

THE CHILD POVERTY ACT 2010

1.0 Background

The Child Poverty Act 2010 which became law prior to the General Election, placed duties on local authorities in England and their named partner authorities. This report provides background to the Act and outlines how the requirements are being taken forward in Wirral.

2.0 The Child Poverty Act 2010

The previous Labour government's 2020 pledge for eradicating child poverty set out four aspirations:

- More families in work that pays, and with the support they need to progress;
- Financial support that is responsive to families' situations;
- Environments in which children can thrive; and
- Poverty in childhood no longer translating to poor experiences / outcomes.

Success in tackling child poverty requires the delivery of services tailored to local needs across a range of policy areas, referred to as the child poverty "building blocks" shown in Figure 1 below.

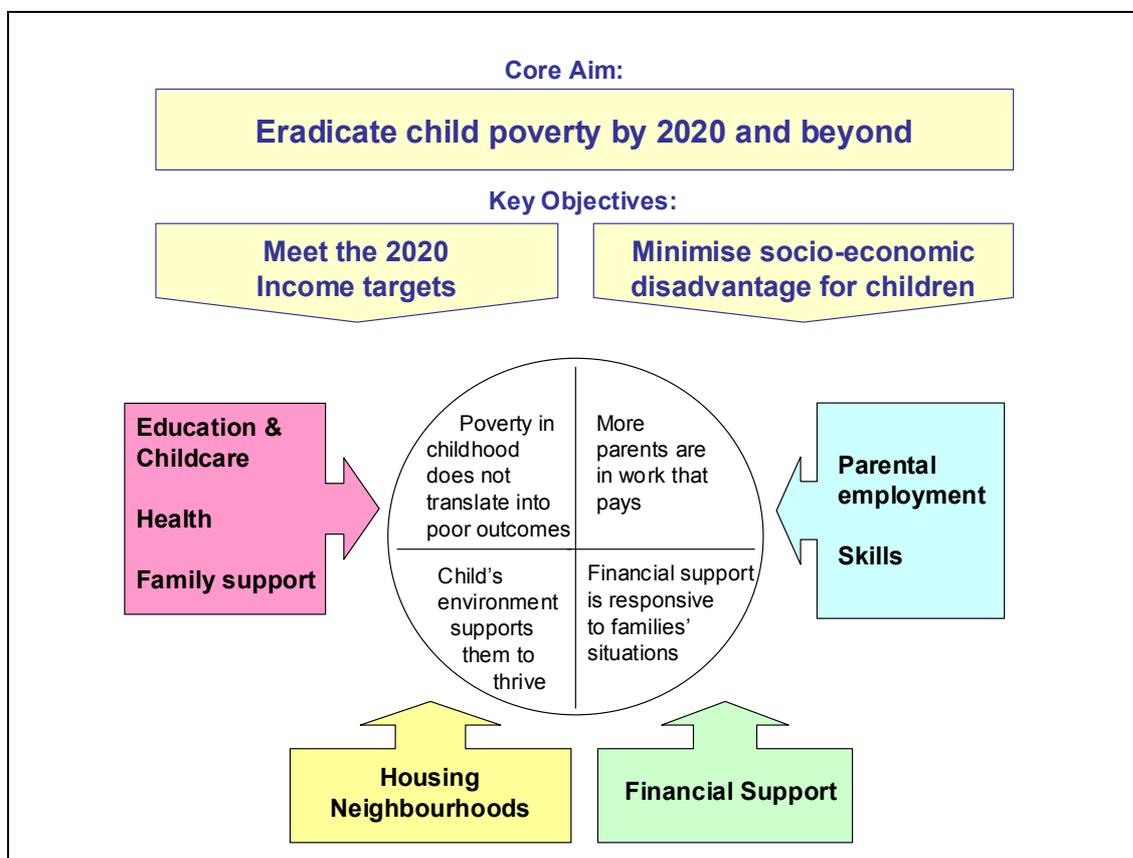


Figure 1: Child Poverty 2020 Building Blocks, Source Child Poverty Unit.

