

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

13th JUNE 2013

SUBJECT:	CHILD POVERTY PROJECT PROPOSAL
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH
KEY DECISION?	NO

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines a proposal for expenditure on child poverty activities based on priorities identified by Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group. The report also sets out a proposed commissioning process for progressing this proposal and related project management arrangements, including the role of the Working Group in respect of monitoring progress.
- 1.2 In summary, this report takes forward the longstanding view of the Working Group that community assets, not deficits, are the key to addressing issues of poverty and deprivation in Wirral. It also recognises the role of schools in improving outcomes now and in the longer-term for Wirral's children. The report outlines a proposed approach which is about enhancing the vital role of schools and creating a platform for them to act as a catalyst for transforming local communities. The approach has been proactively developed by all members of the Working Group, with support from officers as appropriate.
- 1.3 This report further sets out the Working Group's key areas of focus for 2013-14 in line with the Liverpool City Region Strategy on Poverty and Life Chances.
- 1.4 It is noted that, in respect of funding for child poverty initiatives, expenditure has been committed to support the Springboard project and this expenditure has been dealt with separately in a previous report to Cabinet in September 2012. A further report on progress in relation to Springboard will be brought to Cabinet in due course.

2. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Around 25% of Wirral children live in poverty as determined by the income deprivation indicator for child poverty. There are acute inequalities in Wirral with levels as low as 1% in some areas and as high as 70% in others, where long-standing issues of deprivation and disadvantage prevent families from escaping poverty. Feedback from local agencies suggests that the financial climate and changes to the benefits are having a combined impact on children and families in poverty. For example, Wirral's Food Bank has fed and supported 3,791 adults and 2,386 children since April 2012.

- 2.2 Poverty is not a new issue, and its causes and effects have been explored in a range of recent research and evidence-based work, including the national Review of Poverty and Life Chances led by Frank Field MP in 2010 which concluded that life chances are dependent on development in the first 5 years of life. The 2010 Marmot Review, and the 2011 reviews of early intervention and the early years foundation stage reached similar conclusions about giving every child the best start in life. As well as a focus on the early years, the collective evidence suggests that the following are key challenges for addressing poverty:
- Tackling worklessness and improving employability;
 - Addressing financial and digital exclusion;
 - Strengthening families and parenting skills;
 - Narrowing the gap on educational attainment;
 - Improving health outcomes.
- 2.3 Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group was established in May 2011 to explore the evidence and research and to make recommendations to the Council and its partners about priorities for a local child poverty strategy and action plan. Since then, the Working Group has continued to revisit a number of key questions:
- Given that the Council and its partners have continuously sought to address Wirral's deep-rooted and complex issues of poverty and deprivation through a range of services and interventions with varying levels of success, how can we be more innovative and creative in finding solutions?
 - How do we best invest limited resources?
 - How do we best co-ordinate multi-agency resources?
 - How do we measure the outcome and value of any interventions?
- 2.4 The draft child poverty strategy informed by the Working Group and considered by Cabinet in October 2011 provided a starting point for answering these questions, with a focus on challenging partners to join up their activity wherever possible to identify and support families living in poverty or at risk of living in poverty. The Working Group's role has subsequently evolved to become a key stakeholder group for issues of poverty in the borough.

3. WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Working Group recognises that the Council and partners are taking a range of strategic and operational actions to address the challenges of poverty and deprivation referred to in 2.2 above and that there is a wealth of good practice happening in Wirral. Examples of this include the Council's continued focus on economic growth and prosperity, the support provided for families by Wirral's excellent children's services and a range of community-focused activities in local areas. It also recognised that the Council's Corporate Plan has a clear focus on tackling poverty and deprivation and that this will drive further service improvements and joint working.
- 3.2 Further to this, the Working Group has also taken a consistent view that short-term interventions are much less likely to work and that a focus on community assets, rather than community deficits, is critical to tackling poverty for future generations.
- 3.3 A number of members of the Working Group recently attended a workshop organised on asset-based community development. This approach considers local assets as the

primary building blocks of sustainable community development. Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations and community groups, and the support of local services, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.

