

## **SECTION G – AREAS TO ADDRESS**

*This section provides detail on areas to address, dependent on the needs and aspirations of the local community. Therefore, certain parts of this information may not be relevant in all Partnership areas.*

*The detail is intended to support Partnerships as they turn their attention to these areas. It is understood that resource constraints may dictate when these areas are considered. It is intended that supplements or circulars covering further areas will be available in the future.*

*This section will be of benefit to all Partnerships.*

### **17. Involving Children and Young People in Communities First**

#### ***Introduction***

17.1 It is a core aim of the Welsh Assembly Government that all young people in Wales should be given every chance to fulfil their potential. Tackling child poverty is a fundamental component of the Assembly's broader strategy to improve quality of life and extend opportunity to every community in Wales. The Communities First Programme plays a key role in eradicating child poverty and provides an opportunity to reach out to children and young people in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales to help give them a better start in life and to support the most vulnerable.

#### ***i. Principles***

17.2 Involving and supporting children and young people are key objectives of the Communities First Programme. All Communities First Partnerships are expected to develop and take forward work programmes and eventually sustainable action plans which address the themes set out in the Communities First Vision Framework. The needs of children and young people are relevant to each of the six themes in the Vision Framework: jobs and business; education and training; environment; health and well being; active community and community safety. In devising their work programmes and strategies Communities First Partnerships should consider the specific needs of children and young people under each theme on behalf of and with children and young people.

17.3 The Assembly Government has formally adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, based on which it has agreed seven Core Aims to underpin its policy and priorities for children and young people. Core Aim 5 requires that children and young people "are listened to, treated with respect and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised." This and the other core aims are required to be reflected in the work of local Partnerships that have the function of setting jointly agreed priorities and objectives for delivery of all the relevant services for those aged 0-25 (see section on "Inter-Partnership working" below).

17.4 Many Communities First Partnerships are taking forward much good work on behalf of children and young people. As the Programme moves into the next phase, the Assembly Government wants to see Communities First Partnerships build on existing activity and to develop their work on behalf of children and young people in an increasingly strategic way.

17.5 The Assembly Government believes that if children and young people are truly to have a stake in the community in which they live they need to be involved in the decision-making and planning processes which affect their community. Communities First Partnerships need to develop mechanisms which allow children and young people to be consulted, to participate and to contribute in meaningful ways and ensure they receive appropriate skilled support through the process. This will include engaging with:

- Younger children.
- Harder to reach children and young people, for example young people not in education or training.
- Children and young people who reflect diversity in terms of languages, culture, ethnicity, religion, and specific needs.

## ***ii. Communities First Partnerships engaging with Children and Young People***

17.6 The Assembly Government expects Communities First Partnerships to focus on three levels of activity to achieve the objective of greater involvement of children and young people in the Communities First Programme:

### **a. Activities which build capacity and develop strategic links**

17.7 The Assembly Government encourages Communities First Partnerships to take forward yet more activities involving children and young people. Good activity work benefits the children and young people involved, has a positive impact on the community and can help strengthen the Partnership by raising awareness, interest and involvement among the parents too.

17.8 Activities should not be mere self-standing one-offs; if Communities First is to have long-term impact the activities undertaken need to have sustainable outcomes and build capacity among the beneficiaries. The activities need to fit into a strategic framework which will clarify longer-term benefits for the participants and the community.

17.9 Funding bodies other than the Assembly Government's Communities First Unit may still consider funding one-off projects which benefit children and young people. As Communities First Partnerships develop, the Assembly Government expects them to demonstrate how activities will contribute to longer-term objectives for children and young people. The activities and objectives should be set out in the Partnerships' work programmes and action plans.

17.10 The Assembly Government expects Partnerships to be able to demonstrate that they are working with the authorities and agencies in their

area which deliver key services for children and young people - with children and young people themselves involved in planning, developing and putting in place initiatives and monitoring impact.

## **b. Inter-Partnership working**

17.11 A key linkage for Communities First Partnerships to develop is with the Framework Planning Partnerships (FPPs), Children's Partnerships (CPs), and Young People's Partnerships (YPPs). There is one of each of these three Partnerships in each of the 22 unitary authority areas in Wales and they are the key delivery mechanism for the Assembly Government's 0-25 agenda.

17.12 The three Partnerships are often collectively referred to as "the Triangle Partnerships" and they work together to ensure that provision and outcomes for children and young people improve through the effective joint planning, commissioning and delivery of services at local level. They involve local authorities and the key public and voluntary sector bodies in each local authority area. Membership of the Triangle Partnerships is normally 1/3 local authority, 1/3 other statutory sector, 1/3 voluntary sector.

17.13 The primary role of the Triangle Partnerships is to work collaboratively with children and young people to identify need, audit existing services, and to plan collaboratively on a multi-agency basis in order to focus partner agencies' existing mainstream resources on jointly agreed priorities, to eliminate duplication and fill gaps in provision.

