

A FAIR FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN

**The Strategy of the Welsh Assembly
Government for Tackling Child Poverty**

Foreword

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that tackling poverty and inequality among children and young people is a fundamental component of its broader strategy to improve quality of life and promote social inclusion and equal opportunities in every community in Wales. No-one, especially children and young people, should be disadvantaged or prevented from achieving their full potential because of where they live or their family circumstances.

The UK Government has set targets that child poverty will be halved by 2010 when compared with 1997, and eradicated by 2020. The Welsh Assembly Government wishes to play its full part in meeting that target. This Strategy sets out our contribution.

This Strategy has been developed through collaboration between agencies and organisations working for the interests of children and young people in Wales and the UK; through consultation (including consultation with children and young people); and with contributions from experts in the field and an extensive review of research literature.

The approach adopted by the Strategy reflects the findings of, and consultation on, the report of the independent Task Group on Child Poverty, chaired by Dr Charlotte Williams of Bangor University and advised by Professors Peter Townsend and Jonathan Bradshaw. I should like to pay tribute to the thoroughness and commitment with which the Group approached its task.

The Strategy takes forward the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to tackle poverty and inequality among children and young people. It sets out a long-term direction for the Assembly Government and our partners for combating child poverty. It will make a major contribution towards meeting the UK Government's challenge to eradicate child poverty in a generation and also to *Health Challenge Wales* as our new national focus for improving health in Wales. It will also link with the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales, which aims to improve the quality and reduce variations in service delivery throughout Wales through the setting of national standards.

Income is a key factor in child poverty, and the Assembly Government has made representations to the UK Government on the non-devolved issues of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. The opportunities and quality of life of children and young people are also shaped by their education, their access to quality health services, by decent housing, by the security and environment of where they live and by their opportunity to participate in decisions about their lives. The Welsh Assembly Government has devolved responsibility for these key policy areas. We are determined that our policies and programmes across the board will take account of the needs of children in poverty.

In this document we set out the principles which we believe should inform our work on child poverty, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child. We identify a range of indicators by which our performance in tackling it can be monitored. Most importantly, we establish the key issues to be addressed in tackling child poverty in Wales and the ways in which we will meet this challenge.

The consultations carried out by the Task Group with children and young people illustrated how poverty makes an impact across many aspects of children's lives. This strategy is correspondingly wide ranging. But among all the action to deal with child poverty, there is strong evidence that the earliest interventions are the most effective. This strategy therefore describes a major new initiative being taken for the early years of disadvantaged children, which will receive £50 million in 2006-07 and 2007-08. This will complement other initiatives for children, some universal such as the new Foundation Phase and others more targeted, such as Sure Start programmes.

The Assembly Government Cabinet will monitor implementation of the Strategy through publication of an annual progress report. I know that Peter Clarke, as Children's Commissioner, will also take a keen interest in our work. But the Assembly Government cannot achieve its ambition alone. It will take forward our concerted efforts in partnership with local government as well as our partnership with the UK Government and a wide range of agencies to make this Strategy a success. We have the ideal mechanism for such joint work in the strengthened arrangements for local co-operation set out in the Children Act 2004. I call on all those involved with planning and providing services for children and young people to place the issues raised in this Strategy at the centre of their work.



Rhodri Morgan
First Minister
Welsh Assembly Government

Executive Summary

Guiding Principles

In approaching this major task we were guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and by the findings of our Task Group on Child Poverty, who listened to the views and concerns of children and young people.

We believe that eradicating child poverty ultimately benefits the whole community, leading, for example, to healthier, higher skilled adults and lower crime rates.

We will tackle poverty through mainstream services, backing this up with specific targeted support where needed. In addition we aim to remove the myths and the stigma attached to poverty.

Overall this plan aims to:

- fulfil children and young people's hopes and ambitions
- raise their standard of living and quality of life
- ease their worries about lack of money
- help them to share in making decisions and providing services
- combat discrimination that stops children achieving their potential
- Improve health and well-being and reduce inequality
- Help children to become independent citizens who can make choices

1. Income Poverty

Low income denies children opportunities, and both children and adults agree that better job opportunities are the main route out of the poverty.

The Assembly Government's plan "A Winning Wales," sees 175,000 extra jobs being created by the year 2010 and our "Wales Spatial Plan" aims to steer these jobs to parts of the country where they are most needed.

Access to Employment

The new Skills and Employment Action Plan and other strategies will improve access to employment by focusing on:

- raising skill levels by boosting the quality of learning provision,
- getting more people into lifelong learning
- more educational choice for 14-19 year olds
- re-engaging with 16- 18 year olds not in learning or employment
- tackling basic skills problems
- better and more affordable childcare
- community-focused schools
- a more flexible New Deal – welfare to work - programme
- better public transport to help people get to where jobs are available
- work with employers to improve work/life balance and ensure equality

Financial inclusion and adequate income levels

Through a range of measures, we aim to give families and young people access to adequate income and help in managing their finances. This includes:

- More effective PSE classes in school
- Piloting a new framework for “Adult Financial Capability”
- Tackling financial skills deficits via the National Basic Skills Strategy
- National Information and Advice Project for 11-25 year olds, covering debt and related issues
- Continued support for the growth of the Credit Union network,
- An increase in the minimum wage from October 2004
- A UK study on possibility of low interest loans for low income families

Tax and Benefits

Planned tax and benefit measures include:

- New Disability Living Allowance for carers of disabled children
- Reforms to link Housing Benefit with Working Tax Credit
- Local authority drive to encourage full benefit take-up
- GP scheme to refer patients to Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) on benefit issues.
- CAB bases in new and accessible community-focused schools
- New study of barriers to ethnic minorities gaining benefit advice.

We have also made representation to the UK Government on the issue of Child Benefit levels.

Grants for Further and Higher Education

New measures improving young people’s access to post-16 education are:

- Annual Assembly Learning Grants to help young people in low income households into further or higher education.
- Fortnightly Education Maintenance Allowance to encourage young people from lower income homes to remain in learning after 16.

2. Participation Poverty

Children from poor families often feel left out of activities others enjoy. This can be even more acute for disabled and ethnic minority children. We are working to ensure that all children can participate fully in play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities as well as the full range of learning opportunities. Our plans are set out in the paper: “Children and Young People; Rights to Action.”

Leisure and Social Activity

Initiatives to get all youngsters involved in leisure and social activity include:

- Local council discount cards for sports and leisure pursuits,
- Free swimming during school holidays.
- Community Facilities and Activities Programme grants to create or upgrade multiple-use community facilities
- Programmes to spread good practice for community action against anti-social behaviour by young people.
- £3.5m new investment in Safe Routes for cycling or walking to school

Anti-Discrimination and Bullying

We want to ensure children are not stigmatized at school because of their background or circumstances. Measures being considered include:

- Cashless school cafeteria to avoid embarrassment for pupils receiving free school meals
- Low interest loans or grants for school uniforms.
- Teachers' equality training extended to classroom assistants
- New guidance for school governing bodies on policies regarding equality and keeping disadvantaged pupils from dropping out.
- Regional anti-bullying conferences
- Mentoring and friendship schemes for vulnerable pupils
- Head teacher training on Assembly Government anti-bullying guidance.
- Guidance for educationalists to maximise participation by groups such as ethnic or disabled people, travellers and young parents.

Listening to Young Voices

There are a wide range of forums through which children and young people in Wales can make their views known, locally, regionally and nationally. We are:

- Ensuring disadvantaged young people take part in these forums
- Preparing guidance so all groups can participate in school councils
- Taking the views of young carers into account through the Young Carers Advisory Panel and Carers Focus Group.
- Expanding young people's rights to an advocate to complain about public services and further improving the advocacy service

3. Service Poverty

Public services play a key role in breaking cycles of poverty. The Assembly Government's draft National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services aims to ensure all sections of society have equal access to these services. Measures include:

- Extra £50million from 2005-2008, for better provision for children in their early years, particularly in the most deprived areas.
- Cymorth Fund expanding childcare
- Children's Information Service to point parents towards local provision.
- New guidance to help schools get involved in providing these facilities.
- At least one Integrated Centre in each local authority area, providing a combination of childcare, play, early years education, community education and family support services.
- Appointment of a lead director for Children and Young People and a Children and Young People's Framework Partnership in all 22 areas.
- Support for accessible leisure, social and play activity in isolated areas, such as mobile youth clubs, toy libraries and day trips for youngsters.
- "Parenting Action Plan" to develop parenting skills
- Better access to health surveillance to spot delays in child development
- Ten-year All-Wales Strategy for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to ensure all professionals involved work closely together.
- Confidential advice for young people on emotional well-being
- Close monitoring of existing mental health service effectiveness
- New guidance for schools on promoting good mental health.
- Grant for confidential domestic abuse Helpline
- "All-Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy" for co-ordinated victim support
- Education to prevent domestic abuse.

School Curriculum

The Assembly Government wants an inclusive curriculum that motivates all children and young people and prepares them for life and work as well as continuing education and training. At present we are working on:

- Guidance to help education professionals identify and deal with child poverty issues in non-stigmatising ways.
- Learning Pathways providing wider curriculum choice for 14-19 year olds, helping those from deprived backgrounds in particular
- Learning coaches to help reduce truancy, exclusions and drop-out
- Pilot projects to tackle truancy and bad behaviour including electronic registration and enhanced role for the Education Welfare Service.
- More freedom for Governors to provide community services from school premises and grants to encourage this

Other important services to be improved and made more accessible include:

- Sure Start – a comprehensive service delivering confidence and skills-building support from mothers' pregnancy through pre-school years including peer support on issues such as breastfeeding or childhood illnesses. The Cymorth fund, which includes Sure Start, is being increased by over £29 million, in addition to the £50 million for early years, between 2005 and 2008.

- Security - £5million Assembly Government investment in hard-wired detection equipment in more than 60,000 social housing properties.
- Food and Fitness – expanding the successful Free School Breakfast initiative to all interested primary schools by January 2007
- Schools and Health – expanding network of “Health Promoting Schools” to all parts of Wales
- Housing – reduction and elimination of bed & breakfast and other temporary accommodation, new guidelines to social landlords on legal obligations and mediation for young people to prevent homelessness.
- Rural services - new Rural Development Plan 2007 – 2013, to spread prosperity, strengthen communities and improve public transport

4. Measuring and Monitoring Child Poverty

To measure child poverty, we currently track the number of children living in households with less than 60% of the UK average income or those which lack certain household goods and services.

However new measurements will combine income, unemployment data, benefit claims and other deprivation indicators. This will give us a clearer picture and a better basis for measuring our progress in the battle against poverty.

