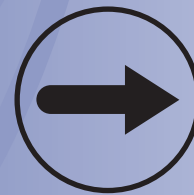


Parenting Action Plan

Information
Document



Parenting

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**Supporting mothers,
fathers and carers with
raising children in Wales**



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**PLANT A PHOBL IFANC - GWEITHREDU'R HAWLIAU
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - RIGHTS TO ACTION**

Adran Hyfforddiant ac Addysg
Department for Training and Education



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Title of document:	Parenting Action Plan: Supporting mothers, fathers and carers with raising children in Wales
Audience:	Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts; Directors of Education, Social Services, Public Health and Health Visiting; Framework Co-ordinators; Principal Youth Officers; Youth Forums; Key Children's Voluntary Organisations; Commission for Racial Equality; Equal Opportunities Commission; Disability Rights Commission; County Librarians; Community Voluntary Services; Welsh Local Government Association; Police Chief Constables; Wales TUC Cymru; Welsh Local Government Association; Members of the Parenting Action Plan Working Group; Children's Commissioner for Wales; Assembly Members.
Overview:	This document sets out the actions the Welsh Assembly Government intends to take to raise the profile of parenting in Wales, and to increase the information, advice and support available to parents.
Further information:	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Huw G Jones Tel: 029 2082 3675 Fax: 029 2082 5116 E-mail: cft@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies:	Can be received from: Jane Hanbury Tel: 029 2082 5101 Fax: 029 2082 5116 This document can also be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government websit www.learning.wales.gov.uk
Related documents:	Consultation on draft Parenting Action Plan issued on 15 March 2005.

CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY VERSION	2
PARENTING ACTION PLAN	
1. Introduction	6
2. Targeted support under Cymorth	10
3. Information and Advice Services	13
4. Promoting Positive Parenting	17
5. Raising Profile in Planning Partnerships	22
6. Education and the School Setting	24
7. Support for Specific Groups of Parents	31
8. Summary of Action Points	40

SUMMARY VERSION

INTRODUCTION

Being a parent is a big job. Everyone who looks after children needs support and encouragement. They also need advice and information about a range of things as their children grow up. This Parenting Action Plan seeks to ensure that parents in Wales get the advice and support they need, by setting out what the Welsh Assembly Government intends to do for parents up to March 2008.

This Summary Version sets out the main points in the Parenting Action Plan. For full details of what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing for parents, you will need to refer to the main document.

The Parenting Action Plan is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Welsh Assembly Government tries to make sure that everything it does helps to put the rights of children and young people into practice. Parents also have rights, including the right to be supported in bringing up their children.

Article 18 of the UN Convention says:

“Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work.”

There are many people who help to bring up children, and who play important roles in young people's lives. These can include grandparents, foster carers, people who have adopted children, step-parents, and sometimes also older brothers and sisters. When we talk about parents, we mean all these other people as well.

When helping people to bring up children, it is important that we do so in ways that take account of the different cultures and ethnic backgrounds that exist in Wales today.

We will publish updates on our progress on each of the areas covered by this Action Plan in November 2006 and November 2007.

EXTRA MONEY FOR PARENT SERVICES

The Welsh Assembly Government helps to support services for parents through Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Fund. We use Cymorth to give money to children's and young people's services in disadvantaged areas of Wales. The local Children and Young People's Partnerships decide how the money is spent in each area.

Part of the Cymorth money is spent on services to support families, including classes for new parents, parent-toddler groups, and groups for single parents. At present, more than 200 family projects are supported in this way.

The Welsh Assembly Government has decided to put extra money into Cymorth in the next two years. This will start to happen from April 2006. We have given guidance to local Children and Young People's Partnerships, telling them that we expect them to use some of this extra money to increase the amount of support given to parents.

The Big Lottery is working with the Welsh Assembly Government to set up at least one Integrated Children's Centre in each local authority area. These centres will bring together many services for parents and children, including early years education, childcare, play, family support and health services.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also publishing a childcare strategy, setting out ways of increasing the number of childcare places and giving parents a greater choice.

INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICES

One of the most important things parents need is good quality advice and information. The Welsh Assembly Government already gives every new parent two guidebooks:

- The Pregnancy Book - a complete guide to pregnancy, childbirth and the first few weeks with a new baby;
- Birth to Five - a complete guide to parenthood and the first five years of your child's life.

Through this Parenting Action Plan we want to increase the amount of advice and information available to parents across Wales.

Telephone Helpline

We shall set up a free telephone helpline for parents in Wales, which can offer advice and support to parents in Welsh as well as in English. We are exploring the various options for delivering this service, and a final decision on the way forward will be taken by the end of 2005.

The new helpline will be able to provide parents with up-to-date information and advice about what is available in their local area. It will also be able to pass them on to other local sources of help and support.

Children's Information Services

There is a Children's Information Service in each local area in Wales. They provide advice to parents on a range of issues including childcare,

parenting, leisure activities, education services, libraries, health services and local children's organisations.

The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to work with local Children and Young People's partnerships to develop better Children's Information Services for parents in Wales.

Booklets for Parents

In 2003/04, the Welsh Assembly Government worked with the National Family and Parenting Institute and Children in Wales to develop two booklets for parents:

- From Breakfast to Bedtime - tips for parents on coping with everyday situations such as mealtimes and getting very young children ready for bed;
- Over the Top Behaviour in the Under 10s - advice for parents on why children behave in the way they do, and how to handle challenging behaviour.

These booklets were tested out in three areas in Wales. Feedback from parents was very positive, so we will be making these booklets more widely available to parents in Wales. The booklets should be available in all parts of Wales by the end of March 2006.

PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTING

Physical Punishment

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that smacking children is wrong. We do not think it encourages adults, children and young people to respect each other. We believe that there are better ways of dealing with difficult behaviour and teaching children right and wrong. We know that many parents would like advice on how to get this right. During 2006-07, we will be preparing a booklet for parents with tips on how to bring up children without using physical punishment. This will be distributed to all new parents.

Incredible Years Programmes

The Incredible Years parenting programme is aimed at parents of children whose behaviour is so difficult that it causes problems for themselves and their friends, and also for their parents and teachers. It can also be used to prevent such behaviour developing in the first place. Results have shown that children's difficult behaviour becomes less of a problem for those parents who have attended the parenting programme. The Welsh Assembly Government is planning to give funding to Incredible Years Cymru, from 2006-07, to train more people in running these classes. We hope that this will help spread the classes right across Wales, helping many more children and their parents.

GETTING PARENTS INVOLVED IN PLANNING SERVICES

The way services for children and young people are organised in different parts of Wales is decided by Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships in each local area. The Partnerships have to make sure that children, young people and their families can have their say about what services are available and how they are organised.

In some areas Parent Networks have been set up. These bring together parents and the people who organise services, to talk about the things that affect them and to suggest changes or improvement. The Welsh Assembly Government wants to encourage these Parent Networks. Early in 2006 we will be starting work on a guide for local partnerships on different ways of involving parents, including good practice in setting up Parent Networks.

EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SETTING

Parents are important in helping their children settle into school and encouraging them to learn. They are responsible for making sure that their children attend school, and schools need to involve them when there are problems such as bullying or bad behaviour. They can also be part of discussions about career choices or which subjects to take. It is vital that schools discuss their approaches and plans with parents.

The Welsh Assembly Government wants to encourage schools to build better links with parents. We also want to see more schools become the centre of the local community, especially in deprived areas. Here schools can provide services that are not available elsewhere in the community. This could include such things as childcare, education and training courses for adults, or information centres for parents.

We will also continue to improve Parentsnet, the new education website for parents (www.learning.wales.gov.uk/parents).

Schools also teach children and young people about being a parent as part of Personal and Social Education (PSE). This includes teaching about sex and relationships, being pregnant and what having a child is like. If this is taught well in schools, all children and young people will have the skills and confidence to be good parents. New guidelines on how PSE should be taught in schools were published a couple of years ago. The Welsh Assembly Government also made PSE compulsory in all schools in 2003. We will carry on trying to improve the way this subject is taught.

