' Policy Council.

Please contact Ed Janes Development Officer, Email: Ed.Janes@childreninwales.org.uk, Tel: 029 2034 2434

Cefnogi Cynnar Early Support



Ceri Belli, a parent involved in the Early Support programme, explains her story and the benefits of Early Support

My daughter, Mia, is four years old, since the day she was born she has brought love, laughter and happiness into my life like I could never imagine. Yet the finest years of my life have also been the hardest.

Mia was born with Down's Syndrome, and as a result of this she also has two heart defects, deafness in her right ear and problems with her vision. When my husband and I made the decision to have a family we had no idea how much our lives would change. Like all expectant parents we planned for the future with hope and optimism, yet when our daughter was born this future became very uncertain.

Mia has had nine heart-related operations in her first 17 months, and there were moments during this period that I thought she would not survive the severity of her condition. Yet with a strength that continues to amaze me every day, Mia fought and overcame these challenges. With this determination Mia has conquered many obstacles along the way. Due to her poor health she was fed via Nasal Gastric tube for over two years. The tube was removed 12 months ago and now watching her tucking into her food every mealtime is an absolute pleasure. Her condition has also delayed her ability to walk, but with Mia's usual resolve she has begun to use a walking frame to aid her, and there is no stopping

her now, she finds great amusement in watching me chase around after her.

When Mia was eight months old I was introduced to Caerphilly Children's Centre, where I received the help and care required to improve Mia's quality of life. It is here that I was first introduced to the Early Support programme. Mia has benefited from many health care professionals and through having access to a key worker. Early Support has introduced me to support tools such as the developmental journal, which I use to record Mia's ongoing development and her many achievements, and this also provides a focus for Mia's future accomplishments. Mia started school in September and has settled in extremely well. She is a very happy, sociable and inquisitive

child and loves discovering what new experiences life has to offer. With the help of Early Support my hope and optimism for Mia's future has returned and I was extremely proud when Mia was chosen to be the "profile" of Early Support in Wales.

It is vital as a parent with a child with additional needs to have access to a support network that is not just available, but actually works. To have services from different agencies brought together to provide help and advice is essential to improve the lives for families like mine. Life has been and can still be very challenging, but I believe positivity and the quality of the support provided to children and their families is the key to a child's success, and makes a real difference to their progress through life.



Ceri and Mia at Caerphilly Children's Centre



Provision of Safe Places to Play and Hang Out

The National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee published the report of its Provision of Safe Places to Play and Hang Out at the end of November. The report says that children and young people need to be given more of a say on play facilities across Wales. The inquiry found that involving them in projects and programmes from the outset provided valuable information and helped to break down barriers between generations.

Inquiry into Financial Inclusion and the impact of Financial Education

The National Assembly for Wales' Communities and Culture Committee published the report of its Inquiry into Financial Inclusion and the impact of Financial Education in early November. The report recommends that the Welsh Government reviews the priority given to financial education in the PSE (Personal and Social Education) syllabus.

Response to the Children and Young People's Committee Report on Children's Budgeting in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government published a written response to the Children and Young People's Committee Report on Children's Budgeting in Wales in November. It sets out the Minister's response to the Committee's individual recommendations.

News from the Assembly

Local Safeguarding Children Boards Inquiry

The National Assembly for Wales' Health and Wellbeing Committee published the report of its Inquiry into the Local Safeguarding Children Board at the end of November. The report found that the role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards was not clearly understood, differed in different areas and, in some cases, was even unknown to those working for agencies represented on those boards.

Consultation on School Toilets: Best Practice Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government is seeking views on guidance for schools about the standards of toilets and related facilities. The consultation follows the outbreak of E.coli in Welsh schools in 2005, and the subsequent inquiry held by Professor Hugh Pennington which recommended that every local authority should have a programme of audits to ensure that all schools have adequate toilet and hand washing facilities. The consultation ends on 24 January 2011.

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training

In October the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Learning Committee published the report of its Inquiry into Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training. The report states that despite a number of positive strategies being in place, a lack of direction and joint-working is resulting in overlapping and uncoordinated services. The Committee recommends that one Welsh Government Minister should oversee the agenda and, at local level, a lead agency should be established to coordinate partnerships, identify responsibilities and manage the journey for young people from one stage to another.

Sexual Health and Wellbeing Action Plan For Wales

In November the Welsh Assembly Government published its new five year plan to improve sexual health. The Action Plan focuses on developing a culture to support sexual health and wellbeing, better prevention, delivering modern sexual health services, and strengthening health intelligence and research.

