



Cynulliad National  
Cenedlaethol Assembly for  
Cymru Wales

## Children and Young People Committee

Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education?

November 2008

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## CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



“I am a young person living in poverty. Am I excluded because of poverty or is poverty excluding me”? Poverty can have a profound impact on children, their families, and society in general. It can create problems for children in their education, employment and social interaction. Child Poverty is such a massive issue that its eradication may seem impossible, requiring generations of family histories of poverty to be broken.

Child Poverty, however, is not inevitable. Cross party support for combating it exists, and progress is being made towards its eradication. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has developed innovative policies aimed at enabling children to break free from poverty's grip. Some initiatives have worked well and we should celebrate these successes.

Yet much of the evidence gathered this inquiry suggests that progress towards eradicating Child Poverty in Wales has long been patchy, and has stalled in recent years. I am, therefore, pleased that during the course of this inquiry the Welsh Assembly Government launched a consultation on a duty for each agency or public body to show how they are working to eradicate Child Poverty. This duty will potentially make the eradication of Child Poverty across a wide range of organisations - from NHS trusts to Arts Councils – a priority. Only through such co-ordinated efforts can we hope to realise the elimination of Child Poverty.

A number of our witnesses also raised concerns about a lack of strategic co-ordination from the Welsh Assembly Government in its plans for tackling Child Poverty. Child Poverty is not the responsibility of any one Minister or Government Department - it cuts across portfolios. It does little good for a child to have free access to a swimming pool if there is no transport by which they can access it, if they are too ill to leave their house, or if they need to stay at home to provide care to a parent. All Ministerial portfolios, whether Health or Heritage, need to place strong emphasis on the eradication of Child Poverty.

The Children and Young People Committee's current inquiry has primarily focussed on Child Poverty in relation to the Education Portfolio. In the future, however, we intend to scrutinise the progress of other Ministerial portfolios in meeting their stated targets for eradicating Child Poverty. Education was the appropriate portfolio for us to start with, given its impact on all children. I trust that the lessons learnt from our consideration of this portfolio can be applied beyond it, into other policy areas. I am grateful to all those who gave evidence to the Committee and helped us with our deliberations. I would also like to thank Ann Jones who was a regular substitute on the Committee, and provided a valuable contribution to this report. It is only through the co-ordination of policy, and Ministerial priorities, that Child Poverty can be eliminated.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Mary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Helen Mary Jones**

Chair, Children and Young People Committee

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Tackling child poverty has been a long standing concern in Wales. It is over six years since, in his first annual report as Children's Commissioner for Wales, Peter Clarke commented that it was a 'national disgrace' that a third of Welsh children lived in poverty.

2. In 1999, the UK Government committed itself to halving child poverty by 2010 (compared to 1997 levels) and eradicating it by 2020. The Welsh Assembly Government adopted these targets in respect of Wales.

3. Although some relevant policy areas (such as the tax and benefits system) are not devolved, the Assembly Government has implemented its own policy initiatives to tackle child poverty. It published its child poverty strategy *A Fair Future for Our Children* in February 2005. This sets out the ways in which the Assembly Government plans to contribute to the UK Government's targets for halving and eradicating child poverty. The Assembly Government also produced *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success* (2006), which sets milestones and targets to measure progress towards eradicating child poverty, and a *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* (2006), which details proposals designed to help meet the objectives in the child poverty strategy. The Strategy makes clear that:

“the Assembly Government confirms its commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020, and is ready to be held accountable for the actions it takes alongside its partners”.

4. This commitment is reaffirmed in the *One Wales* programme of government (Labour and Plaid Cymru 2007)<sup>1</sup> which says:

“we will support the aim to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate child poverty by 2020”.

5. *One Wales* also committed the Welsh Assembly Government to developing Wales-specific solutions and to integrating strategies with appropriate programmes that are currently within the competence of the UK Government.

6. There is no universal definition of child poverty. The most widely used measure of child poverty in the UK is the proportion of children living in households with less than 60% of average income. In 2006/07, 29% of children in Wales were in this group, compared to 30% of children in England, 25% in Scotland and 26% in Northern Ireland. In July 2008, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government said that:

“What is clear is that following a significant reversal of the rising trends in child poverty, progress appears to have stalled”.<sup>2</sup>

7. Following scrutiny in March 2008 of the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, who has responsibility for child poverty, the Children and

<sup>1</sup> Welsh Assembly Government [One Wales](#), A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales. An agreement between the Labour and Plaid Cymru Groups in the National Assembly, 27 June 2008

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Brian Gibbons (Minister for Social Justice and Local Government), [Update on Child Poverty](#), Cabinet Written Statement, 16 July 2008

Young People Committee determined that it would conduct an inquiry into the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* and its targets for tackling child poverty.

### Terms of Reference

8. The terms of reference agreed for the Children and Young People Committee's Inquiry into Child Poverty were:

- to scrutinise the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's policies to tackle child poverty, specifically, the child poverty strategy, *A Fair Future for Our Children* (February 2005) and *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* (November 2006);
- to identify those areas where there are particular problems in implementation and the delivery of positive outcomes for children and young people; and,
- to make evidence-based recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government and others as necessary.

### Scoping the Inquiry

9. The Children and Young People Committee took evidence from the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on the subject of child poverty on 6 March 2008.

10. A scoping meeting, involving key stakeholders - Barnardo's, Children in Wales, Action for Children Cymru, Save the Children, and the Welsh Local Government Association - was held on 24 April 2008 to determine where the Committee might focus its inquiry to have greatest impact.

11. Members noted that a particular concern raised by witnesses was that despite lots of ideas and innovative policy from the Welsh Assembly Government, there was little evidence of coherent strategic co-ordination of policies to tackle child poverty. Members noted that Objective 1 of the Welsh Assembly Government's *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* states that:

"All new Assembly Government initiatives and new spending commitments should be subjected to child poverty proofing. As part of the policy development process the question will be asked: "*What positive impact does this proposal have on the lives of the poorest children?*" If the answer is 'none' then the proposal should be reconsidered. If the answer is in the affirmative, the proposal will also be reconsidered, with a view to *increasing* the positive benefit to the poorest children."

12. Members determined that they would, therefore, focus their present inquiry on examining a particular policy area to establish whether it had been

'proofed' to have significant impact on child poverty. Members determined that this initial inquiry into child poverty would focus on the Welsh Assembly Government's education portfolio. They considered that the education system as a whole would touch upon the lives of all children and noted that, during a scoping meeting, witness had recommended this subject as a particularly suitable area for consideration. The Committee considered that following this inquiry, they might wish to conduct similar child poverty inquiries into other policy portfolios in the future.

13. The Committee were mindful of not replicating other work being undertaken by the Child Poverty Expert Group, established in April 2008, as a *One Wales* commitment and chaired by Huw Lewis AM.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Brian Gibbons (Minister for Social Justice and Local Government), [Child Poverty Expert Group](#), Cabinet Written Statement, 16 April 2008



## THE STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

14. Eradicating child poverty and improving the life chances of children and young people in Wales are key priorities for the Welsh Assembly Government.

