

WELSH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT: SCRUTINY OF THE WELSH GOVERNMENT DRAFT BUDGET 2021-22

MARCH 2021

A TRANSPARENCY OF SPENDING ON CHILDREN (SECTION 3)

Recommendation 1. That our successor Committee in the Sixth Senedd monitor the commitment made in the Welsh Government's response to our Children's Rights Report to refine and amend its Budget Improvement Plan, reflecting its compliance with the 2011 Measure, when publishing its Draft Budget 2022-23

Response: Accept

Following the Welsh Government's response to the 'Children's Rights in Wales' report, we published an updated Budget Improvement Plan on 21 December 2020 as part of the 2021-22 Draft Budget package.

As part of this update, we amended the Plan to reflect how we will continue to improve our assessment of the impacts of spending decisions in future years. This includes further consideration with stakeholders about how information about budget decisions in the context of specific impacts - such as Children's Rights - can be more transparent, in the context of considering impacts through a number of lenses.

Recommendation 2. That the Welsh Government should ensure a transparent process for allocating in-year COVID-19 funding and that the legal duty to give 'due regard' to children and young people's rights is a consideration for all Welsh Government Ministers when deciding on the allocations they are requesting

Response: Accept

Children's rights have been at the heart of decisions taken by the Welsh Government in its response to the pandemic. The Rights of the Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 requires Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC and its optional protocols when exercising any of their functions.

As we progress into 2021-22 we remain committed to being open and transparent about our budget allocations and assessing their impacts, including the duty to give due regard to children's rights, as part of that process.

Recommendation 3. That the Welsh Government , in addition to publishing its Supplementary Budget, should provide regular and detailed updates to the Senedd and relevant committees on the in-year allocations during the financial year 2021-22, in order to ensure robust scrutiny of this significant amount of additional COVID-19 funding

Response: Accept

Despite the exceptional circumstances of this financial year as a result of the pandemic, we have taken significant steps during 2020-21 to increase the transparency of the in-year budget management process.

Unlike the UK Government, we have so far taken the unprecedented step of publishing three in-year Supplementary Budgets to enhance transparency given the unprecedented scale of changes to the Welsh budget. The most recent, the Third Supplementary Budget, was published on 16 February. These have each set out how the funding within reserves, including reprioritisations of existing budgets, has been used to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd has continuously updated the Finance Committee on the consequential funding the Welsh Government has received throughout 2020-21 and the fiscal implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister has also provided regular updates to the Senedd in the chamber.

This approach is underpinned by our commitments to transparency set out in the Budget Improvement Plan, which ensures that the Welsh Government's financial position remains transparent on the finance it has available and the consequential it is receiving. We will continue to take this approach into 2021-22.

Recommendation 4. That all Welsh Government Ministers should continue to take into account children's rights when considering allocations they make within their portfolios. The potential for joint allocations across portfolios should be continuously considered to give further effect to the wide range of children's rights as set out in the UNCRC.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government is committed to the principles of the UNCRC. Children's rights are a fundamental basis for our approach to government policy and underpin our ambition for each and every child in Wales to have the best possible start in life and to fulfil their potential.

The focus of the 2021-22 Draft Budget preparations has been to maintain delivery of the Government's key priorities and ensure alignment between our spending plans

and our recovery programme, building on the cross-government approach which developed our reconstruction priorities.

During budget preparations, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd worked closely with all Ministers to identify their pressures and priorities. While all Main Expenditure Groups (MEGs) received increased funding for priorities identified, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd also made a range of individual specific allocations to particular programmes and priorities, to take a more centralised approach to recognise opportunities for joint allocations across portfolios to support cross-cutting priorities. This includes support for children and young people's mental health as well as funding to tackle poverty.

The approach has therefore been to maximise the impact of available resources to deliver on the Government's values, while recognising that we will need to continue to deal with the impact of the pandemic alongside driving forward longer-term change.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 4)

Recommendation 5. That the Welsh Government should work with consortia, local authorities and schools to continue to develop costed and evidence-based approaches intended to support learners to catch up after the COVID-19 pandemic. This work should inform the Minister's requests for additional funding from the as yet unallocated Welsh Government COVID-19 funding for 2021-22

Response: Accept

Welsh Government is already engaged in regular discussions with regional consortia, Estyn and other stakeholders regarding how schools and settings can be best supported to address the needs of all learners as we work through the pandemic. This work includes evidence review and framing of the challenges facing different learners. The next steps will be to arrange for the direct engagement with and between schools across Wales throughout March via a series of professional 'conversations'. These live virtual events will be facilitated by practitioners for practitioners to share experiences on the provision of learning during the pandemic. The 'conversations' will also provide the platform for the profession to share what is working well for them in meeting learner needs, as well as providing the means for the profession to directly inform national policy approaches and the allocation of resources.

Recommendation 6. That the Welsh Government should fund a review of the efficacy of the different methods of online and blended teaching in order to inform allocations from the Welsh Government’s COVID-19 allocations.

Response: Accept

This forms part of work already being undertaken with ESTYN and through a range of research projects being undertaken by Welsh Higher Education Institutions, as well as being informed by policy insight work underway with the Wales Centre for Public Policy.