PARENTING ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The bond between children and those who care for them is the most significant influence on a child's life. The way a child is nurtured at home has a crucial impact on his or her development, educationally and emotionally. Raising children is the shared responsibility of the family and the wider community. Many agencies, including the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners in local government, the health service, and the voluntary and community sector, have an important role to play in supporting parents and carers with this task.
- 1.2** Since the publication of "Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership" in November 2000, the Assembly Government and its partners have sought to put in place a framework that will support children and young people in Wales to grow and develop in society. This includes empowering those who have primary responsibility for their children's growth and development. That is why parenting and family support has been recognised as a key theme within the Cymorth grant scheme. However, there is a need for a more strategic approach at national and local level - a recognition that parenting is a cross-cutting theme underpinning much work in social care, health promotion, education, social justice and related fields.
- 1.3** This Parenting Action Plan seeks to ensure that a more coherent approach is taken to the development of parenting support services in Wales, so that parents and carers are better informed and better supported.
- 1.4** The Action Plan aims to:
- Raise the profile of parenting among policy makers and service providers in Wales
 - Further the development of policies and services that support mothers, fathers and carers in their caring roles
 - Make connections with other policies and activities that have an impact on parenting
 - Identify key actions to be taken by the Assembly Government to support parenting in Wales.
- 1.5** The Parenting Action Plan covers the three years 2005-06 to 2007-08. It is meant to be a living document, a stimulus to change and development of policies on parenting, and as such it will be subject to review and updating as policy develops. A draft was published for public consultation in March 2005, and the key messages from that consultation have helped shape the final form of the Action Plan.

- 1.6 We will publish annual updates on our progress on each of the areas for action in this Plan in November 2006 and November 2007.

PRINCIPLES

- 1.7 A number of key principles underpin this Action Plan:

❖ **‘Parenting’ is an activity undertaken by those who bring up children**

- 1.8 This includes mothers and fathers, foster carers and adoptive parents, step-parents, and grandparents. In some cases, siblings also undertake a parenting role. All of these play a crucial role in giving the children in their care a flying start in life, providing the best basis for children’s and young people’s growth and development. Local authorities also act as corporate parents for children and young people in their care. In this document ‘parent’ and ‘parenting’ are sometimes used as shorthand, but they encompass all of those people and activities involved in raising children.

❖ **Our approach will be based on the rights of the child and on the principle of respect**

- 1.9 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been adopted by the Assembly Government as the basis of its work for children and young people. All the activities in this Action Plan will be underpinned by the Convention rights, and by the principle of respect for both children and their parents or carers.

- 1.10 The Assembly Government has translated the UN Convention Rights into seven core aims by which it seeks to ensure that all children and young people in Wales:

- 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; and
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

- 1.11 This Action Plan is about recognising the crucial role of parents and carers in helping achieve these aims for the children and young people in their care, and about supporting them in this role.

❖ **The Action Plan will recognise and respect the diversity of families and different ways of providing care for children**

1.12 The direction for developing parenting support provided through this Plan will seek to address the needs of all parents, and to cover parenting support for different groups of children and young people. It recognises that the needs of mothers and fathers, of male and female carers, are not always the same. It also recognises the need for delivery to be sensitive to the range of cultures and ethnic groups that live in Wales today.

❖ **Promoting participation, listening and responding to mothers, fathers, carers, children and young people, will be key to the success of this Action Plan**

1.13 Parents, children and young people will need to be engaged at every stage of the activities outlined in the Action Plan. This will include listening to their views and promoting opportunities for real participation in the development of policy and services.

❖ **There will be an emphasis on promoting positive parenting**

1.14 The Assembly Government has taken a clear line on the physical punishment of children. We believe firmly that smacking is not an acceptable way of disciplining children, and will continue to promote the concept of positive parenting - influencing the attitudes and behaviour of parents and others who care for children, and promoting non-violent relationships with children and young people. Particular importance will be given to developing young people for parenthood - providing all young people in Wales with the skills, confidence and self-esteem they need to become effective parents.

❖ **Support for mothers, fathers and carers needs to be co-ordinated and the result of joined-up policy making and planning at national and local levels**

1.15 To achieve this, the Action Plan will need to stimulate and encourage effective partnerships within government, and between government and other agencies at all levels. It will also need to encourage effective partnership between agencies and parents.

❖ **The Action Plan will include a commitment to promoting bilingualism, and the use of Welsh, other languages of choice and other forms of communication**

1.16 Today's children and young people hold the key to the future growth of the Welsh language. The Action Plan will need to take account of the commitment given by the Assembly Government, and expressed in its Welsh language strategy (*laith Pawb*), to Wales becoming a truly bilingual country. All children and young people should have the opportunity to learn the language and use it in a variety of settings including the home.

- 1.17** It is also important to recognise that English and Welsh are not the only languages of Wales. Wales is now home to a number of different cultures and languages, and all contribute to the cultural richness of Wales. Services that provide support to families need to take account of cultural differences and of linguistic diversity. They also need to consider parents who have particular communication needs (e.g. sign language interpreters) or who need other types of support.

2. TARGETED SUPPORT UNDER CYMORTH

- 2.1** Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Fund - is focused on disadvantaged areas, and provides targeted support within the context of universal provision. Funding is administered through the Children and Young People's Partnerships within each local authority area. The Partnerships consist of representatives from statutory services such as Education, Social Services and Health Services, together with representatives from the voluntary and independent sector.
- 2.2** Partnerships are directed to invest a minimum percentage of their allocation to specific age groups, and across the following six themes:
- A. Family support
 - B. Health improvement
 - C. Play, leisure and enrichment
 - D. Empowerment, participation and active citizenship
 - E. Training, mentoring and information
 - F. Building childcare provision.
- 2.3** The family support theme is the key theme for the delivery of assistance with parenting and more than 200 family support projects are funded through this theme. Examples of activity include parenting programmes, promoting alternatives to smacking, parent-toddler groups, Home Start, and single parents' groups.
- 2.4** The 2005-06 budget for Cymorth, including childcare, is £44.7m. Guidance to partnerships issued in July 2005 made it clear that one of the objectives of the scheme is to improve services offering assistance to parents.

Integrated Centres

- 2.5** The Assembly Government is working, in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, to create at least one integrated children's centre in each local authority area in Wales. £11 million has been made available by the Big Lottery towards the capital costs of building these centres. This funding is intended to complement Assembly Government funding under Cymorth and Early Years Education. The centres will provide an opportunity to bring together services such as Sure Start, early education, childcare, play, training, health, family support and learning opportunities into an integrated network of services. The Cymorth guidance makes it clear that integrated centres represent an ideal location from which support for parents can be delivered.

Childcare

- 2.6** The Assembly Government recognises the importance of childcare and is taking measures to improve provision in Wales for the benefit of children, parents and communities. Childcare is an issue that has

an impact across many areas and directly contributes to the Assembly Government's objectives to deliver:

- A better start for children
- More life choices for parents
- A way out of poverty
- Greater levels of economic activity for society, and
- A fairer and more prosperous Wales.

2.7 A Child Care Working Group was set up in January 2004, to build on and drive forward the Assembly Government's Childcare Action Plan. The Working Group was chaired by Dr Brian Gibbons AM, now the Minister for Health and Social Services, and comprised partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. The Childcare Working Group's interim report was issued for public consultation in July 2004, and the results of this consultation were considered in drawing up the Working Group's final report, published in February 2005. The report made 77 recommendations, including a request to the Assembly Government to support the development of universal childcare in Wales.

2.8 The Assembly Government has developed a full plan for childcare taking into account the Childcare Working Group's recommendations. This response, the Childcare Strategy for Wales, was launched in November, building on our achievements to date in developing childcare in Wales. The Strategy aims to make a significant impact on the provision of childcare in the coming years, recognising that childcare is crucial to the delivery of Assembly Government policies on equality of opportunity, tackling poverty and economic inactivity, and supporting the Welsh language. The Strategy will support three broad objectives, to ensure that:

- all childcare supports the developmental needs of children;
- childcare is widely available and affordable, enabling parents to train or work and thus raising levels of economic activity;
- childcare enables parents to have flexibility and choice in balancing family, work and other commitments, so promoting gender equality within the workforce.

