Working Better Together

Partnership working to improve the educational attainment of the poorest children in Wales

December 2009

Dr Duncan Holtom with Jodie Sims, The People and Work Unit

Feedback and comments are welcomed and should be sent to

duncan.holtom@peopleandworkunit.org.uk

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

1

Acknowledgments

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to halving child poverty by 2010 and eliminating it by 2020. Having fallen since the mid 1990s, child poverty in Wales began to rise in 2006/07 and stood at just over 35% in 2007/08 (DWP, August 2009).[1] The challenge in the short to medium term is to raise the income of parents and carers living in poverty. The challenge over the longer term is to break the poverty cycle, in which many children growing up in poverty, remain in poverty in adult life, and whose children will themselves grow up in poverty.

The Educational Attainment Gap in Wales

There is a very strong link between poverty and poor educational attainment and the poor educational attainment of many children growing up in poverty is a key link in the poverty cycle, because of the strong links between poor educational attainment, low pay, unemployment, economic inactivity and social exclusion (Kenway, et al, 2005). The gap in the development of children growing up in poverty in the UK is measurable from as early as 22 months. Children from poorer families tend to start school at a disadvantage and fall further and further behind. Moreover, many of those children from poor families who make a good start at school, still fall behind their peers from wealthier families as they progress through school (Feinstein, et al, 2007). This is one reason why the strength of the relationship between poverty and poor educational attainment is markedly higher at Key Stages 3 and 4 (see graph 1).

---

[1] Defined as the proportion of children living in households whose income is below 60% of the median income.

Graph 1. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and the percentage of pupils not eligible for free school meals achieving the core subject indictor at Key Stages1-4 in 2008.
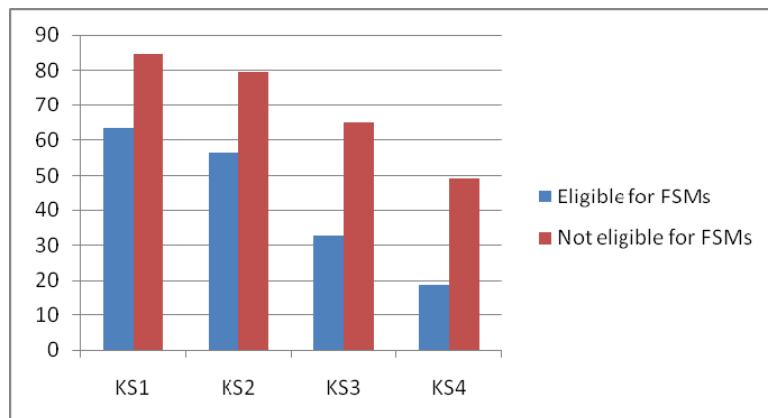
Source WAG, 2009a

In Wales, as graph 2 illustrates, educational outcomes for all children at all levels (KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS4) have improved over the last decade. However, although the overall attainment of pupils growing up in poverty[2] has increased over this period, their gains have been matched by increases in the attainment of children who are not growing up in poverty, so a large gap remains.

Graph 2. The percentage of pupils in key stages 1-4 achieving the expected standard in the core subjects 2002/03-2008/09
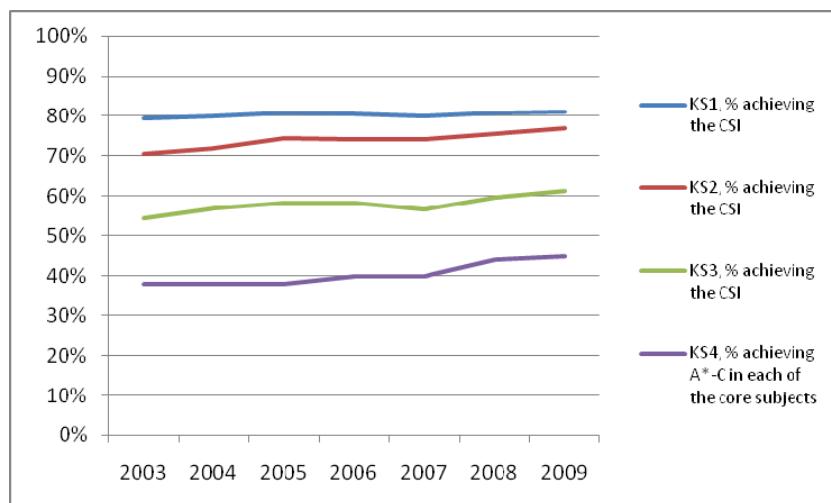
Source: Stats Wales

---

[2] Measured using their eligibility for Free School meals, as a proxy indictor of poverty.

5

Over the last three years (2006-2008) the gap, measured in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving the CSI, peaks at Key Stage 3 at around 31 to 32 percentage points. Therefore, there is increasing interest in what happens between Key Stage 2 when pupils are 11 and Key Stage 3 when pupils are 14, including discussions about what can be done to support pupils progress over this period and a debate about whether the results at key Stages 2 and 3 are directly comparable[3].

Closing the Gap

A series of landmark studies and reviews sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (CPEG, 2008; NAfW, 2008, 2002; Egan, 2007), have all concluded that whilst schools have a central role in helping close the gap, they cannot do it alone.[4] In line with this, Welsh Assembly Government policy, has promoted partnership working between a range of different actors through a range of policy 'levers' including:

- The promotion of children and young people centred approaches, with a focus on rights, entitlements & outcomes (WAG, 2004);
- An emphasis in the School Effectiveness Framework for Wales (SEF) upon tri-level reform and systems thinking[5] and for schools to work with others in order to improve educational outcomes, enhance well-being and tackle poverty (WAG, 2008);
- The introduction of new duties to cooperate, new structures & plans, such as children and young people partnerships (CYPP) (WAG, 2007); and
- Enabling & encouraging joint working, by providing advice and support through bodies such as the Partnership Support Unit, the introduction of new legislation and guidance, the introduction of grants, such as Cymorth and the Young People's Innovation Grant scheme, and through changes in the inspection regime, such as the introduction of area based inspections.

---

[3] It has been suggested that the "expected" level at Key stage 3 (level 5 or 6) is more demanding than the "expected" level at key stage 2 (level 4) relative to the age of pupils. If this is the case, it is likely that fewer pupils would achieve the expected level at key stage 3, widening gaps in attainment.

[4] For example, as the Child Poverty Expert Group (CPEG) observed, "Schools have a major part to play in overcoming the relationship between child poverty and low educational attainment but they can not do it alone. Multiple aspects of disadvantaged children's well-being must be addressed. It is only through the joining up of polices that real success in overcoming the association between poverty and low educational attainment can be achieved and sustained. " (CPEG, 2009).

[5] We discuss system thinking further on page 15. It is a key component of tri-level reform, in which "educational reform is....designed and implemented collaboratively and coherently through all levels of the system: nationally, locally and at the level of the individual learning setting" (p5. WAG, 2008).

This Study

This study was driven by the concern that the potential for partnership working to improve the experiences and outcomes for children living in disadvantaged areas has yet to be fully exploited. In order to explore this, an application was made to the Welsh Assembly Government's New Ideas Fund to support a small piece of scoping research to look more closely at experiences in two Local Authority areas.

The objectives off the study were to:

- Explore the opportunities for schools; CYP Partnerships and their constituent members, for example the Local Education Authority, Youth Services, Children's Services, family support and community development agencies; students and parents to creatively work together to improve the educational attainment and experiences of children aged 8-13 living in disadvantaged areas;
- Review evidence in these local areas of the impact of current WAG policies - in particular their synergy across education, child welfare and poverty and social justice - and ultimately their effect on the ability of schools and CYPPs to respond to the challenge of 'narrowing the gap'; and
- Identify the barriers (to joint working, to implementing evidence-based strategies and utilising the myriad of policies, guidance and funding streams) and strategies/solutions as to how these barriers could be overcome.

