

Integrated Family Support Services - Response to the Welsh Assembly Government Document

This response has been formulated through a discussion at the Neath Port Talbot Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Forum, a discussion with Children in Wales and between officers of Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service with responsibility for children and young people.

Although the focus on support to vulnerable children is welcomed, it was generally felt that the document was very aspirational.

The role of the voluntary sector

Voluntary Sector and Legislation: the duty will only be enforced and applied to public agencies but it is not clear whether voluntary services will be audited under the multi-agency framework for the inspection of children's services.

6.3 It is clear that some sections of the voluntary/Third Sector provide public services as well as support services which fulfil statutory duties. It is not clear what is meant by "will draw effective links with other key professionals in probation, police and voluntary services" and the relationship between the IFSS and voluntary organisations in this context. Voluntary services are already working with families experiencing issues of substance misuse, people with mental health problems etc. and preventing children and young people coming into care through their interventions. In the same paragraph it is stated that the IFSS will "serve as are source for system change by providing training and supervision" but does not state to whom.

General comments

3.3 In what ways would the IFSS influence the ways services are delivered and organised? This should be a role for the CYPP. Accountability for sustainability is proposed to placed with Director of Social Services - this is contradictory to the content of our local Children and Young People's Plan. Where do planning arrangements fit with the SMATs?

Social services departments are running at less than capacity of frontline social workers, if these teams are to be formulated by seconding existing staff, as is proposed, then this would exacerbate the situation where teams are already stretched.

Family support has been a longstanding issue and should have been picked up in the development of the NPT Children and Young People's Plan.

There seems to be no relationship between the Miscellaneous Proposals and the main body of the Document, which could lead to confusion.