

Children First

**Education and Children's Services
Scrutiny Committee**

March 13th 2019

**Report prepared by:
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The purpose of this report is:

That members are fully informed of the Children First approach.

That members are fully informed of the Children First approach and members to engage with and contribute to the development on how to move forward with the approach on a strategic level to effectively facilitate change.

To gain a commitment from members to become part of and contribute to the **vision** which seeks to result in **long term** change to the life chances of children growing up in the Glanymor and Tyisha wards.

What is Children First?

Children First is a Welsh Government ambition for developing resilient communities, supporting children and young people in their communities and reducing inequalities some of them face, in comparison with their peers from more affluent areas.

In essence it means moving towards a way of working which enables organisations to come together

- around a specific place
- to work collaboratively for the children and young people in that place
- to reduce the inequalities these children face compared with children and young people in more socially advantaged places.

The key point about Children First is that it will initiate change at a local level, based on the needs of the specific place, identified by listening to children and young people and to the local community. Welsh Government feel strongly that a Children First approach will contribute to mitigating the impact of ACEs, to give the children and young people and the communities they live in, the opportunity to thrive and prosper. **Fundamentally the approach is about exploring new and more effective ways of tackling poverty with a focus on the place.**

The Carmarthenshire Children First proposal was submitted by Noeline Thomas, Family Support Service Manager in January 2017 on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council. The proposal was developed by representatives from the Local Authority Children's Services and Community Development, local Primary Schools, the Local Health Board and the Carmarthenshire Youth and Children's Association.

19 organisations put forward expressions of interest in establishing Children First areas and 5 were identified as ready to proceed as pioneers and these are; Cwm Taf, Gwynedd, Newport, Caerphilly and Carmarthenshire. Carmarthenshire were invited to become a Pioneer Area for Children First in May 2017

Welsh Government have not attached any funding to this approach as they emphasise that it is not a programme focussed on delivering activity (which has always been done in the past) rather a significant shift in the way we work with communities in empowering and enabling them to achieve positive change which will contribute to improving the prospects of the future generations.

It is expected that the anchor organisations and others work with the community, the children and young people as partners to develop a plan based on the local need.

There are 7 core principles attached to this approach which provide the foundations for developing Children First within the pioneer areas (see attached document Children First – Key Principles)

Welsh Government strongly emphasise that children and young people's rights are central to this approach and the Children's Commissioner is challenging Children First Pioneer areas on how this will be achieved.

Where did we begin in Carmarthenshire?

The vision for Carmarthenshire Children First is to reduce and prevent ACE's, promote resilience, maximise children and young people's physical and mental wellbeing, ensuring equality with their peers from other areas.

Work started in 2016.

The areas identified in Carmarthenshire for Children First are the electoral wards of Glanymor and Tyisha with a population of 10,234. The area was chosen based on:

- ▶ 5/7 LSOAs in top 20% most deprived in Wales
- ▶ Flying Start area
- ▶ 3 primary schools in the areas and one comprehensive with low school attendance and attainment levels and high free school meal uptake
- ▶ Over 10% offences for the County occur in these wards with only 5.5% of the County population

Another reason for selecting these wards was the plan to develop the Life Science and Wellness Village which will be located in the local area of these wards. It was felt that there would be real opportunities for the communities from Glanymor and Tyisha as a result of this development, in particular in relation to employment and skills.

Welsh Government have facilitated visits to other areas and have invited other areas to attend Pioneer Meetings for us to learn how they have developed this approach and to demonstrate how the principles of the approach work in practice. These include a visit from Wallsend Children's Community, and a visit to Pembury.

Wallsend:

The Wallsend Children's Community believes that to improve outcomes for its children and young people, it needs to be able to provide them with the same 'offer' as those in more advantaged areas.

In response to the area's challenges, local leaders have set out an ambitious vision to build, over a generation, a Wallsend where children and young people have access to exactly the same high-quality chances as those in more advantaged areas.

The collective mission is to create a fully-fledged Children's Community in Wallsend.

This will be comprised of an interconnected network of services for children that cuts across their home, school and community contexts in order to both address multiple problems simultaneously and maximise positive experiences and connects phases of childhood so that no child falls through the gaps between stages or institutions. The three early implementation priorities, where a coordinated approach is considered locally to be particularly needed, are "Getting things right early", "Being fit for life" and "Supporting young people to realise their aspirations".

Wallsend Children's Community is a multi-agency partnership which aims to improve the outcomes for children through the development of cradle to career support for young people in the Wallsend locality of North Tyneside. The Children's Community hopes to create contexts in the school, the family and the community which support children to do well by developing a strategic plan for tackling disadvantage across the childhood years and across all the contexts in which children learn and develop. The Wallsend Children's Community hopes to provide a vehicle for planning and delivering a broad range of services, in a more joined up way, reducing the structural barriers that exist between organizations and across the settings of health, education and the community.

The Wallsend Children's Community aims to: -

- Get things right early – getting children on a positive pathway rather than address deficits later
- Ensure that children are 'Fit for Life' – making sure children are healthy (physically and mentally) and can engage with opportunities
- Realise aspirations – empowering the community to support children to achieve their potential and behaving in new ways.