Following consultation with CYPP coordinators, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot, were chosen. Neath Port Talbot was of particular interest because of the strong progress it has made in narrowing the gap at Key Stage 3 and 4 despite high levels of child poverty (Estyn, 2008). Pembrokeshire was of particular interest because of the strength of its partnership working (Estyn, 2008) and the nature of the challenges created by the small concentrations of poverty in two urban areas, Pembroke Dock and Milford Haven, and the more dispersed rural poverty. The findings from these two areas were also discussed with the CYPP coordinator representing a metropolitan area (Cardiff) to help assess the extent to which the findings from Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire are likely to be shared by other Local Authorities in Wales.[6]

As a small piece of scoping research, the fieldwork had to be carefully planned and managed to maximise the use of the limited resources. Therefore, following scoping work including a literature review, participants were carefully selected through consultation with the CYPP

---

[6] It was planned to consult the CYPP coordinator from another Local Authority from North Wales, but this did not prove possible within the timescale of the study.

coordinators in each area and the study was discussed with other members of the CYPP, including schools and the two LEAs. The fieldwork included interviews with six professionals in Neath Port Talbot and eight in Pembrokeshire[7], a focus group with parents and two focus groups with school children in each Local Authority. Wherever possible, findings were triangulated so, for example, assessments of professionals were compared with those of children and young people and their parents and relevant research and data[8]. In addition, emerging findings were presented to, and discussed, with a range of stakeholders from Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Partnership Support Unit and the voluntary sector, including Save the Children and Barnardo's, at two roundtable seminars. In the following sections, we outline our findings under each of the study's objectives.

Opportunities to creatively work together to improve the educational attainment and experiences of children aged 8-13

The study highlighted a wide range of opportunities for different actors to work together at different levels, across different sectors and in different geographical areas. They included opportunities to participate in national policy making, through consultative processes and moves toward tri-level reform in fields such as education; regional policy making, through regional consortia such as swamwac; Local Authority and sector specific policies through partnership structures such as the CYPP and HSCWB; and at more local level through Community First partnerships, partnerships agreements and protocols between different agencies and new innovations, such as the Team Around the Child[9] approach being developed in both Local Authorities. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate some of the opportunities for partnership working and networking around the child poverty agenda in each Local Authority.

On the face of it, there is a comprehensive range of opportunities for different actors to creatively work together to improve the educational attainment and experiences of children aged 8-13. However, the partnerships are not open to everyone. In particular, opportunities for children and young people and their parents to directly participate are much more limited than the opportunities for professionals. This does not mean that their views are excluded though, as specific structures and processes such as Youth Forums and School Councils

---

[7] These were drawn from the CYPP, local schools, the Local Authority, including the LEA, Youth Service and Economic Development, the Local Health Trust and Communities First partnerships. Additional interviews in both Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire were agreed, but could not be completed before the end of the fieldwork.
[8] This included statistical data on pupil attainment and reviews of partnership working carried out by inspectorates such as Estyn, the Care and Social Services Inspection Wales (CSSIW) and the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.
[9] Team Around the Child is a model of service provision in which a range of different professionals work together to help and support an individual child or young person.

have been established to enable their voice to be heard and fed into other partnerships. [10]
Within Pembrokeshire, the work of one Communities First partnership was also highlighted.

In some ways the number and range of partnerships (and by extension opportunities) is a
barrier. Not all the partnerships conceptualise issues in the same way, so that, for example,
a child's problematic behaviour may be viewed in terms of child poverty by one partnership
structure, as a youth justice issue by another, and as a (mental) health issue by a third.
Moreover, and more fundamentally, looking specifically at the challenge of narrowing the
gap in educational attainment and experience, there is no multi-agency group or network
focused upon this challenge.[11] This is likely to make it more difficult to systematically and
coherently apply evidence about 'what works' and to, for example, evaluate the quality and
impact of the work. This in turn limits opportunities to foster synergies between different
projects and investments. Perhaps the starkest illustration of the diffusion of focus is the
way the educational gap can be viewed through the lens of poverty and social justice by,
Core Aim 7 groups and primarily through the lens of under-achievement and school
performance by schools and the LEA. Furthermore, apart from Core Aim 7 groups[12], the
different partnerships and networks do not focus exclusively on children in poverty: some
partnerships focus upon all children and young people, others upon specific sub-groups,
which may include some children in poverty, but not all, and also some children who are not
in poverty. Finally, the aims of the partnerships differ: some are focused upon finding
"technical solutions" others upon "adaptive solutions"[13] (Cf. Hopkins, 2007).

In addition to differences in focus, there is a more fundamental divide between those
partners who see child poverty as a family (or adult) poverty problem, and therefore promote
strategies such as raising employment levels and the pay of adults in households in poverty,
and those partners who also see child poverty in terms of the inter-generational transmission
of poverty, and who are therefore also interested in strategies that aim to break the cycle, by,
for example, raising the educational attainment of children in poverty. The distinctive

---

[10] In addition, there are opportunities for children and young people to provide feedback to individuals, such as teachers and youth workers.
[11] The main focus of discussions is within the LEA and between the LEA and schools and narrowing the educational and experiential attainment gap for 8-13 year olds is not a specific priority or outcome in either Pembrokeshire or Neath Port Talbot CYPP plans, although there is reference to narrowing the gender gap in Pembrokeshire's plan and to need to improve outcomes for looked after children in both Neath Port Talbot's and Pembrokeshire's plans.
[12] The seven core aims are based upon the UN Convention On The Rights Of The Child and are the basis for all policy toward children and young people in Wales. Both CYPPs have established groups to take forward under each core aim. Core aim 7 is that children "are not disadvantaged by child poverty."
13 David Hopkins (2007) suggests there are two broad types of challenges, "technical" and "adaptive" challenges. The former requires the application to existing knowledge to solve them. They are essentially a managerial challenge and in some circumstances may simply require top down prescription (you will do X). There are no existing ('off the shelf') solutions for the latter type of challenge. The problems are more complex. The challenge is one of leadership, of enabling collaborative learning and building capacity to identify and implement new solutions (i.e. new ways of working) (Hopkins, 2007)

strategies adopted by Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire in fulfilment of core aim 7, that children and young people should not be disadvantaged by poverty, provide good illustrations of this. Neath Port Talbot's strategy includes strategies such as job creation, up-skilling young people and adults and support to access employment (Neath Port Talbot CYPP , 2008), whilst Pembrokeshire's includes both strategies aimed at raising household income, such as increasing the take up of benefits, *and* strategies to close the educational attainment gap (Pembrokeshire CYPP, 2008). As noted in the introduction to this report, the two conceptions are not mutually exclusive - in effect, the former is a short term strategy, the latter, a longer term strategy – but they matter because they influence the extent to which different stakeholders see tackling child poverty as part of their responsibility or not.

Selected partnerships and networks addressing the child poverty agenda in Neath Port Talbot

NPT CVC

LSB

CYPP | HSCWB (JEG & HIG) | CPP (annual partnership & | Safer Neath Port Talbot partnership | CCET - NPT

LSCB

Community First partnerships X | YOT

14-19 Network | Learning for Work | Learning in the community | New learning network

LLAN | NASSH | NPT Youth Council and | School Clusters

CHIP

TAC Pilots

Schools

SEF PLCs pilots

School Governors

School Councils

School led partnerships

Acronyms
CCET –Community Consortia for Education and Training
CHIP - Children's Inclusion Project
CPP - Community Plan Partnership
CVC – County Voluntary Council
CYPP- Children and young people's Partnership
EOTAS – Educated Other than At School
HIG- Heath Improvement Group
HSCWB – Health Social Care and Well-Being partnership
JEG - Joint Executive group
LLAN – association of primary school Head teachers
LSB – Local Service Board
LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children Board
NASSSH - Neath Afon Association of secondary Heads
SEF PLC - School Effectiveness Framework Professional Learning Communities
TAC – Team Around the Child
YOT – Youth Offending Team

