



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

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Review of the Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan

Status of this document

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Summary

1. The Assembly Government launched its Parenting Action Plan (the Plan) in December 2005¹. The Plan, “seeks to ensure that parents in Wales get the advice and support they need, by setting out what the Assembly Government intends to do for parents over the period up to March 2008.” The Plan aims to:
 - raise the profile of parenting among policy makers and service providers in Wales;
 - further the development of policies and services that support mothers, fathers and carers in their caring roles;
 - make connections with other policies and services that have an impact on parenting; and
 - identify key actions to be taken by the Assembly Government to support parenting in Wales.²
2. The Plan includes 10 specific actions to achieve its aims. (Appendix 1). The Assembly Government intended that the actions should be delivered by March 2008.
3. Since April 2006 the Assembly Government has provided extra funding to councils to support the delivery of the Plan, through Cymorth, the Children and Youth Support Fund,³ and Flying Start.⁴ However, the Plan is not included as a priority in One Wales, the Assembly Government’s agenda for government in Wales.
4. In April 2008 the National Assembly for Wales’ Children and Young People Committee launched an inquiry into the Assembly Government’s Parenting Action Plan and has called for evidence. The Chair of the Committee asked the Auditor General for Wales to assist with the Committee’s inquiry, and it was agreed that the Wales Audit Office would undertake an evidence-based analysis of the progress that has been made in implementing the Plan. This report records the findings from the Wales Audit Office review.
5. The review was informed by an examination of relevant documents, interviews with key Assembly Government officials and a survey of council-led Children and Young People’s Partnerships. It addressed the following questions:

¹ Parenting Action Plan: Supporting mothers, fathers and carers with raising children in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, December 2005

² Parenting Action Plan, paragraph 1.4

³ The Assembly Government provides funding to local authorities to support services for children, young people and parents in deprived areas through Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund. The 22 local Children and Young People’s Partnerships decide how the money is spent in each area. The Cymorth Fund is targeted specifically on disadvantaged areas; it is not intended to provide universal services

⁴ The Assembly Government launched the Flying Start initiative in 2006 to give children aged up to three years and living in disadvantaged areas a better start in life

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- a) Were the action points evidence-based?
 - b) Have the actions been delivered?
 - c) What resources have been spent to deliver the actions?
 - d) What evidence is available about the outcomes of the Plan?
6. Overall, we concluded that the Plan has raised the profile of parenting in Wales and most of the action points have been either delivered or partly delivered. However, the Plan was modest in its ambitions and was not underpinned by a comprehensive analysis of need. While some additional resources have been provided to increase support to parents it is impossible to be precise about the overall level of expenditure on parenting provided through local Cymorth funding. And, while a number of useful outputs have been produced, there is very limited information on the outcomes achieved as a result of the Plan.

Despite drawing on some relevant research and other information, the Plan was modest in its ambitions and was not underpinned by a comprehensive analysis of need

7. Work to develop the Plan followed a letter from Children in Wales to the then Minister for Health and Social Care, querying the funding arrangements for parenting support in Wales and suggesting that a more focused approach was needed. Meetings between Assembly Government officials, Children in Wales and the Minister concluded that that *“it might be best to take forward the parenting agenda by means of an Action Plan rather than by a full-blown Parenting Strategy.”*⁵
8. Assembly Government officials confirmed that the Plan was not a strategic framework for parenting in Wales, but was intended to raise the profile of parenting by ensuring that the current range of policies in relation to parenting had more impact. The Assembly Government made no additional ring-fenced funds available to implement the Plan. This differed from the approach in England where a Parenting Fund was established and a Parenting Strategy developed.
9. A Parenting Action Plan Working Group, established to provide expert knowledge, informed the development of the Plan. The Group included representatives from the Assembly Government, local government, voluntary organisations, the Children’s Information Service and the Children’s Commissioners Office. Voluntary sector representatives on the Working Group also represented the views of parents.
10. The Working Group met three times in the autumn 2004 and their discussions provided the basis for the draft Plan. The Group was able to draw on relevant information and evidence about parenting initiatives. For example:
 - in October 2002, the National Parenting and Families Institute published its parenting advice booklets; *Breakfast to Bedtime* and *Over the Top Behaviour*;

⁵ Minutes of Meeting between the Minister for Health and Social Services and Children in Wales, 26 July.2004

