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FOREWORD



As Assembly Minister with responsibility for children and young people, I have a particular role in delivering the Assembly's vision of Wales as a place which values its children and where young people want to live, work and enjoy a high quality of life. This consultation document represents an important step towards that aspiration.

For the first time, the document describes all of the Assembly programmes which impact on the lives of children and young people, in the context of the aims and priorities in our strategic plan, *Better Wales*. But it also does much more than that. It sets out the principles which should underpin our provision for children, with reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and based on relevant legislation, particularly the Human Rights Act 1998. It proposes a way in which all of the local partners who provide services for children and young people can work together in an integrated framework, designed to meet the needs of children rather than those of service providers. And it places at the centre of this activity the requirement to listen and respond to the views of children and young people themselves.

The framework in the following pages has been developed using the public and open approach to policy-making which the Assembly has pioneered. Before work even began on writing it, Assembly officials held a series of consultation conferences with representatives of service providers and children and young people themselves. One of the key messages to emerge from local authorities was a call for a reduction in the number of Assembly specific grants. We have listened to this call, and included in this document proposals for bringing together a number of programmes in a single Children and Young People's Support Fund.

I do not pretend that it will be easy for representatives of service providers - including local authorities, the NHS, other public agencies and the voluntary sector - to overcome organisational culture and work as part of a genuine team. Nor do I pretend that this document is the definitive answer to improving our provision for children and young people. It cannot set out in manageable size a detailed prescription for all services - nor would such central prescription be desirable. But it does set out a framework in which improvement can take place.

Much remains to be done; this is a beginning and not an end. I hope you share my belief that the work outlined in the following pages is worth doing. As a first step, I call on you to let me have your views on what we propose.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt".

November 2000

Jane Hutt

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A shared vision for children

1. The Assembly wants to encourage models of good practice and foster a climate in which service providers give priority to developing and delivering high quality, innovative and responsive provision for children and young people. The Assembly is committed to transforming the way in which the needs of children and young people are met by service providers in Wales.
2. The Assembly wants to hear the voices of children and young people, to listen to their views, and to ensure that services respond to their needs and their aspirations.

The aim of the framework

3. This framework is designed to ensure a new approach to the planning and delivery of services for children and young people so that they:
 - contribute effectively to a common objective;
 - reflect and focus on the needs of children and young people;
 - are driven by a strategic assessment of need and priorities across the full range of activities at the local level; and
 - are proactive and positive.

Core Principles

4. The Assembly believes that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should provide a foundation of principle for dealings with children, though other factors will also be drawn upon, including in particular the Human Rights Act 1998. Chapter 2 sets out the core principles of the framework based on the Convention.

Rationalising funding mechanisms

5. Annex 1 provides - for the first time - a coherent overview of the whole range of Assembly-led programmes and policies affecting children and young people in Wales. This offers an opportunity to pose questions about the overall balance in current programmes.

6. The Assembly needs to increase the coherence of its own suite of programmes to match the increased coherence planned locally. One of the key messages emerging from the consultative conferences held with service providers in the Autumn of 1999 was a desire to see fewer individual funding schemes. The Assembly proposes that existing funding schemes should be combined into a new Children and Young People's Support Fund, as set out in Chapter 3 of the framework. The Assembly intends to give an indicative financial allocation for this fund for each local authority area for the three years of the Spending Review; and to set targets for the outcomes required.

Achieving Focus in Strategy and Planning

7. Implementing the aspirations for rationalisation will require co-ordinated activity by local authorities, the NHS and voluntary organisations. It is at the local level that gaps and overlaps in provision can best be identified and remedies set in place.

8. The framework sets out 3 strands for achieving focus in strategy and planning:

- the new Community Strategies functions in the 2000 Local Government Act;
- new, local Children and Young People's Frameworks - to provide a comprehensive overview of all local children's services in each local authority area; and
- reviewing the requirements for detailed service and programme-specific plans for aspects of children's services, with a view to merging and simplifying wherever possible.

9. The local frameworks would:

- reflect the local contribution to achieving the policies and priorities of *Better Wales* and, in future policy agreements in respect of children and young people;
- set joint local strategic priorities for local authorities, the NHS, CETW, Careers Wales and voluntary sectors;
- reflect Best Value and service-user evaluations and thereby provide opportunities for participation of communities and of children and young people;
- set out the local context for service plans, including the way in which the partners will work together - how arrangements will be put in place to pick up and follow through children and young people with problems; and
- indicate how the views of children and young people have been used in developing and monitoring the local strategy.

10. The local framework would set, co-ordinate and reflect the strategic elements agreed in all service plans which are currently produced and which are relevant to children and young people.

11. Coherent local frameworks will depend on strong local partnerships which include representatives of all the relevant groups, including local authorities, the NHS, schools, voluntary organisations and children and young people themselves. They should provide a framework for using of the partnership and funding flexibility between the NHS and social services allowed under the Health Act 1999.

12. Individual service plans for the key service areas may continue to be necessary in order to define operational delivery of services, but the proposed local framework should lead to a radical improvement in the co-ordination of services in respect of children and young people, provided that all partners appreciate that none of the outcomes required for young people can be attributed to the work of any one agency; and that improving the life chances of children and young people has to become a real priority for all involved.

Listening to Children and Young People

13. This framework should ensure that children and young people are listened to and enabled to play an active part in decision making and in determining the services they receive. The views of children and young people therefore need to be incorporated into the policies and plans of service providers. The level at which children and young people can most easily see the result of their participation is the local one and, in submitting their local strategies, authorities will be expected to have shown that children and young people across the whole spectrum, from all communities and backgrounds, have been involved in their production, and in what way.

Monitoring the Strategy- an all-Wales perspective

14. Implementation of improved services for children within this framework will require a structure at the all-Wales level. Chapter 6 discusses the options.

15. The Children's Commissioner for Wales, which will be a statutory office set up under the Care Standards Act 2000, will play a primary role in delivering an independent all-Wales perspective.

16. The Assembly proposes to introduce a requirement for "policy proofing" all new policies to their potential impact on children and young people.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Better Wales, the strategic plan of the National Assembly, sets out a long-term vision of Wales as a place which:

values its children and where young people want to live, work and enjoy a high quality of life; and which is

committed to fostering its unique and diverse identity, and the benefits of bilingualism, while looking confidently outwards and welcoming new cultural influences.

It includes amongst its core values the statement that:

children and young people should be treated as valued members of the community, whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy-making.

This framework makes proposals to realise these aspirations. It should be seen as the first stage in the practical development of a dynamic strategy. In particular, the rationalisation of planning and funding mechanisms proposed in Chapters 3 and 4 should be seen in the context of other such proposals concerning social deprivation and the funding of social services. Considerations of equity should lie at the heart of the framework's implementation, and it must be effective in responding to the needs of all children and young people. To succeed, the framework must be supported by a commitment at all levels to fundamentally new ways of integrated working in order to improve the lives of children and young people. Co-operation among organisations of very different sizes and ways of working will be essential; and there will need to be genuine local teamworking overcoming loyalties to individual organisations.

1.2 Most children and young people have their needs for protection and development met by their parents, wider families and universal services, including schools and the health service. Other children are not so well supported: they might be defined as vulnerable, meaning that their life chances will be jeopardised if special action is not taken to offer additional support to them or their families. Children with poor socialisation or special educational needs can fall into this category. A small minority of children have much more fundamental special needs, and are defined under the Children Act as children in need. These include children with disabilities, those looked after by local authorities and those on child protection registers. To varying extents, the latter two groups will need the help of specialist social, health, education and other services if they are to develop and thrive.

1.3 Across Wales there is a wealth of service provision which contributes directly to support children in achieving their potential through education, health and other services. Providers include local authorities, schools, health authorities and health trusts, the voluntary and private

sectors. There are also many other public services of more general relevance but which have significant impact on the lives of children and young people. Because of pressures on services from what are perceived as key users, children's interests are not as prominent as they might be; for example in the NHS mental health services for children and adolescents do not receive the same attention as acute waiting lists. This framework in itself cannot change attitudes overnight; but it should represent the beginning of a process of change.

1.4 Each service has distinctive features and objectives, although there are many areas which overlap. There is effective co-operation between agencies and authorities in many aspects of children's services; but in other areas co-ordinated service planning and delivery could be improved.

1.5 Considerable amounts of money are spent on these services in Wales, and large numbers of staff contribute to them. There are many examples of imaginative provision with stimulating and highly effective services which make a real and lasting difference to children's lives in Wales. The Assembly wants to extend those models of good practice, to encourage innovative and responsive service development, and to foster a climate in which service providers give priority to developing and delivering high quality provision for children and young people.

1.6 The Assembly is committed to transforming the way in which the needs of children and young people are met by service providers in Wales.

1.7 The Assembly wants to hear the voices of children and young people, to listen to their views, and to ensure that services respond to their needs and their aspirations.

1.8 This framework will ensure a new approach to the planning and delivery of services for children and young people so that:

- they contribute effectively to a common objective, i.e. to provide high quality appropriate and effective services for children;
- they listen to and focus on the needs of children and young people;
- they are driven by a strategic assessment of need and priorities across the full range of activities at the local authority level; they are proactive and positive, designed to maximise potential through enabling success, preventing problems which might constrain achievement and offer timely specialised support when necessary; and
- they respond effectively to the needs of all children and young people, taking into account as appropriate considerations of gender, social deprivation, ethnicity, religion and culture, disability and sexual orientation.

1.9 This is a major task, and will not be achieved quickly; this framework makes suggestions about how the process might be started.

1.10 The framework seeks to ensure that local authorities, schools and colleges, health services, voluntary sector agencies and organisations across Wales can work together more effectively under a common set of objectives and priorities to provide comprehensive, appropriate, high quality and integrated services for all children in Wales. It provides the context for tackling uneven provision, raising standards and ensuring that investment in services for children and young people is directed at quality outcomes for those most in need.

1.11 While the key partnership for service delivery is at the local level, the Assembly has a role at the all-Wales level. The first stage is the production of this shared framework. The next step is for the Assembly to review both its new and existing programmes and policies, to ensure that they are consistent with the shared objectives. The Assembly will consider what further initiatives might be necessary to help authorities deliver the framework and how best to support them through existing funding streams or otherwise. The Assembly is committed to reflecting at the all-Wales level the multi-agency team-working advocated in this framework and will encourage a unified approach to the planning and delivery of children's services at local level.

1.12 The drafting of the framework has been informed by, amongst other things, the recent advisory report of the Assembly's Policy Unit: *Extending Entitlement - support for Young People in Wales* [published on 10 October] and by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 which gives the Assembly new powers to require local authorities in Wales to secure a comprehensive service to support young people. The Assembly will be consulting separately on the detailed recommendations contained in *Extending Entitlement* but the proposals contained in this document for a strategic approach to the cohort of children and young people in each local authority area (Chapter 4) and the options for creating a stronger advisory capacity (Chapter 6) are fully consistent with the objectives and structures proposed in the Policy Unit report.

