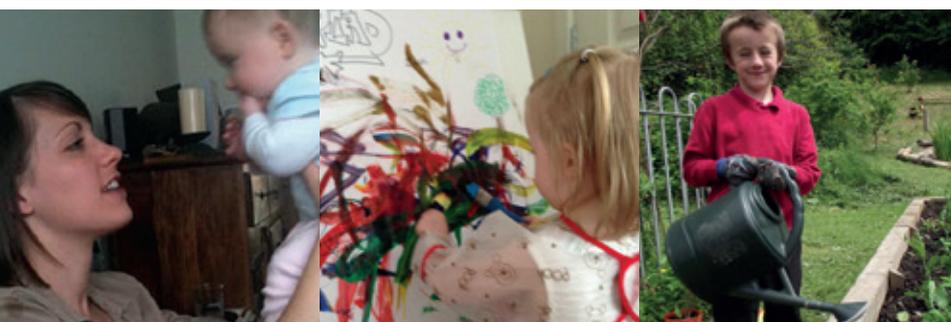




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan



Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan

Audience	This plan is aimed at everyone who leads, commissions and delivers services for children and families from pregnancy up to age seven (the end of the Foundation Phase) in Wales. This includes midwives, health visitors, school nurses, childcare workers, play workers, teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, doctors, dentists, regional consortia, local authorities, local health boards (LHBs) and health trusts through to government and national partners.
Overview	This document defines what the Welsh Government means by the early years and sets out the Welsh Government's vision for the services and system that supports them. It builds on previous strategies such as the <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services</i> (2005) and <i>Nurturing Children, Supporting Families</i> , Welsh Government Policy Statement (2011). It brings together priorities, policies and programmes that impact on or influence children and their families in the early years and sets out plans for improvement from across the following Welsh Government Departments: Education and Skills; Communities and Tackling Poverty; Health and Social Services; Economy, Science and Transport; Housing and Regeneration; Local Government and Government Business; and Finance. The plan identifies the roles of partners in the improvement process and is underpinned by our commitment to children's rights.
Action required	None – for information only.
Further Information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Early Years Team Department for Education and Skills and Department for Communities and Tackling Poverty Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.learning.wales.gov.uk/resources or www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

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Ministerial foreword

Our ambition is for all children in Wales to have a bright future. Our vision is to create a Wales of the future which is a fairer society and where every person is able to make the most of their abilities and contribute positively to the community that they live in. We do not want any of our children to be disadvantaged by poverty and inequality.

We want all of our children to have a flying start in life; be well-educated; enjoy the best possible health; live in a decent home; have access to an enriched environment including play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; be listened to, treated with respect and feel safe.

Families and parents/carers are best-placed to raise their children. All families are different and their needs change over time. Our commitment is to help families, and particularly parents/carers, to be the best they can for their children; and if they need support, that it is timely, integrated, relevant to their needs and delivered in a way that respects the culture and language of the home.

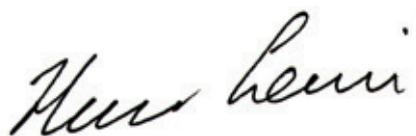
The aim is for parents/carers, and all those that help to care for young children, to be well-informed and have the right level of skill to help all our children stay healthy, develop well and fulfil their potential. Support in the early years is important to children's language development in both English and Welsh, whatever the first language is within the home. We want our children to arrive at school ready and able to learn, and for everyone involved in a child's life and development to have high aspirations for them.

There are many people outside the family who may work with, care for, or support a child and their family – including midwives, health visitors, school nurses, therapists, childcare workers, teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, mental health workers, doctors and dentists. It is essential that this Team Around the Family (TAF) is a coordinated, well-trained and supported workforce.

This is the first Early Years and Childcare Plan. In it we set out the direction of travel for the next 10 years. We bring programmes and policies together in a more joined-up and coordinated way to support children and their families across the early years. We describe the key actions we will take over the short- and medium-term as we progress towards a fairer society. We intend to assess progress against this plan annually and complete a full review in three years time.

Delivering this plan will require all of us to work more closely together, with continued passion, dedication and a common purpose to help our children thrive.

We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.



Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills



Jeff Cuthbert AM
Minister for Communities and
Tackling Poverty

Summary

By the time children reach the age of seven we want them to have the right foundations for good health, be actively engaged in learning and be equipped with the skills to reach their full potential. *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*¹ sets out our commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales.

There are seven sections. Section 1 sets the scene for improvement and explains why investing in the early years is so important.

Section 2 focuses on **children's health and well-being**. A baby born at full term after a healthy, well-nourished pregnancy free of smoking and alcohol, at normal birth weight, fully breastfed and immunised, in safe surroundings, and receiving emotional warmth from their parents², is more likely to become a healthy adult. A child's health, in terms of physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural well-being, is strongly influenced throughout pregnancy and childhood by their parents' health, lifestyle and behaviour, as well as the quality of the child's relationships, particularly with their mother. We will focus on prevention, improving the quality of care of health services for children in the early years and the integration of services to ensure children are given the best start in life. We will promote child development and family health by delivering universal and targeted programmes such as the breastfeeding and immunisation programmes, and we will develop an all-Wales child health programme.

The importance of **strong and positive families** is set out in Section 3. Children do better when they live in a good-quality and safe home, have a close, positive and secure relationship with their mother, father or with another key adult. We know that what parents do with their children at home has a significant impact and can have a stronger influence than their occupation, education or income. Reading, singing and playing with their child are essential activities to support the development of speaking, listening and language comprehension skills which are key predictors of future progress and readiness for school. They are also important in helping to build positive relationships between parents and their children. We will ensure that families, parents and children get the information, advice and support they need when they need it. We will be steadfast in our support for early communication and language acquisition in English, Welsh or both languages, through programmes such as Bookstart and Twf, as well as for those for whom English or Welsh are additional languages and we will pilot approaches to family learning in the early years. We will ensure that all social housing meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020.

High-quality early education and childcare is the theme of Section 4. Attending a high-quality childcare setting or early years education provider has a significant influence on a child's development, especially those children who come from a disadvantaged background. Affordable, flexible and accessible childcare also enables parents to work or access training, and supports our drive to increase economic growth, tackle poverty and

¹ The childcare element of this plan reaches beyond age seven because many of the issues and policies being taken forward will be relevant for those working with children aged eight and above.

² 'Parent' is used as a generic term throughout this document. It can mean any significant adult that is proactively involved in parenting a child or children and includes mothers, fathers, carers, foster and adoptive parents, guardians and corporate parents.

reduce inequalities. We will work with the inspectorates, the sector and local authorities to drive improvements in the quality of childcare and support and develop the childcare market. We will develop proposals for flexible delivery of Flying Start childcare, parenting and early language support, consider a more flexible approach to the Foundation Phase, look at ways to improve the availability of wrap-around holiday childcare and play provision and introduce a Voluntary Childcare Approval Scheme for over-eights childcare.

Having a **good primary education** is addressed in Section 5. We are clear that learning in the early years supports learning in primary school. The relationships between schools, providers, support services and parents are crucial to enabling children to perform well. The best schools and early education providers take a whole view of the child, support their physical health, mental and emotional development, and help them move resiliently from one stage of learning to another. We will support the development of a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phase, roll out the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), National Reading and Numeracy Tests and the National Support Programme (NSP) as well as continue with our commitment to reduce inequalities through the innovative use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant.

Section 6 sets out how we expect to **raise standards**. Our systems and processes must place a strong emphasis on continuously improving outcomes and raising standards, while closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged. To reinforce our key priorities we need to ensure that delivery of support for our children and families is right from the outset. This includes a clear focus on the experience of the individual child, a coherent multi-agency approach, efficient partnership responses to identified need, appropriate regulation and inspection arrangements and high-quality training and development for the workforce. We will work towards a more coherent system of assessing, tracking and monitoring a child's developmental progress across the early years. We will consider whether changes are required to the regulation and inspection of early education and childcare settings and the *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care* (2012) and develop a 10-year workforce plan.

Finally Section 7 clarifies the roles and responsibilities for implementation.

This plan provides an overview of the policies and programmes that are in place and the actions that we will take over the short-term, medium-term and longer-term to help ensure that every child in Wales gets the best possible start in life. It does not list every strategy, plan or programme already in place but highlights the specific areas where we will take further action to ensure a bright future for our children. We recognise the journey for every child will be different, not least because of the circumstances into which they are born and their health at birth, and they may require more specific support. Therefore, we have published separately the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* (2012), *Building Resilient Communities: Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan* (2013) and the *Strategic Equality Plan* (2012) which set out the actions the Welsh Government and its partners will take, over and above those included in this plan, to help lift some of our children out of poverty and to reduce inequalities.

All services, whether targeted or universal, need to be proactive and focused on reducing inequalities and the impact of poverty on children in the early years through preventative action and early intervention, as well as providing support for families in crisis. At a local level a key challenge will be to bring services and professionals together in support of the Team Around the Family multi-agency approach as an important preventative programme. How local partners work together and fulfil their roles in driving this agenda will be crucial. By working together, sharing good practice and learning from what works we will go some way to fulfilling our ambition for all children in Wales to have a brighter future.

1. Why the early years matter

The early years, which in Wales is defined as the period of life from pre-birth to the end of the Foundation Phase or 0 to 7 years of age, is a critical part of childhood; a time children should be able to enjoy; when they grow, develop, play and learn in a safe and nurturing environment. There is widespread agreement that early childhood experiences are crucially important for children’s long-term development and their achievements in later life. As a consequence the early years are the foundation on which society depends for its future prosperity and progress.

Many factors influence a child’s progress in the early years . . .

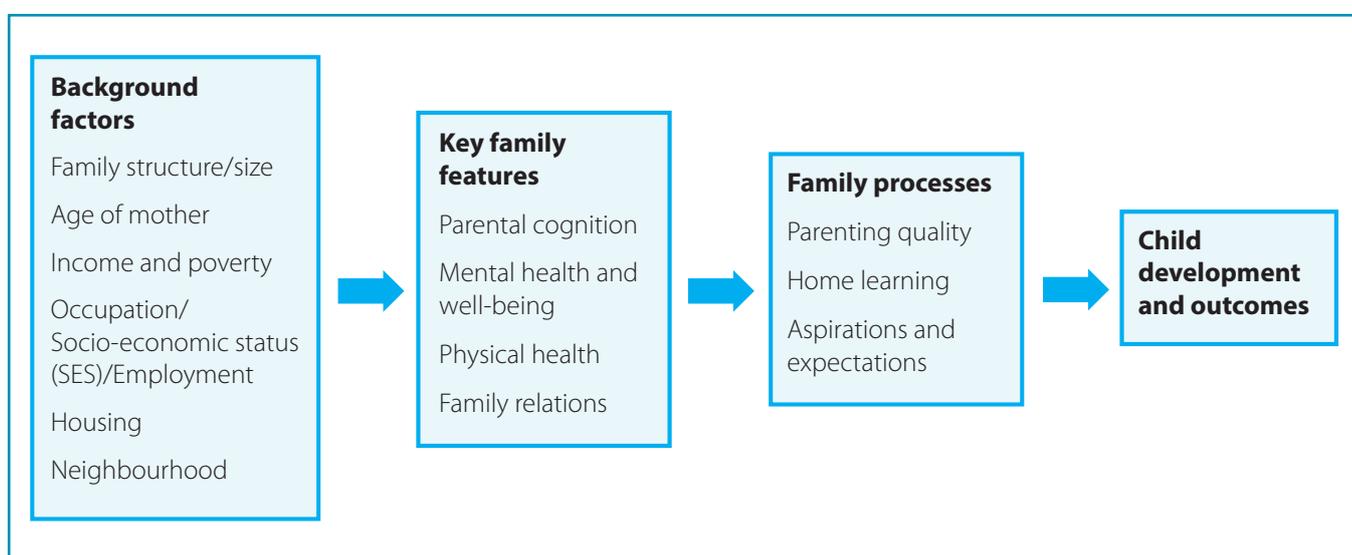


Figure 1: A model of the inter-generational transmission of educational success
Source: Feinstein, L., Duckworth, K. and Sabates, R. (2004)

A child’s life chances are influenced by experiences and circumstances both before birth and throughout childhood and, as Figure 1 shows, it is a complex picture. For example, before birth a child’s health is affected by the health and well-being of the mother and what happens in the womb. A mother’s health during pregnancy, including stress, diet, drug, alcohol and tobacco use, has a considerable influence on foetal and early brain development. The attachment that develops between a baby and both parents is linked to a child’s mental and physical health, behaviour, self-worth, social skills, resilience and educational attainment.

Other background factors including housing and employment also have an important influence on children’s outcomes. Living in a good quality and safe home, for example, can mean that there are more opportunities to play, both indoors and outdoors and a warm, comfortable home can be more conducive to study, healthy eating and better mental health. Being in work, with a steady income, is likely to provide more security for families and sustain a good quality of life in the longer term.

However, no one factor is key to improving a child's outcomes and later life chances; it is experiences over time that matter. We do know though that there are three important elements:

- a good early years home learning environment
- a good quality pre-school
- an effective primary school.

A child who has all three of these experiences is more likely to show improved cognitive and social outcomes compared with children that have only some of these experiences.

Parents taking an interest really does count . . .

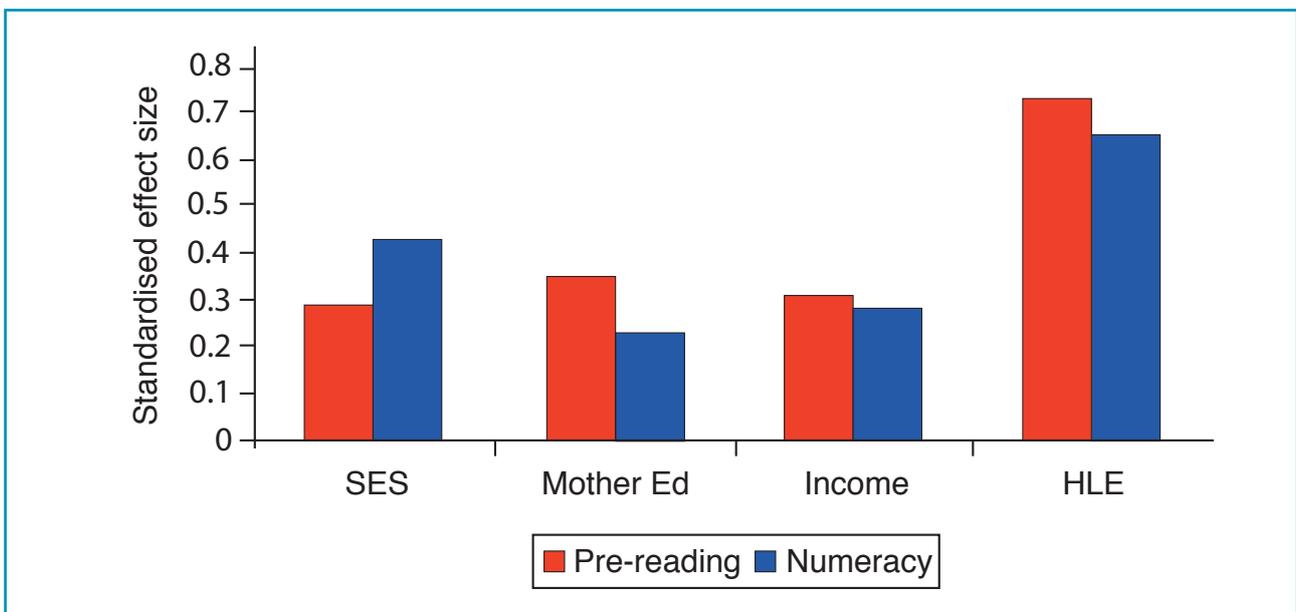


Figure 2: Effect sizes for socio-economic status (SES), parents' education, income and early years home learning environment (HLE) on age 5 outcomes

Source: Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004)

The significance of the home learning environment and parental involvement in a child's development cannot be underestimated. Figure 2 shows that it can have a greater impact than parental occupation, education or income. Mothers and fathers who talk with their children, value learning and encourage their child to read significantly influence their child's language and literacy skills, and support them to become ready for school. Evidence also shows that a strong and positive parental interest in their child's education has a profound and greater effect on attainment by age 16 than socio-economic background.