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- in 2003 the Thomas Coram Research Unit was commissioned by the Home Office to evaluate the Parentline Plus helpline service; and
 - in 2003, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Social Care Institute for Excellence began their research on parenting training / education for children aged under 12 with conduct disorders, which included the Assembly Government as a stakeholder.
11. However, the draft Plan was not based on a comprehensive analysis of the support needs of parents in Wales, or of the full range of service options that could meet identified needs. It was also rather modest in terms of what it set out to achieve over the three year period covered, and a number of the 13 actions in the draft Plan were insufficiently specific or measurable to enable progress against them to be monitored effectively.
 12. In February 2005, the Assembly Government sent the draft Plan out for consultation to relevant stakeholders. These included councils, health bodies, the voluntary sector, other public bodies, trade unions and professional associations and individuals.
 13. Although respondents to the consultation document broadly welcomed publication of the Plan, as a means of raising the profile of parenting and parent support in Wales, some felt that the draft Plan was short on genuinely new initiatives and largely covered what was already in place. Some respondents also expressed concern about what they saw as the Plan's over-reliance on the Cymorth funding stream, which is targeted on disadvantaged areas. There were comments identifying the need for support for parents of older children as well as new parents. And a number of respondents expressed concern that the Plan did not specify how disabled parents and parents with mental health problems might be supported.
 14. Following completion of the consultation exercise, the Assembly Government deleted three proposed actions and made some minor changes to the wording of the others before the Plan was published in December 2005.

Nearly all action points have been fully or partly delivered

Bi-lingual helpline – *not delivered*

15. Although there is research evidence to demonstrate the value of helpline services for parents, appropriate service providers have been identified and there has been a long-standing aspiration to establish such a service, a helpline service specifically for parents in Wales has not been established.
16. At the time the Plan was developed, parents in Wales could call a 24 hour telephone helpline provided by Parentline Plus, funded by the Department of Education and Skills. At that time, 11 per cent of the calls received were from Wales. Although the service is funded as an England-only service, it continues to advise callers from Wales. However, the service is not publicised in Wales and information on current levels of demand is not available.
17. Most consultation responses on the draft Plan supported the idea of a free bilingual telephone helpline and a 24 hours a day, seven days a week service.

Ideas for delivering the bilingual helpline were being explored at the time the Plan was being developed, and the Plan included a commitment to make a final decision on the way forward by the end of 2005. Since this time, there has been considerable correspondence between Assembly Government officials and officials at the UK Government's Department for Education and Skills and Department for Children, Schools and Families, about funding to meet the costs of a helpline for Wales. As at October 2008, the issue of funding a helpline had not been resolved.

Series of booklets - *delivered*

18. The consultation responses to the draft Plan welcomed the provision of more public information and included requests for a wider range of approaches, for example:
 - all booklets should support the anti-hitting message;
 - the booklets for younger children should be comprehensive and matched with booklets for older age groups;
 - attention should be paid to the visual presentation of booklets, for instance using a comic or magazine style;
 - booklets need to include information on contacts for further and ongoing support;
 - information on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should feature in all of the booklets; and
 - 33 other topics for booklets were suggested.
19. Under the Plan, three booklets to support parents of younger children in Wales have been published. However, the National Parenting and Families Institute had already published two of these, *Breakfast to Bedtime* and *Over the Top Behaviour*, in 2002. Respondents to the consultation by Children in Wales were positive about the content of the booklets, but parents also wanted the booklets to contain local contact information and to have similar booklets for parents of teenagers. The Assembly Government translated both booklets into Welsh, with minor changes to their presentation, published them in 2006, and distributed 100,000 copies of each booklet in 2006 and 2008. The booklets contain only national contact information and no similar booklets for parents of teenagers have been published.
20. The Assembly Government commissioned the only new booklet to be commissioned since 2005 through Children in Wales. This was called *Help at Hand* and was designed to support positive parenting and anti-hitting. A toolkit has also been prepared to accompany the booklets, 100,000 of which were distributed in 2007-08.
21. In their response to our survey, the National Association of Family Information Services⁶ reported that the booklets had been positively received by parents and

⁶ The National Association of Family Information Services (until 2008, the National Association of Children's Information Services) is funded by the Assembly Government to provide support and

professionals and there has been a substantial demand for them. However, the Association also expressed concern about the suitability of the booklets to reach a wide audience, and suggested that it would be helpful if they were available in other formats, such as Braille, DVD, and in large print.

22. As part of their input to the development of the Plan, the National Family and Parenting Institute and Children in Wales had recommended that there should be further public information booklets on child development and behaviour (0-5 years), child development and behaviour (5-10 years), living with teenagers, and tackling sex talks with your children. As at October 2008, only the latter action had been implemented: a CD giving advice on discussing sex and relationships with children had been issued to primary schools and made available for parents.