From Vision to Action

The report of the Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales was published at the end of November. The report recommends that common eligibility criteria for social care should be introduced to ensure more equitable provision of services across Wales. Among the other recommendations of the Commission are a review of transitions and transfers to address concerns of poor handover between children's, adults and older people's social care services. It also recommends that private and third sector providers should be more engaged in planning, designing and meeting the needs of service users to encourage more personalised models of support.

News from Westminster

Universal Credit: welfare that works

The UK Government published a White Paper in November that sets out its plans to introduce legislation to reform the welfare system by creating a new Universal Credit. Universal Credit is an integrated working-age credit that will provide a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring. It will support people both in and out of work, replacing Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

New tax-free savings accounts for children

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mark Hoban, has announced that the Government will create a new tax-free children's savings account. The new accounts are being described as 'junior ISAs.' Funds placed in the account will be owned by the child and would be locked in until the child reaches adulthood.

Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid in England and Wales

The Ministry of Justice is consulting on proposals to reform legal aid in England and Wales. Some types of cases will no longer routinely qualify for legal aid funding. This will include private family law cases, for example, divorce and child contact. Funding for cases where domestic violence is involved will, however, continue to receive funding. Funding will also continue to be provided for mediation. The consultation will run until 14 February 2011.

Call to end violence against women and girls

In November the UK government launched a paper outlining how it plans to tackle violence against women and girls. It includes taking action to prevent violence, providing support where violence occurs and taking action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.



Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 30 November 2010. It will replace police authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners to be introduced from May 2012. It will also overhaul the Licensing Act to give more powers to local authorities and police to tackle any premises that are causing problems, double the maximum fine for persistent underage sales and introduce a system of temporary bans for new psychoactive substances.

Other UK News

Starting a Family Revolution: Putting families in charge

The Family Commission launched its final report in October 2010. The report is the result of 18 months of consultation with families across the UK. It shows that more than half of Britain's adults think families need more family-friendly communities, and 47 per cent would like more advice when things go wrong. The report's recommendations include that families should have a legal entitlement to family group conferences and that extended family members should be the first choice when parents cannot look after their children.

For more information about policy affecting children and young people in Wales, members of Children in Wales can log on to the website and visit the Members' Policy Section:
www.childreninwales.org.uk

Children and Young People in Custody 2009-10

HM Inspectorate of Prisons and the Youth Justice Board have jointly published the sixth report of the experiences of children and young people in prison custody. The report sets out how young people aged 15 to 18 described their own experience of imprisonment in 2009/10. The number of young people in custody, held in young offender institutions, fell during 2009-10 from 2,126 to 1,724.



Interview – Jo-Anne Daniels

Jo-Anne Daniels recently took over as the new Head of the Children and Families Division at the Welsh Assembly Government. In this interview she talks about the challenges of her new role and her vision for the future.

1. Could you give us a brief outline of your work before taking over in the Children and Families Division of the Welsh Assembly Government?

Apart from a very brief and misguided few months as a trainee bank manager, I've spent most of my working life developing policy and practice around children's services and education. I've worked as a teacher, as a policy advisor in the Treasury and DCSF (as was) and I have also worked for an education charity, CfBT, that some of your readers may know about through their work in Wales as "Include". During that time I've had the opportunity to lead developments in a number of policy areas. I won't bore your readers with a long list but there are some achievements that I am particularly proud of including improving support for disabled children, increasing the emphasis on positive activities for young people and promoting investment in supporting children and families in the early years. I'm really enjoying being back home in Wales and having the opportunity to work with

a dedicated bunch of people who are really focused on making a difference for children and young people.

2. What were the main challenges that you faced in taking over the new role?

Finding my way round the Assembly offices in Cathays certainly wasn't easy – and I'm not sure I've cracked it yet. There are lots of new acronyms to get my head around and different ways of working to adjust to – but I guess that's probably true in any new job. I've found people to be very welcoming and very supportive so while there has been a lot to learn, people have gone out of their way to be helpful. Many of the challenges we face in Wales – reducing inequalities in outcomes as a consequence of poverty for example – are very familiar, what's different I think, is our ability to create a consensus for change. As a small country we have the advantage of being able to act quickly and decisively and I was really struck recently at the Public Services Summit on children, young

people and education at the way in which public service leaders all came together for a common cause. So of course there are challenges – reductions in public spending, continuing economic uncertainties and the like, but the dedication I've seen to public service fills me with optimism.