2.9 The Assembly Government is already taking forward two new major investments in childcare. Firstly, we have made a successful bid for £12.5 million over three years, commencing April 2005, under Objectives 1 and 3 for the purpose of increasing the contribution of European Structural Funds to childcare provision across Wales. This project, Genesis Wales, will help provide advice, guidance, support and childcare for people wishing to access work, training or learning opportunities. The overall aim of the project is to remove barriers to people finding employment and, as a result, to improve the economic activity of people in Wales. Secondly, the Assembly Government is consulting separately on a new

initiative for Early Years, and has made available £50 million over the two years 2006-07 and 2007-08. Initially this funding 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.

- 2.10** The Assembly Government has already delivered on its commitment to provide free early years education places for three year olds. This programme will begin to provide free part time childcare of high quality for two year olds, as part of an integrated offering in each target community. It will also include a high level of health visiting, professional support to parents, and more intense support to children showing higher needs or higher risks. The areas to be targeted will be based on school catchment areas.

Childcare Pilot

- 2.11** Lone parents on Income Support say that lack of affordable, accessible childcare is a significant barrier to work. The purpose of the pilot is to test this assertion by providing the childcare which lone parents need to enter employment. The Department of Work and Pensions has made funding of around £529,000 available to Wales for this project. The lone parents pilot will run in schools in Torfaen for 18 months and was launched in September 2004.

3. INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICES

- 3.1 It was clear from consultation on the draft Parenting Action Plan that parents and carers value good quality advice and support that is responsive to their needs and readily available.

Telephone Helpline

- 3.2 In England, parents have access to a 24-hour telephone helpline called Parentline Plus, which is currently funded by the Department for Education and Skills to work in England only. However, at present 11% of calls to Parentline Plus come from Wales - a significantly high proportion given the relative size of Wales. There is currently no free access Welsh language helpline for parents. This Action Plan provides an opportunity to plug these gaps, and establish a bilingual telephone helpline geared to the needs of parents and carers of children and young people in Wales.
- 3.3 **We will develop a national bilingual helpline for parents in Wales. We are exploring the various options for delivering this service, and a final decision on the way forward will be taken by the end of 2005.**
- 3.4 In some areas of Wales local agencies have already set up their own local information or support services for parents. An example is the bilingual telephone support service run by the Conwy Family Project, with support from Cymorth, Conwy Denbighshire Youth Offending Team, and NCH Cymru. This service currently offers support to parents and carers who have been referred by other agencies, and there is a lengthy waiting list. Consultation feedback stressed the need for any national telephone helpline to link with local services. The ability to provide parents and carers with up-to-date advice about what is available in their local area, and to refer them to local sources of support was felt to be fundamental to the telephone helpline's success.
- 3.5 In developing our proposals for a national telephone helpline, we will take into account these local initiatives, and ensure that there are clear links to local services, including Children's Information Services.

Children's Information Services

- 3.6 Each local education authority in Wales has a statutory duty to provide a childcare information service. The term "Children's Information Service" is used more generally because information on childcare provision should be set in the context of information on other services for children, young people and parents.
- 3.7 Cymorth planning guidance directed partnerships to form a Children's Information Service (CIS) by October 2004. These services have been developed to provide high quality information to parents on childcare, early years education and related issues. The Assembly Government has published seven minimum standards for Children's Information

Services, including a marketing and publicity strategy standard that each CIS should seek to achieve. The National Association of Children's Information Services (NACIS) was awarded a three-year contract to support the CIS in their attempts to achieve these minimum standards by October 2004. NACIS will provide one-to-one consultancy support and advice to those CISs that did not meet the October 2004 deadline, to help them achieve the minimum standards within a negotiated timeframe.

3.8 The following Mission Statement drawn up by NACIS has been adopted by CIS in Wales:

"Children's Information Services will provide quality, accessible and impartial information and guidance on the full range of childcare services, resources and issues led by the needs of children and their families, carers, employers, professionals and local and national government and their agencies".

3.9 The kinds of information that CIS could provide include:

- Childcare and other children's issues such as bullying, child protection, children's behaviour;
- Parenting;
- Leisure activities, education services and libraries;
- Health services, including information on children's illnesses and conditions, and social services;
- Special needs, including support groups for parents of children with special needs/disabilities;
- Training courses for childcare workers;
- Work Life Balance, including legislation affecting work life balance;
- Sources of funding for parents and childcare providers;
- National and local helplines for parents;
- National and local children's organisations.

3.10 Children's Information Services have the potential to support a number of initiatives proposed in this Action Plan. For example, they could develop and maintain databases of local parent support services, which the telephone helpline could call up to refer parents and carers to local sources of advice and support. They could be a source for distribution of booklets and other promotional material for parents. They link in with the development of integrated centres, and could help us develop pilot information points for parents in these centres and in schools. More generally, through outreach at schools and in the community, they could help build better links between parents and schools. We recognise, however, that many CISs are currently in their infancy, and that further work will be needed to develop their infrastructure if they are to help deliver this agenda. We will continue to work with local authorities and with NACIS on developing the capacity of CISs in Wales.

Booklets for Parents

3.11 The Welsh Assembly Government makes the following resources available to new parents:

- *The Pregnancy Book* is a nationally developed handbook that offers evidence-based advice and information covering conception, pregnancy, antenatal care, labour and birth, everything needed to care for the new baby, mother and baby's health, and rights and benefits entitlements. The book is regularly updated by the Assembly Government to reflect current recommended practice and is offered by midwives free to all women early in their pregnancies.
- *Birth to Five* is a complementary publication to *The Pregnancy Book* and is also provided free to all pregnant mothers in Wales, usually by their health visitor. It includes information on the first weeks with a new baby; growth and development; learning and playing; habits and behaviour; feeding your child; illness and accidents; mothers' health; services, rights and benefits. *Birth to Five* has been made available since Spring 2005.

3.12 Accidents are the most common cause of death among children aged 1-5 years. Chapter 6 of *Birth to Five* deals with common childhood illnesses and accidents, the best ways to prevent them, and the action to take in an emergency. It contains a safety checklist for parents, and advice on where to go for further advice and information. Innovative approaches to accident prevention are also being developed at local level. For example, the Sure Start Health Development Team in Swansea have developed a "How Safe is your Jungle" placemat for parents. The placemat is available in different community languages, and is routinely distributed by health visitors and other professionals in community and hospital settings, to engage in discussion with parents about safety and supervision in relation to the age or stage of development of their child.

3.13 In 2003-04, the Assembly Government worked with the National Family and Parenting Institute and Children in Wales to develop and pilot two supplementary booklets for parents:

- *From Breakfast to Bedtime* - tips for parents on coping with everyday situations such as mealtimes and getting very young children ready for bed.
- *Over the Top Behaviour in the Under 10s* - advice for parents on why children behave in the way they do, and how to handle challenging behaviour.

3.14 The booklets were distributed in three pilot areas in Wales, and an evaluation report was prepared by Children in Wales. This showed that the booklets had been very well received by parents. We will be making the *Breakfast to Bedtime* and *Over the Top Behaviour* booklets available in all parts of Wales by the end of March 2006.

