

**ROOTS AND WINGS – CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY
FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION EVENT – FLORAL PAVILION – 8th JUNE 2011**

1. Introduction

A consultation event was held on the 8th June to explore with practitioners and providers to explore what more we can do in Wirral to tackle child and family poverty. The event incorporated three workshop sessions on the following:

- Raising Family Income
- Improving Life Chances and Supporting Family Life
- Transforming Neighbourhoods and People's Lives

Analysis of the feedback has resulted in the identification of a number of cross-cutting issues for consideration by the Working Group in developing recommendations for Wirral's local strategy. These are outlined in section 2 below along with some of the ideas raised by participants at the event as to how we might address these issues in partnership.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this report summarise some of the more specific issues discussed in relation to the workshop themes.

2. Cross-Cutting Issues

A number of issues were raised across all three sessions of the Consultation Event as they are interwoven within any discussion of child poverty. These have, therefore, been addressed as Cross-Cutting issues in this section.

2.1 Raising Awareness

What's the issue?

There was recognition from participants that we need to challenge and change culture associated with child poverty. This reinforces comments made by the Working Group about the use of positive language and approaches to engage organisations and local people with the agenda.

What should / could we do?

- Promote the 'Roots and Wings' approach through further consultation activities and as the umbrella for key projects and programmes.
- Ensure all partners and local organisations are given the opportunity to engage with and sign up to a clear vision for the local strategy.

2.2 Better Co-ordination and Signposting

What's the issue?

It is clear from the feedback from participants that there is strong evidence of partnership working, with examples including co-located area teams. There was also a clear recognition that we can make improvements; referrals between agencies can be limited, for example, because of a lack of understanding about organisational remits and networks between agencies existing informally.

There was a recognition that staff from some agencies did not always know what services were being provided by other agencies. In addition, it was generally accepted that knowledge of existing services among members of the public could be improved.

What should / could we do?

- Improve referral pathways and signposting for families and individuals, which take into account actual and potential needs linked to issues of poverty – ideas included a directory for use by services, maintaining a central ‘library’ of services and their providers in Wirral, vulnerable children and families having a single lead professional, area teams making links with other services, for example, housing.
- Ensure children and family outcomes built on co-ordinated support are central to local commissioning strategies and partner plans.

2.3 Data Sharing

What’s the issue?

A specific example of partnership working which participants raised was the possibility of greater use of shared data in the future. In particular, the identification of service take-up and the resulting possibility of some families not accessing services were raised. Confidentiality and data protection were highlighted as barriers to greater sharing of data.

What should / could we do?

- Strengthened partnership working should lead to higher levels of data and knowledge sharing.
- Develop protocols to enable improved data sharing between agencies. This could include use of shared technology.

2.4 Outreach and Advice

What’s the issue?

There was an appreciation of the availability of advice available from third sector providers and community facilities, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Laurie’s. In addition, there was recognition of the role played by GPs’ surgeries, One Stop Shops and Children’s Centres in the provision of advice to families.

What should / could we do?

- Investigate the expansion of information made available to mums, especially first-time mums and young mums, at the time of the birth of their child.
- Aim to provide information in more flexible and accessible formats, for example, websites, leaflets and opening hours at information centres.
- Create an information sharing coordinator for locality-based teams.

2.5 Early Intervention

What’s the issue?

There is an increasing recognition of the benefits of early intervention programmes, the intention of which is to support a focus on preventative services in the early years and up through the age range. A particularly important issue is the identification of families who fail to access existing services. The national focus has been set by the development of the

Early Intervention Grant, a specific funding stream, which will run from 2011 until 2015. The intention is to enable local authorities and their partners to pool funding in order to target disadvantage and achieve better results. A process for the allocation of Early Intervention Grant has been developed in Wirral.

What should / could we do?

- Continue to ensure that the Early Intervention Grant is targeted effectively by reviewing the framework used during the recent commissioning process.
- Review the evidence from the 26 Local Authorities named as an Early Intervention Place.
- Look at guided pathways for the most vulnerable children / families.

2.6 Resources

What's the issue?