15. The Assembly Government published its child poverty strategy *A Fair Future for Our Children*<sup>4</sup> in 2005. The Strategy set out the ways in which the Assembly Government planned to contribute to the UK Government's aims to halve child poverty by 2010, compared to 1997 levels, and to eradicate it by 2020. A *Child Poverty Implementation Plan*<sup>5</sup> was published in November 2006 and detailed proposals designed to help meet the objectives in the child poverty strategy.

16. The Assembly Government also produced a document called *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*<sup>6</sup> which set milestones and targets to measure progress towards the eradication of child poverty.

17. The approach adopted by the strategy was informed by the findings of, and the consultation on, the report of the independent *Child Poverty Task Group (2004)*. The strategic direction itself is guided by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Assembly Government's seven core aims for children and young people - one of which is to ensure that children and young people are not disadvantaged by poverty.

18. The strategy sets out to be 'inclusive and holistic', tackling child poverty through mainstream services, with specific targeted support where needed. It cuts across different Ministerial portfolios such as economic development, education and anti-poverty programmes such as Communities First.

19. The strategy uses the three dimensions of child poverty identified by the Child Poverty Task Group: Participation Poverty; Service Poverty; and, Income Poverty. In doing so, the Assembly Government identified that children from poor families could feel left out of activities, that others were able to enjoy, and recognised that public services played a key role in breaking cycles of poverty.

20. There are a number of Assembly Government policies and initiatives which support the child poverty strategy and implementation plan. These include:

- Communities First - a long-term geographically targeted programme which aims to improve the living conditions and prospects for local people and is targeted at the most disadvantaged communities across Wales;
- The Children and Youth Support Grant (Cymorth) which is administered through local Children and Young People's Partnerships within each local authority. Cymorth aims to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people, within a framework of

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<sup>4</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [A Fair Future for Our Children: The Strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government for Tackling Child Poverty](#), 2005

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Child Poverty Implementation Plan](#), November 2006

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales: Measuring Success](#), October 2006

universal provision, in order to improve the life chances of children and young people from disadvantaged families; and,

- Flying Start - a specific grant which complements Cymorth and is targeted at children aged 0-3 living in the most deprived areas of Wales. Interventions include free childcare for 2 year olds, additional health visiting and parenting programmes.

## THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

### The Government of Wales Act 2006 and Current Proposals for Legislation on Child Poverty

21. Issues that affect child poverty cut across Assembly Government policies and portfolios. By virtue of the *Government of Wales Act 2006* (GOWA 2006), child poverty is affected by responsibilities which are devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government, such as education, health, and social welfare.

22. Child poverty is also affected by non-devolved matters such as the criminal justice system, taxation, and social security, including child benefit and tax credits which remain the responsibility of the UK Government.

23. The Assembly Government has used powers under GOWA 2006 to seek legislative competence to make new laws, known as Measures, in relation to the welfare of all children and young people, including vulnerable children, and to tackle child poverty in Wales.

24. Legislative competence has been sought through the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty Legislative Competence Order (LCO) (*The National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Social Welfare and Other Fields) Order 2008* (April 2008), which was approved by the Assembly in July 2008 and is progressing through the legislative system. In conducting this inquiry, Committee Members were aware of the LCO and that its scope extends to tackling child poverty.

25. The LCO is intended to rationalise and consolidate existing provisions for vulnerable children and provide a legal framework for the Welsh Assembly Government to take forward its proposals to tackle child poverty by. This may include, for example, placing duties on public bodies to demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty and creating a statutory right for free child care for two year olds in areas of greatest need.

26. Currently, the Welsh Ministers have wide ranging responsibilities relating to the field of Social Welfare. Local authorities and their statutory partners in Wales have a responsibility to safeguard, promote, and secure the wellbeing of all children and young people.

27. Members were also aware that, during the inquiry, the Welsh Assembly Government launched *Taking Action on Child Poverty* (June 2008), a consultation paper which set out proposals to make legislation on three matters which would contribute towards ending child poverty:

- A duty on public agencies to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty;
- A duty on local authorities to provide free childcare places and other early years' services in specific places; and,
- Duties on local authorities that will match the guidance under which the Cymorth grant is provided.

The consultation closed on 30 September 2008.

28. On 15 July 2008, the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan AM, made a statement on the *Welsh Assembly Government's 2008-09 Legislative Programme* saying that the Assembly Government will be bringing forward a Measure:

“to provide greater support to children and families experiencing poverty. Under that Measure, each agency or public body will be required to show how they work to eradicate child poverty”.

29. Future Measures on child poverty are anticipated.

## **KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Gathering Evidence**

30. In conducting their inquiry, Members of the Committee took evidence from a range of witnesses, including Welsh Assembly Government Ministers, groups of children and young people, representatives of local government, academia, teaching unions and organisations working with children and young people.

31. Given the short and focussed nature of this inquiry, the Committee chose not to issue a formal call for written evidence, though witnesses giving oral evidence to the committee submitted written papers. Written evidence was also received from a number of other interested stakeholders. A list of written evidence received by the Committee is detailed in Annex 2, which also provides a schedule of the six Committee meetings in which oral evidence was taken. Two Members also undertook rapporteur visits to the On Track project in Tylorstown.

32. In order to reduce unnecessary use of paper, the written evidence of witnesses and transcripts of committee meetings are not reproduced in this report. Quotes from some contributors are utilised to illustrate particular issues.

33. Committee papers, meeting transcripts and written evidence can be viewed on the Committee's webpage on the National Assembly for Wales' website:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-cyp-home.htm>

### **Key Themes**

34. There was general agreement among witnesses regarding many of the key issues impacting on child poverty, although proposed solutions to these challenges were varied.

35. Three key themes emerged during the course of the inquiry. These were:

- The need for a coherent national strategic direction;
- The role of schools in mitigating against the effects of child poverty; and,
- The fact that 'schools cannot do it alone', and the need for greater emphasis on a range of out-of-school and community-based services to support young people.

36. Under each main thematic heading, the Committee's consideration of evidence is broken down into sub-themes. In considering these themes, Members made 27 recommendations which are summarised at Annex 1.

## **Gender Issues**

37. Gender issues did not feature heavily in the evidence. Professor David Egan mentioned that, although poverty has an impact on educational achievement, there are also gender issues as boys fall away in literacy. ESTYN submitted some examples of Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE) money being used to tackle this, with one secondary school using money to raise boys' attainment through mentoring by older pupils.

## Theme 1: The need for a coherent national strategic direction

### The Lack of Strategic Approach

38. Members considered that it was vital that resources dedicated to tackling child poverty were effectively targeted. This required clear communication of priorities and a clear strategic approach to eradicating child poverty.

39. In giving evidence, witnesses praised the Welsh Assembly Government's stated commitments to tackling child poverty. A number of witnesses also praised the Welsh Assembly Government's ideas and innovative policies.

40. However, many witnesses considered Wales to lack a clear, coherent and up-to-date approach to tackling child poverty. When giving evidence to the Committee in a personal capacity, Huw Lewis AM, Chair of the Child Poverty Expert Group in Wales, said that while the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* goes back to 2006, there has been "precious little implementation of the implementation plan".

