

WIRRAL LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - EXECUTIVE BOARD**WEDNESDAY 29th SEPTEMBER 2010****REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES****CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL****1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The paper provides Executive Board members with an update on the current position of the work that is being undertaken in Wirral, in conjunction with Liverpool City Region authorities, on developing a Child and Family Poverty Strategy to meet our obligations under the Child Poverty Act.
- 1.2 The paper covers the following aspects of the work so far:
 - Scope of the Child Poverty Act and statutory duties for local authorities
 - Position of the Coalition Government in respect of the commitment to ending child poverty
 - The Liverpool City Region framework for developing a Child and Family Poverty Strategy and related activities
 - Governance and arrangements in Wirral
 - Key dates and next steps
- 1.3 Executive Board members are asked to consider the details of the work being undertaken and to support the proposal that the Local Strategic Partnership's existing Management Group undertakes the role of the Child Poverty Management Board for Wirral.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Child Poverty Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament prior to the General Election. The Act establishes national targets for the reduction of child poverty and places a number of duties on local authorities and other local delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty. These duties are 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
 - 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**.



- 2.2 Further to the General Election, '*The Coalition: our programme for government*' set out a commitment by the new government to maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020. The National Review of Poverty and Life Chances has been charged with studying the extent of poverty in the UK and making recommendations to help poorer people.
- 2.3 On 18 August 2010, the Coalition Government published its response to the formal consultation on draft statutory guidance issued by the previous government in relation to the Act (March 2010). This again reiterated the Coalition Government's commitment to ending child poverty by 2020 and emphasised the importance of action at national and local levels. The report stated that formal statutory guidance will not be issued nor regulations laid detailing the requirements of local child poverty needs assessments.
- 2.4 The Coalition Government also stated its commitment to partnership working with sector-led bodies to ensure the availability of support to enable positive responses to the duties set out in the Act, and announced that there will be a funding-transfer to responsible upper-tier authorities in England to support those leading the cooperation required. Funding allocations will be based on National Indicator 116 – proportion of children in poverty – to reflect the scale of the challenges faced by local authority areas.
- 2.5 Government recently announced that it will no longer stipulate when councils should publish their needs assessments and strategies. The Child Poverty Unit recommends that Councils adhere to the original timescale of having a strategy in place by April 2011 in order to align with business planning cycles and Government funding allocations.

3 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Liverpool City Region's commitment to reducing child poverty is highlighted by the City Employment Strategy (CES) and Multi-Area Agreement (MAA). To help meet this commitment and in anticipation of the Child Poverty Act, the CES Board commissioned the development of a Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Framework. Knowsley is the lead authority in the region for child and family poverty.
- 3.2 The creation of a City Region Child and Family Poverty Commission has been endorsed by the City Region Cabinet. Plans are progressing to finalise membership of the Commission and appoint an independent chair. One of the Commission's immediate actions will be to establish links with the independent National Review of Poverty and Life Chances being led by Member of Parliament for Birkenhead, Frank Field. This review will report in December and will inform the National Child Poverty Strategy.
- 3.3 A Child and Family Poverty Advisory Group will also be established to inform the City Region Commission with representation from each local authority area. This group will be responsible for identifying gaps in data and analysis and raising issues specific to their field of expertise and / or local area.

- 3.4 There are a number of City Region activities in place to ensure that the statutory requirements set out in the Child Poverty Act will be met. These include a child poverty data project and a series of consultation events that were held over the summer. These activities will contribute to the requirement to produce needs assessments for the City Region and for individual local authority areas.
- 3.5 One of the key barriers to developing effective approaches to reducing child poverty has been the availability of data and intelligence. Mott MacDonald was commissioned through Merseyside Information Services (MIS) to assist with the data requirements that will inform the needs assessment. The data project is well underway and a City Region data group has been convened consisting of representatives from all six local authorities.
- 3.6 Attached at **Appendix 1** is the recently published City Region Child and Family Poverty Framework Analysis Report, '*A Brighter Future; working together to tackle child and family poverty*'. This was formally launched at the annual Welfare to Work UK Convention on 1st July and provides a tool for City Region authorities to understand child poverty issues and identify opportunities for joining up activity. This report formed the basis for the consultation event in August with Wirral's partners and stakeholders.
- 3.7 A consultation exercise with children and families was also undertaken in Knowsley by the Young Foundation, July 2010, the outcomes of which will be shared throughout the city region. Any additional consultation with children and young people in Wirral will be determined in light of the need to ensure that the Council and partners avoid duplication and target such activities effectively. The Council's current consultation, 'Wirral's Future', which is also on the agenda, will provide some data and intelligence to support the development of the local needs assessment.
- 3.8 A communications plan has been developed as part of the City Region approach. A webpage is now in place at www.liverpoolcitystrategies.org.uk.

