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Building a Brighter Future:

Early Years and Childcare Plan

Progress report 2013–14

Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan

Progress report 2013–14

Audience

This document is aimed at everyone who leads, commissions and delivers services for children and families from pregnancy up to age seven (the end of 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

The document sets out progress made to date by the Welsh Government against the commitments made in *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* published in 2013. The report also outlines priorities for the year ahead.

Action required

None – for information only.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en

Related documents

Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan (2013)

www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130716-building-brighter-future-en.pdf

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Ministerial foreword

Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan brought together policies and programmes relating to children and families in Wales for the first time. Progressing the actions within the plan has helped us to become more joined up as a government. Work is taking place in a collaborative way across departments and with partners to help achieve the ambitions that we committed to this time last year. The publication of this report gives us an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved to date and review our priorities for the coming year.

It is clear that we have a lot to celebrate. The hard work, commitment, time and resource invested across the early years, childcare and play sector is evidenced in the long list of achievements outlined in this report. We need to ensure that these all have beneficial, positive outcomes for children in the early years, setting the foundations for them to reach their full potential.

We want to continue to move the early years agenda forward in a collaborative way, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of partners. This is why we have established the Early Years Partnership Board. The board is currently overseeing the development of the Early Years Outcomes Framework. They have also provided advice and examples of good practice on key issues such as effective transitions into the Foundation Phase and early years workforce development. We really value the input we have received so far.

The plan set out the direction of travel for the next ten years so the achievements made to date are just the beginning of fulfilling the vision we outlined: for all 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. This report identifies further key actions that we will take over the coming year. The next progress report will be published in July 2015 and a full review will take place in 2016.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ultimately improve the life chances of our children.



Huw Lewis AM
Minister for
Education and Skills



Jeff Cuthbert AM
Minister for
Communities and
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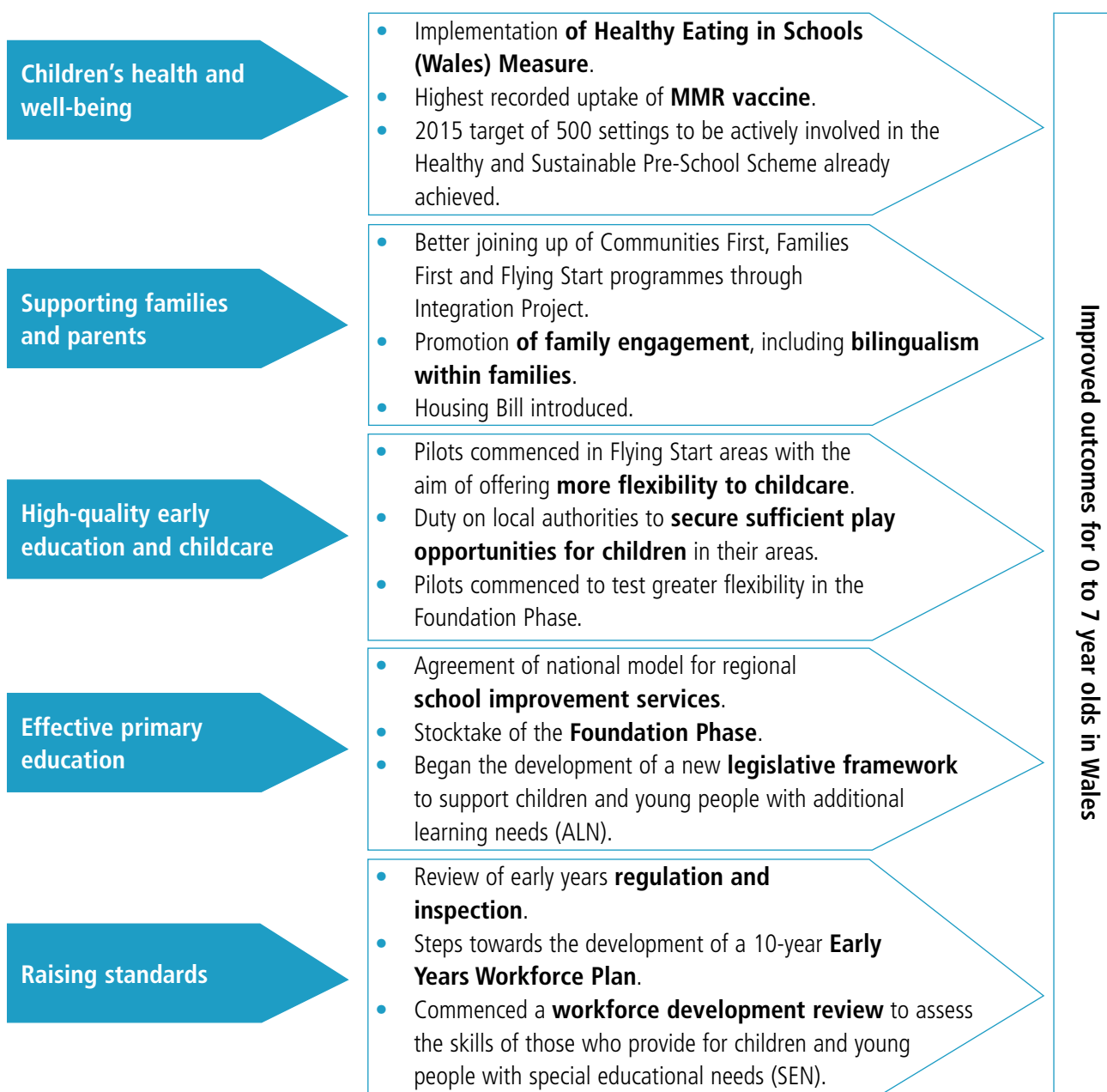
Introduction

In July 2013 *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* was launched. Drawing on evidence it explained why it is so important to invest in the early years. It set out our commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales. We will not repeat what was said in the plan; that is still the driver of our work on early years and childcare for the next nine years.

The purpose of this report is to set out an overview of the action that has been taken in the last year and to outline our key priorities for 2014–15. In order to demonstrate what progress has been made this report follows the same structure as the plan.

Key themes

Key outputs in 2013–14



1. Children's health and well-being

As stated in the plan, being healthy at birth and throughout the early years is one of the most important indicators of well-being in children. We want children to have a good start in life and continue to ensure that we are working together to promote healthy choices and lifestyles.