3. What additional challenges do you now face in the light of the expected cuts to budgets?

We are very fortunate that the Assembly Government has, in the draft budget, chosen to protect spending on children and education. Of course we still have to look carefully at what we do and what we spend to make sure we get the best value for the children and young people of Wales, but the protection provided by the budget settlement is very positive. In some areas, such as Flying Start and Families First, budgets are actually rising. This is great news and sends a very clear signal of the Assembly Government's commitment to children and young

people and addressing poverty. Spending public money is a huge responsibility and I always try to remember just whose money it is and that the people of Wales deserve to have their money spent in the best and most effective way possible. That means trying to make sure that every pound spent counts and that it contributes to making a difference for people in Wales.

4. What have you seen in Wales that you feel is good and innovative practice?

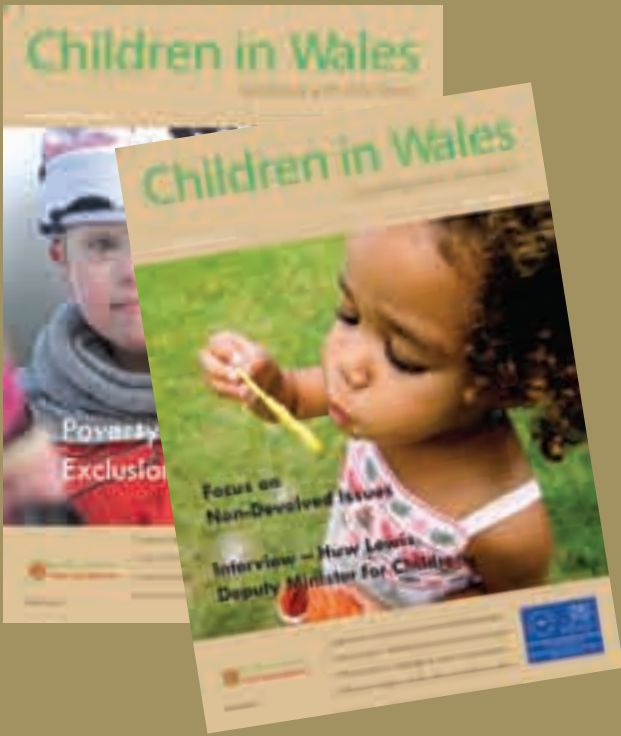
Over the last few months I've had the opportunity to get out and about quite a bit and I've visited a variety of projects and programmes supporting children and families. I've been really struck by the passion and dedication that the people I've met running projects and working with children have shown. I think there is a lot of excellent and innovative practice in Wales and I guess one of my challenges is to find ways to support the sharing of that best

practice. I've been particularly struck by Flying Start – it's still a fairly new programme but the signs are really encouraging and the people I've met – both parents and practitioners, talk glowingly about the difference it is making to young children and their families. I'm also very struck by the commitment in Wales to children and young peoples' rights and participation. There are lots of examples of children and young peoples' rights being given prominence and none more so than the proposed Children and Young Persons' Rights (Wales) Measure. This is a ground breaking piece of legislation that puts the rights of children and young people centre stage. It also puts Wales firmly in the lead internationally in promoting this agenda.

5. What is your vision of services for families in Wales in five years time?

The next few years could be very challenging for families given the


possible impact of public spending cuts and welfare changes. Because of these changes it is vital that we provide families with the support they need so that every child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Families First is an important opportunity to build on excellent and innovative practice in Wales and develop our support for families, particularly those living in poverty. Through Families First we want to see services that are responsive to families' needs, providing tailored and integrated support in a timely manner. We also want families and communities to be empowered to support themselves and each other. There will always be some families that have complex problems and whose lives are "chaotic" despite our best efforts, but I'd like to think that through Families First we can develop more proactive and preventative approaches so families get the support they need earlier – I think that way we'll do even better by our children.



Would you like to receive copies of Children in Wales magazine?

Supplementary Membership is available to individuals or project offices of existing members and, at only £25 per year, you can ensure that you receive copies of Children in Wales Magazine, briefing papers and other information directly to your desk.

For more information contact
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Budget Cuts – What impact will they have on Children and Young People in Wales

Autumn 2010 saw several major budget announcements that have the potential to impact on children and young people in Wales for many years to come.

The UK Government's Spending Review was announced on 21 October 2010. It saw a real terms reduction of the amount of money coming to the Assembly. The Welsh Assembly Government calculate that, in real terms, the budget is set to fall by around 3.1% per year on average, or 12% in total over the coming four years. The Spending Review also saw severe cuts to government departments in several non-devolved areas which

will have a big impact on Wales. This includes a number of changes to the benefit system that will move the focus of benefits away from families with children, and a 20% cut to police budgets over four years by the Home Office.