1.13 The framework:

- provides a concise and clear statement of principles;
- provides a common context for all relevant programmes and services for children;
- covers universal services for all children as well as specialised services for children with special needs;
- assumes that local partners are best placed to assess need, and to construct innovative solutions which exploit local opportunities and extend good practice;
- requires best value, efficiency and effectiveness from the organisation and performance of authorities themselves;

- engages the shared corporate commitment of members of local authorities, the boards of health authorities, local health groups and NHS trusts, police authorities and school governing bodies as well as other relevant bodies, such as the community consortia for education and training;
- requires changes in the practice of professionals working with children and young people such as teachers, social workers, general practitioners and other staff working in health services, the youth service, police and probation officers.

1.14 It depends on:

- a commitment to effective partnership working between the statutory services, and with the independent sector;

1.15 It focuses on:

- outcomes for children and young people rather than service-led inputs;
- locally sensitive solutions rather than centrally defined models of service delivery, within national standards;
- targets which are meaningful for individual children and young people.

2. CORE PRINCIPLES

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

2.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted unanimously by the UN in November 1989 and ratified by the UK Government in December 1991*. Over the past ten years it has helped to establish an internationally accepted framework for the treatment of all children, encouraged a positive and optimistic image of children and young people as active holders of rights and stimulated a greater global commitment to safeguarding those rights. The Assembly believes that the Convention should provide a foundation of principle for dealings with children.

2.2 The Convention defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18. This framework generally takes the same approach to the definition of a 'child or young person', although some programmes referred to, such as work-based learning and support for care leavers, can involve those up to 25.

2.3 The Convention contains 41 articles that set out the specific rights in some detail. Their broad vision is based upon the following principles:

- children and young people are human beings in their own right - needing protection but having their own strengths, views and opinions, as individuals;
- children and young people are active members of their local communities and national societies, and have the potential to be active citizens;
- parents and family are normally the primary carers and protectors of children, entitled to the support they need to fulfil these responsibilities. They are partners in realising the rights of their children, in providing guidance and direction in enabling their children and young people to mature and develop competence and confidence. Where parents are unable to act in the best interests of their children, there should be support systems in place to protect and care for the child;
- society has obligations towards children, including to ensure their well-being and happiness. No child should live in poverty and services should be in place to give them the best start in life.

*The UK Government currently has entered two main reservations to its ratification of the Convention, in respect of UK immigration and nationality law and the position of children in adult offender institutions.

2.4 The 41 rights fall into three broad categories, within a context of non-discrimination in which rights apply to all children and young people equally (Article 2) and where decision-making by adults and organisations on matters affecting children and young people must primarily consider the best interests of the child or young person (Article 3). These categories and examples of the rights which they comprise are given below.

Protection

2.5 Children and young people are vulnerable and have the right to be protected in various ways:

- Article 19 - from all forms of violence;
- Articles 37 and 40 - in respect of treatment in law;
- Articles 32 - 35 - from dangerous work, dangerous drugs, sexual abuse and from being abducted or sold.

Provision

2.6 Children and young people have rights to proper standards of physical care, learning and health:

- Article 6 - to help them develop to their fullest potential;
- Article 18 and 20 - day to day care, preferably by their parents;
- Article 24 - to health and a healthy environment;
- Article 23 - to special support if they are disabled or have special needs;
- Articles 26 and 27 - to an adequate standard of living, supported by benefit of social security;
- Articles 28, 29 and 31 - to education and leisure.

Participation

2.7 Children and young people are active citizens in the world and have rights to their own opinions, to express them and have them fully taken into account:

- Article 7 - to a name and to become a citizen of a country;
- Article 12 - to say what they think about matters that affect them, and to be listened to including by courts and official bodies;
- Articles 13,14 and 15 - to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and association;

- Articles 16 and 17 - to privacy and access to information.

2.8 These three groups of children's rights define the values, expectations and requirements towards children and young people of the ratifying States Parties, including the UK Government. As such they underpin the values and standards upon which policy development and service delivery in Wales need to be based.

Developmental and Environmental Influences

2.9 Services for children and young people need to be based on an analysis of their needs and not on the delivery structures of service providers.

2.10 Knowledge about child development, the physical, social, psychological and intellectual phases children pass through as they grow, has increased dramatically in recent years. Research suggests that there are critical periods or "windows of opportunity"- especially in the early years up to age 3 - when inputs can be most effective in supporting child development.

Prenatal to eighteen months - transition through infancy

2.11 Pre-birth factors can influence a child's development. Good maternal health and nutrition are beneficial - tobacco, alcohol and substance misuse during pregnancy can have serious negative effects.

2.12 During the first eighteen months of life, it is possible that opportunities to learn and develop can be increased with stimulating, quality care. In this period, the 'basic sculpting' of the child takes place and children are both most dependent on, and most vulnerable to, their care givers. Connections are made among brain cells that establish how a growing child experiences his or her environment, basic emotional attachment to an adult develops and infants learn emotional communication and the emotional role of touch. As pathways develop, a child's early experiences with language, colour and music make more complex cognitive, emotional and behavioural abilities possible.

Eighteen months to age five - transition to school

2.13 This is a time when children's interactions with their environments expand. It is a time of rapid cognitive, behavioural, emotional and social development. Children begin to learn social behaviour and how to anticipate consequences for their actions and choices. Positive role models, nurture and attention from their parents or other main carers during this period can help to develop children's confidence and curiosity. There is growing literature about how activities such as reading with children and interactive playing can develop their "readiness to learn."

Ages six to twelve - transition to adolescence

2.14 During this period children develop and consolidate a widening range of physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills and capacities, becoming more independent. Experience beyond the home and family becomes more significant. Repeated negative experiences can affect development and sound adult guidance is important for helping children to understand consequences and develop maturity. Undesirable patterns of behaviour established at this stage can have consequences which last through to adulthood.

Ages twelve to eighteen - transition to adulthood

2.15 Children begin to establish an independent life course and to make decisions that can have lifelong consequences during their adolescence. At the same time, they experience the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty. As teenagers grow, they strive for more independence from their families, experimenting with new ideas, experiences and responsibilities. During this period they lay down the foundation of skills which will be the basis of successful transition to employment. Though peers become increasingly influential strong support from parents, other adults, schools and communities is still important. Negative gender and media images, peer pressure and the desire to test limits can lead to risk-taking behaviours that may have serious consequences. Caring and stable relationships between teens and adults in the home, school and larger community have been linked in adolescents to higher self-esteem, less depression, greater involvement in school and community activities, and better school performance.

Environmental influences

2.16 Children are influenced by the world around them at all stages during their growth, although this influence is stronger in the earliest years, when the integration of children's psychological, behavioural and social processes are occurring. Understanding the impacts of environmental influences can help us make choices that build more supportive environments for children and enhance their development.

Biological inheritance

2.17 Children inherit particular genetic characteristics that can influence their mental and physical health in addition to, or irrespective of, their environments, although some difficulties present at birth can be alleviated or overcome through appropriate interventions.

Family

2.18 There is evidence that every child needs a secure attachment to at least one nurturing adult, with consistent support and affection early in life (*Parenting, Schooling and Children's Behaviour*, editor Ann Buchanan, Barbara C Hudson 1998). Parents are the primary support for

children, and there is empirical evidence that parenting skills strongly influence children's developmental outcomes. Extended family members can also have a crucial influence. Families require sufficient resources and appropriate support to provide adequately for their children, amongst which secure income and flexible, family-sensitive workplace and childcare policies are important.

Culture and language

2.19 Children and young people have a status as prospective citizens of their local communities, of Wales, of the UK and of Europe. They have a right to express their identities in social, cultural and religious ways. Society should recognise the value of diversity in this respect. This includes the recognition of linguistic identity. First and foremost is the need for bilingualism, but consideration should go beyond Welsh and English to include other languages reflecting the multi-cultural nature of modern Wales. In looking at the rights of children, it is important to take note of the effects and impacts of racism. Evidence clearly shows that there is a detrimental impact on the educational development, attainment and achievement of young people of minority ethnic origin in particular. Young children have a right to be treated fairly and given equality of opportunity, without the fear of their differences being exploited. At the formative years this is particularly important - a fact identified by Sir William Macpherson in his report on the death of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence. Celebration and explicit acknowledgement of difference is a right that all children should expect. It will build their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. For ethnic minorities in particular the 'colour blind' approach is no longer acceptable; there needs to be an active rather than a passive approach if children are to have their rights properly respected and accepted.

Child care and school

2.20 At some point in time, most families use some form of supplemental childcare. Research shows that good care, whether at home, or through formal or informal childcare, has a beneficial effect upon social competence, language development and behaviour. Quality pre-school experiences provide varied, stimulating opportunities for interaction and play, and prepare children for school. Schools play a large role in children's learning, and in their social and emotional development. They help to develop children's cognitive skills and provide opportunities for increasingly complex social relationships. For many children, school is the first opportunity to demonstrate their independence, self confidence and self-determination.

Physical and community environments

2.21 The physical surroundings that children inhabit such as housing, roads, parks and play areas can greatly affect their health and well-being. In some communities, children are exposed to pollutants that can adversely affect their health. In other communities, traffic patterns or lack of safe places to play and learn put children at risk. Child-safe communities need to be violence-free, easy to move around in, and provide appealing places to play.

2.22 Communities also provide children and families with social supports in the form of feelings of belonging, stability and continuity, as well as a context where shared values and expectations are developed. Children meet other children and adults who help them to develop trust, independence and initiative. Communities provide the basic infrastructure for family life: employment, childcare, and formal and informal services in health, education, social services, housing, recreation and other areas. Like families, communities vary in their resources and vitality, but all can be friendly to children, particularly when services are accessible and integrated.

Recreation

2.23 Play is an essential part of children's development. As they grow older, sport and other forms of physical recreation can set healthy patterns of exercise lasting into adulthood. Participation in, and appreciation of, music, visual arts and literature can all add to understanding of the world. But, more importantly, these activities bring joy and richness to life. They should be offered as an entitlement to all children and young people.

2.24 The factors and influences outlined in this section will all have impact upon the life chances and potential of children and young people and need to be borne in mind in the determination of priorities and standards for policy development and service provision.

3. ASSEMBLY PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN

Increasing the coherence of the Assembly's support programmes

3.1 Better Wales sets out five major themes:

- Better opportunities for learning;
- A better stronger economy;
- Better health and well-being;
- Better quality of life;
- Better simpler government.

3.2 Services for children and young people fall into almost all areas of public services in Wales. Annex 1 sets out the Assembly's targets and programmes which are relevant to this framework under each of the above headings. It provides - for the first time - a coherent overview of the whole range of Assembly-led programmes and policies affecting children and young people in Wales. It seeks to set the framework within which local authorities and all other service providers can locate their own policies, plans and responsibilities.