Recommendation 7. That the Welsh Government should provide us with further details about the “1052 roles that have been recruited to” using the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards funding. This should include information about:

- **how the total amount spent to date has been used, specifically whether spend has been on new or existing post holders, and**
- **from where the new post-holders were recruited (e.g. has there been a noticeable pattern of retired teachers returning or qualified teachers being attracted back to the profession?).**

Response: Accept

Welsh Government will provide this information from returns being collated from our Local Authority (LA) reporting on progress with the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards – Accelerating Learning Programme. The information we are currently collating, analysing and compiling from LA returns includes data on for example:

- Number of new full time teachers, TAs and other roles;
- Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number from part time appointment for teachers, TAs and other roles; and
- FTE number from increased hours for teachers, TAs and other roles.

The further detail requested, specifically in terms of “from where the new post-holders were recruited” is beyond the scope of what has currently been requested from LA returns. We will however work with our LA partners to discuss the feasibility of collecting these details, taking into account the current operating conditions and circumstances, and work out a timeframe for the return of that data.

The committee may be interested to consider some of the case study examples of how schools have been using the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards funding currently being showcased on the Welsh Government Education channels. We have

recently been highlighting how some schools have been using the £29 million to provide more teaching hours during COVID-19 via our social media channels and Education Wales Facebook page.

There are a number of schools featured, such as Llanidloes High who talk about employing extra physics tutors to support exam year learners with online tutoring. Ysgol Ystalyfera are also featured and talk about how they used their funding to support a well-being team including youth workers and inclusion officers to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils. They show how they have been able to create quality additional provision which has meant that children have been able to receive the support they need during this lockdown.

Recommendation 8. That the Welsh Government should publish transparent and regular data on an on-going basis about spending on the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards funding.

Response: Accept

All funding decisions should be transparent and Welsh Government have published the principles that sit behind the funding, as well as being transparent and open about the funding methodology for allocation of the grant monies. We are also collating (as outlined in response to Recommendation 8) data on progress to achieving the grant purposes.

All funding for the 2020-21 financial year has been allocated to Local Authorities for passport onto schools, and allocations for 2021-22 will be made as soon as possible in the new financial year to meet the commitment to funding the whole of the 2020/21 academic year. It is the responsibility of the Local Authorities to monitor and assure the spend of the grant as the recipients/grant holders.

Recommendation 9. That the Welsh Government should undertake a quick top-line review of spending on the Pupil Development Grant in 2020-21 to assess the extent to which funding has been able to be used in line with the PDG Guidance, given the physical constraints associated with the pandemic. The findings of this review should inform whether any interim changes may be required for the year 2021-22.

Response: Reject

Funding for the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is at the highest level since introduction of the grant, but we recognise the impact that the pandemic is having on

our schools and local authorities and the considerable pressure that has been placed on the workforce during the past twelve months. At this time, we believe the Welsh Government should be flexible in our response and acknowledge that staff in schools will be best placed to allocate funding based on local knowledge and needs. That is why we have increased the flexibility of the grant terms and conditions in 2020-21 to ensure funding is utilised appropriately and effectively throughout the current disruption to education.

This approach will continue for 2021-22, and we are working closely with PDG regional representatives to identify those areas where funding can have most impact in the context of our COVID-19 recovery response. This will include consideration of the future strategic direction of PDG, in the context of the recommendations from the Review of School Spending in Wales report, in particular prioritising additional funding for more deprived schools; and working with local authorities' on ensuring more consistent and transparent school funding formulae.

We do not believe that a review of PDG will be helpful at this stage of the fight against the pandemic. However, we are in regular contact with stakeholders about how the grant is being used. We will make a commitment to review the use of PDG as part of the 2021-22 allocations, and broader considerations in relation to COVID-19 recovery.

We recognise the need to increase support for those who need help and we have allocated additional funding to our demand led budgets, such as PDG-Access, to ensure that support is available. For 2021-22 Welsh Government is continuing to provide increased support for PDG-Access, bringing total funding to over £10m. This additional funding will allow us to support more families affected by the pandemic and extend to further year groups. The terms and conditions of the grant have also been extended to allow for the purchase of IT equipment, to support blended/remote learning. The increased funding for PDG-Access brings the PDG BEL to over £113m for 2021-22, delivering on our commitment to expand the PDG.

Recommendation 10. That the Welsh Government should ensure it is using all sources of available information to inform its exact allocations to support curriculum reform in order to establish the true cost for 2021-22 and going forward.

Response: Accept

We published our [Curriculum for Wales: Implementation Plan](#) in January setting out our approach to evaluation of the new curriculum. That approach is driven by three principles, one of which is to ensure multiple types and sources of evidence from across the education landscape (and from multiple perspectives) are combined to

provide a balanced and inclusive picture. Our evaluability assessment is the first phase of this approach; the invitation to tender for this was published in January.

The evaluability assessment will run throughout 2021-22 and includes work to understand the distance that each tier of the system needs to travel, the support that schools need, and how Welsh Government and the middle tier can provide that support. It also involves a data and evidence audit to understand what information we have, and will need, to evaluate success. The output of this work will further inform funding decisions, which continue to be mapped by officials to record the direct costs of curriculum reform.

Recommendation 11. That, by the end of this Fifth Senedd, the Welsh Government should set out its desired approach to take forward the recommendations of our report on school funding and the findings of the Sibieta review. This would then provide a platform for the next government to act swiftly.

Response: Accept

The Committee's report and the subsequent school spending review have certainly highlighted the complexity of the funding system and that work is needed to make this system not only more efficient but also more transparent. The review also recognises the benefits to such complexity; and the autonomy and independence of local authorities and schools is reported as a strength of the current system, allowing focused spending to meet local needs and provide the best outcomes.

The Welsh Government will provide an update on its response to the recommendations before the end of the Senedd term.