Beating child poverty involves many different Assembly Government departments so an integrated effort is needed. Evaluation of progress will therefore be reported in detail to the full Cabinet each year and be available for public scrutiny.

1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1 Wales is a country that includes areas experiencing pronounced deprivation. Figures for 2002-03 indicate that Wales has a higher proportion of children living in low-income households than most other areas of Great Britain. 30% of children lived in households with incomes below 60% of median income compared with 28% in Great Britain. In Spring 2004, 19.4% of children in Wales lived in workless households compared to 16.4% in the UK as a whole. The Welsh Assembly Government's policies and programmes are already aimed at addressing the underlying problems faced by both individuals and communities moving out of poverty. However, child poverty is a complex issue and its eradication demands special attention. Action taken now to tackle child poverty and related poverty in later generations will benefit society, and prove to be cost-effective in the long-term. The Strategy sets out how the Assembly Government can play its part in meeting the UK Government's Child Poverty targets: to halve Child Poverty by 2010 when compared with 1997, and eradicate it by 2020.
- 1.2 The Strategy is built on a set of core values in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in common with the Welsh Assembly Government Aims for Children and Young People:
- Children and young people in Wales should not be disadvantaged or prevented from achieving their full potential because of where they live or their family circumstances (**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles, 3, 6, 18, 24, 26, 27,28,29,31 and 36**);
 - Children and young people in Wales should be able to exercise their right to participate fully in society and in all matters affecting them (**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles, 12 and 13**);
 - All children and young people in Wales should enjoy equality of opportunity and access to appropriate services in an environment which respects diversity (**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles, 2, 23, 24, 26, 27,28,29,30 and 31**).
 - Children and young people have fundamental rights to social security and adequate standard of living (**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles 26 and 27**).
- 1.3 The Strategy takes forward the main conclusions of the Child Poverty Task Group report and the key messages from children and young that informed that report. In so doing it adopts the guiding principles suggested in the report:

- The Strategy, in common with the UK Government’s strategy, while encompassing income poverty, is also widely focussed to include key aspects of poverty and social inclusion that undermine children and young people’s capacity to participate fully in society and achieve their full potential;
 - The Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to a rights based approach, consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in common with other strategies;
 - The Strategy is focused on action to achieve a significant and sustainable reduction in current levels of child poverty and includes action to support and enable children and young people who are in poverty to live fulfilling lives and to reach their full potential as adults.
- 1.4 Child poverty requires an inclusive and holistic approach, which cuts across Welsh Assembly Government portfolios and across the work of its partners. Our economic development policies and Spatial Plan support the creation of jobs and a skilled workforce that can offer sustainable increased incomes to families. Our investments in the youngest children will offer them improved life chances and help create a high skills workforce in the future – and that investment continues throughout the education system. Our regeneration programme, Communities First, tackles poverty in the areas where multiple deprivation manifests itself. The Strategy links with and reflects other relevant strategies such as the Assembly Government’s Annual Social Justice Report and the UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion. It complements the range of Assembly initiatives that support children and young people, from free school breakfasts to “Climbing Higher”, our consultation on sport and active recreation.
- 1.5 We support the Task Group’s view that child poverty and social exclusion in Wales need to be tackled in the mainstream. The UK Government’s ‘Child Poverty Review’ identifies the significance of mainstream services in contributing to the improvement of poor children’s life chances and thus breaking cycles of deprivation.
- 1.6 Action to ensure that all children and young people in Wales are able to reach their full potential is set out in “*Children and Young People: Rights to Action*”. This includes those who are disadvantaged by poverty or in other ways. *Rights to Action* sets out how we take forward our seven core aims for children and young people in Wales, ensuring that they:
- have a flying start in life;
 - have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
- are not disadvantaged by poverty

1.7 As the Task Group suggests, the role of mainstream universal services is crucial in taking this agenda forward. However the Welsh Assembly Government believes that this must go hand in hand with a targeted approach which directs resources at the most deprived areas. Although it is true that only 26% of poor children live in Communities First areas, these areas account for only 12% of all electoral wards in Wales and so the incidence of child poverty in Communities First (and other deprived) areas is likely to be concentrated and higher.

1.8 Within a framework of universal services the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will need positive action to promote equality. Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund aims to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people within a framework of universal provision, in order to improve their life chances.

1.9 As the Task Group report suggests, preventative programmes (such as Sure Start programmes), which support early intervention and support parents, have a crucial role to play in tackling child poverty. Currently these services are delivered on a targeted basis through Cymorth to reflect identified local need. There is a body of evidence, still emerging but robust in its key findings, that children's early experiences are crucial for their subsequent skills development and therefore for their eventual employment prospects. Getting a child's early years development right makes subsequent investment in education and training much more effective. We are putting substantial new funds into this area, complementing our initiatives for the early years which will be universal – for example the Foundation Phase, free School Breakfasts and free access to swimming. We are developing a Play Strategy, building on our public commitment and action on this issue. Ensuring access to the opportunity to play deals with some of the direct effect of poverty on children.

1.10 We also recognise that some groups within society can face specific aspects of social exclusion because of discrimination and historical disadvantage. This includes minority groups and disabled children and young people. Simply providing the same service to all does not mean that everyone can have equal access to those services. We are taking

forward the equality agenda as a cross cutting theme, informing work across every area of government. We are also funding targeted services through Cymorth and other initiatives, to promote equality of access for groups of children, young people and their families who may face additional disadvantage because of ethnicity or disability. The promotion of equality will continue to inform the development of policy and provision.

- 1.11 The Task Group report highlights the way in which stigma and lack of understanding impacts on the lives of children and young people in poverty. The Welsh Assembly Government will consult with appropriate organisations and agencies to develop material for a public education campaign to dispel myths about poverty. We will also develop and issue guidance for distribution to all agencies and professionals working with children and young people, to raise awareness of the issues and to promote the delivery of targeted support in non-stigmatising ways.
- 1.12 The Welsh Assembly Government has already made representations to the UK Government in relation to a number of non-devolved issues which impact on child poverty, such as Single Room Rent. We have referred the other recommendations relating to the UK Government to the Secretary of State for Wales for a response.
- 1.13 The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that sharing good evidence-based practice is crucial to the development of quality services and will continue to invest in events and processes to disseminate good practice. The sharing and dissemination of evidence-based practice is an important part of our work to promote effective partnership working across Wales.

Key Messages from Children and Young People in Wales.

- 1.14 The Task Group considered the findings of a series of consultations with children and young people living in Wales. They identified a wide range of areas through which poverty impacted on their experiences and the conditions of their lives. The issues they identified informed the Task Group report, and the Strategy reflects these areas of concern. In particular children and young people prioritised two areas for action:
 - Education and schools
 - Employment and training.

The latter was particularly important for older young people.

- 1.15 In line with the broad aims of the Welsh Assembly Government (as reflected in *Children and Young People: Rights to Action*), and with the three cross-cutting themes of social inclusion, equal opportunities and

sustainable development set out in 'A Plan for Wales 2001', this Strategy aims to:

- Reflect the aspirations and expectations of children and young people living in Wales;
- Raise standards of living and quality of life;
- Reduce income insecurity experienced by children, young people and their parents living in Wales;
- Maximise potential and participation in decision making and service provision;
- Tackle discrimination which limits children and young people's opportunities and chances of reaching their full potential;
- Improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequality; and
- Build children and young people's capacity to become independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process.

Tackling Child Poverty in Wales

1.16 The Task Group report identified three principal dimensions of child poverty:

- Income Poverty
- Participation Poverty
- Service Poverty

1.17 These dimensions provide a useful means for examining the complex and interrelated issues connected with child poverty. This Strategy describes the main programmes and activities that will support our drive to tackle child poverty with reference to these three dimensions. It does not include everything that the Assembly Government is already doing or will do in the future in tackling child poverty. Rather it concentrates on key areas in response to the over-arching issues identified in the Task Group report where action has commenced or will be focused.

2. Income Poverty

- 2.1 Children and young people growing up in low-income households do not enjoy the same opportunities as their peers, and are more likely to experience poor outcomes which will impact on their ability to move out of poverty as adults. Although areas such as the tax and benefit system are non-devolved, there are many ways through which the Welsh Assembly Government can and does seek to improve the economic position of families. The UK Government has identified work as the best route out of poverty, and in the second Assembly term we will continue to focus on four key areas: helping more people into jobs; improving health; developing strong and safe communities; and creating better skills and jobs. The UK Government has now published its 'Child Poverty Review', which sets out action to be taken in non-devolved areas for tackling child poverty across the UK.
- 2.2 The Task Group report makes it clear that children and young people identify the importance of creating decent jobs and employment opportunities in Wales as a means of tackling child poverty. The Assembly Government has been working vigorously with its partners to meet the challenges set when "*A Winning Wales*" was published in 2002. Success would mean Welsh GDP per person rising to 90% of the UK average over the next decade, with the ultimate aim of achieving parity. To achieve this we need to modernise the industrial structure of the Welsh economy, to ensure that Wales has a higher share of employment in high growth, high skill and high-value-adding industries and occupations. We also need to ensure that more of our people have jobs and opportunities to benefit from new industries. This will mean action to break down some of the barriers to employment by improving childcare, improving access to skills, and supporting the development of transport infrastructures.
- 2.3 We recognise that some groups currently enjoy limited employment opportunities and face additional barriers to employment. There are a number of ways in which we are seeking to address this issue and to ensure that growth in the Welsh economy benefits people across Wales, including those who may currently be disadvantaged.

Access to Employment

- 2.4 One of the successful outcomes which '*A Winning Wales*' set for 2010 is a 175,000 increase in the number of people in employment (including self-employment), with particular emphasis on communities and groups with low participation rates.
- 2.5 The 'Wales Spatial Plan' offers the best opportunity for the Assembly Government to consider the scope for influencing the availability of jobs geographically.