3.3 Some recent developments, such as Sure Start, are designed to give focused attention on some of the most disadvantaged children. There has been a general welcome for this focus, and of the partnership approach which it involves. However, there has also been criticism that it has taken scarce staff resources away from mainstream services. In providing an overview - a map of existing programmes - the Assembly has attempted to demonstrate the wide range of service areas where special intervention has been warranted. There is a case to be made for mainstreaming much of this effort - for example the early intervention which Sure Start aims to promote - within universal primary care services. However, evidence from traditional patterns of service delivery suggest that children will benefit when there is focused attention - and specific funding - on aspects of service provision for vulnerable children and young people..

3.4 These Assembly priorities also need to be reflected in the plans and programmes being developed and implemented at the local level. They will need adaptation in local children and young peoples' frameworks - but the Assembly would expect local frameworks - by and large - to mirror the broad priorities set out here.

Questions for consultation:

The overview of Assembly initiatives and programmes set out in Annex A offers an opportunity to pose questions about the overall balance in current programmes:

- is the balance right as between younger or older age-groups;
- between health, education, and social services;
- between universal and targeted provision;
- between prevention and intervention;
- between statutory service providers, and those in the voluntary and independent sectors;
- are there areas where there is still need for new direction;
- between services specifically aimed at children and young people, and those where wider age-integration is desirable;
- are there aspects of children's provision where central intervention is unnecessarily high; or alternatively where too little attention has been given so far;
- are the priorities between services right;
- where there are specific service targets, are these set at the right levels.

Bringing programmes together

3.5 The Assembly needs to increase the coherence of its own suite of programmes to match the increased coherence planned locally. Many of the specialist support programmes outlined in Annex 1 involve local authorities and other partners combining to produce plans that are submitted to the Assembly and form the basis of funding for particular activities. Examples include Sure Start, the Children and Youth Partnership Fund, and Childcare Strategy. This process consumes considerable amounts of staff and other resources, both locally and in the Assembly. It also cuts across the concept of integrated planning to meet the needs of children and young people. The next chapter looks at what can be done to rationalise planning requirements at the local level. The remainder of this chapter considers the impact of current funding arrangements.

Funding for priority programmes

3.6 One of the key messages emerging from the consultative conferences held with service providers in the Autumn of 1999 was a desire to see fewer individual funding schemes. The Assembly is receptive to this request, for the reasons set out above. The issue is how best to combine the schemes. One option would be to add all of the local authority funding to Revenue Support Grant; another is to continue to fund discrete initiatives through a variety of specific grants. The Assembly is committed to reducing and rationalising grant programmes, in the interests of minimising intervention and administration, while allowing local authorities and

other agencies to develop locally sensitive solutions within a broad framework of priorities set by the Assembly and monitored against agreed service outcomes.

3.7 The Assembly proposes that existing funding schemes should be combined from April 2002 into a new Children and Young People's Support Fund. This single fund should encompass a number of existing separate schemes, to include:-

Sure Start

National Childcare Strategy

Play 2000 grant

*Children and Youth Partnership Fund

*Youth Access Initiative

Those elements of Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) which tackle disaffection among young people

* these two programmes will be merged from April 2001

3.8 Further rationalisation will be provided by the establishment in April 2001 of Careers Wales - the national all age guidance service. Careers Wales will draw together a number of Assembly programmes that provide support for young people - the careers service, the Youth Gateway and elements of education business links.

3.9 The Assembly intends to give an indicative financial allocation for the Children and Young People's Support Fund for each local authority area for the three years of the Spending Review. This would be based on the Standard Spending Assessment used for children's services in the Revenue Support Grant, which is based on the population below 18 but with weightings to take account of deprivation and sparsity. Targets would be set for the outcomes required from the use of the Fund, and proposals for the use of the Fund would form a separately identified but integral part of the local frameworks for children and young people. That part of the framework describing activities financed by the Support Fund would be submitted to the Assembly for agreement to fund as an annual update to the framework. Partnerships would need to make it clear what funding was to go to local authorities and what to other partners, such as the voluntary sector or health trusts. The Assembly will need to ensure that there is a rigorous system in place to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the targets set.

3.10 The Assembly believes that these proposals offer a number of advantages. They will remove the need for a number of separate plans, while at the same time ensuring that a range of funding for support of children and young people is integrated both with other specialist interventions and with planning arrangements for children and young people more generally.

The proposals would also allow local partnerships to be reviewed and simplified. In most areas a single Children and Young People's Partnership forum should be possible, although it would be for local decision whether separate groups might be retained at least in the short term. The only requirement from the centre would be for a demonstration as to the way in which relevant groups had been involved in the production of the proposals.

3.11 It is not proposed that the Children First Development Fund should be included in the Children and Young People's Support Fund. Children First is the Assembly's programme for improving specialist services for those children most in need. Local authority social services departments provide or co-ordinate services for this relatively small but critically important group. In order to preserve the integrity of the social services responsibility for those most in need, it is proposed that the Children First Development Fund should be amalgamated in the planned Social Services Development Fund.

Questions for consultation:

- is integrating the number of schemes and ensuring proper monitoring and evaluation by the setting of clear targets the right way forward?
- is the list of schemes proposed for integration in the Fund the right one? Should some be deleted or others added?

4. ACHIEVING FOCUS IN STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Achieving Focus in Local Strategy and Planning: Community Strategies

4.1 Implementing the aspirations set out in the previous chapter and Annex 1 will require co-ordinated activity by local authorities, the NHS and voluntary organisations. It is at the local level that gaps and overlaps in provision can best be identified and remedies set in place.

4.2 There are 3 strands to the rationalisation of plans:

- the new Community Strategies functions in the 2000 Local Government Act;
- the new Children and Young People's Frameworks proposed by this document - to provide a comprehensive overview of all local children's services in each area; and
- reviewing the requirements for detailed service and programme specific plans for aspects of children's services with a view to merging and simplifying wherever possible.

4.3 The contributions of all partners will be vital and success will not be achieved without them. But of all the partners, local authorities have a particular responsibility for community leadership under the community strategy arrangements set out in the Local Government Act 2000.

Community Strategies

4.4 The aim of community strategies is to enhance the quality of life of local communities through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area. Community strategies will allow local communities to articulate their aspirations, co-ordinate the actions of the local authority and those of public, voluntary and business organisations in the area, and provide focus and shape for the current and future actions of these organisations. Their key components are: long-term vision and outcomes for the area, an action plan with short term priorities and shared commitment to implementation and monitoring arrangements. Community strategies provide the overarching framework with which authorities and others can develop plans for services for children and young people.

Local Children and Young People's Frameworks

4.5 The Assembly proposes that all local authorities should be required to produce a comprehensive children and youth strategy (local framework) as part of their community strategy. This would set up a context to embrace planning for all services provided for children and young people, including those provided locally by other agencies. The local framework

would, through the community leadership elements of the planning arrangement, be subject to the requirement that local people are consulted on their needs. In the case of the local strategies, this would mean the involvement of children and young people in particular.

4.6 The proposal is that the local framework would be the vehicle for achieving coherence across all strategic planning affecting the quality of life and well-being of children and young people. It would demonstrate the shared ownership of, and responsibility for, meeting the needs of children and young people that lie with the local authority, the health service, education and training providers, voluntary and business sectors and local communities in the area. The local frameworks will need to influence, and be influenced by, the plans of the NHS (including the Local Health Group, NHS Trust and Local Health Alliance), and other agencies. While children and young people are not major consumers of acute health services, some services such as community child health services, health promotion, advice on sexual and substance misuse issues, and child and adult mental health services, are vital components of the agenda of preventing young people from falling into various forms of social exclusion. These areas of health service provision for children and young people therefore need to become priorities under the emerging NHS Strategy.

4.7 The local frameworks would need to take account of, and influence, local Communities First initiatives. They would need to influence other local plans affecting children and young people, including Housing Strategy and Operational Plans, Transport Plans and Community Safety Plans. They would be relevant to strategic planning for other areas such as libraries, leisure and amenities. They would include reference to activities led by the voluntary and business sectors, and link to other activities relevant to children and young people, such as sports and the arts.

4.8 The local framework would:

- reflect the local contribution to achieving the policies and priorities of Better Wales and, in future, policy agreements in respect of children and young people;
- set joint local strategic priorities for local authorities, the NHS, National Council for Education and Training, Careers Wales and voluntary sectors;
- reflect Best Value and service-user evaluations and thereby provide opportunities for participation of communities and of children and young people;
- set out the local context for service plans including:
 - corporate objectives of the local authority, health and other services in the area;
 - use, where appropriate, of European Union funding under Objectives 1 and 3;
 - demographic factors, identified needs of children and young people, socially disadvantaged, in need, looked after and those in the early years and moving to adulthood group;

- performance to date against national and local performance indicators;
- the way in which the partners will work together - how arrangements will be put in place to pick up and follow through children and young people with problems;
- how the views of children and young people have been used in developing and monitoring the local strategy;
- how the relevant agencies will contribute to the overall planning and review process, and their respective responsibilities to lead on discrete service plans.

4.9 Planning for children and young people should be a corporate responsibility across the whole local authority. It is suggested that, in each local authority, a senior elected member should take particular responsibility for the process, matched by a similar responsibility with the chief executive or other chief officer.

Age Range

4.10 The study *Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales* by the Assembly's Policy Unit points to the need for local partnerships to be established under the Learning and Skills Act to review and develop services for young people aged 11 to 25 for some purposes. This raises the issue of whether there should be overall local strategies covering the period from birth to 25, or whether there should be two strategies, one covering from birth to the end of primary school and the other 11 to 25. A single strategy for preventative services for children and young people would maximise integration, but there is a question mark over whether a strategy ranging from health visitors for new-born babies to tackling disaffection among young adults would have adequate coherence.

4.11 A division at the time of transfer from primary to secondary education would recognise that the needs of babies and young children are very different from those of people approaching adulthood. Children aged 0 -11 are heavily reliant on their families or carers for support and nurture. Above this age, young people aged 12 -18 continue to be reliant on their families or carers. However, in this age group young people are beginning to move into the world as they establish an independent life course, develop the confidence and capacity to make rational decisions and take responsibility, based upon choice and awareness of the world in which they live. Many, perhaps most, move to independence after a period of quasi-independence that straddles the age of majority.

4.12 Reflecting this division in the organisation of planning and service delivery would bring a number of benefits, including the introduction of a focus based on the needs of children, young people and their families as they change with the growth of children. Service provision to children in the younger age group needs to focus more upon their families and carers as significant providers of support, whereas for young people the importance of the family, while remaining strong, becomes increasingly less important.

4.13 However, an age-related split in the production of strategies would carry with it the danger of lack of co-ordination of the transfer from primary to secondary education. A number of existing plans, such as Education Strategic Plans and Social Services Children's Services Plans (including Children First plans) need to span the full age range. Moreover, the break at age 11 does not have the same significance for services such as the NHS and social services as it does for education. It is therefore suggested that there should be a single local framework for each local authority area, covering the age range 0 - 18, but extending to 25 for the services covered by the Youth Support strategies proposed in *Extending Entitlement*. The arrangements for planning for young people in *Extending Entitlement* should be just one of the range of plans subsidiary to the local framework.