41. Similarly, Professor David Egan commented that:

"...in the heady world and prolific policy atmosphere that has followed the devolution of power to Wales, policy integration and synergy have not always been strong features. It is likely that Ministers and Assembly Government officials would be the first to recognise this weakness in the policy agenda".

42. This point was reiterated by the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) who said that:

"He [David Egan] used the academic term 'synergy', and I would say that what is needed is joined-up thinking and people working together, and there is a need to look at the various policies and bring them together. We have a collection of ideas, but I do not think that the strategic direction is there from the leaders at the moment".

43. Similarly, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) considered that there was a need to establish priorities and clarity in the Welsh Assembly Government's national framework of policies, recommending the establishment of a 'route map' through these to enabling the elimination of child poverty. Save the Children were also concerned that a lack of strategic vision could lead to resources being ineffectively targeted.

44. Members were concerned that, despite the longstanding commitments of successive Welsh Assembly Governments, these concerns indicated a lack of clarity over the Government's plans for tackling child poverty and the communication of such plans. Members noted, and welcomed, a written statement by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in July 2008, which recognised a stalling of progress towards eradicating child poverty. The Minister commented:

“We have made good progress but we still need to do more, especially as recent figures show a stalling in this progress. It is vital that we renew our efforts to improve the life chances of all our young people. We must continue to target the causes and deal with the effects of poverty, working together across the public, private and voluntary sectors”.

45. Members noted suggestions put forward by witnesses that there should be greater clarity and co-ordination of the Welsh Assembly Government’s policies for tackling child poverty. Several Non-Governmental Organisations, including Citizen’s Advice Cymru suggested that a new Child Poverty Unit be established, within the Welsh Assembly Government, which had responsibility for setting and ensuring strategic direction across government in tackling child poverty.

46. Members also noted that one witness, Save the Children, suggested that civil service resources within the Welsh Assembly Government’s existing Child Poverty Unit should be increased, to enable additional officials to work exclusively on co-ordinating policies to tackle child poverty. Save the Children commented that:

“we understand that there is one lead official working exclusively on child poverty and an Expert Group that is scheduled to meet 3 times a year. That level of resourcing does not reflect an urgent social issue or the Assembly Government’s number one priority”!

47. Additionally, Members considered that the Welsh Assembly Government’s *Child Poverty Strategy and Implementation Plan* could usefully be refreshed to take account of new initiatives.

48. Trade union witnesses suggested that greater engagement with front line professionals, including teaching unions, in the early stages of policy development would enable policy that appeared more ‘joined-up’ to front line staff, who would be responsible for implementing new initiatives. The NASUWT suggested that:

“It is better for us to be inside the tent at an early stage, and at a pre-consultation stage too, so that some of the difficulties with initiatives can be ironed out before they become problems”.

49. Members agreed with this point and considered that greater clarity was required from the Welsh Assembly Government on its expectations of people in front line services, and that such early engagement could prove useful.

50. In specific relation to co-ordination of education policies, Members noted that there was positive evidence about the potential of the School Effectiveness Framework designed to align policies and bring together existing programmes of action directed at school improvement. For example, Professor David Egan commented that:



“There are issues about various policy streams, even within education - without looking across portfolios, which is another huge issue - and there is wonderment about whether there is a kind of unifying force that actually focuses those policies, where they are child-poverty sensitive, in a way that really tries to drive towards child poverty targets. I think that that issue is just as apparent in Wales as it seems to be in the other administrations. What is encouraging is the School Effectiveness Framework”.

51. Witnesses noted that the Framework was a relatively new initiative but that its aim to achieve a joined up and holistic approach should, in principle, lead to a narrowing of the gap in educational achievement. Indeed, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills commented that the Framework would address:

“those factors that result in the inequities that we still have within and between schools, between local authorities, between communities, and between children”.

52. There were a few notes of caution from witnesses because of the relative newness of the Framework, with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) commenting that initial feedback on the Framework was still quite mixed. When asked what the early barriers for the Framework’s success were, NASUWT commented that schools needed to be confident in the abilities of those people who were involved in going into schools and looking at them. Dr. Phillip Dixon, ATL, agreed and said that:

“... you want to see people who are champions of school effectiveness, who know what they are talking about, and have some experience of it. Also, on a point that was made earlier, it did not get off to the best start. The idea emanated from the Assembly and was shared with local authorities and then with the headteacher unions, but we had to fight to get a place at the table, and there was a mistake in the blueprint in that it did not recognise that teachers themselves must be an integral part of any school effectiveness programme”.

53. In considering this evidence, Members concluded that the school effectiveness framework offered a valuable tool towards strategically co-ordinating education policies towards eliminating child poverty.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**1. The Welsh Assembly Government increase internal resources dedicated towards co-ordinating policies that impact on child poverty. This should include greater staffing facility for its Child Poverty Unit to co-ordinate policies tackling child poverty. It should also include a senior policy lead official, within each Department, responsible for the delivery of relevant departmental targets within ‘*Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*’.**

**2. The Welsh Assembly Government ensure participation of front line professionals (including teaching unions) at the earliest possible stages in policy development, rather than only through formal consultation following policy development.**

**3. The Welsh Assembly Government produce an updated and refreshed Child Poverty Strategy and Implementation Plan, taking into account new initiatives, and changes within existing programmes, such as Communities First and Communities Next.**

## **Mainstreaming and Child Poverty Proofing**

55. Witnesses were in agreement that child poverty could not be tackled by targeted initiatives alone, though these did have specific benefits, but rather that an approach was required that mainstreamed the tackling of child poverty in and across all policy areas.

56. Witnesses therefore welcomed the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to 'proofing' all its new policies as detailed in Objective 1 of the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan*. In written evidence, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government stated that many of the *Implementation Plan* proposals from 2006 have been taken forward, including:

"child poverty proofing of strategic policies and programmes through revisions to the Assembly Government's Policy Gateway Tool".

57. The Minister also stated that the Tool was being revised to reflect the *One Wales* programme that tackling child poverty would be integral to the new Tool, and that all new programmes would be 'proofed' to ensure that they provide positive benefits to the poorest children.

58. However, when the Committee subsequently explored this issue with the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills it did not receive clear evidence of policy proofing taking place.

59. Other witnesses, such as Professor David Egan, were concerned as to whether child policy proofing was being carried out on the major education policies in Wales because such policies needed to be strongly aligned and cross referenced if the 2020 targets to eradicate child poverty were to be met.

60. Additionally, witnesses suggested that despite the Welsh Assembly Government's document *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales: Measuring Success* including specific targets across a wide range of Ministerial portfolios, some policy areas were not making obvious effort towards meeting these targets. Huw Lewis AM, Chair of the Child Poverty Expert Group in Wales, commented that the targets themselves were reasonable, but:

"there are portfolio areas out there where there is next to zero awareness that these even exist".

61. Members considered that all Ministerial portfolios within the Welsh Assembly Government needed to demonstrate greater commitment to meeting their child poverty targets. Members noted calls from witnesses, such as Save the Children and Action for Children Cymru, for the Committee to annually scrutinise the Welsh Assembly Government on its impact on child poverty. Members considered that the Children and Young People Committee itself might be a mechanism by which awareness of portfolio commitments could be raised within Government, though in the long term this was a responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government itself.