Selected partnerships and networks addressing the child poverty agenda in Pembrokeshire
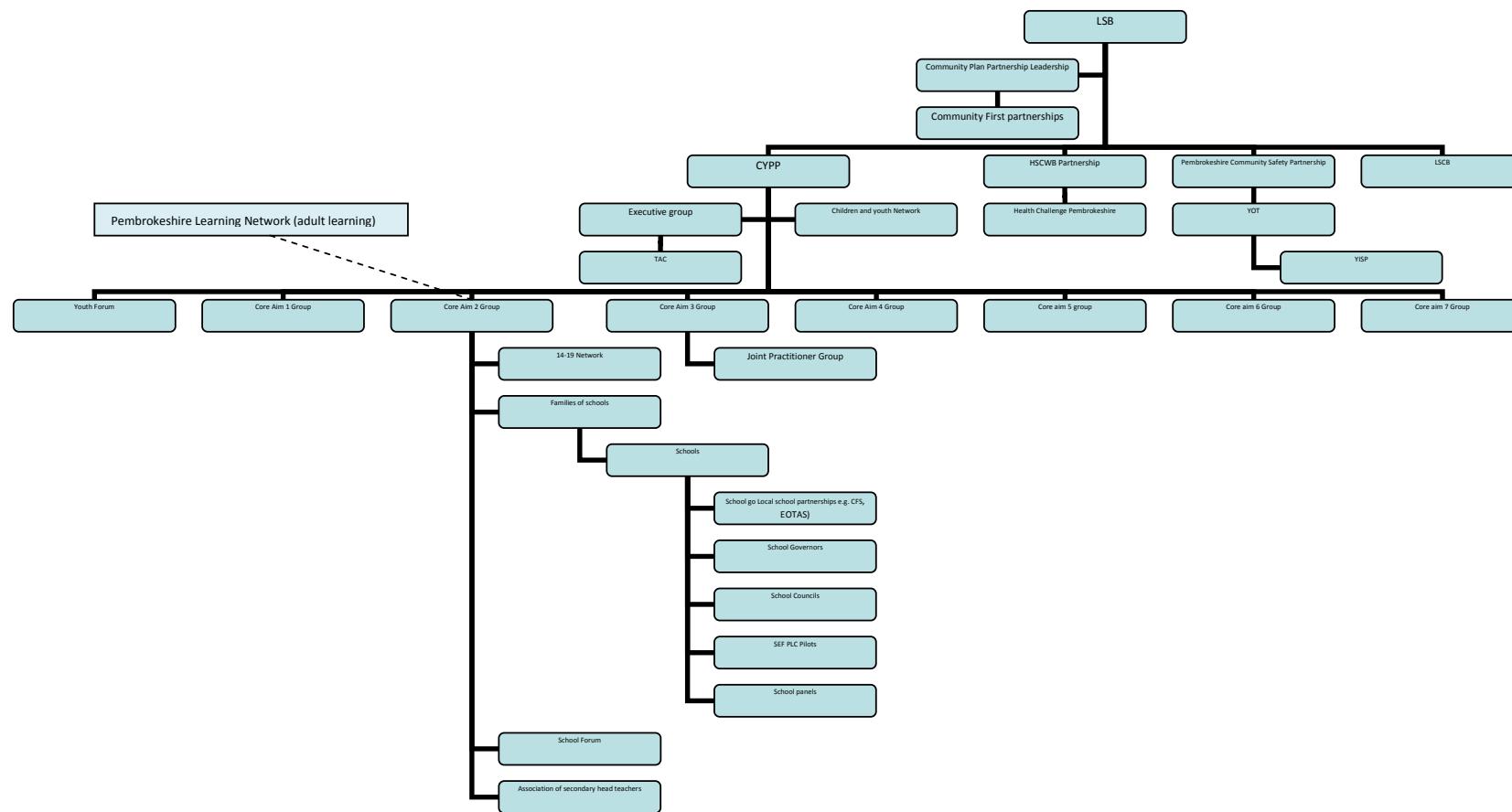
The impact of policy and partnership working upon the attainment gap and children's educational experiences

There was consensus amongst those we interviewed that whilst it was possible to identify individual policies, programmes and approaches that were judged to be successful, and others that were judged to be less successful, it was very difficult to attribute changes in attainment and children's experiences of education to individual policies, programmes and approaches.

The policies and aspects of partnership working that were judged to be working well included:

- The high level, or 'strategic' commitment to partnership working in each Local Authority;
- The strong commitment and passion of those working in this area, which could be thought of as 'moral purpose', an issue we return to in the conclusions;
- The review, and rationalisation of partnerships structures in each Local Authority and the collaboration between innovative multi-agency initiatives, such as the establishment or piloting of Team Around the Child (TAC)[14], and the development of families of schools, which were enhancing operational collaboration between different services;
- The range of youth support services provided by and in schools, including youth workers, pupil support officers, school nurses, support counsellors, educational psychologists and education welfare officers/pupil support officers, which provides a network of support for pupils;
- The strategies to support the transition from primary to secondary school, so that, in general, pupils are not apprehensive of the transition and settle in relatively easily;
- The community focus of schools serving disadvantaged areas, even if they were not always formally a Community Focused School[15];
- The additional funding that schools serving disadvantaged areas had received under the Assembly Government's RAISE programme.[16]
- The funding provided by Cymorth[17].

---

[14] TAC is a model of service provision, in which a range of different professionals work together to support an individual child.
[15] The Community Focused School grant aims to support the development of community focus or extend the services and activities that schools provide.
[16] The RAISE (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards of Education) programme was launched in 2006 to "target disadvantaged pupils and seek to raise their levels of performance" and provided additional funding to schools with more than 20% of their pupils eligible for Free School Meals. It was scaled back in 2009/10 and RAISE funding for schools will cease thereafter.
[17] The Children and Young People's Support Fund, which aims to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people within a framework of universal provision, in order to improve the life chances of children and young people from disadvantaged families.

In contrast, those policies and aspects of partnership working that were judged not to be working so well included:

- joint working between some agencies at an operational level, so that, for example, because information sharing between front line workers can be poor, hampering efforts to coordinate work, there remains some duplication of services and there is not always a consistent message from different agencies working with children, young people and/or their parents or carers. This is changing though, and interviewees were keen to highlight developments such as Team Around the Child, which are reported to be improving information sharing and the coordination of services for some children and young people;
- The integration of all agencies and partnerships, so that, for example, in Neath Port Talbot, it has been difficult to fully engage secondary schools in the CYPP, and the Communities First role in relation to child poverty was described as poorly developed;
- The limited capacity of many specialist services, such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), which limits the support they provide. This was seen as contributing to factors such as high thresholds for intervention, long waiting lists and time limited services;
- The 'academic' transition from primary to secondary school, so that although pupils settle into their new schools well, despite progress, the transfer and use of information about their learning needs and achievements is weaker, so that pupils may, for example, be re-tested at secondary school, because the secondary school does not have full confidence in teacher assessments There are also significant differences in pedagogy in primary and secondary school, which can hamper children's academic progress following transition. Participants at a roundtable discussion[18] also suggested that support for transition often ends after year 7 and there was a need to continue the support beyond this year[19], ;
- The "paternalism" of some schools (as one discussant described it), whose leaders wanted to do the best for their pupils, but who were reported to lack confidence in other agencies and therefore choose to work with their pupils themselves, rather than trying to involve other agencies at an early stage. As a consequence, for some children and young people, a point was reached when the school judged that it could do no more and, at this late stage, when the support of agencies is sought, it was too late for the

---

[18] This brought together representatives from the two local authorities, the Welsh Assembly Government, The Partnership Support Unit and the voluntary sector.
[19] In addition, although beyond the remit of this study, some concerns were voiced about the transition from Key Stage 3 to 4.

child because they exited mainstream education and the problems they faced had sometimes become so entrenched that their prospects for reintegration were extremely poor;

- education other than at school (EOTAS), for pupils who are, for example, disaffected or who have been permanently excluded, which does not always provide a route back into mainstream education because, for example, the efforts to develop children and young people's social and emotional skills come at the expense of the development of their academic skills (both are important); and

- The risk that some children living in poverty who under-achieve, but who attend and who do not exhibit problematic behaviour in school are missed, or hidden, whilst attention and support is directed at the high achievers and the most challenging children and young people.

The paternalism of some schools reflects a wider weakness in systems leadership and arguably 'moral purpose' (see boxed text), because, whilst as outlined above, professionals are committed to ensuring the children and young people in their care achieve the best they can, this does not necessarily extend to a commitment to ensuring that all children and young people in the Local Authority achieve the best they can. As a consequence, weaknesses in the performance of other organisations leads people to do things for themselves, to bring services in house and under their control, rather than trying to work with those agencies to address their problems.

Systems Thinking, Moral Purpose and Systems Leadership

Systems thinking means thinking about the relationships between different parts of a system, rather than trying to isolate individual components of the system, in order to understand them. So, for example, in order to understand a school, how it works and how it might develop, you cannot simply examine the school in isolation; it is necessary to think about how it relates to other 'components' in the system, such as the Local Authority, the community and the family. In effect, it means thinking about things holistically, viewing things in context.

Systems thinking is consistent with approaches such as results based accountability[20] which emphasises that many of the goals of public policy, such as narrowing the educational and

---

[20] Results based accountability is an approach that focus upon desired outcomes, and works back to identify how progress toward this goal can be measured and which partners contribute to its achievement. For more information go to http://www.raguide.org/

experiential gaps, cannot be achieved by any one organisation (or component of the system), such as schools, and nor should they be held accountable for this. Instead, all the components in the system share collective responsibility for achieving this goal (Friedman, 2005).