- 2.6 The Assembly Government will work with its partners, including Jobcentre Plus, to remove barriers to participation in the economy. We have established a Steering Group to consider the best ways forward in tackling economic inactivity in Wales, which has identified the potential benefits of developing pilot approaches to test a return-to-work package in partnership with Jobcentre Plus in Wales. This model will need to be tested with the active involvement of DfTE. In addition to a range of measures to help people overcome the barriers created by low skill levels and work-limiting health problems, participants will, on moving into work, receive financial support to help their transition from benefits to paid employment.
- 2.7 The objective of making sure that people are not disadvantaged in the labour market because of where they live means making the most of programmes like the European Structural Funds. We need to ensure that currently under-performing parts of Wales are made more attractive to business. A balanced spatial approach also means that we take advantage of the opportunities offered in the faster-growing areas of Wales to help increase and spread prosperity.
- 2.8 The importance of ensuring that young people are not disadvantaged because of where they live is particularly pertinent to Welsh speakers living in traditionally (and predominantly rural) Welsh speaking areas. These issues are addressed in *Iaith Pawb*, the Assembly Government's National Action Plan for a bilingual Wales. In general, the Assembly Government's approach is based on the belief that the solution for disadvantaged Welsh-speaking communities rests with our national strategies for promoting economically and socially sustainable communities (particularly "A Winning Wales" and Communities First). As well as requiring Welsh language issues to be mainstreamed in these development programmes, *Iaith Pawb* acknowledges that for some areas of Wales it might be appropriate to devise and implement additional economic and social development programmes which are strongly targeted at Welsh speakers.
- 2.9 The most promising approach to tackling the economic inactivity problem in the long term is a coherent programme of pre-school early intervention to help children on to the right track from an early age as the. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4: Service Poverty.
- 2.10 We will implement and update our 'Skills and Employment Action Plan', which provides a structure to our policies and programmes on skills development, lifelong learning and employment. This will include improving mechanisms of workforce development and providing support so that entrants and re-entrants to the labour market have the skills employers need.

- 2.11 As part of the 'Skills and Employment Action Plan' we will work with our partners to bring a new era to post-16 learning in Wales and a more coherent and flexible range of provision to suit all learners. Key priorities include sustaining a high quality network of learning providers which meets the needs of employers and learners, developing new approaches to bring people into learning, and working with partners to develop clear and flexible progression routes.
- 2.12 We will introduce a choice of learning pathways and learner support for 14-19 year olds to ensure that all young people, including those living in low-income households, have the skills, experiences and opportunities to realise their potential, obtain good quality jobs and contribute to their communities. This will be a crucial element of work to re-engage the 10% of 16-18 year olds in Wales who are not in any form of employment, education or training (referred to as NEETs).
- 2.13 A number of other services have been or are currently available to 16 to 18 year old NEETs including the targeted outreach programme 'Youth Access Initiative' (now part of Cymorth funded activity). Wales 'Youth Gateway', a short intensive course aimed to get young people to learn new skills, and initially targeted at 16 and 17 year olds, now also extends to 14-16 year olds at risk of becoming NEETs.
- 2.14 The 'Keeping in Touch' protocols being developed and implemented by Young People's Partnerships by March 2005 will identify young people not in employment, education or training, and assist them in securing a Learning Pathway to meet their needs. We will include monitoring of NEETs as a specific aspect of evaluation within 'Extending Entitlement' (the implementation of '*Learning Pathways 14-19*').
- 2.15 We will implement and review the 'Basic Skills Strategy' for Wales, which includes a wide range of measures designed to tackle the problems of poor literacy and numeracy amongst children, young people and adults.
- 2.16 We are aware that some projects operating within local Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships are providing increased opportunities for lone parents to engage in training, and to access information about New Deal for Lone Parents and learning opportunities. Initiatives such as Integrated Centres are able to provide short-term childcare to support parents in accessing on-site support. This might include access to a New Deal advisor, further education taster courses and training. We welcome the development of such provision, and will review current provision and consider ways in which such practice can be expanded.
- 2.17 The development of community focused schools may also be of particular benefit to lone parents. These schools have the potential to provide facilities where lifelong learning, childcare and work with partners such as 'Action Teams for Jobs' can be provided in the

community. This approach is currently the subject of a pilot being developed jointly with the Department for Work and Pensions in Torfaen.

- 2.18 We want businesses to employ a wider range of people, providing equality of opportunity for all, particularly those from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and for disabled people. Further research and development is needed into whether current provision by Jobcentre Plus is sufficient to ensure that the particular needs of refugees and members of black and minority ethnic communities are treated sensitively and appropriately.
- 2.19 We welcome the UK Government's proposals for the evolution of the New Deal, Building on New Deal (BoND), founded on movement towards greater local flexibility and less central prescription. This extension of greater freedom and flexibility to front-line staff is intended to enable all groups, including people from ethnic minorities, to receive support more closely tailored to their individual needs. The UK Government intends to pilot this new approach through Pathfinder areas from late 2005, and the Assembly Government is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions in the on-going development of BoND.
- 2.20 We will ensure that business support and advice provided by publicly-funded services includes information on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003.
- 2.21 Transport can act as a barrier to employment for people from some groups or areas, and we are committed to developing a sustainable and integrated transport network which includes improved public and community transport in all areas and improved accessibility for those who do not have a car. We will continue to financially support our scheme guaranteeing free travel to disabled and elderly people. This has allowed operators to safeguard and extend a number of existing services and also to bring forward their investment in more accessible vehicles. We will identify the practical difficulties that will need to be overcome to extend the free scheme to community transport.
- 2.22 When young people are consulted about issues that matter to them, transport is always high on the list. We are developing a scheme to guarantee half-fare travel by 16-18 year olds on bus services, helping to promote learning, training and employment. Local authorities have powers to subsidise local bus services that are not being provided commercially by bus operators, but which in their opinion would meet a social need. Research has identified that local bus services are disproportionately important with lower incomes. It is certain that children will make up a significant number of those who use subsidised local bus services.

- 2.23 It is also our intention to implement the recommendations of the Transport and Employment Working Group, which identified actions to enhance public transport where significant numbers of unemployed people found access to transport a barrier.

Work-Life Balance

- 2.24 Section 47 of the Employment Act 2002 came into force on 6 April 2003. This gives employees with children under 6 (or with disabled children under 18) the right to request a change in the hours they work, a change to the times they are required to work, and/or a change to their work locations. All employers are required to consider such requests and may only turn them down for valid business reasons.
- 2.25 The Assembly Government already has in place, for its own employees, a wide range of flexible working policies which go well beyond the minimum legislative requirements.
- 2.26 We are already involved in significant work to promote work-life balance among employers in Wales, including the public sector. For example, the Assembly Government is funding Chwarae Teg to employ pilot officers, who will work with the public sector to assist them to introduce or enhance work-life balance policies and practices.
- 2.27 Childcare places an important part in enabling parents to make choices about work/life balance. This is considered in more detail in Chapter 4.

Adequate Income Levels

- 2.28 The two main forms of assistance with income levels for children in poverty are Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits. Of the two, only Child Benefit is universal. Professor Peter Townsend drew the attention of the Task Group to his view that Tax Credits are selective and do not cover a substantial number of families in poverty. He also pointed out that UK expenditure on Child Benefit was £8.4 billion in 1997-8 and £9.7 billions in 2003-4, while Tax Credit expenditure on children was £1.3 billions in 1997-8 but £9.1 billions in 2003-4. He expressed his view that the first priority should be to substantially improve the levels of Child Benefit. The Assembly Government has passed this view on to the UK Government.

In the Pre-Budget Report, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced further steps that will help deal with child poverty in Wales, including:

- **an extension of paid maternity leave to nine months** from April 2007, and improvements to the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit;
- a package of measures to ensure that everyone has **access to banking, affordable credit and free face-to-face money advice**;

- **promoting saving** through Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), the Saving Gateway and the Child Trust Fund; and
 - **measures to promote fairness in the tax system**, tackle tax fraud and avoidance, and protect revenues.
- 2.29 In addition to tackling income levels at the UK level action is also needed to improve the levels of financial literacy among poor children. We recognise that literacy and numeracy skills are the foundations of financial literacy, and that improving this range of skills is central to improving economic and social outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.30 Guidance on the need for pupils to develop an understanding of the role and importance of money is contained in the Framework for Personal and Social Education (PSE), published by the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC). It makes clear that pupils need help to understand their role and responsibility as consumers and to cultivate a financial literacy which enables them to make effective economic judgements and decisions. PSE was made a statutory requirement as part of the basic curriculum in Wales in September 2003.
- 2.31 The 'National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales' includes a broad range of measures to tackle the basic skills deficit in Wales. An additional £27 million has been made available since 2001 to raise basic skills levels through a combination of across the board initiatives, support for the development of local action plans, strengthening the effectiveness of programmes in the early years and onwards, curriculum development, new qualifications, staff training, and quality standards.
- 2.32 The Basic Skills Strategy is being implemented by the Basic Skills Agency. Current developments include the piloting of a new tripartite award for basic skills achievement and the publication of the 'Adult Financial Capability Framework'. This Framework helps raise awareness that difficulties may arise from a lack of literacy, language and numeracy skills, and helps advisers identify the skills that individuals will need to be able to manage money better in the future. The Strategy is currently being reviewed and the recommendations of the Task Group will be taken into account in the review.
- 2.33 In March 2003 BBC Wales worked with ACCAC to produce a bilingual package of videos and booklets, 'Raising Standards in Literacy and Numeracy', to help secondary schools develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Also through ACCAC, the Assembly Government is supporting the development of a range of qualifications through the medium of Welsh, so that first language Welsh speakers are not disadvantaged in education and training.

- 2.34 We will continue to support the development of basic skills and financial literacy in Wales, in both English and Welsh, and will consider the best ways forward for delivering financial literacy in innovative ways, including examining the role of Young People's Partnerships as potential providers of financial literacy, and of support and assistance in relation to preventing and resolving debt as part of their wider work with young people. Young People's Partnerships may wish to consider forming links with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other appropriate partners in developing this as a possible area of work for the future.
- 2.35 We know that families on low incomes are vulnerable to debt and face additional barriers to accessing affordable credit and other financial services. The Assembly Government shares the Task Group's concerns about over-indebtedness. In '*A Winning Wales*' we have stated our commitment to work with our partners to develop the community provision of financial services. A review carried out by the Deputy Minister for Communities between May and October 2004 will inform a report on the long-term strategic direction and recommendations for action to tackle this issue (including representations to the UK Government, where appropriate).
- 2.36 The second National Information and Advice Project for 11-25 year olds began in October 2004 and will run for three and a half years, building on the first project delivered by Canllaw On-line on behalf of the Assembly Government. It will aim to make available, to a broad range of young people across Wales and in a variety of settings, accessible advice on key issues that affect their lives. Financial management, including the prevention and resolving of debt, is one of the issues that the project will cover.
- 2.37 We are also promoting the development of Credit Unions, as part of our wider agenda to develop a sustainable social economy and regenerate deprived communities in Wales. Our commitment has been underlined by nearly £1.5 million of Assembly funding for the Welsh Credit Union Strategy over the past three years. This has enabled the Wales Co-operative Centre to access European Structural Funds of £2.6 million, providing Credit Unions with access to over £4 million in total. The project, now completed, has delivered almost a three-fold increase in credit union membership and a 150% increase in deposits. We are continuing to support Credit Unions by means of a grant and bursary fund which, with Welsh Assembly and European Funds, will make available a further £1.5 million over three years to Credit Unions in the most deprived areas of Wales.
- 2.38 The UK Government has announced in its 'Child Poverty Review' that it will explore mechanisms that allow profitable loans to be made available to those on low incomes at a much lower rate of interest. The UK Government will work in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors to develop models which make more affordable loans available.

