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# Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of the Delivery of the Flying Start Programme – **Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council**

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The team who delivered the work comprised Katherine Simmons, Ian Phillips and Sara-Jane Byrne under the direction of Huw Rees.

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# Summary report

## Summary

### Why we undertook the Examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:
  - a. setting their wellbeing objectives; and
  - b. taking steps to meet them.
- 2 The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: ‘...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.
- 3 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 4 The Auditor General has undertaken examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly during 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- 5 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork we undertook between June 2019 to August 2019.
- 6 This report sets out our findings from our examination of the Delivery of the Flying Start Programme, a step the Council is taking to meet its Well-being Objectives. It also sets out the Council’s initial response to our findings.

## What we examined

- 7 We examined the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in delivering the Flying Start programme.
- 8 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working':

### Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials'<sup>1</sup> document.

The Five Ways of Working
<b>Long-term</b> The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
<b>Prevention</b> How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
<b>Integration</b> Considering how the public body's wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the wellbeing goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
<b>Collaboration</b> Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its wellbeing objectives.
<b>Involvement</b> The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 9 Our examination found that: The Council has a number of positive examples of how it has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when delivering the Flying Start Programme, but the Council recognises that its application of the five ways of working can be further strengthened.

<sup>1</sup> Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials, Welsh Government (2015)

# Detailed report

## Part One: Examination Findings

The Council is focused on improving outcomes through the Flying Start Programme, but there is scope to consider how it measures the impact over the longer term

### What we looked for

- 10 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
  - planning over an appropriate timescale;
  - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
  - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 11 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long-term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>2</sup>

### What we found

- 12 We identified the following strengths:
- The Welsh Government's Flying Start programme is an evidence based programme. It is designed to deliver a range of long-term impacts through positive parental engagement on children's outcomes and parenting. This drives a focus on long-term impact locally.
  - The Flying Start programme has been designed to lead to early identification of support needs for children and families. As a result, it has the potential to support long-term planning and preventative work in Merthyr Tydfil.
  - The Council has taken steps to collate and moderate the data it holds. This may allow for the longer-term tracking of a child throughout their education to enable the Council to measure the impact of the programme and inform service planning and resource allocation.
- 13 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- The Council could consider opportunities to track the Flying Start Programme over a longer time frame.
  - The Council use an evaluation tool to measure the immediate impact of parenting programmes on parents, but could look to explore the longer-term impact on those parents.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

- The Council and partners are conscious that they are struggling to reduce obesity at age five and reduce the number of babies with low birth weight and recognise further work is required to address these.

## Prevention is an inherent part of the Flying Start Programme and it is helping to deliver the tackling poverty agenda, but there are some capacity constraints which are limiting its potential impact

### What we looked for

- 14 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
  - resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
  - monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.
- 15 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘prevention’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>3</sup>

### What we found

- 16 We identified the following strengths:
- The Flying Start Programme is a preventative programme, which plays a key role in the Council’s tackling poverty agenda.
  - The Flying Start Programme contains preventative interventions such as speech and language therapy, parenting support classes and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) support.
  - The Council has used data effectively to identify the need for additional training of providers to support children’s mathematical development.
  - The Council is trying to extend the impact of the Flying Start Programme through:
    - drawing funding streams together with Families First to make best use of resources; and
    - training staff in childcare settings to benefit both Flying Start and non-Flying Start children who attend.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1

- 17 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- Whilst it must be acknowledged that the Council is experiencing critical financial challenges, nevertheless its ability to maximise the preventative benefits of the Flying Start programme is hampered by capacity constraints;
    - single points of knowledge within the Capita One team could undermine the Council's ability to develop its use of data; and
    - the Council has planned to target interventions at antenatal stage, however it is currently unable to deliver on this due to partner organisation capacity issues.