Individual Service Plans

4.14 The local framework would set, co-ordinate and reflect the strategic elements agreed in all service plans which are currently produced and which are relevant to children and young people, including:

- Education Strategic Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, Pastoral Support Plans (and, in the case of children with special education needs, Individual Education Plans and statements of special educational needs);
- Social Services' Children's Services Plans (including Children First Plans);
- Health Improvement Plans;
- Early Years Development and Childcare Plans;
- Children and Youth Partnership Fund Plans;
- Youth Justice Plans;
- Crime and Disorder Strategies;
- Drug and Alcohol Action Team or Local Action Team Plans, as appropriate;
- Area Child Protection Committee Plans;
- Sure Start Plans.

4.15 In addition there is a range of other services, some of which are delivered through partnerships, in which local authorities are involved, and which impact crucially on the prospects of young people. These include the careers service and the wide spectrum of post-16 learning to be funded through the National Council for Education and Training. Many of the Council's programmes will be delivered through local service delivery plans of non-statutory Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs). It is envisaged that these will include, as a minimum, further education institutions, local authority training and adult community education provision, local authority schools' sixth forms, Welsh-medium secondary schools, private training providers, employers receiving public funds for training, voluntary sector providers and, where appropriate, higher education institutions as associate members. A wide range of other organisations will have some involvement, including public libraries. Careers

Wales, CCETs and National Council will all need to be involved in the production of the local framework, and these plans should in turn inform the National Council's regional assessments of needs and strategic plans.

Putting local framework into practice - Local planning through a single Children and Young People Partnership

4.16 Coherent local frameworks will depend on strong local partnerships which include representatives of all the relevant groups, including local authorities, the NHS, schools, voluntary organisations and children and young people themselves. These partnerships should ensure co-ordination of planning and delivery and make the links across all existing services and schemes. Local arrangements may vary, but it should be possible to integrate the various existing planning partnerships within a single framework, acknowledging that statutory requirements exist in some cases (e.g. Early Years Development Partnerships). However, flexibility should still be possible within the local partnership; for example sub-groups may be required to concentrate on a particular area of planning or work. The important point is that the overarching partnership should allow the integration of different components as necessary to ensure the coherence and continuity of the planning process.

4.17 Individual service plans for the key service areas may continue to be necessary in order to define operational delivery of services. Further work to develop a unified children's planning framework is under way. Detailed proposals will be ready for consultation later this year.

4.18 The proposed local frameworks should lead to a radical improvement in the co-ordination of services in respect of children and young people. They should enable agencies jointly to agree and set local priorities and their responses to all-Wales priorities, identify gaps and overlaps at the local level, and collectively to own and operate arrangements for evaluation and measuring outcomes.

4.19 The local framework should also provide a context for using of the partnership and funding flexibility between the NHS and social services allowed under the Health Act 1999. It would co-ordinate education, health and social services responses to need at the local level, for example giving more continuity of support arrangements between education and community child health services.

4.20 Partnership working should help to create networks of support for those in need, within a structure that identifies lead responsibilities of providers and can provide a coherent service across both mainstream and targeted interventions. Mainstream services play a key role in linking people to both universal and targeted supports, and local partnerships should aim to ensure that this is achieved.

4.21 The intention is not to add to the requirements for planning or partnership working but to put a new structure in place, fully integrated with the community planning process, which should remove the need for some separate partnerships and plans. Those that remain should become all the more effective for being in the context of an overall framework and agreed ways of working between the partners.

4.22 These new partnerships will be effective only if there is commitment across all of the organisations involved to radically new ways of working. Those involved will have to look beyond the agenda of their parent organisation and identify themselves as part of a team whose prime objective is the improvement of the life chances of children and young people in their area. This will require genuine co-operation among organisations of very different sizes and ways of working. It will require openness, a shared agenda and an end to organisational rivalry. It will also need co-ordination of planning processes which currently operate to different timetables and objectives, and are fuelled by different funding streams. There has to be a new participative approach to planning, involving not just service providers but also users in the shape of young people and their families. The new partnerships will have to be seen not as an additional burden or as a peripheral activity but as the main driver for achieving change. The outcome will have to be, not a plan which sits on a shelf, but a new perspective on dealing with the needs of children, young people and their families.

4.23 The difficulties of this are not under-estimated; it would take time to embed the proposed new approach. But at its heart lies an appreciation that none of the outcomes required for young people can be attributed to the work of any one agency; and that improving the life chances of children and young people has to become a real priority for all involved. These arrangements would provide a means of reflecting that reality in service planning. The rewards would be reaped not just by the children and young people themselves but also, ultimately, by a reduction in the problems to be solved by services for adults. Some authorities have already begun to reflect this approach in their Social Services Children's Service Plans. The challenge now is to embed it in the culture of working for children across Wales.

Question for consultation:

Are the proposed local framework and partnership arrangements for all children and young people the most appropriate way of achieving a strategic overview of their needs and the adequacy of service provision in the local area?

Is the approach of one overall local partnership and local decision as to what other groups should exist beneath it the right one?

Should the Assembly issue guidance about the partnership arrangements required in each area?

5. LISTENING TO CHILDREN

Background

5.1 Chapter 1 referred to the Assembly commitment to treating children and young people “as valued members of the community whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making”. This is reinforced by the objective of promoting active citizenship, providing the incentive and opportunity for children and young people to play a positive part in community life.

5.2 At an individual level, the process whereby children and young people take decisions and exercise responsible choices plays an essential part in each individual’s growth to adulthood and active citizenship. At the level of service provision, participation in decision-making can enhance the relevance and sustainability of planned developments and promote feelings of ownership and responsibility for them.

5.3 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child places a significant emphasis on the participation of children and young people in decision making. Children are active citizens in the world and have rights to their own opinions, to express them, and have them fully taken into account. This includes the right to be involved in decision making (Article 12), to receive information (Article 17) and the right to be a citizen, in the sense of being socially included as active participants in local communities.

5.4 Consultations over this framework with representatives of service providers and with children and young people themselves indicated that there is a strongly held view in favour of listening more closely to the voices of children and young people. The Assembly believes that this framework should ensure that children and young people are listened to and enabled to play an active part in decision making and in determining the services they receive. However, those who are most in need of support tend to be those who are also least likely to put their views forward. Whatever arrangements are put in place must be capable of listening to their views.

5.5 *Llais Ifanc*, or *Young Voice*, is already beginning this process. The Assembly has begun a 12-18 month process of engaging and interacting with children and young people. *Llais Ifanc/Young Voice* will help the Assembly experiment and find sustainable long-term ways of engaging and interacting with children and young people, particularly in relation to effective consultation and the development and implementation of Assembly policies. It aims to create clear, accessible and innovative mechanisms to enable children and young people to have their say about what concerns them, and for the Assembly to establish a positive dialogue with them. An important and integral part of the process will be to consult children and young people about how they can help ensure that *Young Voice* achieves these goals.

5.6 There are currently three elements to *Llais Ifanc/Young Voice*. First, there is a website through which young people can ask questions about the Assembly and its work, and give their opinions on Assembly issues that affect them. The aim is to develop this into a completely interactive site to enable young people to discuss issues not only with the Assembly but with other young people across Wales. The website is being linked to many other websites for young people to create a single focus, or hub, for a range of local information and other networks for young people. Second, information about the Assembly and how it works will be provided for young people through a range of constantly updated information packs. Third, *Llais Ifanc/Young Voice* will organise events which give young people the chance to discuss issues amongst themselves and to debate those issues with Assembly and local politicians.

Participation needs a context

5.7 The views of children and young people need to be incorporated into the policies and plans of service providers. The problems and issues raised are likely to be direct and challenging. Responses will be expected if the participation process is not to become devalued and seen as “a waste of time” or an example of “they don’t listen to us”. Initial action will need to be implemented in a short time-scale; something complex that takes 2 to 3 years or more to emerge will be perceived by many as non-delivery.

Participation needs a structure.

5.8 The level at which children and young people can most easily see the result of their participation is the local one. There are already a number of ways in which participation takes place at the local level, such as children and young people’s forums, town councils and school councils. Most local authorities in Wales support mechanisms of this kind or are in process of establishing them. These arrangements can be built upon in order to establish a mechanism within which children and young people can act as active participants in decision-making in a coherent and consistent manner.

5.9 Schools are a key location for involvement of children and young people. They are a universal service, an important agency of socialisation and of growth to adulthood, in which the ability to make informed choices and take responsible decisions are vital elements. Schools therefore can have a central part to play in ensuring that participation reaches the maximum numbers of children and young people. Practice varies considerably at present.

5.10 The Assembly believes that there should be school councils in every primary and secondary school in Wales with the function of involving pupil representatives in relevant decisions. By listening to children and young people, and encouraging their participation in the wider life of their schools, they will be helped to develop communication skills and to learn how to participate in decision making and in sharing responsibility, assisting them in growing towards independence and adulthood. At the primary level, participation is likely to centre

initially on issues affecting school life directly, such as bullying, and activity might be built on existing initiatives such as School Watch. With the older age groups, this initial focus on the school can lead on to consideration of wider issues.

5.11 The Children and Young People's Partnerships proposed in Chapter 2 will need to involve representatives of children and young people. This might include using the network of local school councils. As all schools are given access to the Internet, this provides an ideal medium for consulting with children and young people at the same time as contributing to their ICT skills. It will be important that the school councils are effective and do not simply pay lip service to pupils' views. This may require a change of culture in some schools. However, schools councils are not likely to be a means of reaching all groups of youngsters. Other arrangements are also likely to be necessary.

5.12 Local Children and Young People's Partnerships and schools councils will need to give particular attention to ensuring that the voices they hear include those of potentially disadvantaged children, such as those with special needs, those from other cultures and those looked after by local authorities.

Participation needs to be supported

5.13 Consultation with children and young people is different from consultation with adults. To be meaningful, it needs to incorporate a range of techniques, and will frequently be more interactive and visual than is usual with adult consultation. The more needy young people are, the less likely they are to access consultation processes. Specialist input will be required in order to advise on issues such as the form which consultation should take and training for participants. A range of projects and initiatives already exists in the advocacy, children's rights and advice fields, many of them supported by local and health authorities, from which models of practice and learning can be developed. The Assembly does not wish to be prescriptive about the form such consultation should take. However, in submitting their local strategies, authorities will be expected to have shown that children and young people across the whole spectrum have been involved in their production, and in what way.

Questions for consultation:

What are the best ways of obtaining the views of children and young people?

Is a network of schools councils a necessary part of the arrangements for obtaining the views of children and young people?

If so, what guidance should there be for schools on setting up and maintaining effective schools councils?

How can the arrangements for participation ensure that children and young people who are disadvantaged, through health, economic or social factors, take part?