The Assembly Government will make representations to ensure that good practice identified through this process is applied in Wales.

- 2.39 As of October 2004, the adult and youth rates of the National Minimum Wage increased to £4.85 and £4.10 respectively. These represent increases of 7% each and are well above the expected rate of average earnings growth. We welcome these increases and the recent extension of the National Minimum Wage to 16-18 year olds.

Tax and Benefits System

- 2.40 The tax and benefits systems are non-devolved areas. The UK Government has set out in its 'Child Poverty Review' evidence of the positive impact of tax and benefit reforms since 1997 on family income, with those in the poorest fifth of the population now on average £3000 per year better off. The 'Child Poverty Review' also sets out the ways in which the UK Government plans to build on the reforms to date in order to continue improvements in the level of financial support available. This includes a statement about the consideration of mechanisms to improve financial support to large families.
- 2.41 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is working towards improving the claim process for disability benefits and developing a new Disability Living Allowance form appropriate for those looking after disabled children.
- 2.42 The DWP and Inland Revenue are reviewing data on take up of income-related benefits and tax credits to assess whether there are systematic differences by ethnic group. In the light of this evidence the UK Government will consider whether further targeted initiatives are required to ensure families are receiving the financial support they are entitled to.
- 2.43 The UK Government has already commenced a reform of Housing Benefit, streamlining administration and introducing pilots of new flat rate local housing allowance for tenants in the private sector. In addition the first £11.90 of earnings for all tenants entitled to Working Tax Credit is now disregarded as part of a series of measures to improve the interface between Housing Benefits and other benefits and tax credits.
- 2.44 The Assembly Government is aware of the restrictions resulting from Single Room Rent rule. The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has already made representations on the matter of Single Room Rent as a result of the work of the Homelessness Commission.

Welsh initiatives

- 2.45 The Welsh Assembly Government is aware that a number of local authorities in Wales are in the process of developing initiatives aimed at income maximisation through the promotion of take up of income related benefits and tax credits. We will review evidence of good practice emerging through these local initiatives, and consider the ways in which we can best support and disseminate the rolling out of similar projects across Wales.
- 2.46 'Better Advice: Better Health' was introduced as a benefits advice pilot scheme in 2003. The scheme allows GPs to refer patients who need benefits advice and social care services to experts from the Citizens Advice Bureau. An evaluation of the scheme has shown wide support for the service from GPs and service users. As a result of the scheme's success, we have now incorporated it into the core health budget for Wales, so that it becomes part of the mainstream service.
- 2.47 In Wales MEWN Cymru are running a Communities and Advice Services Project to identify and tackle some of the barriers which prevent people from local black and ethnic minority communities from gaining an awareness of their rights and from accessing advice. This project is being independently evaluated, and the Assembly Government will review and identify the policy implications of this research.
- 2.48 We have issued guidance for schools and their key partners on how they can develop and provide community focused services and activities. We hope that as community focused schools develop they will take up the opportunity to host or promote community organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. This would contribute to increased awareness of benefits and increased take up of income related benefits and tax credits.
- 2.49 We welcome the announcement in the UK Government 'Child Poverty Review' that it intends to abolish the 'double debt' rule and lower the repayment rate for Social Fund Budgeting Loans.

Grants for Further and Higher Education

- 2.50 The Assembly Government has introduced measures to assist further and higher education learners from low-income families. The Assembly Learning Grant (ALG) provides extra money for students who might otherwise experience financial difficulty when undertaking further education (FE) or higher education (HE) undergraduate courses and was introduced for the academic year 2002/03. Assembly Learning Grants are paid to young people over 18 from households with an income of £15,000 or less. The maximum grant is £1,500. Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA) are being introduced from the academic year 2004/05. It provides a fortnightly payment of up to £60

(£30 per week) for students who are aged 16 years on or between 1 September 2003 and 31 August 2004. It is paid directly to young people from households with an income of £30,000 or less who stay on in education after they reach statutory leaving age. Additionally, Financial Contingency Funds are made available to FE and HE institutions to assist students who cannot enter or continue their course because of financial difficulty. These measures will provide assistance in removing barriers to participation in continuing education for young people from low income households in Wales, and will provide them with opportunities to gain the qualifications and skills needed to secure employment.

3. Participation Poverty

- 3.1 When children and young people describe their experiences of poverty they often refer to the ways in which they feel excluded from the social and cultural activities that their peers enjoy. As the Task Group report highlights, children and young people feel that they have limited opportunities for full participation in social activities, social relationships and the school community. For some groups of children and young people who are over-represented among low-income households - such as those who are disabled or from certain ethnic minority groups - discrimination and lack of respect for diversity can operate as additional barriers to participation. The Task Group Report also found that children and young people may feel stigmatised by special initiatives and sometimes feel that they are not respected by the professionals that work with them.
- 3.2 Participation is a key element of the Assembly Government's approach to children and young people. Through our seven core aims (informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), we are working to ensure that all children and young people are provided with opportunities to participate fully in play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; enjoy a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities; are listened to and treated with respect; and have their race and cultural identity recognised. This work is being taken forward through Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships and Plans (which will become statutory through the Children Act 2004), and through the work of school councils and youth forums. Our implementation plans for taking this work forward and meeting our commitments are set out in *'Children and Young People: Rights to Action'*. We recognise that there is a need to promote participation through the language of choice, and *laith Pawb* includes projects that promote and support participation through the medium of Welsh.

Participation in Leisure and Social Activities

- 3.3 The Assembly Government's strategy for consultation on sport and active recreation ('Climbing Higher') was published for consultation in 2003. It supports our ambition of "an active, healthy and inclusive Wales, where sport, active recreation and physical activity provide a common platform for participation, fun and achievement, which binds communities and the nation and where the outstanding environment of Wales is used sustainably to enhance confidence in ourselves and our place in the world". Increasing participation in physical activity is a key component in achieving the health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 3.4 'Climbing Higher' recommends the development of a nationally branded but local authority owned and managed smart card for sport and physical activity. This would provide incentives for participation

while also helping to develop the evidence base for policy making. All local authorities have agreed in principle that they should work with the Assembly Government towards the launch of a smart card system.

- 3.5 An Action Plan for improvement of standards in schools for all children in Wales is being developed to implement the key recommendations of the Physical Education and School Sports Task Force. The 'Climbing Higher' strategy proposes that Estyn advises on best practice in the provision of PE and school sport for disabled children.
- 3.6 In 2003 the Assembly Government's free swimming pilot for children and young people resulted in a 108% increase in the number of children and young people swimming during the school summer holidays of 2003. Significantly, the highest levels of participation were in some of the most deprived communities in Wales.
- 3.7 Building on the success of the 2003 pilot scheme, the Assembly Government is providing £2.5 million to run the free swimming scheme throughout the 2004-2005 school holidays. As part of this a minimum of one hour a day per local authority will be dedicated to an activity programme for targeted groups (e.g. black and minority communities; sessions for disadvantaged children). At least one of these sessions should be a dedicated structured session for disabled children.
- 3.8 Each local authority is expected to encourage and promote a wider range of sports and participation, and to feed back examples of good practice. This will feed into the monitoring and evaluation system we have established in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales and the Local Government Data Unit to evaluate the success of the Free Swimming Initiative.
- 3.9 Engaging children and young people in recreation and leisure activities helps to divert them from possible involvement in anti-social behaviour. Good practice evidence is emerging from 'Communities that Care' in relation to the positive impact of initiatives that target whole communities in reducing anti-social behaviour. A 'Communities that Care' conference was held in the summer of 2003 to disseminate good practice. We will ensure that good practice from this initiative is brought to the attention of Framework Partnerships and Young People's Partnerships co-ordinators.
- 3.10 Funding under the Communities First programme has been awarded to provide leisure and recreation equipment to the most deprived areas across Wales. Activities funded have included the repair or provision of outdoor play equipment and building skateboard and bike parks and youth shelters. This resulted in the establishment of 38 youth shelters across Wales.

- 3.11 The Community Facilities and Activities Programme awards grants to voluntary and community groups across Wales to help them provide facilities or carry out activities which will promote the regeneration of communities. One of principle uses of the programme is to provide or up-grade community facilities which have multiple functions, including many that relate to children, such as youth clubs, sports activities, music, dance etc. Among other funding priorities for the Programme are providing facilities or activities which reduce poverty, inequality, discrimination and social disadvantage; and involving people of all ages and abilities in the community and addressing the needs of socially excluded groups.
- 3.12 The Assembly Government has also taken a lead in developing policies and strategies to increase access to play facilities. This is described in more detail in chapter 4.

Safe routes to schools

- 3.13 Local authorities in Wales have embraced the safe routes to schools ideals. More Welsh safe routes to school schemes will be completed as a result of our commitment of a further £3.5million for this financial year, bringing the total investment in Wales to over £14.5 million. Successful projects often include traffic calming, crossings, new or enhanced cycleways and footpaths and secure cycle storage. Safe routes to school projects also improve road safety and reduce child casualties, improve children's health and development and reduce traffic congestion and pollution. The best projects are child-centred, build on small steps to raise awareness and change travel behaviour and benefit the whole local community by helping to create safer, healthier environments.
- 3.14 A Road Safety Strategy was published in 2003 to improve safety. The Strategy includes a focus on children, and a sub-group of the Wales Road Safety Forum has been established to look at children's road safety issues. The Strategy also provides for Home Zones under the Action Programme. We are also supporting the use of traffic calming including 20mph zones within new and existing developments.

Participation in the school community, education and training

School meals and uniforms

- 3.15 Under section 512 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education Act 2002), responsibility for the provision of school meals rests with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) or school governing bodies where functions has been delegated. LEAs and governing bodies must provide school lunches to pupils with a free entitlement. The Assembly Government supports the use of non-stigmatising systems such as smart card networked cashless cafeteria, and

although we cannot direct LEAs and school governing bodies in this regard we encourage the use of such systems so that pupils are not stigmatised.