Recommendation 12. That the Welsh Government provide us with further detail on the nature of the £7 million contingency moved into FE and 6th form provision, including information on how many financial years it has been held, if it has been used in the recent past and for what purpose, and if it has not been used, given the cost-pressures in post-16 education, the reasons for not using it.

Response: Accept

As a demand led expenditure, a contingency is built into Higher Education (HE) student support each year. Until students enter HE and claim support, it can only be forecast in advance, based on expected student numbers and behaviours. With

student numbers variable from year to year, the forecast budget requirement needs to have some contingency built in to ensure there is sufficient budget in place, should the forecast model materialise as an underestimate. The size of the contingency varies from year to year, based on the number of students expected and any uncertainties, for example a new policy being implemented would lead to more uncertainty for historical trends to be used for future years. The contingency level is reviewed throughout the year as the data comes through from the Student Loans Company (SLC), providing a more accurate financial year forecast as the academic year progresses. SLC data is only recommended as robust enough to review forecasts from November/December, so only from the New Year can contingencies be finalised and realised if necessary.

This £7m represents a contingency of 1.4% of the total budget for the Post-16 learner support Action for 2021-22.

Recommendation 13. That the Welsh Government provide us with details of the driver, scale and nature of the demographic change expected over the next financial year which has led to the increased allocation of £27.1 million in the Draft Budget 2021-22, and details of what proportion of the funding increase is for this demographic change, and what proportion is to increase the level of funding per learner.

Response: Accept

In the previous funding methodology (at the request of Colegau Cymru in order to maintain stability within colleges), demographic change was taken out of the formula. Since then the Wales Audit Office (WAO) has undertaken a review of the Government's oversight of Further Education (FE) and recommended that we should 'develop a mechanism that links funding more closely to likely demand for further education in each area, while recognising the need to phase in significant changes in order to manage the financial impact on individual colleges.'

In order to address this, we have moved towards a methodology that:

- funds on a predicted number of full time learners at each FE Institution;
- is broadly similar to the methodology already used for Local Authority Sixth Form allocations – to give parity between the two sectors;
- takes account of changing demographics in the 16-19^[1] cohort on an annual basis; and

^[1] The prime statutory obligation is to the 16-18 cohort. Traditionally, Ministers have extended this to nineteen year old learners to take account of those who drop out from sixth forms after one year.

- uses a three year rolling average in predicted numbers to provide some stability and avoid large spikes or dips in funding year on year.

This approach implements the WAO recommendation and benefits those colleges experiencing an increase in their 16-19 demand at the expense of those who are experiencing a downturn in their demographic.

In calculating demographic growth the other element to consider is the average programme value. The average programme value is calculated using evidence of each institutions average activity mix and can also go up and down dependant on the mixture of activity delivered, with total demographic change being the sum of predicted learners multiplied by average programme value.

Of the £27m allocated, around £7m was used to account for demographic growth in the previous academic year (with the third term of 2020/21 academic year being funded from the 2021-22 financial year budget). The remainder is accounted for by changes to the demographic calculation as above.

In line with the 3.8% increase allowed for Local Authorities, we have similarly increased funding (on a like for like basis) to colleges and sixth forms by 3.8%.

Recommendation 14. That the Welsh Government provide us with further detail about the recent announcement of £40 million for higher education to provide for students who are in hardship, including the intended timeframe and the detail of its intended purpose.

Response: Accept

The funding has been made available to HEFCW to distribute to universities, who will in turn prioritise support for students most in need, as well as strengthening advice and support services for students. The funding is intended to mitigate student hardship and issues relating to wellbeing which has arisen as a result of the pandemic. As highlighted in the updated remit letter issued to HEFCW in January, the funding was allocated on the basis that it would be used for the following purposes as follows:

- addressing material hardship for students arising from the pandemic (at least 80% of the £40m); and
- provision of advice and support services to students (no more than 20% of the £40m).

With most students currently being asked to study at home, the funding will also be used to address issues such as 'digital poverty' among students, to enable better

access to online learning, costs incurred due to the need to self-isolate, and living costs, including accommodation.

The funding is in addition to over £40 million the Welsh Government has provided to help universities this financial year, which has included £10m towards student hardship, mental health support and student unions.

It is expected that universities will make a reasonable assessment of hardship prior to distributing funds. HEFCW has made clear the expectation that institutions will allocate this funding to students this academic year, and without undue delay. Institutions will be expected to report to HEFCW on a monthly basis on how the funding has been deployed. HEFCW will report to the Welsh Government by summer on the impact of the funding and also intends to publish a case study document at this time.

Recommendation 15. That our successor committee in the Sixth Senedd keep a watching brief on allocations to support students' mental health during the next financial year, when higher and further education funding is distributed to institutions.

Response: Accept

We are mindful that the impact of the pandemic on students' health and wellbeing will need to be monitored in the longer term and would expect to continue liaising with HEFCW and HE and FE institutions to ensure that appropriate actions are being taken to address this. Whilst HEFCW has been asked to report to the Welsh Government by the end of March 2021 on the deployment of additional funding for mental health and wellbeing, we will expect to continue to work with institutions to assess the impact of interventions as part of their wider work to address these important issues.

We allocated £2m to support mental health and wellbeing initiatives in the FE sector for the 2020-21 financial year to support a whole system approach to mental health, and build capacity to support well-being throughout the whole learner journey.

The funding was allocated to provide high quality mental health training for staff and for further education institutions to develop their mental health and wellbeing strategies. It aims to build on previous projects and to help establish a cohesive approach to mental health provision across the sector. The funding is being used to support National, Collaborative and Institutional projects.