Systems thinking also underpins what Michael Fullan (2001) describes as school leaders' and teachers' "moral purpose": a commitment to narrowing the gap in the attainment of different groups of children and young people and improving the experiences of all children and young people in your area, rather than, for example, a commitment to only improving the attainment and experiences of children and young people in school leaders' and teachers' own school.

Systems leadership involves professionals, who may not have formal or "line" authority taking leadership roles across a whole system, so, for example, a teacher, a youth worker or a social worker might help 'lead' (e.g. facilitate, enable and drive change) reform of children services in their area, by working with professionals in other organisations, to help improve outcomes for all children and young people in their area (Fullan, 2003; Hopkins, 2007).

At an aggregate level, that is to say, the combined impact of all the factors at work, including policy and partnership working, the evidence of impact upon attainment suggests a mixed picture, with real progress at some Key Stages for some groups of children and young people, but weaknesses at other levels and for other groups of children and young people. These groups who are often, although not always, living in poverty, include Looked After children, Gypsy / traveller children, children from some ethnic minorities, children of migrant workers, young carers and those educated other than at schools (EOTAS) (see the appendix for more details).

It is much more difficult to directly assess the aggregate impact of policy and partnership working upon the educational experience, as there are no direct measures. The best available data provide proxy measures, such as rates of absenteeism and exclusions, which suggest a similarly mixed picture (see the appendix for more details). The evidence of an experiential gap is consistent with research into well-being which suggests a strong correlation between poverty and poorer well-being (OECD, 2009).

A range of causes for the continuing educational and experiential gaps were identified in the course of the study. These included a number of 'tough nuts' where progress was reported to have been limited:

- The poor literacy & numeracy of many children growing up in poverty;
- The weak social & emotional skills[21] of many children growing up in poverty;
- The weakness in the support and encouragement some parents and carers provide, because of barriers such as ill health, drugs and substance misuse and the limited skills of some; and,
- A sense of fatalism, or a lack of agency including a sense of powerlessness. Even where expectations are positive, so that children and young people expect to succeed, they see themselves as passive actors in the journey through school and work. In some cases this fatalism was reported to extend to parents and carers and professionals, and was reflected in low expectations for children and young people.

The sense of fatalism was linked to a lack of both self-knowledge (or self-awareness) of their own attitudes and capabilities and how they might help and hinder them and of what they might need to do to achieve their aspirations, such as how they might need to change their behaviour and what grades they need to achieve to continue into further and higher education. This was a more significant barrier than low aspirations per se, indeed, in many ways the aspirations of children from poor families were broadly comparable to those from wealthier families, in that those involved in focus groups were just as likely to identify careers in areas such as the law that required higher education.[22]

The more limited progress made in tackling these challenges may have limited the impact of other polices, so that, the child who struggles to read or write, will struggle at school, even when pastoral care in the school is good.

The Barriers to Partnership Working

The study identified a range of barriers to partnership working including:

- The complexity and the scale of challenge (i.e. narrowing and ultimately closing the educational gap);

---

[21] These include the five domains of emotional intelligence identified by Daniel Goleman (1995): Self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy, the ability to manage relationships and mood management.
[22] Similarly, a large survey of young people undertaken by the Princes Trust (2003) found that the aims and aspirations of disadvantaged young people were very similar to young people who were not disadvantaged and that they were aware that failure at school could hold them back, but that they did not fully understand the impact of this failure until they were much older.

- The limited overall resources and the fragmentation of resources across multiple funding streams[23];

- The differences in institutional cultures, priorities and statutory requirements, most notably between education and social services, which, in the past, have slowed the development of multi-agency initiatives such as the TAC and which despite the considerable progress made in forging a shared (or joint) agenda, remain a challenge;

- The lack of data about the needs and identity of some children and young people growing up in poverty, which in the past has hampered efforts to plan how to meet their needs. This is another area where progress is being made and in both Local Authorities, the quality and range of data that is available, is reported to be improving, but where gaps remain;

- The limited knowledge and understanding of what potential partners could offer and in some cases a limited willingness to work in partnership with others, because for example, there was a lack of trust or confidence in their ability to deliver and/or a lack of patience or frustration with their speed of response;

- The logistics of partnership working, including the time needed, travel, rurality and the need to synchronise diaries;

- The restructuring of some key partners, such as the Health Trust in Pembrokeshire, which had hampered it's capacity to focus upon partnership work;

- The pressures upon individual services and agencies to achieve targets which take precedence over collective goals and outcomes for which no single agency is accountable, and for which no single service or agency can take credit; and,

- Parents and carers who were sometimes reluctant or unable to involve or work with other agencies themselves or allow them to work with their children. This could be caused by mistrust or fears of, for example, being labelled a 'bad parent' and could be caused by a lack of confidence or skill in working with other agencies.[24]

Many of these barriers are reflected in the literature on partnership working (Percy-Smith, 2006; Fryre & Webb, 2002) and are not unique to either Neath Port Talbot or Pembrokeshire.

---

[23] In their submission to the Finance Committee Inquiry into Specific Grants, the WLGA and ADEW identified over 100 specific grants available to Local Authorities to provide services for children and young people, of which over 60 were specifically for education (WLGA & ADEW, 2009)

[24] This is consistent with other research. For example, the recent study into Parental engagement in pre schools, primary schools and secondary schools in Wales (WAG, 2009b), found that "Some parents - particularly those with less positive experiences of school and those with literacy and numeracy issues - felt less able and less confident to contribute to these aspects of their child's education [i.e. academic progress and learning] at secondary level".

Are the findings likely to apply to other areas?

As outlined in the introduction to this study, this was a small scale study, based upon two case studies, and the findings could be unique to the specific contexts of Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire. In order to assess if the findings have a wider resonance and applicability, reference is made, where applicable, to the wider literature; draft findings were presented to, and discussed, with a range of stakeholders from Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Partnership Support Unit and the voluntary sector, at two roundtable seminars, and were endorsed; and finally the findings were discussed with a CYPP coordinator representing a metropolitan area (Cardiff). [25]

Cardiff CYPP reported that the findings resonated with them. They noted in particular, the challenges they shared (with Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot) in trying to fully engage some partners in the CYPP and an interest in trying to devolve services to a local level. One area where they noted some difference in emphasis, was that while they also found it difficult to combine the different agendas, they had found that child poverty provided a common goal for working with Communities First Partnerships.

Overall the wider literature and feedback from the two roundtable discussions and Cardiff CYPP suggests the findings have resonance beyond Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot, but further comments and feedback on the paper are welcomed.

Conclusions

The study highlighted the multiple opportunities for some, but not all stakeholders, to creatively work together to improve the educational outcomes and experiences of children and young people living in poverty. In particular, the opportunities for children and young people and parents and carers are more limited.

The study found real strengths in some aspects of partnership working, but weakness in others. Overall at a strategic level, this study found that partnership working was very strong and improving in both local authorities, but the study found a more mixed picture at an operational level.[26] Partnership work to support early intervention is improving, and there are

---

[25] Unfortunately it did not prove possible to discuss the findings with a CYPP coordinator representing a North Wales local authority, as had been planned.
[26] This conclusion is broadly in line with the assessments of inspectorates. For example, Estyn inspections of youth support services, which found that at a strategic level, partnership working was good and improving in Neath Port Talbot, and outstanding in Pembrokeshire. In contrast, their assessment of operational partnerships,

also effective universal services, such as youth support services, based in and around schools. Nevertheless, many of the most effective operational partnerships, such as the TAC approach, have focused upon most challenging children and young people and are often, in effect, a model of crisis management which, whilst arresting the decline often struggle to reverse it leaving some young people excluded from mainstream education and with poor future prospects. As a consequence, there are many children and young people growing up in poverty who under-achieve but who because they attend school and do not cause trouble, are not targeted and do not necessarily trigger the same level of intervention and support that more obviously challenging and challenged children and young people benefit from.

The differing judgments about the effectiveness of partnership working at a strategic and at an operational level may reflect the relative complexity or difficulty of partnership working at each level. For example, as Goss somewhat archly observes, "while partnership[s] and network[s] seem to be good at strategy, planning, document writing, research, data-gathering and so on, delivery is harder" (p. 95, 2001 cited in Percy-Smith , 2006).