Working Group on Grandparents – *partly delivered*

23. The consultation on the draft Plan generated a positive response about the potential role of grandparents. However, a number of respondents thought that the emphasis should not be restricted to grandparents, but should be broadened to the extended family and kinship care. Some of the responses recommended Family Group Conferencing⁷ as a helpful approach in working with families.
24. The Assembly Government's Strategy for Older People (2003) first highlighted the issue of support for grandparents in Wales. In 2003, as part of its strategy, the Assembly Government commissioned the Beth Johnson Foundation to undertake a baseline study of current knowledge about grandparents and their role in society.⁸
25. The Assembly Government established a working group on the role of grandparents in December 2005. The Group met three times and produced a draft report in March 2006. The Assembly Government issued the draft report for consultation and received eight replies. Responses included requests for:
- a more active approach, such as financial support for grandparents who are full-time carers;
 - a focus on kinship care, rather than grandparenting alone; and
 - grandparenting and kinship care to be an integral part of the childcare strategy.
26. The Working Group published its final report in August 2006.⁹ The report contains 17 recommendations (Appendix 2). Five recommendations have been implemented, including a toolkit on Family Group Conferencing and a book on grandparenting. Five recommendations relate to other work streams and are ongoing, such as the developments following the Children and Young People Bill.

development for Family Information Services (until 2008, Children's Information Services) across Wales

⁷ Family Group Conferencing is a method of decision-making involving families, which is based on principles and practice guidance

⁸ Grandparents in Wales: a baseline document, March 2005

⁹ Grandparenting in Wales: Report and Recommendations of the Grandparenting Working Group, August 2006

Six recommendations, four of which relate to proposals for research on grandparenting, have not yet been delivered. A proposal to the Wales Office of Research and Development¹⁰ for research funding was unsuccessful. One further recommendation has not been delivered because it is not within the legal powers of the Assembly Government.

27. The Parenting Action Plan stated that subsequent actions would be built into the third year of the Plan, 2007-08, linked with Phase 2 of the Strategy for Older People. On 1 October 2008, following public consultation, the Assembly Government launched its Intergenerational Strategy. The strategy was developed in partnership with the Beth Johnson Foundation and with the involvement of older and younger people.

Training on the Incredible Years programme and commissioning of Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) to report on evidence-based programmes - *partly delivered*

28. Responses to the consultation on the Plan included requests for the Assembly Government to support a wider range of parenting programmes in addition to the Webster- Stratton Incredible Years programme.¹¹ While respondents recognised the value of the Incredible Years programme, some also pointed out that it required considerable resources to deliver effectively and did not address the needs of, for example, parents of teenagers, hard to reach parents, or parents of children with disabilities. Although the Assembly Government considered that Incredible Years was the programme with the strongest evidence base that was able to meet these needs in some way, the programme did not meet the needs of parents of teenagers and was not developed to meet the specific needs of hard to reach parents or the parents of children with disabilities.
29. The Assembly Government has funded the Incredible Years Centre, based in Bangor University, to extend the Incredible Years parenting programme in Wales to include:
- a three day basic parent leader training programme for all the Children and Young People Partnerships in Wales, with 20 places each offered to the Cardiff and Swansea Partnerships and 10 places each for all other Partnerships;
 - supervision sessions for people who have completed the training;
 - the translation into Welsh, publication and distribution of 2,000 copies of the Incredible Years parent book; and

¹⁰ The Wales Office for Research and Development is an Assembly Government grant-making body with the remit to commission, manage and disseminate high quality research in health and social care issues in Wales

¹¹ The Incredible Years Parenting Programme was developed by Professor Caroline Webster-Stratton, (Seattle, USA) to help families and teachers with children up to the age of eight who are highly aggressive, disobedient, hyperactive and inattentive and to promote social competence and prevent, reduce, and treat aggression and related conduct problems in babies, toddlers and young children. The Incredible Years Wales Centre was established in 2003 and is located with Bangor University

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- the purchase of Incredible Years materials, such as DVDs and booklets, that are an essential part of delivering the parenting programmes.
30. Responses to our survey showed mixed views about the Incredible Years Programme. Some councils were enthusiastic about the Programme, emphasising its high quality and indicating that there have been good outcomes at a local level. But many councils also reported that the programme is very costly to run, in terms of time, staff and support costs, and the cost of materials required for the course.¹² The majority of respondents considered that there still needs to be greater variety in the range of parenting courses available across Wales.
 31. Although the Assembly Government has discussed with SCIE the action relating to them, the action was not delivered as it was overtaken by the work on the Flying Start initiative. Flying Start needed prompt information on parenting programmes to include in guidance to be issued in April 2006. The Assembly Government discussed the project with SCIE, but SCIE could not deliver until December 2006.
 32. Communities that Care¹³ on the other hand were able to do the work in a very short timescale, given that they felt the basic analysis had already been done in producing their document "Promising Approaches".¹⁴ In addition, they offered to include David Utting, an acknowledged expert in the field, in the project.
 33. The Communities that Care report focused on the Flying Start initiative, and therefore only considered parenting programmes that were suitable for parents with children aged up to three years old. However, the report did not require that the programmes were confined to this age group. Assembly Government officials confirmed that the Communities that Care report covered the need for information on evidence-based parenting programmes identified in the Action Point. Further, the Assembly Government is part-funding an evaluation of the Family Links Nurturing Programme, which should help to inform decisions on extending the Programme within Wales.¹⁵

¹² In recognition of the high costs of course materials, the Assembly Government bought one set of materials for each council for 2008-09 (see Appendix 3).