There are currently two National projects being developed. The first includes the development of practical resources to support colleges in identifying and addressing substance misuse, aligned to the Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Delivery

Plan. The second project aims to create an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) informed FE sector in Wales by developing ACEs knowledge and skills to support institutes in adopting a whole-institute approach to wellbeing, building resilience and embedding an ACE-/Trauma informed practice.

There are thirteen institutional projects being undertaken by FE colleges in Wales. These projects build upon the skills and resources in individual colleges to support staff and learner mental health and wellbeing. The projects centre on creating a wellbeing strategy and to support this, initiating wellbeing posts and upskilling staff in mental health and resilience training.

The Collaborative strand has enabled colleges to come together to share best practice and develop new strategies to manage staff and learner mental health issues.

Collaborative projects include providing training for practitioners in mental health provisions to build resilient communities, research into trauma informed practice to develop an early identification tool and to employ pastoral coaches and an out of college counselling service.

A further £2m has been approved for 2021-22 which will help maintain partnerships, encourage further collaboration and embed well-being support services into all sectors for both learners and practitioners.

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN (Section 5)

Recommendation 16. That our successor Committee should monitor published health statistics that can demonstrate the extent of the Welsh Government's success in addressing the health needs of children in deprived areas

Response: Accept

Both Public Health Wales and Welsh Government publish statistical data that can be used to demonstrate progress against improving health outcomes for children in deprived areas. Examples are below:

- Welsh Government publishes a child poverty strategy report every 3 years. The last one was published in 2019 and the next one is 2022. <https://gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-2019-progress-report>
- In 2018, Well-being of Wales had a focus on children. Although there are no plans to repeat this currently, some of the data within it is updated fairly regularly. <https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-2018>

- In the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) there is [indicator data by deprivation decile](#), some of which relate to child health e.g. low birth weight and obesity.
- The Public Health Wales Observatory page on equalities also provides a range of data that provides insight into children in deprived areas: <http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/inequalities-and-inequities>

Data published on a more regular basis includes information in relation to the Healthy Child Wales Programme and also Flying Start, which shows the take up of services in Flying Start areas (which were defined originally using WIMD).

Welsh Government officials regularly check the available data to understand the impact that policies are having in terms of improvements to child health outcomes, particularly in deprived areas. For example, Healthy Child Wales data is scrutinised by the policy team who will then engage with the Programme Board and health boards to understand compliance with the required contacts under the Programme.

Recommendation 17. That the Welsh Government should ensure that children and young people’s routine health needs are considered alongside those of adults. It must make a commitment to ensuring they get their fair share of funding when the Minister announces his spending plans to address the backlogs in routine healthcare in April 2022. A CRIA should be published alongside this plan.

Response: Accept

General paediatric budgets are delegated to health boards to assess need, commission and provide services to meet this assessed needs within the clinical requirements and national targets. Within the national programme budgets there are just two separate paediatric expenditure lines, CAMHs and neonatal services, all other budgets are under larger more general budget lines.

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Health-Finance/NHS-Programme-Budget/nhsexpenditure-by-budgetcategory-year>

While specialist paediatric services can be monitored and costed via WSHCCs, through their individual contracts there remains a significant amount of routine activity that is covered locally at each health board in both primary and secondary care services.

The link below sets out medical and dental workforce stats by certain paediatric specific services, Cardiac, Dentistry, surgery and paediatrics (general):

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Medical-and-Dental-Staff/hospitalmedicalanddentalstaff-by-grade-year>

There are dedicated health care staff across each HB specific to paediatrics covering specific paediatric services. These are also supported by other specialities such as ENT, dermatology and others that undertaken paediatric provision as part of their whole service. This mixed model of service provision does not allow for clear individual lines of expenditure just related to paediatric services at a national level.

Health boards will have local budgets for their paediatric specific service units which will form part of their overall budget but this is not available in a separate line in the national programme budget line.

For planned care and unscheduled care services, national performance is not currently broken down by age as access is based on clinical need against the same access targets.

To support evidence of fairness of recovery officials will look to break down waiting lists and activity data by under and over 18years to track that recovery against risk stratification is equitable.

A specific paediatric focus group has been established to discuss the needs of the service to support the redesign of planned care services going forward. This is only in its early stage and the scope and nature of the work and timelines are still to be confirmed. The work of this group will also be feed into the national planned care recovery plan to ensure needs for paediatric recovery are equally assessed and forms part of the national solutions.

Paediatric specialised services

WHSSC is responsible for the joint planning and commissioning of Specialised and Tertiary Services on behalf of local health boards in Wales. Specialised services are commissioned from providers that have the appropriate experience and expertise; are able to provide a robust, high quality and sustainable service; are safe for patients; are cost effective for NHS Wales and set equitable access to services for Welsh patients. Service specifications are in place to clearly define what WHSSC expects providers to offer. In relation to paediatric services, WHSSC commissions services in relation to:

- Neonatal Intensive Care and high dependency services
- Paediatric intensive care and retrieval
- Paediatric nephrology, including renal replacement
- Paediatric gastroenterology/hepatology/nutritional support
- Paediatric oncology

- Paediatric haematology
- Paediatric immunology
- Paediatric endocrinology
- Paediatric rheumatology
- Paediatric Cardiology
- Paediatric specialised dermatology
- Paediatric surgery
- Paediatric burns & plastic surgery
- Inherited Metabolic Diseases (IMD) Service (Adult and Paediatric)
- Women's Health, Children and Young people's
- Fetal medicine
- Cochlear Implants
- Cleft Lip & Palate
- Neonatal Transport
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The total sum of paediatric service contracts let to suppliers in Wales (i.e. health boards) is £35,536,000. The total sum of paediatric service contracts let to suppliers in England (NHS England Trusts) is £30,969,000. A total of £28,102,000 is paid to suppliers of neonatal services in Wales.