How do we prevent consultation being tokenistic?

How can we engage children and young people in public life outside their schools or colleges?

6. MONITORING THE STRATEGY

6.1 Implementation of improved services for children within this framework will require a structure at the all-Wales level. A number of elements of this are in place or planned; there is already an Assembly Minister with specific responsibility for children and young people, and her work is supported by a Policy Group of officials at Board and Group Directors across the relevant groups of the Assembly. There is also a Children's Task Group, involving representatives of the NHS, social services, education and the voluntary sector which is involved in implementing the proposals for children in the Welsh Social Services White Paper *Building for the Future*. Work is in hand on further proposals. The Assembly intends to produce regular reports assessing progress in respect of the overall implementation of this framework.

Options for creating new advisory capacity on services for children in Wales

6.2 In his Report, *Lost in Care*, Sir Ronald Waterhouse recommended the establishment of an Advisory Council for Children's Services in Wales comprised of members covering a wide range of expertise in children's services, including practice, research management and training. Its purpose would be to strengthen the provision of children's services in Wales and to ensure that they are accorded the priority that they deserve. Sir Ronald recommended that the functions should include:

- advising on Government policy and legislation with regard to their likely impact on children and young people;
- commissioning research; and
- disseminating information and making recommendations.

6.3 A variant of this proposal would be the creation of a multidisciplinary implementation monitoring group tasked with advising the Assembly on the effectiveness of what is being delivered locally, similar to the model recommended by the *Extending Entitlement* report in relation to young people. This would provide technical expertise and a cross cutting perspective to help determine:

- priorities for improving services for children - across the range of professional, funding and other issues;
- relevant messages from current research - including the dissemination of good practice and topics for future research and evaluation.

6.4 There would be some danger of overlap with the functions of the Children's Commissioner implicit in both variants described above. Although there are arguments in principle for creating a central advisory capacity to focus on the needs of children in Wales

across professional and service boundaries and to tap both academic and professional expertise, there are a number of key issues to be addressed in attempting to create this capacity including:

- defining its functions clearly - should these be addressed through a task and finish process or could a standing advisory group maintain sufficient focus and impetus?
- method of appointment - would appointment through either nomination by sector or through public advertisement be likely to produce the most effective combination of expertise?
- relationship with the office of the Children's Commissioner and with the Assembly's Committees and official structures.

The Children's Commissioner

6.5 The Assembly's Health and Social Services Committee has produced proposals for the role, remit and functions of a Children's Commissioner for Wales, which were endorsed in plenary debate. The Committee recommended that the roles of the Commissioner should be to:

- exercise his/her functions with the overarching aim of promoting and upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and within that context, to:
- promote children's rights, raise the profile of children's issues and take an overview of the impact of all policies and procedures on children across all services in Wales provided for, or affecting children, with a view to making recommendations and developing good practice guidance and models, including for cross-sector working;
- represent the views of children;
- monitor and oversee complaints and whistleblowing procedures and arrangements for children's advocacy; and consider the merits of securing such procedures and arrangements in so far as they do not exist;
- be a source of advice and information for children about how to use existing complaints procedures, and for practitioners about good practice in the production and implementation of complaints procedures;
- undertake formal investigations if a matter of principle is at stake - for example, if there is evidence of a systematic breach of children's rights in a particular area - or the circumstances of a case fall outside any existing complaints procedures;
- have a power to assist, including financially, with proceedings in respect of a breach of the rights of an individual child if there is a matter of principle at stake;

- observe if he/she chooses, and if appropriate, any child abuse investigations in Wales;
- have the power to require the provision of information and the disclosure of documents in connection with these functions and initiate enforcement action to obtain information if necessary;
- make reports, including an annual report to the Assembly.

6.6 The intention is to establish the Commissioner in two phases. The statutory office of the Commissioner will be established initially under the Care Standards Act 2000. The Commissioner's functions under the Act will extend to the services regulated under it. These include children's homes, residential family centres, fostering agencies, voluntary adoption agencies, local authority fostering and adoption services, domiciliary care, the welfare aspects of day-care and childminding services for children under eight, private and voluntary hospitals and clinics, and the welfare aspects of boarding schools. It is hoped to appoint the Commissioner by the end of 2000 or early 2001.

6.7 The Assembly is seeking separate primary legislation to widen the Commissioner's role, remit and functions, in line with the Committee's recommendations.

6.8 At the same time, the Assembly is considering using its existing powers under the Government of Wales Act to ask the Commissioner to undertake, in an advisory capacity, tasks relating to all children in Wales.

6.9 As the Commissioner's aims will include the upholding and promotion of the principles set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it is expected that he/she will contribute to the preparation of the Wales response to the 5 yearly report to the UNCRC Commission.

6.10 The Commissioner will need to be in touch with a wide range of organisations at different levels in order to carry out his/her functions, and further consideration needs to be given to how levels of communication should be developed. But the most important relationship will be that with children and young people themselves, as the Commissioner will be accountable to them and they should inform the agenda for the Commissioner's work. The Commissioner will need to set up, as a matter of priority, specific mechanisms to allow such participation by children and young people. The Commissioner may consider utilising and building on existing participation mechanisms, such as local and regional children and young people's forums, and the Assembly's *Llais Ifanc/Young Voice* initiative as the means of achieving the most coherent participation framework.

6.11 An important aspect of the Commissioner’s work will be taking an overview of the impact of all services in Wales provided for, or affecting children, with a view to making recommendations and developing good practice guidance and models, including for cross-sector working. To be effective, mechanisms will need to be put in place to ensure that the Commissioner is consulted at an early stage on policy proposals.

6.12 The Assembly is likely to request the Commissioner to produce an annual report on the status of children in Wales, which would include an assessment of the position against the background of the UN Convention and the values and priorities embodied in this framework.

Assessing the Impact of policies on Children and Young People

6.13 The Assembly needs to develop mechanisms to ensure that the needs of children, young people, and their families are taken into account when policy is developed across the range of its responsibilities. That means taking them into account when considering developments in services which are not provided directly for children, such as planning issues and road building. The Assembly proposes to introduce a requirement for “policy proofing” all new policies to their potential impact on children and young people.

6.14 The questions which will need to be addressed as part of this process include:

- Does the proposal have direct implications for children or young people and, if so, what are they? How can it improve their lives?
- Does the proposal have a significant indirect effect on children or young people, for example the construction of a road which might affect their access to a school or leisure facility?
- Will the proposal affect one group of children and young people more than others, or will there be competing interests between different groups?
- Will the proposal affect other policy areas or bodies involved in working with children and young people, and is there scope for integrating the new proposal with other measures in train or prospect?

Questions for consultation:

Should the Assembly adopt an external advisory group and what methods of appointment and working would be most effective?

CURRENT ASSEMBLY PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITIES

1. The following sections set out the Assembly's current priorities and programmes within each of the Better Wales themes. Expenditure is for the 2000-01 financial year, unless otherwise indicated.

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

2. Learning is, at its most basic, the key to a child's understanding of the world. As children grow, learning becomes the essential basis for responsible and active citizenship and the stability that comes from a good job. The Assembly aims to ensure that everyone has the skills and knowledge to fulfil their full potential. This process begins with the Assembly priority to:

Give our youngest children, including those in our most deprived communities, a flying start.

3. Better Wales indicates that, by 2010:

New parents must possess the skills needed to help their children learn and develop as rounded individuals.

4. The Assembly recognises that parents are the key influence on the early years of most children. This is reflected in support for the National Family and Parenting Institute and a range of voluntary organisations such as Home Start, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. All of these bodies, and a range of others, are funded from the **Children and Family Services** grant scheme, totalling £2.6 million a year. The fundamental importance of parents is also recognised in the **Family Literacy and Numeracy Initiatives**, which are to be expanded so that 2300 parents and children are involved by March 2003. The Family Literacy Initiative, and its sister scheme the **Family Numeracy Initiative**, are run by the Basic Skills Agency in close collaboration with all 22 LEAs in Wales, their primary schools and local further education colleges. The Initiatives are targeted at parents with poor basic skills and few, if any, qualifications, and their children aged 3 to 6. Both the parents and children are given help in acquiring literacy and numeracy skills, and in addition the parents are also shown how better to help their children with reading, writing and number skills. The schemes therefore help to break down the intergenerational cycle of poor basic skills, and many of the parents have gone on to enrol in further education.

5. All parents need some help with the challenging task of bringing up children. But attention to the most deprived areas, where frequently the formal and informal support networks are at their weakest, is particularly beneficial in reducing disadvantage in later life. The **Sure Start** programme is focused on children from birth up to the age of 4 and is aimed at

improving health, the ability to learn, and social development of these children in the most deprived areas. It links to the wider social inclusion agenda by also providing support for parents and encouraging capacity building and parenting skills development. Objectives of the programme include early identification of and support for children with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties, supporting parents in promoting healthy development of their children, encouraging stimulating play, improving language skills and improving sensitivity of services to local need. Projects are planned by local partnerships, led by local authorities and including the NHS and voluntary sector. They are supported by £11 million of Assembly funding in 2000-2001.

6. While Sure Start is targeted on disadvantaged communities, the Assembly plans to make good quality early years learning opportunities and childcare universally available to those who require it. These services are planned through 22 **Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships**, led by local government but including the non-statutory sectors. They produce local early years development and childcare plans. Their objectives are threefold - to plan early learning provision which will enable children to be in a position to benefit fully from compulsory schooling; to provide safe and stimulating environments where children can be cared for while their parents work or train; and to provide children with settings where they can develop through informal play. Their work on childcare is carried out through in the context of the **National Childcare Strategy**, which is supported by £2.3 million of Assembly funding, of which £1.4 million goes to the Partnerships and the remainder for all-Wales support and training. The prime source of funding for new childcare places is the **New Opportunities Fund**, which has allocated £14.3 million over 4 years against a target of :

22,000 new National Lottery funded childcare places to be created through the Early Years and Childcare Development Plans.

7. Childcare can help children to benefit from the National Curriculum once they have begun school by providing learning opportunities after school or in the holidays. The Welsh Office (now National Assembly) published '**Unlocking Potential**' a framework for extending out of hours learning opportunities in Wales. This framework offers guidance and practical advice to all those who play a part in out of hours learning, also known as study support. The New Opportunities Fund has allocated £13.3 million over 3 years to promote study support activities throughout Wales. During this period, lottery money will be used to fund study support in at least half of all secondary schools and a quarter of all primary schools.

8. The Partnerships' work on early years is to be brought within a new framework for improving educational provision for pre-school children. Better Wales indicates that, by 2010:

Provision should be available for all pre-school children aged 3 to 4 to promote quality child care and early learning.

9. Current statutory provision ensures that there is a free, at least half-time, good quality education place available during the three terms before the start of compulsory education for every 4 year old whose parents want this. The Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee has undertaken a policy review of early years provision for three year olds, although final decisions have not been taken. Specific planning arrangements for any extension of provision will be based on an audit of existing provision across all sectors which will take place in 2001-2002.