However a parent's income and qualifications do make a difference . . .

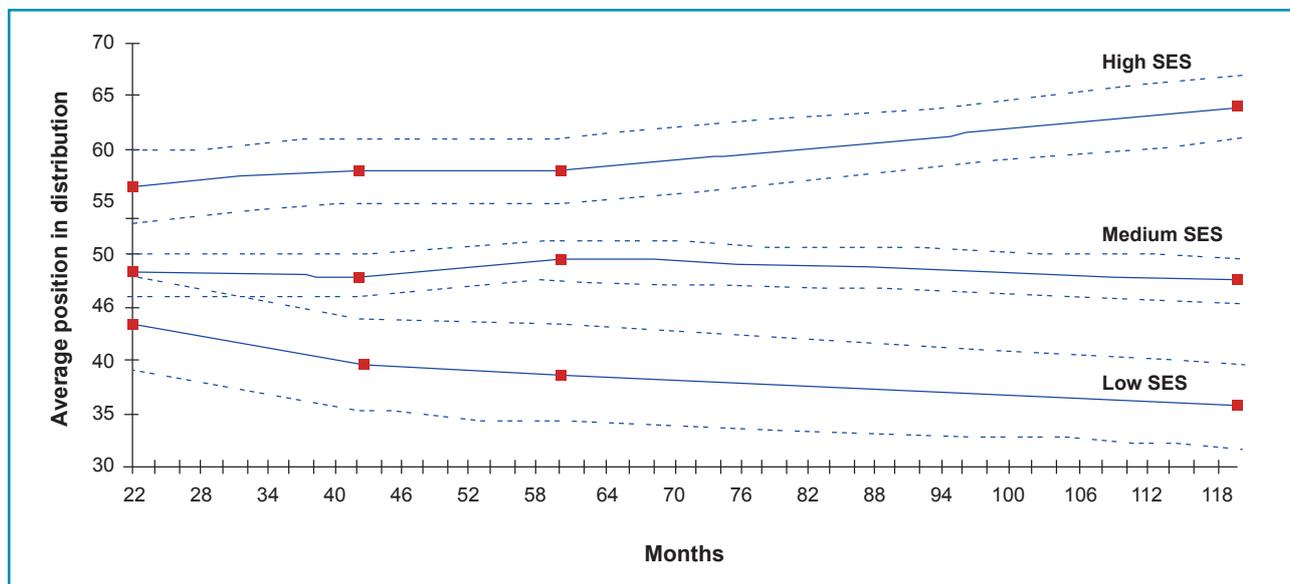


Figure 3: Average rank of test scores at 22, 42, 60 and 120 months, by socio-economic status (SES) of parents.

Source: Feinstein, L. (2003)

A good home learning environment has a strong positive effect, however other influences also have a significant impact. As Figure 3 shows, even at 22 months, there is a significant gap in the development of children from different socio-economic groups who were asked to complete a range of tests including stacking cubes, use of a pencil and indicators of language use and personal development such as pointing to their eyes, and putting on their shoes. The gap widens as the children get older. On average children of mothers with A levels or a degree tended to achieve higher attainment scores compared to children whose mothers were unqualified, and these effects are lasting.

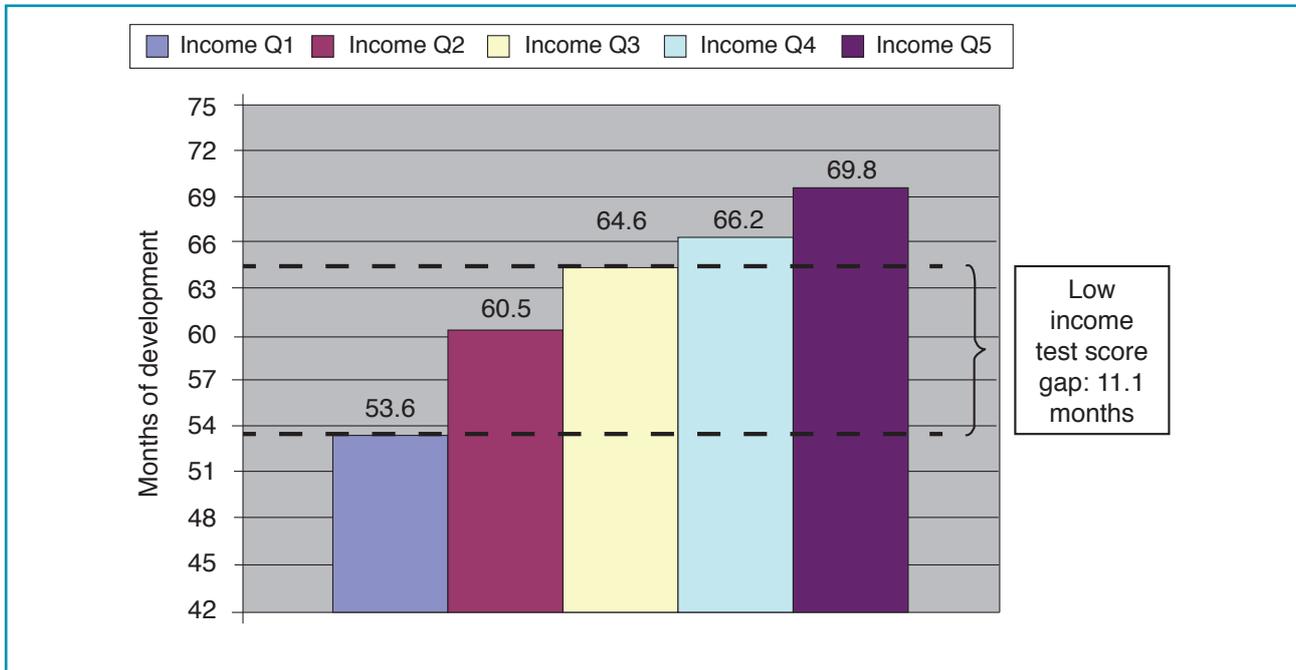


Figure 4: Mean developmental ages at five years two months on the British Ability Scales Naming Vocabulary test by income quintile³
 Source: Washbrook, E. and Waldfogel, J. (2012)

The majority of the gap between the attainment of a child from an advantaged or disadvantaged family is determined early in childhood and created largely as a result of family background and the home environment, as Figure 4 shows. The *Millennium Cohort Study* (2000) found that by age five children from more advantaged families were over a year ahead in their vocabulary compared with those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These findings are reinforced by an earlier study which found that by the age of three children from better off families had heard around 30 million more words than the most disadvantaged children. This is important because poor cognitive performance, as early as ages three and five, has been linked to an increased chance of unemployment, low qualifications and low income in adulthood.

Beyond the home environment we know that high-quality early education and childcare makes a positive difference to a child's life chances. It has been shown to be one of the most effective early intervention strategies to enhance a child's developmental outcomes, in particular language and cognitive development. Research demonstrates the potential long-term benefits of investment in early education and childcare for every child but especially for those who are disadvantaged. It highlights the importance of a skilled workforce and concludes that good quality early years education can boost a child's cognitive and social skills and that this provides a better foundation for lasting success at school and beyond. We also know that doing well at GCSE influences outcomes in early adulthood, including participation in further education and there is a strong correlation between higher qualifications and income levels. So getting it right from the start is crucial because of the

³ Quintiles in this graph are arranged in terms of mean before-tax annual income, ranging from £10,300 for quintile 1 to £20,200, £30,200, £42,900 and £79,500 for subsequent quintiles.

association between development in the early years and success in later life and it becomes fundamentally important if we are to break the cycle of poverty which blights many families.

Intervention and investment in the early years pays off . . .

All children benefit from having a good start in life in a loving and supportive family, with access to good quality universal services. However, for some children the early years are less positive. Poverty, inequality and social disadvantage can lead to 'social exclusion' which affects participation as adults in economic, social and political life. Breaking the cycle of deprivation is important because, while we can do our utmost to make life more manageable for people living in poverty, it is more effective to ensure that our young people avoid the poverty trap in the first place. There is a growing body of evidence, including Professor Sir Michael Marmot's review of health inequalities, that demonstrate the effectiveness, value and high return on investment in early years intervention programmes in tackling inequalities, giving children the best start in life and improving the development of children and their prospects in adulthood.

Drawing on evidence, from home and abroad, the view that there are long lasting and positive effects from early years programmes is well supported. Early action can bring cost effective benefits, not only by improving health outcomes and educational attainment, but also by reducing the knock-on costs of expensive health, social care, criminal justice and welfare support. The United Kingdom's *National Child Development Study*, which has followed a group of people since their birth in 1958, has found that investments before the age of five appear to have long lasting and positive effects, with adults who attended pre-school more likely to gain qualifications and get a job.

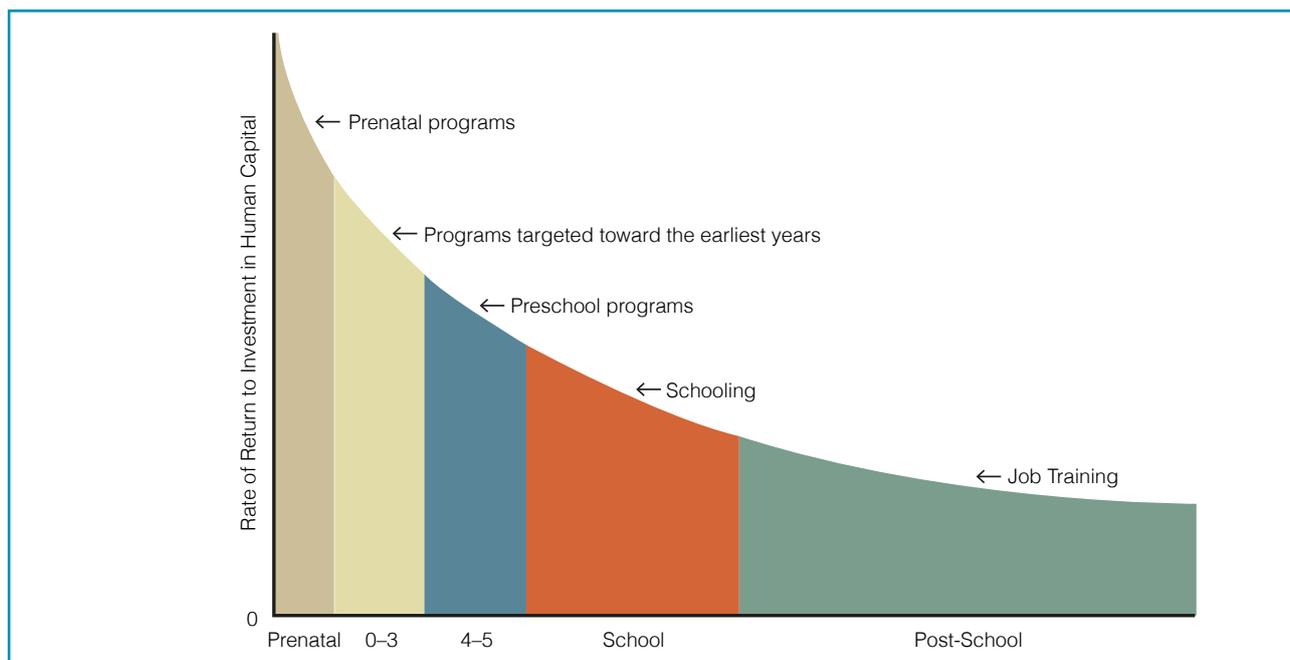


Figure 5: Return on investment over time

Source: Heckman, J. J. (2008)

Figure 5 shows how intervention programmes that support disadvantaged children early in life are potentially much more cost-effective than those targeted at underperforming adolescents or adults, in part because early programmes have a longer time to show their positive benefits, but also because early support can prevent the need for catch-up programmes once a child starts school. The link between high-quality early education and childcare and positive outcomes appears to be especially strong for children from disadvantaged families, with effects for these children being larger and longer lasting. It is important to recognise that this investment needs to continue from one stage of learning and development to the next so that the early benefits are built upon.

To summarise: early years programmes and interventions can improve the development of children and their future prospects bringing short- and long-term benefits with a higher economic return. These benefits are most marked for disadvantaged children and families.

And there are some key factors for success . . .

Evidence points to a number of critical factors that influence positive outcomes for children and can help overcome disadvantage. Generally speaking, targeted rather than universal approaches tend to be judged more cost effective, however, the comparative evidence base to determine which approach might be most cost effective is limited. In practical terms, what is needed is a range of interventions able to provide support at different levels of need focused on the following areas:

- **children's health and well-being** – is strongly influenced by their parents' health and behaviour particularly their mothers. A baby born after a pregnancy with good nutrition, free of smoking, alcohol and drugs, at normal birth weight, fully breastfed and immunised, in safe and warm surroundings, receiving emotional warmth from their parents is more likely to achieve their full potential throughout childhood and adult life
- **strong and positive families** – a child does better when it has a close and positive relationship with its mother, father or another key adult. The quality of care given to a baby, and the attachment that develops between an infant and its parents are significantly linked to the child's learning, educational outcomes, social skills, self-efficacy, behaviour and health
- a **home learning environment** that facilitates and supports learning can counteract the effects of disadvantage in the early years. The things that parents help a child do at home, like reading, singing and playing, are essential in supporting a child's oracy and language comprehension, they are key predictors of future development, and help support the child's readiness for school
- attending a **high-quality early education and childcare setting** has a key influence on a child's development, especially for a child who is from a disadvantaged background
- the relationships between **schools**, providers, support services and parents are crucial to enabling each child to perform well. The best schools and early education providers take a whole view of the child, support their emotional development and help them move seamlessly from one stage of learning to another.

In Wales a strong start has already been made . . .

The Welsh Government already makes a significant investment in the early years. In 2012–13 we invested more than £150 million in early education and childcare, more than £3.6 million in our early years literacy and numeracy programmes and over £2.6 million in our healthy schools and pre-schools programmes. By 2015 we will have invested an additional £55 million in revenue and £19 million in capital funding as part of our Flying Start Programme and made more than £135 million available to family support projects through Families First. And we are committed to maintaining this level of support during these difficult economic times.

Current policy in Wales draws on a wide body of evidence of what works in practice and, as Figure 6 shows, we have a strong early years platform on which to build. For example, Flying Start is already designed to reach more than 18,000 children under the age of four, and this will increase to 36,000 by 2015, and more than 95 per cent of babies under one have been immunised. Designed to Smile (D2S), a programme to improve children’s dental health, has already reached more than 78,000 children. (A fuller list of strategies and programmes across the early years can be found in Annex B.)