Officials meet with WHSSC on a regular basis to ensure that any issues identified are swiftly addressed.

Mental Health funding

Officials already report regularly to the CYPE committee on the proportion of mental health funding which is expressly targeted on children and young people and also report (albeit sometimes estimated) proportions for children and young people within our other funding areas e.g. MH Service Improvement Funding, Integrated Care Funding. This information will continue to be available to the CYPE Committee.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-04/nhs-expenditure-programme-budgets-april-2018-march-2019-371.pdf>

Information is provided on StatsWales which distinguishes between LHB primary and secondary care CAMHS:

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Health-Finance/NHS-Programme-Budget/nhsexpenditure-by-budgetcategory-year>

CRIA

Examples of three CRIAs which have already been produced are provided below. Further CRIAs will be produced as the health service moves towards recovery from COVID-19.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-01/cria-nhs-wales-annual-planning-framework-2021-2022.pdf>

<https://gov.wales/together-mental-health-delivery-plan-2019-2022-childrens-rights-impact-assessment>

<https://gov.wales/childrens-rights-impact-assessment-regulations-governing-school-premises-closures>

Recommendation 18. That the Welsh Government should provide us with a detailed update on the extent to which the Healthy Child Wales programme has achieved its universal screening contacts on a face-to-face basis across Wales between April and December 2020. If and where these contacts have not been delivered, the Welsh Government should set out its plans to do so alongside any financial allocations required.

Response: Accept

The coronavirus pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to children, families and the services that support them. The health and well-being of children especially during this pandemic have remained at the core of policy ensuring that they are seen, safe and heard. The Health Visiting service provides important early intervention and prevention support services.

A range of key contacts have been maintained as part of the Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP) to ensure all families are supported over this period. The 10-14 day, the primary care physical examination at 6 weeks and 6 month contacts have remained essential and continue to be offered to all families either as a home visit, in a hub setting or by telephone. Whether a home contact is required is determined using professional judgement according to information available on family circumstances.

In addition, the full range of HCWP contacts have been offered to all families identified with safeguarding or enhanced/intensive needs. We expect each health board to risk assess all caseloads to identify vulnerable and at risk families. Any family who has concerns about their child is able to contact their health visitor for advice.

Welsh Government has produced Guidance for Flying Start and Generic Health Visitors to provide clarity on the services which remain essential as part of the HCWP. There is no doubt that the pandemic continues to have a very significant impact on the ability of health boards to offer the full range of services and it is therefore appropriate to ensure our guidance is regularly reviewed and updated where necessary. The guidance outlines the minimum provision for the HCWP contacts and models of service delivery.

We have written to health boards to outline that as the situation continues to evolve, they may find they are able to reinstate additional contacts above and beyond the minimum requirements as set out in the guidance and start to move back towards the usual full range of contacts provided by the HCWP. In this case, we expect health boards to plan workforce requirements accordingly.

Statistics in relation to the Healthy Child Wales Programme are published on a quarterly basis, but this schedule has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The next batch of data, for the two quarters Apr-Jun 2020 and Jul-Sep 2020, were published in February.

Recommendation 19. That the Welsh Government provide us with detailed information about the evaluation process for the whole school approach and the CAMHS in-reach project including timescales

Response: Accept

Whole School Approach Evaluation (WSA)

Welsh Government has contracted Cardiff University to undertake an evaluability assessment for the WSA. The aim of this research is to develop a working theory of change for the whole-school approach to mental health and to provide recommendations for an evaluation framework to be used for future research by academic and other partners. The key research questions are:

- What aspects of the existing school system will be/need to be altered as a result of the introduction of the whole-school approach to mental health?
- Where is a whole-school approach to mental health situated in the evolutionary flowchart of the overall intervention programme and related policy programmes, such as ‘Shared Purpose: Shared Future’?
- What other existing and planned programmes are relevant to the whole-school approach to mental health, and how will they be impacted by the new model?
- What variation of the hypothesised impacts of the whole-school approach to mental health is likely across settings and populations and what is the role of context in these variations?
- What actors and relationships are most significant for successfully delivering the whole-school approach to mental health?

The following research questions will underpin the evaluability assessment, in line with the aims of the service specification:

- How will an evaluation of this programme affect policy decisions and how can evaluation utility be maximised?
- What level of programme evaluation is practicable and desirable in the time available?

- What are the key measures for understanding programme implementation?
- What are the key measures for understanding programme outcomes, including both positive and negative unintended outcomes?
- Are proposed measures sensitive enough to inform understanding of unique events (i.e. COVID-19) as well everyday practice?
- What are the key measures for understanding sustainability of programme delivery?
- What measures of whole-population effects and variable effects across population sub-groups are already available and what else needs to be measured?