Interviewees also identified a number of other problems that contributed to a situation in which different agencies were implementing evidence based strategies that were poorly coordinated, limiting their likely impact. These included differences in the ways in which different agencies view the issues, so for example schools may see the educational attainment gap as primarily a problem of under-achievement, whilst members of the core aim seven group view it primarily as problem of poverty; the continuing challenges of fully integrating all agencies and settings and partnerships at a strategic level around the child poverty agenda and working effectively together at an operational level so that, for example, schools may be implementing literacy and numeracy strategies[27], voluntary sector organisations may be providing parenting support[28] and Communities First may be providing extra-curricular activities[29], but these different interventions are not fully integrated into a coherent child poverty plan.[30]

Although it was not possible to identify the contribution (or impact) of individual polices or practices upon the educational outcomes and experiences of children in poverty, outcomes

---

whilst also very positive, found that they were somewhat weaker overall (Estyn, 2008a, 2008b). CSSIW have reached similar conclusions when looking at social services (CSSIW & WAO, 2008).

[27] See Brooks, 2001 , for a review of the evidence of the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy programmes.
[28] See Desforges, 2003, for a review of the evidence of the effectiveness of parenting programmes
[29] See Wikely, et al, 2007, on the evidence of the impact of extra-curricular activities.
[30] Coherence is important, because there are multiple causal pathways to poor educational outcomes and poor-well-being, there is no single 'magic bullet' that will work and a "portfolio of investments" of different types is needed, but which must be carefully planned to ensure that different interventions are mutually supportive creating synergies, enhancing the overall impact (OECD, 2009).

in both Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire are relatively good, compared to other Welsh Local Authorities. Nevertheless, a large gap remains and the educational outcomes and experience of some particularly vulnerable groups of children and young people living in poverty, such as the children of gypsy traveller families and those in care, are much poorer still and remain a concern.

There is consensus that whilst partnership working is key element of any strategy, narrowing and ultimately closing the educational gap is likely to be very challenging. There is also ample evidence that partnership working itself is challenging and it is difficult to evidence its impact[31] (see e.g. Lord, et al, 2008). This study suggests that whilst good progress has been made in both Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire, partnership working needs to continue to develop in order to address some of the 'tough nuts' identified by this study, including low levels of literacy and numeracy, poor social and emotional skills, a sense of fatalism and weakness in the support parents and carers provide. There are unlikely to be easy or "technical" solutions to these problems; they are likely to require "adaptive" solutions, new ways of working and doing things. Systems leaders, who go beyond leading their own organisation, to work with and help drive and lead change in other organisations across the system and embrace a collective responsibility for all children and young people in their Local Authority, are likely to be needed. Many potential systems leaders will not have formal authority over other parts of their system, and they will need to work with others through collaboration, using structures such as the CYPP. A key challenge for them is helping move from partnership work, in which different services and agencies collaborate, to truly integrated working that is child rather than service centred.

Finally, whilst important, the need and role of systems leaders can be overstated: not everyone can or should aspire to be systems leaders. There is still a vital need for leaders at all levels[32] whose focus is upon ensuring that their own organisation or service is outstanding in identifying and meeting need. For example, a focus upon improving the system could potentially distract leaders from improving their own organisation or service.

---

[31] It is often easier to identify the problems caused by a lack of partnership working, than it is to measure the positive impact of partnership working (Leiba & Weinstein, 2003 cited in Percy-Smith , 2006).
[32] There is a need for distributed leadership, in which leadership roles are created and exercised throughout organisations.

Recommendations

The recommendations are based upon the fieldwork and a roundtable discussion bringing together representatives from the two local authorities, the Welsh Assembly Government, The Partnership Support Unit and the voluntary sector. The discussions highlighted the need for more resources (see also CPEG, 2008 on this[33]), but there was recognition that it was likely that in many areas budgets would be frozen or cut in the coming years, therefore the focus of much of the discussion was upon how existing resources could be used more effectively. There was, for example, debate about the potential for new initiatives, such as the School Effectiveness Framework, to facilitate re-prioritisation, with both enthusiasm and some scepticism about its potential amongst participants.[34] There was also recognition that this would mean that funding for some services and agencies may need to be scaled back or services decommissioned, in order to free up resources for other agencies and services to be extended or introduced. Finally, there was also some discussion about whether concepts such as 'reducing inequality', could provide a more effective shared goal, than 'reducing poverty. There was interest, but no consensus on this and the recommendations therefore relate to poverty, but could also be applied to reducing inequality.

There was recognition within the discussion of some of the challenges that would need to be overcome in order to implement the recommendations.   For example, the evidence of the effectiveness of adaptive solutions may be weaker than 'tried and tested' approaches because, by definition, they are new and often unproven. They may therefore represent a risky strategy that is somewhat at odds with the drive for evidence based policy. Equally, it was argued that where current policy and practice was demonstrably not adequate to close the gap, this constituted evidence that alternative polices were needed.

Although some of the recommendations relate to a specific department or agency this does not mean that that department or agency is the only party able to effect the change. For example, recommendations about enhancing the role of community focused schools, may relate to changes to the Welsh Assembly Government's funding and guidance for community

---

[33] The CPEG's eighth recommendation was that "The Welsh Assembly Governments should consider introducing significant additional financial support for schools in our most disadvantaged areas to assist them in improving the performance of those pupils currently achieving lower levels of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4.This funding should build upon the good practice identified through the RAISE initiative and should be closely aligned to innovative programmes of action that make a significant difference for disadvantaged young people in these schools e.g. personalised support, strengthening home/school links, literacy strategies, strengthening student voice, etc. "

[34] It was striking that there was so little discussion about the SEF amongst stakeholders who were not part of the LEA. This was probably because the SEF was still a pilot for much of the study and the communication strategy for the SEF was still being developed. However, towards the end of the study, a number of interviewees mentioned an interest in it, following briefings from their colleagues within the LEA.

focused schools, but could also be addressed by Local Authorities and schools themselves. Therefore, we have not assigned recommendations to specific departments or agencies, but have organised the recommendations thematically.

Fostering 'moral purpose', a commitment to improving outcomes for all learners in a particular area

1. Local Authority child poverty strategies, required by the forthcoming Children and Families Measure, should include a specific action plan, with dedicated resources, to narrow the educational and experiential gaps. This should include SMART targets that address attainment and experiential gaps as part of a shared planning and outcome measure framework, which incorporates both service level and population outcomes, such as results based accountability[35]. This will require improvements in the use and availability of data[36] on the attainment and achievement[37] of different groups of children and young people at a local authority and family of schools level (see recommendation 5).

2. Move toward people-centred' (as opposed to service centred) planning, delivery and review, so for example, services are judged against the things that children and their families value, rather than just what the services themselves (or their funders) value. This approach also requires integrated working, in which organisations look holistically at how money is spent on individuals, linking budgets and workers, sharing outcomes and jointly reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of work, in order to better meet the needs of the children and families they work with and for (also see recommendation 1).

---

[35] "Population", or "results" accountability, focuses upon changes in the whole population, for which no single agency or service is responsible, but which collectively, all the relevant services and agencies can be held accountable for. "Service" or "performance" accountability focuses upon changes that are attributable to the work of a single agency or service, so that they can be held accountable for them (Friedman, 2005). So for example, an individual service, such as a school, may be held accountable using performance measures, for areas such as changes in pupils' skills and attitudes, but no single agency can be accountable for narrowing the gap between the attainment of children and young people from disadvantaged and more affluent families in Neath Port Talbot or Pembrokeshire. However, collectively, the range of children and adult services can be held accountable for this.

[36] The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) provides a very rich data on individual pupils. However much of the data on the attainment of different groups of pupils, such as FSM pupils, and pupils form ethnic minority backgrounds is currently only published on an all Wales basis. Similarly, Local Education Authorities hold rich data sets on their pupils, but this is rarely published, making comparisons between the performance of different local authorities difficult.

[37] Achievement is a wider measure than attainment, as it includes assessment of the progress learners have made and the development of personal, social and learning skills. It is easier to measure attainment than achievement. Proxy measures for achievement include value added measures, which compare the attainment of pupils with pupils with similar prior attainment, giving a measure of their progression, and contextual value added measures, which compare the attainment of pupils with pupils with similar prior attainment and similar circumstances, including eligibility for FSM, gender, special educational needs, first language and age, making them a better measure of schools effectiveness..

3. Encourage and develop the role and contribution of community members and professionals from outside the education sector in schools through, for example, their involvement in school governance, in order to enhance schools' knowledge of the communities they serve and empower local agents of change.