- 3.16 'Guidance on Nutritional Standards for School Lunches' was issued in 2003 and includes advice on the need to encourage increased take up of school lunches including free school lunches.
- 3.17 The Assembly Government is concerned about the cost of the purchase of school uniform for low-income families. The Assembly Government has given a commitment to considering introducing a minimum all-Wales grant scheme for the purchase of school uniform in 2005/06, subject to securing funding.
- 3.18 We are providing financial support in 2004/05 for a low cost loan scheme for the purchase of school uniform being administered through Credit Unions. Participating Credit Unions are Caerphilly, Montgomeryshire, Llandudno and Denbighshire (Clwyd Coast).
- 3.19 The Assembly Government has also consulted on guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform policy, which covers issues of equality, costs etc. The final guidance will be issued as soon as possible in the new 2004/05 school year.

Shaping the attitudes of teachers and support staff

- 3.20 The current requirements for initial teacher training courses were set out in Welsh Office Circular 13/98. This specifies that for all initial teacher training courses, in order to meet the Qualified Teaching Status standards, students must, when assessed, demonstrate (amongst other things) that they:
- understand how pupils' learning is affected by their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development;
 - plan opportunities to contribute to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
 - set high expectations for pupils' behaviour, establishing and maintaining a good standard of discipline through well-focused teaching and through positive and productive relationships;
 - establish a safe environment which supports learning and in which pupils feel secure and confident;
 - understand teachers' legal liabilities and responsibilities relating to race relations and sex discrimination legislation; the duty to ensure that pupils are healthy and safe on school premises and when involved in organised activities off the school site; what is reasonable for the purposes of safeguarding or promoting children's welfare; and the role of the education service in protecting children from abuse;

- are committed to ensuring that every pupil is given the opportunity to achieve their potential and meet the high expectations set for them;
 - understand their professional responsibilities in relation to school policies and practices, such as those concerned with pastoral and personal safety matters, including bullying.
- 3.21 We are in the process of reviewing Welsh Office Circular 13/98 and will take into account the recommendations of the Task Group as part of the review.
- 3.22 There are statutory Induction arrangements for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Wales. In order to complete Induction successfully in Wales, the NQT must continue consistently to meet the Qualified Teacher Status Standards and meet the End of Induction Standard. The Induction Standards include demonstrating “commitment to equal opportunities, social justice and inclusion”.
- 3.23 The Assembly Government will shortly publish professional standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). Support staff who can demonstrate that they meet the standards will be able to take on more demanding teaching and learning activities in support of teachers, such as working with whole classes. Those meeting the HLTA standards must demonstrate among other things that:
- they have high expectations of all pupils; respect their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds; and are committed to raising their educational achievement;
 - recognise and respond effectively to equal opportunities issues as they arise, including by challenging stereotyped views, and by challenging bullying and harassment, following relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.24 School governing bodies should ensure that school policies embrace equality for all pupils. Pupils should not be discriminated against because of disability, race, religion or other circumstances that may draw attention to a child’s individuality. Additional support may need to be offered to these pupils to ensure that they do not become disengaged from school.
- 3.25 Certain groups of children have been identified as being at particular risk of disengagement. That is, they are over-represented amongst those who do not attend school, whose behaviour is poor, and who are excluded from school. Many pupils who are at risk of disengagement, or become disengaged, are already among the most vulnerable in the community. Disengagement from school, therefore, serves to exacerbate what are already difficult circumstances for the child.

- 3.26 The Assembly set out, in the Learning Country as one of its key principles that 'Barriers to Learning must be recognised and steadily overcome to the benefit of learners' access and participation; support for diversity and communities; and wider opportunities and option choice.
- 3.27 Potentially there are many pupil groups who could be identified as having specific needs which need to be addressed. This could include those pupils who come from a background of poverty. School governing bodies need to be aware of this and ensure that these children are not discriminated against because of their financial situation.

Bullying

- 3.28 The Assembly Government's anti-bullying guidance '*Respecting Others*' has been developed with the assistance of children's charities and with reference to existing good practice. We are now supporting schools to develop policies and to ensure that children, parents and teachers are clear on the action to be taken, A number of regional conferences have been held where young people have discussed initiatives such as mentor support and friendship schemes that are working well in individual schools. All schools in Wales will have school councils and these will have an important role to play in tackling bullying issues.
- 3.29 The monitoring of outcomes of anti-bullying strategies will be included in remit guidance to be issued to Estyn.
- 3.30 The anti-bullying guidance has been included in the training programme for the National Professional Qualification for headship (NPQH) in Wales. It is intended that the NPQH will become a mandatory qualification for all first time headteachers from 1 September 2005.

Equality and diversity

- 3.31 The Assembly Government has commissioned Estyn to carry out a survey in 2004-05 of how schools have implemented ACCAC's curriculum guidance, "*Equal Opportunities and Diversity in the School Curriculum in Wales*", (issued 2001) and how schools are implementing their duties under the Race Relations Act.
- 3.32 We are working with EALAW: English as an Additional Language Association in Wales to achieve levels of consistency following the EALAW report which highlights the different arrangements currently employed by local authorities in the provision of translators/interpreters.

- 3.33 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (as amended by the SEN and Disability Act 2001) places a duty on LEAs and schools to plan to increase progressively the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils. This came into force in October 2003 in Wales and LEAs' accessibility strategies and schools' accessibility plans should have been in place by 1 April 2004. Guidance has been issued to LEAs and schools (National Assembly for Wales Circular 15/2004) on their responsibilities which cover:
- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
 - improving the physical environment of schools; and
 - improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled.
- 3.34 The Assembly Government is providing an additional £650,000 to the Asylum Seeker Education Grant Scheme, which is additional to finance provided by LEA services.
- 3.35 LEA education strategies must take account of the needs of Gypsy and Travellers. The monitoring of adherence to this requirement will be included in remit guidance to be issued to Estyn.
- 3.36 The Assembly Government has developed Guidance to schools and LEAs on providing suitable support for young parents so that they can continue their education. We will issue this for consultation later this year.

Access to post-16 education

- 3.37 We have introduced policy measures to facilitate access to Post 16 education for young people in Wales. This includes developing a scheme to guarantee half-fare travel by 16-18 year olds on bus services and the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowances and Assembly Learning Grants (see paragraph 2.55).

Participation processes

- 3.38 The National Assembly for Wales has established participation as a core value of devolved government in Wales. In response to the principles of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Assembly Government has presented as a core value that "children and young people are to be treated as valued members of the community whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy-making".

- 3.39 This agenda is being taken forward in Wales, locally through school councils, youth forums and through the activities of Children and Young People's Partnerships, and nationally through the work of Funky Dragon: the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. A wide range of partners from the children's voluntary sector support this work. For example, Voices from Care ensure that looked after children are heard by those in authority. Partners working with children and young people bilingually, including Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Mentrau Iaith are also active in this work.
- 3.40 The Participation Consortium is a network of national statutory and voluntary organisations which are working together to identify and promote good practice across Wales. The Assembly Government is represented on the Consortium and we are working with it to co-ordinate developments and areas of work. The Participation Consortium is developing a set of common principles that will include reference to the importance of facilitating inclusion of disadvantaged groups.
- 3.41 The Assembly Government is funding a Participation Project to focus on developing, encouraging and supporting good practice in the participation of children and young people across its functions and other statutory organisations. As part of the Participation Project we will update the Partnership Framework guidance. The project will also support and encourage the reflection of good practice across all policy areas relating to children and young people.
- 3.42 The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that young people and children are heard by decision-makers in all public services, including schools. Section 176 of the Education Act 2002 requires LEAs and school governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Assembly on consulting pupils on decisions that affect them. Section 21 of the Education Act 2002 allows the Assembly to make regulations conferring functions on governing bodies and headteachers of maintained schools that will assist them in promoting high standards of achievement. The Assembly intends to make regulations requiring the establishment of school councils in all maintained junior, secondary and special schools in Wales. Consultation on draft regulations and guidance took place in late 2003. It is anticipated that the regulations will be made and final guidance issued in Spring 2005.
- 3.43 The Personal and Social Education (PSE) Framework provides a wide range of opportunities for engagement with adults to be covered at all Key Stages of the curriculum. The skills section of the learning outcomes varies from 'being able to express their own views and ideas' at Key Stage 1 to 'Communicate effectively their feelings and views in a wide range of situations' at Key Stage 4.

- 3.44 Guidance is being prepared for distribution to Communities First Partnerships which will highlight the importance of engaging children and young people in the programme. The Deputy Minister for Communities has undertaken a review of Communities First which recommends that children and young people should be given automatic rights to participate in Partnerships. Options for taking forward the recommendation are currently being considered by Ministers.
- 3.45 When developing standards for the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services Consultation Document, launched on 15 October, the Assembly Government commissioned an extensive series of consultation events with children, young people, parents and carers at a variety of venues around Wales, as well as through a questionnaire sent out to schools. The development of the key actions within the consultation document have been driven by the results of these consultation exercises to ensure that children and their families are placed at the heart of all service planning.
- 3.46 Children and young people who care for siblings or parents who are sick or disabled can be a particularly disadvantaged group, particularly those who come from poorer families. Young carers can particularly experience participation poverty, with limited opportunities for full participation in social and other activities. To address these issues, young carers have been clearly identified as a group needing support in *“Caring About Carers”*, the Strategy for Carers in Wales. The Assembly Government has established a Young Carers’ Advisory Panel and Young Carers’ Focus Group to provide a focal point for considering young carer issues. One of its first tasks has been to develop a training package for professionals working in schools, with the aim of raising awareness of young carer issues and the effect caring may have on their life opportunities. In addition, young carer groups have extended across Wales, giving valuable support to young carers. There is now at least one Young Carer Project in every local authority. The range of services available within projects differ from authority to authority, but all benefit young carers with practical and moral support, and act as a “signpost” to other services.

Advocacy

- 3.47 The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that listening and responding to children and young people is part of everyday practice, and that children and young people have a voice in all matters and decisions that affect their lives. Since June children in need have a statutory right to an independent advocate when raising a concern or making a complaint to a local authority social services department. Children and young people making a complaint in the NHS have access to the Independent Complaints Advocates operated by Community Health Councils. The Assembly is also consulting on new

arrangements and guidance for pupil complaints in schools. The guidance recognises the importance of advocacy to support a pupil through the complaints process.

