

# HALTON CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY

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## FOREWORD

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The children and young people of Halton are our future. We are:

***'A community committed to realising high aspirations, where all children, young people and families are valued and respected and where inclusion and diversity are promoted'***

However, around 6,500 children in Halton are currently growing up in poverty, around a quarter of all our children.

We know that a child that grows up in poverty is more likely to do less well at school, have lower chances of getting a well paid job and is more likely to have poor physical and mental health during adulthood.

This is the reality of growing-up in poverty; where birthdays and Christmas are potentially times of crisis for families, and the spectre of spiralling debts at punishing rates of interest and repayment are the enduring memory. Also, in turn, their children are likely to suffer the same disadvantage, perpetuating the cycle of poverty from one generation to another.

However, in Halton we are not prepared to accept this, and before the 2010 Child Poverty Act came into force, tackling child poverty was a priority for the council and its partners in Halton.

It is our view that tackling child poverty is everybody's business. Our strategy is a child & family poverty strategy. This is because we all firmly believe that it is only by addressing poverty through a 'whole family' approach that we can help families make sustained progress out of poverty.

However, this strategy has been developed at a point in time when we are about to experience the greatest changes to the welfare system since its inception, together with the partners' most significant reductions in their budgets for a generation.

Perhaps not the most auspicious time to launch a new strategy!

In the light of the fact that there is unlikely to be significant extra money available for the foreseeable future, our strategy focuses on how we can work more effectively and efficiently together to make sure we deliver the right support and services to those families in greatest need in a way they can use them to their best advantage.

Everyone in Halton can contribute in some way to eradicating child and family poverty by 2020. We all have a role to play to provide a better future for ALL our children and young people in the Borough.

Councillor John Swain  
Children, Young People and Families Portfolio Holder  
Halton Borough Council

## VISION FOR HALTON 2020

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To create and sustain an environment in which **ALL** children and their families living in Halton are supported in achieving emotional wellbeing and prosperity to fulfil their potential through the elimination of child and family poverty by 2020.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This Strategy outlines the extent of child and family poverty in Halton and our commitment to reducing it between now and 2013. The Strategy covers a relatively short timeframe because we will be reviewing the Halton Needs Assessment that underpins the strategy in 2013 to ensure that our actions are based on the most current information. We share the Government's goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and believe that partnership working is the best way to achieve this.

Our vision is;

*'To create and sustain an environment in which ALL children and their families living in Halton are supported in achieving emotional wellbeing and prosperity to fulfil their potential through the elimination of child and family poverty by 2020.'*

The Government definition of eradicating child poverty as set out in the Child Poverty Act is:

- Relative low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in families with net income below 60% of the median to less than 10%.
- Combined low income and material deprivation – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and live in a household where the net income is less than 70% of the median to less than 5%.
- Persistent poverty – to reduce the proportion of children that experience relative poverty for 3 or more consecutive years (target to be set by 2015).
- Absolute low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in households where the net income is less than 60% of the average net income in 2010 to less than 5%. By fixing the comparator income at 2010 levels this indicator allows changes in average net income to be ignored. This is particularly important during recession as a fall in average net income will lead to a reported fall in the number of people in poverty using the other indicators.

In addition to these targets, the National Child Poverty Strategy includes an indicator aimed at tracking the poorest:

- Severe poverty – proportion of children who experience material deprivation and live in households where income is less than 50% of median household income for the financial year.

In Halton around 6,550 (26.4%) of our children live in poverty. Whilst this puts Halton below the Liverpool City Region average, it highlights the considerable challenge in front of us to meet the Government's targets.

We believe that achieving these financially orientated targets will be very challenging but despite this we have chosen, in common with Liverpool City Region partners, to adopt a wider definition of poverty. We believe that financial poverty is only one element and that other forms of poverty such as poverty of services (or accessibility of them), poverty of opportunity, and poverty of aspiration are equally important factors holding people back from achieving their full potential. In addition this Strategy overtly refers to family poverty in addition to child poverty, recognising the linkages between the two.

In order to assess the prevalence and distribution of child and family poverty within Halton a comprehensive Needs Assessment was undertaken. In recognition of Halton's position within the wider Liverpool City Region economic area, the Assessment was coordinated between the six authorities. This Strategy draws heavily on the conclusions of the Assessment.

The key priorities for action are:

Key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton

- Some families feel that they will never move out of poverty which restricts their aspirations
- A cycle of benefit dependency which can be an intergenerational issue

Key priorities to tackle child and family poverty in Halton

- Cultural challenge and realising aspirations
- Early intervention/help
- Whole family approach
- Providing a single point of access to support services

Key issues and barriers to overcome first to tackle child and family poverty in Halton

- Ensuring that support services meet the needs of target groups now and in the future and are easily accessible
- Improving the sharing of information between partners to provide greater support to customers

In consultation with our partners we have developed a development plan which tackles child poverty head on. The continued commitment to reducing child poverty displayed by all partners is central to our approach and will provide the best outcome for the people of Halton.