4. Provide advice and training to enable and support key people in all agencies to become systems leaders, driving improvements within, and where appropriate, beyond their organisations and consider the potential role of children's champions who could take on systems leadership roles.

Improving partnership working at an operational level

5. Develop and extend the 'families of schools'[38] concept by locating and integrating universal children and adult services and those providing additional support (tiers 1 and 2)[39], adult education and voluntary sector activities on and around families of schools and where necessary (e.g. in rural areas), exploring how services can be organised around two or more families of schools. In line with the School Effectiveness Framework's emphasis upon the central role that schools can play in improving outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with others (WAG, 2008), this would include extending and developing the concept of community focused schools, to go beyond the provision of extra curricular activities for pupils and community members, so community focused schools become hubs or a focus for a range of services that can support children and adults (see below) (see also CPEG, 2008)[40]. It would also include strengthening the engagement of Communities First partnerships at this level, rather than at a Local Authority level, in order to strengthen local planning and community participation[41].

---

[38] These bring together the secondary schools with the contributing (or 'feeder') primary schools and in some cases share resources, such as educational psychologists.

[39] Tier 1 services are universal services, such as schools, tier 2 involve services providing additional support tier 3 services are targeted services and tier 4 services are specialist services such as specialist CAHMs services.

[40] The CPEG's fifteenth recommendation was that "The Welsh Assembly Government should seek to significantly increase its investment in the Community Focused Schools programme in recognition of its potential role in tackling child poverty. This additional funding should be focused upon our most disadvantaged areas, with the intention of placing all secondary schools at the heart of their communities in providing 24/7 opportunities for community and family learning and access to a range of integrated services. The opportunities provided through Convergence and Competitiveness Programmes should be maximised in this respect." (CPEG, 2008). Similarly, the The Children's Committee's twenty seventh recommendation was that "The Welsh Assembly Government enable the establishment of more appropriately funded, well planned and community focused schools, starting with areas of high socio-economic disadvantage."

[41] This does not preclude their contribution to policy making in area such as child poverty, through for example, Core Aim 7 groups, where they have expertise.

6. Ensure that all grants which could contribute to narrowing the gap are approved by the CYPP or LEA, in order to ensure that the available funding is used coherently and systematically support evidence based policies[42].

7. Further strengthen area based and joint inspections of services and ensure that services and partnerships are held to account by both the Local Authority and the welsh Assembly Government.

Improving support for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

8. Extend the often strong partnership working in the early years, in which targeted services are provided within a framework of universal provision[43], so that support for children, young people and families (see also the CPEG, 2008)[44] continues as pupils progress into primary school and beyond. This should include work to support the roles of teachers and support staff so that they can more effectively identify needs, including those children and young people growing up in poverty who under-achieve, but who do not exhibit problematic behaviour, and know how to access additional support from universal, targeted and specialist services (see also NAfW, 2008)[45].

9. Build upon the progress made in enhancing multi-agency working for those children and young people with identified needs, to enhance partnership working within universal services and those providing additional support to ensure that services are responsive to needs identified by, for example, teachers and support staff (see recommendation 8).

10. Sustain and continue to develop youth support services, such as youth workers, school counsellors and educational welfare officers/pupil support officers, based in and around schools.

---

[42] For example, under the ESF Objective 1 programme, all bids had to be approved by local partnership boards, helping ensure that the individual projects contributed to strategic objectives.

[43] The On Track model for 4-14 year olds provides a good example of this.

[44] The CPEG's third recommendation was "There is evidence to confirm that in supporting children's educational experience the home/school relationship is important but the critical driver is the home learning environment including parental experience and confidence in supporting learning in the home. The Welsh Assembly Government should explore what further action could be taken to support these relationships, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged families. This should include stronger support for parenting programmes, for family and community learning in a venue appropriate for the participants."

[45] The Children's Committee's eleventh recommendation was that"The Welsh Assembly Government ensure increased poverty education within mainstream teacher training and in training of other professionals working with young people in education settings. This education should encompass the impact of poverty upon children and their education. This should also incorporate teachers' responsibilities to provide pastoral care. " (NAfW, 2008)

Bibliography

All web reference correct, 28th September 2009

Blastland, M & Dilnott, A. (2007). *The Tiger That Isn't: seeing the world through numbers.* London: Profile Books

Brooks, G. (2002) *What works for Children with Literacy Difficulties? The Effectiveness of Intervention Schemes*, London: Department for Education and Skills. Available online at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR380.pdf

The Child Poverty Expert Group (2008). *Child Poverty: Education 4-14 years.* Available online at http://wales.gov.uk/dsjlg/publications/childrenyoung/education/recommendations.pdf?lang=en;

CSSIW & WAO (2008). *Joint Review of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Social Services*, available online at http://www.joint-reviews.gov.uk/assets/NPT_Report_e_220708WEB.pdf

Desforges, C., With Abouchaar, A. 2003 *The Impact Of Parental Involvement, Parental Support And Family Education On Pupil Achievement And Adjustment: A Literature Review.* Research Report 433. London, DfES.

Feinstein, L., Hearn, B. & Renton, Z. with Abrahams, A. & MacLeod, M. (2007). *Reducing Inequalities: realising the talents of all.* London: National Children's Bureau

Egan, D. (2007). *Combating child poverty in Wales: are effective education strategies in place?* York: JRF, available online at http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/pdf/2162.pdf

Estyn (2008a). *A Report on the quality of youth support services in Pembrokeshire.* Cardiff: Estyn. Also available online at http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_reports/pembrokeshire_yss_october_2008.pdf

Estyn (2008ab). *A Report on the quality of youth support services in Neath Port Talbot*. Cardiff: Estyn. Also available online at
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/inspection_reports/neath_port_talbot_yss_june_2008.pdf

Estyn, (2009) *The Impact of RAISE 2008-2009.* Cardiff: Estyn. Also available online at
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/thematicreports/Impact_of_RAISE_2008-2009.pdf

Friedman, M. (2005). Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough. *How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities.* Oxford: Trafford Publishing

Frost, N. (2005). *Professionalism, Partnership and Joined-up Thinking: A research review of front-line working with children and families.* RIP.
http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/socialwork/people/images/frostreview8.pdf

Frye, M. & Webb, A. (2002). Effective Partnership working. HM Treasury http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/PSPP_partnerships_report.pdf

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change.* San Fransico: Jossey Bass

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.* New York: Bantam

Hopkins, D. (2007). *Every School a Great School: Realizing the potential of system laedership.* Open University Press:; Maidenhead

Lord, P., Kinder, K., Wilkin, A., Atkinson, M. & Harland, J. (2008). *Evaluating the early impact of integrated childrens services: a study carried out by the Local Authorities Research Consortium.* Slough: NFER, also available online at
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/CYIlongreport.pdf

Lupton, R., (2005). 'Social Justice And School Improvement: Improving The Quality Of Schools In The Poorest Neighbourhoods', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 5, Pp. 589-604

NAfW (2002). *Narrowing The Gap In The Performance Of Schools.* Cardiff: NAFW, also available onlinehttp://www.wlga.gov.uk/uploads/publications/59.pdf

NAfW (2008) *The Children and young people's Committee: Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education? November 2008*, Cardiff: NAFW, also available online at http://www.assemblywales.org/cyp_3__child_poverty_report_eng__2_.pdf

NAO (2001) Joining up to improve public services. London: NAO http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0102/joining_up_to_improve_public.aspx

Neath Port Talbot Children's and Young People's Partnership (2008). *The Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011.* Available online at http://education.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/schools/children_and_young_people/cypplansfinal/neath/?lang=en&ts=1

OECD (2009). *Doing Better for Children.* Paris: OECD

Percy-Smith J (2006) 'What works in strategic partnerships for children: a research review' . *Children and Society* , 20 , 313 – 323

Pembrokeshire Children's and Young People's Partnership (2008). *The Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011.* Available online at http://education.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/schools/children_and_young_people/cypplansfinal/pembrokeshire/?lang=en&ts=1

The Prince's Trust / Royal Bank of Scotland Group, (2003). *Breaking barriers? Reaching the hardest to reach*

Red Kite Research and Consultancy (2007). Review of the Sure Start and family support provision for children aged 10 and under within Cymorth in Pembroke Dock and Milford Haven. Unpublished Report

