



## **EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 23RD FEBRUARY 2016**

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITIES FIRST PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT MATCH FUND  
PROJECTS – YOUTH WORKERS IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILY SUPPORT  
PROJECT (JOINT WORKING BETWEEN COMMUNITIES FIRST AND  
SCHOOLS)**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Match Fund projects, which have been developed jointly between schools, Communities First and Caerphilly Youth Service in each cluster; as well as to provide information on their aims and anticipated outcomes in relation to academic performance and parental engagement with schools.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the projects developed in line with the Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Match Fund, including the initial development stages of the projects, progress to date, and emerging outcomes. The programme has been running for two years with project costs of £400,000 in 2014/15 and projected costs of £320,000 in 2015/16.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Welsh Government**

- Building Resilient Communities – Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan (2012-16)

#### **3.2 Estyn**

- Effective Practice in Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage in Schools (2012)

#### **3.3 Caerphilly CBC**

- Caerphilly Community Strategy (CCBC 2004)
- Single Integrated Plan (CCBC 2013 – 17)

## 4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Match Fund projects have been running in Caerphilly County Borough Council since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.
- 4.2. The projects have been developed in partnership between Communities First (CF) and local secondary schools in the Caerphilly Borough. Funding for the projects consists of 50% funding from the core Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) of each of the schools involved in the project; matched with 50% funding from the Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Match Fund.
- 4.3 The Communities First Pupil Deprivation Grant Match Fund was made available by Welsh Government from 2013, to encourage schools in areas of high deprivation to develop closer links with their local communities and to promote greater collaboration of schools with their local CF cluster.
- 4.4 Within the Caerphilly County Borough, 1 secondary school from each of the 4 CF clusters was identified to host projects to be funded through the Communities First PDG Match Fund. The schools were identified following a consultation process which took into account factors such as number of Free School Meal (FSM) pupils and proportion of pupils from CF areas. The 4 schools which were selected are as follows:
- Rhymney Comprehensive (Upper Rhymney Valley cluster)
  - Pontllanfraith Comprehensive (Mid Valleys East cluster)
  - Lewis School, Pengam (Mid Valleys West cluster)
  - St Martin's Comprehensive, Caerphilly (Caerphilly Basin cluster)
- 4.5 Delivery on the CF PDG Match Fund projects commenced in April 2014. A PDG Youth Worker and PDG Family Link Officer were employed for each cluster, with each pair of Officers responsible for delivering 4 projects (*Homework Clubs, Youth Workers in Schools, Family Support, Improving Parent Skills*) within each of the identified secondary schools. The PDG Youth Worker focused on working with targeted young people to improve academic performance; whilst the PDG Family Link Officer worked with the parents and families of the young people to improve parental engagement with the school.
- 4.6 Outcomes from the first year were generally positive, with improvements in academic performance of young people including improved attendance, improved behaviour and additional qualifications gained. Improvements were also made in terms of parental engagement. However the *Improving Parent Skills* project was unsuccessful due to the failure of the Parent Forum model that this project was based upon, thus leading to the decision to discontinue this particular aspect.
- 4.7 Within the current delivery year 2015-16, the CF PDG model for Caerphilly continues to run as a collaborative approach between Communities First, the Youth Service and the School. As of April 2015, the School Headteachers have taken over management of the project and line management of the individual Family Link Officers, overseen by a project management group chaired by the Chief Education Officer. Previously the staff and the project were managed within Communities First, however it was considered that changing the project management in this way would lead to improved cohesion with the Schools and their associated structures and priorities. The projects have also been simplified for the current year and there are now just two CF PDG projects running within each of the identified schools, namely *Youth Workers in Schools* and *Family Support Project*.
- 4.8 For the current year, a targeted group of pupils (and their families) was identified to enable consistency and quality of work over a 12 month period. The group that were chosen for each school consist of Free School Meal (FSM) pupils moving from year 10 last year into year 11 in the current school year, who are on the borderline for achievement and considered to be capable of achieving well with some additional support.

- 4.9 The largest barrier encountered by the project so far, across all 4 PDG Schools in the Caerphilly Borough, has been in relation to staffing issues. For various reasons including staff moving on to new opportunities, it has proved challenging to maintain a full staffing team of both Youth Worker and Family Link Officer in schools. The aim of this joint staffing team is that they can work together to form a holistic support function for the identified pupils, with one member of staff supporting the individual pupil and the other working with the family. However where staff members have not been in post this has obviously limited the capacity of the other staff member to deliver the project as planned, which has had a subsequent impact on outcomes.
- 4.10 Where the project has run as planned, with the full staffing team in place, outcomes have been positive and have demonstrated that the model is generally a successful one. As with the previous year, improvements have been made with regards to the academic performance of participating young people; and improved parental engagement is evident with regards to the increased attendance of targeted parents at activities such as parents' evenings and meetings. Evaluations conducted at the end of Quarter 4 will assess whether parents now feel more confident supporting their child with their education and whether they feel their child is coping better at school, as a result of participating in the projects.
- 4.11 Whilst the CF PDG project staff have engaged, to varying degrees, with their local Communities First teams, it has been identified that there is room for further improvement in this area, to encourage greater links between the schools and their wider communities and to ensure that the families identified are truly offered a holistic service whereby they are supported both within the school and their local community. For example, further improvement in the links with CF cluster teams will ensure that PDG project staff are more informed about the services offered by CF within the community and thus are more able to make appropriate referrals into projects designed to support families, in relation to a range of needs including unemployment, health etc.
- 4.12 It has also been considered that, whilst the young people selected for the projects were identified according to their potential to make improvements within a critical year in terms of their educational achievement, there may also be some benefit in the project working with young people from lower school years in the future. This would enable support to be put in place for a longer period within their time at school and could also provide support at other critical times such as the transition from year 6 to year 7.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No impact assessment has been undertaken on this report, however many young people and families, who fall under the protected characteristics and wider issues covered by the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, are often affected by the problems arising from poor educational achievement and difficulties coping in schools, as a result of poor parental engagement with school and a lack of parental confidence in supporting their child; therefore the PDG projects will have positive impact on those individuals and groups.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 PDG staff salaries and associated delivery budgets are provided by the Welsh Government, via the PDG fund with match funding by Communities First. The total amount claimed in 2014/15 was £400,000 with an expectation that a further £320,000 will be claimed by the end of this financial year. The programme is currently funded until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 All staff working on the project are employed on a fixed term basis. The contracts will come to an end when the project funding ceases.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 All comments have been reflected in the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That members note the progress made in delivering the PDG match funded projects to date in line with Welsh Government outcomes, as well as some of the main considerations outlined above.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To ensure members are kept up to date on the PDG match funded projects, their aims and outcomes, in relation to educational achievement and family engagement with schools.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Measure 2009.

Author: Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer

Consultees: Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Bleddyn Hopkins, Assistant Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools  
Councillor R Passmore, Cabinet Member, Education and Leisure  
Councillor W. David, Chair, Education for Life Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor J. Pritchard, Vice Chair, Education for Life Scrutiny Committee  
David Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)  
Sue Richards, Finance Division  
Lynne Donovan, HR

### Background Papers:

Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012 – 2016  
Building Resilient Communities – Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan  
Effective Practice in Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage in Schools, Estyn 2012  
Communities First Delivery Plans 2014/15 and 2015 /16  
Caerphilly Delivers – The Single Integrated Plan