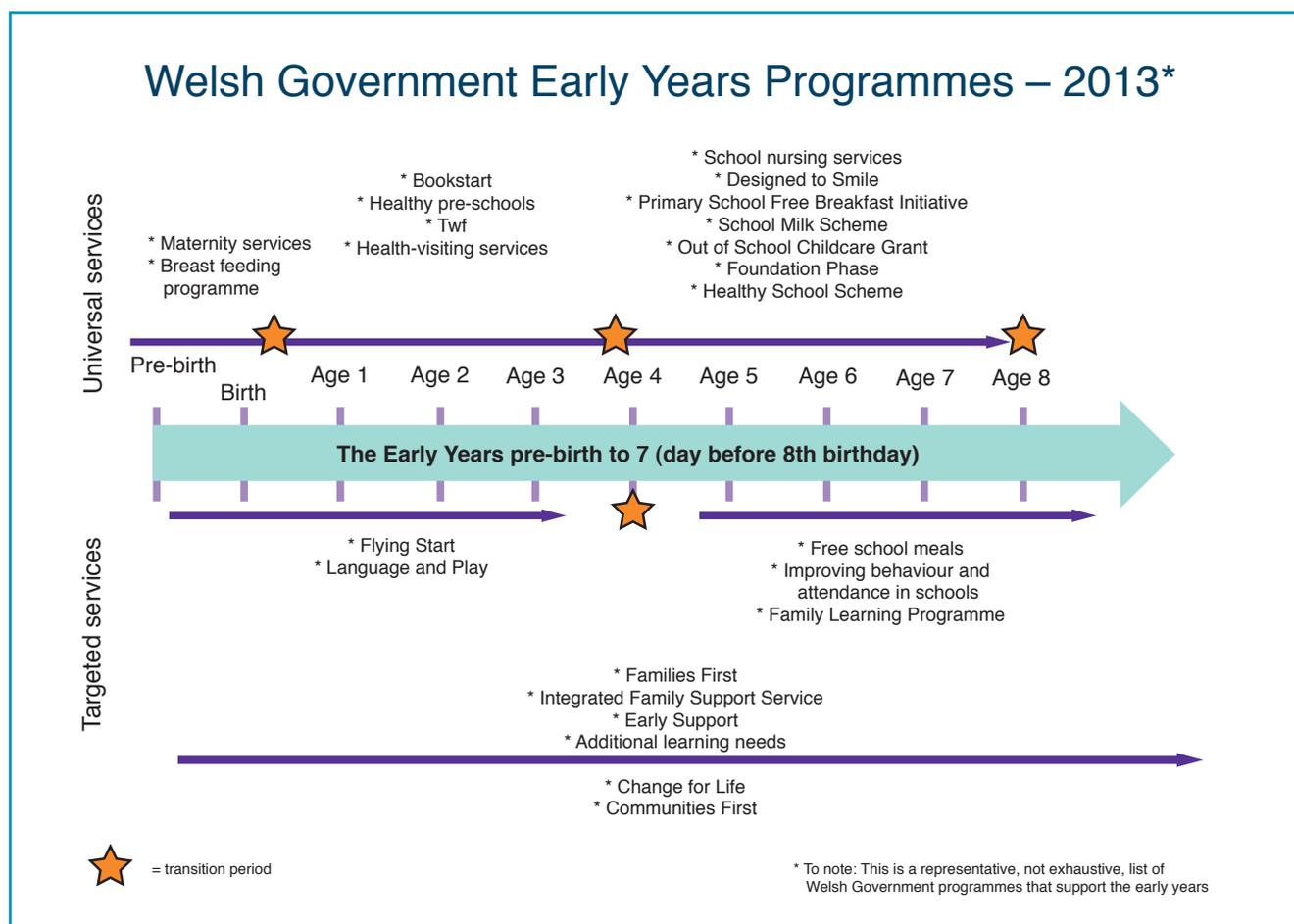


Figure 6: Welsh Government Early Years Programmes – 2013
Source: Welsh Government (2013)

However, we must tackle child poverty and inequalities if we are to make further progress . . .

Nearly one in three children lives in poverty in Wales; around 20 per cent live in absolute poverty. As Figure 7 shows this is higher than in the other UK countries. Although being in employment reduces the risk, the most recent estimates suggest that more than half of all children living in poverty are now in households where at least one person is working.

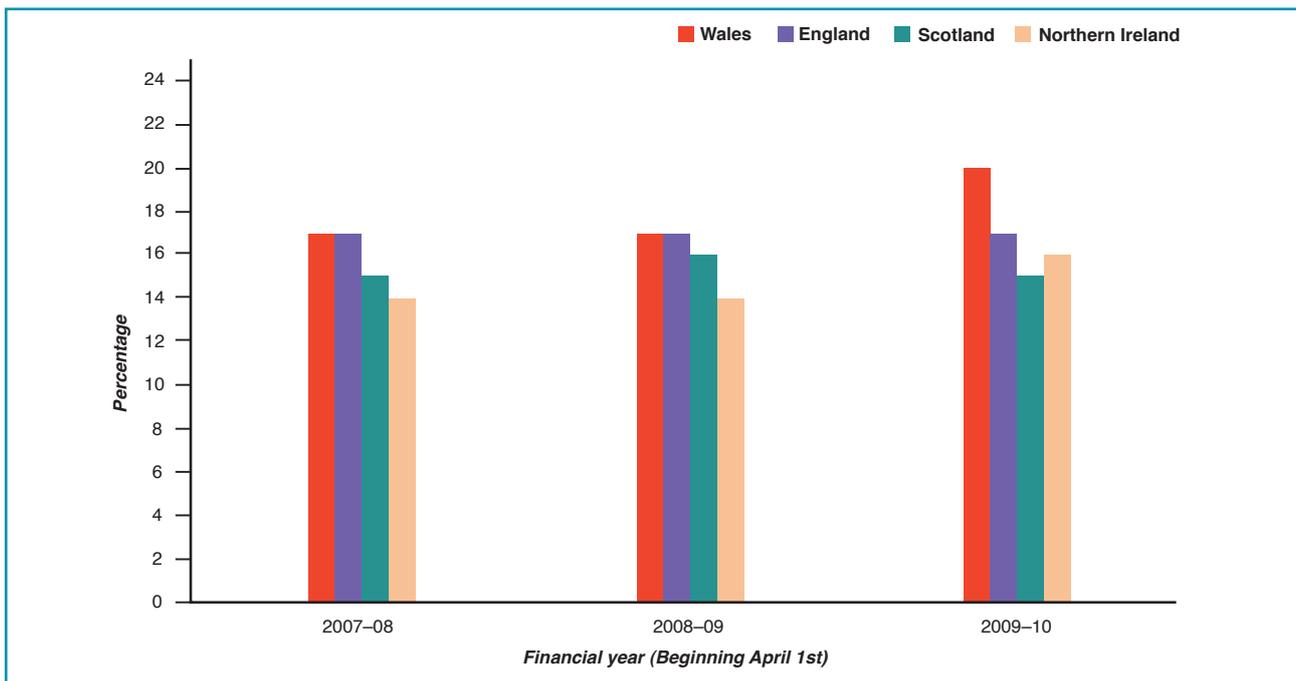


Figure 7: Percentage of children living in combined material deprivation and low income
Source: Family Resources Survey 2009/10

As we saw in Figure 1 many factors influence a child's life. Evidence from the *Millennium Cohort Study* shows that there are some significant differences between the wealthiest and poorest 20 per cent of families in Wales which includes employment status; quality of housing; health factors including mental health and obesity; and family life including reading and having routine. Figure 8 illustrates the breadth of these issues and the influence that differences in income can have on childhood experiences. Both tackling child poverty and supporting positive parenting are important for ensuring children achieve their potential.

	Wealthiest 20% of households	Poorest 20% of households
Mother at risk of post-natal depression	7%	20%
Read to daily at age three	78%	45%
Regular bedtimes at age three	91%	70%
Damp in home a problem at age three	2%	13%
Mother works full-time at age five	31%	6%

Figure 8: Differences on key indicators between the wealthiest and poorest families in Wales
Source: Millennium Cohort Study

Another way of measuring how poverty has an impact on children’s lives is to look at their birth weight. Babies born weighing less than 2,500g are at greater risk of doing less well developmentally and having health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Wales has a 2020 child poverty target to reduce low birth weight among babies born in the most deprived fifth of the population to no more than 7.3 per cent; between 2005 and 2007 it was 8.9 per cent in the most deprived fifth of the population compared to 7.2 percent of those in the middle deprived fifth. Figure 9 shows that the numbers of live births within each weight category has remained relatively constant over time.

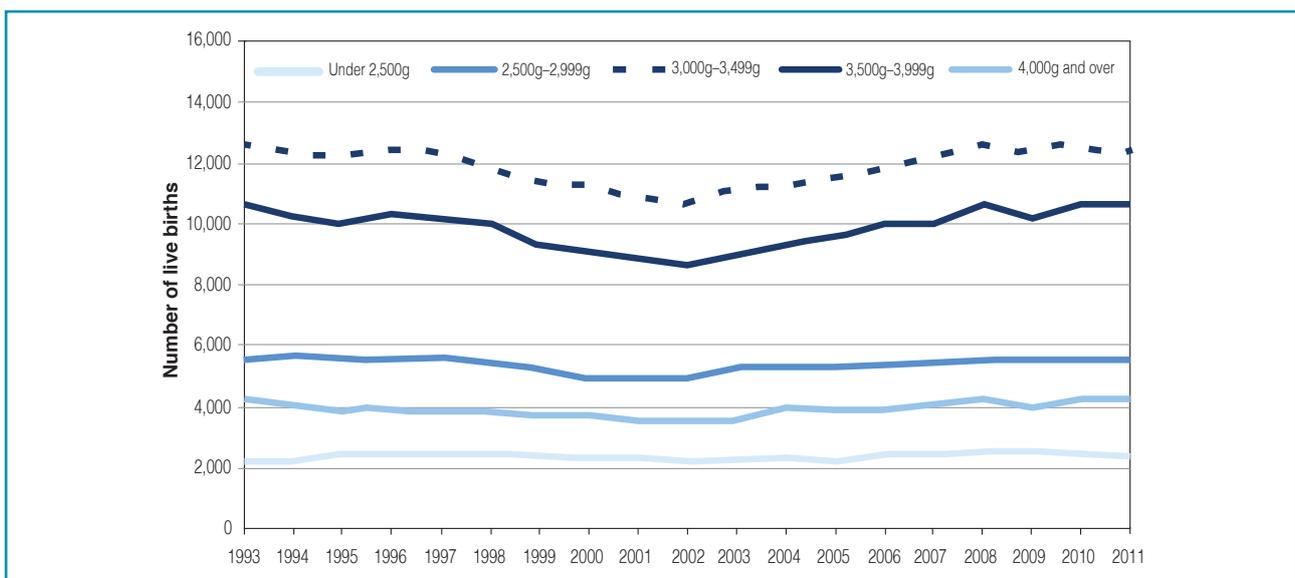


Figure 9: Number of live births per weight of baby, Wales, 1993–2011
Source: Statistics for Wales, Statistical Bulletin SB 18/2013 (Feb 2013)

Again poorer children tend not to be able to read as well as advantaged children and overall, as Figure 10 shows, seven-year-olds in Wales read less well than those in England and Scotland regardless of levels of disadvantage. Research shows that six per cent of mothers and eight per cent of fathers in Wales never read to their children because of concerns about their own ability to read and only 45 per cent of three-year-olds from the poorest families are read to on a daily basis.

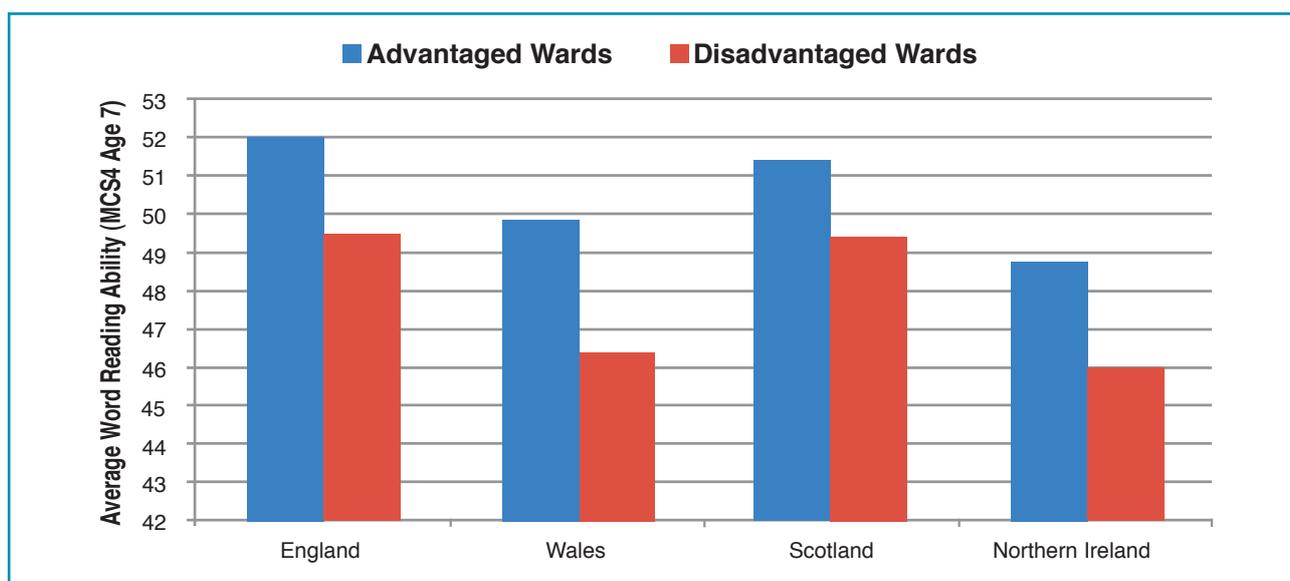


Figure 10: Word Reading Ability (age seven) by country
Source: Taylor, C., WISERD (2013)

Another area where inequalities are seen is in terms of attainment at the end of the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. In Wales the proportion of children in maintained schools who are known to be eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) is 20.6 per cent. In 2012, the performance of these children was lower than other children at all key stages. At the end of the Foundation Phase the gap in Foundation Phase indicator achievement between e-FSM and non-FSM children was 18.3 percentage points. At Key Stage 2, the proportion of e-FSM children who achieved the core subject indicator (CSI) level was 20 percentage points lower than non-FSM children. At Key Stage 4 the gap between children eligible for FSM and those not eligible for FSM achieving the Level 2 threshold was 33 percentage points. As Figure 11 shows, overall the progress of e-FSM children does not compare well with their peers, although the gap has narrowed slightly in primary schools.

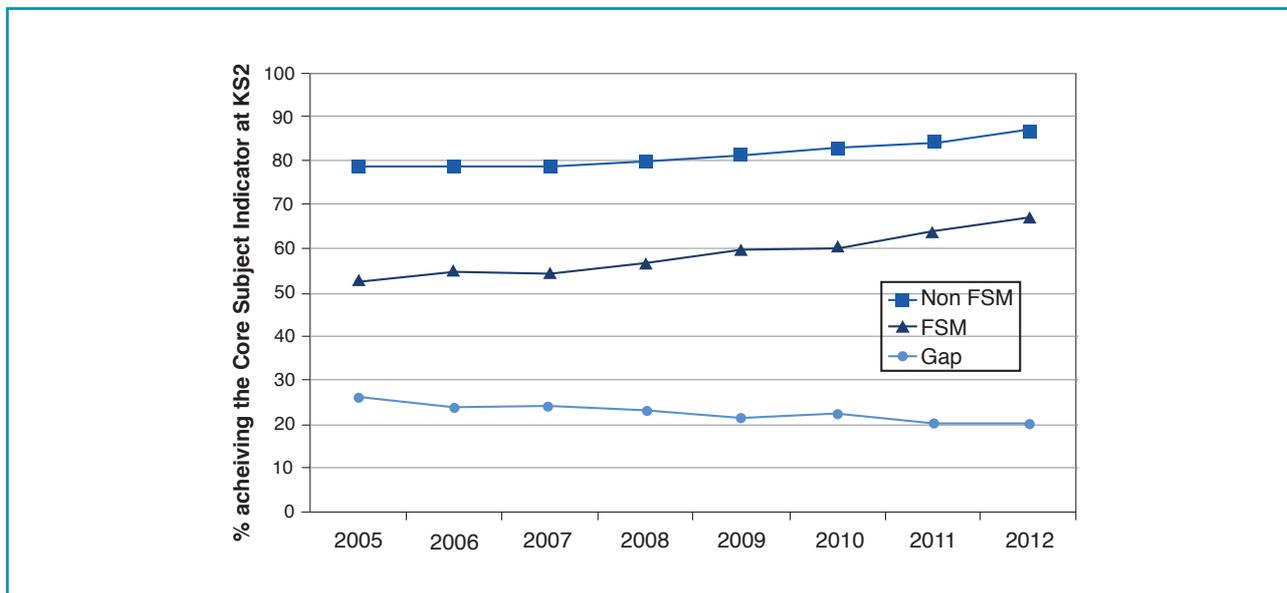


Figure 11: Primary school performance in Wales since 2005. Difference between CSI performance for FSM and non-FSM learners at Key Stage 2⁴
 Source: Statistics for Wales, Statistical Bulletin SB 32/2013 (March 2013)

There are also ‘gaps’ in performance between learner groups such as looked after children compared to all learners. The attainment gap widens from 26 percentage points for this group in the Foundation Phase to 32 percentage points at Key Stage 2. Outcomes also vary by ethnicity and gender. Underachievement and school exclusion are particularly concentrated in certain minority ethnic groups; in 2010–12 for example, 71 per cent of Black or Black British and nearly 34 per cent of Traveller children achieved expected levels at Key Stage 2, compared with nearly 81 per cent of White British learners. Getting it right in the early years regardless of a child’s background is crucial if we are to reduce these inequalities.