Robinson, M., Atkinson, M. & Downin, D. (2008). Integrated children's services: enablers, challenges and impact. Slough: NFER, also available online at http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/CYLsummary.pdf

WAG (2004) *Children and Young People: Rights into Action.* Cardiff: WAG

WAG (2007) *Shared planning for Better Outcomes.* Cardiff: WAG

WAG (2008). *School Effectiveness Framework: Building effective learning communities together.* Cardiff: WAG, also available online at http://new.wales.gov.uk/dcells/news/educationskillsnews/schooleffectivenessframework/framework-e.pdf?lang=en

WAG (2009a) *First Release Exclusions from Schools in Wales 2007/08.*
Available online at:
http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/090331sdr512009en.pdf?lang=en

WAG (2009b). 'Parental engagement in pre schools, primary schools and secondary schools in Wales - Summary Report'*, DCELLS 2007-10 Customer Research Programme Newsletter, available online at* http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/090924crpnewsletteren.pdf

WAG (2009c). *Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics, 2005-2008*, Available online at http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/schools2009/hdw200903241/?lang=en

WAG & WLGA (2005). Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools Project: Phase II Primary. Cardiff: also available online at
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance_and_information/Narrowingthegapschoolsproject?lang=en

Wikely, F., Bullock, K., Muschamp, Y. & Ridge, T. (2007). *Educational relationships outside school: Why access is important.* York: JRF, also available at
http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2027-education-poverty-activities.pdf

WLGA & ADEW (2009). Finance Committee: FIN(3) 03-09 (p3) Hypothecated Education grants Inquiry: Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Association of Directors of Education Wales (ADEW)
http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third1/bus-committees-third-fin-home/bus-committees-third-fin-agendas/fin_3__03-09__p3__hypothecated_education_grants_paper_from_the_wlga.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=FIN(3)-03-09%20:%20Paper%203%20:%20Hypothecated%20Education%20grants%20Inquiry:%20Wales%20Local%20Government%20Association%20(WLGA)%20and%20the%20Association%20of%20Directors%20of%20Education%20Wales%20(ADEW)%20(PDF,%2060KB)

Appendix. Analysis of Pupil Performance in Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire

This section provides additional information about the scale and nature of the educational and experiential gaps in Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire.

As Tables 1 and 2 and graphs 3 and 4 illustrates, in Neath Port Talbot, at both Key Stage 2 and key stage 4, the gap in the attainment between pupils who are not eligible for Free School Meal (FSMs) and those who are, has narrowed over the period 2006-2008.

Table 1. Comparing the percentage of pupils not eligible for FSMs and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) in key stage 2 in 2008 in Neath Port Talbot	KS2 Wales	KS2 NPT
% of all pupils achieving the CSI	76%	73%
% of non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	80%	76%
% of FSM pupils achieving the CSI	56%	58%
Gap between FSM and non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	**23%**	**18%**

Sources: Statistics for Wales, StatsWales & Estyn, 2009

Table 2. Comparing the percentage of pupils not eligible for FSMs and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving at least five GCSEs Grades A*-C in Neath Port Talbot and Wales	KS4 Wales	KS4 NPT
% of non FSM pupils achieving 5+ A*-C	62%	52%
% of FSM pupils achieving the 5+ A*-C	28%	28%
Gap between FSM and non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	34%	24%

As graph 3 and 4 illustrates, in Pembrokeshire, at Key Stage 2, the gap in the attainment between pupils who are not eligible for FSMs and those who are, narrowed over the period 2006-2008. However, at Key Stage 4, although the overall gap between the attainment of FSM pupils at Key Stage 4 is relatively small in comparison with other Local Authorities, the gap has widened somewhat over the last three years. It is important to stress though that this may be chance finding caused by the relatively small numbers of FSM pupils in Key

stage 3 and 4, which will tend to increase the year on year volatility caused by differences in the ability of each year's cohort of pupils (cf. Blastland & Dilnott, 2008).[46]

Table 3. Comparing the percentage of pupils not eligible for FSMs and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) in key stage 2 in 2008 in Pembrokeshire		
	KS2 Wales	KS2 Pembs
% of all pupils achieving the CSI	76%	76%
% of non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	80%	78%
% of FSM pupils achieving the CSI	56%	63%
Gap between FSM and non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	**23%**	**15%**

Sources: Statistics for Wales, StatsWales & Estyn, 2009

| Table 4. Comparing the percentage of pupils not eligible for FSMs and the percentage of pupils eligible for FSMs achieving at least five GCSEs Grades A*-C in Neath Port Talbot and Wales		
	KS4 Wales	KS4 Pembs
% of non FSM pupils achieving 5+ A*-C	62%	44%
% of FSM pupils achieving the 5+ A*-C	28%	22%
Gap between FSM and non FSM pupils achieving the CSI	34%	22%

.

.

---

[46] Because the figures in graphs 3 and 4 are based upon comparing the performance of pupils in one year, (i.e. 2006) with the performance of pupils in another year (i.e. 2008), and the numbers of FSM pupils in each year in some local Authorities is low (for example, there were less than100 pupils in Monmouthshire and Ceredigion eligible for FSMs in KS4 in 2007) some of the variation in their performance may be due to chance, because the ability of pupils will vary from year to year (cf. Blastland & Dilnott, 2008). This may explain some of the variation in Pembrokeshire, where the proportion of FSM pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C increased from 2005 to 2006 before falling back in 2007.

Graph 3. Differences in performance of FSM pupils in CSI at KS2 between 2006 and 2008
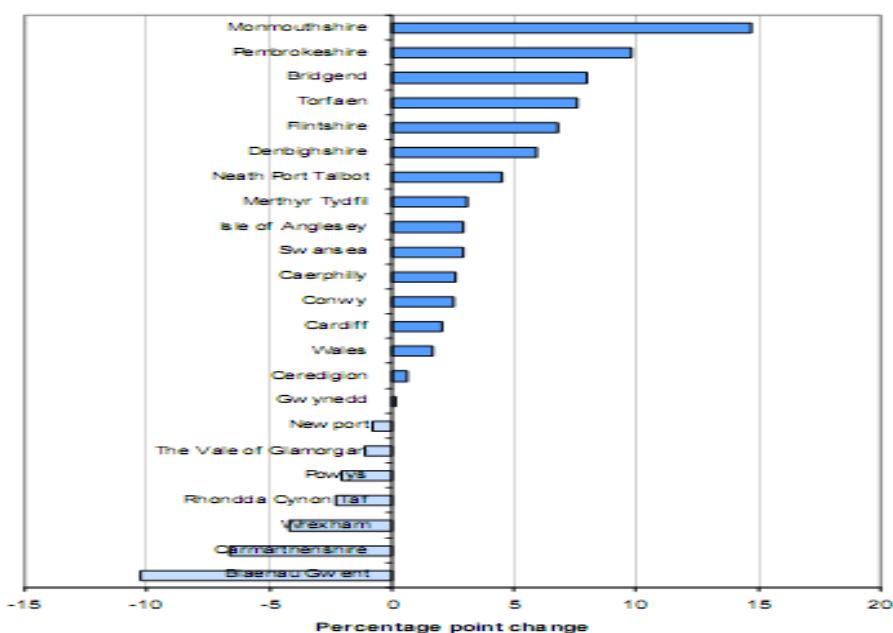
Source: Estyn, 2009

Graph 4. Differences in performance of FSM pupils achieving five or more GCSEs, A*-C between 2006 and 2008
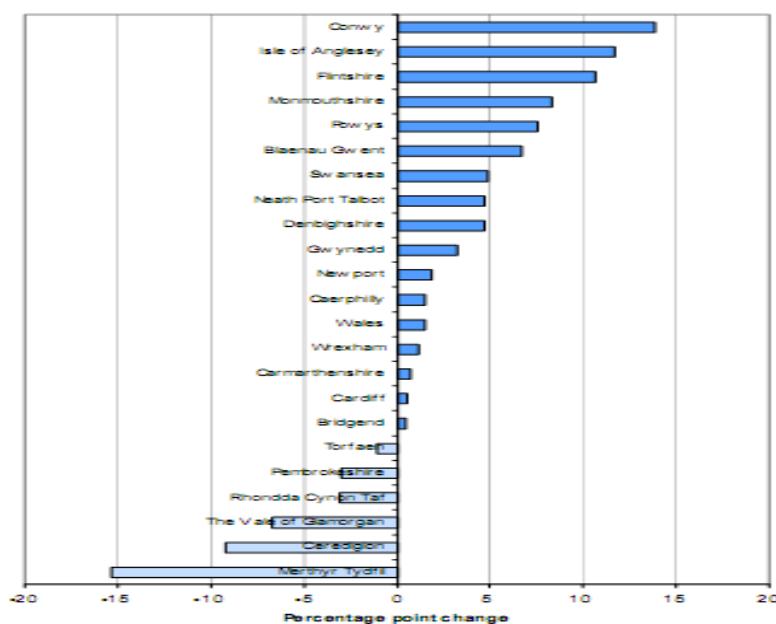

Source: Estyn, 2009

In assessing the educational gap, it is important to consider both the relative and the absolute performance of FSM pupils, because the gap between FSM and non FSM pupils may narrow because the performance of FSM pupils improves relative to that of non FSM pupils or because the performance of non FSM pupils declines relative to that of non FSM pupils.