10. Once children begin full-time schooling, they fall within the Better Wales priority to:

Drive up standards of teaching and attainment in all our schools, particularly those serving our most deprived communities

11. **School education** is the central universal service in the lives of most children. The vast majority are in mainstream schools, which are increasingly taking responsibility for supporting children who need special help to reach their potential. Inclusive education in mainstream schools, where this best meets the needs of the individual child, should be the aim, so these universal services include special support for those children in need of support - those with SEN and behavioural problems and many of those with physical disabilities.

12. All Local Education Authorities now have in place **Education Strategic Plans**, covering the 3-year period from April 1999. The plans, which are updated annually and reviewed fully at the end of the 3-year period identify the key priorities for LEAs in raising educational standards, and explain how they, schools, and other partners will work to deliver those priorities. They also detail the LEA's strategy for identifying and supporting schools with serious shortcomings.

13. The bulk of funding for school education is provided through Revenue Support Grant to local authorities. The current total local authority education budget is £1,409 million for revenue spending and £98.5 million for capital. The central strategy for school education is the **Building Excellent Schools Together (BEST)** programme, which emphasises the importance of improving standards and delivery of education and training, the need for policies designed to benefit the many, not the few, and special approaches to under-performance.

14. For children at the beginning of their school education, the Assembly has made the commitment that there should be no infant class with more than 30 pupils by 2001. Funding of £13.5 million is available to support **infant class size reduction**.

15. Target-setting underpins the BEST approach. Without targets, it would not be possible to monitor whether the young people of Wales are receiving the educational opportunities they deserve. Targets should not be a reason for undue narrowing of the curriculum; nor should they result in the particular needs and difficulties of some pupils being overlooked. But one of the greatest disservices that can be done to a child is to have excessively low expectations. Key targets include:

70%-80% of 11 and 14 year olds should attain the expected standards in the National Curriculum tests by 2003.

55% of 15 year olds should achieve at least 5 GCSEs at grades A to C, and 90% should have at least this number at grades A* to G, by 2003.*

The number of pupils leaving school without qualification to be cut by one-third by 2003.

School absences to be reduced to below 8% and exclusions to be reduced by one-third by 2003.

By 2010, over 90% of pupils must be entered for public examinations, attendance should exceed 95%, and the attainment of boys should be so improved that the gap between girls and boys will have been more than halved.

There must be a strong extra-curricular prospectus for every child by 2010, covering cultural, volunteering and enterprise activity.

On average, looked-after children should achieve at least 5 GCSEs by 2010.

16. It is vital that progress towards achieving these targets is regularly monitored. Estyn carries out a comprehensive programme of school inspections to help improve education standards in Wales. This is achieved by identifying strengths, or weaknesses, within a school and making constructive recommendations for disseminating good practice and addressing deficiencies. Evidence gathered by Estyn is invaluable in helping to develop education policies and in evaluating their effectiveness.

17. These universal services are backed up by specific measures to deal with the particular requirements of some groups of children, such as those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or looked after by local authorities. January 1999 saw the publication of **Shaping the Future for Special Education: an Action Plan for Wales** which highlighted key priorities for change and improvement in the assessment and provision for children with SEN. The needs of a number of groups needing special support are addressed by **Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST)**, which amount to £50million (including LEA contributions). The aims of the GEST programme include raising standards and the expectations of schools, teachers and pupils; getting better leadership and support for teachers; improving performance through the use of information and communications technology; broadening the range of qualifications to include vocational qualifications for school age children; promoting the wider social inclusion agenda; and spending money wisely. Its 19 target areas involve support to the under 5s, youth & community workers, special educational needs (SEN), youth access initiative, raising standards of literacy and numeracy, vocational & careers education, ethnic minority achievement, music development fund, school attendance and behaviour.

18 The educational needs of children looked after by local authorities have their own milestones on the way to the 2010 target above:

- 50% of children looked after to achieve at least one GCSE or GNVQ qualification by 2001, and 75 per cent by 2003; and
- children leaving care to achieve no less than the average educational attainment of children living in the area.

19. Following consultation, guidance on key actions aimed to improve the education outcomes for looked after children will be issued shortly.

20. The transition from school to other forms of education or to training and/or work can be a time of risk. Too many children are still falling out of education, training or employment during their teenage years, with the consequent danger of social exclusion for the remainder of their adult lives. Two programmes are specifically designed to intervene at an early enough stage to remove this risk. These are the **Children and Youth Partnership Fund** and the **Youth Access Initiative**.

Better Wales target

Local initiatives to raise youngsters' educational achievement using the £25 million Children and Youth Partnership Fund.*

- *3 years funding

21. The main emphasis of the Children and Youth Partnership Fund is on services for those aged over 11 years, although this can cover those down to the age of 8 where there is local need. The initiative aims to develop ways of lifting youngsters' educational achievement and encourage them away from crime, drugs, vandalism and truancy. It is specifically aimed at encouraging children and young people to strive for independence and to develop a sense of community and personal achievement. The Fund is co-ordinated through local partnerships including representatives from local authorities, the NHS and the voluntary sector, and is supported by £11 million from the Assembly in 2000-2001 (£1m of which is for Play 2000 - see below).

22. The **Youth Access Initiative** has the similar objective of engaging disaffected 14-17 year olds back into suitable education, training or employment. £2 million worth of projects are delivered through TECs, involving partners in the voluntary sector, and additional funds for work in schools are provided through GEST (see above). Given the closeness of objective to the Children and Youth Partnership Fund, the Youth Access Initiative is to be combined with it from April 2001.

23. **The West Wales and the Valleys Objective 1 and the East Wales Objective 3 European Structural Fund programmes** recognise the need to develop universal and targeted programmes to help ensure that children and young people transfer successfully from education into work.

To be effective, this support needs to be aimed at the pre as well as post-16 age groups and both programmes will support specific action, within the education environment, to prevent disaffection amongst children and young people and to prepare them for adult and working life. This will be particularly relevant for disadvantaged (including those leaving care or with care responsibilities) and disaffected children. The funds acknowledge that the fundamental need to help children and young people to be good citizens is an important factor in helping them to access the labour market. There will be a wide range of activities eligible for the support, including:

- projects to strengthen the links between education and the business and voluntary/community sectors;
- pre-vocational training, including opportunities to improve employability, motivation, confidence and self-esteem;
- work trial programmes;
- mentoring programmes and outreach work;
- projects to engage disaffected children and young people or those at risk of disaffection, for example based around schools and colleges, which could include a combination of academic/educational and vocational training activities and extra curricular activities;
- support for multi-agency partnership approaches and capacity and training measures for practitioners.

24. The relevant Objective 1 and 3 measures will build on existing policies and programmes for helping young people into work, promoting social inclusion and good citizenship.

25. Implementation bodies will include local authorities, voluntary and community organisations, schools and colleges; public sector bodies, training organisations, the private sector and trade unions.

26. As young people move from school into other sectors of activity, their needs fall within the Better Wales priority:

Put more of our investment in people and lifelong learning so that everyone, and particularly our youth, can gain the range of knowledge and skills required to fulfil their potential and prosper in the new economy.

27. The task of making choices as to the appropriate form of employment, training or continuing education is one of the critical moments of life, and the role of the Careers Service is vital for all young people as they approach the end of compulsory school education. Current expenditure on the Careers Service is £14.9 million. Education business links - including work experience, opportunities to learn about business and enterprise and employer support for the delivery of the curriculum are supported by £3.6 million of Assembly funding, provided via the Training and Enterprise Councils.

28. While careers advice and work experience are universal services of potential benefit to all, some young people need more specialist support. This is provided by the Youth Gateway, designed to help those young people who need additional support to progress to good quality education, training or work that will best suit the individual's needs, currently funded through the training and enterprise councils (TECs) at the level of £3.3 million by the Assembly. The establishment of Careers Wales, in April 2001, will draw together Assembly support for the Careers Service, elements of education and business links and the Youth Gateway. The new Careers Wales companies will work with young people and local partners to ensure that all young people have access to impartial and independent information and advice in making decisions on career and learning options.

29. **Learning is for Everyone (LIFE)** plays the same role for learning after compulsory school age as does BEST for school education. It sets out a National Learning Strategy for Wales, which includes better access to information and provision; new measures to increase and widen participation; a single, flexible, credit-related qualifications framework spanning all learning post-16; new targets for learning; and strengthening co-operation, collaboration and partnership at the local, regional and all-Wales levels.

30. LIFE was followed by the Education and Training Action Plan, which builds upon it and proposes the creation of Careers Wales as an all-age service providing information and advice on learning and careers, and a National Council for Education and Training to drive further education and training, both formal and informal.

31. Better Wales includes the following targets in support of the Education and Training Action Plan:

A reduction in the number of 16-18 year olds without qualifications to some 1 in 20 by 2003;

15% of further education courses to reach the highest standard (Grade 1); 80% to reach Grade 1 or 2 by 2003;

By 2010, access to, and participation in, education and training should have increased markedly. All pupils leaving school should enter further or higher education or take up training in employment. Virtually all 16-18 year olds should have GCSE or equivalent vocational qualifications;

Local authorities and the voluntary sector will have integrated and well-developed youth services.

32. In support of these targets, the Assembly currently provides £75 million to TECs to fund **work-based training** for young people, which includes the **Modern Apprenticeship** programme, and £213.6 million to the further education sector via the Further Education Funding Council. In order to help ensure that the learning that young people acquire meets the needs of employers

the Assembly has led a partnership to undertake the Future Skills Wales project, has appointed a Skills Task Force and will prepare a **Skills Action Plan** as part of an Economic Development Strategy.

33. Finally, Better Wales recognises that, vital though the acquisition of skills to obtain employment are, there is far more to learning than this. It includes the priority to:

Promote active citizenship, creativity and entrepreneurship.

34. The Assembly has the following targets under the above priority:

Increase participation in voluntary and community action: in particular, more of our young people to be engaged in the life of our communities as a result of an Internet-based, interactive network of youth councils, the establishment of a 'Youth Voice' to advise the Assembly and by ensuring that all schools place a greater emphasis on active citizenship.

A new framework to be developed to tackle youth exclusion on the basis of an integrated approach to supporting young people.

Further support for the development of bilingual and other linguistic skills for more of our children and young people.

35. The report *Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales* makes a number of recommendations designed to support this priority, including the following:

- support for young people in Wales should be structured around an **entitlement for all young people** to a range of services designed to promote their attainment and development as individuals;
- in every Welsh local authority area there should be a **young people's strategy**, agreed and delivered jointly by the statutory and voluntary agencies, to create a **network of support and opportunity** open to all young people in the area;
- the aims of the strategy should be to help every young person in Wales to realise their full potential by **participating successfully** in education, training and work and by **contributing as citizens** within their communities and beyond.