And our workforce needs the right skills . . .

The Early Years workforce is large and diverse and includes many professionals such as midwives, health visitors, school nurses, teachers, social workers, dentists and paediatricians who must attain specific, high level qualifications before they can practice. There are other members of the Early Years workforce who must attain minimum level qualifications, including some teaching assistants, Twf support workers, childcare and play workers, and community workers, before they can work unsupervised with and support children and families.

In 2012 just over 4,380 childcare settings were registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW). Around 17,500 people work with our youngest children in childcare. The *Effective Pre-School and Primary Education (EPPE)* study points to the

⁴ Primary – percentage of Year 6 learners attaining at least Level 4 in the core subjects of English/Welsh, mathematics and science and the breakdown by learners eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) and their non-eligible peers.

importance of the quality of adult-child interactions, staff knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and how young children learn and how they support children’s learning at home as features of a good pre-school setting. In settings that view educational and social development as complementary and of equal importance, children tend to make better progress particularly where staff have higher qualifications, including some trained teachers. As well as this, there are particular benefits of attending a high-quality setting for children from disadvantaged backgrounds or where they are disabled or have special educational needs (SEN). The number of children at risk of SEN can be reduced to one in five, from one in three, through good pre-school education.

Provider	No qualification	Level 2	Level 3	Level 5	Degree
Full day care provider	15%	10%	64%	6%	4%
Sessional day care	18%	15%	62%	4%	1%
Childminder	72%	3%	23%	2%	0%
Out of school childcare	17%	25%	54%	3%	1%

Figure 12: Qualification levels held by category of childcare provider (all staff)
Source: 2012 Melyn Report for the Care Council for Wales

Figure 12 above shows the wide variation in the qualification levels of the childcare sector in Wales. One of the considerable challenges we face is to raise the status and value placed on the caring for and teaching of young children to the level of other early years occupations. Some positive progress has already been made to build workforce capacity and skills, but some significant barriers remain to be overcome including the cost, availability and accessibility of training.

But we need to do more . . .

This Early Years and Childcare Plan recognises that much has been achieved to date. In partnership with local authorities, local health boards (LHBs) and the voluntary and private sectors we have made great strides in Wales towards building an early education, childcare and play sector of which we can be proud. We have done this through the development of, and investment in, free early education for three and four year olds through the Foundation Phase; the establishment and expansion of free childcare to some of the most disadvantaged two years olds through the Flying Start Programme; and placing play on a legislative footing.

Furthermore, through Families First and the Integrated Family Support Service, we have improved the way that services work together to support families and, through legislation, we have taken a lead in ensuring that the rights of the child are upheld. However, more needs to be done to develop a well-qualified Early Years workforce that can work together in an effective and integrated way, if we are to achieve our aspirations and ambitions. Figure 13 summaries the direction of travel set out in this Early Years and Childcare Plan.

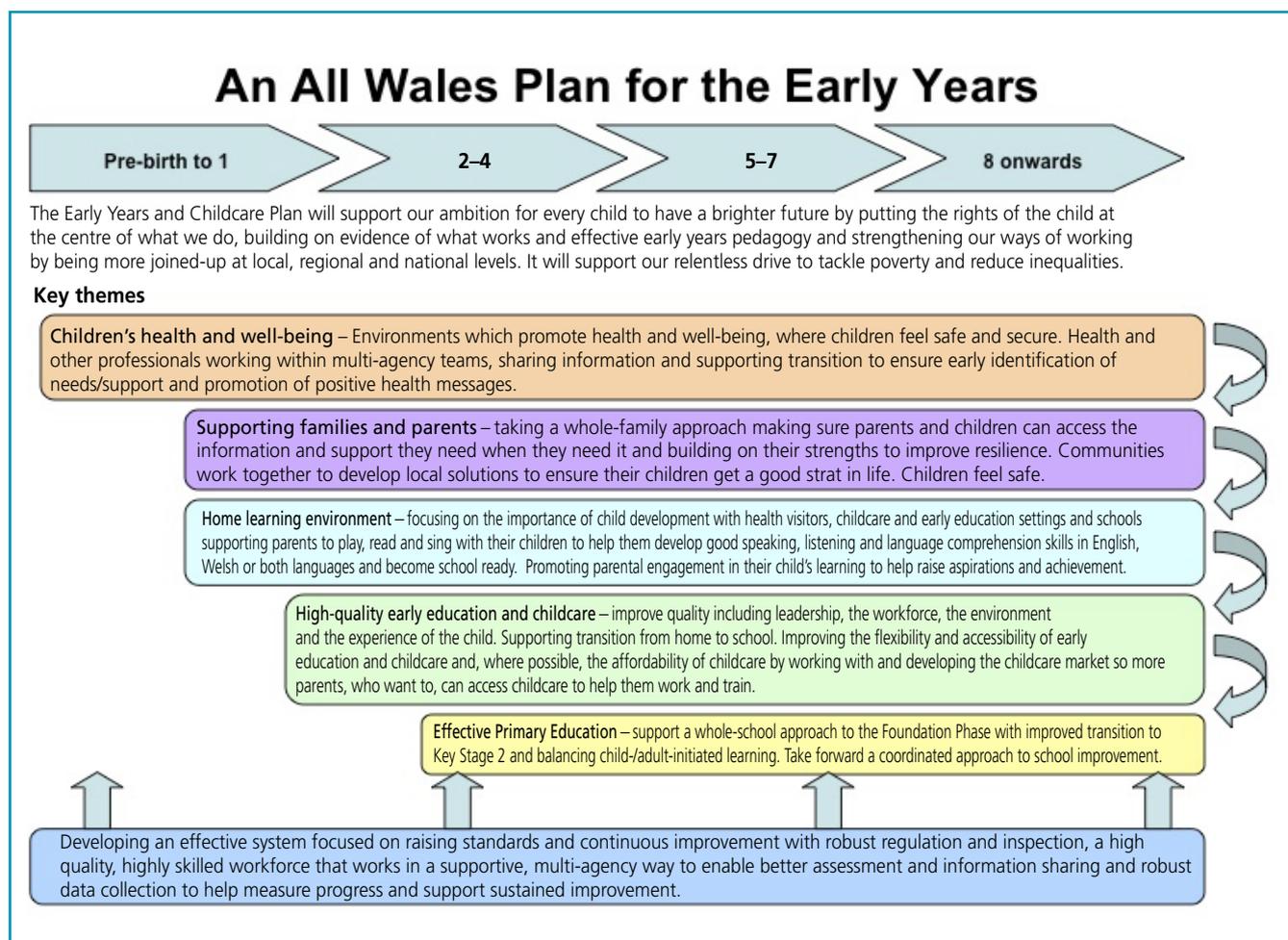


Figure 13: High level summary of *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*
Source: Welsh Government (2013)

2. Children's health and well-being

The foundations of good health are laid down during pregnancy, followed through into infancy and built upon during the school-age years. Good health outcomes are associated with a number of protective factors, including a smoke-free pregnancy; breastfeeding; immunisation; good dietary and exercise habits; a warm, secure home environment; and an emotionally supportive family. However, a range of risk factors, such as maternal smoking, poor nutrition in pregnancy, maternal mental health problems, poverty in childhood and family neglect or rejection, are associated with negative outcomes for health and well-being. Factors that improve lifelong health and well-being, and build children's resilience to poor health in the early years are at the forefront of our policy considerations.

Building on the principles set out in the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales* (2005) and the commitments in *Our Healthy Future* (2010) we have identified the key priorities for action in the early years to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities:

- preventive services
- better quality of care provided by health services for children
- integrated services – across health, social services and education.

The following indicators are set out in the *Programme for Government* (2011) and the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* as significant measures which can be used to assess progress. Rates of:

- infant and child mortality
- low birth weight
- breastfeeding at 10 days
- dental caries at age five
- children, aged two and five, who have been immunised against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)
- hospital admission due to injury in children
- children at ages three and five whose general health is good or very good
- children who are normal weight at age five.

Prevention

We made a commitment in *Our Healthy Future* for health and social services to place greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. This means rebalancing services, with more prominence on promoting, protecting, maintaining and restoring health and independence and less on avoidable, more expensive options such as treatment and care. *Together for Health* (2012) reinforced this approach. To support our prevention priority we want our children to have a good start in life and ensure that we are working together to promote healthy choices and lifestyles.

Ensure children have a good start in life

Develop our maternity services

Being healthy at birth and throughout the early years is one of the most important indicators of well-being in children. Normal birth weight is an important determinant of positive future health while low birth weight is associated with poorer outcomes in health and education. This is a challenge in Wales because the percentage of pregnant women who smoke and who are overweight is the highest in the UK and around seven per cent of babies are born with a low birth weight (less than 2,500g), a statistic that has shown little improvement in nearly twenty years.

A Strategic Vision for Maternity Services in Wales (2011) sets out the actions that we will take forward to achieve a step change in maternity services. It is focused on improving early access to services and promoting healthy lifestyles for pregnant women which have a positive impact on them and their family's health. Early access to maternity services is a crucial part of our preventative approach and is important in providing:

- early advice on healthy lifestyles (smoking, alcohol, healthy eating, exercise and vitamin supplements)
- referral or signposting to support services, especially smoking cessation services
- information on local services, i.e. support groups and exercise classes
- assessment of mental health in order to plan and coordinate the care of women with existing serious mental health issues.

We have, therefore, published **practical guidance and advice to LHBs which promotes direct access to a midwife**. The guidance includes 'Rhian's story' – a fictitious case history of a pregnant woman whose care planning and delivery will require multi-agency collaboration, coordination and communication. The assumption is that if we can meet Rhian's needs we will have improved her health and reduced inequalities. This supports our aim for Wales to have a service to be proud of and one that will make a real difference to the lives of women and their families.

The new Maternity Board now meets twice a year to monitor progress against a set of nationally-agreed outcomes and performance measures, including the proportion of women

who have an initial assessment carried out by 10 completed weeks of pregnancy. To continue to improve the quality of our maternity services, we will:

- **implement the NICE guidance** on *Quitting Smoking in Pregnancy and Following Childbirth* (2010) and increase pregnant smokers' access to smoking cessation programmes
- work with the higher education (HE) sector to ensure the **midwifery pre-registration curriculum prepares midwives** with the skills and knowledge to address contemporary public health challenges.

Promote healthy choices and lifestyles

The early years of life are crucial for healthy physical and mental development with children needing safe and supportive environments. Early intervention and prevention are vital. Our priorities for this age group are:

- good mental and emotional health and well-being
- supporting optimal developmental progress
- achieving and maintaining a healthy weight
- freedom from second-hand smoke
- good oral health
- creating healthy and safe environments
- improved immunisation.

Good mental and emotional health and well-being

Together for Mental Health (2012) recognises the need to promote resilience and self-esteem as children develop, and identify and minimise the risk of mental health problems for those who are liable to develop them. At a local level we expect:

- LHBs, local authorities and the third sector to ensure Flying Start, Families First and the Integrated Family Support Service are coordinated and become involved with families in a timely way.

Within the school setting, children need to be supported through a whole-school approach to achieve good mental and emotional health and well-being. Early and easy access to counselling can prevent mental health problems developing or becoming more serious and can build up trust and confidence to enable learners to access more specialist services if required. We will:

- explore ways of supporting local authorities to **extend counselling services to Years 5 and below in schools.**

Play is central to children's mental and emotional health, well-being and happiness. The Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 have been introduced as part of our commitment to improving play opportunities. The next stage will be:

- to commence the duty on local authorities **to secure sufficient play opportunities** as identified in their play sufficiency assessments and action plans.

Supporting optimal developmental progress

Children may make progress at different rates but they usually do so within a recognised developmental range across a set of indicators. Any developmental difficulty, such as delay in speech and language or in walking may be able to be addressed if noticed at an early stage. It is important that children with any significant delays are identified early, and the correct support offered to ensure they continue to develop to their own full potential.

A systematic way to identify children with problems, especially vision and hearing, or any medical condition that may affect development is essential. To address this we will:

- **review the child surveillance programme** for vision, hearing, development and medical conditions, to ensure it is based on the most up-to-date evidence
- ensure the integrated **all Wales child health and mental well-being programme** is applied consistently to allow the most efficient and effective identification of health and developmental problems to enable early support and intervention.

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight

The recent *Child Measurement Programme for Wales* (2013) report has shown that during 2011–12 more than 70 per cent of children aged four to five had a healthy weight, while just over 28 per cent were overweight or obese. Reducing the proportion of children who are overweight or obese is essential because poor nutrition and lack of physical activity in children can lead to health problems.

We will build on our programme of work to ensure healthy eating is supported and maintained throughout the early years and beyond. The next steps are to:

- increase the numbers of mothers who start and continue breastfeeding their baby
- ensure **all maternity services attain the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Award** by 2015
- implement the provisions in the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure so that local authorities and governing bodies will be required to take action to **promote healthy eating and drinking** in maintained schools in their areas
- introduce legislation requiring local authorities and governing bodies to meet more stringent **standards for the food and drink provided to learners** in schools

- continue to roll out a children's obesity referral programme (e.g. MEND) for five to seven-year-olds, targeted at areas of high need across Wales, involving overweight and obese children and their families so that they are helped to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

Freedom from second-hand smoke

We will protect children from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. The Fresh Start campaign on smoking in cars is underway and we will:

- **consider legislating to ban smoking in cars** which carry children, if children's exposure to second-hand smoke has not started to fall
- **encourage the introduction of smoke-free policies** for all playgrounds.

Good oral health

Between 2008 and 2012 some 78,350 children in over 1,200 schools and nurseries have taken part in the Designed to Smile (D2S) Programme aimed at nursery and primary school children in areas of greatest need as part of our commitment to improve the oral health of children in Wales. Working with schools and nurseries the Community Dental Service promotes tooth brushing using fluoride toothpaste, provides dental screening and advice on good oral health and healthy eating and drinking. We will improve the uptake of D2S by eligible schools by continuing to:

- work with the Community Dental Service to **ensure effective delivery** of the wider D2S Programme
- **commission independent research** into the impact of D2S; and examining whether D2S has influenced the decay levels in five-year-olds by 2015, and 12-year-olds by 2020.

Creating healthy environments

We want, as far as is possible, for our children to be happy, safe and well. Providing a healthy environment is vital to ensuring the best health outcomes for all children, including reducing childhood accidents.