¹³ Communities that Care was established in the UK in 1997 with the support of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It takes an evidence-based approach to identifying the main risk and protective factors for young people. It merged with the Rainer Foundation in 2006 to create Rainer Communities that Care

¹⁴ A Guide to Promising Approaches (Second Edition, 2005) is a comprehensive, practical guidebook that brings together evidence about effective preventative programmes that improve outcomes for children and young people

¹⁵ The Family Links Nurturing Programme offers courses for parents and children in Early Years settings and schools. It aims to increase parents' confidence in their parenting by building empathy and developing realistic expectations.

Strengthening parental participation in planning - *delivered*

34. The need to involve children and families in planning was first acknowledged in the Framework for Partnership guidance in 2002.¹⁶ The guidance established the local Framework Partnerships for Children and Young People, and encouraged councils to work in partnership with local service providers, children and young people, parents and carers. The updated guidance issued in 2004 repeated this message.¹⁷
35. This action was delivered as part of guidance issued in September 2007 under Section 26 of the Children Act 2004, which includes requirements about parental participation in service planning.¹⁸ Paragraph 8.5 of the Guidance requires that: *“Partnerships should ensure the involvement of children, young people and their families in the development, planning and evaluation of services that affect them.”* In addition to their published plans, each Partnership is required to publish the issues raised by parents and the Partnership’s response to them.
36. Information from our survey of councils indicated that arrangements are in place to consult parents, even in those areas where there are no Parent Networks.

Commissioning a practice guide for Partnerships on parental participation - *delivered*

37. The Parenting Action Plan Working Group seconded one of its members from the voluntary sector to the Assembly Government for three months to develop a draft practice guide. The Working Group, along with a number of council officers and partners who had contributed to its development or had expertise in working with parents, considered the draft Guide and the final version was published in November 2006.
38. Of the 11 councils that responded to the survey question, six said that they were using the Guide, four said they were not and one stated that they will be using it in the future.

Framework Partnerships to consider in their planning the needs of parents and children - *delivered*

39. This action point is linked to the action on increasing parental participation. Information gathered from our survey of councils found that all respondents considered the needs of parents and children. Some referred to extensive assessments of needs, while others referred to parenting co-ordinators who assist parents to participate in meetings.

¹⁶ Framework for Partnership: Children and Young People’s Framework Planning Guidance, page 2, Welsh Assembly Government, 2002.

¹⁷ Framework for Partnership: Children and Young People – Rights to Action, Welsh Assembly Government, 2004

¹⁸ Shared Planning for Better Outcomes: Planning Guidance and Regulations for Local Authorities and their partners on Children and Young People’s Plans. Welsh Assembly Government, September 2007

Invitation to pilot children's information service satellites in schools and other centres- *delivered*

40. In October 2006 the Assembly Government sent a letter to all 22 councils asking if they would like to participate in piloting children's information service satellites, but making it clear that no additional resources were available. Of the 15 councils that responded: one was already piloting children's information service access in its libraries; one had a children's information service visiting the local jobcentre at regular intervals; one had a children's information service based in a local children's centre; and one was providing access to the service in schools for just one day in each term. Four other councils indicated that they would like to develop satellites but would need additional resources to do so.
41. Our survey found that seven councils (out of the 12 that responded to the relevant question) are aware of the children's information service satellites. These included two that are piloting the satellites. However, recent changes in legislation have changed the requirements for children's information services. The Childcare Act 2006 has made the provision of children's information services / family information services a statutory responsibility for councils. Section 27 of the Act broadens the existing duty on councils to provide information on childcare and related services. The intention is to ensure that parents can obtain the full range of information they may need in their parenting role. Councils will also need to ensure that information is accessible to fathers as well as mothers, to disadvantaged and excluded groups and to parents for whom English is not their first language.
42. This change to statutory requirements has resulted in a change in the funding arrangements. From April 2008, the allocation from the Cymorth funds ascribed to children's information services has been transferred to the Revenue Support Grant.