Promote healthy choices and lifestyles

- The second part of Play Opportunities, section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, will place a **duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities** for children in their areas. The duty will commence in July 2014 and be accompanied by the publication of statutory guidance, *Wales: A Place Where Children Can Play*. Assessments of play sufficiency take place every three years with the next due in 2016. Local authorities also produce Play Action Plans which are updated each year and available on their websites.
- In order to **improve infant and child nutrition and health**, midwives work to increase the numbers of mothers who start and continue to breastfeed their baby.
- Maternity and healthvisiting services across Wales are making steady progress towards **UNICEF UK Baby Friendly accreditation**. Currently 59 per cent of births in Wales and 30 per cent of families with a new baby receive maternity and health-visiting services with this award. All services are on track to achieve accreditation by the end of 2015.
- Provisions in the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure were implemented in 2013 so that local authorities and governing bodies are required to take action to **promote healthy eating and drinking** in maintained schools in their areas. Supporting statutory guidance will be issued in the summer term 2014.
- Our Fresh Start Wales campaign, which **encourages adults not to smoke in cars** carrying children, was completed in March 2014. We have consistently stated that we will consider the possibility of legislation to ban smoking in cars when carrying under-18s, once the impact of the campaign has been assessed. We have commissioned studies of children's exposure to second-hand smoke in cars, with the results available later this summer, as well as monitoring public attitudes and behaviours.
- The 2011/12 dental health survey of five year olds shows the proportion of children with dental caries at age five has reduced from 47.6 per cent in 2007/08 to 41.4 per cent in 2011/12. Through the Designed to Smile (D2S) Programme the Community Dental Service works in disadvantaged areas to **promote good oral health and daily tooth brushing** with fluoride toothpaste in schools and nurseries. By the end of March 2013 87,318 children in 1,394 schools and nurseries were participating in the supervised tooth-brushing element of the programme. Independent research and programme evaluation shows that overall schools are extremely positive about their experience of taking part in the programme, and supports the findings of the 2011/12 survey which shows a 17 per cent decrease in dental decay in those children attending schools participating in D2S. A parental survey showed that around a third (31 per cent) of

children were more likely to brush their teeth at home in the morning since taking part in the scheme.

- The target of 500 settings to be actively involved in the **Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme** (HSPSS) by 2015 has already been achieved. We also set the target that 10 per cent of maintained schools will have achieved the **Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes** (WNHSS) National Quality Award by 2015, rising to 20 per cent by 2020.
- The Programme for Government commitment to achieve 95 per cent uptake of one dose of MMR vaccine in children by two years of age was exceeded during 2013/14 reaching 96.5 per cent across Wales, up from 94.6 per cent in 2012/13. Uptake of two doses of MMR by age five years also continues an upward trend increasing to 92.6 per cent from 89.6 per cent in 2012/13. These are the **highest recorded annual uptake figures for MMR**. The improvement is a considerable achievement and reflects the efforts invested by health boards and GPs to increase MMR uptake in light of the measles outbreak and an increased awareness by parents¹ of the risks associated with measles.

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

- Work has been carried out in conjunction with Public Health Wales to develop an evidence-based outcomes framework which will **measure the overall health and well-being of children**. The feasibility of this is being tested in the Plentyn Gwent Child Project to allow refinement of the model before future rollout throughout Wales. This will align with the Early Years Outcomes Framework that is also in development.
- In December 2013 the recommended protocol for the Healthy Child Wales/Plentyn Iechyd Cymru Programme was agreed by an expert advisory group. This will deliver a **consistent, coordinated Wales-wide approach** to support child health and well-being in the early years, promote **early identification of developmental problems** and opportunities for **effective intervention**. Next steps for implementation include establishing a project implementation group to work with health boards and NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS). It is the intention to implement the new programme across Wales during 2014–15 and it will be reported on in the July 2015 progress report.

Integration of services

- The integration of health services for children, young people and young adults with additional learning needs (ALN) is being planned. This aims to ensure that learners with health needs, medical needs or sensory deficits are given appropriate integrated support as part of their individual development plan.

¹ '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.

- Good practice guidance has been published to support midwives, health visitors, school nurses and other professionals to work together and share information so they can provide a **coordinated, smooth transition for children and families between individual services and phases of development**. This forms an integral part of the Healthy Child Wales Programme.
- The Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty opened four **Regional Tackling Poverty Events** held across Wales in February and March 2014. The purpose of the events was to develop a **stronger and more consistent approach to working together towards shared objectives**. The audience for the events included local authority Anti-Poverty Champions as well as representatives from local health boards, Communities First, Flying Start and Families First teams.
- Feedback from delegates confirmed that the regional events were very useful, in terms of bringing key partners together to consider how they could align their outcomes to focus on those who need their services most. These events focused on two key priorities of the Welsh Government's *Tackling Poverty Action Plan* (2013) – reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) and **reducing the number of babies born with a low birth weight**. Feedback from the events also confirmed that the Welsh Government's commitment to partnership working needs to remain strong and consistent, to be able to make a difference to the lives of the poorest communities across Wales.
- There will be further events in the autumn. These will focus on the progress made against the two aforementioned priorities. There will also be an opportunity to focus on another key priority within the Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

2. Supporting families and parents

Strong supportive families and communities

- As well as the annual Family Information Services (FIS) conference, regional learning sets were held throughout 2013 to share best practice and improve delivery. The FIS meet as a network on a quarterly basis to continue this process of learning.
- As part of this work a contract is in place to support and **further improve the quality of services delivered by the FIS across Wales**. The standard for delivery, Raising Standards, is currently being revised to ensure further alignment between FIS, tackling poverty and other wider Welsh Government policies. This revised standard will be published in summer 2014.
- The **National Outcomes Framework for people who need care and support and carers who need support** was published in June 2014. This sets out the most important well-being outcomes for people and the outcomes indicators used to measure whether well-being is achieved. The National Outcomes Framework and our overall approach to improvement will shine a spotlight on what needs to be done to improve people's well-being.
- A public consultation will be held in late summer 2014 on the development of a new strategy to support our objective of **raising the educational attainment of looked after children**. The objective is to improve our ability to coordinate activity and share good practice to meet the needs of learners in the early years and beyond.
- As stated in the plan, families and communities play a pivotal role in the way a child develops. There are already a number of programmes that are designed to support families, children and the communities they live in including Communities First, Families First and Flying Start. In a difficult economic climate it is important that these all work together to provide the best value for money and at the same time ensure that families' diverse and challenging needs are met. The Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty is working with stakeholders to create a shared outcomes framework. The aim is to deliver optimum alignment of these programmes and systemic joint working at both a local and national level.

