

Huw Lewis AC/AM  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant  
Deputy Minister for Children



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref:  
Ein cyf/Our ref: MB/HL/0026/11

Veronica German AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

24 February 2011

*Dear Veronica*

During the plenary debate on Families First on 15 February I agreed to send you a copy of the letter I sent to Leaders of local authorities in Wales inviting them to submit expressions of interest to become the next Families First pioneers. I enclose a copy of the letter, the accompanying guidance and the expressions of interest form as sent to Leaders. The information will now be published in the Members Library.

*Best wishes*  
*Huw*

Huw Lewis AM/AC

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300  
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400  
Ffacs \* Fax 029 2089 8129  
Correspondence.Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk

*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

*Printed on 100% recycled paper*

Huw Lewis AC/AM  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant  
Deputy Minister for Children



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf / Your ref:  
Ein cyf / Our ref: SF-HL-007-11

Local Authority Leaders

7 February 2011

Dear Leader

### **Families First - Phase II**

On 20 July 2010 I announced the first tranche of Families First Pioneers as part of our commitment to support families and tackle child poverty. Two consortia of pioneer areas were announced: one in the north, led by Wrexham, with Flintshire and Denbighshire; and one in the south, led by Rhondda Cynon Taff, with Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

Families First aims to ensure that our investment to support families is delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, making the best use of the resources available to us. The two initial consortia of pioneers have established themselves well and are moving from scoping activity to supporting a range of actions. In many instances we are already able to identify the good practice that exists and to share that across organisation and local authority boundaries.

When I announced the establishment of Families First and the selection of the first two consortia, I made it clear that this was a national programme of change in the way families were supported. I am pleased to announce the process for the selection of a further set of pioneers with a view to them starting work as soon as possible in the 2011/12 financial year.

Today I am inviting expressions of interest from local areas who wish to become Families First Pioneers; guidance is enclosed and the deadline to submit proposals is 11 March 2011. Expressions of interest will then be assessed and I will make an announcement by the end of March, with a view to the new pioneer areas starting early in the new financial year. Our officials will be available to support the development of proposals throughout the application period and contact details are included in the guidance.

My letter of 7 October referred to the 2011-2012 transitional year for Cymorth funding to prepare for full rollout of Families First in April 2012. Early in the summer we will issue guidance on what is expected from the national programme and how it is to operate. At this stage, we anticipate bids for 2012-13 being submitted in Autumn 2011 with the results announced early in 2012.

The draft Assembly Government budget sees our investment in Families First stabilised in the next year, with year-on-year increases in each of the two subsequent financial years. Given the current economic climate, this underlines our absolute commitment to protect vulnerable children and young

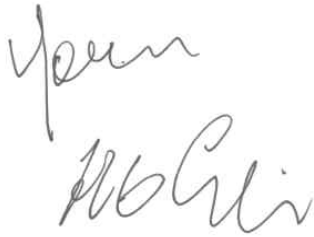
Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300  
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400  
Ffacs \* Fax 029 2089 8129  
Correspondence: [Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Huw.Lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk)  
Printed on 100% recycled paper

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

people. However, we must ensure that we do all that we can to maximise our resources and see real and measurable outcomes that reduce the inequalities for children in poverty. These are challenging times and I look forward to working with you on our agenda for families over the coming year.

I am copying this letter to Chief Executives and Children and Young People Co-ordinators.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', written in a cursive style.

**Huw Lewis AM/AC**

## **Families First**

### **- Guidance for invitation to become a Pioneer -**

#### **Background/Context**

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to the eradication of child poverty by 2020. This is an ambitious challenge at a time when public spending is contracting. In the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2011 we have set out our three strategic objectives:

- (i) to reduce the number of families living in workless households;
- (ii) to improve the skills of parents and young people living in low income households so they can secure well-paid employment; and
- (iii) to reduce inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

The Child Poverty Strategy also sets out the range of policies that, collectively, will help deliver these objectives. Families First is an integral part of our approach.

The Assembly Government has made increasing family prosperity a priority as this is a necessary condition for improving outcomes for children, young people and families but it is not on its own sufficient. Public services, communities and the third sector all have a vital role to play in shaping the life chances of children and Families First is intended to help transform services so that they better meet the needs of children, young people and families living in poverty and help to reduce inequalities.

Our approach is underpinned by our commitment to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and the progressive realisation of children's rights.