Continue to work with others to promote parental participation in schools - *partly delivered*

43. The Assembly Government has done little to take forward this action point, although it did award funding in 2006 and 2008 for Cardiff University to carry out school-based research into the links between families and schools.¹⁹ Effective action would have required joint working between different parts of the Assembly Government and effective leadership and ownership of the action. However, the Assembly Government made no progress in implementing the action point until 2007. In England, parenting support has been used to help improve children's behaviour and attendance at school, and the UK Government has published

¹⁹ Bridging the link between families and schools: an all-Wales study: proposal from the Department of Psychology, Cardiff University, September 2006; and Promoting family and school-based support programmes aimed at improving outcomes for families and children in Wales: proposal from the Department of Psychology, Cardiff University, January 2008

material as part of its behaviour and attendance programme, including guidance on working with parents to improve pupil behaviour and attendance.²⁰

44. The Assembly Government took forward this action point as part of the new guidance that it issued in 2007 for the development of Children and Young People's Plans.²¹ The Guidance makes a specific reference to the opportunity provided for engagement of parents through parents' groups involved with schools.
45. In June 2008, the Assembly Government published the report of a national review of behaviour and attendance. The report included 92 recommendations for the Assembly Government, including a number that directly relate to parental participation in schools. The Assembly Government is considering the recommendations and intends to publish an action plan in March 2009.

Further development of Parentsnet – *not delivered*

46. The position relating to the development of Parentsnet has deteriorated. Responses to consultation on the draft Plan indicated that there was little awareness of the Parentsnet site amongst professionals or parents. Respondents also identified:
- difficulties in finding the host Assembly Government website;
 - the need for parents to have good basic skills to be able to access and navigate around the site; and
 - that the site did not have a link to Children's Information Service websites.
47. The intention of this action point, therefore, was to develop and improve the site and to raise awareness about it. The part of the Assembly Government website that hosted Parentsnet was removed for development in 2006 and has not been restored. The Assembly Government told us that its priority at the time had been to rebuild the entire Assembly Government website. As at October 2008 it is developing an area on the education part of the website to provide detailed information for parents, which it expects to become operational before the end of 2008.

The Assembly Government has funded expenditure on the Plan, but it is impossible to be precise about how much has been spent at a local level

48. Wales has not had a specific fund to support developments in parenting. In contrast, the 2002 Spending Review established a three year, (2003-2006), Parenting Fund for England of £25million.²²

²⁰ Every Child Matters. Know-How Booklet – Parenting Support. 2006. DfES

²¹ Shared Planning for Better Outcomes: Planning Guidance and Regulations for Local Authorities and their Partners on Children and Young People's Plans, Welsh Assembly Government, September 2007

²² The Parenting Fund: proposals for consultation, paragraph 1.8, page 4, HM Treasury and the Department of Education and Skills, July 2003

49. The Assembly Government has funded central expenditure in relation to the Plan through budgets that have been top-sliced from the total Cymorth Fund. Expenditure recorded against these budgets shows that the Assembly Government spent £390,000 on activities related to the Plan over the three years to March 2008 (Appendix 3).
50. The Cymorth Fund is targeted specifically on disadvantaged areas, although there is discretion for Partnerships to decide on where they offer certain services.²³ Between 2005-06 and 2006-07 the Assembly Government increased the amount of Cymorth funding provided to local Children and Young People's Partnerships by 27 per cent, from £43.3 million to £54.7 million (Exhibit One). Although the additional funding was not ring-fenced, the Plan acknowledged the increase and stated that: "*we have given guidance to local Children and Young People's Partnerships, telling them that we expect them to use some of this extra money to increase the amount of support given to parents*".²⁴ In addition, Flying Start had a parental support element, worth £1.7 million in 2007-08.

Exhibit One: Total Cymorth funding allocated across the 22 local Children and Young People's Partnerships between 2005-06 and 2007-08

Financial Year	£ million	Increase over previous year
2005-06	43	
2006-07	55	27%
2007-08	57	3%

Note: Figures for 2007-08 do not include an additional £1 million that was released to Partnerships mid way through the year specifically to support play activities for children with a disability. Appendix 4 shows the total allocations to each local partnership over the same three year period.

Source: *Welsh Assembly Government*

51. In assessing the way that local partnerships used their overall Cymorth allocations, the Assembly's primary focus was on ensuring a minimum level of investment for different age groups or on specific projects with a childcare theme, including children's information services. The Assembly Government also required Partnerships to demonstrate a reasonable spread of activity across the six Cymorth themes²⁵ and between the council, health providers and the voluntary sector, but there was no specific guidance on what constituted a 'reasonable spread'.