Bumps and Babes, Afan Valley

The Afan Valley was identified as an area where there were high incidences of low birth weight babies. Communities First developed the Bumps and Babes Programme to help improve this. The programme is also aligned with Flying Start.

The programme is an eight-week course, bringing together expectant and new parents in the area, with workshops taking place across the Afan Valley and the Communities First Team deliver sessions on a range of subjects. These include healthy eating, savings, loans and other money issues and physical exercise.

The classes are delivered in an informal and friendly way. One participant said, *"It is very nice having the other classmates here to support me. A couple of the other girls are breastfeeding and if you need to talk to anyone about anything, there are other women here sharing the same experience."*

Helping parents engage in their child's learning

- In order to encourage **effective parental engagement in learning** we have appointed expert practitioners to help develop guidance which will include examples of what has been proven to work well. For example, offering short courses on healthy eating/cooking or woodworking for parents to encourage them into the school, then building relationships and offering further courses on supporting their children's education. Rather than being a static document, we will be considering ways of making the guidance more dynamic and interactive and aim to publish this later in the year.
- A **family engagement communications strategy** has been launched. This includes the four-week TV and Facebook campaign, Education Begins at Home, launched at the beginning of May 2014. In addition the latest version of *How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase? – A guide for parents and carers* has been published and is now available.
- In July we published updated guidance for the **Flying Start parenting entitlement**. The guidance was developed based on evidence gleaned from stakeholders and from research, including from the National Evaluation of Flying Start.
- Alongside this we have developed a **Framework of parenting support principles** which sets out our expectations and principles on **how parenting support should be provided**, including good practice approaches to delivery. The guidance is intended for those who have a direct or indirect role in, and responsibility for, providing parenting support. The guidance was published in July.
- Funding continues to increase for the **Family Learning Programme (FLP)** to provide support where low levels of literacy and numeracy are barriers to improving children's development. The FLP grant has been increased for 2014–15 (£1.83m, compared with

£1.72m in 2013–14) to enable local authorities to continue to offer a range of family learning support.

- Detailed assessment of the future direction for FLP provision is currently in progress, in light of the findings of a scoping project undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Government by NIACE Dysgu Cymru.
- Support is ongoing for a **programme of adult community learning**. This provides parents with opportunities to improve their own learning so they have the skills they need to help their children. Due to reductions in the amount of funding allocated to Adult Community Learning for 2014–15 providers have been asked to focus on a curriculum which addresses key priority areas of Adult Essential Skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and digital literacy. This provision will be focused on those most in need.
- In line with the *Welsh Language Strategy: A living language: a language for living* (2012), we are actively **supporting the growth of the Welsh language and bilingualism within families across Wales**. Information about Twf, which aims to increase language transmission rates in families across Wales, has been given to parents through a range of methods during 2013–14. This includes 11,015 contacts with 5,098 parents within clinics across Wales, and 4,628 parents attending Amser Twf (a series of informal sessions for parents and babies). Information has also been given through marketing resources including the distribution of 36,000 Twf maternity folders to expectant mothers across Wales.

Feedback from parents involved in Twf continues to be positive:

“It’s been very good to get the opportunity to speak and sing through the medium of Welsh.” Parent, Llandudno.

“Baby massage has been excellent – helped with colic and to get to know other Welsh mothers in the area.” Parent, Denbigh.

“Thank you very much – I have thoroughly enjoyed every session and have learnt a lot of new songs.” Parent, Denbigh.

- Following their development, piloting and evaluation, the Welsh for the Family course and the Cymraeg o’r Crud sessions are available throughout Wales as part of the general provision of the Welsh for Adults Centres. The Welsh for the Family course is tailored to **allow parents, family members, friends or anyone working with children to learn Welsh**. Approximately 1,500 learners a year follow these courses or sessions and work is being undertaken to develop and grow this provision further.

- Every school in Wales continues to receive resources through the Pori Drwy Stori Programme so that **schools and families can work together** on speaking, listening, writing, reading and numeracy in both English and Welsh.
- Tyfu Gyda'r Gymraeg/Growing with Welsh is a pilot project in Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend and Caerphilly which aims to **promote bilingualism**, create a social network that will support parents, **increase parent's understanding and awareness** of the Welsh language as well as increasing their understanding of their important role in supporting their children's language development. During the last year field officers have worked with over 60 families in the pilot areas. We are committed to increasing this to a further 180 families during the next year.
- The roll-out of Mae Dy Gymraeg Di'n Grêt/Your Welsh is Wicked continues; 71 parents have been part of the project in the last year and over 90 per cent of those who returned feedback questionnaires noted that they have felt **more confident in using the Welsh language**.

"These sessions have been brilliant in giving me the confidence to use the Welsh I already have but has got rusty. My main aim was to be able to speak Welsh at home with my two young boys and also to be more comfortable discussing school matters with the teachers. Since starting this group I have spoken Welsh at the school and am also using it with neighbours, in shops and at home. Diolch."

Your Welsh is Wicked – End of year report 2013–14

- Following a public consultation a policy statement has been published setting out our **priorities for the delivery of ESOL in Wales**. The aim of this is to provide clarity on where providers should focus their delivery of ESOL.
- Following a review of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant, a public consultation exercise was held to inform how the grant could be run to best effect. This resulted in changes to the grant regime. A new, more robust monitoring and reporting framework was introduced for local authorities to complete on their use of the funding to make it more focused on outcomes.
- Research was undertaken into the needs of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds who require Welsh language support in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools. The research findings are under consideration and will be used to focus policy development to better meet needs.
- A research report *Ethnic Minority Pupils – Evidence Review and Practice in Wales* undertaken in 2013 and published in June 2014 brings together evidence on the factors involved in shaping differential experiences of the education system for learners from ethnic minority backgrounds, alongside practice in Wales.