- 3.15** The Assembly Government will also be developing in 2006-07 a booklet for parents on alternatives to physical discipline, in line with our commitment to work towards the abolition of physical punishment through influencing the attitudes and behaviour of parents and others who care for children. The booklet will be distributed by health visitors to all new parents to supplement *Birth to Five*.
- 3.16** An area that parents can often find particularly difficult addressing with their children is sex and relationships. In countries such as the Netherlands, where parents and wider society feel comfortable addressing this subject with children from an early age, there are better sexual health outcomes for young people. It is estimated that the average age for first intercourse is one year later in the Netherlands as compared to the UK and they also have far lower rates of teenage pregnancy. The consultation feedback showed support for a booklet that would provide guidance to help parents talk to their children about sex and relationships. The Assembly Government will produce and disseminate, by the end of March 2008, a booklet on talking to children and young people about sex and relationships.
- 3.17** **The Assembly Government will develop and distribute a series of booklets for all new parents in Wales, supplementing the *Pregnancy Book* and *Birth to Five*.**

4. PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTING

- 4.1** There are a number of initiatives supported, or under development, by the Assembly Government, which support the development of positive parenting in Wales.

Children and Families Organisational Grant

- 4.2** This grant scheme supports national projects that develop the voluntary sector's capacity to support children and young people, their parents and families. Three of these projects are concerned directly with promoting positive parenting in Wales.

Parenting Development Project

- 4.3** The Parenting Project is a joint initiative between Children in Wales and the National Family and Parenting Institute. Its aim is to develop networks which it is hoped will support positive parenting in Wales. Part of the work is to support further development of Fforwm Magu Plant, the all-Wales network for professional, voluntary and other agencies involved in providing parenting support services. A significant recent piece of work has been the development, and distribution in three pilot areas, of information leaflets for parents.

Fatherhood Development Project

- 4.4** The Fatherhood Wales project began in September 2004, and is managed by Children in Wales and Fathers Direct. It aims to promote a strong and positive relationship between children and their fathers or/and other male carers, and to prepare boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children. The project will work closely with the Assembly Government and other agencies in raising the profile of fatherhood by promoting father inclusion in all public services, and will establish a network of professionals working specifically with fathers and male carers.

Children are Unbeatable!

- 4.5** Children are Unbeatable! is an alliance of organisations and individuals across the UK who are committed to reforming the law on physical punishment of children, and to promoting positive alternatives to physical discipline. The Assembly Government is funding Children are Unbeatable! in Wales for three years from 2004-05, as part of its commitment to promoting positive, non-violent approaches to parenting. We will be working with CAU! during 2006-07 to develop and distribute a booklet on alternatives to physical discipline.

Intergenerational Practice

- 4.6** Intergenerational work aims “to bring generations together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and help build more cohesive communities” (Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice).
- 4.7** As part of the Strategy for Older People in Wales, we have provided funding to develop and implement an intergenerational practice strategy in Wales and establish the Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice. The Centre, an initiative of the Beth Johnson Foundation, administered and hosted by the University of Glamorgan, was established in May 2004. It aims to support the development of intergenerational practice throughout Wales by:
- Supporting those involved in intergenerational work;
 - Developing the understanding of intergenerational work and its benefits;
 - Influencing decision -makers to incorporate intergenerational initiatives into their policies and funding guidelines.
- 4.8** The Centre has established a network of organisations and individuals with a commitment to intergenerational practice. The Beth Johnson Foundation are also publishing a practice guide on the development of intergenerational work which gives different generations a greater understanding of each others needs, wants and aspirations.

Grandparents

- 4.9** Grandparents have always played a significant role in supporting parents with bringing up their children. Increasingly grandparents play an important role in the work/life balance of their children and grandchildren. The Beth Johnson Foundation has estimated that some 86% of grandparents provide some form of free childcare, but this contribution is often unrecognised and invisible. It also poses pressures and issues for the grandparents themselves. These pressures on grandparents can be compounded by the impact of divorce and family breakdown. There are also issues around the role of step-grandparents.
- 4.10** The Assembly Government's Cabinet Sub-Committee on Older People asked for further work be carried out on the role of grandparents and older people as carers for children and young people. This would link the Assembly Government's Strategy for Older People with the Parenting Action Plan. As an initial step, the Assembly Government funded the Beth Johnson Foundation to undertake a scoping study on the current understanding and knowledge about grandparents and their role in society to establish a base line understanding to build future work on. The study was completed in March 2005.

4.11 We will set up a Working Group in December 2005 to consider the BJF report and propose an outline Programme of Action for the Assembly Government, statutory authorities and the voluntary sector, including the sharing of good practice and approaches. Subsequent actions will be built into the third year of the Parenting Action Plan (2007-08), linked with Phase Two of the Strategy for Older People.

4.12 The Working Group's remit will be to:

- Review and advise on the implications set out in the Beth Johnson Foundation report, 'Grandparents in Wales: A Baseline Document';
- Advise on the development of a policy framework for grandparenting in Wales, in the context of the Parenting Action Plan and the Strategy for Older People in Wales;
- Propose an outline Programme of Action for the Assembly Government, statutory authorities and the voluntary sector including the sharing of good practice and approaches; and,
- Produce a short report with recommendations by end May 2006.

Parent Training and Education Programmes for Children with Conduct Disorders

4.13 The Department of Health and the Welsh Assembly Government have asked the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to conduct an appraisal of parent training and education programmes for children with conduct disorders, and provide guidance on their use to the NHS in England and Wales. The Appraisal Committee's preliminary recommendations on the use of these programmes were published for consultation in September/ October 2005. The Committee's final appraisal may be used by NICE and SCIE as a basis for guidance on the use of these programmes.

4.14 The preliminary recommendations set out criteria for evaluating effective group-based parent training and education programmes for the treatment of children with conduct disorders, and also recommended that providers ensure that the infrastructure is in place and support available to enable the participation of parents who may find it difficult to access the programmes.

Webster-Stratton Parenting Programme

4.15 Through Cymorth, and particularly through its Sure Start strand, we are seeking to encourage provision of programmes to provide support to parents and assist in managing children's behaviour problems. A range of programmes already exists, including the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years Courses and Dinosaur Schools. Programmes of this type can be valuable for professionals

(therapists and parent educators from psychology, social work, education, nursing and psychiatry) who are working with families of young children with conduct problems and can help to build useful links between families and schools.

- 4.16** Incredible Years parenting programmes for children with behavioural and related problems have been thoroughly evaluated since they were first developed 25 years ago. Sure Start projects across North Wales have been delivering the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years Parenting Programme as part of their services to families for several years. Some of the centres are working with referred children with behavioural problems, their families and teachers. Others are working with whole classrooms of young children, in preventive early intervention initiatives, to teach them social, friendship and problem-solving skills, and to increase their confidence. The programmes enable parents and professionals to improve their communication with children, and enable children as young as two years old to recognise other children's emotions and to deal sensitively and effectively with social situations.
- 4.17** An Enhancing Parenting Skills course has been developed and is offered to a range of staff working with children and families, including specialists in children's mental health, school nurses, health visitors and social workers.
- 4.18** The Incredible Years programmes are researched and promoted by Incredible Years Wales: the Welsh Centre for Promoting the Incredible Years Programme, which is based at the University of Wales College, Bangor. The Centre has been evaluating the Webster-Stratton parenting programmes in Sure Start centres across North Wales for the past two years. Results have shown that children's difficult behaviour became less intense and less problematic for those parents who had attended the parenting programme. Further research is proposed into the long-term effectiveness of the programme. We want to encourage the uptake of evidence-based programmes such as these in all parts of Wales.
- 4.19** In 2006-07, we will be funding a training programme at University College, Bangor, to extend the scope of the Incredible Years programmes, supporting the development of parenting programmes across Wales. We will also commission SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) to produce information on other evidence-based programmes used in Wales that can inform decisions on future investment.

Iaith Pawb

- 4.20** The Assembly Government believes that all children and young people should have the opportunity to learn the Welsh language and use it in a variety of settings, including the home. Initiatives to support this are

set out in our Welsh language strategy (*laith Pawb*). Two initiatives in particular have a bearing on parenting. Both are funded by the Assembly Government via the Welsh Language Board.