**The Council acknowledges that embedding integration is going to take further work and time, but it has begun to take positive steps to address this challenge across the organisation**

#### What we looked for

- 18 We looked for evidence of consideration of:
- how this step could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals;
  - how delivery of this step will impact on the Council's wellbeing objectives and wider priorities; and
  - how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' wellbeing objectives.
- 19 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>4</sup>

#### What we found

- 20 We identified the following strengths:
- The Flying Start programme is designed to deliver health and educational outcomes.
  - Mindful of the need to increase understanding and awareness of integration, the Council has recently carried out a Council wide exercise to enable services to see how they fit together and how reliant each service is on others to achieve their respective wellbeing objectives.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1

- 21 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- The Council could consider how it links the Flying Start programme with other areas of work to have a positive impact across the wellbeing objectives.
  - The Council recognises it has too many strategies and aims to streamline them, although they are currently drafting another, the Parenting Strategy. It will be important to ensure that the Parenting Strategy is closely aligned with other relevant strategies.

## There are some examples of effective collaboration with partners and parts of the Council, although aspects of collaboration could be strengthened

### What we looked for

- 22 We looked for evidence that the Council:
- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its wellbeing objectives, or assist another body to meet its wellbeing objectives);
  - is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
  - is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet wellbeing objectives.
- 23 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>5</sup>

### What we found

- 24 We identified the following strengths:
- There are various collaborative mechanisms in place such as the ALN multi-agency panel and the Early Years Strategy Group which brings together Council officers and partners.
  - Relationships between the childcare providers we spoke to and the Council are positive.
  - The Families First and Flying Start programme teams work together constructively.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1

- 25 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- Strengthen linkages between social workers and the Flying Start Programme, to improve the ability of social workers to signpost families to the various aspects of the Flying Start entitlement.
  - Further explore some of the challenges of joint working between health and social care, including sharing of data and resourcing.

**There are examples of the Council effectively seeking the views of parents and other stakeholders in aspects of the Flying Start Programme, but there are further opportunities to ensure the right people are meaningfully involved and their views taken into account**

#### What we looked for

- 26 We looked for evidence that the Council has:
- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
  - effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
  - used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
  - sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.
- 27 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>6</sup>

#### What we found

- 28 We identified the following strengths:
- The Council responds to feedback from parents, such as tailoring the programme in direct response to parents' views.
  - There have been recent initiatives to strengthen the transition process between childcare settings and schools, including an event with key stakeholders that considered transition and the moderation of Foundation Phase outcomes.
  - The Council proactively seeks feedback from parents on the quality of parenting classes.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1

29 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- Further consider how to optimise the Parent Network to facilitate a greater level of involvement of parents who are part of the Flying Start Programme.
- The Council recognises the challenge posed by the Act of involving the diversity of the population. It is able to provide translation services to families with English as an Additional Language, however the Council should consider further ways in which the views of the diversity of the population can shape the Flying Start Programme.
- The Council acknowledges that although parents provide feedback on the services they receive, not all opportunities are taken to analyse/learn from this feedback.
- The Council could consider whether there are opportunities to involve parents in the delivery of the programme, for example as champions or providing peer support.

## Part Two: Council's response

Activity	Start Date	End Date	Responsible Officer	BRAG Status	Complete
<b>To consider opportunities to track the Flying Start Programme over a longer time frame</b>					
Analysis report produced at end of Foundation Phase based on FS and Non FS	October 2020	Nov 2020	SO	Green	25%
Analysis report produced at end of key stage 3 based on FS and Non FS	October 2025	Nov 2025	SO	green	0%
<b>The Council use an evaluation tool to measure the immediate impact of parenting programmes on parents, but could look to explore the longer-term impact on those parents</b>					
Identify approaches in other local authorities and produce a report with clear recommendations on ways forward	Aug 2020	Jan 2021	DJ	Green	0%
<b>The Council and partners are conscious that they are struggling to reduce obesity at age five and reduce the number of babies with low birth weight and recognise further work is required to address these</b>					
Increased awareness of Elected members on current strategies and approaches to tackling health inequalities in Early Years, challenges and barriers	Nov 2019	April 2020	CH	Green	20%
Existing provision in antenatal services and workforce development priorities identified in partnership across the region	Nov 2019	Sept 2020	CH	Green	20%
Support and influence regional investment plans in services to tackle health inequalities in early years obesity and low birth weight	Nov 2019	Sep 2020	CH	Green	20%
<b>Single points of knowledge within the Capita One team could undermine the Council's ability to develop its use of data</b>					
Carry out a capacity exercise for the service	Jan 2020	Jan 2020	CH	Green	0%
<b>The Council has planned to target interventions at antenatal stage, however it is currently unable to deliver on this due to partner organisation capacity issues</b>					
Through regional work secure a broader trained workforce in relation to attachment	Nov 2019	Dec 2020	SO	Green	20%
Pilot of welcome to world antenatal programme with partners	Nov 2019	Sep 2020	DJ	Green	15%