- 3.48 Similarly, the Assembly will consult next year on draft regulations and guidance on new complaints procedures in health and social care and as part of this work will consider how best to simplify and co-ordinate the complaints process for children and young people in health social care and education.
- 3.49 The Assembly's aim is to extend access to advocacy services to all children and young people in health, social care and education settings and to ensure that all advocacy services are provided under the national standards. The priority focus however is our vulnerable children - children in need, including those looked after by local authorities or away from home in other settings. The Assembly has commissioned a major research study on advocacy services across Wales. The study will be completed by the end of 2004 and will inform developments on the future provision of advocacy services in Wales. The Assembly has also responded to its recommendations in 'Telling Concerns' the Children's Commissioner review of local authority complaints, whistleblowing and advocacy arrangements. A key recommendation was the setting up of an Assembly Advocacy Unit from November 2004. The Unit will work closely with the Advocacy Task Group to report on the future development of advocacy in Wales.
- 3.50 The long term objective is to ensure that children and young people get the help they need, when they need it, however large or small their concern; and to make sure that there is always someone there to listen and take action to help.

4. Service Poverty

- 4.1 Children and young people living in poor households and their families can experience difficulties in accessing and benefiting from services. The UK Government makes clear in its 'Child Poverty Review' that mainstream public services have a central contribution to make in improving poor children's life chances and thus breaking cycles of deprivation. This message is also clearly provided in the Task Group report which states that mainstream services have a key role to play in alleviating the impact of child poverty and preventing generational cycles of poverty. We also know that some groups face additional barriers in accessing services and that mainstream services may fail to accommodate diversity.
- 4.2 The cross-cutting nature of child poverty means that consideration of the relevant issues must inform the development and implementation of a wide range of national policy areas and local strategies designed to carry policy forward. In this way the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners can work together to tackle child poverty in Wales through mainstream services, and to ensure that these services respect and accommodate diversity.
- 4.3 The draft National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales has been drafted with a particular focus on tackling poverty, health inequality and social exclusion. The NSF standards seek to improve quality and reduce variations in service delivery across Wales through the setting of national standards. These standards have been set not just for health and social care, but also for other local government services which have a strong influence on the health and well-being of children, such as education, housing, leisure and transport.

Early years

- 4.4 International evidence indicates that support to the youngest children and families pays back many times over in its impact on the future of the child. But that support must be of the best quality and where possible proven to be effective by evaluation. The Assembly Government has announced £50 million of additional funding for Early Years investment over the two years 2006-7 and 2007-8. This will provide for such activities as well-evaluated Sure Start projects working with families, additional money for the Foundation Phase, good quality childcare, and language and play programmes. The investment will be targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, recognising the evidence that children within areas of multiple deprivation suffer additional effects of disadvantage.

Sure Start

- 4.5 Around £13 million of the near £40 million Cymorth Fund in 2003-2004 was for Sure Start projects for young children aged 0-3 years and their families in disadvantaged areas. Local Sure Start programmes ensure that health (including antenatal health), social services and early education services work together to help expectant mothers, young children and their families. The emphasis of the work is on early intervention and a preventative approach. Specific midwifery and health visiting posts exist to support minority ethnic communities to access maternity services.
- 4.6 Sure Start initiatives exist throughout Wales. These initiatives support teenage women through early pregnancy, childbirth, the post-natal period and pre-school years. Young mothers are offered midwifery support as well as support from health visitors, social services and the voluntary sector in maintaining health, developing self-esteem, parenting and life skills. Post-natal Peer Support groups have been set up throughout Wales. Particular successes have been in peer support for breastfeeding mothers. Local women are trained in offering advice and support to new mothers experiencing breastfeeding difficulties.
- 4.7 Cymorth is to receive some £29 million of additional funding over the next three years, in addition to a share of the early years initiative referred to in paragraph 4.4 above.

Childcare

- 4.8 The Assembly Government is determined to boost childcare provision. We reaffirm the central principle of our 2002 Childcare Action Plan, that childcare strategy must keep children's needs at the centre.
- 4.9 The Assembly Government has established a Childcare Working Group to provide advice on implementing the Childcare Action Plan for Wales, promoting the general provision of childcare for the benefit of children, parents and communities.
- 4.10 The Working Group published its Interim Report for consultation in June 2004. This identified key considerations relating to the needs and rights of the child, regulation, building the workforce, developing links between childcare and early years policy agendas, and use of school premises. It considered the critical issue of affordability, and the relative advantages of tackling this by subsidies to the parent or to the provider. It also considered the provision of childcare for disabled children and their families, making childcare meet the needs of children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds, and financial support for childcare.

- 4.11 The Cymorth fund supports childcare by assisting with the development of new provision and providing sustainability grants to existing providers, whether nurseries, playgroups, out of school clubs or childminders. Such grants help to maintain the affordability of fees. The Fund also supports a Children's Information Service in each area to make sure that parents can easily find out about childcare that is available locally.
- 4.12 The number of out-of-school childcare clubs has been growing with support from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). Over 24,000 new out-of-school childcare places have been created with NOF funding in Wales since 1999. Following the end of funding from NOF, Cymorth funding has been expanded to pay for further growth.
- 4.13 Sections 27 and 28 of the Education Act 2002 give governing bodies powers to provide services to help meet the needs of their pupils, their families and wider communities. We have produced and issued guidance on Community Focused Schools which sets out the ways in which schools can support a range of local facilities and services including local childcare provision. As a result of the Education Act 2002, in addition to offering out-of-school childcare through a voluntary management committee, private provider or local voluntary organisation, school governing bodies themselves have the opportunity to provide childcare, whether or not in partnership with others, on the school site.

Integrated centres and integrated services

- 4.14 Our programme of integrated centres provides children and families with buildings and service networks bringing together in every case early years education, play, childcare and community training. Integrated centres may also deliver a range of family support services. We are working with the Big Lottery Fund to develop at least one integrated centre in each local authority area, but expect to exceed that target. Our new funding for Early Years will further expand the number of integrated centres. At the same time, it is important in every locality to join up local services to provide for all children's needs. That is why we are using the Children Bill to ensure there is a lead Director for Children and Young People, and a Children and Young People's Framework Partnership in all Local Authorities.

Play

- 4.15 The Cymorth Fund supports the provision of accessible leisure, social activities and play opportunities to children and young people in deprived and isolated communities. This includes provision such as mobile youth clubs, toy libraries, support for trips, and activities to support child development through play. Children and Young People's Framework plans should continue to support and develop activity in this

area. We will review, identify and share examples of innovative practice which can be considered for replication across local authorities.

- 4.16 The Assembly Government published its Play Policy in October 2002 and received the Report of the Play Policy Implementation Group in 2004. The Assembly Government will produce a response which includes action points. The Assembly Government already provide core funding to Play Wales to support the role of playworkers and the Play Policy, and access to play opportunities will continue to be a focus of activity under the Cymorth fund.
- 4.17 We have taken the innovative step of making a mandatory element in the model of services provided by integrated centres. We are now building on that approach, regarding play as an integral part of Early Years programmes as a whole.
- 4.18 One of the key issues raised in the external Play Policy Implementation Group report was the need to offer children the excitement of risks appropriate to their stage of development, and there is a need to overcome the apparent deterrence of potential litigation and high insurance costs. We are reviewing how we can use our powers to impact on this problem within Wales.

Family Support

- 4.19 Supporting disadvantaged families will also be a theme in the Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan, which is currently being developed in conjunction with Children in Wales and the Fforwm Magu Plant network. The Assembly Government has taken a lead in opposing the physical punishment of children. This Action Plan will seek to build positive models and support for parenting. In particular, it will:
- Raise the profile of parenting, and of policies and services that support mothers, fathers and carers in their caring roles;
 - Map out existing policies, services and initiatives on parenting at national and local levels;
 - Make connections with other policies and activities that have an impact on parenting;
 - Identify, promote and disseminate examples of good practice; and
 - Identify key priority areas for further development.
- 4.20 The Plan will consider a range of policy areas and service provision, including early years support and Cymorth, NHS and health promotion programmes, education and citizenship, and community safety.

- 4.21 A Working Group representing statutory and voluntary service providers and officials has been established to assist in drawing up the Action Plan, which will be issued in the first half of 2005.
- 4.22 We know that some children underachieve at school because developmental delay has not been identified in the early years. A major cause of lack of identification and early intervention results from some children not receiving the universal core child health surveillance programme that all children in Wales should have access to. The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services contains a key action to ensure that all children are enabled to access core child health surveillance programmes, especially those from marginalised groups who find it more difficult to access these services.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

- 4.23 Our vision for CAMHS is set out in the All-Wales Strategy for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. '*Everybody's Business*', (2001) through a ten year programme. The vision is of CAMHS which are effective and efficient and which, above all, unite all professions in a determination to put the needs of children and young people at the heart of our approach to CAMHS in Wales.
- 4.24 'Every body's Business' has at its core the following overriding aims: Relief from current suffering and problems with the intention of improving, as soon as possible, the mental health of children, adolescents and their families; Longer-term interventions to improve the mental health of young people as they grow up and when they become adults and thereby, to positively influence the mental health of future generations; and partnership with families, substitute families and all those who care for young people.
- 4.25 The Minister for Health and Social Services has announced £1.2 million of additional recurring funding for CAMHS from 2004-05. This is being directed to support improved provision of beds for adolescents who require admission in emergencies, to establish Forensic Adolescent Consultation Teams and to provide Primary Mental Health Workers.
- 4.26 The Minister has also announced non-recurring expenditure that will help local specialist CAMHS teams to implement New Ways of Working in Mental Health. This will allow them to improve services for children and young people in ways that they think are best for their area, and allow them to make the best use of resources and relieve some of the pressures on senior staff in all disciplines.
- 4.27 The need to pay due attention to the communication needs of people with mental health problems will be particularly relevant to Welsh speaking children and young people who require CAMHS services. Good practice examples and recommendations in relation to the needs

of Welsh speaking mental health patients were identified in the Mental Health Act Commission's report, "Expression of Choice" (2003). These recommendations will be taken into account by the Assembly Government in developing mental health services.

- 4.28 The National Service Framework contains a number of key actions in relation to the promotion of emotional well being in children and young people, as well as key actions in relation to the early and effective intervention for children and young people who have mental health problems or disorders.
- 4.29 Also contained in the NSF is a key action on the provision of easy and confidential advice for young people in a community setting on a range of issues that may affect their health and well-being. Implementation of all key actions in the NSF will be monitored to ensure they are being delivered and will be subject to joint inspection processes. Outcome measures will be developed to ensure the effectiveness of the services delivered. Children and Young People's Partnership Plans will be expected to demonstrate that appropriate services have been commissioned to deliver the key actions of the NSF
- 4.30 The Assembly will consult on guidance for schools and LEAs in the autumn on how to promote mental health among pupils, and recognise and deal with more advanced mental health problems, including appropriate referral to specialist services.