- 3.4 The Working Group is proposing that the proposed project should take as its starting point an asset-based approach. The Working Group suggests that that testing this approach in a localised way will be the most effective use of the resources available and that this should be on the basis of a primary 'school community hub.' The activities co-ordinated through this 'school community hub' would be aimed at mitigating and reducing the impact of poverty and deprivation through a 'whole family' approach and a community-led programme of activity. It would seek to enhance rather than duplicate pupil-centred interventions, for example those in place to narrow the gap in attainment.
- 3.5 The Working Group also suggests that, if this approach proves successful, the lessons learnt can be rolled out borough-wide and will be of significant value as the Council and partners develop neighbourhood working in Wirral.
- 3.6 Primary schools tend to have a focused geography, are naturally accepted as community leaders, have a resource of buildings, land and people and access to enrolled children, younger and older siblings and most importantly to parents. Schools are uniquely placed to understand how services and activities can come together to better support families. There is also evidence that primary school pupils are much more likely to be affected by an area's economics and employment deprivation than their counterparts in secondary schools (Zhang, 2003, links between school absenteeism and child poverty, *The Journal for Pastoral Care and Personal Social Education*; Vol 21 (1) 10 – 17). A DWP Child Poverty Pilot in 2011 (the School Gates Initiative) focused on increasing the amount of employment and enterprise support that parents receive in and around their children's school.
- 3.7 The Working Group has previously informed the commissioning of an evaluation project which explored the impact of existing local initiatives and programmes on families in poverty with a particular focus on identifying what interventions have been most successful in supporting parents into sustainable employment. The findings of this evaluation concluded that:

"The recognition and use of community networks and assets is an essential element in providing a sound context for mutual trust, peer support and personal development to be undertaken in a familiar and informal setting, often within walking distance, where individuals can be supported to meet with professionals on their own terms to manage their journey towards employability." ('Supporting Families Out of Poverty: What Works?' Final Report, October 2012)

- 3.8 The Marmot Review on Health Inequalities (Fair Society, Healthy Lives 2010) mentioned in 2.2 above also made recommendations about the role schools the following approaches to reduce social inequality:

- Extending the role of schools in supporting communities and families taking a 'whole child' approach to education;
- Consistently implementing 'full service' extended school approaches and

- Developing the school based workforce to build skills to work across school and home boundaries.

3.9 As would be expected, schools in Wirral differ widely in terms of the deprivation experienced by the children and families they serve. Work has been undertaken by the Policy, Performance and Public Health Directorate to identify those schools most affected using a number of key criteria:

- Income deprivation (i.e. the national child poverty indicator);
- The wider determinants of deprivation (i.e. the Indices of Multiple Deprivation);
- Children on Free School Meals (i.e. the FSM indicator).

3.10 It is proposed that those schools where the majority (i.e. 51% or above) of pupils on roll live in an area where child poverty and deprivation levels are in the highest 20% of areas nationally are invited to express an interest in working with the Council to deliver the project outlined below. Taking into account the need to maximise the impact of the funding available, it is further proposed that the targeting of schools should also take into account the total number of pupils on the school roll.

4. PROJECT OUTLINE

4.1 The Working Group's broad project proposal is as follows:

- The selection of a school community hub using the commissioning process set out in section 5 below;
- The selected school community hub to identify / recruit community organisers to work using the school as a base;
- The community organisers to work with the school community to develop an asset map for the local area, and an action plan which sets out what the community can do for itself, what it needs support to do, and what it wants partners to deliver;
- This action plan to be delivered by the community organisers working with the school and the local community, with project management arrangements as set out in section 6 below.

4.2 Taking into account that the proposed approach will generate an asset map and action plan which very much depends on the school and community selected through the commissioning process, the Working Group anticipates that a map of community assets might include:

- Community connectors – people who make things happen in the local area;
- Existing community groups and associations, for example faith groups, the PTA and 'friends of' groups (parks, libraries, etc);
- Local traders / businesses;
- Housing providers;
- Voluntary organisations;
- Local services, for example Police, Fire and Rescue, health agencies and Jobcentre Plus.

4.3 Similarly, an action plan might include:

- Celebrations and other events designed to equip the community to self help and identify opportunities and ideas;

- Development of social enterprises to meet community need and create employment;
- Microfinance projects – credit unions, business loans, etc.;
- Targeted skills courses and jobs readiness training linked to real job opportunities;
- Provision of childcare;
- Securing transport links to areas of employment;
- Improving access to banking services and debt, benefits and legal advice;
- Community celebration events and ideas fairs;
- Parenting and family skills, e.g. budgeting;
- Training to promote community resilience;
- School readiness;
- Building links with neighbouring assets;
- Extended schools programme, e.g. holiday provision;
- Working with housing providers to tackle local housing issues;
- Community-led clean ups and physical improvements.