62. Members welcomed the Welsh Assembly Government's proposal, in its consultation document *Taking Action on Child Poverty* (2008), to:

“introduce a reserve power to issue guidance to public agencies to advise them on how to carry out their functions to take account of child poverty”.

63. Members considered that such guidance would be critical in light of evidence from witnesses that a lack of clarity over policies could potentially lead to their impact being hampered. For example, when referring to report commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government which focused on examining how effectively RAISE funding had helped schools to tackle the underachievement of pupils with socio-economic disadvantage, ESTYN commented that:

“the lack of a firm definition of categories of approved spending from the Welsh Assembly Government has led some schools to use RAISE funding for a wide range of purposes which are not always closely allied to the aims of the RAISE initiative”.

#### **The Committee recommended that:**

**4. The Welsh Assembly Government demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring the child poverty proofing of all its policies. This should include:**

- a) publication of specific annual targets for each Ministerial Portfolio, to address Child Poverty;**
- b) annual publication of each Ministerial Portfolio's progress towards meeting these targets; and,**
- c) a scheduled annual debate, in Government time, on the Welsh Assembly Government's progress towards meeting these targets.**

#### **Levels and Accessibility of Funding**

64. Several witnesses mentioned the need to ensure appropriate funding was in place to implement policies tackling child poverty and also to look at funding mechanisms for implementing these policies.

65. The Bramley Report,<sup>7</sup> commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, suggests that the current formulae for schools do not allow sufficient weighting for deprivation. Initial reports have shown that programmes such as RAISE, which target disadvantaged pupils in order to raise their level of performance, have demonstrated ‘encouraging’ results. However, Save the Children commented that the RAISE programme had a comparatively small budget compared to equivalent programmes in England. In Wales, the RAISE grant to schools in 2006-07 was £14.6m, and in 2007-08 it was £14.4m. £1m was also allocated for looked after children.

66. The Committee received strong evidence from a majority of witnesses welcoming the fact that Flying Start money was ring-fenced. Professor David Egan contended that, based on evidence on how countries can best allocate funding to tackle educational disadvantage, it is best to have both generic funding programmes and specific targeted ones such as RAISE. When asked if more of the money that goes to tackle child poverty should be ring-fenced so that it is spent by the school on that and not on anything else, Rex Phillips (NASUWT) agreed and said:

“equally I think that there is a role for local authorities to play in this. Whatever proposals they put in place, such as school reorganisation or the rationalisation of school places, their proposals should include impact assessment statements, and one statement should concern how the proposal will impact on the authority’s ability to help in the drive to eradicate child poverty”.

67. However, other witnesses were concerned that ring fenced funding streams could make funding appear disjointed, requiring relationships to be built up with a wide variety of officials, and involved a significant amount of bureaucracy in applying for funding. David Hopkins, Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), commented that:

“In my local authority we get something in excess of £5 million a year for 0 to 5 year-olds, if I include all grants from all sources, including Flying Start and so on. However, that figure comprises a large number of separate grants, which can be difficult to manage. In fact, we have employed somebody to pull all of that together and to make sense of it. We need a more coherent funding regime and a quicker way for you to say to local authorities, for example, ‘look, we want this done for 0 to 5 year-olds within this period of time, and you are accountable for that”.

68. Committee Members considered that coherency in making funding applications was desirable and efforts should be made by the Welsh Assembly Government to streamline this process wherever possible. However, Members also considered that the process of making funding applications needed to reflect the Government’s prioritisation of the eradication of child poverty.

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<sup>7</sup> Heriot-Watt University Study, (2007) *Alternative Resource Allocation Models for Local Services in Wales* (“The Bramley Report”)

**The Committee recommended that:**

**5. The Welsh Assembly Government should review and rationalise its funding of local agencies with the intention of enabling coherency throughout its funding regimes.**

**6. The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that, when applying for any 'non recurrent funding' as opposed to core funding, local authorities should be required to demonstrate how money granted will impact on the authority's ability to tackle child poverty.**

**7. The Welsh Assembly Government should review its extant statutory guidance in Circular 23/02, issued July 2002, in order to require that proposals for school reorganisation, or the rationalisation of school places, include an impact assessment statement detailing how the proposal will impact on the authority's ability to help eradicate child poverty.**

**Lack of Data about the Impact and Monitoring of Policies**

69. Several witnesses, including Save the Children, the WLGA and NASUWT, called for greater monitoring about the impact of policy and greater monitoring of its co-ordination. Witnesses were concerned about a lack of data and the need for a longer term view to enable identification of what works, what is not working, and how things might usefully be changed. In written evidence, Professor David Egan commented that:

"It can be suggested that whilst much has clearly been done in the field of education to introduce policies designed to counteract the effects of disadvantage, little is known about the actual impact these policies, individually or collectively, have had. Whilst the Assembly Government is committed to evidence-based policy and evaluation, crosscutting research and evaluation of this type has not been undertaken".

70. Save the Children suggested that schools should be given incentives to tackle inequalities. Members considered that monitoring could potentially provide such an incentive for schools. Members noted evidence from ATL that:

"child poverty is yet another item on the agenda for schools, and they have a very busy, tightly packed programme to deliver. All these priorities can be jostling with each other, so there needs to be some requirement there".

71. However, Members were also conscious that monitoring should not purely focus on educational qualifications, achieved by pupils who are supported by such programmes, but should include qualitative analysis of other positive changes that such policies had made to the lives of children and young people. Similarly comments were made by Antonia Bridges, from Vale of Glamorgan Flying Start, who noted that while not everyone will achieve academic qualifications, people could still benefit from life coaching. She also stated that the types of evidence observed at a local level by Flying Start,

such as waiting lists for children requiring speech and language therapy going down, were often different to types of evidence which the Welsh Assembly Government asked for. She suggested that longitudinal studies were required to evaluate changes in people's hearts and minds. Evidence from young people attending the Tanyard Youth Project suggested that targets could encompass numbers of exclusions, as well as educational achievement.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**8. The Welsh Assembly Government introduce more effective monitoring and evaluation of policies' impact, including longitudinal studies. Monitoring should be a key requirement of local authorities when applying for grant funding, with RAISE funding linked to monitoring of the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals, for example. Monitoring should not focus exclusively on educational attainment, but rather should also include targets related to pastoral care, such as numbers of permanent exclusions from school.**

## **Theme 2: The role of schools in mitigating against the effects of child poverty**

### **Sharing Good Practice and Awareness Raising of Child Poverty Issues**

72. A number of witnesses, including ESTYN, Save the Children, Action for Children Cymru, ATL and NASUWT, were concerned that sharing good practice amongst education professionals needed to be better facilitated. Dr Phillip Dixon, ATL, commented that the most practical recommendation he could think of would be to ensure that best practice is shared among schools and is facilitated. Dr Dixon also welcomed proposals to mainstream poverty education into teacher training.

73. The ESTYN evidence also pointed out that many schools involved in RAISE were working in isolation from each other, saying that the Assembly Government was:

“well behind schedule in establishing the proposed website to facilitate sharing of ideas and best practice”.