- Research is being undertaken on good practice in engaging with Gypsy and Traveller families with a view to improving school attendance and educational attainment among Gypsy and Traveller learners. The results of this research will be published in the summer.
- A policy statement *Minority ethnic achievement in education in Wales* (2014) has been published which describes how educational outcomes for minority ethnic learners, including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population, can be improved. The statement sets out how we will work together with regional consortia, local authorities, schools and families to make a difference to minority ethnic achievement.

Keeping children safe

- In May 2014 the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Bill received Royal Assent. This will further **strengthen safeguarding arrangements** in Wales.
- As stated in the plan, children and families who live in social housing are more likely to be disadvantaged and we need to continue to ensure that this type of housing is of a good quality. To support this:
 - all social landlords have confirmed that they will meet the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020**
 - over 4,474 **affordable homes** have been built during this term of government. We have committed to delivering a total of 7,500 affordable homes by the end of the term (May 2016).
- The Housing Bill was introduced in November 2013. Subject to it being passed by the National Assembly for Wales, it is on track to receive Royal Assent this summer. In addition to addressing a range of housing issues that will make a difference to people's lives, the Bill will result in more action that help to **prevent families from becoming homeless**.
- The Renting Homes Bill is on schedule for introduction into the National Assembly for Wales in 2015. This will provide **greater stability for children** and other victims of domestic abuse by enabling them to remain in their own home.

3. High-quality early education and childcare

Improve the quality of early education and childcare

- A pilot **Quality Judgement Framework** for use in nurseries ran from January to March 2014. This took place in 43 settings across Wales. The key findings were reported to the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in April 2014. CSSIW are now considering further piloting and plans for future roll-out.

Improve the flexibility and accessibility of early education and childcare

- In the plan we committed to doubling the Flying Start Programme; therefore reaching almost a quarter of all children in Wales under the age of four. At any time in 2012–13, 23,579 children were in receipt of Flying Start services in Wales. Ninety per cent of offers of childcare in a Flying Start childcare setting were taken up during 2012–13.
- Based on the unvalidated management information received for the nine months to December 2013, we are on track to meet the target number of Flying Start beneficiaries for 2013–14, with over 27,000 children benefitting in these first nine months of the year. This data is currently undergoing validation and data for the entire year will be formally published in July 2014.
- We continue to **monitor the long-term impact of Flying Start** both through evaluation activities and analysing data collected from local authorities.
- Summary statistics for the Flying Start Programme were published for the first time during summer 2013. In 2012–13:
 - 82 per cent of children in the programme reached, exceeded or were within one age band of their developmental norms at age two, while 55 per cent met or exceeded their milestones at this age
 - 83 per cent of children in the programme reached, exceeded or were within one age band of their developmental norms at age three, while 55 per cent met or exceeded their milestones at this age.
- Two specific examples of our evaluative work are the following reports on Early Language Development which were published in May:
 - *A review of research evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to promoting early speech and language development*
 - *A review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start.*

These reports will inform the development of detailed guidance setting out clear expectations for local authorities to follow to improve the delivery and monitoring of the Early Language Development entitlement of Flying Start. This guidance will be published in November 2014.

- In May 2014 pilot approaches commenced within Flying Start areas in order to **offer greater flexibility to childcare**, particularly where this may help parents access work or training. These will run until July 2015; the outcomes will be reported in the 2014–15 progress report.

Flying Start childcare

Catherine is a lone full-time parent to three children, two of whom are under five. She has used Flying Start childcare with both of her youngest children at a local Family Centre.

Her daughter Rachel has cerebral palsy, often has to use a wheelchair and rarely meets children outside the family.

Catherine reported that she had noticed a big difference in Rachel's confidence and ability to interact. Without Flying Start she feels that Rachel would have started school being nervous about mixing with other children.

(Information taken from *Flying Start qualitative research with high need families*, Pope et al. (2013).)

- In 2014 pilots to improve the **flexibility of provision of the Foundation Phase** began in four local authorities, namely Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire. These will run until July 2015 and consideration of the next steps will follow.
- A Rapid Evidence Research Assessment was carried out during the spring into the childcare needs of **parents who work atypical hours or have additional needs support**. The findings of this initial high-level research are currently being considered and will inform a further, more in-depth research analysis of wider parental needs in relation to childcare. This will be undertaken during the summer.
- In order for parents to have increased opportunities for their children to have **high-quality childcare through the medium of Welsh**, funding continues to be provided to Mudiad Meithrin, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and Wales Pre-School Providers Association (WPPA). The Mudiad Meithrin contract for 2014–15 has many targets to increase current provision by establishing new settings and also

looking to extend the offer at current settings. It also includes models to introduce Welsh-medium provision in English-medium settings, to dovetail with other programmes such as 'Un, Dau, Tri – Hwyl a Sbri' and to market Welsh-medium provision.

- We require local authorities to plan for and provide Welsh-medium early education and childcare for children and families who wish to receive their education in Welsh. This requirement is monitored through the local authorities' Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. The **needs of Welsh-speaking families** are specified as those requiring special consideration as part of the assessment.
- Local authorities are also required to measure the demand for Welsh-medium education and respond by planning adequate provision in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). The WESPs are a key vehicle for creating an **improved planning system for Welsh-medium education**. Local authorities are expected to provide continuity and progression of Welsh-medium provision from the early years through each key stage of a child's education.
- We need to ensure the best use of resources to help address the needs of parents when seeking out of school provision. We are therefore undertaking a **review of the effectiveness of the Out of School Childcare Grant** this summer. Wraparound and holiday childcare and play provision will be considered.
- A **review of the duty on local authorities to conduct Childcare Sufficiency Assessments** is being undertaken to ensure the assessment process is fit for local and national purposes, and is aligned to other planning processes. We will carry out a public consultation in August 2014 on any proposed changes.
- During 2013–14 we made £1.25m available in grant funding to local authorities to prepare for the commencement of the duty and to increase play opportunities. The intention was to **support the provision of more play opportunities** for all children, with particular consideration for children living in low income families or areas of deprivation, children living in rural areas, and those with diverse needs.
- We are engaging with Job Centre Plus and the FIS in relation to **improving awareness and parental uptake of support for childcare**.

Support and develop the childcare market

The plan highlights the importance of engagement with the business community and the promotion of childcare and family-friendly policies as part of the wider economic strategy.