The Child Poverty Act enshrines the 2020 pledge in law to ensure that it remains priority for local partnerships and provide a framework for them to work in. It recognises that accelerating progress in tackling child poverty not only requires local partnerships to take action, but to ensure that this action is co-ordinated, comprehensive and prolonged, and leads to substantially better outcomes.

The Act sets four challenging UK-wide targets to be reached and sustained from 2020:

- **Relative poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income (in families with income below 60% of the median) to less than 10 per cent.
- **Combined low income and material deprivation** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and have a low income to less than 5%.
- **Persistent poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children that experience long periods of relative poverty, (specific target to be set at a later date).
- **Absolute Poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in absolute low income to less than 5%.

The Local Authority (LA) is expected to lead on the delivery of the duties but they must be delivered through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). Like approaches to safeguarding, child poverty is everybody's business. The Child Poverty Act introduces new duties on responsible local authorities in England and their named partner authorities to:

- Cooperate to put in place arrangements to work to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local area;
- Prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment to highlight the drivers of child poverty in the local area and the characteristics of those living in poverty; and
- Prepare a joint child poverty strategy setting out measures that the local authority and each named partner propose to take to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local area;
- Take tackling child poverty into account when preparing or revising Sustainable Community Strategies.

'The Coalition: our programme for government' sets out a commitment by the new government to maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020. The new coalition government have appointed Frank Field MP as a Child Poverty Advisor. He is leading a poverty review on behalf of the coalition Government. The Review on Poverty and Life Chances is charged with conducting a wide-ranging inquiry into poverty and developing recommendations to help poorer people.

3.0 Duty to Co-operate

The duty to co-operate recognises that, whilst the local authority should play a lead role in coordinating local partners, it cannot tackle child poverty alone and a range of other partners must play their role. A number of agencies are named as partner authorities in the Bill in relation to the responsible local authority:

The police, youth offending teams, and probation service;

- Transport authorities;
- Primary Care Trust and Strategic Health Authorities;
- Jobcentre Plus.

In addition there are many other organisations which are mentioned in the Bill but can play a critical role such as private and third sector service providers, charities, community groups, the housing sector and employers.

The guidance recognises that “the specific governance and management structures to enable and support the delivery of the child poverty agenda will vary according to local circumstances”. The suggestion is of a central board or group that brings together senior representatives of all the key organisations and takes responsibility for shaping and driving the child poverty agenda. The board need not be a new group: partners may cooperate through existing structures and forums. There is flexibility as to which group or forum takes responsibility for leading action on child poverty.

4.0 Developments in Wirral

Wirral has formed a child poverty officer working group with representation from Children and Young People’s Department, Strategic Development and Corporate Policy. The work is being co-ordinated centrally by the Head of Corporate Policy. The partnership approach will be formalised through the LSP governance review currently underway.

The City Employment Strategy Board has adopted child poverty as a key priority. Knowsley is the Child Poverty lead and the Employment and Skills lead in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and is working with the component local authorities to deliver an LCR-wide needs assessment and Child and Family Poverty Strategy. Wirral has nominated representatives for the LCR Data Group and Advisory Group. Wirral officers are also members of the Government Office North West Child Poverty Network.

Data mapping for the LCR needs assessment is being delivered by Mott McDonald in conjunction with local authorities. A data mapping exercise is being carried out in Wirral to ensure that the needs assessment is aligned with other activities to avoid duplication and make best use of local intelligence.

Wirral’s Joint Child Poverty Strategy will need to outline how co-ordinated services will tackle child poverty up to 2020 and be refreshed every three years. The first strategy will be in place by April 2011. The development of the strategy aligns with the production of the new three year Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) 2011-14 and an integrated approach will be adopted in the development of the two documents. The Child Poverty Strategy will also be integrated with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

5.0 Recommendations:

5.1 That Wirral Children’s Trust Board note the report.

5.2 That Wirral Children’s Trust Board members make recommendations on partnership involvement in child poverty strategy developments.

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