74. Members also considered that good practice about teachers' roles in providing pastoral care could be better communicated through mainstream teacher training. Members noted that *The National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload* had addressed workload levels for teachers. This included the routine delegation of administrative and clerical tasks. However, Members considered that the agreement should not preclude all teachers from having a responsibility to enable the delivery of pastoral care to pupils. Members considered that all teachers had a responsibility to be sensitive to the needs of children in poverty, to consider this in their interaction with them, and to be able to refer them to appropriate parties who would be able to provide further support when required.

#### **The Committee recommended that:**

**9. The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure better dissemination of good practice amongst schools and other formal and informal education settings in tackling the effects of poverty.**

**10. The Welsh Assembly Government should swiftly establish the proposed RAISE website to facilitate sharing of ideas good practice.**

**11. The Welsh Assembly Government ensure increased poverty education within mainstream teacher training and in training of other professionals working with young people in education settings. This education should encompass the impact of poverty upon children and their education. This should also incorporate teachers' responsibilities to provide pastoral care.**

**12. The Welsh Assembly Government undertake a review of interpretation of 'The National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' in relation to teachers' responsibilities to enable provision of pastoral care. This review should determine whether the**

way in which agreement has been interpreted is militating against teachers, without specific responsibilities for providing pastoral care, offering sensitivity to the needs of pupils in poverty, or who are experiencing other barriers to learning. If the agreement is being so interpreted, the Welsh Assembly Government should put out clear direction to education authorities and schools, clarifying all teachers' enduring responsibility to show sensitivity to issues of social poverty, and other social issues, in their interaction with pupils and to direct pupils to further support if appropriate.

## Free School Breakfasts

75. The Committee received a range of evidence about the issue of free school breakfasts. The Committee asked several questions about the numbers of children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds receiving free school breakfasts. The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, commented that:

“there is probably more that we can do in terms of assessing whether the children who could really benefit from it are doing so, in terms of numbers”.

76. Ann Jones AM<sup>8</sup> also raised the issue of the timing of school breakfasts, saying:

“I have been to breakfast clubs and I have seen that those we are targeting - those from poor and disadvantaged communities - often do not get to school in time for the breakfast before the school bell rings at 8.55 am or whatever time it may be. Is there so me way that we could ensure that the breakfast is provided after the school has assembled, so that the children could all go to registration and then go to have their breakfast? That way, those from the disadvantaged communities might be able to take advantage. In some areas, the breakfast club is often seen as an extension to the childcare facility, which is much needed and I do not decry that, but you often see siblings from the poorer communities taking the others into school and they have missed out on the breakfast”.

## Free School Meals

77. Committee Members noted that the take up of free school meals by pupils eligible to receive them has been variable for a number of years. Children in Wales commented that around 28% of secondary school children entitled to free school meals do not take them up, with anecdotal evidence linking free school meals to bullying and stigma. In 2003, *Save the Children's Listen Up! Children and Young People Talk: About Poverty* reported one 12 year-old boy's comments that:

“People don't claim free school meals out of embarrassment. I would let people with money go ahead of me in the queue so they wouldn't see”.

<sup>8</sup> Ann Jones AM attended the Children and Young People Committee in a substitute capacity for Lynne Neagle during her maternity leave.



78. Children in Wales commended the introduction of smart cards in some schools for the purchasing of school meals, making it more difficult to identify which children were entitled to free school meals. They also suggested that the Welsh Assembly Government should conduct a study into the feasibility of universal free school meals. NASUWT and ATL commented that the idea of providing compulsory free school meals, to all children below a particular age, had some merit. Members noted that 12 year-old school pupils might be more willing to accept a compulsory school meal than 16 year-olds. Members also observed that a compulsory school meal would need to be attractive to young people, considering that one young person commented that meals at his school did not taste like they had been cooked correctly.

79. Members noted that the Welsh Assembly Government had commissioned a literature review of work undertaken on take up of free school meal entitlement and had worked in partnership with the UK Government Department for Children, Schools and Families to introduce an electronic system for determining eligibility for free school meals, which went live in March 2008.

80. Members also noted that the WLGA had launched a Wales-wide survey on the potential of rolling out a cashless system in school canteens which could impact on the take-up of free school meals. Members noted that take-up of free school meals could potentially be affected by bullying and stigma, but could also be affected by pupils' views on the food available or their desire to socialise with peers during lunch breaks. Members were conscious that, as many schools had invested in electronic systems for purchasing free school meals, it would be sensible to evaluate the effectiveness of such systems before considering the introduction of universal free school meals. However, Members considered that the Welsh Assembly Government could conduct research into the feasibility of universal free school meals while evaluating the effectiveness of existing programmes.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**13. The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of the take up of free school breakfasts, among children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, and commission research into the potential benefits of amending timings of breakfast clubs. This should also encompass monitoring of whether schools and local authorities were making free breakfasts available. Monitoring in this fashion would not entail fingerprinting of children and young people.**

**14. The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of take up of free school meals, including the monitoring of the nutritional value of such meals.**

**15. The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the feasibility of delivering universal free school meals for children of different ages.**

**16. The Welsh Assembly Government consider piloting universal free school meals.**

**17. The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the effectiveness of schemes to reduce stigma associated with free school meals.**

### **Role of School Governors**

81. In written evidence, Professor David Egan highlighted a study on the role of school governors and governing bodies in disadvantaged areas (Dean et al., 2007) which supported other contemporary research that governors had an important role to play in school effectiveness. This appears to be particularly true in disadvantaged areas where the challenges faced by governing bodies are considerable. Governing bodies face problems in recruiting suitable members who have the capacity to perform their role and offer challenges as well as support to head teachers. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation study, quoted by Professor Egan, suggests that new models of school governance may, therefore, be required to overcome these obstacles and to allow governing bodies to fulfil their potential.

82. No other written evidence made direct reference to the role of school governors. However, when asked, both the NASUWT and ATL agreed that school governors have an important role to play. Dr Dixon, ATL, said:

“It is about providing training and mainstreaming policy, so that they can see what their responsibilities are and what assistance they can have in discharging those responsibilities. So, I think that they play a key role, but I do not think that we should give them those responsibilities and just say, ‘Now, get on with it’. I do not think that that would be fair at all”.

83. Mr Phillips, NASUWT, commented that:

“They certainly have a role to play in looking at some of the issues that we have talked about, such as policy on school uniform, and so on. I am assuming that, in most schools, all those issues come before, and are ratified by, school governors. I think that it is about heightening the awareness of governors so that, when they are discharging those functions, they keep one eye on the issue of child poverty and the policies that are being put in place in schools and how they can be measured against the eradication of child poverty. It comes back to the impact assessment statements that need to be put in place. Ending child poverty should, perhaps, be an agenda item for governing body meetings, or reference should be made to it in headteachers’ reports to governors”.