- To assist, steer and develop this area of work a consultation group has been formed. The group has met twice since July 2013 and is attended by external childcare professionals. This forum provides expert advice on the childcare market with a view to attaining childcare sustainability.

- The following local authorities are taking part in pilots to improve childcare capacity by specifically addressing identified business support requirements:
 - Anglesey
 - Blaenau Gwent
 - Gwynedd.
- Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP), the Welsh Government's overarching *Regeneration Framework*, published in March 2013 with National Outcomes aligned with those of Community First. Early years and childcare is recognised within the framework and followed through into the guidance for applicants.

Affordable childcare – £227,000 Vibrant and Viable Places Funding

Wrexham VVP area

Two council-owned buildings on the outskirts of the town centre will be redeveloped to become affordable childcare centres. The flagship centres will offer childcare training, apprenticeship and volunteering opportunities, directly supporting the programme's aim to increase employment levels.

Further funding opportunities from the VVP Programme also look to have the early years and childcare element as a core principle. The VVP Tackling Poverty Fund which sees seven settlements in our most deprived communities eligible for £1m of investment has these areas as key projects for support.

4. Effective primary education

A coordinated approach to supporting schools to improve

As underpinned by *Improving Schools* (2012), the national implementation action plan for 3–16 education in Wales, a range of reforms have been introduced in order to support schools to improve; focusing particularly on literacy and numeracy skills, and reducing the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes.

During 2013–14 we have:

- reached agreement to adopt a **national model for regional school improvement services** which ensures that local authorities provide school improvement services through a consortia rather than as individual local authorities. This will ensure that expertise and resources are pooled and best practice disseminated, as well as ensuring that school improvement services are delivered in a consistent way across Wales in order to avoid some of the duplication that was previously taking place
- run a public consultation on draft regulations governing **school development plans (SDP)** that require all schools to set out their strategic priorities for improving school performance and how they intend to address them in a single planning document. The SDP will also set out how the school intends to develop its staff in order to achieve its priorities, with Regulations coming into force during the autumn term of the 2014/15 academic year
- run a public consultation on the review of assessment and the national curriculum. The consultation sought views on proposed changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements, aimed at **strengthening and supporting the teaching of literacy, numeracy and wider skills** across key phases and stages of education, from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4. Specifically, we have consulted on proposed revisions to the Areas of Learning (AoL) for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, and Mathematical Development, and programmes of study (PoS) for English, Welsh and mathematics for Key Stages 2 to 4. Consultation responses have been considered and the final versions of the AoLs and the PoS will be published in autumn 2014, in readiness for statutory implementation in September 2015
- appointed Professor Donaldson to lead a wide-reaching and independent review of assessment and the national curriculum. Professor Donaldson will articulate a **clear, coherent vision for assessment and the national curriculum in Wales from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4**. The review will build on the developments that are already underway to ensure they form part of a **relevant, challenging and rewarding curriculum which is fit for the 21st century**. On 16 May Professor Donaldson launched a 'call for evidence', responses to which will form an important part of the evidence base for his recommendations. Professor Donaldson will report his findings to the Minister for Education and Skills at the end of the year

- commissioned a new interactive case study focusing on the **impact of professional learning communities (PLCs)**. It is hoped that this will encourage the development of PLCs as an effective method of school improvement. The case study will be published on the Learning Wales website in the summer term.

Strengthen the Foundation Phase

We remain wholly committed to the Foundation Phase ethos and its approach to teaching and learning. The Foundation Phase in Wales is about making learning relevant and enjoyable while at the same time ensuring that children develop the vital skills that underpin future learning. Play has a key role in developing these skills through a structured approach to teaching underpinned by careful, child-centred planning – this is a fundamental part of the Foundation Phase.

In order to strengthen the Foundation Phase the following activities have taken place.

- The Foundation Phase continues to undergo a **long-term evaluation** by the WISERD (Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods) research centre at Cardiff University.
- Five thematic summary reports were published earlier this year with further summary reports due to be published over the summer. The final report is due to be published in the autumn. We will need to carefully consider the recommendations falling from that report along with the findings from the Foundation Phase stocktake and other ongoing reviews.
- Early evidence from the ongoing Foundation Phase evaluation and from Estyn thematic reports has been positive and early indications from those delivering the Foundation Phase show that there is a **positive reported impact on our youngest learners, in particular around well-being, attitudes and confidence.**
- A **stocktake of the Foundation Phase** commenced in September 2013, led by Professor Iram Siraj. The findings of the stocktake were submitted in March 2014, making recommendations about how the Foundation Phase can be strengthened. It looked at language development, literacy and numeracy skills; the impact on children subject to socio-economic deprivation; variability in the quality of leadership and workforce; effective transitions and progression from Flying Start into Key Stage 2. The stocktake report was published in May 2014 and its recommendations will be considered alongside the findings of other ongoing reviews and evaluations.
- As part of the development of an Early Years Development Assessment Framework, a Data Collection and Sharing Task and Finish Group including representatives from education consortia, NHS, local authorities, schools and the non-maintained sector has been set up. The group will develop and agree data/information that should be transferred from Flying Start settings to Foundation Phase settings and identify how this

information would be utilised in the Foundation Phase to **strengthen approaches to key transitions for a child and their family**.

- In line with the review of assessment and the national curriculum in Wales, the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) is being embedded across all Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase. Practitioners will be able to plan effectively to **improve children's literacy and numeracy skills** within the existing philosophy and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase, while meeting their statutory duty to deliver the LNF.

Reducing inequalities

Our focus in reducing inequalities in the early years is on:

- minority ethnic learners
- learners with additional learning needs (ALN)
- learners from low-income households.

Minority ethnic learners

An online curriculum resource *Travelling together: Resources to promote the integration of Gypsy and Traveller culture into the national curriculum* (2014) has been published which celebrates Gypsy and Traveller heritage and culture. It is intended that this will increase culturally relevant teaching, help to overcome bullying, and support and encourage school attendance.

Learners with additional learning needs (ALN)

To support learners with ALN we are reforming the approach to assessing and meeting their needs by:

- introducing a **new legislative framework**, for supporting children and young people with ALN. A series of workshops with stakeholders were held in autumn 2013 and the White Paper, *Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs*, was issued for consultation in May 2014. The White Paper explains how our proposals will create:
 - a unified legislative framework to support learners aged 0 to 25 with ALN
 - an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions
 - a fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.

