



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT**

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**Title: Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan for Wales**

**Date: 2 February 2011**

**By: Huw Lewis, Deputy Minister for Children**

I would like to inform Assembly Members that we will be publishing the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales on 3 February.

The Strategy affirms the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. This is an ambitious challenge at a time when public spending is contracting. However, since its inception, the Welsh Assembly Government has consistently made clear that reducing child poverty is a fundamental element of its social justice agenda and also part of its key priorities to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

We are very grateful to the many individuals and organisations that responded to the consultation and attended events across Wales. We know that in order to make progress on reducing child poverty it is imperative that we galvanise and draw on the experience of a whole range of public bodies, the third sector and other partners in Wales.

All the responses have been analysed and a summary of the responses will be published shortly.

This Child Poverty Strategy gives a clear account of what the Assembly Government can achieve in helping to reduce poverty particularly in the areas of improving health, education and economic outcomes for children in low income families during the next three years 2011-2014 by pursuing the strategic objectives to:

- reduce the number of families living in workless households
- improve the skills of parents and young people living in low income households
- reduce inequalities that exist in health, education outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

Significant policy action we intend to take forward to deliver the three strategic objectives in the Child Poverty Strategy 2011-14 includes:

- **Investment in early years**

Early years of a child's life represent a period of rapid development, and that the quality of experiences during these formative years play a significant role in shaping the life chances and abilities of the individual in later life.

Flying Start is targeted at the 0-3 age group in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales and aims to influence positive outcomes in the medium and long term. The core entitlement of this programme is based upon evidence of the most effective approaches to improving child development including, free quality part-time childcare for 2 to 3-year-olds, an enhanced Health Visiting service, and access to Language and Play sessions.

Funding for Flying Start will increase from 2012-14 and will enable further support to those children and parents who need it most so that more children and parents can benefit from the support it provides. We will also be implementing an outcome-focused monitoring system for the programme to ensure the continuing focus of Flying Start is on improving the life chances of disadvantaged children.

Flying Start works closely with practitioners and families in its target areas to help ensure children are ready for the next level of provision. This helps ensure a smooth transition into the Foundation Phase.

- **Transformation of support for families**

Families First is the Assembly Government's key programme for designing better integrated support for families living in poverty. Its principal focus is on supporting families through interventions at the preventative and protective stages. The programme aims to drive improvements to family support design and delivery and, in so doing, reduce the numbers of families developing more complex needs and thus requiring more intensive and costly interventions.

Families First was established in 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 areas are also acting as pioneers for the

Integrated Family Support Team 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. £1.35m was made available for the consortia in 2010/11.

Further consortia, to be active in 2011/12, will be announced later this spring, and will be asked also to explore ways in which support for families with disabled children and young people can be improved.

Families First will be rolled out on an all-Wales basis from April 2012. The Assembly Government will expect to see significant movement toward system change, with family-centred services delivering effective and efficient support to families living in poverty, thus reducing the inequities that they experience.

- **Support to vulnerable children and their families**

We recognise that there are families with particular and increased vulnerabilities. Disabled children are more likely than non-disabled children to be more susceptible to bullying and to mental health disorders and their families are more susceptible to higher levels of stress, lower levels of parental wellbeing and higher levels of poverty. It is therefore particularly important that disabled children and their families are able to access a wide range of services and that services are inclusive and provide the necessary support to enable parents of disabled to work or engage in education or training.

£3million will be invested in a new transition to adulthood grant for looked after children and support for disabled children via our Families First initiative to ensure that local services better reflect the needs of children and their families.

The strategy also responds to the changing UK fiscal climate and sets out a distinctive Welsh approach to the provision of public services that can address the long-term root causes of poverty and to alleviate some of the more damaging impacts of poverty.

Achieving our aim has always depended on the UK Government's continuing contribution to eradicating poverty in the non-devolved areas of tax and welfare payments, employment support and the continued recovery of the wider economy.

The impact of fiscal consolidation along with rapid changes in UK Government Policy means that inevitably some of the detailed policy actions and commitments set out in the Delivery Plan published in May 2010 have in part been overtaken by events. The Delivery Plan will therefore be developed further. In this way it will provide the most up-to-date information, promote the development of complementary projects and foster stronger working partnerships.

In recognition of the fact that tackling child poverty requires action across public agencies, the living Delivery Plan provides the opportunity to highlight initiatives taken to eradicate poverty by local authorities and other public bodies as a result of their new duties under the Children's and Families (Wales) Measure.

The new duties in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 will add a new impetus to the process as each local authority and Welsh public body will be required to develop their own strategy to tackle child poverty which will complement the Assembly Government's own approach.

**A copy of the new Strategy can be found via the following link tomorrow:**

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/poverty/newcpstrategy/?lang=en>