84. Members considered that strong, passionate leadership both from governors and other school leaders was vital in addressing child poverty. Members recalled the dedicated leadership of Mick Millman, Tylorstown On Track project leader, and considered that leaders needed to be given responsibilities and support to impact on child poverty.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**18. The Welsh Assembly Government ensures that greater support and training is made available to school governors on the issue of child poverty.**

**19. The Welsh Assembly Government provide statutory guidance to governors and school leaders on the sort of leadership that they should be giving to address child poverty. This guidance should include practical steps to addressing child poverty such as balancing the educational value of residential trips against their financial cost. This guidance should also be accessible to parents, carers and pupils.**

## **Transitions**

85. Witnesses identified in evidence a wide range of factors that could put children and young people at risk of poor educational achievement and anti-social behaviours. During Members' rapporteur visits to the On Track project in Tylorstown, Mick Millman commented that young people appeared to be particularly at risk of entering a cycle of underachievement during educational transitions: entering primary schools; transitioning between primary and secondary school; and, leaving secondary schools.

86. The risks associated with the transition between primary and secondary school were also identified in evidence from Professor David Egan, who commented that primary schools appeared to be better at flattening out disadvantages caused by socio-economic disadvantage:

“Primary schools seem systematically more capable of helping young people to overcome the effects of disadvantage and poverty – though not all the effects – but as children get to secondary school, an effect kicks in. It is happening somewhere within the experience of 11-14 year olds”.

87. Similar views were put forward by young people from the Tanyard Youth Project, who also commented that they were conscious of the greater class sizes in secondary school, where:

“there were 30 people in a class and not enough teachers to help you when you needed help”.

88. Asked about modelling the primary school teaching system in secondary schools, David Hopkins, ADEW, commented that:

“Some headteachers have already tried to teach in the first two years in secondary school in the way in which children are taught in primary school. That is to say, a teacher will not just teach a subject but will teach a group of pupils for the first year in secondary school, for example. Things like that have been tried, and they tend to work well. I have to say, however, that not all secondary school teachers would be enamoured of that model, and neither would all headteachers”.

89. Members also noted evidence from ADEW which highlighted particular work undertaken in LEAs and schools to manage the transition between primary and secondary education. These included:

- Eirias High School in Conwy is introducing a 'Project Based Learning Curriculum'. Eight projects will be completed in Year 7 on a variety of themes, each having a focus on skills-based learning. This is intended to enable young people to manage the transition from primary to secondary school with more confidence.
- Carmarthenshire County Council has a number of initiatives to assist primary-secondary transition and secure improved pupil engagement and outcomes. These include projects using ICT as a vehicle for pupils and teachers to gain experiences in Design Technology across Year 6 and into the secondary school.
- Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School in Blaenau Gwent, and its partner primary schools, have pooled parts of their 'Building Schools for the Future' grant to support effective transition of pupils from primary into secondary school. A programme on thinking and learning skills was developed, which carried through from Year 6 into the secondary phase.
- Five local authorities - Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan - are working with the Education and School Improvement Service to pilot the "Investors in Families" scheme in Wales, which can work across the primary and secondary phases. Schools involved can become accredited and the scheme will enable them to work more closely, consistently and productively with parents.

90. Members also noted the approach taken by the Tylorstown On Track project. Originally granted for the Tylorstown ward, as part of a national research project, the project was rolled out to the whole of the Rhondda Fach Valley, the school cluster area of Ferndale Community School, in 2002. The project provides a multi-agency children and family service around, and in partnership with, the School Cluster Group. Universal mainstream services, accessible to all children and young people within the cluster group, support targeted services for families in greatest need such as young people in transition between education institutes. This interlinked approach of universal and targeted services avoids stigma being associated with the acceptance of support. Members also noted that, of the 24 On Track projects originally established across the UK, projects that provided both mainstreamed and targeted support for young people had proved to be the most effective. In their written evidence, Tylorstown On Track quoted from the Policy Research Bureau's *National Evaluation of On Track* (2004) which found that:

“the provision of multi-modal services working at both the universal and the targeted levels, and incorporating parent support alongside direct work with children is now thought to be best practice in delivering interventions aimed at improving outcomes for children in high risk environments”.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**20. The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the reasons why educational progress seems to decline in the early years of secondary school, with particular reference to children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.**

**Social Cohesion**

91. Members considered that all schools should be under a duty to promote social cohesion, both in terms of the pupils entering that school, and in their interaction with other schools through sport, for example.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**21. The Welsh Assembly Government place a specific duty on all publicly funded schools to promote social cohesion.**

**The Costs of Education and ‘Cultural’ Poverty**

92. The End Child Poverty Network Cymru coalition indicated that a number of their members were concerned by the cost of school uniforms, school meals, school trips and extra-curricular activities. Similarly, Sean O’Neil, from Children in Wales, told the Committee that:

“you will know from the Child Poverty Implementation Plan milestones and targets that there were no specific targets for addressing these issues; the focus on education was around educational achievement and attainment”.

93. Children in Wales estimated that the average cost of primary schooling one child for one year is £563. This rises to £948 in secondary school and includes the cost of lunches, school transport, materials for coursework, photos and contributions to school funds.

94. Children in Wales noted that this concern was also highlighted in the 2004 Child Poverty Task Group report, which stated that:

“Children and young people perceive schools as expensive and elitist. They do not feel that they are able to participate fully in the school community because of the costs of school trips and activities; because clothing and free school meals identifies them as poor and attracts bullying and a lack of understanding or support by teachers and youth workers”.

95. Several Non-Governmental Organisations called on the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce the costs of education, particularly relating to school trips and materials for GCSE courses. They also called for initiatives such as uniform grants to be better publicised.

96. However, the Committee noted evidence from the WLGA that many schools had sought to minimise the costs of education. ATL Cymru provided examples of schools seeking to minimise costs for parents, such as:

- supplying exam kits for pupils (paper, pens, pencils etc);
- supplying polo and sweat shirts at cost and discretely offering some families free uniform; and,
- inviting children to take part in breakfast clubs.

97. Members received mixed evidence from young people on the costs of school uniforms. Some had been actively involved in school councils to reduce uniform costs and others were concerned that grants for school uniform costs were inadequate. Members considered that further research could usefully be undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government on the costs of education across Wales, including the costs of school uniforms, and on school's adherence to guidance provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce these costs. Members considered that, depending on the findings of this research, it might be appropriate for the Welsh Assembly Government to make greater funds available for local authorities to award grants for associated costs. Members also considered that this research might lead the Welsh Assembly Government to introduce specific targets, with statutory force, for the costs of school uniforms, meals, trips and extra-curricular activities.

98. Members were concerned by charges for school trips. Members noted that the *Education Act 1996* determines that education for pupils during school hours should be free. Schools are permitted to charge for the costs of board and lodging for a registered pupil, at a maintained school on a residential school trip, but where these take place mainly during school sessions, pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain support benefits will, in addition to having a free school lunch entitlement, also be entitled to the remission of these charges.

99. However, ATL, NASUWT and young people from the Tanyard Youth Project all raised concerns that awareness of this law, and associated guidance, was low. Similarly, Citizens Advice Cymru noted that only 1 in 4 parents were aware that support was available to fund school trips for children from low income families.