36. Play, and more structured forms of physical recreation, should be a normal component of a healthy childhood and adolescence. Out of school care supported under the National Childcare Strategy provides valuable opportunity for unstructured play, but not all children attend such settings. The Assembly has recognised the value of play by making available £1 million for the **Play 2000** scheme, as part of the Children and Youth Partnership Fund (see paragraph 20 above), to improve open-access play facilities in deprived areas. Part of the funding is being used to support a study of play in Wales, which will report to the Assembly in the autumn and form the basis of consideration of future policy.

37. While unstructured activity in settings such as adventure playgrounds can be attractive well into the teenage years, as children grow older their needs for recreation tend to be met in more structured settings. Many of these are provided by the voluntary sector, such as Guides, Scouts and boys and girls clubs. Others are provided through **local authority youth services**. Currently, the Assembly supports these services through Revenue Support Grant. Grants totalling some £1.2 million are also made to the Secondary Schools and Youth Work Programme (a range of projects bringing schools and youth workers together to re-engage 11 to 16 year olds who have been, or are in danger of being, excluded); to support the central activities of 17 all-Wales voluntary youth organisations, including appropriate training for their youth workers; and for the mainstream programmes of the Wales Youth Agency.

38. Other schemes for encouraging participation in sport and the arts are provided by the **Sports and Arts Councils for Wales**. In comparison with other parts of the UK and the majority of European countries, the health of people in Wales is poor. Low levels of physical activity are linked to heart disease, hypertension, non-insulin dependent diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis. Encouragement of sporting activity among children and young people can lead to lifelong healthier habits of exercise. Sport can also contribute to social cohesion and regeneration. The Sports Council has targets of ensuring that:

55% of children aged 7-11 and 57% of young people aged 11-16 take part in extra-curricular activities by 2003.

39. The Sports Council has produced a **Strategy for Welsh Sport: Young People First**. That includes the *Dragon Sport initiative*, which aims to introduce 7-11 year olds to an enjoyable and well-organised range of sports, and engage resources, both paid and voluntary in delivering sports activities through out-of-school clubs. **Clwb Cymru** is an initiative to establish links between schools and sports clubs so that there is a natural progression from one to the other. The National Assembly has set up a task force to examine physical education and sport in schools. This will explore means of developing existing good practice, raising performance standards and widening participation in extra-curricular activities.

40. The Arts and Young People in Wales Taskforce aims to ensure that all schools in Wales adopt a policy for arts development. It will develop guidance with the Welsh Local Government Association for schools on devising and implementing an arts policy element within schools plans. The target over the period 1999-2002 is to have the guidance accepted by local education authorities and professional bodies. The other target is for 25% of schools to have arts policies by 2002.

A BETTER STRONGER ECONOMY

41. The Assembly aims to create an advanced, dynamic and more diverse economy. This strategic framework covers young people up to the age of 18, during which time they will have a maximum of two years in which to participate in the world of work. However, that does not mean that the theme of the economy is irrelevant to young people. The key contribution of services for children and young people is to ensure that all have the necessary education and

skills to participate in the economy. A buoyant economy, offering the visible prospect of rewarding jobs, is in itself a major motivating factor, but services also need to be provided in ways that motivate and encourage young people, including the marginalised and those with disabilities, to participate. Finally, economic prosperity increases the capacity of parents to provide support and opportunity for their children.

42. The most directly relevant Better Wales benchmark for 2010 under this heading is that:

Spreading prosperity throughout our country should make it possible for more young people to secure a reasonable choice of rewarding work within reasonable reach of their communities.

BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

43. The National Health Service is a universal service for children, as is education. All children are likely to come into contact with the NHS and NHS services are the only universal services for pre-school aged children. Relevant services include ante-natal care and maternity services, GP, dental and health visitor services, community child health services and hospital based services. Improving equity and access are two key aspects of health service development. A review of the highly specialised hospital services for children (tertiary services), including neonatal intensive care, has recently been announced and will report in June 2001.

44. The Assembly, as outlined in Better Wales, aims to tackle the root causes of ill health, including poor housing, the stresses of living in deprived communities and low income linked to unemployment. It deals with better health and well-being under the following themes.

Improve health and reduce health inequalities by tackling the underlying causes of ill health and improving access.

45. Relevant targets supporting this priority include:

A measurable improvement in health in key areas, by the continued implementation of the Better Health - Better Wales programme and related Action Plan;

Local action plans under the Sure Start programme, which supports parents and pre-school children in disadvantaged areas, to be fully implemented by 2000;

Substance misuse to be tackled by implementing the Welsh Substance Misuse Strategy;

To have implemented new Welsh strategies on the mental health of children, adolescents and adults.

46. **Better Health - Better Wales**, published by the Welsh Office in 1998, set out aims for sustainable health through collaborative action. It indicated that children's health is an important indicator of health in later life, and that high levels of poor health among adults has

a damaging effect on their children's health. It referred back to *The Health of Children in Wales*, a statement of existing policy and advice on best practice in dealing with children's health issues released by the Welsh Office in 1997. *The Health of Children in Wales* identified the need for the child to be seen as a whole and care to be integrated across the wide range of disciplines - health, social, education and independent sectors - in response to assessed needs.

47. **Better Health - Better Wales** was followed by a strategic framework, which set out the aim 'To ensure that children and young people meet their potential'. Drivers for action were identified as being local authority children's services, schools and colleges and the youth services. A range of levers for action were also identified, some of which, such as Sure Start and the Childcare Strategy, are dealt with under 'Better Opportunities for Learning' above. Other levers for action include the **Healthy Schools** initiative, which helps schools to become health promoting bodies, with a budget of around £500k a year until 2004, nutritional standards for school meals and initiatives with the Wales Youth Agency to enhance the health promotion work of the youth services.

48. The basis of the **Sure Start** initiative has been described above. It aims to provide integrated support for both the health and education of the youngest children in the most deprived communities.

49. Better Wales target:

Give children from disadvantaged backgrounds a better start to life through the £25 million Sure Start programme*

* 3 year funding

50. Sure Start targets of particular relevance to the improvement of health include:

- A reduction in proportion of low birth weight babies (i.e. low birth weight below 2,500 grams, the baseline being 7.4% (1998) Wales;
- A reduction in the number of children admitted to hospital as an emergency during their first year of life with gastro-enteritis, a respiratory infection, or a severe injury.

51. Concern for the earliest years is also reflected in the **Breast Feeding Strategy**, an initiative to increase the initiation and continuance of breast feeding in Wales. It involves health professionals supporting women and aims to reduce the current health inequalities and narrow the gap between the lowest and highest local area breast feeding rates.

52. The **Substance Misuse Strategy** *Tackling Substance Misuse in Wales, a Partnership Approach*, emphasises the need to help children and young people resist substance and alcohol misuse.

53. The National Assembly is consulting at present on a draft **Child and Adolescent Mental Health** Strategy drawn up by an independent Advisory Group. The draft ranges over the whole subject of mental health for young people, but it is worth highlighting one aspect of the Group's work. In preparing the draft, the Advisory Group arranged presentations from experts whose research showed very clearly the value, to individuals and to society in general, of early intervention for children with emotional, behavioural and other mental problems. In particular, early informed intervention helps prevent the vicious circle of isolation, social exclusion, offending and longer term, more serious mental disorder problems. When comments have been received and evaluated, the Assembly will decide how best to take the Strategy forward.

54. The National Assembly has also established an external Learning Disability Advisory Group to prepare a draft service framework for people (including children) with learning disabilities. This Group will build upon the aims and objectives contained in the 1994 Welsh Mental Handicap Strategy Guidance to produce proposals to give people with learning disabilities; their families and carers a clear picture of the services and support they are entitled to from statutory authorities. The Advisory Group's report to the Assembly is expected in March 2001 and the Assembly will consult on the group's proposals.

55. High rates of teenage pregnancy and increasing rates of some sexually transmitted infection amongst young people are a matter of concern in Wales. The Assembly is tackling these through a **Strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales** which outlines a number of proposals to ensure that young people, particularly those at greatest risk, receive effective sex and relationships education, and have access to services offering information and advice on sexual health.

Through financially sustainable organisations, improve the quality and responsiveness of health and social services.

56. Objectives supporting this priority include the following:

To improve social and long term health care by setting up a Care Standards Inspectorate, a new registration system for health care services, producing guidance on fair access to care and forging good working relationships with the Disability Rights Commission;

To champion the rights of children by appointing a Children's Commissioner;

To improve the well-being and educational attainment of all children in need, including those looked after by local authorities, by implementing our Children First programme, which will also protect children in care from abuse and neglect;

To improve the health and well-being of Wales' 35,000 carers, by implementing the Carers' Strategy.

57. The Assembly's implementation of the Care Standards Act 2000 includes the establishment of the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales. From April 2002, the Care Standards Inspectorate will be responsible for regulatory inspections of adoption and fostering services, domiciliary services and residential and nursing homes. This will include the regulation of small children's homes, which under the terms of the Act, are expected to become liable for registration in January 2001.

58. The Care Standards Inspectorate will also be responsible for the regulation of day care services for children under eight, and for inspections of welfare provision in both maintained and independent boarding schools. In both of these areas, it will work closely with Estyn.

59. The creation of the post of Children's Commissioner is fundamental to this strategy. It is therefore dealt in Chapter 4 above.

60. The **Children First** programme aims to ensure that children in need and children looked after by local authorities are given a better start in life, through measures to promote their health, encourage their proper social development, raise their educational achievements and protect them from abuse or neglect. The main elements are:

- new objectives for children's services with performance indicators related to clear outcomes for children;
- targets set at all-Wales level or locally against each PI. Some targets already set;
- partnership between the Assembly and local government;
- significant role for local authority elected members.

61. New **National Standards for Foster Care** were launched in Wales in November last year, introducing 25 standards covering the needs and rights of children, the provision of effective and appropriate care by foster carers and the provision of high quality foster care services by local authorities.

62. The **Children (Leaving Care) Bill**, when enacted, will introduce new arrangements from April 2001 to support care leavers and to improve the life chances of young people aged 16 and over living in and leaving local authority care. It places new duties on local authorities to provide continuing care and support up to at least the age of 21.

63. **Child Protection** responsibilities are carried out through the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC), an inter-agency forum for agreeing how the different services and professional groups should co-operate to safeguard children in that area, and for making sure that arrangements work effectively to bring about good outcomes for children. ACPCs should contribute to, and work within the framework established by the Social Services Children's Services Plan. They should have a clear role in identifying those children in need who are at risk of significant harm, or who have suffered significant harm, and in identifying resource gaps - in terms of funding and/or the contribution of different agencies - and better ways of working.

64. **The Protection of Children Act 1999** creates a framework for identifying people unsuitable to work with children. Regulations covering England and Wales, prescribing the organisations to be covered by the Act and regulating the operation of an appeals tribunal are expected to come into force during October. Provisions of the recently announced **Criminal Justice and Court Services Bill** include a prohibition on persons with convictions for certain offences from working with children. The Bill is expected to become law shortly. The **Criminal Records Bureau**, which will cover England and Wales, will provide checks on the suitability of people to work with children. The Bureau will become operational in 2001.