Our Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (HSPSS) and Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) support the development of learning environments which actively promote and embed physical, mental and social health and well-being, working in the most deprived areas first. We expect learners to make healthier choices as a result of these programmes. To strengthen this further we will:

- **extend the HSPSS and WNHSS** so that by 2014 there will be 500 settings actively involved in the HSPSS, and 10 per cent of maintained schools will have achieved the WNHSS National Quality Award by 2015, rising to 20 per cent by 2020

- expect local authorities to assess the extent to which they encourage and **provide healthy environments** for children to play, walk or cycle to school, ride a bike and take part in recreational activities
- **take a lead in early years injury prevention** by considering the recommendations from *The Burden of Injury in Wales* report (NHS, 2012) and the European Child Safety Report Card in order to reduce childhood accidents
- **develop an all Wales child injury prevention strategy** that is coordinated across all services and settings to reduce the risk of child death and harm due to injury.

Immunisation

Effective immunisation saves lives and promotes good health. The target for routine childhood vaccinations is to achieve 95 per cent uptake and in 2011/12, this was exceeded for children under one. For older children the long-term trend is positive but remains below target. For example, one in five children starting school in Wales in 2011/12 missed out on one or more key immunisations. We are determined to meet our immunisation targets by:

- working with Public Health Wales, Directors of Public Health and others through the Wales Immunisation Group to **identify barriers to uptake**, improve the delivery of vaccination programmes and support LHBs in their efforts to improve vaccination rates, especially for groups such as looked after children
- **identifying areas of inequality** using Public Health Wales local level reports and Child in Need census data so that LHBs can target practices with lower uptake, learn lessons from practices with higher uptake, and ensure that children who are looked after by the local authority are fully protected by immunisation
- **increasing awareness of the need to vaccinate children** against the effects of serious preventable diseases.

Improving the quality of care provided by health services for children in the early years

We published *More than just words* (2012) which set out our strategy to strengthen Welsh-language services in health, social services and social care. It places a responsibility on the NHS and social services to ensure that everyone, including infants and young children, are actively offered services in Welsh.

Some of our children are disabled, have long-term health conditions or particular needs, and while services for these children have improved over recent years we will seek to make further improvements. To support this we propose to develop:

- an outcomes framework which **measures the overall health and well-being of children**, which will lead to better integration of child-centred services

- **an integrated additional needs plan** to ensure secondary healthcare services including paediatrics, speech and other therapy and developmental support services will be coordinated for children with additional healthcare needs.

Integration of services

Better outcomes for our children will only be achieved by professionals across the early years ensuring that they are working together to deliver services in a cohesive and timely way. Many, including health visitors, have a vital preventative role in supporting families and their children in the very early stages of development as well as ensuring services are delivered in an integrated way. We recognise that this is complex, however effective multi-agency working and sharing of information between different professional groups including medical, nursing, dental, health visiting, pharmacy, mental health, managerial and support staff, are essential if we are to provide children with services which are joined-up, efficient and effective. This is the core requirement of the preventative approach being taken forward through Families First. We expect all early years professionals to work in this multi-agency way.

To support professionals to do this we will:

- work towards **a more coherent system of assessing children** in the early years, which will allow a consistent national approach to the assessment, tracking and monitoring of a child's development and progress and improve information sharing between agencies
- develop an integrated **all Wales child health and mental well-being programme** – a comprehensive, universal and evidence-based health promotion, protection and surveillance programme, linked to the new assessment system. This will be supported by a package of assessment tools which can be used by all service providers and practitioners to assess and track a child's progress at relevant points from birth to age seven
- improve information flow and exchange via a **personal child health and well-being record ('red book')** once the integrated all Wales child health and mental well-being programme has been developed. We will coordinate a supporting information system and the personal child health and well-being record. This will introduce a consistent approach to ensure that the assessment and monitoring of a child's development can be tracked throughout the early years across agencies
- **develop good practice guidance** to support midwives, health visitors, school nurses, and other professionals to work together and share information so they provide a coordinated, smooth transition for children and families between individual services and phases of development.

3. Supporting families and parents

Strong, supportive families are crucial in building cohesive communities, promoting resilience in children and ensuring good social, physical and emotional health and well-being. They are a protective factor for children growing up in disadvantage and have a positive impact on children's development, learning and outcomes at school.

In recent years a number of economic, social and demographic changes have had a significant impact on families in Wales. Some key features include persistent child poverty and higher teenage pregnancy rates. Alongside these developments has been a growing recognition, exemplified in our preventative and early intervention Families First Programme, of the importance of multi-agency working and taking a whole-family approach to improve outcomes for children.

Families and communities play a pivotal role in the way a child develops. It is important that we work with communities to ensure they are safe and supportive places to raise young children, with decent housing and appropriate access to local services, activities and facilities, especially in our most deprived communities. There are already many programmes that support families and parents throughout Wales. Our focus now is to:

- improve outcomes for children through **strong supportive families and communities**
- support **parental engagement in their child's learning**
- ensure that **children are safe**.

The following indicators are set out in the *Programme for Government* and the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* as significant measures which can be used to assess progress. Rates of:

- Flying Start children reaching or exceeding their developmental milestones at two years and at three years
- six year olds who speak Welsh at home
- social housing meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020
- homeless families, with children, in bed and breakfast accommodation
- homeless households which include dependent children.

Strong, supportive families and communities

We have drawn together a range of programmes and policies that are designed to support families, children and the communities they live in. In a difficult economic climate it is important that organisations funded to provide this wide range of services work together, ensure best value for money and at the same time ensure that families' diverse and challenging needs are met.

We will concentrate on:

- supporting families
- improving outcomes for looked after children
- getting better join-up in Communities First areas.

Supporting families

A range of support services are available to families from early intervention and preventative programmes like Flying Start and Families First. Building on good progress already made we will now:

- **carry out research** to obtain valuable contemporary information and insights into current parenting attitudes and practices in Wales
- **raise awareness of positive parenting** and non-physical alternatives to child discipline
- lead on the development of **national learning sets** and support regional and local arrangements to share learning, good practice and develop effective joint working
- **review information services** for families to establish a clear picture of the service available in Wales and how this may be improved. A learning set on information services will be launched during 2013 as part of the review process.

Looked after children

We understand there are times when parents find coping difficult and babies and children need to be looked after outside the family home. Looked after children are a key priority for national and local government and their safety and protection is of paramount importance. The *Programme for Government* and *Sustainable Social Services: A Framework for Action* (2011) set out our plans to improve the well-being of looked after children. Our priorities include the development of:

- a **National Outcomes Framework for Social Services**. Working initially with the looked after children sector, a well-being statement has been developed and was published in April 2013. Further work to develop the statement and populate the outcomes framework will take place over 2013–14 and 2014–15
- **criteria and performance and improvement standards**, which will draw together information, evidence and research to drive forward transformation of services, including arrangements for looked after children, and support the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services in Wales, during 2013–14
- a new strategy in 2013 to support our objective of **raising the educational attainment of looked after children**, which will improve our ability to coordinate activity and share good practice to meet the needs of learners in the early years and beyond.

Communities First

The early years are a key priority for the new Communities First Programme. The programme recognises the complexity of problems faced by families living in areas of multiple deprivation and the importance of supporting and involving local communities in designing solutions which meet their needs. As well as working with the 52 Communities First cluster areas the programme will:

- **use Communities First to engage 'hard to reach' groups** and help them make use of the services they need
- **improve co-ordination at a local level** by linking Flying Start, Families First and Communities First projects locally to maximise support for families and children
- **further develop integrated, community-based services** for families in poverty who do not have complex needs to improve their outcomes including helping them return to work
- **develop the workforce** through training on Team Around the Family (TAF) and ways to support families during the early years.

Helping parents engage in their child's learning

We want parents to be able to provide the best home learning environment they possibly can as well as encouraging more mothers and fathers to read with their child. Building a child's speaking and listening skills from the earliest stage supports the development of good literacy skills and can help them get the best start possible. To support this, our emphasis will be on:

- improving oracy, language development and numeracy
- promoting parental engagement in learning
- supporting parents to raise their children bilingually.

Improving oracy, language development and numeracy

To support a coherent approach to oracy, language development and numeracy across the early years, which is integrated with our National Literacy Programme (NLP) and National Numeracy Programme (NNP) and assists our drive to reduce inequalities, we will:

- **develop resources** and **publish good practice guidance** for practitioners that will support them to take forward a number of key priorities. These include effective language and play schemes to promote language development, developing the home learning environment and oracy and language acquisition. Some resources are already available on the Learning Wales portal
- **support parental involvement in their child's language development** and encourage a joy of reading by giving all children appropriate 'Bookstart' reading materials

and providing guidance to all parents at their child's nine-month and 24-month health checks. **Additional materials and training** will be made available in Flying Start and Communities First areas to support our aim to reduce the impact of poverty

- **fund Cylchoedd Meithrin and Ti a Fi to provide Welsh-medium activities** for children from birth to school age, a social network for their families and support and encouragement for parents to read stories and sing with their children
- **fund Welsh for Families schemes** to support non-Welsh speaking parents who attend Cylchoedd Meithrin
- **support schools during the Foundation Phase** to work with parents to help their child at home with their literacy and numeracy skills through the Pori Drwy Stori Programme. Every school in Wales receives resources so that schools and families can work together on speaking, listening, writing, reading and numeracy in both English and Welsh.

Promoting parental engagement in learning

Parental engagement in a child's learning is a powerful lever for raising their achievement in school and has a significant impact on a child's outcomes and aspirations. We will, therefore:

- **develop guidance on effective parental engagement in learning** in partnership with practitioners, highlighting examples of what has worked, for schools, early education providers, Flying Start and childcare settings. The effective use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant will be a specific focus
- **promote the use of the techniques described in the Sutton Trust Toolkit** and the 2012 Estyn report on *Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools*
- **pilot approaches to Family Learning in the early years** to improve understanding of the best ways to help parents support their child's early learning and better prepare them for school
- **increase funding over the next three years for Family Learning Programmes** to provide support where low levels of literacy and numeracy are barriers to improving child development
- continue to support a **programme of adult community learning** to ensure parents have opportunities to improve their own learning so they have the skills they need to help their children
- **consider the recommendations of the review of funding of adult community learning**, which is due to report in autumn 2013, in relation to families with children in the early years and take relevant action.

Supporting parents to raise their children bilingually

Children benefit socially from speaking two languages by enabling them to participate more effectively in two cultures. This also applies to minority ethnic families where English or Welsh are an additional language. The 2011 Census results showed a decline in the numbers and percentage of Welsh speakers overall but an increase in Welsh speakers among three and four year olds.

We set out how we would support the growth of the Welsh language and bilingualism within families across Wales in the *Welsh Language Strategy: A living language: a language for living* (2012). We are actively taking this forward through:

- Twf, which aims **to increase language transmission rates in families** across Wales, through raising awareness of the value of Welsh or bilingualism and providing support and advice to parents about language transmission in the family and Welsh-medium education
- Tyfu gyda'r Gymraeg/Growing with Welsh, which is a pilot project in Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend and Caerphilly and aims **to promote bilingualism**, create a social network that will support parents, **increase parents' understanding and awareness** of the Welsh language as well as increasing their understanding of their important role in supporting their children's language development
- Mae Dy Gymraeg Di'n Grêt/Your Welsh is Wicked, which aims to **increase confidence and the use of Welsh** among parents who are reticent about using Welsh and change language customs in the family
- Cymraeg i'r Teulu/Welsh for the Family course which starts at Entry level **helping parents to use the language with their children from the start**
- Cymraeg o'r Crud (Welsh from the cradle) **sessions which are provided for new parents and their babies.**

For some families in Wales, English or Welsh is not their first language. For these parents English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is vital, it enables them to play an active role in their child's language, literacy and numeracy development during the early years. This can be a long and lengthy process and we are striving to provide as much support and opportunity as possible to enable individuals to gain the skills they need. As part of our commitment we will:

- **publish a policy statement setting out our priorities for the delivery of ESOL** in Wales before the end of 2013. The policy statement is being developed in partnership with key stakeholders and will aim to provide clarity on where providers should focus their delivery of ESOL.

Young children from minority ethnic families who are learning English or Welsh as an additional language, and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds who are underachieving or who are at risk of underachieving in primary school also need additional support to enable them to meet their potential and actively take part in their community. Local authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Services provide resources and training for schools, specialist teachers and teaching support assistants working with children from the age of three. In addition we will:

- **conduct an impact assessment** of work funded through the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and, based on evidence, refine the grant, make it outcomes focused and target it on where it will have greatest impact
- **commission research** in 2013/14 to identify the needs of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds who require Welsh language support in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, identify good practice and act on the findings.

Keeping children safe

There are a range of programmes and policies which can be defined as helping to keep children safe. Safeguarding and stable housing are seen as key components of ensuring children feel safe and are safe.

Safeguarding

It is important for a child's well-being that they feel safe. The Children Act 2004 requires all local authorities to establish Local Safeguarding Children Boards to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area and places responsibilities on agencies to work together to ensure that all children are protected – **safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility**.

The Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 sets out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children's welfare and protect them from harm in Wales. Further guidance is provided through the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008) which combines the shared knowledge and experience of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, provides common standards to guide child protection practice and addresses a wide range of safeguarding issues. This includes effective partnership working and communication between agencies which is essential to identify vulnerable children and help keep them safe from harm and abuse. Building on this we will:

- take forward the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill to further **strengthen safeguarding arrangements** in Wales
- establish a **National Independent Safeguarding Board** to advise on the adequacy and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, action to strengthen policy and on improvements to practice for both children and adults
- issue revised guidance to **support safeguarding in schools**.

Warm, safe, secure homes

Ensuring everyone has a stable, affordable home that is in good condition is a fundamental part of a fair and supportive society. It is about much more than putting a roof over someone's head. It affects people's health and well-being and their ability to find and keep a job. For children, it is an important foundation in terms of their development, confidence and well-being.

Children and families who live in social housing are more likely to be disadvantaged and it is vital that we ensure that this type of housing is of a good quality. To support this we will set targets, provide grant aid linked to approved plans, and monitor achievement through annual returns. This in turn will:

- ensure that all local housing authorities and housing associations **meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard** by 2020
- deliver an additional 7,500 **affordable homes** for people to live in which will help to create jobs and training opportunities in local communities.

Insecure accommodation or periods of homelessness have a negative impact on a child and prevent them forming and maintaining informal and formal networks with friends and statutory organisations such as schools and the health service. The causes of homelessness such as ill health (both mental and physical), domestic abuse and debt can also have a negative impact on a child's development. Preventing homelessness and instability in housing are key priorities. We already help vulnerable households sustain tenancies through the Supporting People Programme and support projects aimed at preventing homelessness through the Homelessness Grant Programme. The next steps are to:

- introduce a Housing Bill in autumn 2013 which, among other important issues, will focus on **preventing families from becoming homeless**
- **provide greater stability for children** and other victims of domestic abuse, through the Renting Homes White Paper and subsequent Renting Homes (Wales) Bill, by enabling them to remain in their own home.

4. High-quality early education and childcare

High-quality early education and childcare has an important role in supporting our drive to tackle poverty and inequality as set out in the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* and *Strategic Equality Plan*. Research tells us that high-quality early education and childcare produces greater long-term benefits for our children and strongly influences their future life chances. The right early education and childcare can help to tackle some of the more entrenched issues that result from living in deprivation, including low skills and poor health that will take time to overcome.

Accessible and affordable childcare enables parents to work and train which can help them contribute to the wider economy. Without this parents find it difficult to work and without a diverse workforce business growth can be held back. In a tough economic climate we need to get the balance right between high-quality provision that will ensure the best developmental outcomes for the child and affordable and flexible early education and childcare that supports parents' ability to work.