- The “**Twf**” project (Transmission of Welsh in Families) aims to encourage and support new parents to speak Welsh to their children. The emphasis is on families where only one parent speaks Welsh, and Twf offers practical advice to help them achieve this.
- “**Cylchoedd Ti a Fi**” (run by the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin) seeks to offer parents and carers an opportunity to enjoy playing with their children and socialise in an informal Welsh atmosphere. It provides activities promoting the development of children from birth to school age, and opportunities for parents to support each other and discuss issues such as health, safety and child development.

Communities First and Parenting

- 4.21** The Welsh Assembly Government’s Communities First Programme which targets the most deprived areas across Wales has supported parents through a variety of means. For example, funding contributions have been given to provide advice to parents on a range of issues and Creches have also been supported to enable parents to pursue educational qualifications.
- 4.22** For example, Communities First funding has contributed to the Winchestown Family Centre’s running costs. The Centre, based in Nantyglo in Blaenau Gwent, brings together various funding sources to offer a range of services and activities, including advice to families, parents and children on social exclusion issues. In addition, the Centre also runs grandparents and carers groups, Creche facilities for parents participating in sessions and provides a Careers Service and Drug Aid & health advice.

5. RAISING PROFILE IN PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS

- 5.1** Local joint strategic and service-level planning of services for children and young people is overseen by a Children and Young People's Framework Partnership, which draws together work done by the local Children's Partnership and Young People's Partnership. These Partnerships aim to ensure that provision and outcomes for children are improved and they involve local authorities, the NHS and other public and voluntary sector bodies in each local authority area. They also involve children and young people, and representatives of families and carers, in their planning arrangements.
- 5.2** The Assembly Government is taking the opportunity provided by the Children Act 2004 to give a statutory footing to Framework and Children's Partnerships. This will also formalise a requirement for Framework Partnerships to produce strategic Children and Young People's Plans that set out agreed headline objectives and targets for the services of all the partners dealing with children and young people in the local area. The details of the new plans will be developed over the coming year and planning guidance will issue for consultation in the summer of 2006. First plans will be required in 2008.
- 5.3** **We will be strengthening parental participation within the planning process from summer 2006. Framework Partnerships will be required to make sure that parents and carers participate effectively in service planning, such as through local Parent Networks.**
- 5.4** Most Partnerships already have in place mechanisms for promoting the participation of service users, particularly of children and young people, rather than with parents or carers. A number have already identified parent support as a priority and have established Parent Networks or other mechanisms for effective engagement of parents. The first Parent Network in the UK was established by Caerphilly (using the participation element of their Cymorth funding). Other local authority areas where networks are being established include Neath Port Talbot, which has employed a development worker specifically to promote parental representation and participation.
- 5.5** **We will commission work early in 2006 to produce a practice guide for Partnerships on parental participation and empowerment.**
- 5.6** The work will map actions taken currently to further parental involvement, and prepare a guide that will include:
- Underlying Principles and Aims;
 - Common standards for parental participation and key features of networks;
 - Factors to be taken into account in planning parent involvement;
 - Examples of good practice in establishing and running Parent Networks and links;

- Examples of different models for promoting participation; and,
- Evaluation models - how to monitor & evaluate parent participation.

5.7 Partnerships will be encouraged to share good practice and to adopt common standards for parental participation.

5.8 **Framework Partnerships will be required to consider in their planning the needs of parents and carers and how agencies will work together to meet these, including the relevant key actions set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.**

5.9 In developing this aspect of their planning, it is suggested that Partnerships consider:

- Conducting a survey of the views of local parents and carers on existing services and gaps where their needs are currently not being met.
- Audit of existing services to parents, with reference to the new National Occupational Standards for Work with Families, recently developed for use throughout the UK, and launched in Cardiff on 21 October 2005.
- Reference to the local Children's Information Service as a focal point for mapping and collating information on services available to parents in the local area.
- The needs of parents and carers in special circumstances: fathers, young parents, parents of disabled children, from black and minority ethnic groups, Travellers and other marginalised groups (linked to the National Service Framework standards).

6. EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SETTING

- 6.1** Parents are key partners in the education of their children. For education to be provided to children and young people that is appropriate to their needs, it is vital that schools and others discuss their approaches and plans with parents. This is necessary at a general level to provide well-informed services but is also important in meeting the specific needs of individual pupils.
- 6.2** The work of the Assembly Government's Department for Training and Education interacts with parents in a number of ways. They are a key constituency for consultation over education policy development and implementation. There are many policy initiatives which seek to support parents in helping their children before and during formal education, or which seek to support particular groups of parents (e.g. parents of children with special educational needs). The Assembly Government is also responsible for putting in place a framework of statutory and other guidance to assist schools and other educational providers in their work with parents.

National Basic Skills Strategy

- 6.3** The Basic Skills Strategy contains a number of programmes aimed at parents, which are meant to encourage them to help develop their children's language, literacy and numeracy skills. These are:
- Books for Babies, which gives the parents or carers of every child born in Wales a bookbag, to encourage them to read to the child or join a library;
 - Language and Play, a six session programme for parents of children aged 0-3, to help them play constructively with their children to develop their language skills;
 - Number and Play programme (currently under development);
 - Family Literacy and Family Numeracy programmes, aimed at supporting parents to develop their basic skills and encourage them to learn along with their children (usually aged 3-7 years).
- 6.4** The Basic Skills Strategy is currently being reviewed, following a comprehensive evaluation. The Assembly Government's Department for Education and Training has consulted on the content of a revised Strategy, which was launched in December 2004. All the activities listed above will be proposed for inclusion in the new strategy and we do not foresee any objections but decisions about specific activities and associated funding will not be made until after the consultation period.

Foundation phase

- 6.5** A new Foundation Phase is being piloted in Wales from September 2004 for all children from 3-7 years. This will combine the current Early Years (3 to 5) and Key Stage 1 of

the National Curriculum. The Foundation Phase places great emphasis on working closely with parents and carers to ensure that all young children have a flying start in life.

Statutory and other guidance

- 6.6** The need for schools, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and others involved in the education of young people to work with parents is highlighted and clarified in many of the guidance documents issued by the Assembly Government. As well as working with parents of individual pupils, the guidance highlights that schools should work with parents as a whole to promote the community aspects of the school and involve them in developing schools' policies and practices. A few examples of Assembly Government guidance are given below:

Guidance to Careers Wales on strategies for engaging parents

- 6.7** The Assembly Government's planning guidance to Careers Wales companies asks them to set out in their Business Plans their strategy for engaging parents, to maximise the effectiveness of the careers education and guidance process. This recognises that parents have a significant influence on the educational and careers choices of their children. As a minimum, we require companies to send a letter to parents or guardians of Key Stage 4 clients, explaining in general terms the services made available to their children, how they can support their children's career decisions and link in with the careers adviser, and how to obtain further information.

Guidance on behaviour and attendance in schools

- 6.8** The early identification and intervention of attendance and behaviour issues is vital, as is the engagement of parents at as early a stage as possible. Where an individual pupil's attendance is particularly poor, guidance recommends that schools and LEAs work with parents to develop a plan of action and provide any support that is required. Similarly, where pupils are displaying inappropriate or disruptive behaviour, or appear to be disengaging from education, schools should discuss possible reasons and remedies with parents at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 6.9** As part of the Better Schools Fund (BSF), the Assembly Government currently provides around £6 million to LEAs (for 2005-06) for Pupil Support. Funding is largely used for projects to address behaviour and attendance issues, many of which involve working with parents. This has been supplemented by a further £500,000 a year (between 2002-03 and 2004-05) to fund a number of pilot projects to tackle attendance and behaviour in schools. Amongst the approaches funded by the Tackling Disaffection grant were the Webster-Stratton method, which involved working with young

children and their parents. From 2005-06 the focus of this funding will be on projects working directly with parents.

Guidance on Tackling Bullying

6.10 The Assembly Government issued guidance on preventing and dealing with bullying to all schools and LEAs in September 2003. *Respecting Others* highlights the need to get parents involved at an early stage, both in the consultation process of developing new anti-bullying policies as well as in dealing with incidents of bullying - alleged or otherwise. The guidance also highlights the need for training all school staff to deal with parents who may often be angry about the bullying of their child. An annex of the guidance gives a summary for parents on what to do if their child is being bullied and provides contact details for organisations who may be able to help.

