

CF 11

Ymchwiliad i dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – yr hyn a ddysgwyd
Inquiry into poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn

Response from: Isle of Anglesey County Council

Background: Thank you for the invitation to submit evidence for consideration by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee. This submission is on behalf of the Isle of Anglesey County Council, the Lead Delivery Body [LDB] for the Communities First programme on the Isle of Anglesey, delivered in Holyhead and Llangefni's Tudur Ward.

Môn Communities First, known as Môn CF, will submit their evidence, as a separate entity. Môn CF was established as a Company Limited by Guarantee, is a registered charity, and has a trading arm, Ynys Trading.

When established, approx. 5 years ago, a legal contract was put in place by the Council which originally was for a 3 year period, and has been extended twice to cover the period to date. This year, the partnership is due for a review, using the Council's Partnership Toolkit. Môn CF report annually to the Council's Partnership and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee, and performance is monitored quarterly by the Housing Services staff. It is the Head of Service for Housing Services who leads on the tackling poverty agenda within the Council. Financial scrutiny is undertaken by the Council's Grants Manager. Both Officers sit on the Board of Môn CF as observers.

Overall, the Council believes that Communities First, has been an ambitious and valuable programme locally to help reduce poverty and tackle deprivation.

This submission will provide evidence to the inquiry by following the same order of the terms of reference as outlined in the correspondence dated 12th April, 2017.

What's worked well

Service delivery model: One of the key reasons why Môn CF was set up as an independent organisation, was that the model provided them the opportunity to attract external funding, that would not have been an option available to the Council to approach. This has been one of the success factors for Môn CF. As at the end of 2016–2017, approx. 48% of their core income came from Welsh Government, whilst the remaining income comes from Trusts, Companies such as Magnox and the Health Lottery.

Partnership working: Môn CF is highly regarded amongst most organisations locally, with high praise received from colleagues in other key tackling poverty programmes, and organisations such as Health colleagues. The success of the delivery of programmes such as *Lift* and *Communities for Work* comes from the joint working with local employers, Job Centre Plus and DWP.

Community engagement: Môn CF is highly regarded by the communities where the programme has been delivered, and this has been evidenced through attendance at it's Annual General Meetings and turn-out at community participation and engagement events. The programme has the communities as their grass roots. Môn CF is an organisation that communities trust and as a result, are more likely to take part in volunteering activities and get into training than possibly accessing more formal organisations. Engaging with young people, including the dis-engaged, has been achieved through establishing 'The Hub' in Holyhead – a set-up recently discussed by Council Officials with the Children's Commissioner.

Changed people's lives: A range of case studies demonstrate the positive changes that the programme has made to the lives of individuals and is the best type of evidence that demonstrates the effect of the programme.

Accessing other services: trust of accessing services through Môn CF have opened the door to other support services, such as Welfare Benefits advice, Debt Management, Food bank, referral to Supporting People Housing Support services for people with conditions such as Mental Health problems,

or dependent on alcohol or drugs, or referrals to other programmes such as Team Around the Family, Families First, Social Services and Housing.

Lift: *Lift* is based on an assertive outreach model, which has worked very well to address barriers to work identifying the needs of the individual and designing a bespoke package of support to remove those barriers.

What has not worked so well

Making a difference on an area-wide basis: The programme has reaped success for changing and improving individual people's lives by supporting them into training, volunteering and work opportunities and improving their life skills. Indeed, Welsh Government Officials regularly report that the success of Môn CF in delivering the *Lift* programme is amongst the best in Wales. However, the programme has not really achieved demonstrable reductions in area-based poverty and deprivation. One could argue the absence of good quality jobs locally, has made it more difficult to demonstrate the impact as an area-based programme. On its' own, was it the expectation of Welsh Government that the Communities First programme be expected to reduce poverty and deprivation? It is well known that area wide economic deprivation is due to complex social and economic factors including the availability of a range of skilled and semi-skilled jobs and access to good quality affordable housing.

Weak strategic links with Economic Regeneration programmes: on a national basis, the Communities First programme has been seen more as achieving traditional well-being outcomes. Possibly this is down to the wide range of soft outcomes that the programme was required by Welsh Government to report. Unlike other CF programmes, Môn CF during the last 18 months, has concentrated its work programme on employability outcomes and has demonstrated success in this field. Possibly this has not been communicated or celebrated with a high enough emphasis locally or nationally. This is an area where the forthcoming economic programme which is understood to follow *Viable and Vibrant Places* [VVP], will need to highlight effective links with the Employability Grant and Communities for Work.

The post-code approach to access services: the restriction of service availability to certain geographical areas has not helped the programme. The lack of flexibility of the CF programme, resulted in Môn CF to approach other funders such as the Health Lottery so as to open the access of some programmes to individuals living outside the CF post-codes.

Funding: annual cycle of funding over the last 2 years, has led to uncertainty, loss of staff and prevented any long-term planning.

Alignment of the tackling poverty programmes: has not worked and has therefore led to duplication and ineffective use of resources.

General comment: What Local Authorities will need to do is to maintain the good work of engaging local communities to steer it's work programme. Communities First managed to engage with the most disadvantaged communities, managed to gain their trust and deliver their agreed plans. A lot of good practice, which all public bodies can learn from and improve their engagement skills, should not be lost.

How the local authority will decide which projects continue to receive funding after June 2017

2017 will be a transition year when the Communities First programme will be closed down. Locally in Anglesey, Môn Communities First has changed it's name to Môn Communities Forward, retaining it's *Môn CF* brand and trust locally amongst the local communities. The organisation will be looking for alternative funding to replace core Welsh Government funding, and will know the outcome of bids by September 2017. A due diligence test will be made on the organisation to ensure they are financially sound, are sustainable and robust to continue to deliver in partnership with the Council.

If they are successful, the Council through a newly established Project Board, will decide which projects will continue – the two employability programmes which will continue to receive funding will be *Lift* which will be replaced by the new *Employability Grant* from April 2018 and *Communities for Work*, whereas agreement is needed on what are the projects the Council puts forward for Legacy funding, which will also need to support the PSB's priorities.

Any activity outside the core employability grants will need to demonstrate:

- value for money,
- strategic links with the Council's Corporate Plan and PSB's priorities,
- how they add value to target the most vulnerable families and strategic areas on the Island,
- engaging in the ACEs agenda, any projects carried forward will need to have a track record of delivering outcomes,
- working with other programmes to target specific areas for intervention and
- have a range of suitable SMART outcomes, replacing a range of previous 'soft' outcomes.

How different poverty reduction programmes (Communities for Work, Lift, Flying Start etc.) will change as a result of the end of Communities First

The delivery of *Communities for Work* and *Lift* should remain seamless. Experienced staff will continue to operate the programmes. However, there will be a strategic transformation in the way poverty reduction programmes will be targeting resources, which will be guided by a new Programme Board in Anglesey.

Emphasis will continue to target the economically inactive, unemployed and together with other employability programmes on Anglesey, linked to major economic developments such as Wylfa Newydd and the National Grid, will also look at targeting in-work poor, working in partnership with other organisations.

Emphasis of programmes such as *Flying Start* will continue on building confidence, resilience and supporting networks for parents.

Disclaimer: This evidence has not received Elected Member input, and represents Officer views only, due to the timing of the Local Government elections.