

A Good Today and a Bright Tomorrow

Draft Children and Young People's Plan for Merthyr Tydfil 2008- 2011 Executive Summary



success
creative**e**xchanges
through people

CREATIVE EXCHANGES LTD

Introduction

- 1 This plan, covering the period 2008-2011, identifies our ambitions for our children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil. The plan has been produced by our Children and Young People's Partnership. It is intended to give direction and focus to our work and to identify the intended outcomes for the services we will provide.
 - 1.1 The plan sets out our shared vision and agreed priorities. It is a high level strategic plan and includes only the level of detail that is relevant to our priorities at a strategic level. Details of the activity required to achieve the strategic objectives can be found in partners' business and operational plans
 - 1.2 Our vision is shaped by national policies, by the local strategic priorities identified by children and young people and by all the partners involved in service delivery, by the needs identified in the needs assessment and service mapping, our work to implement the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services and by the aims and objectives contained in the Community Strategy.
 - 1.3 Working together, we aspire to excellence in all that we do. Our ambition is set out in our Community strategy, reflecting the local ambition for Merthyr Tydfil to become "*By 2020 a community in which all people of all ages can enjoy living and working safely and healthily and pursue opportunities to develop themselves and their families in a clean and attractive environment.*"
 - 1.4 This shared vision is reinforced in the County Borough Council vision of "*a sustainable, confident County Borough which recognises and promotes equality of opportunity and where people want to achieve in all aspects of their life, through work, leisure and learning.*"
 - 1.5 In producing the plan we have followed the Welsh Assembly Government's Shared Planning for Better Outcomes Guidance. The Plan replaces a number of other statutory plans. The detailed operational information which would have been found in those plans will now be found in operational plans on our website.
 - 1.6 This plan is important to Merthyr Tydfil's Children and Young People's Partnership. We have used the process of producing the plan to bring together the many statutory and voluntary organisations in Merthyr Tydfil that play a role in meeting the needs of children and young people. Together we have analysed the strengths and weaknesses of our service to children and young people. We have used that information to produce a shared vision, principles and key priorities for children and young people's services in Merthyr Tydfil. That vision and these key priorities will guide how we refocus our services over the next three years.

Principles and Values

- 2 The Plan is organised around the Welsh Assembly Government seven Core Aims for children. These are that all children in Wales:
 1. **Have a flying start in life;**
 2. **Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;**
 3. **Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;**
 4. **Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;**
 5. **Are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised;**
 6. **Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well being;**
 7. **Are not disadvantaged by poverty.**
- 2.1 Our task is to deliver on these seven core aims which are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all Partnership agencies in Merthyr Tydfil are fully committed. The plan also shows how we will deliver on the Welsh Assembly Government's ten entitlements for all young people in Wales aged 11-25, which are detailed in the Learning and Skills Act 2000. They are highlighted under each of the relevant core aims of this Plan. They require Local Authorities to ensure that young people:
 - Participate effectively in education and training;
 - Take advantage of opportunities for employment;
 - Participate effectively in community life.
- 2.2 Working effectively in partnership with others is central to the Partnership's commitment to provide high quality services to our children and young people. We aim to work closely together delivering services to all children through primary and community health care, early years services, education and the police service. We aim to work even more closely together to bring the more targeted services of social services, the voluntary sector, housing, specialist health services and youth offending services to those children, young people and families who need more specialist support.

Shared Principles

- 3 In implementing this plan, the Children and Young People's Partnership proposes to adopt shared principles about how the Partnership will work together. These are to:
 - Commit to deliver agreed priorities
 - Be evidenced based, but not stifle experimentation

- Align our resources to our priorities, pooling budgets where appropriate, and ensure value for money
- Use the tiered model of needs and interventions to support shared planning
- Be accountable for the quality and performance of our services
- Use a project and performance management approach to deliver the priorities in the plan
- Support the workforce development to underpin the plan

The Views of Young People

4 Young People have given us a wealth of information about their experience of family, school and community life in Merthyr Tydfil and also shared their views about what they would like to see changed. Evidence of their views comes from seven pieces of consultation work in which the views of children and young people were sought, namely:

- The Communities that Care audit which interviewed 1800 Young people;
- The Sexual Health Report based on interviews with 377 young people aged 13-17;
- The consultation workshops for the over 11s as part of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategy development, and a parallel consultation process with under 11s;
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Youth Service health survey;
- Ethnic minority children and young people consultation;
- School Councils' Conference;
- Junior Local Safeguarding Children Board consultation about complaints procedures.