There was recognition that the national economic climate presents challenges to service providers in both the third sector and public sector. The necessity to use resources more effectively was highlighted. There was a particular acknowledgment that small community groups can often have a big impact in a locality albeit on a limited budget. There was some acceptance that, in the past, evaluation of the outcomes of intervention programmes has not always been strong and, as a result, all programmes are not effectively evaluated.

What should / could we do?

- Promote longer-term funding of projects, particularly by commissioning services over a longer timeframe. This will enable service providers to plan over a greater timescale.
- Investigate the possibility of developing more shared services and pooled budgets between partners.
- Place a greater emphasis on enabling community groups to retain funding.
- Ensure that appropriate monitoring and evaluation of intervention programmes is in place to measure outcomes.

2.7 Raising Aspirations

What's the issue?

There was a wide recognition of the importance of raising aspirations both of young people themselves as well as the aspirations of parents for their children. Specific target groups included NEETs (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training), young parents and families of "third generation" unemployed. Embedding motivation from an early age in a child's life was identified as a particularly important issue.

What should / could we do?

- "Work with the next generation to raise their aspirations for their children".
- Encourage the use of mentors and peer-support, particularly in more deprived communities.

3. Raising Family Income

What are the issues?

- 3.1 Barriers to employment and training including:
- Education and training – Some young people do not have the relevant basic skills for work including numeracy and literacy skills.
 - Availability of opportunities for adult learning.
 - The prevalence of third-generation unemployment and the consequential cycle of worklessness.
 - The need for affordable, accessible and flexible childcare.
 - Low travel horizons in deprived areas, partly exacerbated by the affordability of transport.
 - Hard-to reach-groups, including mental health issues, young offenders, people who do not engage, homeless / rough sleepers, alcohol / drug dependency, ethnic minority communities

- 3.2 Financial inclusion – issues raised included:
- The lack of basic financial skills in some families.
 - The need for greater debt support, including increased access to Credit Unions
 - Further awareness is required regarding benefit entitlements.
 - The need to enhance the current programmes aimed at reducing fuel poverty.

3.3 Steps to reduce in-work poverty

4. Improving Life Chances and Supporting Family Life

What are the issues?

- 4.1 Hard-to-reach families including:
- Non-engagement of families with existing services.
 - Early identification of those families not engaged with services, including Children's Centres.
 - Target groups including transient families.
- 4.2 Raising parenting skills including:
- Parental aspirations and the negative culture towards parenting in some communities.
 - Although parenting and family learning programmes are available, they are not widely accessed in all communities.
 - Target groups such as young parents and grandparents.
- 4.3 Reducing health inequalities, including:
- Enhancing successful programmes such as the Family Nurse Partnership and the Health Visitor programme.
 - The need to examine the pathways for people with mental health issues.
 - The strong links between health providers and schools in Wirral were noted.
 - Further promote successful programmes to promote breastfeeding.
- 4.4 Improving educational attainment, including:
- Attendance at Children's Centres is lower in more deprived areas. Therefore consideration could be given to the provision of incentives to participate.
 - Language development in the early years is crucial in ensuring that a child is "ready for school".
 - Despite some success in reducing persistent absence, significant numbers of young people are not fully engaging in education.
 - A significant number of young people are leaving school without the basic numeracy and literacy skills required in later life, especially to be successful in the workplace.

- Will the forthcoming Pupil Premium ensure that more resources are targeted at deprived children in schools?

5. Transforming Neighbourhoods and People's Lives

What are the issues?

5.1 Housing, including:

- Continuing to improve standards of housing in both private sector and Registered Social Landlord stock.
- Housing Market Renewal Initiative – refurbishing properties and building sustainable communities.
- Gaps in intelligence relating to Private Sector Housing.

5.2 Safer Communities, including:

- Anti-Social Behaviour – long term, intensive investment required.
- Young people are not engaged with services.
- Gaps in intelligence relating to domestic violence.

5.3 Community Engagement, including:

- Low community cohesion in some areas.
- Need to increase 'ownership' of issues by the community.
- Need to involve residents with skills / resources in more affluent parts of Wirral to support more deprived areas.
- Change attitude of more affluent communities towards deprived areas.
- Evaluation of Youth Hubs – are Young People willing to travel further for a 'better' service?