17.14 Drawing on the expertise gathered in the Triangle Partnerships, local authorities are required to produce Children and Young People's Plans. These are plans which set out agreed headline objectives and targets for the services of all the partners dealing with children and young people in the local area. They should inform and reflect the Community Strategy for that local authority area, provide the Children and Young People's elements of health, social care and wellbeing strategies and inform the more detailed service-specific plans that sit beneath them.

17.15 The Children Act 2004 sets out to strengthen these planning Partnership arrangements, providing a statutory basis for co-operation between a local authority and key partner agencies to improve the well-being of children. The Assembly Government has indicated that it will use this power to give a statutory footing to the established Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnerships and Children's Partnerships which will rationalise their relationship with Young People's Partnerships that already have a statutory basis in the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

17.16 Section 26 of The Children Act enables the Assembly, by regulations, to require local authorities to provide a single plan for children and young people, to cover the services provided by all of the local authorities' partners – including the NHS. The Assembly will set out in regulations and guidance more detail about the planning requirements. This is in line with the Assembly Government's current programme to rationalise and streamline local authorities' planning requirements. The precise number of remaining plans will

be a matter for consultation, though whatever the final number, it will represent a considerable easing of the planning burden.

17.17 Developing better links with the local Triangle Partnerships will help Communities First Partnerships develop a more strategic framework for their work with children and young people. It will also help ensure that the needs and views of children, young people and their parents or carers from the most disadvantaged areas are fully represented in the work of the Triangle Partnerships and their planning processes and hence into the other strategic plans.

17.18 Examples of active participation, provided by the Communities First Programme, will also demonstrate the positive part that children and young people can play in the lives of their local communities and in making those communities richer. The organisations involved in the Triangle Partnerships, such as the statutory and voluntary youth service, have skills and expertise in working with young people and will be able to assist Communities First Partnerships.

17.19 In terms of funding, Communities First Partnerships can influence the priorities detailed in the local plans drawn up under the Cymorth Programme (Cymorth is the Assembly Government's Children and Youth Support Fund). Representatives of Framework Partnerships should meet annually with Communities First Partnerships within the local authority area, in good time to influence the disposal of Cymorth funds. The purpose of the meeting is for Communities First Partnerships to apprise the Framework Planning Partnership of their priorities for their areas, and conversely for the Framework Planning Partnership to explain their agreed priorities for children and young people in general, and for Cymorth investment in particular. The Cymorth Plan should take account of the Communities First priorities set out in the meeting.

### **c. Involving children and young people in decision-making**

17.20 The Assembly Government expects Communities First Partnerships to work with children and young people in their area to agree on issues which need to be tackled, to jointly develop and support implementation of proposals for tackling them (including funding bids) and to jointly monitor their effectiveness.

17.21 All general community audits undertaken by Communities First Partnerships must demonstrate that they seek to ascertain the needs and aspirations of children and young people in the area.

17.22 Communities First Partnerships should work to develop links with established bodies which bring together children and young people from the area in a representative way, such as school councils and the local county youth forum. But Communities First Partnerships should take care to ensure that they also seek out the views and involvement of children and young people who may feel detached from such bodies.

17.23 Engaging with children and young people for this purpose is a skilled process. Older community members (acting with the best of intentions) can sometimes appear patronising or even dismissive of younger people. Children and young people will require training and support if they are to make a sustained and meaningful contribution. Adults involved in Communities First Partnerships may also need training, in terms of listening skills and an awareness of the importance of regular and meaningful feedback to children and young people.

### **iii. Actions**

17.24 Communities First Partnerships should:

- Continue to undertake capacity building work and activities for and with children and young people.
- Set the capacity building work and activities within a strategic framework outlined in their work programme or community action plan.
- Base their work programme or community action plan on the relevant priorities set out in the Community Strategy and ensure consistency with the relevant parts of other partnership plans such as those for health social care and well-being, children and young people and community safety.
- Develop and strengthen linkages with the main deliverers of services for children and young people.
- Ensure that there are good links into the planning and commissioning activities undertaken by the local Triangle Partnerships.
- Consider organising occasional county-based meetings of co-ordinators from all the Communities First and Triangle Partnerships in that area.
- Use the Communities First Bulletin, *Partner* (the Communities First quarterly newsletter) and regional meetings of Communities First co-ordinators to share good practice about projects involving children and young people and establishing links with the Triangle Partnerships.
- Ensure community audits address the needs of children and young people.
- Establish links with local primary and secondary school councils and the local youth forum.
- Raise awareness generally of the need to involve children and young people in the decision-making process – and of the skills needed to do so effectively.
- Develop sympathetic ways of involving children and young people in the decision-making processes.
- Develop ways so children and young people get feedback on the outcome of their involvement as soon as possible after it has taken place.
- Put in place enduring and sustainable systems to ensure children and young people's involvement in future in all of the above areas of work, for example, considering setting up a children and young people sub-group or attendance at youth fora.