The proposed steps are:

- Document analysis of key policy and practice documents from the past five years to identify embedded assumptions of programme change mechanisms and to develop a working theory of change for exploration. This analysis will also aim to identify: changes in understanding and terminology used to discuss mental health; existing data and outcome measures used; and data sources for the development of new outcome measures for the whole-school approach to mental health.
- Rapid overview of reviews of whole-school interventions for mental health from the last five years, drawing on a realist overview of reviews approach, which focuses on identification of programme theory through mechanism-outcome associations. As with step 1, this review will also aim to identify changes in understanding and terminology used to discuss mental health, in order to identify existing outcomes and data sources for the development of outcome measures for the whole-school approach to mental health.
- The Client has convened a working group of key stakeholders with insights into the problem, the programme, the setting and the wider policy context. This group will operate as a study steering committee and will offer insights throughout the research process. A wider stakeholder pool will also be recruited for six additional focus groups.
- Develop a systems map illustrating the current school system in relation to mental health and refine the theory of change for the whole-school approach to mental health based on stakeholder feedback.
- Identify process and outcome measures based on the theorised change mechanisms, for use in evaluation of the whole-school approach to mental health. This will include identification of existing data sources and additional data collection requirements.
- Develop and appraise evaluation measures and data sources in consultation with a sub-sample of relevant stakeholders.
- Finalise the theory of change, proposed evaluation measures and report on findings

The work commenced in late 2020 with the final report due by the end of August 2021. The on-going situation with schools closures has impacted the timescale, in particular the required fieldwork and interviews with school and other staff. Most of the evidence collection has been completed, however it has not been possible to involve children and young people in the research and it is aimed to do this when schools re-open.

CAMHS school in-reach programme

Initially conceived as a two-year pilot programme the CAMHS school in-reach programme was established in 2018. Originally planned to run until the summer of 2020, in 2019 the pilot programme was first extended to coincide with the final evaluation (originally due to conclude in December 2020) and then extended again to July 2021, given the impact of COVID-19. In addition, the funding available for the pilot programme was increased in 2019-20 and maintained in 2020-21, taking the total investment in the pilots (excluding evaluation) to just under £1m. In advance of the final programme evaluation (due in March 2021) we have made available an additional £4m in the 2021-22 budget to meet the evaluation recommendations and roll-out the programme on an all-Wales basis.

Coinciding with the establishment of the pilots, People and Work were contracted to undertake an independent evaluation to understand how the CAMHS In-Reach pilot programme is working, whether the objectives of the pilot programme are being met and how the pilot programme is understood by stakeholders across the pilot regions. The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess and evaluate the confidence and skills of teachers and schools in responding to emotional and mental health concerns of pupils, including early recognition and support;
- Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the pilots in responding to pupils with more serious issues and facilitating access to specialist support;
- Review the process of implementing the pilots and whether the activity has been delivered effectively;
- Examine how each of the pilot areas is supporting pre-critical point referrals to CAMHS;
- Identify good practice and support the work of multi-agency/co-working;
- Provide recommendations for future multi-agency working, good practice, research and policy and whether further evaluations are required to inform Welsh Government (WG) and Local Health Board (LHB) and Local Authority (LA) decisions on the potential of a future roll-out of the CAMHS In-Reach to Schools pilot programme.

The impact of COVID-19 has affected the evaluation. The planned midline survey of education staff was abandoned, and the second round of qualitative research with schools and services, could only be partially completed (WG, 2020b). COVID-19 has also radically changed the context for the pilot programme, in terms of needs, the feasibility of operations (such as the move to deliver online) and policy responses (with significant additional investment and activity in this area). Understanding its impact upon the pilots and schools will be an essential part of the evaluation. This will include exploring how it has changed schools' needs and the impact of the pilot programme upon schools' resilience (their ability cope with the impact of COVID-19 upon staff and students).

A theory-based approach to evaluation, focused upon testing the CAMHS In-Reach to Schools pilot programme's logic model is being used. In order to generate data to test the logic model and establish if, for example, activities and outputs are delivered and outcomes generated as expected, a mixed methods approach has been deployed, including:

- Desk-based research;
- A baseline survey of school staff;
- Qualitative case-study research; and
- Engagement as a critical friend to the national pilot programme team and the pilot programme team in each area.

One further round of qualitative research (comprising visits to schools and interviews with services) and an end line survey are planned for the spring term of 2021. The timing needs to balance the risks of further national or local lockdowns and closures of schools, with the risk that if fieldwork is conducted too early, it is conducted during an atypical period of transition where, for example, schools and services and the pilot programme are readjusting to new ways of working and may be less motivated and able to engage. The fieldwork for the final evaluation is underway and has been affected by the lockdown and closure of schools, which is expected to impact on the final report.

The remaining fieldwork is structured in two broad phases. The first would focus upon work with the pilots in the autumn term as they establish their ways of working and plan for the remainder of the pilot programme. Communication has been agreed and co-ordinated with the programme national Co-coordinator and the work would focus upon:

- Evaluating schools' engagement with the pilot programme;
- Exploring how the pilot programme's work fits within regional training 'ecosystems';
- Comparative evaluation of training and professional learning; and

- Comparative evaluation of the advice and consultancy models and case analysis.

The second phase would focus upon the end line survey of school staff and qualitative research with schools and services, in the spring term of 2021. This would provide time for the pilot programme to establish itself and for schools and services to adjust to the challenges posed by COVID-19 and for them and the pilot programme to have establish new ways of working in a COVID world. It would also provide time to arrange changes to existing permissions from LHB Research and Development offices to extend and change the focus of the evaluation. The second phase would include:

- Evaluating access to specialist support and pre-critical point referrals to CAMHS;
- The end line survey of school staff; and
- Research to understand the extent to which pilot areas are delivering the programme Objectives in the context of COVID-19, though, for example an extension of qualitative research with schools and services.