4.1 Every school has a school council. These are used actively to seek children and young people's views, for example a recent conference involving all the school councils consulted young people about school attendance and absenteeism.

Our Vision for Children and Young People In Merthyr

5 Our shared vision for children and young people is that:

In Merthyr Tydfil, all our children and young people enjoy life and achieve their full potential.

5.1 Our vision statement comes from the analysis of our current position and aspirations. As a Partnership we have high ambitions and we want to inspire all our children and young people to have the highest ambitions for themselves. We aim high and we want all our children and young people to do the same so that, with our support, they can reach

beyond their experience and achieve above their traditional expectations. That is the challenge underpinning our first single Children and Young People's Plan

- 5.2 Merthyr Tydfil's future, and that of our children and young people, depends on continued economic and social regeneration, creating a community where adults have the skills and the motivation to take up job opportunities and motivate their children to achieve
- 5.3 This is a particular challenge for us. The legacy of our unique industrial history and our post-industrial experience is of a declining population, with outward migration as well as a falling birth rate, leaving a low adult skills base and, for many, low aspirations. This sits alongside high rates of limiting long-term illness and poor health.
- 5.4 Our children have particular challenges to face, which is why our public services must perform better than average to help them. Overall, our public services are delivering well and our children are achieving at the level of children in similar communities in Wales but our ambition is to do better.
- 5.5 Merthyr Tydfil is also changing. Over the last few years we have seen new communities arrive from Europe, working and settling here, with their children. Our plans and ambitions include these children too.

Shared priorities

Criteria for determining priorities

- 6 The criteria we have used to determine our priorities are that they should:
 - Focus on outcomes for children and young people, not on services;
 - Target our areas of greatest need or deficit;
 - Involve concerted multi agency effort to make progress;
 - Be capable of showing progress in the next three years;
 - Reflect the views of children and young people;
 - Be linked to national and local strategies.
- 6.1 These priorities have in common the need for multi agency involvement to deliver them.

Implementing our priorities- Integrating children's services

- 7 Our plan for 2008-11 includes taking forward our commitment to improving all levels of multi-agency working. This is at three levels;
 - Integrated planning and performance management
 - Integrated processes
 - Integrated services

Joint Commissioning and pooled budgets

- 8 To make progress on our agreed priorities, the Partnership intends to shift the emphasis of its work from single agency planning to joint planning and commissioning with specific needs analysis, using the Audit Commission's Joint Commissioning Framework

Priorities for 2008-11

- 9 We have agreed eight key priorities for change over the next three years. Action on these priorities will contribute to meeting more than one aim. To avoid duplication, the intended outcomes measures indicators and targets are, however, to be found under the most relevant core aim.
- 9.1 We have used the Tiered model to help describe our target groups of children for these priorities. For many of our priorities we want to improve outcomes for all children at the universal or Tier 1 level, but we also want to target additional attention on children with more support needs at Tier 2 and more vulnerable children at Tiers 3 and 4
- 9.2 For 2008-2011, our agreed strategic priorities for change relevant to children and young people of all ages are to improve:
- ⇒ **Attainment, qualifications and life skills;**
 - ⇒ **The social inclusion of disabled children and their parents;**
 - ⇒ **Sexual health of young people;**
 - ⇒ **Emotional and mental health of vulnerable young people;**
 - ⇒ **Safety, and well being for the most vulnerable children;**
 - ⇒ **Children's enjoyment and social skills as well as increasing physical activity through self directed play;**
 - ⇒ **Children's, young people's and their parents' influence over the services they receive and over services which are designed for them;**
 - ⇒ **Homeless young people's access to housing and support**