The Welsh Assembly Government published its draft budget on 17 November 2010. The budget sets out the Departmental Spending Limits for each Assembly Government Department and provides some additional details about where spending is to be protected and where efficiencies are planned. While it is difficult to work out the exact impact of

the budget on children, young people and families until final departmental budgets are produced, the budget provides a guide to the Assembly's priorities and shows a very welcome commitment to protecting some services for children. This includes protecting the entire Health and Social Services budget from revenue cash reductions for the next three years, and protecting budgets for schools by 1% above changes to the Welsh budget overall. The capital budget is however cut.

The budget also outlines some other positive measures for children and young people. These include:

Changes in Benefits

- Child benefit is to be withdrawn from higher rate taxpayers
- Total household welfare payments are to be capped on the basis of median earnings after tax for working households
- A new 12 month time limit will be imposed on those receiving Employment and Support Allowance
- The mobility component of disability living allowance is to be removed from claimants living in residential care
- Working Tax Credit eligibility rules will be changed so that couples with children must work 24 hours per week between them
- From April 2011, the proportion of costs covered by the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit will be reduced from 80% to 70% of costs
- The child element of the child tax credit will increase by £30 in 2011 and by £50 in 2012

- Maintaining free school breakfasts, free school milk, and free swimming
- Maintaining the 14-19 Learning Pathways
- Additional funding totalling £21.6m over three years from 2011-12 for the continued roll-out of the Foundation Phase
- An additional £6.5m per year for post 16 SEN
- Future year increases to funding for school based counselling
- Additional funding for the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant

- Additional funding for the Gypsy Travellers learning grant
- Flying Start - the early years programme and Cymorth both receive indicative increases from 2012-13.

The Local Government settlement was subsequently announced on the 23 November. Local Government Minister, Carl Sargeant AM, pledged protection for schools and social services within the Welsh Assembly Government's funding of local authorities. Local authorities are currently in the process of developing their own budgets, so there is still uncertainty about what local funding decisions will be. The Welsh Assembly Government Budget promises to remind local authorities and sponsored bodies "that they need to give due regard to equality impact in the decisions they take in spending money allocated by the Assembly Government". Children in Wales gave evidence to the Children and Young People Committee about the budget and called for children and child poverty to be the subject of a similar message and for the audience to be widened to include Health Boards. In other words an exercise on local and national child impact assessments should be carried out in the same way as that of gender impact assessment in relation to budgets.

Many in the children's sector are also concerned about the increasing demand for services. In social services, rising demand is placing considerable pressure on services for the most vulnerable children. The latest figures highlight growing demand and pressures on children's social services from numbers of "looked after" children and an increase in the number of children on the child protection register. The numbers of "looked after" children

in Wales grew by 10% in the year to April 2010 with almost all local authorities seeing a rise in the number of children it cares for. Interim figures from the majority of authorities indicate that this rise is continuing through 2010. In a similar way the numbers of children placed on the child protection register grew by 8% last year. There is a risk that a negative circle of rising demand and rising costs could occur if preventative services that reduce demand for child protection activity suffer from spending cuts.

Local authorities also saw a substantial increase in costs for the care of children as increasing numbers of children are placed in specialist placements to meet growing demand. Local authorities in Wales overspent by over £17,000,000 last year to meet demand in this area with particular pressures on both legal and placement costs. All the signs are

that this financial pressure has continued during 2010 despite substantial additional investment from many local authorities.

There are many other concerns, not least how the UK government cuts to the police and justice system will impact on services in Wales, and the terrible effect that the cuts and economic climate are having on young people who are not in employment, education or training. There is also the impact that it is having on the third sector where financial uncertainties are already leading to redundancies. Children in Wales will be monitoring all this over the coming months, and will continue to raise the needs of all those in the sector to policy makers. We would like to know how the budget cuts are affecting your organisation. To let us know about your concerns please contact Children in Wales: nell.warner@childreninwales.org.uk

How efficiencies will be made

Health and Social Services:

- The NHS reforms and development of the 'Five-Year Service, Workforce and Financial Strategic Framework' form the core of the approach being taken to identify innovation and efficiency in health and social care
- It is planned to save £40m or 20% on management costs in the NHS by 2013-14
- The Assembly Government has also launched a new campaign, to reduce the amount of wasted medicines which cannot be reused. In support of the commitment to reduce back office costs, a new shared service model will be introduced in the NHS

Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills:

- In order to direct funding to schools and skills, the majority of budget reductions have been focused on specific budgets. Higher Education will receive a reduction over the next three years of £51m
- Funding for Careers Wales will be reduced by £3m (7.25%) in 2011-12 with further reductions in following years
- A reduction of £6.5m will be applied to Further Education in 2011-12, which amounts to some 2.09% of the FE budget
- Reductions have been applied to bodies with an administrative function which are funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. This includes the Children's Commissioner for Wales, HEFCW, and Student Loans Company.