Guidance on Parenting Orders and Parenting Contracts

6.11 Parenting Contracts are another tool to identify and focus on the issues behind non-attendance or misbehaviour and to develop a productive relationship with parents and the school or LEA to address them. Parenting contracts were introduced as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, along with Parenting Orders for poor behaviour to supplement those already available for truancy. Consultation on guidance on the application of both these provisions in Wales was issued in May 2005.

Guidance to LEAs on school admissions

6.12 The Code of Practice on school admissions emphasises the need for LEAs to develop admissions arrangements that are clear and objective. They should also publish information for parents that helps them to make suitable school choices and to complete the necessary application procedures. The Assembly has recently been reviewing these admissions information documents and offering advice to LEAs on how they might be improved. Revised Codes of Practice are also planned.

Role of School Governing Bodies

6.13 Parents play a crucial role in helping their children learn. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can help more effectively if they know what the school is trying to achieve and how they can best support that. Schools engage with parents in a number of different ways:

- **Home-school agreements** - provide a framework for the development of such a partnership. Schools are required under sections 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework

Act 1998 to adopt a home school agreement and parental declaration. Guidance to schools on introducing home schools agreement is contained in Welsh Office Circular 27/99;

- **Parent Governors** - are elected to include the voice of parents on school governing bodies which have responsibility for setting the ethos and policies of the school;
- **Parent Governor representatives on local authority education scrutiny committees** - are elected in an LEA area to represent the views of parents in the decisions the LEA take about education;
- **Complaints Procedures** - under the provisions of the Education Act 2002 all schools are required to have a complaints procedure in place and to publicise its existence including to parents and others. A school that actively promotes its complaints procedure, takes complaints seriously and determines them in accordance with its procedure is likely to engage more effectively with parents by sending the message that parents' concerns are listened to and dealt with effectively. Guidance to schools on handling complaints is contained in NAW Circular 03/2004;
- **Governors' Annual Meeting with Parents** - all maintained schools are required to hold an annual meeting with parents (except in certain specific circumstances) to provide parents with an opportunity to discuss the manner in which the school has been, and is to be, run, and any other matters of relating to the organisation and running of the school and its policies. The Assembly Government is aware that very few parents, and sometimes none at all, attend these meetings. Nonetheless, it considers these meetings to be an important element in governing body accountability to and contact with parents. School governing bodies are encouraged to take an innovative approach in holding these meetings, for example to consider carefully their timing or combine them with another parents event or meetings in order to secure better attendance.

Estyn

- 6.14** Estyn (the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) also has an important role to play in informing Assembly Government policy in this area.
- 6.15** School inspection reports provide a fair overall reflection of how individual schools interact with parents. A meeting with parents is an integral part of evidence gathering for a school inspection. There is also a requirement that schools provide parents and guardians with a summary of the inspection report, and access to the full report if requested.

6.16 Beyond this, as part of the Common Inspection Framework inspectors assess:

- How the school management team seeks out and takes account of the views of parents and others in monitoring and improving performance.
- The quality of care, support and guidance provided for learners. This would include how well the school works in partnership with parents and carers in caring for, supporting and guiding pupils and the extent to which the provision takes parents' and carers' views into account.
- How class teachers monitor pupils' academic progress, behaviour, personal development and attendance and regularly discuss these with pupils, and where appropriate, their parents.
- How the school involves and works with parents of young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) including involvement in SEN reviews.

6.17 Inspectors also report on initiatives, such as reading schemes, that involve parents, in the context of how they contribute to pupil achievement.

6.18 **We will continue to work with Local Education Authorities and school governing bodies to promote parental involvement in schools.**

6.19 We will promote examples of good practice and encourage authorities to share innovative ideas. There are already a number of innovative projects seeking to improve parents' involvement in their children's education. For example, Blaenau Gwent has devised the Parents and Children Together (PACT) project for primary schools. To qualify as a Pact school, parents of pupils in each class have to be invited into school to undertake fun learning activities alongside their children for one lesson per year. All activities last for an hour. It is hoped the project will encourage even the most reluctant parents to become involved with their children's schools, especially those whose own experiences of schools were negative.

Community Focused Schools

6.20 Most schools recognise the influence of family, peers and the community on pupils' learning and consider the wider needs of learners, including, for example, family well-being and health promotion. The Assembly Government wants to see schools rooted in the wider community, providing a base for education and training as well as a range of family services such as family support, childcare, health and enterprise promotion, which might include training courses and even commercial use. This expansion of activity is particularly important in areas of deprivation where alternative facilities often do not exist.

- 6.21** A school with a community focus can help to raise pupil aspirations and their determination to progress from school to further or higher education, training or employment. Encouraging parents and other adults within the community back into learning can change the culture of schools by raising the profile of learning within the home and the local community generally. In short, engagement with parents and with the community reinforces the value of education and improving outcomes for pupils, and over time this will result in breaking the downward spiral of failure and low self esteem in the community and instead build a culture of success.
- 6.22** Schools that engage with their communities and develop a strong community focus are also more successful in discouraging disaffection and developing ways of re-engaging excluded or disaffected pupils.
- 6.23** Many schools already provide a wide range of services to enhance community life and learning. The Education Act 2002 gives governing bodies increased powers to provide a wide range of community services and activities. Guidance to assist schools and their partners in developing or enhancing a community focus was issued in December 2003 and an annual grant of £3 million is being provided to help develop community focus in schools.
- 6.24** **We will invite LEAs and Children's Information Services to pilot CIS satellites in primary and secondary schools, in conjunction with community-focused schools and in the new integrated centres.**

Parentsnet

- 6.25** Parentsnet is a new education website provided by the Welsh Assembly Government. It can be found at: www.learning.wales.gov.uk/parents. It is designed specifically for parents, and aims to provide all the information parents and carers will need to know about their children's education in Wales.
- 6.26** It was clear from the consultation feedback that Parentsnet is not well known or well used by parents or professionals at present, and that further development work needs to be undertaken both in terms of content and marketing.
- 6.27** **We will undertake further development of Parentsnet to ensure its suitability for all parents, including those who are less well-educated or who are not so well informed.**

Teaching young people about being a parent

6.28 Schools teach children and young people about being a parent as part of Personal and Social Education (PSE). This includes teaching about sex and relationships, being pregnant and what having a child is like. If this is taught well in schools, all children and young people will have the skills and confidence to be good parents. New guidelines on how PSE should be taught in schools were published a couple of years ago. The Assembly Government also made PSE compulsory in all schools in 2003. We will continue our efforts to improve the way this subject is taught.

7. SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF PARENTS

- 7.1** Although universal services aim to meet the needs of all families, there are some groups of parents who find themselves, or who feel themselves to be, excluded from universal support, and who would find targeted support helpful. Sometimes there is also a need for specialist support, for example where a parent or child is disabled, where parent or child has mental health problems, in families in which there has been a history of abuse, or where children or young people are in trouble with the law. Some of the key areas in which targeted or specialist support is provided for parents are covered below.

Parents of Children in Need

- 7.2** The Children First Programme aims to improve the quality and delivery of social services to children in need and their families. The programme impacts upon all children in need including looked after children, children with disabilities and children at risk (including children whose parents misuse substances or alcohol). Since its inception in 1999 over £100 million has been allocated to the programme, the majority of which is paid directly to local authorities to enable them to meet the programme's objectives.
- 7.3** The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families is a key component of the Children First programme. It recognises that early intervention is essential to support children and families before problems, either from within the family or as a result of external factors, which have an impact on parenting capacity and family life escalate into crisis or abuse. It also recognises the effect adult problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and mental health problems can have on children.
- 7.4** Through Children First and related programmes local authorities and their partners are developing prevention strategies and early intervention models such as Family Group conferencing, 24-hour crisis support and Family Support schemes to prevent family breakdown.

