

Voluntary Sector Response to the Single Children's Plan

Network Event 22/5/08

Background

A Voluntary Sector Network Event was held on the 22nd May 2008 to allow a collective group of organisations to express their opinions on the Single Children's Plan for Pembrokeshire that is currently out for consultation. In total, 11 groups were represented by 14 people. The group heard a presentation from Geraldine Murphy who outlined the plan to them and then joined 2 workshops that looked at the plan, one Core Aim at a time. Below are the collated responses from the group.

General Comments

The plan is predictably safe and does not seek to drive services forward, merely keep them as they are.

The plan mentions partnership but does not indicate how this will be achieved, this is particularly true in the health area of the plan. It seems as if the plan has been put together without a proper health input. How then can we expect strong partnership working?

There are significant gaps regarding young carers and disabled young people

How this plan is to be funded is not clear, nor how it will be implemented and, crucially, monitored. If extra money is not available the prioritisation of the plan will be crucial – the areas most in need should be assessed and services delivered there first.

In order to even think about prevention services there must be a migration of thinking from the acute model currently in place

Core Aim 1 – A Flying Start – Priorities and Actions

The mention of parenting courses has the potential to carry stigma with it, parenting skills is a more appropriate term along with flexible support and awareness raising. In addition there is no mention of the parenting strategy which, properly actioned, could form a key outcome for this Core Aim.

There is no mention of respite against physical or mental disability – this in itself would 'strengthen support to families'.

The Key Outcomes are health and education based – there is a need for actions to be directly related to outcomes – 1 action = 1 outcome.

Core Aim 2 - Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities – Priorities and Actions

CAMHS (Tier 2 and 3) is wrongly placed and should sit in CA3.

A strong focus on 14-19 age group is confusing and suggests other young people are not to be supported. A form of words such as “Over the next 3 years we will support all children and young people engaged in education.....” and then To achieve this we will... “Focus on specific age groups such as 14-19”

There is no mention of informal education services – home tuition, hospital education, Pride, POPPI etc.

A key action should be to better inform parents and children about their rights to education especially those who are excluded – they are still entitled to the basic number of hours tuition.

There is no mention of Careers Service or the College and the help that they can provide.

NEET’s need to have a much higher profile.

Core Aim 3 - Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation – Priorities and Actions

Despite CA3 being about health there is no mention of services above Tier 1 in this Core Aim.

NSF Standards should be mentioned in a much clearer way.

There should be a key outcome that looks to seriously reduce the number of patients who have to go out of County for CAMHS services.

There is a mention of strong partnership working within this CA that does not appear in the others – this should be a running theme throughout the document.

The links between bullying and mental health need to be ensured with teaching professionals. Coping strategies need to be a part of the PSE curriculum.

*A suggestion was made that CAMHS professionals could create a guidance tool for Tier 1 workers, possibly a check box tool, that would clarify referral routes to Tiers 2 and 3 and the appropriate times to make these referrals.

Core Aim 4 - Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities – Priorities and Actions

This CA is far too sport focused and looks as if it has been written by a footballer for a footballer.

Play is not implicit in the plan apart from a one line mention re open access play.

Play and disabled children should be emphasised strongly in the plan

An acknowledgement of the importance of play needs to be clearly stated and be made explicit in the plan. This could be achieved by emphasising strong links to the Play Strategy.

There is no mention of a work force development element for play – this is essential if any play actions are to be achieved.

The differences between open access play and open access to play opportunities need to be made clear as this is a potential area for confusion.

The actions in this Core Aim will only be achievable with a clear commitment to funding and work force development.

There is no mention of any cultural activity, specifically Welsh culture and related activity.

There is no mention of how we will work with the cultures of those young people who arrive as the families of migrant workers.

As part of the ‘Over the next 3 years we will’ section in this CA, sport, leisure, play, culture should all have their own outcomes/actions.

There needs to be specific reference to out of County activities that enhance cultural awareness and expand horizons.

There are a huge range of musical opportunities outside the LA – TidyLike Records/Rock School is just one example. The references to these Voluntary Sector activities are conspicuous by their absence.

Core Aim 5 - Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised – Priorities and Actions

An explanation of participation is needed at the top of this CA as there is still some confusion between participation in decision making and participation in activity.

Equal opportunities feature strongly here and CA5 should feature in every CA.

The specific references to volunteers aged 16-25 should be revised to 14-25 – there are currently 14 year old volunteers in independent sector projects.

In terms of advocacy the whole subject area needs to be expanded. There should be an explanation of what advocacy is, and how our local delivery will match that of Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). There is no mention of regional working and this is an anticipated outcome of the current WAG review.

There is no measurable outcome for the under 11's in terms of participation and this is an area for improvement.

There is not enough mention of the work of the Youth Assembly and only a passing mention of the work of school councils. Both of these need a much stronger focus.

There appears to be little or no focus on LGBT issues.

There appears to be a gap in terms of Traveller children and their issues.

Core Aim 6 - Have a safe home and a community, which supports physical and emotional well-being – Actions and Priorities

Clear community safety approach to this CA but little reference to emotional wellbeing. Mental health problems can be prevented if dealt with earlier and this needs to be reflected in CA6.

There need to be proactive and definite statements with regard to working to alleviate the continuing social housing problem. This is a massive issue for young adults and this plan is the perfect place to show how the County is dealing with the issue.

The mental health aspect of homelessness needs to be raised here. Evidence shows you are far more likely to become homeless if you suffer from poor mental health.

Clear links to the Housing Strategy need to be made clear here.

There needs to be mention of fostering and adoption within this CA which is totally lacking.

The aim to reduce harm associated with drugs and alcohol is welcomed, as is the work on domestic violence. The links between these two areas should be tighter and more defined.

Core Aim 7 - not disadvantaged by poverty – Priorities and Actions

Proposed actions fit well with Communities 1st vision.

This CA does not appear to have been thought through very well. Monkton is an area that is particularly disadvantaged by poverty. Promotion of the minimum wage will not impact on this area as a lot of people do not work.

Promotion of Credit Unions needs to be a part of this plan as ‘doorstep lenders’ contribute to poverty. Credit Unions need as many people as possible to make them viable, support to these organisations should be a part of any action to reduce poverty.

Organisations should seek to work in partnership with Communities 1st partnerships as they have been looking to meet the vision of this CA for some time. They have tried and tested projects.

Isolation and poverty of access (rurality) to services should not be forgotten.

There is an institutional failure by central and local government that is perpetuating poverty.