²³ Cymorth: Children and Youth Support Fund – guidance, page 6, November 2007

²⁴ Parenting Action Plan, page 3, Welsh Assembly Government, 2005

²⁵ The six Cymorth themes are (A) Family Support; (B) Health Improvement; (C) Play, Leisure and Enrichment; (D) Empowerment, Participation and Active Citizenship; (E) Training, Mentoring and Information; (F) Building Childcare Provision.

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52. The Plan identified Theme A (Family Support) as the key theme for the delivery of parenting assistance. Figures provided by the Assembly Government show that, when submitting their initial Cymorth plans for 2005-06, local Partnerships anticipated an allocation of £12.5 million to projects that had Theme A as their main focus. In their 2006-07 Cymorth plans the initial allocation on Theme A projects increased by 26 per cent to £15.7 million, and in 2007-08 by a further 10 per cent, to £17.2 million. In 2006-07, the percentage of the total allocation for each local Partnership that was spent on projects identified with Theme A as their main theme varied significantly from 15 per cent in Wrexham to 43 per cent in Neath Port Talbot.
53. While these figures point to an increase in expenditure on parenting related projects, it is impossible to be precise about the overall level of support for parenting provided through local Cymorth funding, for two main reasons:
- Not all of the projects listed under Theme A will have a specific parenting focus and, for those that do, parenting support may only be one part of a wider project. Also, projects listed under other themes may also include a strong parenting focus.²⁶ Although the Cymorth guidance provides a steer on the type of projects located under each theme, this has been a matter for local judgement and there have been some inconsistencies in approach. For example, although Children's Information Services is mostly listed under Theme F, in some councils it appears under Theme A or Theme E. Similarly, funding support for Integrated Centres was identified variably under Themes A, D and E. Assembly Government officials had not sought to challenge or correct these inconsistencies.
 - Final expenditure profiles frequently differ from the initial projections held by the Assembly Government. Our analysis of the Cymorth files found that, in 2006-07, audited outturn expenditure on Theme A projects was £15.1 million compared with the initial allocation of £15.7 million.

A number of outputs have been produced, but there is very limited information on the outcomes achieved by the Plan

54. The Parenting Action Plan Working Group, which met four times during the implementation phase of the Plan, was the key mechanism for monitoring progress in implementing the Plan. The original intention had been to publish annual updates of progress on each of the actions in November 2006 and November 2007. In the event, only one progress report was produced, in July 2007.
55. Progress against some of the individual actions can be identified in terms of the outputs delivered, such as:
- the publication and distribution of three booklets;

²⁶ In submitting their Cymorth plans, Partnerships can also identify whether, in addition to their main theme, projects address other supplementary themes. In 2005-06, £7.0 million of expenditure was identified in Partnerships' initial allocations as having Family Support as a supplementary theme. This increased to £7.2 million in 2006-07 and £7.5 million in 2007-08

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- the practice guide on parental participation;
 - the report of the Grandparenting Group; and
 - the number of staff trained in the Incredible Years Parenting Programmes.
56. The Assembly Government has done little to evaluate the outcomes achieved by the Plan, in terms of its impact on standards of parenting. For example, the outputs from the Incredible Years Parenting Programme are very clear in that people have been trained and some training materials have been purchased. But the Assembly Government has not evaluated the impact of the training at local level.
57. As part of its Cymorth guidance, the Assembly Government has set out its expectations for the local monitoring and evaluation of Cymorth projects. In 2006-07 this included the expectation that at least four per cent of total expenditure would support local evaluation. For 2007-08 the Assembly Government reduced the expected expenditure on local evaluation to two per cent, because it had top-sliced from the allocations to local Partnerships funds to support the central evaluation of the Cymorth Fund.
58. The Cymorth guidance also included some examples of key outcome indicators that could be used to measure success. However, although the Assembly Government has, at different times, received feedback from individual partnerships on the outputs from individual projects and highlighting particular project successes, until 2007 it had not attempted to pull together these findings to evaluate the overall outcomes of Cymorth, or its particular impact on parenting.
59. In March 2007 the Assembly Government commissioned a three year evaluation programme of Cymorth and Flying Start, at a cost of £3 million. In July 2008, the evaluation programme steering group decided to commission a thematic case study on parenting programmes that would examine what is being delivered, who by and who to, and how parents are engaged in the process.
60. Nevertheless, Assembly Government officials consider that the Plan has played a role in raising the profile of parenting support and the priority now given to parents locally. Their analysis of the 22 draft Children & Young People's Plans suggests that:
- 8 partnerships have local Parenting Action Plans in place;
 - 9 partnerships are developing local Parenting Action Plans; and
 - 5 partnerships are looking at how they can increase parental support.
- Officials identified the next step as the need to ensure that all partnerships have a local Parenting Action Plan in place.
61. Some respondents to our survey commented that the Plan had also provided a useful framework for planning parenting and family support services. However, some respondents also felt that more action was now needed, because there had been a policy gap since the Plan had expired in March 2008 and future arrangements were uncertain.