Corporate Parenting

- 7.5** Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility across services and across local authorities to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children. The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.
- 7.6** Once a child is in care, all Members and officers of the council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and

holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

- 7.7** It should be part of all councillors' responsibilities as corporate parents to be satisfied that there is a joined up, effective and holistic approach to meeting looked after children's needs through the local planning arrangements.
- 7.8** In February 2005 the Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association issued "If This Were My Child: Guidance for elected members on how to be a good corporate parent". The guidance identifies key questions councillors should be asking and information they should be receiving to satisfy themselves regarding the quality and range of services provided to looked after children in their area. A number of local authorities have adopted a statement on corporate parenting to inform their work and relationships with looked after children and care leavers. Several Welsh local authorities produce corporate parenting packs for all their councillors.
- 7.9** As corporate parents local authorities have a key role in ensuring there is support for looked after children to prepare them for the transition to adulthood and independent living. To facilitate this, the Assembly Government proposes to introduce a new grant scheme to encourage local authorities to make annual contributions of £50 to the Child Trust Funds of children they look after. The scheme will be implemented from April 2006, following consultation on the detailed arrangements. The principle of the scheme is that those who are in care over longer periods will accumulate growth in their Child Trust Fund, and have some element of financial security of their own to assist them in the transition to adulthood.

Children who run away

- 7.10** In May 2002 the Assembly Government commissioned research by the University of York into young runaways in Wales. It found that each year around 3,500 youngsters under the age of 16 (and sometimes as young as 11) ran away overnight for the first time. Emotional issues and difficulties with relationships were more often the cause of running away than were economic circumstances, and nearly 80% of those who ran away did so to escape problems at home. High on the list of things that might have prevented running away, or which would have helped the children while they were away, were information about local services, advice or family mediation.
- 7.11** The Assembly Government plans to issue guidance to statutory and voluntary sector organisations outlining good practice to help children who run away either from home or from care.

Parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- 7.12** In relation to children and young people with SEN we recognise the important role that parents play as the main educators of their children. The SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2002) provides guidance for parents and all those involved in supporting children and young people with SEN. To accompany this a good practice handbook has been developed for schools and contains a section designed to assist partnership working with parents.
- 7.13** All local authorities must provide information to parents on local parent partnership services (PPS) operating within an area. The PPS can provide invaluable advice and support to parents, as they have a wealth of knowledge in relation to the statutory assessment and statementing framework. They often work with the parents and schools or the LEA to ensure appropriate levels of support and provision are in place. They also provide parents with a network of support in their own area.
- 7.14** There are also a number of voluntary organisations operating across Wales that can provide a useful source of information for parents.
- 7.15** Where there are difficulties and disagreements between parents, schools and the LEA in relation to provision and support, parents also have the right to request access to disagreement resolution services. It is compulsory for all LEAs to offer parents access to disagreement resolution services as well as providing information on the local parent partnership service.
- 7.16** Where agreement cannot be reached parents also have the right to access the the SEN tribunal for Wales (SENTW). SENTW has been established to consider appeals from parents in relation to the statutory framework for SEN.
- 7.17** The Assembly Government has issued a "Parents' Guide to SEN". This easy to understand guide provides a step by step guide for parents through the statutory assessment framework. It is based on the SEN Code of Practice for Wales and provides information to parents on procedures as well as sign-posting them to relevant organisations who can provide support.

Disabled Facilities Grants for parents of disabled children

- 7.18** Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) contribute towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable disabled people to continue living in their homes. The average value of DFGs in Wales is currently £6,500, and grants of up to £30,000 are available. Following an independent review of housing adaptations and DFGs, the Assembly Government decided in April 2005 to abolish the means test for DFGs for the parents of disabled children in Wales. The change came into force on 20 September 2005.

Disabled people with parental responsibility

7.19 The Direct Payments scheme was extended in Wales from 1 November 2004 to include disabled people with parental responsibility for a child. These payments offer individuals more flexibility in how to meet their assessed care needs by enabling local authorities to offer a cash payment to service users to purchase their own care. The new scheme also requires local authorities to offer a direct payment, rather than leaving this to the local authority's discretion. People with parental responsibility for a disabled child, and disabled children aged 16 and 17, were already covered by the existing scheme.

Young Carers

7.20 The particular needs of young carers are acknowledged in the Assembly Government's Carers Strategy. A Young Carers Advisory Group already provides advice on young carers issues to our Carers Strategy Review Panel. In 2004, a training resource pack was issued to every school in Wales to help teachers and raise awareness in schools about pupils who are young carers, and the Assembly Government provided funding for an all Wales Young Carers Festival held in mid Wales in the summer of 2005. In many areas, young carers clubs have also been established.

Parents of children and young people at risk of offending

7.21 Existing work on the training and education of children and young people in the criminal justice system, or who are at risk of offending or re-offending will in due course need to focus on acquisition of good parenting skills. Good practice from other, related initiatives will need to be evaluated to see which aspects can be applied more generally.

7.22 Local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) conduct a parenting assessment in cases referred to them. The assessment is used to identify parenting risks and protective factors as well as general need. Intervention with parents is based upon an analysis of the information gained during the assessment and can include input by YOT staff or referral to appropriate agencies. YOT officers also provide relevant information to the courts based on the assessment.

7.23 The All-Wales Youth Offending Strategy, published in July 2004, provides a national framework for preventing offending and re-offending by children and young people in Wales. The Strategy was the result of joint work by the Assembly Government, the Youth Justice Board and local agencies. Offending behaviour among young people is often related to lack of family support or other experiences causing disengagement or disaffection. Consequently, one of the Youth Justice Board targets is that 10% of young people with a community sentence should receive a parenting intervention, and that

75% of these parents should be satisfied. A range of parenting interventions is possible, from information giving, to brief specialist interventions (e.g. relating to substance misuse issues), to participation in structured parenting groupwork programmes.

- 7.24** Parents in custody are also supported in order to maintain their contact with children by various means.

Parents who are separating or getting divorced

- 7.25** The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) gets involved with families when parents separate or divorce and cannot agree about arrangements for their children. It works with the children and their families, and then advises the courts on what it considers to be in the children's best interests.
- 7.26** Responsibility for CAFCASS in Wales passed to the National Assembly on 1 April 2005. The devolved service, known as CAFCASS Cymru is a functional division within the Assembly Government, and operates from 13 offices across Wales.
- 7.27** CAFCASS Cymru's main aim is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children involved in family court proceedings. When parents separate or divorce and cannot agree about arrangements for their children, the courts will usually ask a Children and Family Reporter from CAFCASS to help. The Reporters are independent of the courts, social services and similar agencies, and are impartial. They are qualified in social work and experienced in working with families. The purpose of the intervention is to assist the Court in reaching a decision about how the dispute may be settled in the best interests of the child.

Adoption and adoptive parents

- 7.28** Where children cannot live with their birth families, for whatever reason, adoption can provide an alternative permanent family home. In recent years there has been an increase in the numbers of looked after children in Wales who have been adopted. The Adoption and Children Act 2002, due for full implementation on 30 December 2005, will increase further the focus on adoption.
- 7.29** Various measures in the Act are designed to help more people come forward to adopt as well as to assist adoptive placements to succeed. These include a new right to assessment of needs for adoption support services for adoptive families, brought into force in Wales from 1 October 2004. When fully implemented, the Act will allow adoption by unmarried couples as well as married couples and single people.

7.30 The Act will enable a step-parent to acquire parental responsibility for a child of his spouse. That may be done either by agreement with the parents who have parental responsibility for the child or by order of the court.

7.31 New rights to leave and pay for adoptive parents were introduced for employees whose children are placed with them on or after 6 April 2003. Full details are available on the Department of Trade and Industry website at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/adoption.htm>

Foster parents

7.32 About 75% of children looked after by local authorities in Wales are placed with foster parents (foster carers). These may be long or short term placements or for periods of respite care. Carers receive allowances and other payments in respect of the children for whom they provide care.