In Wales we already provide 12.5 hours a week of free childcare for eligible two to three year olds as part of the Flying Start Programme and a minimum of 10 hours a week of free early education for three to four year olds through the Foundation Phase. We also provide grants to fund targeted wrap-around and holiday childcare and to sustain the childcare market. We are committed to maintaining this investment. Looking to the future we will:

- **improve the quality of early education and childcare** focusing on four key areas – the experience of the child, the environment, leadership and the workforce
- improve the **flexibility, accessibility and affordability** of early education and childcare and work with the sector to address the key concerns of parents and providers
- support children through a **whole-phase approach to key transitions**
- **engage with the business community** to promote early education and childcare and family-friendly policies
- support and **develop the childcare market** in partnership with the childcare sector and local authorities to increase capacity and ensure sustainability.

The following indicators are set out in the *Programme for Government* and the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* as significant measures which can be used to assess progress:

- number of children benefitting from Flying Start nursery provision
- percentage of Flying Start children reaching their developmental milestones at age three
- percentage of Flying Start children registered to start Foundation Phase.

Improve the quality of early education and childcare

Our aim is for all early education and childcare settings in Wales to be of the highest quality with a specific focus on leadership, the workforce, the environment and the experience of the child. This will require an effective system of regulation and inspection, support for providers, parents able to easily access information about provision in their area and the quality standards they should expect. We have recently **published Flying Start childcare guidance** which sets out expected quality standards in Flying Start settings and can be used as a benchmark by all childcare providers. This goes some way to supporting our aim, but to take this further we will:

- **review current early years regulation and inspection** in 2013 and take relevant action (see Section 6)
- **pilot a Quality Judgement Framework** for use in nurseries in 2013–14
- publish a consultation paper on **improving childcare quality standards** and agree a way forward by June 2014
- **consult on the right approach for the early education and childcare workforce** in Wales in relation to minimum qualification levels, graduate leadership and continuous professional development (see Section 6)
- develop programmes, as part of the next round of EU Structural Funds (2014–20), to **improve the skills of some of the childcare and play workforce**.

Improve the flexibility and accessibility of early education and childcare

For early education and childcare to meet the requirements of families in Wales it needs to be of a high standard, available at the times and places where it is needed, at a price that parents can afford and available for children of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, abilities and needs. Current research shows that parents feel that cost is the principal barrier to accessing childcare. We currently provide support through Flying Start, Foundation Phase and the Out of School Childcare Grant to help address these gaps. However, we recognise a need to go further to meet the needs of parents and we will, therefore, look more closely at how we can improve:

- the flexibility of Flying Start and the Foundation Phase
- accessibility of early education and childcare
- access to financial support for wrap-around childcare, holiday and play provision.

Improve the flexibility of Flying Start

Our aim is for Flying Start to be recognised internationally as a strong and effective early

intervention and prevention programme. By maintaining our commitment to double the Flying Start Programme we will reach almost a quarter of all children in Wales under the age of four, providing the benefit of an intensive health visiting service, parenting support, early language development and free part-time quality childcare for two to three year olds.

Our early evaluation evidence suggests that Flying Start is having positive results. Headteachers report that these children settle more quickly and parental confidence has increased. This is an important initial outcome and we will:

- **monitor the long-term impact** of Flying Start and build evaluation evidence about programme effectiveness in order to inform future investment decisions as resources allow
- **issue guidance to local authorities on parenting** and enhance our data collection to allow us to monitor the effectiveness of the parenting element of Flying Start.

A very high number of children across Wales are taking up their Flying Start childcare places; uptake across the other key elements is good in a number of local authority areas. To ensure consistently high uptake, we will:

- **review the current Flying Start offers** by autumn 2013 to ensure maximum uptake of sessions while maintaining the emphasis on child development
- **pilot approaches within Flying Start childcare to offer parents greater flexibility**, particularly where this may help parents access work or training and pilot options to ensure maximum uptake of parenting courses and language and play sessions.

Improve the flexibility of the Foundation Phase (age 3–4)

Our ambition is for our universal Foundation Phase offer to be leading the way internationally in terms of the number of free hours of early education provided, flexibility of the offer, the quality of the curriculum and outcomes for our children. As resources allow our aim is to increase the number of hours of free early education, working with the sector to grow capacity in the system to meet demand.

The Foundation Phase statutory guidance for local authorities allows for provision to be organised flexibly based on their assessment of local need. In most local authorities the hours are offered in equal amounts over four or five days with parents limited to either morning or afternoon sessions only. Parents tell us that this approach can be a barrier to uptake. We will:

- **consider options to improve the flexibility of provision**
- **produce updated guidance for local authorities** to support them in improving the flexibility of the Foundation Phase offer to parents.

Improve the accessibility of early education and childcare

For some parents, inflexible opening times, a lack of holiday care, gaps in Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, and difficulty in finding childcare for disabled children are also real concerns. We will take the following actions:

- **research the needs of parents who work atypical hours**, as well as those who need additional support, and develop recommendations for future action
- **explore different models for wrap-around care for children**, including in and through schools, for term-time and holiday periods and make recommendations for further development
- work with Mudiad Meithrin and other providers through a range of grants to **increase the quality and amount of Welsh-medium childcare provision** so that parents have a choice in terms of the first language of the childcare and education setting their child attends
- require local authorities to plan for and provide **Welsh-medium early education and childcare** for children and families who want to receive their education in Welsh; we will monitor delivery through the childcare sufficiency assessments, childcare action plans and Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs).

Improve access to financial support for wrap-around childcare, holiday and play provision

Quality wrap-around childcare is essential to help support parents access work and training. Annually we provide £2.3 million to local authorities through the Out of School Childcare Grant. This enables them to provide wrap-around and holiday childcare and play provision for school-aged children between the ages of four and 18 where certain conditions are met. We recognise that more needs to be done to help parents manage childcare costs and, in the longer term, if funding becomes available we will look to make further investments to support those families that need it most. Ahead of this we will take the following action:

- **review the effectiveness of the Out of School Childcare Grant** and consider further options for greater wrap-around and holiday childcare and play provision
- commence the second part of Play Opportunities, section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which will put a **duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities** in their local area
- **consult on a Voluntary Childcare Approval Scheme** for over-eights' provision during 2013, to enable parents, where they meet the eligibility criteria, to claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit. We will act on the consultation outcomes in 2014
- work **with Job Centre Plus to improve awareness and parental uptake of financial support** for childcare, through supporting their staff with information and training.

Engage with the business community

The importance of childcare provision to the economy cannot be emphasised enough. As part of our wider economic strategy we will promote childcare and family-friendly policies. Our priorities will be to:

- **provide advice to micro and small businesses** on the benefits and practicalities of adopting family-friendly employment policies and the advantages of offering Welsh-medium and bilingual provision through the Business Wales Network and in collaboration with Chwarae Teg's services
- **explore the potential for and implications of encouraging businesses to offer surplus space to childcare providers** in order to provide childcare close to their work-based locations. A working group will be established in 2013 to examine the issues involved and produce recommendations on how this could be taken forward.

Support and develop the childcare market

Across Wales we have a vibrant and diverse childcare market which supports parents to work and train. We want to work with the sector and local authorities to support the development and increase the capacity and quality of the childcare market through a range of approaches. We will:

- run a campaign from autumn 2013 in two areas that need additional childcare capacity to **encourage new business starts in childcare** and offer a range of support, including tailored business advice and training to achieve childcare qualifications
- offer advice on the range of support available through Business Wales, to **develop the childcare market**, including support for childminders and childcare business expansion
- ensure **childcare is part of major regeneration or economic development** projects
- continue to develop the Social Firms Wales pilot project working to develop childcare provision and support to enable parents to participate in training or return to the workplace
- consider **testing childcare co-operatives** in areas that do not have sufficient childcare based on models run in other parts of UK.

5. Effective primary education

If we want a continuum of learning that tackles disadvantage and prioritises equality of opportunity for all learners then all of our primary schools must ensure that all children get the education they deserve, that they make the progress they should and achieve their aspirations. The Foundation Phase is available to all children in Wales regardless of their circumstances. We know that this phase in a child's life is extremely important because learning here puts the foundations in place for learning throughout school and life.

The actions set out in this section are aimed at:

- providing a **coordinated approach to helping schools to improve** – through the Improving Schools Plan and application of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)
- **strengthening the Foundation Phase** – we will undertake a stocktake of the Foundation Phase and its implementation to ensure language development, alongside literacy and numeracy skills, are at the heart of learning and that progression from Flying Start to the Foundation Phase is demonstrated. We will improve transition from home/Flying Start/childcare and from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 through whole-phase and whole-school approaches to the Foundation Phase and we will develop a more balanced approach to adult-/child-initiated learning
- **reducing inequalities** – by making improvements in the assessment and planning of provision for children with additional learning needs (ALN), and setting out our expectations for the use of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant, the Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children and the Pupil Deprivation Grant.

The following indicators are set out in the *Programme for Government* and the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* as significant measures which can be used to assess progress. Rates of:

- learner attendance in primary schools
- primary schools inspected graded as 'good' or 'excellent' by Estyn
- Year 2 learners (aged seven) assessed in Welsh (first language)
- learners achieving the core subject indicator (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science) at Key Stage 2, age 11.

A coordinated approach to supporting schools to improve

We are focusing on three priorities for improving educational outcomes for learners in Wales: improving literacy, improving numeracy and reducing the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes. To support schools in bringing about these improvements a range of reforms has been introduced underpinned by *Improving schools* (2012), the national implementation action plan for 3 to 16 education in Wales. It outlines our intention to:

- **move forward with a system of grading for primary schools** which will provide a coordinated approach to ensuring schools are supported and challenged to improve

- **make significant changes to the delivery of school improvement services** which aim to ensure all schools receive the right level of support and challenge
- **place school development plans on a statutory footing** during 2013/14 to ensure that all schools are taking responsibility for assessing their strengths and areas for improvement, analysing their performance, assessing future factors that may impact on them and setting out priorities and targets for improvement
- **review the expectations set out in the current national curriculum subject Orders** with phased implementation of any changes expected to commence from September 2014.

Strengthen the Foundation Phase

We want the very best outcomes for all learners regardless of their circumstances. Early evidence from the Estyn report *Literacy and the Foundation Phase*, published in September 2011, found that the impact of the Foundation Phase had been positive in the majority of schools, with five to six year olds achieving well. Similarly in the majority of schools where leaders and practitioners have implemented the Foundation Phase well, there is a focus on raising standards particularly in literacy. However, in some schools this is not the case. The report states that:

- leaders and practitioners are not understanding the principles and practice of the Foundation Phase
- in a significant minority of schools, there is not enough direct teaching of reading and appropriate opportunities for children to practise and use their reading skills are not always provided
- while the Foundation Phase in nearly all schools provides rich contexts and motivating opportunities for writing, the range and quality of children's written work in many schools is often limited because writing tasks are formulaic and undemanding.

To address these issues we will take the following action:

- undertake a stocktake of the Foundation Phase
- develop a more balanced approach to adult-/child-initiated learning
- improve key transitions through whole-phase and whole-school approaches.

Stocktake of the Foundation Phase

In *Building Resilient Communities: Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan* (2013) we made a commitment to narrow the gap in attainment levels between learners aged seven eligible for free school meals and those that are not eligible for free school meals who achieve the expected levels at the end of Foundation Phase, as measured by the Foundation

Phase indicator, by 10 per cent by 2017. It is crucial that we learn from the schools and settings that are breaking the link between disadvantage and poor performance and are demonstrating how they build on what has been achieved through Flying Start, as well as those that are stretching and supporting our most able learners. We will:

- undertake a **stocktake of the Foundation Phase** by March 2014.

Developing a more balanced approach to adult-/child-initiated learning

The Foundation Phase statutory curriculum is planned as a progressive framework that spans an age range from three to seven. At its centre is a whole-child approach to developing a child's skills and fostering positive partnerships with the child's parents and home. The framework is designed to reflect the developmental needs of young children, when progress is rapid, but often uneven. It does not, therefore, only focus on age-related outcomes. Rather it requires schools and practitioners to understand how a child develops and to plan a developmentally appropriate curriculum that meets the diverse needs of every child across the spectrum of ability.

To make sure that each child reaches their learning potential it is essential that they develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills. Key to this for all children in the Foundation Phase is practitioners understanding the principles of the Foundation Phase and achieving the right balance between providing direct teaching and practitioner-led learning and providing rich opportunities for child-initiated learning. To support this we will:

- **develop guidance** to help practitioners achieve this balance with case studies to illustrate how this is currently being done successfully in schools around Wales.

Improve transition through whole-phase and whole-school approaches

Transition from home, childcare or Flying Start to the Foundation Phase is an important time for children and their families. As part of a multi-agency approach, to help children move from one phase of learning to the next, improve standards and educational outcomes, and ensure that no child falls through a gap, we want to strengthen approaches to key transition times for a child and their family.

The way that Flying Start settings, pre-school and childcare providers, schools and the key professionals within those settings work together is critical. Heads of Foundation Phase within local authorities have said that where transitions are well managed children settle into school more readily. To support this we will:

- identify and **share good practice in sharing information and managing effective transitions** between schools and childcare settings – the initial focus will be on the transition from Flying Start to Foundation Phase
- work with maintained and non-maintained Foundation Phase providers to **develop guidance on effective cross-phase working**.

Estyn assessments and other evaluation evidence suggest that a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phase is the most effective way of raising standards, especially in literacy, planning and supporting children, parents and teachers to manage the changes as they move to Key Stage 2. We will take the following actions:

- **identify and share good practice to support leaders** and Key Stage 2 practitioners to understand the importance of the Foundation Phase and how it enables learning at Key Stage 2
- **ensure a whole-school approach to improving literacy and numeracy skills** through embedding the LNF across all Areas of Learning and through the use of outcomes from reading and numeracy tests to inform children's next steps in their learning. The Foundation Phase is a statutory part of the school curriculum and the focus on improving children's literacy and numeracy skills does not change the existing philosophy and pedagogy that underpins it
- **review training modules** on a regular basis to ensure a continued focus on the successful delivery of the Foundation Phase
- encourage the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) as an effective method of school improvement; we will develop a range of resources to **assist schools to develop effective PLCs** that can demonstrate impact on learner outcomes.

Reducing inequalities

Reducing inequalities is one of our major priorities and some of the key objectives are set out in the *Strategic Equality Plan*. These objectives include supporting disadvantaged learners, such as disabled learners, particular minority ethnic learners and boys from lower socio-economic groups to achieve their potential. The focus for helping reduce inequalities in the early years will be on:

- minority ethnic learners
- learners with additional needs
- the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG).

Minority ethnic learners

We will continue to tackle inequalities faced by certain minority ethnic learners by targeting the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) at those with the greatest need, including asylum seekers and refugees. The use of the MEAG to support children from the age of three in their language acquisition will continue so that their social and academic language skills develop in such a way as to give them full access to the curriculum. With the Grant for the Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children we will continue to support children aged three and above to access education. This includes European Roma children for whom English is an additional language, whose dual needs are recognised making them eligible under both this grant and the MEAG. To support teachers we will:

- **provide them with a curriculum resource** that celebrates Gypsy and Traveller heritage and culture so they can make the curriculum more relevant to Gypsy and Traveller children.

Learners with additional needs

To support learners with additional learning needs (ALN) we are working to bring forward significant reform of the approach to assessing and meeting their needs by:

- **replacing the current legislative framework**, replacing 'statements' with a more person-centred system for children and young people with ALN
- **extending the age range** to cover all learners with ALN from 0–25
- **introducing a multi-agency approach to assessment and planning** between education, health and social care agencies (including the third sector where relevant) for those with the most complex needs
- introducing a more consistent approach and emphasising the importance of preventing disagreement and disputes by establishing more empathetic **partnership working with parents, children and young people**, and establishing dispute resolution as a pre requisite to bringing forward a complaint to the SEN Tribunal in Wales
- providing **better access to information and support** – to achieve this, we will work with all other family support services including Early Support and Families First.