#### **Putting Families First**

Most children in Wales grow up in families and the home environment is fundamental to shaping children and young people's life chances. As a consequence, tackling inequalities and achieving better outcomes for children means supporting families.

Families do not come in neat packages, and they do not have identical needs. Accordingly, the variety of needs cannot always be met through one-size-fits-all solutions. Rather, children, young people and families often require a broad range of help and support of varying intensity, throughout life.

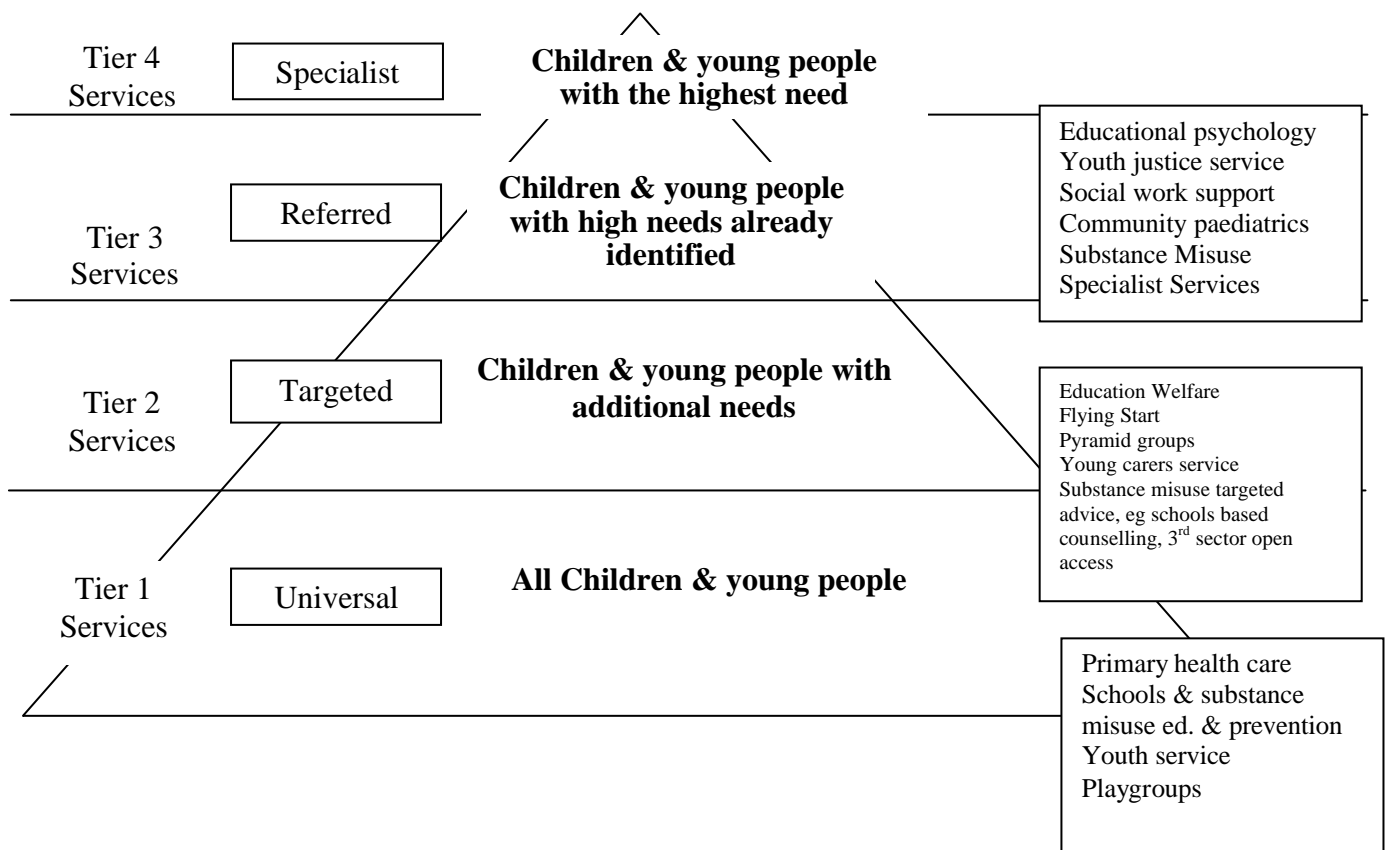
There is emerging consensus, and evidence from programmes like Flying Start, that the best way of supporting families, particularly those families in poverty, is through an integrated, whole family approach. The development of a whole family approach built around integrated services, providing holistic support to children, young people and families at every level of need is at the heart of Families First.