7.33 Standard 17 of the UK National Standards for Foster Care, issued in 1999, says "each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her". This standard was also included (number 30) in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services issued by the Assembly Government which came into effect on 1 April 2003. Local authorities' implementation of these standards are inspected by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales. The Children Act 2004 now gives scope for the Assembly Government to set national minimum levels of allowances, following consultation with local government.

7.34 From 1 April 2003, a new system of taxation for foster carers was introduced by the Inland Revenue. It set an income tax exemption for foster carers with gross receipts below a threshold. Carers with receipts above the exemption threshold will be able to choose between computing their profits in the normal way for self-employed persons or treating the amount by which their gross receipts exceed the threshold as their taxable profit. Full details are available from the Inland Revenue.

7.35 Also since April 2003, foster carers have been entitled to Home Responsibility Protection - a way to make sure that they do not get less basic Retirement Pension just because they have stayed at home to look after a child.

Parents who are substance misusers

7.36 "Hidden Harm - Responding to the needs of children of problem drug users", a report to the Home Office of an inquiry by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, was launched for

stakeholder consultation in Wales in June 2003. The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration referred the report to the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse in order for it to consider the report's 48 recommendations alongside the analysis from the stakeholder consultation.

7.37 As a result of the stakeholder consultation and key stakeholder conference that was held on Hidden Harm in September 2004, the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse has developed a Framework for Action for progressing work in this area.

7.38 The five themes of the Framework for Action are:

Family Support Services - promoting health, safety and well being of the children of substance misusing parents

Health - improving health outcomes for substance misusing women, their partners and children

Training and Awareness Raising - ensuring that the health and social care workforce is better equipped to understand and respond to the needs of substance misusers and their children

Criminal Justice - ensuring that where possible the outcomes for substance misusers subject to the criminal justice system have regard to their parenting role

Data Collection - enhancing the relevance of policy development and implementation by informing the process with relevant quantitative data.

7.39 In order to gain the widest possible support within the Assembly, "Hidden Harm" has been considered by the Cabinet, and the Social Justice and Regeneration, Health and Social Services, and Education and Lifelong Learning Committees. It was also the subject of a plenary debate.

7.40 The Cabinet paper and the Framework for Action recommended by APoSM were presented to Cabinet in February 2005. Cabinet approved the paper and agreed that the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Children and Young People should consider the cost of the recommendations before the matter was referred again to Cabinet.

7.41 Indicative costings of implementing the Framework for Action will be obtained. An internal audit of Welsh Assembly Government policies, procedures and guidance will identify those in place or under development and relate to the aims and actions in the Framework for Action.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

- 7.42** The vision for improving child and adolescent mental health services in Wales, is set out in the All Wales Strategy for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) "Everybody's Business" (2001). It describes a ten-year programme aimed at establishing comprehensive, effective and high quality services across Wales. Our 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.
- 7.43** Mental health and psychological well being of children and young people is addressed in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NSF) which contains specific and measurable key actions for the delivery of multi-agency services across Tiers 1 to 4 that are closely linked to the CAMHS Strategy Everybody's Business.
- 7.44** One of the core aims of the CAMHS Strategy is partnership with families, substitute families and all those who care for young people. To achieve this, the Strategy promotes services that involve parents and carers in planning and commissioning services. It also seeks to establish child-centred services that take into account the views of the children, young people and families using them. To be child-centred, services must be holistic, flexible and focused on the needs, opinions, cultures and lifestyles of children and adolescents. The importance of good parenting is one of the key factors which professionals from all disciplines are encouraged to reflect in their work with children and young people with mental health problems or disorders.
- 7.45** The NSF also addresses situations where a parent or carer has a mental health disorder. It builds upon the Royal College of Psychiatrists report, "Patients as Carers. Addressing the needs, including the safety, of children whose parents have a mental illness" (2002). It stresses the importance of services for adults having the capacity and capability to intervene where and when necessary, and having good and effective relationships with children's services so that joint intervention plans can be put in place.
- 7.46** In 2001, the Department of Health and Welsh Assembly Government asked the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to produce a clinical guideline on "the short-term physical and psychological management and secondary prevention of self-harm in primary and secondary care". The guidelines were published in July 2004, and the Assembly Minister for Health and Social Services expects the NHS in Wales to take full account of them when planning services for their local populations. 'Healthcare Standards for Wales', which was launched by the Minister in May 2005, also requires healthcare organisations to provide patients and service users with effective treatment and care that conforms to NICE clinical guidelines.

7.47 Work is currently underway to develop guidance for schools, LEAs and other partners to promote the mental health and social well-being of pupils, including those in nursery settings. The guidance will cover aspects such as whole-school approaches to promoting positive mental health, recognising early signs of mental health problems and distinguishing between different types of mental health problems and of course describing the necessary referral systems. The guidance is due to be issued by the end of 2006.

Young parents

7.48 Becoming a parent for the first time is always a challenge, whatever the age of the parents. It can, however, be a particular challenge for young mothers and fathers, and they often need special support. For example, young parents might need support so that they can continue going to school or college. Some can call on their parents or other family members for support, but others have to cope on their own, struggling to make ends meet or living in poor quality housing.

7.49 The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services highlights the need for specialist services for young parents. These can include support groups like “Young Mums R Us” and “Young Mums 2B R Us”, which have been set up by Sure Start in Swansea. These give young mothers the chance to meet each other and discuss things such as health, how babies and children develop, relationships, housing, budgeting, ‘risky’ behaviour and having fun. Groups are needed for young fathers too. We will be encouraging Children and Young People’s Partnerships to set up more services like this.

7.50 The NSF acknowledges that young parents are more likely to have poorer health, social and economic outcomes than other parents. Children born to young mothers are more likely to experience living in a lone parent family, of living in poverty and in poor housing conditions. These factors point to the need for targeted services for young mothers, particularly for those who do not have the support of an extended family.

Parents with Low Incomes

7.51 The Assembly Government is aware that for some parents with low incomes meeting the cost of the purchase of school uniform, particularly when children move into secondary school, can present a hardship. To help with these costs it has introduced a school uniform grant of £85 for the families of pupils entering Year 7 of maintained secondary schools. This applies to those who have an entitlement to free school meals and for pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units who are aged 11 at the start of the school year and are eligible for free school meals. Application for the grant should be made to the Local Education Authority.

8. SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

1. We will develop a national bilingual helpline for parents in Wales. We are exploring the various options for delivering this service, and a final decision on the way forward will be taken by the end of 2005.
2. The Assembly Government will develop and distribute to a series of booklets for all new parents in Wales, supplementing the existing *Pregnancy Book* and *Birth to Five* books.
3. We will set up a Working Group in the autumn 2005 to consider the Beth Johnson Foundation report on grandparents in Wales and propose an outline Programme of Action for the Assembly Government, statutory authorities and the voluntary sector, including the sharing of good practice and approaches. Subsequent actions will be built into the third year of the Parenting Action Plan (2007-08), linked with Phase Two of the Strategy for Older People.
4. In 2006-07, we will be funding a training programme at University College, Bangor, to extend the scope of the Incredible Years programmes, supporting the development of parenting programmes across Wales. We will also commission SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) to produce information on other evidence-based programmes used in Wales that can inform decisions on future investment.
5. We will be strengthening parental participation within the planning process from summer 2006. Framework Partnerships will be required to make sure that parents and carers participate effectively in service planning, such as through local Parent Networks.
6. We will commission work early in 2006 to produce a practice guide for Partnerships on parental participation and empowerment.
7. Framework Partnerships will be required to consider in their planning the needs of parents and carers and how agencies will work together to meet these, including the relevant key actions set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.
8. We will invite Local Education Authorities and Children's Information Services to pilot CIS satellites in primary and secondary schools, in community-focused schools and in the new integrated centres.
9. We will continue to work with Local Education Authorities, Estyn and school governing bodies to promote parental participation in schools.
10. We will undertake further development of Parentsnet to ensure its suitability for all parents, including those who are less well educated or who are not so well informed.