Our Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Task and Finish Group is working to **develop a framework for SpLD**. We aim to publish initial work by December 2014. As part of our work to support SpLD we will host an event, in autumn 2013, to showcase approaches to the early identification and support for learners with dyslexia.

Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)

Schools have an important role to play in helping to improve the outcomes for children from deprived backgrounds. We have introduced the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) amounting to more than £36 million in 2013/14. All of the money associated with the PDG will be directed to schools, to invest in effective approaches for tackling the impact of deprivation. This grant complements activities funded by the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG).

Detailed guidance has been issued to schools, local authorities and education consortia setting out the priorities for the PDG and the required outcomes. We will work closely with schools, local authorities and education consortia to make sure that the activities supported by these grants make a real difference to the life chances of those who need extra help. As part of that support we:

- have **devised a national training and development framework** for system leaders to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to help to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment

- are looking at introducing a requirement that in their use of the PDG schools **must apply evidence-based approaches** – the Sutton Trust research, for example, has identified different approaches to improving learning in schools and provides guidance on which are most appropriate for which settings and in which core subjects
- will **support schools to make effective use of the PDG**, highlighting best practice and strategies that are proven to be effective and have long-term, sustainable impacts
- will **develop guidance and best practice examples on engaging communities and families in their children’s education** to ensure that learning is relevant and extends beyond the school gate
- will **identify and share good practice** on making effective links between primary schools and the community and the best use of the new Communities First Pupil Deprivation Match Fund aimed at breaking the link between deprivation and attainment.

6. Raising standards

The relationships between local services and partners, schools, early years and childcare providers, local authorities, LHBs, regional infrastructure, the inspectorates, Welsh Government and national partners are important for enabling the whole system to work effectively so that our youngest children and their families receive the best possible start in life.

The actions set out in this section are aimed at strengthening the key partnerships and relationships of those working across the early years, and cover three priorities:

- **strengthening regulation and inspection** – we will review the current regulation and inspection arrangements for social care, childcare and early education
- **developing the workforce** – through training and opportunities for a range of professionals working across the early years, developing local, regional and national learning sets and developing a 10-year early years workforce plan
- **measuring progress** – through the introduction of a Health Outcomes Framework, the early years development and assessment framework and the addition of the Foundation Phase to the all Wales Core Data Sets.

Strengthening regulation and inspection

In June 2012 we announced our intention to publish a White Paper on proposals for the reform of regulation and inspection of social care services. Public consultation is anticipated to take place during autumn 2013, with the Bill being introduced in spring 2015. In general this legislation will cover:

- regulation and inspection of social services, covering service provision and duties of local authorities both for adults and children
- workforce regulation and training in social services.

We need a regulation and inspection system that supports continuous improvement and helps raise standards across the early years.

The early education and childcare inspectorates, Estyn and CSSIW, have already made changes to the way that they inspect. However, feedback from providers suggests the inspection system is not as integrated or mutually supportive as it could be. Current legislation does not permit a single inspection approach and joint Estyn and CSSIW inspections have proven impracticable. We have an opportunity to review these regulation and inspection arrangements and develop a system that supports our ambition to continuously improve standards and, where possible, reduces burdens on local authorities and providers. We will, therefore, take forward the following actions:

- **conduct a review of early years regulation and inspection** including the *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care* (2012) and take relevant action
- **consider changes to the duty on local authorities** to conduct Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

- **consider the responses to the consultation on proposals to amend regulations** in relation to the timing of Estyn school inspections (that was undertaken in spring 2013) and bring forward any necessary amendments to regulations
- **consolidate and clarify the law in relation to powers for intervention in schools** and local authorities to come into force at the end of 2013 and develop new statutory guidance on a similar timetable.

Developing the workforce

There are many professionals who may be involved with a family during the early years of a child's life – midwives, health visitors, school nurses, childcare and play workers, teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, doctors and dentists to name but a few. We want a well-trained, highly-skilled and supported workforce that works together as a Team Around the Family (TAF). Many aspects of workforce development and training are covered in other strategies and plans; it is for local commissioners, employers and leaders to ensure that workforce development and succession planning are in place. However, here we set out the key priorities for those working in the early years.

Whole workforce

Our aim is for children's rights to be embedded in all that we do to support children and their families. This is underpinned by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. To support everyone in the workforce, we have developed a short **online training module** that can be accessed at www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/rights/uncrc/onlinecourse/?lang=en

Health workforce

Health professionals have a significant role to play in the lives of every family during pregnancy and the early years. They undertake clinical training to ensure they meet the required standards to enter their chosen profession. Post-qualification health professionals, like many others, take part in continuous professional development (CPD) to maintain and update knowledge, and to develop specific skills. However, the content of curricula need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they are keeping pace with the health care needs of our population.

- Midwives now require the skills to enhance multi-agency collaboration and coordination of care as well as an increased knowledge of how to encourage and motivate behaviour change. To this end, midwives have been involved in a pilot training programme in motivational interviewing. This is expected to give midwives improved skills in encouraging behaviour change in pregnant women, particularly around smoking, healthy eating and healthy weight gain during pregnancy. The evaluation of this programme, during 2013, will be used to decide whether to roll this training out to all midwives and to include it in the undergraduate curriculum.

- Health visitors are reviewing their education programme to ensure it maximises their ability to contribute to the health and happiness of children and their families. The work will be completed by December 2013.
- Discussions will take place during 2013 around how to improve collaboration between midwives and health visitors. This will include opportunities for shared learning.
- During 2013 dental teams in the General Dental Services and Community Dental Services will have access to *Delivering Better Oral Health* (2013) an evidence-based oral health resource. It is designed to support teams to deliver up-to-date oral health information to their patients and carers. Training in its use will be offered by the dental postgraduate department of Cardiff University.
- Schemes such as Twf and Bookstart training are succeeding in bringing the importance of language transmission within families into the work of midwives and health visitors. They also contribute to raising awareness about the advantages of being bilingual. We need to build on this good work, improving the way we support health sector workers and communicate the advantages of bilingualism to the target audience.

Childcare and play workforce

Childcare has been designated as a priority area for work-based learning provision and funding has been agreed for an increased number of childcare qualification places to support the Flying Start expansion. In addition, the Care Council for Wales, as part of its agreement to develop the childcare and early years workforce, will:

- **work with higher education institutions to develop existing degree-level qualifications** in order to increase the number of graduates working within the childcare sector
- **ensure apprenticeship frameworks meet the needs of the sector** and are compliant with new legislation, including a new Level 5 framework for advanced practitioners and leaders/managers
- develop and promote publications to **support the childcare workforce**, particularly the *Induction Framework* and *First Year as a Manager in Early Years*
- develop and support the delivery of a **CPD framework for Flying Start practitioners** to ensure consistency in staff development programmes across Wales
- through the Care Council for Wales' **Welsh Language Action Plan** help the early years and childcare workforce develop skills to work in Welsh-medium and bilingual childcare settings and provide Welsh-language opportunities for children in English-medium childcare settings.

Research suggests that settings with more highly qualified staff are of higher quality and their children make more progress. The 2012 Childcare Workforce Survey highlighted the gap between childcare workforce qualifications across Wales. It is therefore essential that we support the childcare workforce to obtain the qualifications and the skills they need. We will:

- consult on the right approach for the childcare workforce in Wales in relation to **minimum qualification levels, graduate leadership, continuous professional development and career pathways**, agree next steps and **develop a 10-year workforce plan**
- **ensure an adequate supply of Welsh-language practitioners in the sector** through the National Sabbatical Scheme, Cam wrth Gam, the current Geiriau Bach and any future schemes as well as the use by local authorities of the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG)
- work with the Sector Skills Councils, through existing funding, for example the Sector Priorities Funding Pilot, **to increase the number of play workers and childcare staff with qualifications at certificate and diploma Level 3**
- as funding allows, **create professional development and learning networks** across the sector initially prioritising childminders.

For the play workforce we will continue to work with SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for play work, and with Play Wales to ensure that there are sufficient play workers qualified at the required level to meet the needs of the play sector as a whole and for wrap-around care and holiday play schemes.

Support staff in schools

In Wales, we currently do not have specific qualification requirements for support staff in schools, including those involved with supporting teaching and learning. To address this issue we will:

- undertake a review of the current **qualification requirements for support staff** working in schools at different levels within the classroom and develop options for future qualification requirements by October 2013 – this will be in partnership with unions and employers
- publish proposals for the introduction of **minimum qualification requirements** for specific support staff in schools in January 2014.

In addition we will:

- **undertake a comprehensive exercise in mapping needs and specialist provision** in relation to ALN, during 2013, which will be used to inform workforce and policy development.

Team Around the Family (TAF)

One of Families First's key aims is for every local authority, working with its partners, to put in place Teams around the Family (TAFs). This is a prevention and early support approach bringing together a wide range of professionals to work with a family to help with their needs and build family resilience. Findings from the Families First interim evaluation, shared at the first national learning set in January 2013, suggests local authorities and service providers acknowledge that they will need to work in a different way, for example four local authorities have adopted a multi-locality team-based approach. To support further development of these new approaches we will:

- **assess and monitor local plans** to ensure that services are working together
- **encourage greater join-up across programmes** including Flying Start, Communities First, Family Learning Programmes and the Integrated Family Support Service.

Social services workforce

Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action (2011) sets out the future direction for the development of the workforce, building upon the successes of the last 10 years, including in recruitment and retention, quality standards and strengthened partnerships between employers and providers. The social work degree, the first year in practice and the content of training have also moved us on significantly. However, we need to go further and through the programme to implement sustainable social services we will:

- develop a 10-year **workforce strategy**
- improve the quality of leadership through nationally-led, **senior management development** to stretch existing leaders and develop leaders of the future
- put in place clear **career pathways** both for social work and social care
- **develop national standards for continuous professional development and learning** for social workers, and consider the same for other professionals working in social care.

Sharing information

The sharing of personal information among partner providers is essential to the delivery of effective outcomes in early years provision. Sharing of personal information can be challenging given barriers such as fears over legal duties, the incompatibility of information systems and processes and inconsistency in sharing practice within and between sectors, all of which affect willingness and confidence to share.

We will continue to encourage improvement and expect the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) to be used as the basis for sharing where appropriate. A single process can increase transferability of skills and expertise and efficiency, reducing duplication

in information sharing protocol (ISP) development so that once an ISP is assured it can be adapted for a service with the same purpose and partners elsewhere, reducing development time. For example, Flying Start ISPs have been developed by both Torfaen and Denbighshire and can be adapted for use in other areas. For more information see www.waspi.org

The Public Service Leadership Group (PSLG) of chief executives recognise that practice needs to improve. They have issued a collective leadership challenge to chief executives to improve their information sharing and use the WASPI as the single basis for this. As a first action chief executives and their heads of information governance are meeting to look at barriers to sharing and how they can be resolved, individually and in collaboration.

To support this improvement the Welsh Government has funded the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) for a two-year period to advise on WASPI use, local ISP development and staff training. The Welsh Government will continue to monitor improvement in local practice and use of the WASPI.

Measuring progress

Development and assessment in the early years

Effective systems are able to measure progress over time and we need to consider how best to design an approach that collects information once but uses it many times.

There is currently no nationally consistent approach to measuring a child's progress, or to the sharing of information on a child's progress between agencies. This means that while a child may be assessed by different professionals at different times during the early years, the picture of their developmental progress between birth and seven years of age is incomplete. We are tackling this as a priority by:

- working towards **a more coherent system of assessing**, tracking and monitoring the development and progress of children in the early years, and improving information sharing between agencies
- piloting assessment tools, including a new tool for the Foundation Phase, to track progress from entry to the end of phase. A development and assessment framework will also be developed during 2013–14. Subject to evaluation, they will be rolled out across Wales during 2014–15. They will be suitable for use by a range of service providers and practitioners to assess and track a child's progress at relevant points from birth to age seven.

In addition, primary healthcare services including immunisation, health promotion and protection, screening and developmental checks, will participate in **a review in 2013 to recommend the most effective content and method of child health surveillance**, configuration and workforce skills.

Monitoring progress in school

The use of data in schools is important and it forms the starting point for Estyn inspections. Welsh Government provides schools with analyses of performance at the end of Foundation Phase in the All Wales Core Data Sets as part of the policy for school self-evaluation. The All Wales Core Data Sets contain analyses of performance by gender and entitlement to FSM as well as contextual data about the ethnic background of learners, the number of learners with SEN and the number of learners with English as an additional language (EAL). The data includes trends over time and comparisons with other schools in the family (a group of schools facing a similar level of challenge), the local authority average and the Wales average. Schools can therefore see how well different groups of learners are performing and address any areas for development. This plays an important role in promoting continuous improvement in maintained sector early years settings. There are a minimum of three school targets that reflect priorities identified through the self-evaluation process and schools are required to publish the most recent report on school performance at the end of the Foundation Phase in the Governors' Annual Report and School Prospectus.

We have recently launched a **new website called 'My Local School'** (www.mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk). Its main focus is to provide access to **data for parents**.

Alongside this, to support improvements in understanding and measuring progress across the Foundation Phase:

- the new **reading and numeracy test data** should provide a more consistent perspective on progress at a national level and we will collect information in relation to the Year 2 cohort in the Foundation Phase.

7. Taking the Early Years and Childcare Plan forward

In this plan we have set out an ambitious and stretching programme for change. Effective delivery will require partners at national, regional and local level to work more closely together, have clarity about organisational and individual roles and responsibilities, and balance available resources with the need to achieve shared outcomes. We have set out our priorities and expectations but recognise that responsibility for delivering statutory and other key services rests with local authorities, LHBs and health trusts, and their network of partners. However, to support this we will:

- develop and consult on **an early years outcomes framework** which will take account of existing frameworks that support children and families across the early years
- develop an **integrated all Wales child health and mental well-being programme** that ensures evidence-based interventions that promote the desired outcomes are universally available, to address and reduce inequalities
- work with Public Health Wales to ensure there are strong **links between this Early Years and Childcare Plan and all health-based interventions** including screening, health education, immunisations and child safety and evaluations conducted by the Early Years Programme and Observatory
- expect **local service boards to include early years outcomes** within their Single Integrated Plans and strategic needs assessments, particularly in relation to the statutory child poverty duty.

Where there is a national policy development which requires new expertise, speed of delivery or standardisation across Wales (for example, for the development of an early years development and assessment framework or the National Literacy and Numeracy Programmes), we will commission development support and work closely with key partners on implementation. Where there is a clear need for building capacity or local provision is weak we will commission support to help fill significant gaps.

Many partners need to work together to deliver the vision set out in this Early Years and Childcare Plan. Figure 14 summarises the key actions that partners need to take in order to ensure that children across Wales have the very best start in life. Figure 15 brings together the key outcomes for the early years and Figure 16 shows the high level timeline for achieving the plan's key commitments.