Families First

As part of the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to support families and tackle child poverty, the Deputy Minister for Children, Huw Lewis announced in July the first series of Families First Pioneers. Two consortia of Pioneer areas were announced: one in the north of Wales, led by Wrexham, with Flintshire and Denbighshire; and one in the south of Wales, led by Rhondda Cynon Taff, with Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

The intention is to develop new models of integrated working to better support families with children living in poverty. Families First will identify ways of meeting the three strategic objectives in the draft Child Poverty Strategy, which are:

- Reduce the number of families living in workless households
- Improve the skill level of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment, and
- Reduce the inequalities that exist in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by

improving the outcomes of the poorest.

The two consortia have submitted scoping papers to the Welsh Assembly Government, which outline how they will take this work forward. Integrated service delivery may include:

- Joint commissioning and budget pooling
- Workforce development
- The development of systems for sharing information across authorities

Cymorth, as currently delivered, will end in March 2011. In 2011-12 local authorities will be expected to start developing new approaches to working with families to allow the roll-out of Families First from April 2012. Plans for 2011-12 will have to show that projects with Cymorth funding meet the key themes of Families First, as set out in Chapter 10 of the draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. Projects will therefore need to be:

- Family focused
- Bespoke
- Integrated

- Proactive
- Intensive
- Local

The Welsh Assembly Government is developing a Families First Framework, which will set out their approach for the delivery of services to children, young people and their families. The Framework will contain a number of underpinning principles, which they consider essential to effective service delivery. Future Families First Pioneer areas will develop their services to families under the umbrella of the Framework.

To help develop the Framework the Welsh Assembly Government held three regional events in November and December. They have also commissioned GHK, an independent multi-discipline consultancy, to develop a programme of action research and evaluation. This will assess the emerging impact and effectiveness of the Families First Pioneers and learning will be shared across Wales.

The Role of the Youth Justice Board

In October 2010 the UK Government announced that the functions of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) were being transferred to the Ministry of Justice. Dusty Kennedy, Head of Youth Justice Board Wales Strategy and Youth Justice Policy Advisor to the Welsh Assembly Government discusses the role of the YJB and what the changes will mean in Wales.

A decade or so ago the 'National Youth Justice Board' was the name suggested by UK Government for an organisation to oversee the new youth justice system. On advice that this could cause some to wonder exactly which of the home nations this referred to, the name was hastily revised to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

In many ways this anecdote is symbolic of the way in which youth justice has often been governed since then. Whitehall policy formulation, forged in the heat of innovation, immersed in the challenges of creating a 'national' system delivered by 157 local youth offending teams and tempered in response to the latest media outrage about 'feral' youth.

In this context it is easy to forget that 18 of these teams operate in a different children's policy context, under a devolved government. Easy to forget that, amid the constitutional wrangling, there are real consequences for children in Wales when their localities are not considered in the state response to bad behaviour.

A feature of this new system is closer work between agencies charged with enforcement of the law and those with responsibility for welfare. Of the five local partners who staff youth offending teams the majority are accountable to the Welsh Government.

However, London's sheer financial and demographic pull means that there is the potential for Wales to be overlooked when it designs and funds the most welfare oriented programmes.

Another consequence of split accountability is a temptation for the welfare needs of children in the youth justice system to be perceived by the relevant agencies as somebody else's responsibility – to see their educational, housing and health problems as a symptom of offending, not a cause. This means that planning for children in Wales has not always recognised the inherent vulnerabilities of the majority of those whose behaviour leads them into conflict with the law.

A key function of the YJB is to overcome these challenges; to insist that London takes account of devolution when making decisions about youth justice and to remind policy makers and local leaders in Wales that these are and remain their children.

As an arms length body the YJB has acted as a bridge between Cardiff and London. It has developed a joint All Wales Youth Offending Strategy with the Assembly Government in order to balance the constitutional equation. It has allowed both administrations to see that there is a great deal of willingness on each side to tailor

the system for the devolved context and unlock opportunities that could have remained closed.

Because of this willingness, together we have made a difference. There are children who could have entered the system who did not, children are kept in the Welsh secure estate whose mental health needs would once have meant transfer to England and children who would have been homeless, now have a place to live.

This could make the abolition of the YJB a cause for great concern.

We have come a long way since the National Youth Justice Board; a name that would not even be considered now. We now have a solid foundation for Wales and England to work together and make the most of the changes, challenges and opportunities ahead. Transfer of the YJB's functions to the Ministry of Justice will also be a transfer of Welsh experience, skills and knowledge closer to the Whitehall decision making centre.