100. Members were also concerned that residential trips organised by schools should always have a clear educational value and should not represent a costly holiday for pupils. Members were particularly concerned that some school trips could potentially be expensive and exclusive, without significant educational value. Members noted that School Visits Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government, available at [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/providers\\_health\\_and\\_safety/schools/visitsguidance/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/providers_health_and_safety/schools/visitsguidance/?lang=en) currently states that:

“Aims and objectives of the visit should be clearly identified at an early stage. These should be relevant to young people and their development, taking account of age, ability, competence, previous experience and resources available”.

101. Members also noted positive feedback from young people about the value of such trips, with one young person commenting on a trip to Berlin:

“It was an educational trip. To go there and see the sights was fantastic”.

102. Members considered that school governors had a responsibility to ensure that residential trips organised by schools should enable all children to participate on an equal basis without stigmatisation due to financial or cultural constraints. Members considered that, in determining the location and activities of school trips, Governors should presume to select the least expensive option which realised the same educational objective.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**22. The Welsh Assembly Government initiate a study into the costs of education to provide comprehensive evidence to help formulate policy addressing such costs.**

**23. The Welsh Assembly Government monitor schools’ adherence to its guidance on school uniforms.**

**24. The Welsh Assembly Government enable greater consistency between schools, and across authorities, about minimising additional costs of education. This should involve clear statutory guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on minimising such costs and include practical advice on balancing the educational value of such trips against their financial costs. This should enable all children to participate on an equal basis without stigmatisation due to financial or cultural constraints.**

**25. The Welsh Assembly Government ensure that there is greater public clarity and awareness of guidance regarding the costs to parents and carers of school trips and support available to them.**

### **School Liaison Officers for Young Carers**

103. Members noted that evidence from young carers indicated a lack of clarity over which education staff should be informed of young carers' responsibilities. It was noted that support workers for young carers often did not know whether to contact education welfare officers, head of years, or head teachers. Members considered that a member of staff trained as a school liaison officer for young carers could act as a valuable contact person for young carers and support workers. Members also considered that such an officer could liaise internally with teaching staff and develop staff ability to identify potential young carers and to interact appropriately with them.

#### **The Committee recommended that:**

**26. The Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance to schools on training and establishing a member of staff as a school liaison officer for young carers, responsible for proactively identifying and engaging with young carers and support workers, and liaising internally with other teaching staff.**



### **Theme 3: The Fact that “Schools Cannot do it Alone” and the Need for Greater Emphasis on a Range of Out-of-School and Community-Based Services to Support Young People**

104. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation research cited by Professor Egan has consistently argued that schools alone cannot overcome the links between child poverty and low education achievement. This research points to the need for much greater integration of discrete education policies to maximise their impact on the effects of disadvantage and a greater emphasis on a range of out-of-school and community-based services that can support young people. This evidence was supported by a wide range of witnesses, including children and young people, who also observed that the availability of public transport to and from school could have a significant impact on young people’s capacity to engage in out-of-school activities, including school trips.

#### **Community Focused Schools**

105. The Welsh Assembly Government has made funding available to all 22 local authorities to develop community focused schools. The programme is universal, not targeted solely at disadvantaged areas, and is not, therefore, aimed specifically at reducing child poverty.

106. The Committee heard a range of convincing evidence about the role that community focused schools play in helping to support learning, encourage development and give a range of opportunities to children who may otherwise not have them. ContinYou Cymru, the charity which provides support to local authorities in Wales to develop community focused schools, indicated that these schools have real potential to address child poverty as part of a wider, joined up network of provision. The charity commented that:

“the issue of community schooling can be put simply: the out-of-school activities that people in this room would these days take for granted in supporting their children, and would ensure that their children get, are the things that children in poverty do not get and cannot expect”.

107. However, several witnesses were concerned that the community focused schools programme in Wales was under-funded. Save the Children suggested that, in relative terms, the Welsh Assembly Government was putting very little resource into developing community focused schools compared with funding allocated in England to develop and implement equivalent policy. In oral evidence Anne Crowley, from Save the Children, said:

“We also have concerns about the allocation of resources. In the Minister’s statement on 20 February, and in the evidence that he gave to you in March, he described the many things that the Government is doing, which is great, but that description was short on the detail of just how much was being done. The example that I give in my evidence is that of community-focused schools. A lot of evidence suggests that working in that way would be effective in trying to reduce the gap between the attainment of poor children and better-off children. The Government has allocated £2 million to that programme, which is just not going to go very far in the scheme of things”.<sup>1</sup>

108. Similarly, Professor Egan commented that:

“we are putting a modest amount of money into that programme at the moment in Wales. Pro rata, it is not anything like the amount of money going into the extended schools system in England”.

109. ESTYN also raised concerns that funding for community focused school projects had sometimes been inappropriately awarded, limiting funding for the:

“small minority of projects [which] can justifiably be regarded as exemplar, innovative or models of good practice”.

110. ESTYN suggested that the Welsh Assembly Government should withhold funding from projects that did not meet the criteria specified for allocation of community focused school grants, thereby prioritising those which were well planned to have significant effect and impact and which often would not be dependent on future funding. Members noted that these comments echoed those of Mick Millman, manager of the On-Track project, who suggested that one-off project grants should be utilised with the ultimate aim of reconfiguring services more effectively rather than with the expectation of further grant funding. Mick Millman clarified that this did not exclude new things being trialled, as this could enable reconfiguration in the future, and also commented that one-off project grant funding needed to enable a project sufficient time to set up and be evaluated.

111. Members considered that in providing funding to schools, the Welsh Assembly Government also had a duty to ensure such funding was being utilised effectively. Professor Egan suggested that, to understand the impact of community schooling and thereby determine an appropriate level of resourcing, an integrated policy impact assessment needed to be urgently carried out. Members considered that greater monitoring of the impact of community focused schools and greater prudence in awarding grants to community focused projects, to ensure they were appropriately planned, should be coupled with an increased budget for funding such projects. While recognising that community focused schools were a universal programme, Members also considered that projects in areas of high socio-economic deprivation could be prioritised with a view to impacting on child poverty.

112. In addition to direct funding implications, Professor Egan also raised concerns that community focused schools had implications in relation to rationalisation of school places, commenting that:

“Given the debate over the need for extensive rationalisation of school places in Wales as a result of a significant decline in pupil numbers, leading to the possibility of a major programme of school closures over the next decade, is the ‘community school’ issue being sufficiently factored into considerations? Again it would seem that this is not the case”.

113. This concern was also picked up by ESTYN, which recommended that calculations over surplus school places and the accommodation needs of new schools needed to take account of facilities that would be required for community focused school activities.