In Neath Port Talbot, although the gap at key stage 2 is relatively small, this is due in part to the relatively poor performance of non FSM pupils, and consequently, the overall performance of pupils is relatively weak.[47] In contrast, at Key Stages 3 and 4, the performance of FSM is very strong and as a consequence, the overall performance of pupils in Neath Port Talbot is much better than would be expected, given the level of poverty in the county (Estyn, 2009). As graph 3 illustrates, at key stage 4, Neath Port Talbot does particularly well, with the third highest percentage of FSM pupils achieving at least 5 A*-C. Graph 3 also illustrates how FSM pupils in some affluent Local Authorities, most notably Monmouthshire, fare particularly poorly.

---
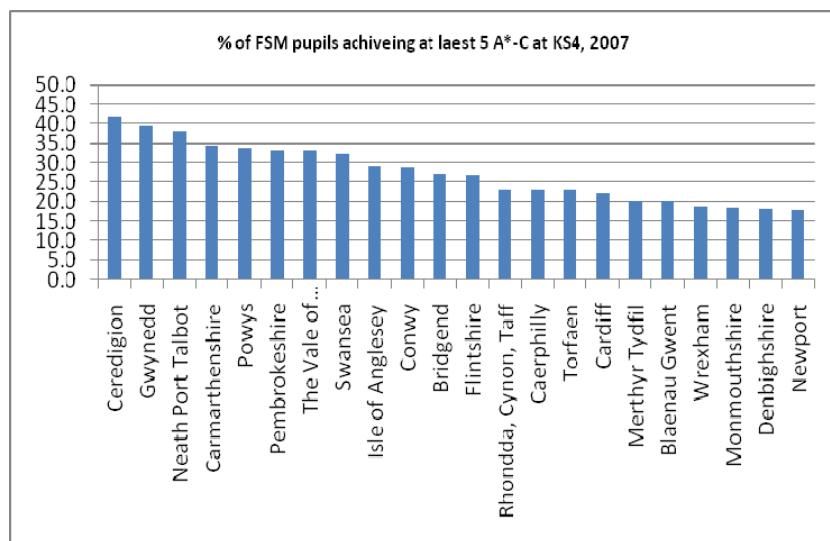
[47] Ranked in terms of the overall performance of pupils at Key Stage 2 in 2008, Neath Port Talbot comes 20th, but ranked in terms of the performance of FSM pupils, Neath port Talbot comes 8th (Estyn, 2009, WAG, 2009a)

It is much more difficult to directly assess the aggregate impact of policy and partnership working upon the educational experience. The best available data provide proxy measures, such as rates of absenteeism and exclusions.

As table 5 illustrates, in Neath Port Talbot, although rates of unauthorised absences are below the Wales average, authorised absences are much higher in primary school and therefore the overall rates of absences in both Neath Port Talbot is markedly higher than the average for Wales, indicating a poorer educational experience. In contrast, as table 6 illustrates, rates of absences in secondary schools and special schools are below the Wales average in Neath Port Talbot. This suggests that the steps taken in Neath Port Talbot to reduce absences in secondary school have been successful and some aspects of the experiential gap can be addressed. This success at secondary school may be one factor which helps explains the differences between pupils' attainment at primary and secondary schools in Neath Port Talbot.

Table 5. Primary & Special schools: Percentage of half day sessions missed due to absences 2007/08			
	% of half day sessions missed to authorised absences	% of half day sessions missed to unauthorised absences	% of half day sessions missed due to absences
Neath Port Talbot	7.0	0.3	7.3
Wales	**5.8**	**0.9**	**6.7**

Source: WAG, 2009a

Table 6. Secondary & Special schools, percentage of half day sessions missed due to absences 2007/08			
	% of half day sessions missed to authorised absences	% of half day sessions missed to unauthorised absences	% of half day sessions missed due to absences
Neath Port Talbot	7.4	0.5	7.9
Wales	**7.3**	**1.8**	**9.0**

Source: WAG, 2009a

As table 7 illustrates, rates of exclusion in Neath Port Talbot is higher than the average for Wales, indicating a poorer educational experience.

Table 7. Average number of days lost from school per fixed term exclusion by Local Authority 2007/08			
	Av. no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions of 5 days or fewer	Av. no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions of 6 days or more	Av. Total no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions
Neath Port Talbot	2.5	11.3	3.5
Wales	**2.3**	**10.9**	**3.2**

Source: WAG, 2009a

As Tables 8 and 9 illustrate, in Pembrokeshire, although rates of unauthorised absences are below the Wales average, authorised absences are higher than the average, meaning that the overall rates of absences in Pembrokeshire is similar to the average for Wales.

Table 8. Primary & Special schools: Percentage of half day sessions missed due to absences 2007/08			
	% of half day sessions missed to authorised absences	% of half day sessions missed to unauthorised absences	% of half day sessions missed due to absences
Pembrokeshire	6.2	0.4	6.6
Wales	**5.8**	**0.9**	**6.7**

Source: WAG, 2009a

Table 9. Secondary & Special schools, percentage of half day sessions missed due to absences 2007/08			
	% of half day sessions missed to authorised absences	% of half day sessions missed to unauthorised absences	% of half day sessions missed due to absences
Pembrokeshire	7.6	1.5	9.1
Wales	**7.3**	**1.8**	**9.0**

Source: WAG, 2009a

As table 10 illustrates, rates of exclusion in Pembrokeshire are higher than the average for Wales, indicating an experiential gap.

Table 10. Average number of days lost from school per fixed term exclusion by Local Authority 2007/08			
	Av. no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions of 5 days or fewer	Av. no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions of 6 days or more	Av. Total no. of days lost to fixed-term exclusions
Pembrokeshire	3.1	9.5	3.4
Wales	**2.3**	**10.9**	**3.2**

Source: WAG, 2009a

In addition to the difference in the attainment of girls and boys, the attainment and experiences of some specific groups of children and young people, who are also often, although not always, living in poverty, most notably, Looked After children, Gypsy / traveller children, children from some ethnic minorities, children of migrant workers, young carers and those educated other than at schools (EOTAS), tends to be poorer (see table 12 for examples). Direct comparisons are difficult because as table 12 illustrates, even when data on outcomes of these children and young people is available at a local authority level (as it is for looked after children), it is not always possible to directly compare outcomes of these groups with other groups of children and young people given differences in the way that data is collected.

Table 12. Academic achievement by ethnicity, 2006-2008		
	Percentage of pupils achieving the CSI at KS2	Percentage of pupils achieving the CSI at KS3
All	**74.7**	**58.4**
Chinese	78.4	69.1
White	77.6	58.6
(White, Gypsy/Roma)	*34.4*	*10.2*
(White, traveller of Irish heritage)	*-*	*22.6*
Mixed	74.9	58.4
Asian	69.1	52.8
Other	66.3	50.3
Black	61.5	41

Source: WAG, 2009c

Table 13. Comparing the outcomes of care leavers with all young people in Wales, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire			
	Wales	NPT	Pemb
Percentage of care leavers with no qualifications*, average for 2006-2008***	38%	41%	38%
Percentage of all pupils aged 15 who left education without a qualification**, average for 2005-2007***	2%	2%	1%
Notes on the data * children, who ceased to be looked after aged 16 or over, year ending 31 March, with no GCSE or GNVQ qualifications and no other vocationally related qualifications. ** pupils aged 15 who left school without achieving a recognised qualification *** Three year average has been calculated to smooth out the yearly variation in attainment. The time periods differ, because the data for looked after children is for the year end 31st March, so for example, those sitting their GCSEs in June 2007, will be recorded in the data for 2008.			