The responses to the consultation will be essential to shaping the detail of the provisions to be included in a draft Bill. We anticipate that a Bill, including these legislative proposals, will be introduced to the National Assembly for Wales by 2015 at the earliest. The dates will be subject to the First Minister's annual announcement of his legislative priorities for the year ahead which will be made this July

- **developing a framework for specific learning difficulties** (SpLD). A well-attended Dyslexia Networking event was held in October 2013. Delegates had the opportunity to network, share knowledge and experiences, and view some software resources provided by, or used by, organisations to assist children with dyslexia. A task and finish group has been established to develop the framework. The group's activities have focused on the scope of the SpLD agenda, the wider policy context, current data, definitions for SpLD and identifying priorities for the framework. The following two guidance documents for schools are to assist teachers to support learners sitting National Reading Tests and will be published by September 2014:
 - *National Reading Test question analysis – Initial indicator for specific learning difficulties*
 - *National Reading Test guidance – Developing supporting strategies for specific learning difficulties.*

Learners from low-income households

- A **Deprivation Programme** – *Rewriting the future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* – has been developed. The programme has four key themes which are:
 - Family and community engagement
 - Early years
 - High-quality learning and teaching
 - High expectations and aspirations.

The programme includes a call to action for schools, local authorities and regional consortia, and makes commitments which will be reflected in a forthcoming implementation plan and outcomes framework.

- Schools receive funding through the **Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)** to support initiatives to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Schools are expected to use evidence-based approaches, such as those described in the *Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Sutton Trust Toolkit* or Estyn's ten strategies that effective schools in challenging circumstances do well. New guidance for schools, *Pupil Deprivation – Short guidance for practitioners*, was issued in December 2013.

Other work to help schools make effective use of the PDG includes:

- a webinar in March 2014 which included a presentation by a member of the EEF Sutton Trust on the use of the toolkit, and video case studies of effective interventions in Welsh schools
 - *Guidance for using the Pupil Deprivation Grant – What Really Works?* (2014)
 - support for the regional consortia to deliver conferences and workshops on use of the grant
 - commissioning the regional consortia and Wales Centre for Equity in Education to develop best practice case studies which will be available on the Learning Wales website.
- Ipsos Mori and WISERD are conducting an **ongoing evaluation of the impact of the PDG** and part of this evaluation includes which sources of evidence, such as the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit, schools are using, and how effectively the schools measure the impact of their interventions.
 - In March 2014 the Minister for Education and Skills appointed Sir Alasdair MacDonald, former headteacher of Morpeth High School in Tower Hamlets, as Raising Attainment Advocate. Sir Alasdair MacDonald will work with schools and consortia to support and inspire them in **tackling the link between poverty and academic under-achievement**, ensuring that learners from deprived backgrounds achieve their potential.

5. Raising standards

Strengthening regulation and inspection

- An independent **review of current early years regulation and inspection** was undertaken by Professor Karen Graham of Glyndŵr University. The review report will be published in summer 2014 and its recommendations will be considered alongside the findings of other ongoing reviews and evaluations.
- A public consultation will run from July to September 2014 seeking views on the **duty on local authorities to conduct Childcare Sufficiency Assessments**. The responses will be analysed in autumn 2014 and they will inform next steps. Implementation of any changes is envisaged in spring 2015.
- We have **laid new regulations relating to Estyn inspection** following a joint Estyn and Welsh Government consultation on the issues (undertaken during 2013). The amended regulations are due to come into force from September 2014, addressing the current predictability of inspection. They will also amend the length of time that providers have to prepare a post-inspection action plan. This will help providers to plan for improvement with pace and urgency following the publication of their inspection reports.

Developing the workforce

- Through the All Wales Health Visitor Group, **health visitors continue to review their education programme** to ensure it maximises their ability to contribute to the health and happiness of children and their families.
- The publication of the third edition of *Delivering Better Oral Health* is due in summer 2014. The Department of Health in England is leading this work with Welsh Government input. In the meantime version 2 remains extant and available to dental teams in Wales. It is designed to support dental teams deliver **up-to-date oral health information and advice to patients and carers**. Publication of version 3 will be supported by dental team training by the dental postgraduate department of Cardiff University.
- The training programme 'Un, Dau, Tri – Hwyl a Sbri' has been designed for early years practitioners. The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and the Welsh Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA) receive grant funding to visit settings to **promote the development of Welsh language skills and introduce the Welsh language to children** within the settings. During these visits they will be expected to provide information about the training on offer through this new programme, offer taster sessions, and identify suitable candidates to attend the courses. The main purpose of the grant is to provide support for the Welsh language training of practitioners in English-medium non-maintained early years settings. The course aims to improve the confidence of practitioners in using basic Welsh with children under five. The Cymraeg Meithrin course offered through the Welsh for Adults Centres is also designed to develop the skills of early years practitioners.

Un, Dau, Tri – Hwyl a Sbri, Wrexham

The 'Un, Dau, Tri – Hwyl a Sbri' training programme was delivered in a day nursery within a rural area on the outskirts of Wrexham; 13 practitioners took part in the training. The practitioners consisted of the nursery owner and manager as well as 11 other staff members who worked within various rooms in the nursery caring for children between the ages of six months and eight years.

"Since doing the course it has given us the confidence to use the Welsh language with the babies and it is now incorporated into our daily routine. The babies love the Welsh songs and have responded well to the stories, and we are now confident in using the simple Welsh commands throughout the day with the babies. We have also had positive feedback from parents within the setting. When they come into the baby room and see the Welsh songs up on the walls, they are really pleased to know that we are using Welsh with the children, and are keen to hear about which songs/stories we have been using, so they can use them at home."

Baby room practitioner

"It has refreshed what I already knew and has given me the confidence to use it. We have had really good feedback from the parents, with one parent telling me that they would like to send their child to a Welsh school."

Pre-school practitioner

"The group as a whole really enjoyed the course and had lots of fun. The staff have put into practice lots of the things they have learnt, right through the nursery from the babies to pre-school. The children have thoroughly enjoyed it and have started using it at home. We would all recommend that other nurseries take part in the Welsh Language Programme."

