

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and  
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |  
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

**CYPE 30**

Ymateb gan : Prosiect Sbectrwm Hafan Cymru

Response from : Hafan Cymru's Spectrum Project

**Question 1** – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

- School class sizes that allow for proportionate levels of individual attention for children and young people
- School staff (both teachers and support staff) adequately trained to identify and respond to areas that may affect children and young people's ability to learn e.g. all areas of child protection including domestic abuse, poverty etc.
- Additional and adequate support both within the school environment and outside for children/young people affected by issues such as domestic abuse, poverty etc.
- Dedicated PSE type sessions to educate children and young people on Healthy Relationships/Healthy Minds issues delivered by appropriately trained/qualified staff or outside agencies.
- Consistent and proportionate levels of funding for projects working with schools in a preventative capacity on Healthy Relationships/Healthy Minds projects i.e. 3 or 5 year funding rather than year on year.
- Smaller, more manageable caseloads for Social Workers
- More dedicated children's workers within H&SC

**Question 2** – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

**1. Additional and adequate support both within the school environment and outside for children/young people affected by issues such as domestic abuse, poverty etc.**

There is substantial evidence to suggest that life chances are reduced for children and young people living in houses where domestic abuse occurs.

- A child born who is exposed to domestic violence during infancy (aged 0–2) has, by age 8, a 7–point reduction in their IQ compared to a child who was not exposed to domestic violence during infancy. (Enlow et al., 2012)
- Exposure to domestic violence can reduce IQ by one–half of one standard deviation; as a consequence the odds of a pupil achieving 5 A–C’s are significantly reduced.
- Adults without 5 GCSEs earn on average £55 a week less than those with 5 GCSEs. Unemployment rates for these adults tend to be 20% higher.

The report *Making a Difference: Investing in Sustainable Health and Well-being for the People of Wales* makes the case that investing in the prevention of poor health and adverse experiences would result in healthy outcomes for our population, and far–reaching benefits across all aspects of our society and our lives.

These benefits include improving educational attainment for our young people, increasing employability, and reducing the risk of criminal activity and ill–health in later life. Such an approach would also result in real cost savings, and deliver short and long–term benefits to our society, communities and the economy.

[http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/PHW%20Making%20a%20difference%20ES%28Web\\_2%29.pdf](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/PHW%20Making%20a%20difference%20ES%28Web_2%29.pdf)

“In Wales, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as child maltreatment and/or living in a household affected by parental separation, domestic violence, mental ill health, alcohol, drug abuse or the incarceration of a parent, are associated with:

- – over ½ of the violence and drugs abuse
- – over 1/3 of teenage pregnancies

- nearly ¼ of current adult smoking”

“Early life experiences, such as bullying or abuse, may have long-term consequences for the development of children and young people, with associated costs to society and public services.”

“In Wales, domestic violence and abuse costs public services £303.5 million per year. Human and emotional costs are an additional £523 million.”

**“Reducing violence and abuse could result in substantial savings to health and social care. Effective interventions include focusing on children and young people; preventing domestic violence, abuse and violence against women; reducing harmful use of alcohol; and multi-agency approaches.”**

It is therefore essential that adequate support is on hand and readily available for children and young people in need of support to deal with these issues. Staff involved in the Spectrum Project are often asked by teachers where they can refer children and young people, but sadly our staff are currently not usually in a position to offer very much in the way of positive advice. CAMHS is an obvious option, but in most areas referrals can take several months before they are actioned.

## **2. Consistent and proportionate levels of funding for projects working with schools in a preventative capacity on Healthy Relationships/Healthy Minds projects i.e. 3 or 5 year funding rather than year on year.**

There can be no doubt that preventative interventions provide the best outcomes for both individuals and services as can be evidenced in the section above, but currently many projects and initiatives working in this capacity, including the Spectrum Project, are subject to year on year funding with no guarantees as to how long the project can run for. This results in difficulties in both recruiting and retaining good quality, experienced staff due to only being able to offer short term contracts and relatively low salaries for complex roles. This can often result in high staff turnover, which is not cost effective and also results in a lack of consistency for service users. As can be seen from some of the statistics referred to above domestic abuse can be extremely costly both to services and society as a whole, not to mention the effects on the individuals concerned. Investment in awareness raising, preventative programmes should therefore be seen as key to both helping to break the cycle of abuse and reducing the cost of complex interventions.

**3. School staff (both teachers and support staff) adequately trained to identify and respond to areas that may affect children and young people's ability to learn e.g. all areas of child protection including domestic abuse, poverty etc.** Many times when Spectrum staff are working in schools they come across teaching staff who are not always aware that the attitudes and behaviours being exhibited in their classroom may be attributed to their home environment, with some children being labelled as "disruptive" rather than their behaviour being seen as a potential cry for help to deal with something that they do not understand or know how to deal with. Early intervention can again be key to helping children and young people to grow up to be much healthy, resilient and productive members of society.