

Child Poverty Update

1.0 Background

Wirral is producing a Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. To support this, the local authority established a local advisory group to review the evidence and make recommendations to the Council and its partners about local action to tackle child poverty. Representation on this group (the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group) is drawn from the local authority, voluntary, community and faith, housing, health, and education, employment and skills sectors

2.0 Progress Update

Milestones regarding the development of the strategy and action plan since the last report to the Children's Trust Board:

- The Council's budget resolution of the 1st March set out a commitment to tackling intergenerational poverty in Wirral and agreed an investment of £400,000 to take forward the 'Roots and Wings' strategy. Council also agreed that the independent Working Group would determine, prioritise and recommend where this investment should be made to best effect in local communities.
- In addition to the £400,000 funding, a further £100,000 was allocated in the Council's 2012/2013 budget to support research and subsequent development of school readiness measures. The research element is being undertaken with a group of Birkenhead Schools by the University of Cambridge and it is intended that the outcomes from the research will be of benefit locally and nationally.
- The Child and Family Poverty Working Group met on the 21st March 2012 with the principal objective of discussing the approach to determining the allocation of the £400,000 investment. The Working Group discussed a number of key principles in relation to allocating the funding, including identifying any conflict of interest and basing the investment of the latest available evidence.
- In a report to Cabinet on the 12th April, a number of steps were agreed in relation to allocation of the funding. These are set out below with a brief update on progress:

<i>Agreed Next Step</i>	<i>Progress / Approach</i>
More detailed profiles of the areas with the highest levels of child poverty are developed using existing and new statistics and information, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan consultation findings and the report of the 'what works' project previously commissioned to evaluate the impact of local initiatives and programmes on families in poverty which will be finalised in April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detailed profiles are being developed to reflect cluster areas of child poverty in Wirral, working with colleagues in partner organisations to ensure that the data is up to date and key challenges are identified ▪ A draft report of the 'what works' project has been submitted, and stakeholders will be asked to review the findings prior to this being finalised

Profiles are considered by the Working Group alongside options for commissioning and delivering the programme of activity and that the Working Group makes recommendations to Cabinet with regard to the how the investment should be targeted and a preferred approach to delivering the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Working Group will consider the area profiles and additional evidence in order to agree criteria for allocating funding and agree an approach for commissioning
Previous work undertaken with regard to identifying best practice and the key drivers for tackling poverty is integrated as appropriate in the preferred approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous work will be captured in a summary document which sets out the key elements of the 'roots and wings' strategy, updated information on national and sub-regional drivers and best practice and key action being undertaken by partners in Wirral
Commissioning is undertaken with due regard to procurement procedures further to Cabinet's consideration of the Working Group's recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commissioning will take place subsequent to further discussion by the Working Group as indicated above
A clear protocol is put in place with regard to any conflict of interest related to the membership of the Working Group and the commissioning process to ensure transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Working Group will agree a revised Terms of Reference with regard to its role in determining the allocation of the funding and ensure that any conflict of interest relating to the allocation of the funding is identified as appropriate

- Frank Field MP addressed the Cabinet meeting of the 12th April and presented an application to establish a virtual free school for young women pregnant from twelve weeks. Cabinet's recommendation to the Working Group in this respect will be addressed as appropriate as part of the next steps referred to above.

3.0 Recommendations:

3. 1 Wirral Children's Trust Board notes the contents of the report and agrees to continue to receive further updates.

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