

**REPORT TO:** Employment, Learning, Skills and Community  
Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Resources

**SUBJECT:** Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy, 2011-  
2013

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To share with PPB members the development of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The draft strategy is endorsed
- (2) A further report on the strategy's Action Plan is brought to a future meeting.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

The 2010 Child Poverty Act made a Government commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Specific duties imposed upon local partners include:

- Local partners to co-operate to mitigate the effects of child poverty
- Local authorities to prepare a local child poverty needs assessment
- Local joint child poverty strategies to be produced by April 2011.
- Child poverty to be taken into account when preparing or revising the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Whilst poverty can be measured by income, the council has agreed to adopt the European Union's working definition of poverty;

***“Persons, families and groups of persons, whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State to which they belong.”***

This recognises that poverty is not just about income but about effective exclusion from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities, such as:

- Income poverty
- Service poverty (difficulty in accessing and benefiting from quality services e.g. housing, health, education and leisure)
- Participation poverty (affecting the ability to participate in the community and to engage in social activities)

It also has a negative impact on experience of education and training and affects the transition to independence.

The Liverpool City Region's commitment to reducing child poverty was prominent in both the City Employment Strategy (CES) and the Multi-Area Agreement (MAA).

Therefore, in anticipation of the Child Poverty Act the CES Board commissioned the development of a LCR Child and Family Poverty Framework, with Knowsley acting as the lead City Region authority for child and family poverty through the City Employment Strategy.

This has facilitated the adoption of common definitions, the sharing of data and good practice and good practice across the city region authorities.

#### **4.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The report, 'A Brighter Future: working together to tackle child and family poverty (Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Framework Analysis Report) was published last summer, and has been a helpful resource in the development of our strategy. It will also help in the better understanding of cross boundary child poverty issues and assist in identifying opportunities to join up activity across the city region

Halton's Child and family poverty needs assessment was completed and published in December 2010 and is appended to the strategy.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY**

The key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton identified are;

- Low family aspirations
- Persistent cycle of benefit dependency, often intergenerational.

The key priorities to tackle child and family poverty in Halton;

- Change/challenge cultural acceptance and raise aspirations
- Early intervention
- Whole family approach
- Provide a single point of access to key support services

Key issues to be tackled as an early priority;

- To ensure that support services meet the needs of target groups now, and in the future, and are easily accessible

- Improve the sharing, and quality of information, between partners to provide a better response and greater levels of longer-term support to service users.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

Subject to formal approval, the next milestone is to draft an Action Plan to co-ordinate work towards the objectives set out in the strategy. This work will be undertaken during Qtr 1 of 2011/12.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

The Child & Family Poverty Strategy is a statutory requirement upon the Council and key partners. If it is to be effective it has to be of a genuinely 'cross-cutting' nature across all of the Council's and our partner's priorities and plans. This has already been recognised by its identification as a key cross-cutting issue in the draft Sustainable Community Strategy.

The need for the strategy to be embedded into all of the council's priorities to varying degrees has an especially strong resonance for the employment, learning and skills agenda as work is the best route out of poverty for most parents and their children.

This is not only because children in families where parents are in work are much less likely to be poor in income terms, although this is of course the case. It is also because paid employment can offer a sustainable route out of poverty for the longer term; because work is good for the physical and psychological health of parents and hence of their children; and because children who grow up in workless households are themselves much more likely to be poor in adulthood.

Therefore, as well as ensuring that there are jobs available it is vital that our residents are 'work ready' through learning suitable skills and knowledge and that barriers to employment such as transport, and affordable childcare are accessible to those in greatest need.

## **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The level of knowledge and understanding of the child and family poverty agenda in Halton is varied across the borough. It is important that there is a common understanding of the issue and a wide awareness of the child and family poverty strategy and activity amongst our partners. This risk will be addressed through an effective and robust communication plan within the Action Plan.

Achieving an effective approach to eradicating Child and Family in Halton will requires strong strategic leadership from the Council. This is being addressed through the establishment of a Child & Family Poverty LCR Child and Family

Poverty Commission. The membership of the commission will be finalised over the following months.

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

An Equality Impact Assessment of the draft strategy will be completed by a multi-agency panel in late February and its outcome will be taken into account when developing the strategy's action plan.

## **10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

April 2011

## **11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
'A Brighter Future: working together to tackle child and family poverty'	<b>Rutland House, Halton Lea</b>	<b>Nick Mannion</b>