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### **Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services**

During my appearance at the Health and Social Care Committee on 6 June, and in a written submission to the Finance Committee last month, I gave a commitment to make a Written Statement on finance for the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act before recess.

As Assembly Members and Leaders in Local Authorities will know, over the course of the last three Local Government Settlements additional funding for social services equivalent to 1% higher than the overall Welsh Local Government budget uplift has been included in the Revenue Support Grant.

However, with evidence showing that the current model of social care provision in Wales is no longer sustainable, and with it becoming increasingly apparent that the reductions to the Welsh Government budget in future years will continue to place considerable pressure on the full range of public services in Wales, it is clear that we cannot invest at the level of previous years. Between 2010-11 and 2014-15 the Assembly revenue budget has been cut in real terms by £1 Action. Simply trying to protect the social services element of a reducing overall budget is not a viable long term answer. Legislating for a change in how we deliver services is the only way forward and the only one which will ensure the Welsh Government can continue to meet its duty of care to some of the most vulnerable in society.

The continuing reality of these pressures is why I have sought to be clear on many occasions that there simply is no more money. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is part of the Welsh Government's response to the challenges highlighted by the Sustainable Social Services White paper, published in 2011 and it recognises that the key to achieving a more sustainable footing for the sector is change.

What this means is that all of us from Government to front line delivery must be prepared to think differently about how services are commissioned and delivered. This thinking needs to include how we can re-align existing funding with the new duties and priorities set out under the Act.

Deciding how we go about doing this - what we keep, what we change and what arrangements we put in place to work together more effectively across the public sector and in particular health and social care – will involve difficult decisions now and in the longer term. The implementation plan and policy

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intent for regulations will help us make these decisions and this is why I have made a commitment for work in these areas to be undertaken in parallel with the passage of the Act.

I am confident in our ability to meet this challenge because I have seen, through my National Social Services Partnership Forum, many examples of the commitment to improve services – and therefore the lives – of people in need of care and support. I am also confident because I already see work which points us in the direction we need to take across the sector under this Act.

One example is the roll-out of Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) which provides intensive support to complex families and aims to keep families together by helping them take positive steps to change and improve their lives.

The Welsh Government has allocated £4.5m for the implementation and delivery of the service which will cover the whole of Wales by the end of this year. The core values of IFSS - recognising people as part of families, a focus on achieving greater integration, the building of trust between those in need of care and support and skilled professionals, and the offering of services in a way in which people are valued and their voice is heard - are of course direct reflections of the values we are seeking to extend to other parts of the sector through the Act. Through the provisions for developing partnership arrangements the Act will give us the ability to do more of this type of work.

Further examples can be found in the projects funded by the Regional Collaboration Fund. I have said before how pleased I am with the forward thinking this fund has facilitated. I also feel that the work done by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in developing a local government implementation plan for Sustainable Social Services has been instrumental in providing a platform for the development of these collaborative projects. This is real evidence of effective leadership and delivery of change.

As a result of the fund we now have projects such as the North Wales Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, which aims to improve communications and collaboration between adults and children services as well as the Adult Social Care and Health and Social Care integration Project which is redesigning

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current social care and health care models for key population groups including older people.

These projects, along with others, are delivering innovation due to the £10m put into the Regional Collaboration Fund to drive public service collaboration. This is a way of investing in change that has cross government support and which has allowed local authorities to access financial support to underpin their ideas for change. Our challenge therefore is to use such initiatives, including Invest to Save (which is pump-priming funding to underpin innovation and transformation), as catalysts to exploring new approaches to service delivery. We know already for example that health and social care joint working Invest to Save projects are benefitting from £13.2m investment.

We also need to identify where we can stop implementation or delivery in areas which are no longer compatible with our direction or which have been superseded by the Act. Again we have good experience of doing just this in the form of the £4.5m provided to Local Authorities through the Revenue Support Grant to help meet the additional burdens of the Children and Young Person's Act 2008. Having agreed a phased approach to the implementation of that legislation over three years (2009/10 - 2011/12) and after making good progress up until April 2011, the decision was taken to defer the third phase of implementation. This is because it was due to involve the consolidation of regulations which would be central to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. This decision allowed for a proportion of the funding to be retained by Local Authorities for the purposes of offsetting future burdens that would arise in implementing the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act. In an environment of reducing resource these are the kinds of clear decisions on priorities that we need to be willing to take together.