Housing

- 4.31 The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration will take account of conclusions from Local Housing Strategies and Homelessness Strategies in considering the need for additional investment in social housing.
- 4.32 The recently produced draft version of the 'All Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy' contains a commitment to ensuring that strong links are established with 'Supporting People' groups and homelessness services, leading to full engagement in the establishment of Supporting People Operational Plans and local Homelessness Strategies.
- 4.33 Assembly Government guidance on allocation of housing has recently been reviewed and has fully taken into account concerns raised by the Homelessness Commission. Current guidance is set out in the "Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness". Guidance to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) is enshrined in the draft Regulatory Code and supporting circulars, and requires RSLs to work with local authorities to assist them in meeting their statutory duties towards homeless and vulnerable people.

- 4.34 The Assembly Government is taking forward as a matter of urgency the commitment given, in the National Homelessness Strategy, to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, to eliminate it for families, and to minimise the numbers of people in temporary accommodation for more than six months. This commitment was given in response to a rise in the use of temporary accommodation. The Homelessness Strategies Working Group is reviewing practice and options for legislation and other action to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, especially B&Bs, for families. The Group will report to the Minister and to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee in the Autumn. Reducing the use of temporary accommodation is one of the targets set by the Assembly's Government's current policy agreements with local authorities. The Assembly Government granted significant expansion of allowances for short-term leasing by local authorities in 2004-05.
- 4.35 The Assembly Government has already provided funding for two services for young people, which offer mediation as a means of preventing homelessness. We have also commissioned a good practice pack on relationship breakdown that has been distributed to all social landlords. We have referred in the Code of Guidance to the "Dreams Deferred" report and its good practice guidance.
- 4.36 Progress with the implementation of the Black and Ethnic Minority Housing Action Plan for Wales is being monitored through the BME Housing Review Group and through assessments of work undertaken i.e. assessments of the local authority/RSL BME Housing Strategies/ Race Equality Plans.
- 4.37 The Assembly Government is conscious that a lack of affordable housing in rural areas is perceived to be one of the reasons for the out-migration of young people from rural and Welsh-speaking Wales. This is addressed in *Iaith Pawb*, and by a number of measure the Assembly Government has put in place to facilitate access to housing in these communities. These include the Homebuy low cost home ownership scheme.

Communities First

- 4.38 Communities First, the Assembly Government's programme for tackling poverty and social disadvantage in the most deprived communities across Wales, has a particular interest in ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. Giving children and young people the best possible start and the opportunity to influence the services that effect them have been identified as key themes within the programme.
- 4.39 The needs of young people will be considered through the Communities First Action Plans that are to be developed by Partnerships. These should provide a clear focus on helping young people to find work and ensuring that young people are actively

encouraged to develop skills that will help them find work and participate in further education. Also, comprehensive health advice and support should be provided for young people in a way that is acceptable to them and communities should have a forum in which the views of all people, including the young, are listened to and acted upon.

- 4.40 The importance of Children and Young People in the Programme is demonstrated by the fact that one of the eligible areas under Communities First is a Young People's "Community of Interest" in Pembrokeshire. This Community of Interest seeks to raise economic activity and increase the employability of disadvantaged young people.

Domestic violence

- 4.41 The Assembly Government has awarded Welsh Women's Aid a three year grant to provide a free and confidential telephone Helpline for women, children and men who are victims of domestic violence in Wales. From March 2004, this has been operating for 12 hours a day, 365 days a year in Welsh and English.

- 4.42 We have recently produced the draft version of the 'All-Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy'. The Assembly Government's vision for effectively addressing domestic abuse in Wales incorporates a better, more equitable, accessible and effective service provision providing:

- A co-ordinated network of services that meet the needs of all survivors including children and young people, people who live in a rural part of Wales, people who do not speak English and those from black and ethnic minority communities;
- Adequate and appropriate safe solutions for women and children/young people escaping domestic abuse;
- Appropriate support and solutions for women and children/young people experiencing domestic abuse;
- Easily accessible information to ensure that help is available for any survivor – when and wherever it is sought;
- Help and support for children and young people in violent homes;
- Education to help prevent domestic abuse.

- 4.43 The Assembly Government has also recently issued good practice guidance, '*Good Practice on Domestic Abuse: Safeguarding Children and Young People in Wales*', to LEAs, schools and youth organisations.

School Curriculum

- 4.44 The Assembly Government believes that we must understand and plan an appropriate curriculum that takes account of children's development needs and the skills that they need to grow to become confident learners.
- 4.45 In its initial strategic advice on the review of the school curriculum and assessment arrangements, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) advised that the existing curriculum, assessment arrangements and qualifications have served many pupils well, but have failed to motivate a significant minority, leading sometimes to disengagement from the education/training system. ACCAC recommends a curriculum that is more inclusive, and better prepares young people for life and work, as well as for further education and training, through being appropriately learner-centred and skills-focussed. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has accepted the broad thrust of ACCAC's advice and has remitted the Authority to proceed to the next stage of the review process which will involve drawing up, consulting on, detailed proposals at individual subject level.
- 4.46 A number of qualifications in life skills and personal and social skills are already offered by awarding bodies and have been approved by the Minister for use with learners aged under 19.
- 4.47 The Assembly Government will consult with appropriate organisations and agencies to develop and issue guidance for distribution to LEAs, schools and professionals working with children and young people to raise awareness of the issues related to child poverty and to promote the delivery of targeted support in non-stigmatising ways.
- 4.48 The Better Schools Fund provides funding to LEAs to assist them to take forward local action in support of a programme which consists of Activity Areas, each supported by a grant. Activity 1, The School Curriculum: Key Areas for Curriculum Development, supports curriculum development activity in key areas that are highlighted by current Assembly Government initiatives including Personal and Social Education (PSE) where grant funding can be used to provide INSET training to allow LEAs to support the implementation of the new statutory requirement. A whole-school approach to PSE will incorporate a range of experiences to promote the personal and social well being of children and young people and enable them to develop a sense of self worth and relate effectively to others.

Learning Pathways: 14-19 year olds

- 4.49 We will introduce a choice of learning pathways and learner support for 14-19 year olds to ensure that all young people, including those living in low-income households, have the skills, experiences and opportunities to realise their potential, obtain good quality jobs and contribute to their communities.
- 4.50 There are six key elements of Learning Pathways: individually tailored learning pathways; wider choice and flexibility; the learning core; support for learners through the learning coach; personal support and careers advice and guidance. There is an entitlement for all learners. There will be support for each learner to access a unique blend of support to meet their individual needs. In particular, personal support aims to ensure access for all learners to services or people to support them in developing solutions to the personal, social, emotional and physical problems which become obstacles to them realising their potential. Guidance has been issued which is clear about what is to be achieved including:
- Bringing about a reduction in the number of young people leaving full time education with no qualifications;
 - Reducing NEETS;
 - Increasing attendance, reducing exclusion and improving retention;
 - Leading to improvements in those progressing to further learning (full-time or work-based) at 16.

Community-focussed schools

- 4.51 The Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, *'The Learning Country'*, sets out a key aim for the development of schools with a strong community focus. The Assembly Government's view of the importance of school being at the heart of the communities they serve was supported by the findings of the 'Narrowing the Gap' study. The Assembly took powers in the Education Act 2002 to assist schools in the provision of community facilities and activities. Section 27 of the Education Act 2002 makes it easier for governing bodies to provide a wider range of community services and activities and enable governing bodies to charge for some of them. The Assembly Government issued guidance in December 2003 to assist schools and their key partners in developing a range of community facilities and activities. We have identified £2.0m in 2005/06 to fund community focused school initiatives.

Support for disadvantaged pupils

- 4.52 The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, (ACCAC) is developing guidance for teachers on meeting the needs of ethnic minority pupils. This guidance is due for publication in Summer 2006. This follows a remit given to ACCAC by the Assembly Government in its 2004-05 remit letter to ensure that the curriculum, assessment and qualifications help tackle patterns of lower achievement by particular groups of pupils, including boys and pupils from some social, economic and ethnic backgrounds.
- 4.53 The Cymorth Fund and developments on the Foundation Phase provide the opportunity for support for children at risk of disengagement and in need of extra support from an early age. We are issuing revised guidance on Pupil Support and Social Inclusion and this will be directed at primary as well as secondary schools.
- 4.54 The Assembly Government is currently working with Estyn in developing information on best practice for transition from primary to secondary school. There are particular issues around continuity in language medium of study when pupils move between the various sectors of schooling. *Iaith Pawb* is seeking to address these through projects such as “language continuity” and “second entry points”.

Attendance and truancy

- 4.55 The Assembly Government has a policy on working with LEAs and schools to avoid the imprisonment of parents whose children truant. We have set up a Task and Finish Group on Attendance to deal with issues of non-attendance at school. The recommendations of the group are currently being taken forward, these include introducing the collection and monitoring of primary school data, sharing good practice and reviewing the role of the Education Welfare Service and the use of electronic registration. A new exercise on benchmarking schools attendance figures will begin in the autumn with the aim of working with schools and LEAs to develop specific plans for addressing non-attendance.
- 4.56 The Assembly Government currently provides £500,000 a year to fund a number of pilot projects to tackle attendance and behaviour in schools.

Health and Safety

- 4.57 Poor children are at greater risk of accidental injury. The draft National Service Framework contains key actions which are designed to prevent accidental injuries in children and young people. The NSF refers to the two new health gain targets set in 2004:

- To reduce pedestrian injuries to children (0-14 years) from motor vehicle accidents by 35% by 2012;
- To reduce the incidence, severity and death rates of pedestrian injuries in the 0-14 age group by 2012 (reduction in inequalities in incidence by quintiles of deprivation).

Accidental injuries will be monitored through A&E department attendances, sorted by age bands and case mix and provided to the All Wales Injuries Surveillance Centre.

Safer Homes

4.58 The Assembly Government's Community Fire Safety Working Group findings were published in its report 'Wired for Safety' in October 2001. The findings and recommendations were subsequently adopted by the Assembly Government, which established its Community Fire Safety budget (currently £5 million) to take forward the recommendations contained in the report.

4.59 Among its findings, 'Wired for Safety' recommended that:

- All social housing without hard-wired smoke detectors to have a hard-wired detector by the end of 2005, bringing existing social housing in line with standards in the building regulations; and
- The Assembly explore the potential to incorporate the provision of hard-wired smoke detectors in its Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES).

