

Information sheet

Community Focused Schools

'A Community Focused School is one that provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community.'

(Community Focused Schools, Circular No 34/2003, National Assembly for Wales)

Why develop Community Focused Schools?

Children and young people learn better and are in a better position to fulfil their potential if they are happy and healthy. Research shows that a range of factors outside school can have an impact on children and young people's wellbeing and their ability to learn and achieve effectively in school.

The Community Focused Schools approach involves schools working in partnership with councils and others to address these factors and to help meet the needs of children and young people. This approach supports the core role of schools to improve learning, as well as helping to address the needs of families and communities.

'Education outcomes do not just depend on schools. They are influenced by a range of factors including poverty, family circumstances, housing and health.' (School Effectiveness Framework: Building effective learning communities together, Welsh Assembly Government, February 2008)

Developing a Community Focused Schools approach is part of the School Effectiveness Framework; an effective school needs to be a Community Focused School. Working in this way will have a role to play in addressing social disadvantage and contributing to strategies for eliminating child poverty.

What does Community Focused Schools provision 'look like'?

Effective Community Focused Schools provision responds to identified needs and priorities and can include:

- out-of-school-hours learning and community learning opportunities, including: sports, leisure, arts and cultural activities; cookery, homework and breakfast clubs; access to community ICT facilities; and a 'safe place to be' for young people outside the school day;
- the provision of out-of-school-hours childcare;
- family, intergenerational and lifelong learning and skills development;

- multi-agency support for children, young people and families, whether on the school site or elsewhere;
- providing a base for, or signposting to, local access to services and activities, such as Credit Unions, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), food co-ops, health advice or childcare provision;
- being a Healthy School, being an Eco School, and developing links with schools and communities in other areas and countries.

Key messages

The Community Focused Schools approach:

- is about complementing and supporting 'in-school' learning for children and young people;
- is about far more than just dual-use of school buildings; in the most effective Community Focused Schools, the approach is built into whole-school planning;
- can be developed by all schools, and not all provision has to take place on school sites;
- goes beyond schools and the council's education department; those within the wider council, as well as other partners, both statutory and voluntary sector, have key roles;



- is a way of contributing to achieving a range of priorities, for example, in school development plans, school effectiveness framework, councils' community, health, social care and wellbeing plans, children and young people's plans, and community cohesion strategies;
- is one way of helping to address social disadvantage and contributing to strategies for eradicating child poverty;
- needs to be included in plans for developing 21st Century Schools from the outset.

Who has a role to play in developing and delivering Community Focused Schools provision?

Anyone who has an interest in or a role to play in delivering improved outcomes for children and young people, families, communities and schools:

- children and young people;
- parents and families;
- schools: headteachers, all school staff, governors and parent teacher associations;
- communities: individuals, community organisations, community councils and Communities First Partnerships;
- councils: officers and elected members;
- local health boards;
- voluntary sector organisations working with and for children and young people, families and communities;
- Welsh Assembly Government.

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The leaflet was written by Heledd James. It was produced for publication by staff at ContinYou: Paul Mephram (design) and Louise Reilly (editing). Welsh translation is by Eleri Jones, Penisa'r-waun.

This leaflet is designed to supplement and be used with the CFS Toolkit (*Community Focused Schools – Making it happen: a toolkit*, ContinYou, 2006). The toolkit can be downloaded from www.continyou.org.uk/walesresources.

Community Focused Schools developments in Wales

Since 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government has made some funding available to the education departments of the 22 councils in Wales to develop Community Focused Schools approaches in their areas, and will continue to make this funding available until 2011. Each council has a nominated officer with responsibility for developing Community Focused Schools.

Further information and support

ContinYou is a UK-wide charity, which works to help change lives through learning. ContinYou Cymru carries out the charity's work in Wales.

As part of that work, it provides the Supporting Community Focused Schools (SCFS) Service, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to help the 22 councils in Wales and others to develop and support the development of Community Focused Schools approaches.

ContinYou Cymru has developed the following materials to support Community Focused Schools developments:

- *Community Focused Schools – A joint vision;*
- *Community Focused Schools – Making it happen: a toolkit;*
- *Community Focused Schools – A governors' guide;*
- *Community Focused Schools – Making it happen: a checklist for audit and inspection.*

ContinYou Cymru also provides a range of other services and programmes that support Community Focused Schools and out-of-school-hours learning developments.

To access these materials, or for more information and support about developing a Community Focused Schools approach, please email info.cardiff@continyou.org.uk or visit www.continyou.org.uk/wales.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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