Traditionally we have used the tiered model of service provision (Figure 1) for children and young people, relating services to different levels of need, to illustrate the range of support and the varied services that need to be in place to help children, young people and families. Viewed in this context Families First aims to achieve:

1. improvements in the interface between services and tiers of need to ensure that services work better together and are seamless.
2. stronger services at tiers 2 and 3 in order to reduce the number of families needing tier 4 services.

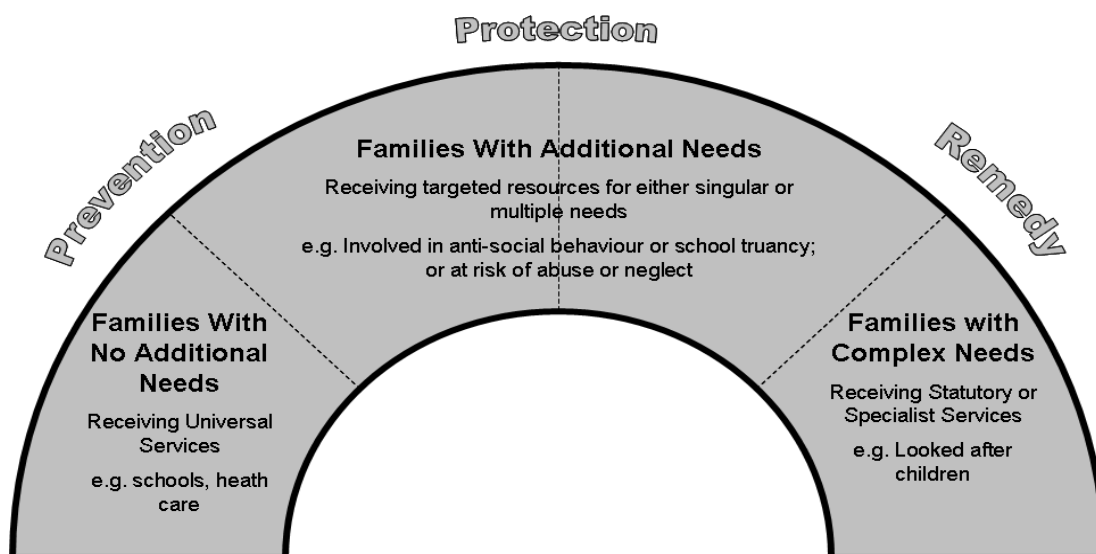
Many stakeholders, though have commented that families rarely fit neatly within this tiered model.

**Figure 1:** A tiered model of service provision for children and young people, relating services to different levels of need



An alternative approach, which better captures the aims of Families First, is to look at support for families across a spectrum of need, rather than by the nature of the service required. Families First provides an opportunity for local areas to consider whether or not support for families operates effectively across this spectrum and provides a continuum of support.

The Efficiency and Innovation Board's (EIB) *New Models of Service Delivery Group* recently published a report examining the diverse Team Around the Family approaches that currently operate in Wales and identified the need for a systemic approach to supporting families that encompassed prevention, protection and remediation (Figure 2).



- **Preventative** – takes account of wider family needs by addressing individual needs through a broad range of programmes/interventions that are typically universal (e.g. by promoting positive parenting or supporting family learning);
- **Protective** – detects and supports families which, without intervention, may reach crisis. Protection here is used in a general sense and should not be confused with, for example, ‘child protection’ as used in a social services or legal context. The approaches are aimed at early identification and action to support families well before they reach crisis point, and to stop problems escalating to that point. These typically involve looser, multi-agency approaches towards meeting identified needs (e.g. Team around the Family models);
- **Remedy** – supports families at or near crisis point through fully integrated support (e.g. Integrated Family Support Services, IFSS).

The Families First programme aims to drive improvements to family support, its design and delivery, and in so doing, reduce the numbers of families developing more complex needs and thus requiring more intensive and costly interventions. Accordingly, the principal focus of Families First rests between preventative and protective approaches.

