

Public Accounts Committee - Supporting People Programme

3 December 2018

1. Purpose of this paper

Further to the invitation to attend Public Accounts Committee on 3 December 2018 for a scrutiny session on the Supporting People Programme, the Committee requested a copy of the interim evaluation on Flexible Funding.

I have taken the opportunity, therefore, to provide a short paper to cover; the evaluation, my evidence paper provided in January 2018 and my letter to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee of 24 August 2018.

2. Interim Evaluation Report

I enclose a link to the Wavehill interim evaluation report published on 3 October about the flexible funding programme.

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-flexible-funding-programme/?lang=en>

The interim evaluation demonstrated the potential for improved outcomes arising from better integrated services. Although at an early stage of delivery, the interim findings showed signs of some positive developments in programme delivery.

3. Written Statement – October 2018

On 3 October 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services and Minister for Housing and Regeneration made a Written Statement (link below) announcing the publication of the interim evaluation report into the flexible funding pathfinder work and also setting out their decision on future funding arrangements.

<https://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2018/eipsg/?skip=1&lang=en>

The evaluation highlighted a variety opportunities for alignment between the grants included in the pathfinder arrangements. After carefully reviewing the findings of the evaluation and considering the views of stakeholders, Ministers decided that the Early Intervention and Prevention Grant should be split into two, separating the housing-related grants from non-housing elements.

This approach is in line with the recommendations of some key stakeholders and has been widely welcomed by the housing sector, in particular. It has also been supported by the Welsh Local Government Association, for a period of time.

From April 2019, a Children and Communities Grant will be established, encompassing Flying Start, Families First, the Legacy Fund, Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People, St David's Day Fund, Communities for Work Plus

and Childcare and Play. We will also introduce a single Housing Support Grant encompassing Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement.

These arrangements will remain in place for the remainder of this Assembly term and will apply to all local authorities in Wales. They will be carefully monitored to ensure the concerns raised by the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee and the Wales Audit Office are addressed.

The ability to develop our approach to the two grants and integrate them to achieve common outcomes will be very much enhanced by a collaborative approach involving all relevant stakeholders.

4. Related developments

A number of changes to the context of the pathfinder work over the period should also be mentioned - notably announcements from the UK Government on the future of Supported Accommodation funding and Welsh Government budget decisions.

Supported Accommodation Review (SAR)

In our evidence paper submitted in January, we made reference to the Review being undertaken by UK Government into the funding of supported accommodation through the welfare system. In August this year, UK Ministers announced a reversal of the policy proposal to create a cash-limited fund for the additional costs of providing supported accommodation settings and that tenants would be able to claim these costs through Housing Benefit. This essentially retains the current provisions and has been welcomed by Welsh Ministers and providers as providing a more sustainable funding position.

Budget decisions

In the draft budget in October 2018, it was stated that Welsh Government are allocating £13.4m in total to restore previously-planned cuts to the programmes supporting early intervention, prevention and support.

5. Next Steps

We are now working on a programme to progress reform in this area in partnership with our stakeholders. The two-grant approach allows us to build on the good work already completed with our partners and provides opportunities for crucial services to be integrated as efficiently and effectively as possible. It also allows us to consider fully the evidence and recommendations emerging from recent committees, reviews and evaluations in relation to the housing related grants including the Aylward Review.

Tracey Burke – November 2018