

## WEST CHESHIRE TOGETHER

### CHILD POVERTY

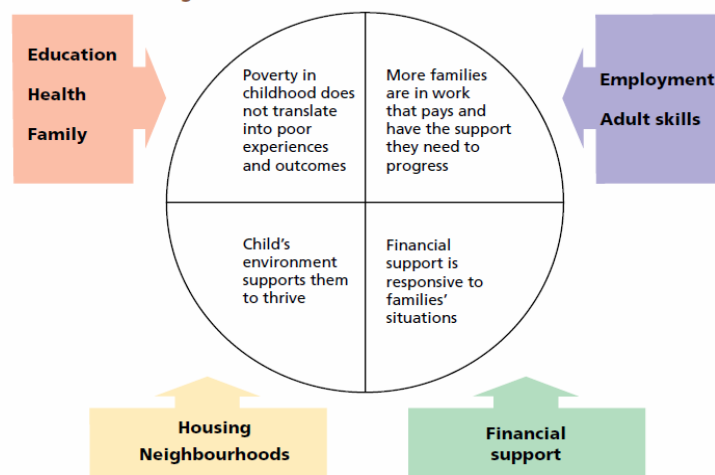
#### Introduction

1. The Child Poverty Bill received Royal Assent in March 2010. The new Child Poverty Act 2010 introduces new duties on local authorities and local named partners to:
  - Co-operate to put in place arrangements with partners to reduce the effects of child poverty (by setting up a Child Poverty Board);
  - Prepare and publish a Child Poverty Needs Assessment;
  - Prepare and publish a Child Poverty Strategy by April 2011;
2. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the main requirements of the Act; to update on local and national issues; and advise how a Child Poverty Strategy needs to link not just with Children's Services strategies for education, safeguarding and early intervention, but also with agendas for health inequalities, transport, regeneration and housing, adult skills and learning, worklessness and welfare reform. A key point to note is that many of the drivers of child poverty sit outside the remit of Children's Services and so cross-cutting partnership working is vital.

#### Background

3. In 1998 the previous government committed to ending child poverty by 2020, (the then government defined 'eradicate' as reducing child poverty from the current national figure of 19.2% to only 10% of children living in low income households i.e. households with incomes below 60% of median income).
4. The 2010 Act requires local authorities to 'lead' local cooperation by setting up a Child Poverty Board. This has been done and attached at **Appendix 1** is the Terms of Reference and Membership.
5. A Child Poverty Needs Assessment should be published by placing it on the council's website within 12 months of the duties coming into force (April 2011). The Needs Assessment should then form the basis of a joint Local Child Poverty Strategy (LCPS) to be prepared by April 2011 with links to other key assessments and strategies including the Children Plan (CYPP), Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), Local Economic Assessment (LEA), and Health Inequality Strategies.
6. The previous government identified that Local Strategic Partnerships are key to ensuring the successful delivery of measures to tackle the causes of child poverty and their role is crucial to ensure a holistic approach to addressing the wider needs which cause children to live in low income households and suffer from social determined poor outcomes.
7. Whilst child poverty is defined as growing up in a low income household, it is recognised that it results from a range of factors and that ending child poverty needs all public services to play a role in breaking the cycle. Ending child poverty requires tackling a range of causes of low income, which the Child Poverty Unit describe as the "Building Blocks" for the 2020 strategy, shown below:

Figure 1: 2020 Building Blocks



8. Children's Trusts are viewed as a major player and need to be tightly linked in through their strategies and plans. But a Children's Trust cannot tackle alone the wider issues around parental worklessness, adult skills, routes into employment, regeneration, social housing mobility (i.e. the ability of people in social housing to move closer to where work is), and access to public transport in the poorest communities. In essence, addressing child poverty requires a genuinely cross cutting approach and this needs to be owned by the Local Strategic Partnership and be a key part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

### Current situation

9. The new Coalition Government is very much committed to tackling child poverty and its causes as part of its welfare and social reform agenda. Attached at **Appendix 2** is a summary of the Conservative Manifesto key points on child poverty. A formal Position Statement from the Coalition is expected in July.
10. Cheshire West and Chester does not have child poverty as a named LAA priority (NI 116), but there are a number of projects in progress specifically to address child poverty: such as Total Place in Ellesmere Port and the Family Intervention Projects in Winsford, Chester and Ellesmere Port.
11. Cheshire West and Chester Council was successful in 2009 in bidding for Government grants of £300,000 specifically for setting up a Family Intervention Project (FIP) to address child poverty, youth crime and housing related anti-social behaviour. The Children's Trust Board and the LSP are invited to note that an explicit part of the bid was that the LSP, through the Children's Trust, would be responsible for the strategic oversight and governance of this project. This responsibility will be discharged through the Child Poverty Board.
12. The Child Poverty Board has already commissioned a dataset of child poverty indicators for its needs analysis. This needs analysis will be reported to the Child Poverty Board in September 2010, and will be used to develop a child poverty based Resource Allocation Model that will be able to inform strategic planning at locality (Super Output Area) level. For example, the resource model will take account of the actual numbers of children: in poverty, in workless households, on the health visitor family support index, with child protection or family support plans, in temporary accommodation, and claiming free schools meals. This will generate a Borough-wide analysis of poverty and show what the rates of child poverty are for each Super Output Area so that resources can be targeted at known needs and vulnerabilities.

## **Key Groups at Risk of Poverty**

13. Certain groups of children and families are at a greater risk of experiencing poverty and deprivation than others.
  - The largest group nationally (1.2 million) live in couple households with at least one parent in work. In-work poverty is a significant issue and one that the government can be expected to address through its Welfare Reform agenda (i.e. making work pay).
14. Other characteristics of families with children are associated with higher than average risks of experiencing relative poverty, such as:
  - being in an ethnic minority group (incl travellers);
  - being a lone or teenage parent;
  - having a disabled family member;
  - being in poor social housing or temporary accommodation;
  - coming from a family background of offending.
15. The vast majority (83%) of children in low income households in 07/08 belonged to one or more of these categories. However it is important to be clear that poverty is not fixed nor determined solely by background factors such as ethnicity, family size, disability or relationship status.

## **Next Steps**

16. The Child Poverty Steering Board will take forward the needs analysis and strategy development, subject to any comments from the LSP or Children's Trust. The Child Poverty Board will report to the Children's Trust Board, and to the LSP Executive through the Chief Executive of the Council as Chair of the Children's Trust Board.
17. A Local Child Poverty Needs Assessment will be completed by October 2010 to identify which areas have highest child poverty and the key issues to be addressed. A key deliverable related to the needs analysis will be a Resource Allocation Model based upon child poverty rates at Super Output Area level.
18. A Local Child Poverty Strategy will be written by April 2011, which will draw on other strategies and plans (such as housing, supporting people, children plan, transport and regeneration) as appropriate and also seek to identify any unaddressed issues in Cheshire West and Chester in relation to child poverty.

## **Recommendations**

- A) The Terms of Reference and Membership of the Child Poverty Board be approved. That is be Chaired by the Head of Integrated Strategy and Commissioning for CWAC and NHS Western Cheshire and report into the Trust Board and the CEO of the Local Authority and from there into the LSP Executive.
- B) A local Child Poverty Needs Analysis and accompanying Resource Allocation Model by Super Output Area be developed by October 2010, to inform the targeting of Council and LSP resources to meet identified local needs.
- C) A Child Poverty Strategy be written by the Child Poverty Board by April 2011 for the approval of the Children's Trust and LSP Executive.

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