

CF 16

Ymchwiliad i dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – yr hyn a ddysgwyd

Inquiry into poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Dinas Caerdydd

Response from: City of Cardiff Council

What worked and didn't work about the Communities First programme;

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

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

1. Background

2. On 14th February Carl Sargeant, Cabinet Secretary of Communities and Children confirmed that Communities First will be phased out and outlined a number of new funding sources to help mitigate this change.
3. The current spend on Communities First nationally is £31.7 million per annum, of which Cardiff received £2.98m per year. For 2017/18 this budget has been reduced by 30%. There are four Communities First areas or "clusters" in Cardiff; each cluster is managed by a third sector organisation. The cluster areas each develop a separate delivery plan which includes a range of projects and activities under the three main themes - Healthier, Learning and Prosperity. Community involvement is also a key feature of the Communities First programme and each cluster has developed its own Community Involvement plan.
4. The City of Cardiff Council is committed to locality working that involves and empowers local people. The Communities First Programme has been an important part of locality working and has been embedded into partnership delivery across the City via our Neighbourhood Partnership mechanisms. Our focus in Cardiff has always been on preventing poverty in the longer term through collaborative interventions in the areas where we have the levers to make a difference.
5. Cardiff produces a detailed review on performance and delivery for Communities First on an annual basis. Detail of the reports can be accessed here: <https://www.cardiffpartnership.co.uk/partnership-delivery/communities-first/annual-reviews/>

6. What worked and didn't work about the Communities First Programme

7. Whilst poverty remains a persistent and challenging problem across Wales, the Communities First programme in Cardiff has achieved some good outcomes through a Council/Third Sector partnership arrangement. Providing a delivery model, with added value that had a focus on community ownership through the local organisations we worked with.

8. Working with the mix of different organisations and funding streams has meant that Communities First delivery has been perceived as complex and also something of a postcode lottery for service access. With four different providers and four different delivery plans consistency in access and service delivery has been an ongoing issue in the City. The delivery model was designed to be anchored locally, and to get 'under the skin' of the community and ensure people were engaged and involved in the projects and activities offered. On the whole this was achieved. Having a physical presence in the heart of the community, with better chances to develop links has proved beneficial to good community engagement, particularly as we were able to co-locate with third sector and statutory services in Cardiff's network of Community Hubs.
9. Overall there has been good engagement of people considered the furthest away or most difficult to reach. Communities First enabled relationships that could be built and nurtured over time. In some cluster areas their work has supported the physical regeneration of local spaces, including supporting the Community Asset Transfer of much valued community buildings.
10. Developing relationships with the local community has been a key resource for other services such as Schools and Adult Community Learning, enabling them to identify need and source suitable learning opportunities, on a term-by-term basis so that the activities offered remained responsive to need.
11. The performance data collected since 2013 also tells us people living in Communities First areas that did engage with the programme reported increased learning opportunities and access to employment support, the figures for job outcomes achieved through Communities First work has been consistently good over the last two years.
12. Improved health outcomes and overall increased community cohesion has also been highlighted. The organisations involved have experience of delivery in extremely diverse communities including long established BME communities, new arrivals, refugees and asylum seekers and Roma Communities and Gypsy Travellers.
13. Building resilient communities has always been a strong focus for Cardiff. There has been a lot of work promoting messages, including those related to health and wellbeing and consultation processes to residents in Communities First areas.
14. What didn't work so well has been the overlap with other programmes and services. This was initially because of the cycles of funding for key programmes such as Flying Start and Families First, with planning at a national and local level at the initial stage not as joined up as they could have been. Locally inroads have been made to address this and we have started to be clear about the specialisms of each of the programmes and develop better pathways between them. We have also decommissioned services or stopped activities identified as duplication.