We are now in the third year of funding the provision of hard-wired detectors in social housing, a priority target group for the fire and rescue services. To date we have provided over 60,000 properties with hard-wired detectors (against a potential 100,000 properties without such protection) and are on course to meet the 'Wired for Safety' target date of the end of 2005. In addition, we have amended the HEES regulations to provide free long-life (10 year) sealed battery detectors in the homes of eligible clients, including elderly people, disabled people, and low-income families. Through this twin approach we are ensuring that the most vulnerable householders and those at most risk of domestic fire are targeted and provided with the most appropriate protection.

Food and fitness

- 4.60 Responsibility for ensuring that the standards set in the Assembly's Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (Wales) Regulations 2001 rests with LEAs or school governing bodies. Guidance on monitoring is provided in the Welsh Assembly Government's Nutritional Standards for School Lunches Guidance issued in March 2003.
- 4.61 Our Free School Breakfast Initiative for primary schools, which is being piloted from September 2004, aims to provide all children registered in primary schools in Wales with the opportunity of receiving a healthy breakfast at school each day during the school week. Evidence from the successful breakfast schemes already operating in schools indicates that having a good healthy breakfast leads to improved attendance, improved behaviour, fewer discipline problems, and greater sustained concentration, and we want to build on this. The initiative is being introduced incrementally on a pilot basis starting in 9 local authorities from September this year. New schools will be added each term, until by January 2007 the policy will have been rolled out to all maintained primary schools that wish to participate.
- 4.62 The development of health promoting schools is encouraged in Wales by the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS). WNHSS encourages the development of local healthy school schemes within a common national framework, which makes a significant contribution to *Health Challenge Wales*' aims of helping children and young people to do more work to look after their health. These, in turn, encourage the development of health promoting schools in their area. Advice and guidance within the national framework, including national aims and guidance on local and national roles, is offered to local schemes by means of publications and national networking events. Local schemes are accredited by the Welsh Assembly Government. Nineteen of the twenty-two local authorities in Wales now have accreditation. Local co-ordinators also ensure local networking, and maintain a system of monitoring and accreditation of the schools in their scheme. WNHSS builds on the experience of working with 12 schools in Wales as part of the European Network of Health Promoting Schools.
- 4.63 The food and well-being, and physical fitness, agendas are also being taken forward by the Food and Fitness Task Group for Children and Young People, which the Assembly Government established in May 2004. The Task Group aims to contribute to the strategic planning and co-ordination of food and fitness initiatives for children and young people, and it will advise on the development of additional interventions to address identified gaps in provision.
- 4.64 Food and fitness is also being addressed within the Children's National Service Framework consultation document with key actions identified to encourage breastfeeding, infant nutrition, the promotion of healthy food

options and the ready availability of drinking water. The consultation document also recognises that recovery from illness and surgery is dependent upon sufficient nutritional intake. A key action has been included so that children in hospital are offered appropriate menus, healthy snacks and drinks designed to tempt them to eat and which take account of different cultures and family traditions.

- 4.65 The provision of services and an environment that supports active play and physical activity is identified as a key action within the Children's National Service Framework consultation document with the recommendation that Children and Young People's Framework Partnership Plans include mechanisms to promote physical activity.

Health Challenge Wales

- 4.66 All the above actions, and a number of others that appear under other parts of this strategy, make an important contribution to *Health Challenge Wales* as our new national focus for improving health. *Health Challenge Wales* is a challenge to organisations in all sectors and to individuals to do more to prevent ill health in Wales. The actions described include health for individuals to take steps to improve their lifestyles, and wider action to address the socio-economic determinants of health, in which poverty is a key factor.

Rural areas

- 4.67 There are a number of issues in relation to poverty in rural Wales which will have a bearing on the well being of children from poorer families living in those areas. These will include the provision and coverage of a range of services, including public transport. In many rural areas, the provision of services and employment opportunities for Welsh-speaking children and young people is a particularly relevant issue. The Assembly Government's Rural Development Plan 2000-2006, which sets out our framework for sustainable development in rural areas, has a number of objectives which have a bearing on child poverty. These include spreading economic prosperity, strengthening communities, and improving access to rural services. We will shortly be undertaking, in conjunction with the Rural Partnership, a review and revision of the Rural Statement - the first step in the process of producing a new Rural Development Plan for the period 2007-2013. This will provide a foundation on which to continue to build a coherent and integrated rural strategy. We will work with the Rural Partnership to ensure that tackling poverty and inequality among children, young people and families living in rural areas, is one of the issues addressed during that review.

5. Measuring Child Poverty

5.1 Previous chapters have noted that child poverty manifests itself in terms of income, participation and services. This makes the measurement of child poverty a complex issue. The Task Group examined the issues in detail and offered a number of key recommendations which have informed the approach the Assembly Government adopted.

5.2 The Assembly Government will adopt the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) tiered approach to measuring child poverty. This tiered approach includes:

An indicator of absolute low income

- the number of children living in households with an income below £210 per week (present value).

Relative low income

- children living in households with an income below 60% of median equivalised household income before housing costs. This is the most widely used indicator in the EU.

Material deprivation

- children living in households that lack certain goods and services and have an income below 70% median equivalised household income. This attempts to measure living standards as well as relative income.

5.3 The first two levels of the tiered approach cover indicators of absolute and relative income. In order to duplicate this approach for Wales the DWP has responded to our request to provide the Assembly with data from the Family Resources Survey which combines figures for a number of years. This will overcome the small sample size problems in providing a time series of Welsh data.

5.4 The third level of the tiered approach includes both material deprivation and low income. The DWP have only recently started collecting deprivation information in the Family Resources Survey. We have requested that this combined measure of poverty be made available at the sub-GB level. However, this measure will not be available for at least two years.

Comparisons between Wales, other countries in the UK, and across Europe

- 5.5 One method through which the Welsh Assembly Government will monitor trends in child poverty will be those family and child specific indicators in 'Opportunity for All' (the UK Government's White Paper on enterprise, skills and innovation), which are available at the Wales level. This will allow comparisons with other UK countries.
- 5.6 It will be possible to monitor trends and make comparisons in relation to a number of key areas covered through the family and child specific indicators in 'Opportunity for All' at the Wales level.
- We have already secured agreement from the Office for National Statistics to provide relevant figures in relation to Children in workless households regionally, including for Wales. These will be published regularly in the *Work and Worklessness Among Households* first release.
 - The remaining indicators relate to policy areas that are devolved, so as matter of principle, the DWP have decided not to cover Wales.
 - Many of the demographic, education and health indicators are standard statistical series. We are able to make a Welsh comparison with England in these cases.
 - Other indicators relate to England-only policy initiatives and cannot be replicated in Wales.
- 5.7 The proportion of children in households below 60% contemporary median income (before housing costs) provides for a standard comparison across Europe. There are currently differences in the scales used to equalise household income in GB and other European countries. However these are addressed by the DWP 'tiered approach'.

Wales-level indicators for child poverty

- 5.8 'Opportunity for All' compiles indicators of social inclusion across all-age groups. Similarly the development of appropriate indicators for children in Wales will be designed to link with the Social Justice Annual Report. The development of Wales-level indicators will also reflect proposals for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and NPI to develop their "Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion" indicators to provide an analysis for Wales (as they have already done for Scotland).
- 5.9 As identified in the Task Group report, the outcomes, indicators and means of verification contained in '*Children and Young People: Rights to Action*' will provide an important means through which to monitor issues relevant to child poverty in Wales.

Monitoring persistent and severe poverty

- 5.10 We support the Task Group Report's view that special attention should be given to monitoring the extent of persistent and severe poverty within Wales.

Persistent poverty:

- 5.11 We are giving consideration to two immediate statistical projects which may help to assist our understanding in this area.
- 5.12 Firstly, we are developing the capacity to analyse the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). It is our intention to interrogate this data source to identify whether this will generate information about persistent poverty, in line with the suggestions of the Task Group report.
- 5.13 Secondly, we are undertaking a feasibility study in relation to commissioning a longitudinal cohort analysis of benefit claimants in Wales. This would be the same as the study commissioned for England by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. It is designed to track individual benefit claimants as they start claiming, stop claiming, or change benefit. If we go ahead with this research work, it is our intention to amend the terms of reference to investigate children in these families, as far as this is possible.
- 5.14 Once we are satisfied that we have fully investigated the potential of these immediately available data sources, we will make a decision on whether further research is warranted.

Severe poverty:

- 5.15 The Task Group report defined severe poverty as below 40% median equivalised household income. The DWP does not currently publish any low income statistics using 40% median income as a threshold and has no plans to do so. There is evidence to suggest that there are serious limitations associated with the quality of this data. It is likely that such a measure would generate analysis focusing on those on temporarily low incomes rather than those in severest poverty.
- 5.16 When the DWP material deprivation indicators become available they will facilitate a means through which to establish current income thresholds which best capture those on more permanent low incomes.
- 5.17 The combined income and material deprivation measure of the DWP tiered approach will provide a more robust indicator of depth (and persistence) of poverty than income alone can. It is our intention, therefore, to await the outcome of DWP's investigations once data becomes available.

6. Monitoring the Child Poverty Strategy

- 6.1 This strategy is not to be a statement of activity at one period in time. It is to be a living document, which guides the implementation of both mainstream and targeted Assembly Government policies and programmes across the board. We wish to measure movements in child poverty and monitor achievement of our objectives. Crucially, we wish to involve children and young people in this process in a way that reflects their involvement in the creation of the Task Group's recommendations.
- 6.2 The measurement issues described in the previous chapter will be embedded in an overall Monitoring and Evaluation programme to report on the progress of the Strategy. This will include mechanisms for exploring the views of children and young people on the impact of this Strategy. Subject to discussion with Funky Dragon, we propose that implementation of this Strategy should form part of the annual discussions between Ministers and Funky Dragon.
- 6.3 Child poverty is a cross-cutting issue, and detailed plans, objectives and initiatives for taking action forward in support of this agenda will be the responsibility of relevant policy divisions across the Assembly Government. Progress in taking forward action to tackle child poverty will be driven and monitored by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Children and Young People, supported by the Children and Young People's Policy Co-ordination Group.
- 6.4 It is only through the concerted efforts of a wide range of the Assembly Government's programmes that the adverse effects of child poverty can be overcome. This strategy has outlined many commitments cutting across Ministerial portfolios. The Monitoring and Evaluation Programme will therefore provide the full Cabinet with an annual progress report for publication. The report will report on measurement data and on actions taken across Government to implement the commitments in this strategy.
- 6.5 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.