Priority Outcome 1

Improving Attainment

We want to improve attainment for all children in Merthyr Tydfil, but our focus for this priority outcome is those children and young people who are most likely to disengage from education and to leave school without the necessary qualifications and life skills to enter employment and adult life. Key issues are the transitions children experience, the relevance of the curriculum for some children, access to alternative programmes and preparation for employment. These are children at Tier 2 and above. Improving the amount of time spent in purposeful engagement in education is essential to this. Hence the County Borough Council's focus on removing barriers to learning, improving attendance, especially tackling condoned absence and reducing the amount of time lost by exclusions from school, will continue to be a priority. Early intervention to support this priority means that for Core Aim 1 our focus will be on ensuring that, by the age of 7, children reach their developmental milestones, are attending school regularly and enjoying the experience of learning.

Priority Outcome 2

Improving the social inclusion of disabled children and young people and their parents

Our focus for this priority outcome will be children and young people with substantial and permanent physical or mental disabilities. Multi-agency identification of children and young people in this group will provide the basis for shared management information between health, social care and education about their needs of disabled children, on which to agree a plan, priorities and arrangements for commissioning and funding services to meet those needs. These are children and young people mostly at Tier 3.

Priority Outcome 3

Improving emotional and mental health of vulnerable children and young people

We want to improve the mental health of all young people in Merthyr Tydfil, at Tier 1, but our focus for this priority outcome is young people who display significant emotional or behavioural distress, including alcohol, drug and domestic violence related difficulties, but who do not have a diagnosed mental disorder. These are children whose needs place them at tier 3 or above. Early intervention to support this priority means that for Core Aim 1 we will focus on improving the attachment of very young children to their parents or care givers, especially those at Tier 2 and above.

Priority Outcome 4

Improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people

We want to improve the safety of all children in Merthyr Tydfil and to focus further on the most vulnerable children at Tier 3 and above. We will focus particularly on those families whose children are most likely to be in need of protection, be in care or on the edge of coming into care or be involved in offending or anti-social behaviour. These children's needs are at Tiers 3 or 4. Some families, a small group in Merthyr Tydfil, have problems which are long standing, interrelated and sometimes intergenerational. For these families current or previous agency involvement has not led to long lasting improvement for the

children or young people. We will scope how we can change the way we work with these families, children and young people to better meet their needs

Priority Outcome 5

Improving the sexual health of young people.

We want to improve the sexual health of all our young people. Our focus for this priority is to improve social and relationship education and knowledge of safe sexual practices for all children at tier 1 and to improve access to sexual health services for those most at risk, young people whose needs place them at Tier 2 or 3, including improving working to enhance their self esteem and aspirations and to reduce teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections

Priority Outcome 6

Improve children and young people's enjoyment, learning, social skills and increase physical activity through self directed play.

Our focus for this is to complete and prioritise our play strategy and work to have the strategy adopted implementing the highest priorities in each of the areas highlighted within the Welsh Assembly Government Play policy and implementation plan. This priority is for all children and young people.

Priority Outcome 7

Increasing children's and young people's and their parents' influence over the services they receive and over services which are designed for them

The focus of this priority will be to review the participation strategy and the participation promise and toolkit in the light of the latest Welsh Assembly Government guidance on participation. We will then work to have the strategy adopted and implemented systematically in every agency delivering services to children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil, building on existing good practice. This priority is for all children

Priority Outcome 8

Improving homeless young people's access to housing and support and improving our ability to identify those at risk of becoming homeless and preventing them from becoming homeless

Workforce Planning and Development

Our priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan will have an impact on the numbers and types of staff and the skills and knowledge of existing staff. We have a range of workforce plans covering recruitment and staff development. These plans will need to be integrated and up dated to create a plan covering all sectors, looking at the overall needs of our workforce to deliver our priorities in the plan