

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – 22nd January 2013

CHILD POVERTY UPDATE

1.0 Background

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the first quarterly update to the Children's Trust Board 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. Board members will recall that reporting arrangements for the Working Group were considered by the Board at their meeting on 25th September 2012 as part of setting out a clear governance framework for the Working Group to operate.

2.0 Quarterly Update

2.1 At its meeting in December Bev Morgan 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 adult safeguarding website pages. The Working Group supports the commitment previously set out by the Trust Board to ensure that the training module is widely used and that its impact is monitored.

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

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opportunity to develop local responses to the priorities identified for 2013 by the Liverpool City Region Commission on Poverty and Life Chances.

2.3 Board Members will also 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

Wirral is proposing to submit a separate response as well as informing the one being developed by the Liverpool City Region.

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.

3.0 Recommendations:

3.1 It is recommended that the Children's Trust Board:

- Notes the update set out in this report and requests any further information as required;
- Agrees to receive the next quarterly update on the 21st May 2013.

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