Greater links with service delivery to complex families (e.g. IFSS) and community driven approaches (e.g. Communities First) will ensure a whole system approach at national, regional and local level to ensure effective working between all agencies and the community in working with disadvantaged children and families. They will link and promote access to services available more widely to disadvantaged families and communities.

In order to develop an integrated approach to family support in Wales which will improve both short and longer term outcomes for parents, children and young people

living in poverty we think services need to be organised in such a way that the support provided is:

- **family-focused**, taking a whole family approach to improving outcomes;
- **bespoke**, tailoring help to individual family circumstances;
- **integrated**, with effective coordination of planning and service provision across organisations, ensuring that needs assessment and delivery are jointly managed and that there is a seamless progression for families between different interventions and programmes;
- **pro-active**, seeking early identification and appropriate intervention for families;
- **intensive**, with a vigorous approach and relentless focus, adapting to families' changing circumstances; and
- **local**, identifying the needs of local communities and developing appropriate service delivery to fit those needs.

The development of new models of service delivery through Families First is being supported by a new Families First Fund, which will become operational from April 2012. The Families First Fund replaces Cymorth and will operate on a different basis, taking account of the lessons from Cymorth. The evaluation of Cymorth showed that the projects were relatively small scale and distributed over a wide age range and variety of themes, consequently, the contribution of Cymorth to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Wales as a whole was difficult to measure. Moreover, the grant did not leverage funding from mainstream providers which would have helped embed successful Cymorth-funded practices. The re-design of Cymorth and the support the new fund will provide for Families First is crucial to our ambitions for addressing child poverty.

## **What has happened so far**

Families First was established in Summer 2010, when the selection was announced of two Families First pioneer consortia (Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire local authorities in the north, and Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil in the south). Three of the pioneer authorities are also acting as pioneers for the IFSS pilots to address the needs of families at or near crisis point. This provides a real opportunity to consider the broad range of family needs and how integrated services can best support families to build resilience.

## **Current Pioneer activity**

The work of the consortia looks to build on increasing family resilience and self-sufficiency, providing key, appropriate information to families and professionals, and to developing community-led solutions to local issues. £1.35m was made available for the consortia in 2010/11.

The southern consortium has identified a number of initiatives which involve the three authorities working together to improve services. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) is leading an exercise to identify shortfalls and duplication in service provision, and to understand how children and their families interface with services. The authorities also plan to scope the potential for joint commissioning of family support services across the consortium, assessing the potential for integrated processes and

pooled budgets in later years. Individually, the authorities have a number of initiatives planned where they will learn from examples of best practice within the consortium. For example, the local approach to targeting family need that has been developed through the 'Canopi' approach in RCT is now being tested in areas of Blaenau Gwent. In Merthyr they have taken their progressive work on early identification of vulnerable families and are progressing a better approach to intervention using learning from the Team Around the Child Model from Blaenau Gwent. RCT and Merthyr are also working together on undertaking a comprehensive mapping of workforce skills and needs for those who are involved in family support issues.

Similarly, in the northern consortium we are seeing benefits of bringing authorities together and engaging them in a process of challenge and design of better delivery systems. The consortium is working on three main workstreams. The first workstream focuses on a "Together Achieving Change" approach, building on Team Around the Child-type models currently operated by the three authorities and recasting them in a more family-focused way. The second workstream develops an approach to community engagement and leadership in family support through a Community Conferencing initiative. The third workstream expands the capacity and eligibility of Genesis-type projects to support and assist parents and carers of children to overcome barriers to entering the workforce or training. These include 1:1 mentoring for hard to reach families, assistance to improve self-esteem and to attend training and improve skills, access to child care and help with transport costs. The third workstream also places a focus on information sources and delivery.

## **Emerging learning**

In order to identify what works within Families First, to sustain improved delivery and to ensure that the learning from the pioneer areas is shared effectively with other areas, a programme of research to support and document these processes has been commissioned. An 'implementation report' will be produced that will inform the next stage of Families First as well as provide recommendations about the medium and long term evaluation of the programme.

## **How to apply to become a Pioneer**

The precise level of funding for each area will depend upon the proposals submitted, their scale, scope, quality and the number of participants identified. We envisage that there will be c.£1m each for existing consortia and up to £750k each for the new consortia.