Appendix 1

The Assembly Government's Parenting Action Plan: Summary of action points

1. We will develop a national bilingual helpline for parents in Wales. We are exploring the various options for delivering this service, and a final decision on the way forward will be taken by the end of 2005.
2. The Assembly Government will develop and distribute a series of booklets for all new parents in Wales, supplementing the existing *Pregnancy Book* and *Birth to Five* books.
3. We will set up a Working Group in the autumn 2005 to consider the Beth Johnson Foundation report on grandparents in Wales and propose an outline Programme of Action for the Assembly Government, statutory authorities and the voluntary sector, including the sharing of good practice and approaches. Subsequent actions will be built into the third year of the Parenting Action Plan (2007-2008), linked with Phase Two of the Strategy for Older People.
4. In 2006-2007, we will be funding a training programme at University College, Bangor, to extend the scope of the Incredible Years programmes, supporting the development of parenting programmes across Wales. We will also commission SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) to produce information on the evidence-base programmes used in Wales that can inform decisions on future investment.
5. We will be strengthening parental participation within the planning process from summer 2006. Framework Partnerships will be required to make sure that parents and carers participate effectively in service planning, such as through local parent Networks.
6. We will commission work early in 2006 to produce a practice guide for Partnerships on parental participation and empowerment.
7. Framework Partnerships will be required to consider in their planning the needs of parents and carers and how agencies will work together to meet these, including the relevant key actions set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.
8. We will invite Local Education Authorities and Children's Information Services to pilot CIS satellites in primary and secondary schools, in community-focused schools and the new integrated centres.
9. We will continue to work with Local Education Authorities, Estyn and school governing bodies to promote parental participation in schools.
10. We will undertake further development of Parentsnet to ensure its suitability for all parents, including those who are less well educated or who are not so well informed.

Source: "Parenting Action Plan: Supporting mothers, fathers and carers with raising children in Wales", Page 40, Welsh Assembly Government, 2005

Appendix 2

Detailed information on the recommendations from the Grandparenting Working Group

1. The final Report and Recommendations from the Working Group was published in August 2006.
2. The report contains 17 recommendations, of which five have been delivered, five are ongoing, and seven have not been delivered.
3. Five recommendations have been delivered.
 - a. The Assembly Government has funded a Family Group Conferencing toolkit and this was provided in English in March 2007 and in Welsh in March 2008.
 - b. Preparation of a Wales version of the Family Rights Group “Second Time Around” guide was actioned during 2007 -2008 and the Welsh version of Family Rights Book has been completed in draft and is awaiting final edit.
 - c. The recommendation to provide continued recognition of grandparenting has been delivered in the Grandparenting Strategy for Wales published in March 2008; paragraphs 3.2 and 3.24.
 - d. Further guidance on information that should be held by the Children’s Information Service has been issued as part of the Childcare Act Guidance in April 2008.
 - e. The Beth Johnson Foundation broadened the remit of its work on an intergeneration strategy and this is to be launched in October 2008.
4. Five recommendations are ongoing as at October 2008:
 - a. The recommendation for an inclusive approach to grandparenting that is child and family centred is being followed up in the future implementation of Children and Young People’s Plans.
 - b. The survey of the use of family and friends care is being pursued through the Children and Young Persons Bill that proposes to provide a new framework for family and friends care.
 - c. The recommendation for Guidance on family and friends care will follow the Children and Young Persons Bill.
 - d. The recommendation for a single brand to bring together all policies and programmes for children and young people is being developed by the Assembly Government.
 - e. The recommendation to add extended family members to the list of standards for the Children’s Information Services is underway and the Nation Association of Family Information Services Quality and Training Development Officer has confirmed that information for extended family will be an element of the new Standards required for the Family Information Service Quality Award.

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5. Seven recommendations have not been delivered, including four relating to research on grandparenting (an application for research funding was made to the Wales Office for Research and Development, but was not successful) and one that was not within the powers devolved to the Assembly Government.
 - a. A literature review should be carried out to find out what research data is available around grandparenting in general and in Wales in particular. Decisions should then be taken on any further research that might be needed.
 - b. in drawing up proposals for this research, the following should be considered;
 - the need for further data in relationships within families and inter - generational contact, including Wales-specific demographic data;
 - the experiences of grandparents themselves and what they say their support needs are in their grandparenting role;
 - the experience and needs of grandparents who have not retired and who are therefore combining work and caring roles;
 - the perceptions and experience that children and young people have of their grandparents.
 - c. Pilot projects should be set up in Wales, based on any research commissioned as a result of recommendations 2 and 3 above, to establish a portfolio of good practice in support fro grandparents.
 - d. Although a survey of grandparenting and the role of the extended family within BME communities in Wales was conducted, no further action was taken in respect of the recommendation on equalities issues.
 - e. The recommendation for an all-Wales forum on grandparenting has not been delivered as funding has not been available.
 - f. The recommendation that the Working Group be reconvened has not been implemented.
 - g. One recommendation, to encourage employers to provide flexible working for family and friends carers, related to a non-devolved area and so was not within the powers devolved to the Assembly Government.