Interdependencies and increasing connections

Recognising that there is cross over between the two evaluation Welsh Government has encouraged People and Work and Cardiff University to collaborate, where possible, in order to reduce the research burden on local authorities, schools and health authorities; make best use of findings to inform a range of policies; and ensure appropriate data sharing agreements are in place.

Recommendation 20. That the Welsh Government provide as soon as possible further information about the next steps for Tier 4 provision, including accommodation for children and young people with the most complex needs. This information should include details of all necessary funding

Response: Accept

We have prioritised this additional £5.4m CAMHS investment and the additional funding will be directed towards bolstering the NHS CAMHS services plans against Tier 4 (specialist, including inpatient care) and Community Intensive Teams. Strengthening support in community mental health teams to provide more intensive support will be key. The aim must be to reduce the need for inpatient admissions and to provide step down care for those leaving in patient provision.

Planning for the exact nature of this expenditure is well underway and will be informed by the National Collaborative Commissioning Unit's review of our two NHS Tier 4 units. Final funding decisions will also be shaped by feedback from the NHS CAMHS bed

management panel and the review of age appropriate beds within LHBs. All of this is designed to confirm what provision is needed within communities and in Tier 4 and in the best interests of the children and young people.

Regional Partnership Boards have provided expressions of interest to Welsh Government for the use of Integrated Care Funding to support accommodation solutions for children and young people with the most complex need. Every RPB has submitted a proposal, which are currently undergoing assessment by Welsh Government.

Recommendation 21. That the Welsh Government provide us with further detail of how it is satisfying itself that its expectation that Health Board perinatal services meet standards set by the Royal College of Psychiatrists is being met: and how it is assuring itself that adequate funding is being allocated by health boards in this regard.

Response: Accept

Health boards have been directed to use the Mental Health Service Improvement Funding (SIF) to support perinatal services (as a Mental Health Delivery Plan priority) and must evidence if they are meeting the Royal College Standards as part of this process. Perinatal mental health services will remain a priority area as we recognise additional funding is required in this area to enable LHBs to adhere to the Royal College of Psychiatrists community standards. Officials monitor this through the assessment of SIF plans and through six monthly updates to Welsh Government. Progress against the standards will also be assessed through a formal accreditation process.

The impact of this funding will be monitored through the agreed arrangements for the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022. Further detail will be incorporated into the next full update to the CYPE committee, in March, in response to the Perinatal Mental Health Committee Inquiry recommendations.

Recommendation 22. That the Welsh Government announce its intentions in relation to specialist perinatal mental health provision in North Wales (including funding arrangement) as a matter of urgency. This should include details about community provision as well as a mother and baby unit. It should also include details about how it intends to deliver Welsh language perinatal mental health provision

Response: Accept

We remain committed to developing further specialist perinatal mental health provision for North Wales. The Welsh language needs of women and families in Wales has been highlighted as a priority and we have been clear that consideration must be given in how this need will be met in all aspects of service delivery and staffing. Further detail will be incorporated into the next full update to the Committee in response to the Perinatal Mental Health Committee Inquiry recommendations.

Recommendation 23. That the Welsh Government should provide us with further details of the £8million for children’s social services that was referred to in the Deputy Minister’s evidence

Response: Accept

Throughout the pandemic, local authorities have reported that placements have remained stable and they have worked hard to keep children and young people with their families. Where placement moves have been necessary, local authorities have put arrangements in place efficiently and effectively. This is very much to the credit of local authorities and their dedicated workforce. They are working hard and tirelessly to look after the children and families in their care.

We understand the difficulties placed on children’s services from the pandemic. Where there has been additional financial pressure, for example where placements have been extended during the pandemic or where placements have broken down and residential care is provided as an alternative, local authorities have been able to claim for these additional cost from the local government hardship fund. To date, from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund, we have provided £8m for children’s social services, details of which are provided in the table below:

	Children’s Social Services	
Blaenau Gwent	£	94,322
Bridgend	£	47,032
Caerphilly	£	244,876
Cardiff	£	2,589,885
Carmarthenshire	£	209,584
Ceredigion	£	118,236
Conwy	£	260,568
Denbighshire	£	1,404

Flintshire	£	111,607
Gwynedd	£	154,875
Isle of Anglesey	£	68,081
Merthyr Tydfil	£	85,906

Recommendation 24. That the Welsh Government should continue to monitor children’s safeguarding referrals on a weekly basis and respond swiftly where there are any concerns that there may be under reporting of cases.

Response: Accept

Throughout the pandemic, regular engagement has continued with the Chairs and Business Managers of the Safeguarding Boards and the Heads of Children’s Services in Wales. This has proven to provide a valuable opportunity to identify and explore any fluctuations in children’s safeguarding referrals and this engagement will continue for the foreseeable future. In addition, local authorities have provided weekly data in the Social Services Checkpoint Reports. This includes weekly assessments of the number of safeguarding contacts received for all children in Wales. This data has consistently proven to be of great value in monitoring the position on children’s safeguarding referrals and it is intended that this data will continue to be captured throughout the pandemic. This data is also shared with the National Independent Safeguarding Board and ongoing discussions between Welsh Government and both the National Independent Safeguarding Board and Regional Safeguarding Boards regarding children’s safeguarding referrals will continue.

Recommendation 25. That the Welsh Government should, as soon as practicable, publish costed proposals on how it intends to extend the Childcare Offer to parents in Education and training.

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Government has committed to exploring the implications of expanding the Childcare Offer to parents in education and training or on the cusp of work. A review of the funding support currently available to these parents has been undertaken and the findings of this independent review are expected to be published during March 2021.

