

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

21ST JANUARY 2013

SUBJECT:	CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
KEY DECISION:	NO

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to work with partners to develop a Wirral Child Poverty Strategy as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is principally to update Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee members about the actions being taken by the Child and Family Poverty Working Group, the independent advisory forum established in 2010 for the purpose of informing the development and implementation of Wirral's strategy and action plan. The refreshed role and remit of the Working Group was outlined in the previous report to Committee on the 12th November 2012.

2.0 Update

- 2.1 At its meeting in December the Chair of the Working Group (Bev Morgan, Homestart-Wirral) presented an e-learning version of the child poverty training module which has been developed by the voluntary and community sector for use across the children's workforce and which will be available online for all organisations to utilise through the safeguarding website. The Working Group is keen for all those with an involvement or interest in children and family services to complete the training.
- 2.2 The Working Group also agreed a number of actions to progress the development of its action plan:
 - Consideration of the 'what works' report commissioned by the Council in conjunction with the Working Group to consider the barriers for local people in gaining and sustaining employment, and the impact on family life;
 - The establishment of a Task Group to develop a strategy and practical interventions focused on the best use of community assets in supporting action to tackle issues of poverty; this work will be supported by Public Health in respect of geographical profiling;

- The establishment of a Task Group to review innovative international approaches to community resilience, and explore where these could be practically applied in Wirral;
- A focused discussion and debate at the next meeting of the Working Group on the 19th February 2013 concerning changes to the welfare benefits system and what financial inclusion activities are in place to mitigate against the impact of these changes.
- A decision was made that all future meetings of the Working Group will include a themed presentation on a priority topic for challenge and enquiry by the Working Group (see above for the focus on 19 February); this is to ensure that Wirral has a focused work programme and framework for action. This also provides the opportunity to develop local responses to the priorities identified for 2013 by the Liverpool City Region Commission on Poverty and Life Chances.

2.3 Committee Members will be aware that a range of activity is underway by the Council to ensure that services respond effectively to the changes to the welfare benefit system and that the impact on local residents is clearly understood. As mentioned in 2.2 above, the Working Group is keen to engage with this agenda and make recommendations to feed into the Council's action planning. The Liverpool City Region Commission on Poverty and Life Chances has also prioritised understanding the impact of Universal Credit in the coming year and Wirral will continue to contribute to this sub-regional working.

2.4 Wirral recently attended a meeting organised on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Commission to discuss a response to the government consultation currently underway with regard to a national measurement of child poverty. Information on this consultation can be found at:

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/consultations/a00216896/measuring-child-poverty

2.5 Work is also being undertaken by Council officers to update Wirral's child poverty needs assessment and to incorporate this as a dedicated 'chapter' in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This will ensure that statistical and other information about child poverty in Wirral is considered as part of the key evidence base for the local area when strategic commissioning activities undertaken.

2.6 The Working Group will report its quarterly update to the Children's Trust on the 22nd January in accordance with the governance arrangements now in place.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 Failure to develop and implement a child poverty strategy and action plan will expose the Council to risk of challenge for failing to discharge a statutory duty.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 This report provides an update on the ongoing approach being undertaken to explore options for action by the Council and its partners in relation to eliminating child poverty in Wirral, and to implement these as appropriate.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The information set out in this report is based on ongoing consultation with local partners and stakeholders through the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 The role of the voluntary, community and faith sector in tackling the complex problems faced by children and families living in poverty and in identifying those at risk is recognised through appropriate representation on the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group. In addition, the group is chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector. The sector continues to be a key partner in developing and delivering Wirral's strategy and action plan.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

7.1 The activities described in this report are being progressed using existing staff resources from a number of departments.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The local authority has statutory duties in relation to the Child Poverty Act 2010.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The final child poverty strategy and action plan referred to in 2.5 above will be accompanied by an equality impact assessment attached.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report has no specific carbon reduction implications.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report has no specific planning and community safety implications.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is recommended that

- Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the update set out in this report and requests any further information as required.

13.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 At its meeting of 17th October 2011, Council requested that regular updates on progress in implementing the recommendations in the report to Cabinet are provided to the Children & Young People and Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committees.

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APPENDICES / REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
CABINET: CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY BUDGET OPTION	27th September 2012
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN	14th April 2011
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	13th October 2011
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	16th November 2011
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	14th April 2011
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	21st March 2012
CABINET: CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY BUDGET OPTION	27th September 2012
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	12th November 2012