5. COMMISSIONING PROCESS

- 5.1 A proposed commissioning approach has been developed with guidance from the Council's Procurement Team taking into account the procurement principles of fairness and transparency:

Expressions of Interest invited from schools	Mid-June 2013
'Information Day' undertaken with prospective schools	End-June 2013
Expressions of interest received	July 2013
Expressions of interest evaluated and shortlist identified	July 2013
Proposals invited from short listed schools	July 2013
Proposals received	August 2013
Final proposals evaluated by commissioning panel	August 2013
Funding awarded and work commences	September 2013

- 5.2 The invitation to schools to express an interest would outline the broad project proposal and ask for a response which outlines how the school would:
- Engage the school community in the project and recruit and host community organisers;
 - Work with local services and agencies to support the project and lever in additional support;
 - Ensure that the project enables the community identifying its own resources and action required.
- 5.3 Schools would be asked to describe their current strategies for improving outcomes where deprivation and disadvantage has an impact on pupil aspiration and attainment, for example through the use of Pupil Premium funding, and how any additional funding might add value to this work through improving outcomes for families and the wider community.
- 5.3 The process will also be mindful of the following recommendations from the national Child Poverty Pilot evaluation which helpfully describes some qualifying criteria for establishing child poverty projects in schools:

“Selecting schools in the most deprived areas has proven key in this pilot to reaching the target group of parents. However, within this selection, an equally important factor needs to be selecting the right school, including:

- A head who is committed to, and on board with the pilot aims and who can recognise the ways in which the pilot could benefit the work of the school and its community of parents and children;
- A school which has the staff capacity to support the pilot is key, particularly in providing trusted ‘frontline’ school staff who could help engage parents in the pilot.” (DWP, 2012 Study of School Gates Employment Support Initiative)

5.4 Running an Information Day for qualifying schools is to provide an opportunity to give an overview of the project and initiate discussion about:

- How assets from within the community could be involved;
- Project outputs and how improvements could be measured;
- How the interventions and the improvements identified could be made sustainable.

5.5 Schools that progress past the initial short listing process will be asked to present to the commissioning panel prior to selection.

6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

6.1 The Working Group is committed to monitoring the impact and findings of this initiative as it progresses to understand what lessons can be learnt. Progress will also be of interest to the Council and partners as they develop neighbourhood working in Wirral. The Working Group and officers also recognise that there will be links to other emerging areas of work, including the preventive strategy for children’s services, and will proactively seek to ensure that duplication is avoided and that links are made as necessary.

6.2 A framework for monitoring success will be put in place as part of the development of the project dependent on the interventions identified. However, there will be a number of output measures that will need to be included to ensure that the project is meeting key requirements, for example numbers of families engaged with and service referrals. This framework will need to be in place within the first three months of the project being initiated.

6.3 In addition to this quantitative data about how the project is being delivered, areas for qualitative evaluation as part of ongoing delivery and at the end of the first year of investment might include:

- Increased family and children’s wellbeing;
- Increased capacity in the community to tackle poverty;
- Greater awareness of support available to parents in the local area;
- Increased desire of parents to move into work, and with a clear understanding of how to pursue this goal;
- Increased engagement of parents with existing employment and enterprise;
- Improved aspirations of children due to rising parental aspirations;

6. WIDER ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP

- 6.1 The Working Group is also committed to continuing to challenge the Council and partners about their responses to issues of poverty, for example in respect of mitigating the impact of welfare reform on children and families.
- 6.2 The Working Group has maintained close links with the Liverpool City Region Commission on Poverty and Life Chances and recognises that the work of the Commission and the associated Liverpool City Region Strategy and recently updated child poverty needs assessment provides the wider context for Wirral's local interventions. In recognition of the need to further strengthen these links, the Working Group has developed a broad work programme to mirror the Liverpool City Region Commission's priorities for 2013, i.e. understanding and challenging what the Council and its partners are doing to:
- Improve school readiness;
 - Support families to be prepared for Universal Credit;
 - Tackle children and young people with unhealthy weight;
 - Close attainment differences in schools;
 - Improve transport access;
 - Increase employment and skills within low income families.
- 6.3 In light of this, it is recommended that Cabinet recognises the Liverpool City Region Strategy on Poverty and Life Chances as providing the strategic framework for child poverty activities in Wirral and agrees that the Working Group should review progress on the areas set out above in line with this framework. Subject to approval by Cabinet in relation to the project proposal outlined in this report, the core principles of the draft child poverty strategy considered by Cabinet in 2011 will be taken forward through the implementation of the school community hub project outlined in this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 A risk register will be developed and monitored in line with the project management arrangements which will be put in place. This will reflect the need to allow for innovation in the project given the focus on the community identifying its own needs.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 A range of options have been reviewed by the Working Group in order to develop the recommended approach set out in this report.