If you are interested in becoming a Families First pioneer consortium then you should submit a short written proposal (no more than 15 pages) by 11 March based on the expressions of interest structure attached. Responses should be broadly based on the following points:

- evidence of current good practice in your area/s;
- a gap analysis of current service design and delivery;
- proposals for improving service design and delivery;
- how the proposal is additional to mainstream activity and provision;



- the outcomes for children and families that you are seeking to achieve and how you propose to measure them;
- governance arrangements, including linkages to LSBs and CYPs;
- the partners who will be involved in FF – this should include LHB, voluntary sector, the police, family information services etc;
- indicative level of funding required to deliver on proposals; and
- proposals for supporting disabled children in Wales through Families First.

The current consortia arrangements have shown themselves to be effective at encouraging the sharing of best practice, enabling consortia to explore new models of service delivery across local authority boundaries. We think there are significant benefits to this way of working, so will want to see proposals from at least 2, but probably not more than 3, local authorities working together as consortia for the duration of pioneer phase. If there are exceptional and compelling reasons why consortium working is not possible or desirable we will consider this – but our expectation is for the consortium approach to be the norm.

In addition to working across local authority boundaries there is an expectation that consortia will engage with a range of partners with a direct interest in the delivery of family support, including the voluntary sector, police, health boards, educational institutions. Applications should describe how the consortium will engage with these appropriate local and regional partners. We will also expect proposals to avoid duplication and demonstrate linkages, for example to emerging work around Integrated Family Support Services and Communities First Partnerships.

We are keen to extend the pioneer consortia in ways that will allow for exploration of issues related to service delivery in rural and relatively large-population urban areas. As such, we will particularly welcome applications that incorporate either of these issues.

## **Disabled Children, Young People and their Families**

Disabled children and their families should be included in all aspects of the Families First initiative but as disabled children and young people are a particularly vulnerable group who face multiple barriers Families First aims to specifically improve support for these children and their families. The Children's National Service Framework provides the template for services for all children in Wales, Chapter Five in particular sets a series of standards and key actions for disabled children and young people. All Local Authorities and other statutory agencies have been working to this agenda for the past five years.

Additional ring-fenced funding, c£500k, is available for use between the consortia to help develop new non-statutory approaches to supporting disabled children and their families. Proposals for how this money is to be used should be driven by local need and with due regard to local disability organisations. However, local plans should also be informed by the priorities of the Disabled Children Matters Wales Campaign, in particular they have highlighted the following areas for development:

- Keyworking;
- Play and leisure, including preschool play provision and referral schemes;

- Developing new approaches, or building capacity, to provide specific support for parents of disabled children;
- Child care;
- Welfare maximisation.

Please include proposals within your expressions of interest and be aware of existing strategies, schemes and emerging duties when developing your proposals to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity with existing activity.

## **Forward Look**

We aim to announce the new consortia of pioneer areas by the end of March 2011 with a view to work starting early in the new financial year. The consortia of pioneer areas will then be funded for 12 months and no further pioneer areas will be announced. During the summer of 2011 guidance on the rollout of Families First in 2012 to all local authorities will be published. Whether your consortium is successful or not this year the Families First team will work closely with you to develop your proposals for the coming year.

The Families First team is available to support the development of proposals. To arrange to speak to a member of the team please contact 02920 82 3053 or [megan.colley@wales.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:megan.colley@wales.qsi.gov.uk)

**Families First 2011-12  
Expression of Interest Form**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

**1. Name/contact details of the person submitting the expression of interest:**

<b>Name of Lead Contact and Organisation submitting EOI:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	

**2. Evidence of current good practice within the consortia.**


**3. Gap analysis of current service design and delivery.**


**4. Please describe your proposals for improving service design and delivery to support families and tackle child poverty in the most efficient and effective way possible.**


**5. Please describe how the proposal will be additional to mainstream activity and provision.**


**6. List the outcomes for children and families that you are seeking to achieve and how you propose to measure them.**

--

<b>7. What will the governance arrangements be?</b>
<b>8. Which other partners will be involved (eg health boards, voluntary sector, police, educational institutions)?</b>
<b>10.What is the indicative level of funding required to deliver on proposals?</b>
<b>10.What are your proposals for supporting disabled children in Wales through Families First?</b>

**The Family Support Team at the Welsh Assembly Government is available to support the development of proposals. Please contact the team on 02920 82 3053 to speak to a member of the team or e-mail [megan.colley@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:megan.colley@wales.gsi.gov.uk)**