4 DEVELOPING AN APPROACH FOR WIRRAL

- 4.1 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 that a range of other partners must play their role. A number of agencies are named as partner authorities in the Bill:
- The police, youth offending teams, and probation service
 - Transport authorities
 - Primary Care Trust and Strategic Health Authorities
 - Jobcentre Plus
- 4.2 Many other organisations are also mentioned in the Bill that can play a critical role in child and family poverty such as private and third sector service providers, charities, community groups, the housing sector and employers.



- 4.3 Despite the newly announced lack of stipulation by Government, we are still planning for our Child and Family Poverty Strategy to be in place by April 2011. The Strategy will outline how co-ordinated services will tackle child poverty up to 2020 and will be reviewed every three years. There will be an opportunity in future years to integrate the Child and Family Poverty Strategy with the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 4.4 Mapping of the data and information has illustrated that there is already much in place in Wirral that is addressing the causes of child and family poverty through wide ranging activities such as, financial support and advice for business, employment and training advice services for individuals, Childrens' Centres, and housing, education and health services. Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy recognises and explores many of the issues linked to child poverty in its clear focus on tackling inequality and deprivation through increasing prosperity. The development of Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Strategy will build on this approach.
- 4.5 Wirral's Child Poverty partner consultation event was held in August where a number of key partners and stakeholders attended. Outcomes from the event will inform the needs assessment and subsequent Strategy.
- 4.6 The Council has recently nominated Councillor Andrew Hodson to be Wirral's representative on the City Region Child Poverty Commission. The Interim Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Children's Services are jointly accountable for the delivery of the duties set out in the Child Poverty Act in conjunction with key partners. The Head of Policy and Performance is the Council's lead officer for this work.
- 4.7 The Local Strategic Partnership's Management Group has agreed to oversee the development and delivery of the Strategy in tandem with the Liverpool City Region approach outlined above. Development of the Strategy would then be within an existing partnership structure, although the membership of the group would need to be extended to include all partner authorities. It is intended that these arrangements are formalised through reports to the Executive Board and to Wirral Council's Cabinet.
- 4.8 Responding to the requirements of the Child Poverty Act and reducing child and family poverty will be a significant challenge to local authorities and their partners in the current economic and financial climate. Wirral is working proactively with City Region colleagues to ensure that any economies of scale may be achieved and to share learning and good practice. The City Region and local needs assessments will provide a rich source of information for the Council and partners in any future review of priorities within the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 4.9 The local authority is also seeking to add value to the child poverty agenda by capitalising on opportunities such as the support which has been offered by the DWP Financial Inclusion Champions Programme for Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire to develop Wirral's approach to financial inclusion. A workshop was held on 22nd September at the Floral Pavilion to develop local



approaches to financial inclusion and to share best practice. The results will be fed into the needs assessment and Child Poverty Strategy.

5 LATEST POSITION AND NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The work towards a child poverty strategy for LCR and Wirral is continuing throughout September and October in respect of the development and publication of LCR and local needs assessments.
- 5.2 The draft needs assessment will be circulated to Executive Board members and an update on progress provided at the next Executive Board meeting in November.

6 KEY DATES

Date	Activity
25 March 2010	Royal Assent of the Child Poverty Bill
November – December 2010	Development and publication of City Region wide needs assessment and local needs assessments
December 2010	Publication of City Region strategy and action plan
April 2011	City Region and local child and family poverty strategies to be published
	First national child poverty strategy to be published
	New National Child Poverty Commission to be established

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Executive Board members are requested:
- 7.1.1 To note the approach and progress to date in developing a Child and Family Poverty Strategy for Wirral.
- 7.1.2 To support the proposal that Wirral LSP Management Group act as the Child Poverty Management Board, subject to consideration by Wirral Council's Cabinet as the statutory lead organisation for the Child Poverty Act.
- 7.1.3 To continue to receive updates on progress in developing the Child and Family Poverty Strategy prior to its adoption in April 2011.

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