Over the next year or so, the YJB will continue to deliver its existing functions. It will continue to facilitate good service delivery, advise Ministers and disseminate good practice. It will also continue to promote a youth justice system fit for Wales.

Researchers in Wales Evaluate Substance Misuse Prevention Programme

The Cardiff Institute of Society and Health (CISHE) at Cardiff University is leading a major research project into the possible long-term benefits of the Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 UK (SFP).

Many factors which protect young people against substance misuse are found within the family. The SFP aims to develop these factors, which include communication, parenting skills, and strategies to enable young people to deal with stress and peer pressure. It is a seven-week programme which is delivered in weekly sessions lasting two hours. Parents and young people meet separately for the first hour, and then spend the second hour together in family activities. Through discussions and games and activities, families solve problems together, learn about rules and consequences and explore ways to show love and support.

Research in the USA has shown that the SFP can help reduce alcohol, tobacco and drug use among young people. Now the Welsh research trial, called Project SFP Cymru, aims to see if it can achieve the same effect here.

Project SFP Cymru is a randomised controlled trial which will involve more than 700 families in Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Flintshire, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham. The research will monitor the results for two years after families enter the trial and

will examine its success in reducing drinking, smoking and drug use. It will also examine the impact of the SFP on family functioning, young people's peer resistance skills, school performance and mental health and well-being. The extent to which the SFP provides value for money will also be assessed.

In each of the trial areas a local delivery team is responsible for receiving applications from families and referrals from practitioners, and for delivering the programme. A researcher visits each family to recruit them into the trial and conducts structured interviews with both parents and young people. Nine and 15 months after the initial visit, parents are asked to participate in telephone interviews conducted by Cardiff University staff. A member of the research team also visits families to conduct structured interviews with both parents and young people two years after the initial visit.

To accurately assess the extent to which the SFP prevents substance misuse and strengthens family-based protective factors, a randomised controlled trial design is being used. This means that half of the families who agree to participate in the trial are randomly allocated to receive the programme (intervention group). The other half of families are randomly allocated to a comparison group, and do not receive the programme. All families (regardless of whether they agree to take part in the research or their allocation to

intervention or comparison groups) will be able to access any other local services or programmes which may be of benefit to them.

Any families deemed eligible to attend the Strengthening Families Programme will be included in the research trial, subject to their giving consent. Families must have a child aged 10-14. They must also have a parent or carer and a child willing to attend the programme together and must be able to speak either English or Welsh.

Programme delivery in three areas is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. All research costs, and programme delivery in the other three areas are funded by a £2.1M research award from the National Prevention Research Initiative. CISHE will run the evaluation independently of the programme providers, working with colleagues at Swansea University and Oxford Brookes University and the South East Wales Trials Unit. Staff training for the teams delivering the programme is being provided by Cardiff Alcohol and Drug Team - an SFP centre of excellence.

For more information about Project SFP Cymru, visit www.projectsfpwymru.co.uk, email us at projectsfpwymru@cardiff.ac.uk or phone 029 2087 9609.

Spotlight on Blind Cords

In our continuing 'Spotlight' series we look at the potential dangerous hazards of blind cords. Every year in the UK, children die after accidentally becoming entangled in looped blind cords.

While strangulation and hanging injuries are still rare, they can have devastating outcomes. These accidents happen very quickly and quietly, often with parents or carers in close proximity, but unaware of what has happened. They can occur in any room where blinds are hung and to any age of child. However, research has shown that most deaths occur in the bedroom and in children between 16 and 36 months.

There are many reasons why babies and young children have a greatly increased risk of injury, including their small, undeveloped windpipes, inability to recognise what is happening and to take evasive action and their very inquisitive nature.

Fatal injuries have occurred in various ways, including a baby grabbing the cord from her cot and a toddler playing on the window sill. Children become entangled in the looped cords on blinds when playing, reaching, grasping, exploring and climbing. All of these common activities are part of a child's early development and therefore it is important to raise awareness of these issues with families so that they can understand the dangers of blinds and reduce the risks within their homes.

Most blinds pose a risk to children including vertical, roman, roller and venetian blinds. It is not only the long pull cord that poses a threat, but also the cords and loops on the blind itself, for example roman blinds have a mechanism that requires the use of a looped cord to function as do venetian blinds.