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Working Group is the key stakeholder group for child poverty in Wirral and has been consulted on an ongoing basis as to the content of this report.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR

- 10.1 It is anticipated that the proposed project will require the school selected to develop relationships with the voluntary and community sector to deliver a local action plan.
- 10.2 The sector will be involved in the commissioning process given its expertise in respect of community-led approaches.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

11.1 The project makes proposals for the amount of £100,000 allocated in the Council's budget to be commissioned based on priorities identified by Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group. Staffing implications for the Council will be in respect of project monitoring and unlocking barriers to implementation.

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Clear governance arrangements are in place for the Working Group to report to the Children's Trust and these will provide the framework for monitoring the proposed project.

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 A Phase 1 equality impact assessment is attached and will also be published at:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/corporate-services>

14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There will be no direct carbon reduction implications.

15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There will be no direct planning and community safety implications.

16.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

16.1 The £100,000 allocated for priorities identified by the Working Group be utilised to commission the delivery of the project outlined in this proposal;

16.2 The Wirral Child and Family Working Group acts as the key stakeholder group for this project;

16.3 Regular reports on progress in relation to the delivery of the project and on Wirral's wider contribution to delivering the Liverpool City Region Strategy on Poverty and Life Chances are produced for the Children's Trust in line with existing governance arrangements;

16.4 Cabinet commits to ensuring that the lessons learnt from the implementation of the project are considered as the Council and its partners further develop neighbourhood working in Wirral.

17.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

17.1 This report outlines a proposal for expenditure on child poverty activities based on priorities identified by Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN	14th April 2011
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	13th October 2011
COUNCIL: COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13	1st March 2012
CABINET: ‘ROOTS AND WINGS’ CHILD POVERTY BUDGET OPTION	12th April 2012
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY BUDGET OPTION	27th September 2012
COUNCIL: COUNCIL BUDGET 2013/14	5th March 2013

Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (from May 2012)

Section 1: Your details

EIA lead Officer: Jane Morgan

Email address: janemorgan@wirral.gov.uk

Head of Section:

Chief Officer: Julia Hassall

Department: Children's Services

Date: May 2013

Section 2: What Council proposal is being assessed?

Child poverty project proposal

Section 2b: Will this EIA be submitted to a Cabinet or Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

Yes / No

If 'yes' please state which meeting and what date

Cabinet 13th June 2013

Please add hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published on the Council's website (see your Departmental Equality Group Chair for appropriate hyperlink)

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/children-young-people>

Section 3: Does the proposal have the potential to affect..... (please tick relevant boxes)

- Services**
- The workforce**
- Communities**
- Other** (please state e.g.: Partners, Private Sector, Voluntary & Community Sector)

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 4.

- None** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 4: Does the proposal have the potential to maintain or enhance the way the Council (please tick relevant boxes)

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advances equality of opportunity
- Fosters good relations between groups of people

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 5.

- No** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 5:

Could the proposal have a positive or negative impact on any of the protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership)?

You may also want to consider socio-economic status of individuals.

Please list in the table below and include actions required to mitigate any potential negative impact.

Which group(s) of people could be affected	Potential positive or negative impact	Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact	Lead person	Timescale	Resource implications
Groups affected by socio-economic status	Project will be targeted at schools where pupil live in areas with the highest levels of child poverty (as measured by the national deprivation indicator for child poverty) and have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of children and families	-	-	-	-
All groups with protected status	The programme of activity linked to the project will be community-led and will proactively ensure that all protected groups are encouraged to engage.	-	-	-	-

Section 5a: Where and how will the above actions be monitored?

Wirral's Child and Family Working Group will act as the stakeholder group for the project and will regularly review impact on children and families engaged in the programme.

Section 5b: If you think there is no negative impact, what is your reasoning behind this?

The project proposal is based on the need to address inequality, with a particular focus on developing community assets.

Section 6: What research / data / information have you used in support of this process?

A range of evidence has been used, including child poverty data, research about best practice in other areas and the views of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group as representative stakeholders.

Section 7: Are you intending to carry out any consultation with regard to this Council proposal?

No – (please delete as appropriate)

If 'yes' please continue to section 8.

If 'no' please state your reason(s) why:

No, as consultation has already been undertaken to develop the approach through previous work on Wirral's child poverty strategy.

(please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 8: How will consultation take place and by when?

N/A

Before you complete your consultation, please email your preliminary EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer in order for the Council to ensure it is meeting it's legal requirements. The EIA will be published with a note saying we are awaiting outcomes from a consultation exercise.

Once you have completed your consultation, please review your actions in section 5. Then email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for re-publishing.

Section 9: Have you remembered to:

- a) **Add appropriate departmental hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published** (section 2b)
- b) **Include any potential positive impacts as well as negative impacts?** (section 5)
- c) **Send this EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer?**
- d) **Review section 5 once consultation has taken place and sent your completed EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer for re-publishing?**