

**Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**Item 8: Final End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Provisional Key Stage 4 Outcomes 2018**

**Action:**

*Members enquired when Flying Start was first introduced in Blaenau Gwent, and requested information with regards to the outcomes achieved by the first cohort of Flying Start children compared to those children not living in Flying Start areas.*

**Officer Response:**

Flying Start was introduced in 2007 and is regarded by the Welsh Government as one of its flagship programmes. The Welsh Government's programme for government for 2016-2021, 'Taking Wales Forward', has committed to its continuation. As Flying Start is a Welsh Government grant funded programme, guidance and direction for the programme come from WG and is not decided locally. Flying Start was initially targeted on the catchment areas of schools in deprived areas. The expansion of the scheme from 2011 resulted in revised criteria and funding was allocated according to the estimated number of 0-3 year olds living in income benefit households in local authority areas in lower super output areas.

Flying Start is an early years programme aimed at children 0-3 years living in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. Robust and plentiful data is collected around the 4 core elements of the programme and reported back to Welsh Government who produce an annual statistical release comparing 22 Local Authorities performance against this data. There is no request from Welsh Government for Local Authorities to track children or collect data after they have left the programme or compare children from Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas.

In February 2018 the National Assembly for Wales, Children, Young People and Education Committee decided to undertake a short inquiry into the outreach elements of the Flying Start programme:-

““This inquiry emerged from of its overarching work on the First 1,000 Days of a child's life. The Committee heard evidence highlighting a lack of data collected for evaluative purposes from the early days of the Flying Start programme. Public Health Wales referred to an absence of comparative data, stating that:

“It is also difficult to measure the impact of programmes and initiatives designed to improve outcomes if insufficient focus has been given to evaluation from the outset or where evaluation approaches have not included a comparison group. This has been a challenge with the Flying Start Programme and we are aware of very little analysis that has been able to compare outcomes for families in Flying Start areas with outcomes in areas experiencing similar levels of deprivation which are not Flying Start areas. Any adaptations to the future delivery of Flying Start should build in consideration of the evaluation of impact from the beginning.”

The Committee acknowledges that the Welsh Government is currently piloting ways of strengthening data collection and analysis in relation to Flying Start and intends to monitor closely developments in this area. This work is particularly important given

the increased budgetary allocation to outreach announced during the course of this inquiry.

The Committee acknowledged that the nature of outcomes expected from the programme may not be easily quantifiable, and are by their nature potentially longer term, and urged the Welsh Government to pursue all available means of strengthening data collection to allow meaningful evaluation of whether the programme is able to demonstrate value for money.

The Committee looks forward to receiving updates from the Welsh Government in respect of the SAIL Data project. We hope that this work, alongside other evaluation mechanisms, will urgently address some of the historic deficiencies in collecting data and enable the Welsh Government to better assess the impact of its significant investment in the Flying Start programme””.

An update can be provided to Members if the Welsh Government implement steps to capture such data in the future.