65. **Social services** departments have a responsibility not just to act as providers of services but also to act as advocates for the children for whom they are responsible, obtaining the necessary services on their behalf. The bulk of funding for local authority social services for children is provided through the Revenue Support Grant. In aggregate, local authority budgets for these services in the current year amount to £613 million. From 1999-2000, this has included £5 million a year for Children First. For 2000-01, an increase in local authority spending of £48 million was made possible, and the Assembly has made it clear that it expects to see one-third (£16 million) of this spent on children's services. Finally, local authorities have been provided with a further £3 million of specific grant to support the implementation of Children First in 2000-01.

66. The **Carers' Strategy** puts forward proposals for dealing with the needs both of adults caring for disabled children and of children and young people who are themselves carers. It is commissioning an independent assessment of the needs of young carers and promoting awareness of them as children in need and in the context of the Children First programme.

BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

67. The Assembly seeks to improve the quality of the environment, to improve access to recreational and cultural experiences, and to widen the choice and opportunity for affordable and convenient transport options. The Assembly is also committed to transforming the most disadvantaged communities into places where everyone would want to live.

68. The first of the priorities under this heading is to:

Achieve high standards in the management of our environment.

Clearly activities under this priority will benefit children and young people more than any other part of the population, since our stewardship of the environment influences the world which they will inherit.

69. The second priority is to:

Develop a better co-ordinated and sustainable transport system to support local communities and the creation of a prosperous economy.

70. A number of targets under this priority are of direct relevance to children and young people. They include:

For all local authorities to have transport plans by August 2000, and bus strategies by 2003, and for more people to have ready access to facilities and more people to use public transport;

Better public and community transport for community groups by increasing subsidised, socially necessary bus services by 60%, extending the bus network, ensuring free bus travel for pensioners and encouraging community transport schemes, by 2002;

Improved road safety through our new Road Safety Strategy and developing safer neighbourhoods;

70% of the National Cycle Network to be completed by 2003.

71. Provision for road safety, public transport and cycling are of vital importance to children and young people. In their earliest years, public transport is frequently the only way in which they can be transported to supportive facilities such as health clinics and playgroups, as well as less formal settings such as the local park. Road safety also has a key role in making sure that the streets are safe for them. As they grow older, children make their own journeys. Dedicated cycle provision can play a valuable role, but road safety remains key in encouraging them to use cycling and walking as a method of transport, with consequent benefits both to the environment and to their health. Finally, at the upper age range young people are heavily dependent on public transport in order to conduct their social lives.

72. The bulk of funding for local transport services is provided through the revenue settlement. In addition the Assembly provides a direct grant to support the provision of **socially necessary bus services**. £2.5 million was provided to local authorities in 1998-99; this increased to £5 million in each of 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. Support is also provided for a **Wales Rural Transport Officer** and an annual grant of £250,000 is available to support **community transport projects**. Both schemes are currently under review with a view to re-focusing support more effectively.

73. This year, for the first time, the Assembly provided local authorities with a specific grant of £3.6m for **road safety** work. The criteria include an emphasis on combating child deaths and serious injuries. A three year pilot scheme, providing support to local authorities for **Safe Routes to Schools** was introduced in 1999-2000 under the Transport Grant mechanism. The scheme was guaranteed £0.5 million per annum. In the first two years it has been allocated £0.8 and £1.4 million. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage school children to walk or cycle to school, or to use public transport. Schemes need to be based in the school and community and contribute to wider area strategies for walking and cycling. Transport Grant also supports integrated transport package developments, which include investment to improve bus and rail services, provide cycling facilities and improve the pedestrian environment.

Help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime.

74. Targets include:

Communities First - community-led action to improve our most deprived communities;

A reduction in the proportion of people who feel very worried about safety on the streets to below the 1998 figure of 11% by supporting local crime and disorder partnerships, the Crime Reduction Programme and other community development strategies;

A reduction in the temptation for young people to engage in anti-social behaviour by using the £25 million Children and Youth Partnership Fund to provide constructive activities.*

* 3 year funding

75. Better Wales sets out the priority which the Assembly has committed to give to combat poverty and social disadvantage and to bridge the gap between the most deprived communities in Wales and the more affluent ones.

The Assembly is committed to addressing some of the shortcomings of past regeneration programmes: a lack of cohesion between different initiatives, difficulty for communities to take the lead, too many different funding streams, short-term pump priming, questionable commitment from key players and insufficient community involvement - 'quick fixes' have not worked. The problems faced by our most deprived communities are complex and deep rooted.

The Assembly's programme **Communities First**, launched on 31st March, is a new concept in community regeneration in Wales. Communities First offers a non prescriptive approach based on the principle that regeneration and community renewal should meet the needs and priorities determined by communities. The Communities First programme will be targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales; it will involve long term commitment by local authorities, the Assembly and other key agencies to promote real partnerships at local level for the delivery of action. It will help communities to take the lead and build capacity for sustainability.

A comprehensive consultation and participative policy development exercise has been embarked upon. The Assembly also arranged discussion sessions in all 22 local authority areas, and a number of community focus groups were set up to enable people at a local level to become involved and contribute their ideas and concerns. Following the initial consultation phase, the Assembly will consider more detailed arrangements for the programme including the selection of the target community areas. This work will be based in part on objective

indicators of deprivation at ward level across Wales, but will also involve consultation with local authorities and other agencies. Firm proposals for the programme should be developed by the early autumn, with a view to launch by the end of 2000.

76. Although neither youth justice nor crime and disorder are devolved matters, the Assembly has a close interest in both. In order for the fight against crime and disorder to be effective, it needs to be mainstreamed within a range of Assembly policies. There is also a small team of officials who work directly with the Home Office in supporting the crime and disorder partnerships and assessing bids from Wales against the £400 million (over 4 years) Crime Reduction Programme for England and Wales. This is headed by the Crime Reduction Director for Wales, who reports both to the Home Office and to the Assembly Cabinet.

77. The Crime Reduction Director also has responsibility for the Assembly's oversight of youth offending teams (YOTs). YOTs are multi-agency bodies, in which local authorities, police, probation and health are all statutory participants: successful operation of the teams requires consistent policies for the treatment of young people and reasonable financial contributions from each agency. Strong links between youth offending teams and local crime and disorder partnerships are necessary. The work of youth offending teams is governed by the production of annual youth justice plans (with which local authorities take the lead) and the contents of these need to be consistent with the policies set out in Social Services Children's Services Plans.

78. Local drug/alcohol/substance misuse programmes are directly relevant to the work of youth offending teams. The YOTs should have firm connections, through their constituent agencies, with other services for children and young people including, for example, child protection services, services for children who are looked after by the local authority, and children in need including children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and children with mental health problems. YOTs are the responsibility of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. They have received support from the £85 million Development Fund made available to the Board over a three year period to drive forward the Government's programme of youth justice reforms. Wales has received over £5 million from the Fund for a variety of different projects (e.g. bail support and restorative justice), mainly devised and run by local partnerships.

BETTER SIMPLER GOVERNMENT

79. Streamline our work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups.

Good government means acting in partnership with key players in society, and listening to people particularly the public as users of services. This applies equally to children and young people, who can be encouraged to participate in decisions that affect their lives, developing the ability to take responsible decisions and make informed choices and also a sense of shared ownership of their communities and services they receive. In addition taking the views of children and young people into account in service planning is a means of ensuring effective service delivery. The relevant target under this section is the production of this strategic framework for children and young people.

MAIN CONCERNS RAISED BY CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE DURING CONSULTATIONS AROUND THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

1. As part of the initial consultation on the strategy, the views of children and young people were sought directly by way of 3 workshop events held in Mid, North and South Wales in 2000. The target age was 11-18. The Children and Young Person's Assembly Steering Group were commissioned to arrange and hold the events. The Group comprises elected young people's representatives, and is supported by Children in Wales, the Wales Youth Agency and Save the Children. The Group issued invitations to children and young people to attend the events, via a wide variety of organisations, including youth clubs and schools. The workshops were based on group discussions and interactive exercises. The Group also held additional workshops for representatives from minority and disadvantaged groups. The main issues emerging were as follows.
2. **Drugs**
 - Too much made of the issue, just a natural part of growing up;
 - Peer pressure may lead to children experimenting with drugs;
 - Drug dealing is a big problem often taking place in schools;
 - Police should clamp down on drug dealers.
3. **Lack of Facilities**
 - Young people in all areas found there was not enough to do (particularly if aged over 14);
 - Would welcome the idea of being able to organise themselves and make decisions rather than being told what to do and where to go;
 - Cost of public facilities problematic.
4. **Bullying**
 - Still a common problem;
 - Additional problems can stem from the way bullying is handled;
 - Bullying is something that need to be stood up to;
 - Peer pressure could mean young people would bully others in order to "fit in".
5. **Education**
 - Still an issue for those who had left school as well as those still attending;
 - Under 14s felt exams were not a bad thing but too much emphasis is placed on them;

- Exams sometimes not relevant to the things young people want to know;
- Lower sets don't receive the extra help they need;
- Many felt they had benefited from smaller class sizes as teachers had more time to listen and give help needed ;
- Many described teachers in derogatory terms.

6 **Employment Opportunities**

- Opportunities limited leading to feelings of uncertainty (particular concern in rural areas);
- The need for support during uncertain transition period to adulthood.

7 **Sex and Teenage Pregnancy**

- Teenage pregnancy was an issue raised most often during consultation;
- Aware that Wales has one of the highest rates in Europe;
- Sex education in schools inadequate;
- Most young people would turn to friend and siblings for advice on these issues before parents.

8 **Racism**

- Aware of considerable levels of racism in society which need to be tackled;
- Elements of racism between Welsh and English.

Other Issues

- Under age drinking - often linked to young people having nothing to do or wanting to escape from pressures;
- Conflict with parents ;
- Homelessness ;
- Abuse.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION CONFERENCES WITH PRACTITIONERS

1 Initial consultation on the strategic approach to children's services took place in November 1999 with conferences held in Mid, South and North Wales. The aim of the conferences, which were organised jointly with Children in Wales, was to begin the formulation of the strategy by seeking the views of a wide range of representatives from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, including education, health, and social services. The following summarises the main views expressed.

- Obtain an audit of need in order to provide the basis of the focus;
- Support the values of the UN Convention;
- Establish children and young people as a focus for all policy planning within central and local government;
- Underpin social inclusion and foster active citizenship;
- Address the difficulties in sustainability of service;
- Raise the value of parents and parenting;
- Publicise good practice in multi-agency working;
- Consider a refocus of funding activities;
- Recognise that there should be baseline, universal services but above targeting those defined as in need;
- Establish a shared value system and common priorities among different agencies;
- Give children and young people a voice and an active role through partnership with them and their families at all levels for all services.