Prevention:

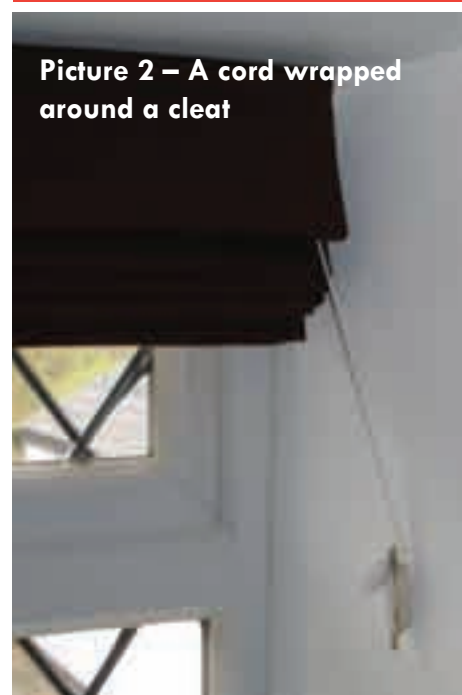
- Consider the choice of blinds in a child's bedroom
- Buy blinds that have no loops, either on the blind or as part of the opening mechanism, for example a self rolling blind with a short single pull cord (see picture 1)
- In the past, intervention advice has been to cut the loop where the mechanism allows. However, the free cords can easily become entangled and therefore still form a loop.
- Cords should be kept as short as possible and out of reach of children
- Use cleats to secure the cord to the wall. Fix the cleat as high as possible and out of reach of children and always wrap all of the cord around the cleat (see picture 2)
- In a child's bedroom, remove furniture and cots away from the window

The British Blind and Shutter Association (BBSA) is promoting the adoption of BBSA recommendations by businesses involved in the manufacture and installation of window blinds. To view their 'Make it Safe' campaign and to download their free leaflet, please follow the links on the accident prevention section of the Children in Wales website. In this section there is also a link to the 'Parents for Window Blind Safety' website where you can view videos showing how blind cords are dangerous.

Picture 1 – A roller blind with a short single pull cord



Picture 2 – A cord wrapped around a cleat



Commissioner's Column



Promoting Positive Images of Children and Young People: Giving you a voice

The Children's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, is carrying out a piece of work to help put an end to the negative stereotyping of children and young people. His team are working with politicians, the media and others to persuade them to portray young people as they really are. They have been calling for examples or experiences from young people from when they have been 'labelled' unfairly by the media or in their communities. The experiences don't have to be negative, they are also interested in example of how the media or others have talked about young people positively.

Keith will use the information he gets in a new guide he'll be publishing in the New Year for the media and others, to try and encourage them to talk more

positively about children and young people across Wales.

Commenting on his project, Keith Towler said:

"The words of the UN Committee member two years ago keep ringing in my ears – "Why do you hate your children so much?" It was at this point I decided to commit to working with others to tackle the negative portrayals of children and young people in society.

"I have committed that this will be a priority for me and my team for the next five years because we're not going to change things overnight. We've had an open door from everybody who we've approached for help so far and the young people who have been working with us have provided invaluable information we'll include in our guide.

"I'd encourage anyone who thinks they can help us with this to get in touch so that we can showcase some progress for when the UN Committee member returns in a few years' time."

For more information about Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales, then log on to: www.childcomwales.org.uk or get in touch with his team by emailing media@childcomwales.org.uk or phone Sara Young, Communications Officer, on Tel: 01792 765638

Perceptions of Young People in the Media

The way young people are portrayed by the media in the UK has long been an issue of concern for many working in the children's sector. While some stories are very positive there are numerous examples of children and young people being portrayed in a negative light. This issue was highlighted in the 2008 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. They said "The Committee is also concerned at the general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children, especially adolescents, which appears to exist in the State party, including in the media, and may be often the underlying cause of further infringements of their rights." The Committee recommended that the Government take urgent measures to "address the intolerance and inappropriate characterisation of children, especially adolescents, within the society, including in the media." The Concluding Observations also highlighted the need for the meaningful participation of children and young people in the media, and recommended that the Government "continue to collaborate with civil society organisations to increase opportunities for children's meaningful participation, including in the media."

The Welsh Assembly Government outlined its response to the

Concluding Observations in its Action Plan Getting it Right published in 2009. In the Action Plan the Welsh Assembly Government promised to campaign to promote positive images of children and young people, and consider ways in which discrimination and negative perceptions of children and young people can be addressed. Part of this campaign was a new guide launched by the Welsh Assembly Government in November 2010 to help young people get their stories into the media. The new guide *Tell it like is* aims to support professionals who work with young people to give them the tools needed to get their positive stories into the news. Chris Pollard from the Torfaen Young People's Forum helped to pilot the materials before they were published. He explained "I believe that the new media toolkit will not only promote the rights, views and positive activities of young people throughout the media, but it will also show media services the importance of portraying young people in a positive manner, rather than viewing them in a negative manner!" The guide is available on: www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk/mediatoolkit.aspx

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has also been working on a guide that is being designed to help journalists consider the language that they are using when they write stories about children and young people (see Commissioner's Column opposite for more information). This work is being supported by Children in Wales and the some of the other large children's organisations.