<http://www.childrenscommunitynetwork.org.uk/our-communities/wallsend>

Pembury:

The vision for 2025 is that Pembury will be:

- A neighbourhood where people are proud to live
- A community where people from all backgrounds come together, where everyone matters and there are opportunities for all
- A place where young people are encouraged, inspired and empowered to get the best out of life

The approach

Together with residents, they have developed 8 'Goals for 2025' which outline their ambitions for the estate:

1. Pembury children are more ready for school
2. Pembury children and young people are in education, training and employment and on the way to achieving their ambitions
3. Pembury families experiencing poverty are on a long term route out of poverty and are more able to manage financial difficulties
4. Both young people and parents are more connected to informal support networks that create opportunities and meet needs
5. Pembury children feel healthy and happy and Pembury families experience positive wellbeing
6. Pembury children and young people are safe and secure
7. Service providers can demonstrate that services are more accessible and joined up across children's home, school and community lives
8. We have developed a model that can transform children's outcomes and their neighbourhoods

The 3 priority areas are:

Getting things right early

Supporting young people in Secondary School and beyond

Support for parents

<http://www.childrenscommunitynetwork.org.uk/our-communities/pembury>

What have we learnt from these examples:

- We need to set a shared **long term** vision
- An acceptance that seeing outcomes and impact will take time and therefore the ways of measuring impact need to be varied.
- We need to focus on people's capacity and the things that they want to change in order to unlock their potential, we need to resist the temptation of 'doing to' and move to a 'doing with' approach.
- We need to start from the strengths of individuals and communities
- Communities need the freedom and autonomy to decide the focus of activity whilst aligning to the shared strategic vision.
- We need a shift to enabling, empowerment, ownership

In essence we need to move away from the traditional 'What's Wrong' approach to 'What's Strong' and start with the coalition of the willing both within the communities and the services within these communities.

PROGRESS AND WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

Children First Scoping Meeting (November 2017)

Public Services Board Members were invited to attend the meeting to be informed of the Children First approach in Carmarthenshire and to discuss the role of the PSB members in supporting this approach.

Carmarthenshire Children First Steering Group

At present a steering group meets in order to develop this way of working and membership consists of representatives from:

Local Authority Education and Children Services

Communities for Work plus

Ysgol Penrhos

Hywel Dda University Health Board

Hywel Dda Public Health Wales

Local Authority Youth Service

Carmarthenshire Youth and Children Association

University of Wales Trinity St David

Welsh Government Seed Funding (July 2018)

Welsh Government have allocated £20,000 to each Pioneer area to accelerate progress in taking forward the development of Children First pioneer areas related to Principle 7 'Dedicated secretariat support to drive things forward and do'.

This is a one off payment in the 2018/2019 financial year only. Welsh Government stipulated that this funding was not for services or activities for children, young people and communities. Carmarthenshire have allocated the majority of this funding to enable 2 days a week of officer time to drive forward the development of Children First.

Theory of Change and Community of Enquiry

To date the steering group has completed a Theory of Change model (at the request of Welsh Government) which details broadly how to affect change by examining the resources we have available to us and how these can be made more effective; scrutinising the assumptions we make and the intermediate and long term outcomes we would expect to see. Furthermore, a Community of Enquiry session was delivered on 31st January delivered by Swansea University in order to provide steering group members with support in moving forward in facilitating change at both a community level and strategically.

Active involvement in the Planning for Real Consultation in Tyisha

The Tyisha ward is a focus of physical regeneration via the Local Authority housing department with particular focus on Station Road. As part of this regeneration the Planning for Real community planning process has been commissioned to work with residents of the Tyisha ward which allows residents to register their views on a range of issues, to work together, to identify priorities, and in partnership with local agencies develop an action plan for change. In light of Children First the Housing Department have agreed to consider the whole of the Tyisha ward within the regeneration process and are considering not only physical regeneration of the area but also looking at services within the areas related to family support etc. This form of consultation encourages residents to think of the positive aspects within their communities alongside the negatives and encourages residents to contribute positively to the action planning and prioritisation of what needs improvement or change. To date the Planning for Real process is at the action planning/prioritisation stage. Unfortunately, this piece of work does not include the residents of the Glanymor ward at present.

Involvement in the Expression of Interest and bid for the Healthy and Active Fund (HAF): Living Well Together: Preparing Glanymor and Tyisha for the Wellness Village

An Expression of Interest has been submitted to the Healthy and Active Fund for £400,000.00. The proposal uses a 'place based' approach to engage with the communities of Glanymor and Tyisha in developing and using the Wellness Hub (Leisure Centre). The overall aim is to:

- Increase health related activity in the community to feed into the new Wellness hub to address significant health and physical activity inequalities
- Provide opportunities to upskill the community with accredited training & volunteering to allow access to potential employment.
- Engage the surrounding communities in the design, build, programing & staffing of the Leisure Centre at the Wellness Village

Produced a film: Our Voice Our Community

In response to the Children Commissioner's challenge to including children's views, funding was secured from the Public Services Board to develop a media clip titled 'Our Voice Our Community'. The media clip depicts the opinions children have of their community – looking at both the negatives and positives and their future aspirations. The clip is intended to stimulate conversations and commitment which will contribute towards the direction of the Children First priorities within Glanymor and Tyisha. (to be shown during Scrutiny meeting)

What we need for Children First in Carmarthenshire

- ▶ Strategic support from the Local Authority Leadership in moving forward with a long term vision to this approach. This would need to ensure that all relevant Local Authority departments and external organisations are on board and agreeable to considering a different way of working – moving away from 'What's Wrong' to 'What's Strong'. From this long term vision local developments and activities will be identified.
- ▶ Financial and Strategic Support to address the consultation responses of children and communities within the Planning for Real and Our Voice Our Community pieces of work – such as redeveloping the old Lakefield or Copperworks primary school buildings to be community hubs with services being accessible later at night and during weekends, and having advice and support for Early Years, Youth and Employment strands.
- ▶ Commitment that the Life Science and Wellness Village will be physically accessible to the communities of Glanymor and Tyisha as service users – at present they do not feel that this is a resource that is relevant or accessible to them. And that a percentage of the employment opportunities available from construction to the village being operational are available to local people, and a commitment to ensuring that local people have the necessary skills sets to be able to apply for these jobs.