Deputy Manager

- We are committed to improving outcomes for children by raising skills and standards across the early years, childcare and play workforce. In support of this, the Care Council for Wales carried out a survey of the early years, childcare and play workforce in the spring. We have brought together a reference group of key external stakeholders to evaluate issues facing the sector and offer solutions. Taking proposals from this group, as well as evidence from the Foundation Phase stocktake, the review of early years regulation and inspection, and the survey results into account, we will **develop a 10-year Early Years Workforce Plan**, setting out a strategy to fulfil our long-term ambitions for all those working in early years, childcare and play in Wales. Where we can, we will draw on European Social Fund (ESF) resources to support this up-skilling agenda. A consultation on the right approach for this workforce will commence in September 2014.

The quality of Welsh-medium provision and the extent of Welsh language use in non-Welsh-medium schools will also be considered as part of the 10-year Early Years Workforce Plan.

- In the plan we committed to undertake a review of the **qualification requirements for support staff** working at different levels within the classroom. In September 2013, a reference group was set up which has explored what skills and knowledge those staff who work as learning support workers in the classroom should have to equip them for their role. The group considered the skills and knowledge that should be included as requirements for different levels of qualifications that should be available to teaching and learning staff in Wales.
- The work produced by the reference group is a good benchmark to start exploring options that could be developed to set the content and requirements for future qualifications. We will now be seeking the views of a wider group of stakeholders who have a role in the development and delivery of qualifications as well as employers, current learning support staff and unions.
- We are focusing on workforce planning and development to raise the capacity of teachers and schools to **better meet the learning needs of learners with SEN**. A workforce development review has commenced to assess the skills base of the general education workforce across Wales in relation to those who provide universal provision to children and young people with SEN. This review will be completed by July 2014. In addition, an assessment of workforce planning needs within specialist services provision commenced in May 2014 with completion expected in November 2014.
- With a view to improving the quality of leadership within the social services workforce, the Social Services Improvement Agency and the Care Council for Wales have developed **management development programmes for social work and social care managers**. A National Team Manager Development Programme (TMDP) has been successfully running since 2010 and over 300 students have undertaken the programme. Contracts for both the TMDP, along with the emerging Middle Management Development Programme (MMDP), will be awarded in July 2014. We anticipate that the TMDP will continue under a new contract from spring 2015 with the MMDP beginning in January 2015.

Career pathways have been developed for social work. The Care Council for Wales has consulted with social care managers to develop clear career pathways for social care.

- During 2013 a survey of Welsh employers to assess their **current and future need for Welsh language skills** was completed with the final report, *Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors*, published in April 2014. The survey specifically targeted the care and childcare sectors in Wales. **Sixty-eight per cent of childcare employers considered that increased Welsh language skills would be beneficial for their organisation.**

There was a high demand for Welsh language skills in the recruitment process in this sector; such skills were considered desirable for 59 per cent of vacancies, and childcare was also the sector most likely to experience hard-to-fill vacancies resulting from a lack of Welsh language skills. The results of the survey will influence future Welsh Government skills policies and programmes to ensure that these programmes **meet the future Welsh language skills needs of employers**.

Measuring progress

As stated in the plan, 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. The following progress has been made since the publication of the plan.

- The development of the **Early Years Development and Assessment Framework (EYDAF)** has continued. It was originally the intention that the development of the EYDAF, a single overarching 0–7 assessment framework and a suite of linked assessment tools which can be used to chart children's progress, would be introduced from September this year. However, it is important that the findings of the review of assessment and the national curriculum in Wales are taken into account and that the on-entry assessment profiles are aligned with these findings. It is therefore the aim that the on-entry assessment tool will now be introduced on a statutory basis from September 2015.
- In the Foundation Phase work to develop draft **on-entry assessment profiles** for Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity and Physical Development Areas of Learning has been completed and are due to be trialled with pilot schools. The timetable for development of draft profiles for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development Areas of Learning is being undertaken alongside the review of assessment and the national curriculum in Wales.
- The **Healthy Child Wales/Plentyn Iechyd Cymru Programme** will be accompanied by more consistent, Wales-wide data collection on healthcare needs, immunisation, health promotion and protection, screening and developmental checks. This will provide more consistent information to parents via the 'red book', allow better liaison with education services, and improved monitoring of population needs and outcomes.
- Local service boards now include **early years outcomes within their Single Integrated Plans** and strategic needs assessments. Compliance with this is monitored.

6. Taking the Early Years and Childcare Plan forward

The plan presents an ambitious and stretching programme for change. It is important that we continue to evaluate the impact and value of these early years policies and programmes so that we can learn from areas that are making a real difference and make changes to those that are not. This is why we are developing an **Early Years Outcomes Framework for Wales**. Using a results-based accountability approach this will start with the outcomes that we ultimately want to achieve during children's early years in Wales. The main purpose of the outcomes framework will be to help us to see where our policies and programmes are making a difference and having an impact on these outcomes. We intend to use it this time next year to assess the progress we make during 2014–15.

Although not the primary purpose, we also want the outcomes framework to help all individuals working in the early years and childcare sector to see and understand the important contribution they are making to achieving improved outcomes. Although it will not be governed at national level, it is hoped that the outcomes framework will be a useful tool to support planning and evaluation of performance at local level.

We have already had a number of valuable discussions with partners in the sector about what should be included in the outcomes framework; thinking about what the key outcomes are; and the best indicators and measures of success. These discussions will inform the draft outcomes framework that will be open to public consultation in autumn 2014. It is our intention to then publish the outcomes framework early in 2015.