15. Across Cardiff the services, activities and community involvement projects delivered by Communities First varied by Cluster area and Organisation. This was often an issue for partners and residents to navigate and understand.
16. Communities First has also been very focused on geographical areas rather than on need - Data from various sources including WIMD, Schools and the Families First projects demonstrate that there are families that need support in all areas of Cardiff. Coverage of Gabalfa, Llandaff North and Llanishen, which contain significant areas of deprivation (some are in the top 10-30%) have never had Communities First intervention.
17. Aligned to the phasing out Communities First this year, proposals for a more joined up and cohesive tackling poverty programme will be developed. Whilst learning from the success of the existing programme, the focus going forward should be on achieving a more efficient and joined up service which focuses on participants with the greatest level of need, regardless of their postcode.
- 18. How local authorities will decide which projects continue to receive funding after June 2017:**
19. Cardiff has been working with the Cluster Delivery Teams to review current projects and staffing arrangements since the initial announcement in October 2016. We have taken this opportunity to review the successes of Communities First since 2012 and build on best practice. We will be aligning current and new arrangements for 2017/18 and beyond with the Council's Locality Working approach to ensure a consistent approach across Public and Third Sector.
20. Work is underway to develop a detailed plan for submission to Welsh Government by 31st May on the delivery and subsequent closure of Communities First by 31st March 2018. The exit plan will be developed in partnership with the current delivery organisations.
21. As part of this work we have drawn on the intelligence we have assembled including various data sets on engagement, performance and the quality and quantity of project delivery. This process will involve utilising existing community needs assessment data and the results of the well-being assessment, mapping current services, identifying the gaps and any service duplication. Considerable action is being taken to mitigate any negative impact from the phasing out of the programme but inevitably some elements of the programme will have to cease or be delivered in a different way.
22. Recommendations for project continuation will take into account the need for integration of activity into a "Whole System" approach to tackling poverty. The various funding streams that will enable directly provided and commissioned services going forward need to be completely aligned to avoid duplication and crucially to ensure that individuals are effectively supported through appropriate interventions and are accessible across the city. It is proposed that a gateway approach to service access is developed to reduce complexity and improve effective service matching to individual needs. Proposals for the new ways of

working will be made by the Local Authority and the Cardiff Public Service Board (PSB) following consultation.

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

24. Welsh Government in its new approach to resilient communities has put the emphasis on Employment, Empowerment and Early Years. Earlier identification and intervention will help to prevent disadvantage and discrimination in people's lives. Greater emphasis on employment and employability will support those who face the greatest barriers to work (including those with protected characteristics). The proposed Children Zones for Cardiff will see organisations collaborating to improve the lives of children and young people and, along with Flying Start and Families First, supporting them to get the best possible start in life.

25. Cardiff has already identified the importance of aligning the main anti-poverty programmes and governance arrangements are in place to deliver on this objective. A Tackling Poverty Board (TPB) has been established which brings together programme managers from Supporting People, Communities First, Families First and Flying Start with representation from Public and Primary Health, Police, Fire and Third Sector. The terms of reference of the group set out clearly the ambition to provide a forum to discuss common strategic themes, align work programmes and delivery plans to avoid duplication and to identify any remaining gaps.

26. For Families First and Flying Start going forward there will be opportunities for more cross-programme delivery and joint commissioning. Closer alignment and clearer pathway for individuals across and between programmes will also be developed. To do this, we will be clear about the specialisms and focus of each of the programmes to make sure that we maximise their effectiveness through joint working and better referral pathways.

27. The other important factor is the Councils commitment to locality working through its Neighbourhood Partnership approach. This approach seeks to align and integrate service delivery within local communities through local partnership working. These networks will be utilised in our approach to developing further alignment between programmes and to increase our community involvement mechanisms. Demonstrating a whole system approach ensures the best use of all resources in a local area through joint approaches between communities, public, voluntary and private sectors.

28. For Communities First, Lift and Communities for Work going forward the new funding available through the Employability Grant provides a real opportunity to develop a consistent, comprehensive and community focused employment support service for the city post April 2018, with improved pathways, data collection and information sharing processes in place.

29. Current employment support in the city is complex. While the Council's Into Work Service offers open access services across the city, the provision of more in-depth support and mentoring depends on postcode and has complex qualifying

criteria. There are examples of best practice that work well and whilst there has been a considerable effort to take a joined up approach to help participants find the right services, this still remains a considerable issue. The closure of Communities First provides an opportunity for the development of a “gateway” approach that ensures visibility and alignment of all the opportunities available ensuring a more consistent and coherent offer to the person accessing services.

30. The additional funding available through the Community Facility Grant will allow local authorities and third sector organisations to apply for capital funding to make community buildings more sustainable over the longer term. This is to help address the loss of rental income or financial support that these buildings may receive from Communities First. It will be important to ensure this funding opportunity is linked and adds value to the current Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process in place. Cardiff will work to ensure that best use is made of this fund to make community buildings more sustainable in the long term.