Informed by the independent review’s findings, the Welsh Ministers will consider all options for maximising support with childcare costs for families on the cusp of work or in education and training. This will include consideration of the feasibility and benefits of extending the Childcare Offer but will also consider whether greater

benefits can be achieved through changes to existing support schemes for these parents.

Recommendation 26. That the Welsh Government should provide us with a detailed note on the Children and Communities Grant as it applies to children and young people. It should set out:

What has been monitored since the grant was created in terms of outcomes for children and at what intervals;

A narrative about how this grant has delivered value for money to date;

An explanation of how the Welsh Government has monitored the benefits of providing an un-hypothecated grant in terms of the flexibility it was intended to provide to local authorities;

Details of any changes the Welsh Government has required any individual local authority to make as a result of its ongoing monitoring of the grant's allocation;

Details of the new 'cross-government outcomes framework' which has been developed.

Response: Accept

- **What has been monitored since the grant was created in terms of outcomes for children and at what intervals;**

The Welsh Government is committed to offering local authorities a flexible funding approach for the Children and Communities Grant (CCG), which enables local authorities to make decisions on how to use their grant funding to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people at a local level in their area.

The Welsh Government has effective finance and governance arrangements in place to monitor spend and delivery of services for the CCG, which includes each local authority providing a progress update 3 times per year, which is assessed against the commitments set out in their annual Delivery Plans. The progress reports are assessed by the relevant teams within Welsh Government including Flying Start and Families First policy officials. This ensures services delivered to children and young people continue in line with national programme guidance.

In addition to the progress reports, data is collated by Welsh Government for some of the individual programmes within the CCG, for example, the collection of pre-existing Families First and Flying Start monitoring data has continued alongside

CCG monitoring processes. These data are submitted termly for Flying Start, and twice yearly for Families First, and are used by the Welsh Government to ensure that the programmes are continuing to deliver services in line with national programme guidance.

Work to improve the Flying Start data collection and deposit data into SAIL (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage)¹ for evaluation is also continuing, although this was paused until February 2021 as a result of the Welsh Government and local authority response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, it will resume on 23 February 2021 with the publication of a research paper examining the relationships between Flying Start attendance and education outcomes.

The funding provided via CCG has, through the Childcare and Play element of the grant, enabled local authorities to support the establishment and sustainability of quality childcare and staffed play work provision. Childcare provision is vital in supporting parents' ability to work or train but it also provides essential support in the earliest years of a child's life and supports their ongoing cognitive, emotional and social development. Staffed play provision such as out of school clubs or holiday play schemes also supports the well-being of school age children as well as enabling parents to work or train.

The Welsh Government has been developing an Outcomes Framework in conjunction with local authorities, which will report outcomes across the CCG, including children and young people. Work to further develop the outcomes framework is currently paused as a result of the Welsh Government and local authority response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. We will restart this work in spring with local authorities if the pressures of dealing with the pandemic have eased by then.

- **A narrative about how this grant has delivered value for money to date;**

The draft budget allocation for the CCG is £138.942m which is subject to final budget ratification through the Senedd.

Each year, the local authorities set out how they intend to achieve efficiencies through joint commissioning and achieve administrative savings in their annual CCG

¹ Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) is a databank at Swansea University which is used to link and analyse anonymised data. This process enables the Welsh Government to understand more about the relationship between different areas of public service delivery and gain a better understanding of people's experience as they move through different services.

Delivery Plans. Authorities are required to report on this aspect of their Delivery Plans twice per year, which is monitored by Welsh Government.

The flexibility provided to local authorities by the CCG has promoted greater alignment of service delivery between the complementary services provided by local authorities. This has enabled local authorities to jointly commission services across CCG programmes in order to benefit from economies of scale and minimise duplication, allowing for greater efficiencies and value for money.

As an example of how local authorities have achieved savings, some reported they have restructured resources and combined management roles/functions, which resulted in being able to offer a better integrated service via community hubs which has been welcomed by the service users.

- **An explanation of how the Welsh Government has monitored the benefits of providing an un-hypothecated grant in terms of the flexibility it was intended to provide to local authorities and details of any changes the Welsh Government has required any individual local authority to make as a result of its ongoing monitoring of the grant's allocation;**

As part of the monitoring process local authorities are asked to provide details on expenditure by programme area for information purposes. At the end of the financial year the Welsh Government are able to identify how local authorities have directed their CCG funding to each of the 7 programmes and utilised the flexibility of the grant. For the 2019-20 financial year, the amount invested in children and young people through the Flying Start and Families First programmes combined was on par with the historical budget allocations allocated to those programmes prior to the introduction of the CCG.

In December 2019, the Welsh Government published its final evaluation report on Flexible Funding <https://gov.wales/evaluation-flexible-funding-programme-final-report>.

Some of the key findings included evidence that some local authorities were making changes at a strategic level and were aligning services better, aiming to improve their early intervention and prevention services.

Throughout the past year, the Welsh Government has continued to gather feedback from local authorities on how flexible funding is being applied via its grant management processes. Local authorities have reported that the Flexible Funding approach has enabled them to allocate funds to the programmes which sit within both grants to meet the needs of citizens at local level. A number of local authorities reported using this flexible funding approach to bring together services under certain programmes, such as Flying Start and Families First, into one 'Family Support Model'. Examples include the provision of parenting support across the whole local

authority area, and expanding the type of support available under Flying Start to include access to other health specialists.

- **Details of the new ‘cross-government outcomes framework’ which has been developed.**

See above.