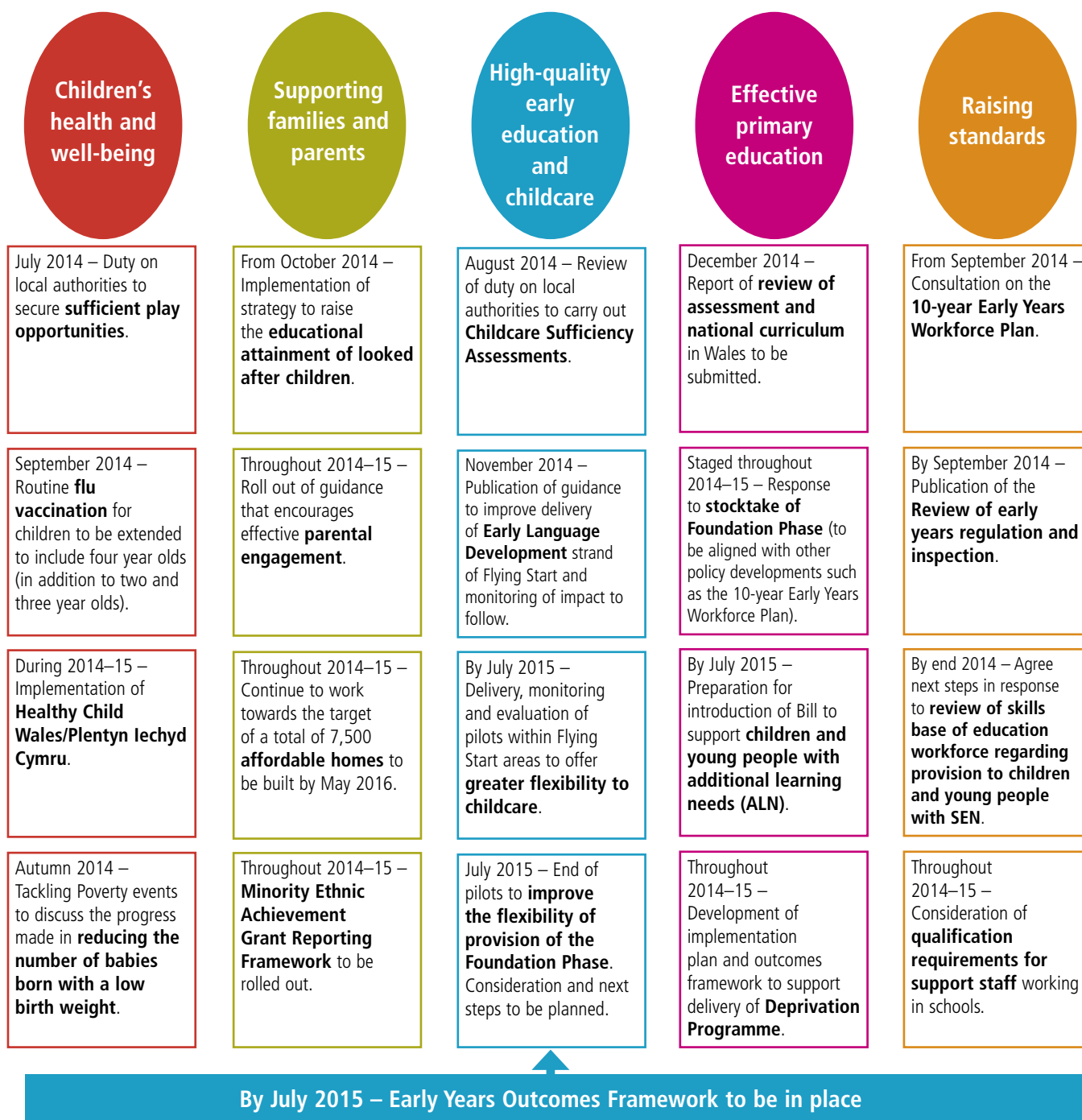
This report has outlined key areas of activity and outputs that have taken place since the launch of the plan in July 2013. During the 10-year lifespan of the plan we want to see tangible improvements to the outcomes of all children in Wales. We will therefore publish another annual progress report in 2015 and carry out a full review in 2016.

Annex A outlines our key priorities for the year ahead. The delivery of these priorities is very much dependent on continued partnership working at national, regional and local level.

Annex A: 2014–15 priorities

As stated in *Building a Brighter Future Early Years and Childcare Plan*, our vision is for all 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.

Priorities for 2014–15 include the following.



Annex B: Useful resources

Welsh Government

Call for evidence for review of assessment and the national curriculum in Wales
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolhome/curriculuminwales/curriculum-for-wales/contact-us/?lang=en

Consultation: Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs (May 2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/proposals-for-additional-learning-needs-white-paper/?lang=en

Consultation on draft regulations governing school development plans (28 April 2014 – 21 July 2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/the-education-school-development-plans-wales-regulations-2014/?lang=en

Creating a Play Friendly Wales (2012)
www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/121102playen.pdf

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales (2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140619-esol-policy-en.pdf

Ethnic Minority Pupils – Evidence Review and Practice in Wales (2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/ethnic-minority-pupils/?lang=en

How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase? – A guide for parents and carers (2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140707-how-is-my-child-doing-in-the-foundation-phase-en.pdf

Minority ethnic achievement in education in Wales (2014)
www.learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/minority-ethnic-achievement-in-education-in-wales/?lang=en

Pupil Deprivation Grant (2014)

Pupil Deprivation Grant – Short guidance for practitioners (2013)
www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/school-effectiveness-grant-2013-2015/?lang=en

Pupil Deprivation Grant – What really works? (2014)
www.learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/pdg-what-really-works/?lang=en

Review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start (2014)
www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/review-practice-implementation-early-language-development-support-element-within-flying-start/?lang=en

Review of Research Evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to promoting early speech and language development (2014)

www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/review-research-evidence-effectiveness-different-approaches-promoting-early-speech-language-development/?lang=en

The national outcomes framework for people who need care and support and carers who need support 2014–15; working document (2014)

www.wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/140624NOFen.pdf

Travelling together: Resources to promote the integration of Gypsy and Traveller culture into the national curriculum (2014)

www.learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/travelling-together/?lang=en&kjh

Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL): Research into the level of the need and current support provided to black and minority ethnic pupils with Welsh language support needs (April 2013 – February 2014)

www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/welsh-additional-language/?lang=en

Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors

www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/welsh-language-skills-needs-eight-sectors/?lang=en

Other

Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools (Estyn, 2012)

[www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/259977.9/effective-practice-in-tackling-poverty-and-disadvantage-in-schools-november-2012/?navmap=30,163,](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/259977.9/effective-practice-in-tackling-poverty-and-disadvantage-in-schools-november-2012/?navmap=30,163)

Fresh Start Wales

www.freshstartwales.co.uk

Sutton Trust Toolkit (2013)

www.suttontrust.com/who-we-are/impact-and-influence/toolkit/