We also need a good shared understanding of the scale of the challenge we face and the potential benefits that can be realised. This is why I was pleased to meet with the Institute of Public Care at the ADSS Cymru National Social Services Conference last month and to learn more of the work they are undertaking on behalf of the WLGA and Society of Welsh Treasurers. I very much hope this report will contribute to our approach to analysing opportunities and potential benefits as well as the interim transition costs in order that we get a full picture of the impact of this legislation.

The split between long term costs and transition funding is one I have drawn attention to on a number of occasions during Stage 1 scrutiny. I have been

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clear in my commitment to support local authorities as they make the transition to the new arrangements. The Explanatory Memorandum (EM) that accompanied the Act when it was introduced indicated that this support would include funding. I would now like to share some of the latest developments with you.

I announced at the ADSS Cymru Conference on 27 June that £1.5m from the Sustainable Social Services budget will be distributed directly to local authorities this financial year. This funding will be ring fenced and used to support capacity building at a local level, something that local authorities and their partners have been clear that they would welcome. It is in addition to the funding already provided to the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) for the development of local government implementation of Sustainable Social Services. Further discussion with WLGA and ADSS Cymru on the most appropriate mechanisms for distribution is underway, but I expect this to take the form of a targeted grant scheme using the public services footprint as a basis.

The purpose of this scheme is clear. It is intended to build the local capacity needed to support the transformational agenda set out in sustainable social services and to prepare for and support the shift to new legislative arrangements set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Crucially, this latter aim includes the co-design of core regulations and Codes of Practice - key areas of partnership working if we are to introduce a Act that meets the policy objectives of the Government in a way that can be delivered locally.

This is also why leadership at local level will be vital. Securing the right leadership capacity to head a team in each footprint area and drive forward the programme of change with partners from other organisations, including the NHS, will be a priority under the grant. So too will be creating the infrastructure to sustain a programme of change through to 2016. This is the cornerstone of making our vision a reality across Wales and what we are building here is a long term model for distributing funding. I will provide further updates on this work as it progresses.

This is not the only area where we have provided funding to assist with transition. I have now agreed a total of £622,000 in this financial year with which to support the safeguarding agenda and further strengthen multi-agency arrangements for citizens to ensure that they are free from

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exploitation and abuse. This includes work to strengthen the national approach to safeguarding and protecting neglected children as well as funding for the recently appointed Safeguarding and Protection Expert Development Panel which will provide advice on the future safeguarding and protection arrangements for children and adults as they are developed through Regulations and Codes of Practice.

Similarly, in April of this year £50,000 was made directly available to ADSS Cymru for the commissioning of resource to further develop out plans for a National Adoption Service. This follows the endorsement of a functional model by the Adoption Expert Advisory group and the recognition that additional capacity would be required to work through some of the detail ahead of any implementation. This funding will now enable ADSS Cymru to undertake a number of key tasks including the identification of core business components required by the service and the development of a national performance framework. A report will then be presented to the Welsh Government in August so that next steps can be agreed.

Our ability to achieve the generational change in service delivery required under this Act is reliant on making sure all those involved in delivery have the skills they need. We should not underestimate therefore, the importance of the training requirements that will arise from the implementation of this legislation. For this reason the Explanatory Memorandum for the Act makes reference to the Social Care Workforce Development Grant (SCDWP) of which 70% of the total cost is made up of a grant used by employers to supplement their own training resources. In 2013/14 this amounts to £8.1m. The EM makes clear my intention for this grant funding to be “re-directed to ensure the relevant staff receive the training they need throughout the preparation for, and implementation of, the Act”. This is in keeping with the original purposes for this grant which first came into being to support major legislation such as the Children Act 1989 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

In achieving this we cannot afford to lose those training schemes or qualifications which have continuing value as we move towards the new system. For this reason, officials have begun a process of consultation with practitioners to develop a National Training Plan that will specifically take into account how existing training and development needs can be supported or adapted.

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Nevertheless, we must recognise that the considerable funding provided through SCDWP will need to be a primary source of money for ensuring that the Social Care workforce are supported with the training they need and that they are duly equipped to embrace and deliver their functions under the new ways of working