**The Committee recommended that:**

**27. The Welsh Assembly Government enable the establishment of more appropriately funded, well planned and community focused schools, starting with areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.**

### **Recommendation 1**

The Welsh Assembly Government increase internal resources dedicated towards co-ordinating policies that impact on child poverty. This should include greater staffing facility for its Child Poverty Unit to co-ordinate policies tackling child poverty. It should also include a senior policy lead official, within each Department, responsible for the delivery of relevant departmental targets within '*Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*'.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Welsh Assembly Government ensure participation of front line professionals (including teaching unions) at the earliest possible stages in policy development, rather than only through formal consultation following policy development.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Welsh Assembly Government produce an updated and refreshed Child Poverty Strategy and Implementation Plan, taking into account new initiatives, and changes within existing programmes, such as Communities First and Communities Next.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Welsh Assembly Government demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring the child poverty proofing of all its policies. This should include:

- a) publication of specific annual targets for each Ministerial Portfolio, to address Child Poverty;
- b) annual publication of each Ministerial Portfolio's progress towards meeting these targets; and,
- c) a scheduled annual debate, in Government time, on the Welsh Assembly Government's progress towards meeting these targets.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Welsh Assembly Government should review and rationalise its funding of local agencies with the intention of enabling coherency throughout its funding regimes.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that, when applying for any 'non recurrent funding' as opposed to core funding, local authorities should be required to demonstrate how money granted will impact on the authority's ability to tackle child poverty.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Welsh Assembly Government should review its extant statutory guidance in Circular 23/02, issued July 2002, in order to require that proposals for school reorganisation, or the rationalisation of school places, include an impact assessment statement detailing how the proposal will impact on the authority's ability to help eradicate child poverty.

**Recommendation 8**

The Welsh Assembly Government introduce more effective monitoring and evaluation of policies' impact, including longitudinal studies. Monitoring should be a key requirement of local authorities when applying for grant funding, with RAISE funding linked to monitoring of the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals, for example. Monitoring should not focus exclusively on educational attainment, but rather should also include targets related to pastoral care, such as numbers of permanent exclusions from school.

**Recommendation 9**

The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure better dissemination of good practice amongst schools and other formal and informal education settings in tackling the effects of poverty.

**Recommendation 10**

The Welsh Assembly Government should swiftly establish the proposed RAISE website to facilitate sharing of ideas good practice.

**Recommendation 11**

The Welsh Assembly Government ensure increased poverty education within mainstream teacher training and in training of other professionals working with young people in education settings. This education should encompass the impact of poverty upon children and their education. This should also incorporate teachers' responsibilities to provide pastoral care.

**Recommendation 12**

The Welsh Assembly Government undertake a review of interpretation of 'The National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' in relation to teachers' responsibilities to enable provision of pastoral care. This review should determine whether the way in which agreement has been interpreted is militating against teachers, without specific responsibilities for providing pastoral care, offering sensitivity to the needs of pupils in poverty, or who are experiencing other barriers to learning. If the agreement is being so interpreted, the Welsh Assembly Government should put out clear direction to education authorities and schools, clarifying all teachers' enduring responsibility to show sensitivity to issues of social poverty, and other social issues, in their interaction with pupils and to direct pupils to further support if appropriate.

**Recommendation 13**

The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of the take up of free school breakfasts, among children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, and commission research into the potential benefits of amending timings of breakfast clubs. This should also encompass monitoring of whether schools and local authorities were making free breakfasts available. Monitoring in this fashion would not entail fingerprinting of children and young people.

**Recommendation 14**

The Welsh Assembly Government enable monitoring of take up of free school meals, including the monitoring of the nutritional value of such meals.

**Recommendation 15**

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the feasibility of delivering universal free school meals for children of different ages.

**Recommendation 16**

The Welsh Assembly Government consider piloting universal free school meals.

**Recommendation 17**

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the effectiveness of schemes to reduce stigma associated with free school meals.

**Recommendation 18**

The Welsh Assembly Government ensures that greater support and training is made available to school governors on the issue of child poverty.

**Recommendation 19**

The Welsh Assembly Government provide statutory guidance to governors and school leaders on the sort of leadership that they should be giving to address child poverty. This guidance should include practical steps to addressing child poverty such as balancing the educational value of residential trips against their financial cost. This guidance should also be accessible to parents, carers and pupils.

**Recommendation 20**

The Welsh Assembly Government commission research into the reasons why educational progress seems to decline in the early years of secondary school, with particular reference to children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

**Recommendation 21**

The Welsh Assembly Government place a specific duty on all publicly funded schools to promote social cohesion.

**Recommendation 22**

The Welsh Assembly Government initiate a study into the costs of education to provide comprehensive evidence to help formulate policy addressing such costs.

**Recommendation 23**

The Welsh Assembly Government monitor schools' adherence to its guidance on school uniforms.

**Recommendation 24**

The Welsh Assembly Government enable greater consistency between schools, and across authorities, about minimising additional costs of education. This should involve clear statutory guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on minimising such costs and include practical advice on balancing the educational value of such trips against their financial costs. This should enable all children to participate on an equal basis without stigmatisation due to financial or cultural constraints.

**Recommendation 25**

The Welsh Assembly Government ensure that there is greater public clarity and awareness of guidance regarding the costs to parents and carers of school trips and support available to them.

**Recommendation 26**

The Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance to schools on training and establishing a member of staff as a school liaison officer for young carers, responsible for proactively identifying and engaging with young carers and support workers, and liaising internally with other teaching staff.

**Recommendation 27**

The Welsh Assembly Government enable the establishment of more appropriately funded, well planned and community focused schools, starting with areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

**Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference agreed for the Children and Young People Committee's Inquiry into Child Poverty were:

- To scrutinise the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's policies to tackle child poverty, specifically, the child poverty strategy, *A Fair Future for Our Children* (February 2005) and *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* (November 2006)
- To identify those areas where there are particular problems in implementation and the delivery of positive outcomes for children and young people.
- To make evidence-based recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government and others as necessary.

**Scoping the Inquiry**

Members considered that a particular concern raised by witnesses in their early scoping meeting was that despite lots of ideas and innovative policy from the Welsh Assembly Government, there was limited evidence of coherent strategic co-ordination of policies to tackle child poverty.

Members determined that they would therefore focus their present inquiry on examining a particular policy area, to establish whether it had been 'proofed' to have significant impact on child poverty. Members determined that this initial inquiry into child poverty would focus on the Welsh Assembly Government's education portfolio.

**Oral Evidence was taken as follows:**

6 March 2008:

- The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

24 April 2008:

- Barnardo's Cymru
- Children in Wales
- Action for Children Cymru
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Save the Children
- Welsh Local Government Association

8 May 2008:

- The Deputy Minister for Regeneration
- Huw Lewis AM, Chair of the Child Poverty Expert Group in Wales, who gave evidence to the Committee in a personal capacity



11 June 2008:

- The Minister for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills
- Professor David Egan, Cardiff University of Wales Institute, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Flying Start, Vale of Glamorgan

25 June 2008

- Association of Teachers and Lecturers Cymru
- National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Association of Directors of Education in Wales

9 July 2008

- Young Carer's Group, facilitated by Action for Children Cymru
- Young Peoples Group, facilitated by Save the Children and Tanyard Youth Project

### **Written Evidence**

Due to the short and focussed nature of this inquiry, a formal call for evidence was not issued. However, written evidence was received from:

- Action for Children Cymru
- Barnardo's Cymru
- Citizens Advice Cymru
- Child Poverty Net Work Cymru
- ContinYou Cymru
- ESTYN
- Professor David Egan, University of Wales Institute, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Save the Children
- The End Child Poverty Network
- The Deputy Minister for Regeneration
- The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.
- The Minister for Children Education, Life Long Learning Skills.
- Tylorstown On Track project
- Welsh Local Government Association