Funky Dragon's Column

Videos show concerns of young people

Funky Dragon's part of the Reach the Heights project continues apace. So far we have worked with over 2,000 young people and are starting to build up a picture of what is happening across the convergence areas. Working with youth groups and schools we have discovered that bullying, sexual health and under age drinking are issues of major concern to young people across Wales.

DVDs by youth groups and schools in convergence areas have been shown to audiences in Caernarfon and Swansea as well as in the areas where they were produced. The videos are a mixture of short dramas and documentaries made by young people on a variety of subjects of their own choosing. They can now be seen on our website.

All of the work has been done as part of the Reach the Heights project, which is part funded by the European Social Fund Convergence program through the Welsh Assembly Government. This aims to provide more opportunities for young people and those facing disadvantage. It does this by better preparing them for the world of work – increasing participation in learning and raising the aspirations of those who are able to continue to Higher and Further Education.



Benllech Girl Guides wrote and performed a short drama about bullying which featured several scenarios teaching young people to value and support their friends. Young women from Llandrillo College carried out research into what needs to be done to get a sexual health clinic in Denbighshire.

The Caerau Youth Works centre talked about their many initiatives designed to keep young people occupied and improve their job prospects. The Get Real About Bullying conference (G.R.A.B) looked at the reasons behind bullying, forms of bullying and practical approaches to dealing with the problem. The results of the conference will feed into the Children and Young People's Plan for Blaenau Gwent.

The DVDs demonstrate that there is a lot of very rich and diverse work being done throughout Wales and, more to the point, that it is being done by young people, for young people. These are fantastic examples of young people taking the initiative to help not only themselves and their peers, but also the wider community.

Members' News

SNAP Cymru: Young People Reaching the heights!

Around 30% of children in Wales have additional learning needs at some time. SNAP Cymru, the children's Charity are specialists in Educational Advice. They provide Parent Partnership Services across Wales, supporting parents, children and young people to participate in planning and decision making which affects them.



Many professionals refer families to SNAP Cymru although families can self-refer to local services or receive information advice and support through a national helpline. Staff and volunteers help on a range of issues including SEN, disability, transition, exclusion, assessment and placement.

SNAP Cymru has gained additional funding from the European Social Fund as a partner organisation in the WAG 'Reach the Heights' Project. The funding will allow SNAP Cymru to:

- Help prevent young people from disengaging from education, employment or training
- Support and address issues surrounding education, employment and training
- Promote awareness of disability, discrimination and young people's rights through an Agored accredited training programme run in schools and the community
- Encourage young people's participation in order to have their voice heard in the decision making process
- Provide mentoring and advice to help raise the skills and aspirations of young people

NATIONAL HELPLINE: 0845 120 3730 Website: www.snapcymru.org

Citizens Advice launches advice site for young people

In November 2010 Citizens Advice launched a microsite aimed specifically at young people in order to ensure that they can access advice and information quickly and easily about the problems that concern them the most.

Between April 2009 and March 2010 young people under the age of 25 sought help from Citizens Advice on nearly three quarters of a million problems (729,825). This is an increase of 21 per cent compared to the year before. Eighty per cent of their problems related to just four issues: debt, benefits, housing and employment.

For more information, visit www.advice4me.org.uk

Seen and Now Heard: Taking action on child neglect

In October 2010 Action for Children published a report on child neglect. The study of over 3,000 children aged eight to 12 years looked at the prevalence of child neglect across the country. Children told the researchers that they had seen, on average, at least three children showing one of the key signs of neglect this year. Other known indicators of neglect spotted by those surveyed included:

- Children who are often late or missing from school (41%)
- Don't seem to have any friends to play with at school or at home (34%)
- May seem like their parents don't know what they are doing a lot of the time (26%)
- Children whose clothes do not fit them, may be old or smelly (25%)
- Children who were unwashed or often dirty (19%)
- Children who might say they don't get meals at home (7%)

Travelling Ahead website

A new website for young Gypsy Travellers was launched in November. The Travelling Ahead project at Save the Children exists to support young Gypsies and Travellers to have a voice. The website will give young people their own sections to discuss their issues and interests with young people across Wales. The website also has a professionals section which aims to offer guidance on good practice to workers who are new to working with Gypsies and Travellers. Visit www.travellingahead.org.uk