Appendix 3

National expenditure on the Parenting Action Plan

Expenditure on the production of the Plan	Details	£
Consultation document launched		7,240
Cost of final document - 13 December 2005		4,900
	Total expenditure on the production of the Plan	12,140
Expenditure on the Plan's Action Points		
1. Bi-lingual helpline for parents	Not delivered	-
2. Booklets	2005-06 Breakfast to Bedtime and Over the Top Behaviour 100,000 copies of each	24,976
	2007-08 Reprint of Over the Top Behaviour and Help at Hand	21,150
	Help at Hand for CIS	2,244
	Children in Wales Help at Hand toolkit to support use of the booklet	5,000
	Grant to Fforwm Magu Plant, including preparation of the Help at Hand booklet (located with Children in Wales)	500
	Reprints of Breakfast to Bedtime, Over the Top Behaviour and Help at Hand; 100,000 copies of each	33,600
		<u>62,494</u>
3. Grandparents	Grandparenting book: Second Time Around - translation and printing	16,893

4.a) Incredible Years		
Payment to North West Wales NHS Trust	2006-07 2007-08 2008-09	30,000 30,000 36,000
Training and Supervision Courses	2006-07 2007-08	35,000 20,000
Materials bought from Incredible Years Headquarters, Seattle in advance of 2008-09 training	2007-08	41,253
Conferences	2006-07 2007-08	5,000 3,900
Additional costs	Incredible Years Book translation Incredible Years Book Welsh version print Incredible Years Royalties	13,160 4,597 <u>2,560</u> <u>221,470</u>
4. b) Social Care Institute for Excellence	[Not commissioned]	-
Communities that Care	Funded through the Flying Start Initiative	14,538
5. Strengthening parental participation in the planning process	[Actioned through statutory guidance for Children and Young People's Plans]	-
6. Practice Guide on Parental Participation and Empowerment	Secondment of author Publication and distribution of Guide (30 November 2006)	2,800 12,500 <u>.....</u> <u>15,300</u>
7. Framework Partnerships to consider the needs of parents and carers	[Actioned through statutory guidance for Children and Young People's Plans]	-
8. CIS Satellites	Delivered at no cost	-
9. Promote parental participation in schools	Funding for Cardiff University to do school-based research	20,546
10. Parentsnet	Not delivered	-
	Total national expenditure on the Action Points	376,217
Expenditure on small items	E.g. meetings, support for Fforwm Magu Plant conference, storage of publications	1,200
	GRAND TOTAL 12,140 + 376,217 + 1,200	389,557

Source: Information provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to the Wales Audit Office, August 2008.


Appendix 4

Cymorth funding allocations: 2005-06 to 2007-08**Cymorth funding allocated to each of the 22 local Children and Young People's Partnerships between 2005-06 and 2007-08**

	2005-06 (£000s)	2006-07 (£000s)	2007-08 (£000s)
Anglesey	951	1,263	1,315
Blaenau Gwent	1,187	1,801	1,864
Bridgend	1,922	2,343	2,418
Caerphilly	2,796	3,763	3,870
Cardiff	5,430	6,514	6,682
Carmarthenshire	1,994	2,773	2,857
Ceredigion	789	1,047	1,093
Conwy	1,372	1,786	1,849
Denbighshire	1,274	1,651	1,711
Flintshire	1,823	2,225	2,298
Gwynedd	1,403	1,763	1,825
Merthyr Tydfil	1,226	1,652	1,712
Monmouthshire	933	1,090	1,137
Neath Port Talbot	2,166	2,782	2,867
Newport	2,638	3,358	3,456
Pembrokeshire	1,458	2,021	2,090
Powys	1,305	1,536	1,593
Rhondda Cynon Taff	3,432	4,838	4,969
Swansea	3,748	4,215	4,332
The Vale Of Glamorgan	1,884	2,004	2,071
Torfaen	1,686	2,090	2,160
Wrexham	1,846	2,219	2,291
Total	43,263	54,733	56,459

Note: 2007-08 figures excluding the additional £1million provided to support play activities for children with a disability

Source: Welsh Assembly Government



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