<b>The Council could consider how it links the Flying Start programme with other areas of work to have a positive impact across the wellbeing objectives</b>					
Complete consultation on employment support with flying start parents and produce analysis report with recommendations	December 2020	February 2021	SO	Green	0%
<b>The Council recognises it has too many strategies and aims to streamline them, although they are currently drafting another, the Parenting Strategy. It will be important to ensure that the Parenting Strategy is closely aligned with other relevant strategies.</b>					
All strategies are reviewed and justified or redefined	February 2020	September 2020	AM	Green	0%
Parenting plan consultation is completed and revised in line with comments prior to approval	January 2020	April 2020	CH	Green	10%
<b>Strengthen linkages between social workers and the Flying Start Programme, to improve the ability of social workers to signpost families to the various aspects of the Flying Start entitlement</b>					
Establish regular meetings with children's services to share service information.	Nov 2019	April 2020	SO	Green	30%
Up skill the knowledge base of children's social workers on the preventative services available	April 2019	December 2020	SO	Green	20%
<b>Further explore some of the challenges of joint working between health and social care, including sharing of data and resourcing</b>					
Vulnerability Profile produced and fit for purpose agreed across regional approach	October 2019	September 2020	CH	Green	15%
Review with Health how they can in future meet the staffing requirements of Flying Start service	April 2020	December 2020	CH	Green	0%
<b>Further consider how to optimise the Parent Network to facilitate a greater level of involvement of parents who are part of the Flying Start Programme</b>					
Undertake a review of peer parent support groups and provide recommendations on way forward	Dec 2019	June 2020	JW	Green	10%
<b>Consider how the diversity of the population can influence future delivery</b>					
Produce an annual analysis report for childcare provision recommending how future services should be shaped based on views of service users	April 2020	August 2020	SP	Green	0%
Pilot the production of a 6 month analysis of parent programme evaluation questionnaires completed by parents and share key messages	January 2020	May 2020	AM	Green	0%

Pilot the production of a 6 month analysis of ELD evaluation questionnaires completed by parents and share key messages	January 2020	May 2020	KB	Green	0%
Review what best practice exists across Wales on exit evaluation of Flying Start and make clear recommendations on way forward	Apr 2020	Oct 2020	SO	Green	0%
<b>Ensure feedback from parents is acted upon</b>					
Produce an annual report that analyses feedback from parents engaged in parenting programmes and ELD programmes making recommendations for the reshaping of future services	Nov 2020	April 2021	SO	Green	0%
Flying Start to produce literature for parents on key messages of learning and how this has shaped services	April 2021	Sep 2021	SO	Green	0%
<b>Consider how to involve parents themselves more in delivery of services</b>					
Identified services working with parents to establish how parents could act as champions across the community	April 2020	August 2020	SO	Green	0%
Champions identified in key services to be supported /trained to be able to share key messages across communities	Aug 2020	Apr 2021	SO	Green	0%

# Appendix 1

## Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified and will use to help inform our assessments of the extent to which bodies may be applying the Sustainable Development Principle (SDP). We do not intend to use the indicators as a 'checklist'. They should be viewed as 'indicators' that will help us to form conclusions, rather than 'determinants' of the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the SDP in taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.

### Exhibit 2: Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

#### What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?

- There is a clear understanding of what 'long-term' means in the context of the Act.
- They have designed the step to deliver the wellbeing objective/s and contribute to their long-term vision.
- They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long-term (within the project context).
- They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.
- Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.
- Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.
- There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long-term.
- They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.
- They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches.

#### What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?

- The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.
- The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.
- The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer-term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.
- There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

#### **What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?**

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and wellbeing objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the wellbeing objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the wellbeing goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

#### **What would show a body is collaborating effectively?**

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

#### **What would show a body is involving people effectively?**

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital source of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.



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