Figure 14: Summary of key actions in *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
Children's health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the good practice toolkit to plan services and ensure continuity for the child. • Consider opportunities to take part in the Baby Friendly Scheme. • Schools and pre-schools to work to become healthy settings. • Promote child mental health in all settings. • Implement effective child safety measures across all settings. • All pre-school settings to follow guidance in <i>Mind the germs! Infection Control Guidance for Nurseries, Playgroups and other Childcare Settings</i> (2006). • Schools to use <i>Teach germs a lesson! Infection Control Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools</i> (2006). • School nurses undertake and oversee the child measurement programme in all primary schools, and ensure data is entered locally. • Encourage uptake of the Designed to Smile (D2S) Programme in all settings including schools and pre-school organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LHBs to implement direct access to a midwife. • LHBs to share good practice in maternity services to improve local delivery. • LHBs to pilot and implement the all Wales child health and mental well-being programme and the personal child health record. • Child health professional leads and heads of midwifery to develop and implement guidance on child development and mental well-being checks. • LHBs, local authorities and partners to implement and evaluate effective child safety measures across all settings. • LHBs to implement the Baby Friendly Scheme locally supported by Public Health Wales. • Public Health Wales to provide guidance and data to support the child measurement programme, All Wales Perinatal Survey (AWPS) and child death review. • Public Health Wales and Cardiff University to support delivery and evaluation of the Designed to Smile (D2S) Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish guidance for midwives, health visitors and school nurses to ensure a seamless transition for children and families. • Publish practical guidance and advice on improving direct access to a midwife. • Develop an integrated all Wales child health and mental well-being programme and the personal child health record. • Work with child health professional leads to develop outcome indicators and performance measures. • Develop an all Wales child safety strategy. • Develop an integrated approach to school nursing performance indicators and outcome measures. • Take forward the child measurement programme. • With the Community Dental Service, improve uptake of the Designed to Smile (D2S) Programme. • Establish a National Independent Safeguarding Board. • Commence part 2 of the play sufficiency legislation.

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
Children's health and well-being		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health Wales, local authorities and LHBs to support the extension of the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme to additional pre-school settings. Local authorities to conduct play sufficiency assessments. 	

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
Supporting families and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in Families First learning sets and continue to develop effective practice. Through Communities First, help hard to reach groups make use of the services they need. Childcare providers and schools to work closely with parents to support their child's learning. Schools to actively use the Pori Dwry Stori resources. Schools to use the Sutton Trust toolkit, and other available resources, to increase the impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively engage in Families First learning sets and share effective practice. Local authorities to support improved coordination at a local level by linking Flying Start, Families First and Communities First projects to support families and children. Local authorities and further education institutions continue to deliver adult community learning, prioritising the delivery of basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. Establish new regional Safeguarding Children Boards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out research into parenting attitudes. Create Families First national, regional and local learning sets. Develop a National Outcomes Framework for Social Services. Publish guidance on effective parental engagement in learning. Roll out Pori Dwry Stori to support parents to help their children with their literacy and numeracy skills. Pilot approaches to family learning in the early years. Publish the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy statement. Improve quality of social sector homes via Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). Legislate to provide greater housing stability for children.

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
High-quality early education and childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Start settings to implement the new childcare guidance. • Family Information Service to ensure parents get the advice they need about childcare provision and available financial support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities to ensure that Flying Start settings are implementing the new childcare guidance. • Local authorities to take account of and plan for Welsh-medium childcare and education in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Flying Start childcare guidance. • Carry out a review of specific grants. • Publish information for parents on financial support for childcare. • Issue guidance to local authorities on parenting. • Pilot initiatives to support and develop the childcare market. • Consider options to improve flexibility of Foundation Phase provision and produce guidance. • Research the needs of parents regarding childcare.

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
Effective primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools to establish a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phase. • Use the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), tests and available support, to plan their curriculum, monitor learner progress, inform self-evaluation, report to parents and to identify where support for learning is needed. • Administer the reading and numeracy tests, analyse and use the data at individual learner and group level to outline the next steps and to address learning gaps and problems creatively and proactively to raise standards. • Use the new reading and numeracy tests at whole-school level to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortia to place literacy and numeracy at the heart of support and challenge for school improvement. • Consortia to lead the identification and deployment of outstanding teachers of literacy and numeracy. • Monitor schools' progress in reading and numeracy tests, provide support and challenge appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and share good practice about a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phase. • Publish guidance on developing a more balanced approach to adult-/child-initiated learning • Roll out the training and development framework for system leaders. • Develop the Sutton Trust toolkit for use in Wales. • Legislate to amend current legislation for statementing and assessment of children with additional learning needs (ALN). • Develop an approach for the national grading of primary schools. • Publish high-quality resources and teaching materials in literacy and numeracy. • Develop and roll out a programme of national support for literacy and numeracy. • Refine the reading tests and develop numeracy tests.

	Local partners	Local authorities, LHBs, regional partners	Welsh Government
Raising standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all staff to complete the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) online training module. • Take part in a professional learning community (PLC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work together to support children and families across the early years. • Local service boards to include early years outcomes within their strategic needs assessments and single integrated plans. • Respond proactively to areas for improvement identified through inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a review of early years regulation and inspection. • Review the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) duty on local authorities. • Take forward proposals to amend the timing of Estyn school inspections following consultation. • Clarify regulations relating to school interventions. • Develop a 10-year early years workforce plan. • Consider the minimum qualification requirements for childcare workers and support staff in schools. • Develop a Social Services Workforce Plan. • Encourage the use of the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI). • Work towards a more consistent approach to development and assessment in the early years. • Consult on an Early Years Outcomes Framework.

Figure 15: Outcomes for the early years supported by the commitments and actions in Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan

As set out above we will develop and consult on an Early Years Outcomes Framework. We recognise the need to take account of a number of frameworks already in place or under development, for example the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services in Wales and the following outcomes set out in our Programme for Government, Tackling Poverty Action Plan and Strategic Equality Plan.

Children's health and well-being

- Infant and child mortality rates.
- Percentage of live births with a birth-weight of less than 2,500g.
- Percentage breastfeeding at 10 days.
- Dental caries at age five.
- Percentage of children, aged two and five, who have been immunised against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).
- Hospital admission due to injury.
- Percentage of children at ages three and five whose general health is good or very good.
- Percentage of children who are normal weight at age five.

Supporting families and parents

- Percentage of Flying Start children reaching or exceeding their developmental milestones at two years and at three years.
- Percentage of six year olds who speak Welsh at home.
- Percentage of social housing meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020.
- Number of homeless families, with children, in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Number of homeless households which include dependent children.

High-quality early education and childcare

- Number of children benefitting from Flying Start nursery provision.
- Percentage of Flying Start children reaching their developmental milestones at age three.
- Percentage of Flying Start children registered to start Foundation Phase.

Effective primary education

- Learner attendance in primary schools.
- Percentage of primary schools inspected graded as 'good' or 'excellent' by Estyn.
- Percentage of Year 2 learners (aged seven) assessed in Welsh (first language).
- Percentage of learners achieving core subject indicator (English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science) at Key Stage 2, age 11.

Figure 16: High level timeline for achieving the commitments in Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan

	By Dec 2013	Jan–June 2014	July–Dec 2014	2015	2016 and beyond
Children's health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Implement Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Dec – develop good practice guidance for midwives, health visitors and school nurses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Dec – all Wales child injury strategy developed □ Dec – 500 pre-schools involved in the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme (H&SPSS) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Dec – all maternity services have attained the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Award
Supporting families and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Oct – research into parenting attitudes and practices □ Develop and pilot Tyfu gyda'r Gymraeg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Oct – introduce the Housing Bill □ Jan – test the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services □ Jan – pilot early years family learning programmes □ Apr onwards – share Communities First best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Jan – roll-out the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services □ Jun – publish guidance on effective parental engagement in learning □ Jun – pilot early years family learning programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 2015 – implement Housing Bill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 2020 – Welsh Housing Quality Standards are met
High-quality early education and childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Sept – pilot flexible approaches to Flying Start childcare and parenting courses □ Sept – develop pilot activity to support new childcare businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Sept – consider flexible approaches to Foundation Phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ June – consult on improving childcare quality standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Sept – publish looked after children attainment strategy □ Apr – pilot models of wrap-around childcare 	
Effective primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Publish adult-child-initiated learning guidance □ Undertake a stocktake of the Foundation Phase □ Oct – review of childcare/early years regulation and inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Introduction of primary school grading model 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Dec – develop an initial framework for specific learning difficulties (SpLD) □ Dec – take forward early years workforce plan recommendation following consultation 	
Raising standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Sept – develop and pilot the early years assessment tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Jan – delivery of post graduate MDE training of dental teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ July – consult on Childcare Sufficiency Assessments □ Sep – begin to roll-out the assessment tools 		

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Annex B: Programmes and strategies

Key Welsh Government programmes and strategies that are already in place which support delivery of our vision include the following.

A living language: a language for living (Welsh Language Strategy 2012–17)

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/welshlanguage/publications/wlstrategy2012/?lang=en

A vision for health visiting services in Wales

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/reports/healthvisiting/?lang=en

A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities (Welsh Government, 2012)

www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/housewhitepaper/?lang=en

Building Resilient Communities: Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/socialjustice/publications/taking-forward-tack-pov/?lang=en

Childcare policy statement: Nurturing Children, Supporting Families

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/nurturing/?lang=en

Communities First

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/regeneration/communitiesfirst/?lang=en

Creating a Play Friendly Wales – statutory guidance

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/play/?lang=en

Delivering community learning for Wales

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/communitylearning/deliveringlearning/?lang=en

Fairer Health Outcomes for All

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/reports/fairer/?lang=en

Families First

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/familiesfirst/?lang=en

Flying Start

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/flyingstart/?lang=en

Foundation Phase

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation_phase/?lang=en

Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales (National Housing Strategy)

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/strategy/publications/strategydoc/?lang=en

Improving Schools Plan

www.learning.wales.gov.uk/news/sitenews/improvingschools/?lang=en

Mind the Germs! Infection Control Guidance for Nurseries, Playgroups and other Childcare Settings (pre-school settings)

www.wales.gov.uk/hcwsbsite/healthchallenge/organisations/media/germs/?lang=en

National Literacy Programme

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/literacynumeracy/literacyprogramme/?lang=en

National Numeracy Programme

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/literacynumeracy/numeracyprogramme/?lang=en

National Oral Health Plan

www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/healthsocialcare/6436017/?lang=en

Our Healthy Future

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/ocmo/healthy/?lang=en

Renting Homes White Paper and Bill

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/rentingbill/?lang=en

School Nursing Service Frameworks in Wales

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/reports/nursing/?lang=en

Strategic Equality Plan

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/equalityactatwork/?lang=en

Strategic Vision for Maternity Services in Wales

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/maternity/?lang=en

Tackling Poverty Action Plan

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/socialjustice/publications/tacklepovactionplan/?lang=en

Teach Germs a Lesson! Infection Control Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/protection/communicabledisease/publications/teachgerms/?lang=en

Ten Year Homelessness Plan

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/publications/homelessnessplan/?lang=en

Together for Health

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/reports/together/?lang=en

Together for Mental Health

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/strategy/?lang=en

Twf

www.twfcymru.com/?lang=en

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/rights/uncrc/?lang=en

Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/businessandconomy/regeneration/vvpframework/?lang=en

Welsh Housing Quality Standard – guidance

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/housing/qualitystandard/?lang=en

Welsh-medium Education Strategy

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/welshmededstrat/?lang=en

Annex C: Glossary

Term/phrase	Definition
Absolute poverty	Children living in households where income is below 60 per cent of the median income in 2010/11 adjusted for prices.
Active learning	Children are active and involved in their learning rather than passive recipients of information and knowledge. It is a first-hand experience that motivates, stimulates and supports children in the development of skills and concepts, including language acquisition.
All Wales Core Data Sets	The All Wales Core Data Sets provides schools with a consistent and balanced suite of contextual analyses of performance at the end of Foundation Phase and each key stage (as relevant for each school). The All Wales Core Data Sets is intended to support school self-evaluation and performance improvement, and inform work with local authority and Consortia Improvement Officers and Estyn.
Care	The provision of what is necessary for the development, well-being and protection of a child.
Childcare	Care for the child by a carer other than a close family member.
Child(ren) in need	<p>A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority.</p> <p>The child's health is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired without the provision for the child of such services, or the child is disabled.</p> <p>'Family' in relation to such a child includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom he/she has been living.</p>
Continuous provision	This is an approach to planning learning and development through provision of learning areas both indoor and outdoor that enables children to progress.
Disadvantaged families	Families who are physically, mentally, socially and/or economically disadvantaged and/or living in highly deprived neighbourhoods.
Early Years	The period of a child's life from pre-birth to seven years (up to and including the day before the child's eighth birthday).
Early education	Foundation Phase (does not include Flying Start) early education offer usually for three to four year olds.
Foundation Phase	The statutory curriculum for three to seven-year-olds in Wales.
Fuel poverty	A household is judged to be fuel poor if it would need to spend more than 10 per cent of its income on all fuel – to heat particular rooms within the home to a specified minimum temperature for set periods during the day and night, to provide hot water and to cook.

Term/phrase	Definition
Funded non-maintained settings	Non-maintained childcare providers (private or voluntary sector, including social enterprise, CiCs) funded by the local authority to provide early education (Foundation Phase).
Green Paper	Green Papers are consultation documents produced by the Government. Often when a government department is considering introducing a new law, it will put together a discussion document called a Green Paper. The aim of this document is to allow people both inside and outside Parliament to debate the subject and give the department feedback on its suggestions. (www.parliament.uk)
Home learning environment	A range of activities that parents undertake with pre-school children that are related to improvements in children's learning and have a positive effect on their development. For example, reading, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, taking children on visits and creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home.
Improved outcomes	Improved outcomes relate to the positive impact on circumstances and life chances for children, and families as a result of help and support via a range of projects, programmes and interventions.
Income benefit households	Income benefit is defined as any state benefit assistance particularly if individuals are sick, have a low income or dependent children. For the purpose of Flying Start, an income benefit household with children aged 0–3 includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income support households • pension credit households • job seeker allowance households • tax credit households below a low income threshold.
Integrated working	Individuals from a range of different professions working together and collaboratively to effect positive change for the individuals and families that they support. (This goes beyond being co-located – it is a positive way of working.)
Looked after children	Children who are the subject of a care order, interim care order or emergency protection order or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours.
Maintained sector	Schools and nurseries maintained by the local authority.
Material deprivation	Material deprivation is classed as having insufficient physical resources – food, shelter, and clothing – necessary to sustain a certain standard of life.

Term/phrase	Definition
Multi-agency	A number of agencies – at least two – working together to meet needs/deliver services for the benefit of recipients, working to develop consistent language, and often effecting real and pecuniary economies of scale. Or it could be defined as a number of different services working collaboratively to provide support to children and families.
Non-maintained sector	Private or voluntary settings (some of which receive funding from the local authority to deliver the Foundation Phase early education offer for three to four year olds).
Parental engagement	Parents pro-active in supporting their child’s development.
Play	Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development.
Positive parenting	A mutually respect-based relationship between parents and children, with constructive reinforcement of ‘good’ behaviour and using alternative, non-physically punitive, ways of developing and maintaining discipline.
Poverty	A long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) that are taken for granted by others in society.
Practitioners	This generic term refers to the adults that work with children across the early years and can include childcare workers, teachers and classroom assistants.
Quality childcare	The components of good quality childcare include the quality of adult-child interactions; staff knowledge and understanding of how young children learn; ratios and group sizes that allow appropriate interaction with children; and supporting children’s home learning environment.
Reduce inequalities	Close the gap in measurable, identified outcomes (levelling up not down).
School ready (school readiness)	A child’s understanding of six basic concepts: colours, letters, numbers/counting, sizes, comparisons and shapes. The state of early development that enables an individual child to engage in and benefit from learning from compulsory school age (five years).

Term/phrase	Definition
Safeguarding	<p>Safeguarding (Children) given in Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting children from abuse and neglect • preventing impairment of their health or development • ensuring that they receive safe and effective care <p>so as to enable them to have optimum life chances.</p>
Team Around the Family (TAF)	<p>Multi-agency groupings, comprising two or more partners, ensuring a whole-family approach to improving the outcomes for families and family members, identifying and building on the family's strengths. TAFs feature either a key worker or lead professional and should develop preventative approaches.</p>
White Paper	<p>White Papers are documents produced by the Government setting out details of future policy on a particular subject. A White Paper will often be the basis for a Bill to be put before Parliament. The White Paper allows the Government an opportunity to gather feedback before it formally presents the policies as a Bill. (www.parliament.uk)</p>