## SECTION ONE: CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CONTEXT

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### INTRODUCTION

This Strategy outlines why we need to tackle child and family poverty and the scale of the problem both nationally and here in Halton. Halton Borough Council and its strategic partners are committed to reducing the number of people living in poverty in Halton. We believe that achieving this aim will benefit not only those directly affected but everybody who lives in, works in, and visits Halton.

We recognise that tackling the causes of poverty requires partnership working both locally and regionally. With this in mind, during the development of this Strategy we have worked closely with both statutory partners and key colleagues in Halton. In addition we have also worked with partners across the Liverpool City Region to ensure that work is coordinated regionally. We feel that this gives us the best chance of maximising the positive work that is, and will, be undertaken to reduce child and family poverty.

We are determined to ensure that the work we undertake is targeted as effectively as possible to overcome the real issues that people face in our area. To do this we have undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment for Halton with our Liverpool City Region partners. The results of this have shaped this Strategy. We recognise that the needs of people will change over time, some of these changes will be due to the work undertaken to reduce poverty and some will be outside of our control. To make sure that our work remains as focussed as possible we are committed to undertaking a new needs assessment in 2013/14.

### THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Despite the best efforts of everyone involved, child and family poverty is still far too common in the UK today. In recognition of the fact that there needs to be a concerted effort to reduce the number of children living in poverty, the previous Government passed the Child Poverty Act in April 2010. This includes a commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and imposes specific duties on key public sector organisations including:

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

The Act also sets out four challenging UK targets to be met by 2020 which frame the Government's definition of eradicating child poverty:

- Relative low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in families with net income below 60% of the median to less than 10%.
- Combined low income and material deprivation – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and live in a household where the net income is less than 70% of the median to less than 5%.

- Persistent poverty – to reduce the proportion of children that experience relative poverty for 3 or more consecutive years (target to be set by 2015).
- Absolute low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in households where the net income is less than 60% of the average net income in 2010 to less than 5%. By fixing the comparator income at 2010 levels this indicator allows changes in average net income to be ignored. This is particularly important during recession as a fall in average net income will lead to a reported fall in the number of people in poverty using the other indicators.

In addition to these targets, the National Child Poverty Strategy includes an indicator aimed at tracking the poorest:

- Severe poverty – proportion of children who experience material deprivation and live in households where income is less than 50% of median household income for the financial year.

To provide a national focus for action the Government has published a national strategy to tackle child poverty. To support the development of the Strategy the Government has commissioned a series of reviews. The ‘Graham Allen review of Early Intervention’ and the Frank Field report ‘The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults’ both focus on early intervention and the importance of providing a structure to support children during these formative years. Both of these reports are discussed in greater depth in Section 3 of this report.

The most recent figures for England from 2008<sup>1</sup> show that 21.6% of children under the age of 16 lived in a relative low income household. This figure reduces slightly to 20.9% when all children are included (up to the age of 19). It is clear therefore that a significant amount of work remains.

## **THE REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The North West of England has above average numbers of children living in poverty. With 23.5% of children under 16 and 22.8% of all children living in low income households, the region has the fourth highest rate of child poverty in England.

In recognition of this, the Liverpool City Region (LCR) is developing a Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy which will coordinate work to tackle poverty across the Region. The Strategy identifies four key areas of work:

- Foundation Stage/Early Years
- Learning and attainment
- Labour market
- Income and parenting

In addition seven key actions are identified:

- Support effective parenting and drive improvement in foundation years services
- Enhance children’s school and emotional development and reduce gaps in educational achievement
- Promote prevention and early intervention approaches to reduce health inequalities

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/lsoa-gov-off08.xls>

- Improve the quality of places and support strong communities to minimise the impact of disadvantage
- Improve access to suitable financial services and support families to make good financial decisions
- Optimise employment opportunities by removing barriers to good quality and sustainable employment
- Support parents to progress in work

The draft Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy was published in August 2011, and is expected to be formally adopted before the end of 2011.

Considerable progress has been made since 1999 when the Government first stated its ambition to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Nationally 800,000 children have been lifted out of poverty but 2.9 million<sup>2</sup> remain below the threshold. Of these 726,000 reside in the North West and 167,770 live in the Liverpool City Region<sup>3</sup>.

In our region the task is made even harder by lower average wages. Average median wages in all six city region authorities are below the national average, and all but one lies below the average for the North West. The widest gap is found in Halton where the average annual median wage is £4,361 lower than the average for Great Britain. Due to the fact that the child poverty targets are a percentage of the national average wage, this makes it more likely that children will fall into the poverty category in our area.

Area	Average gross median wage 2010
United Kingdom	£26,510
North West	£24,062
Merseyside	£23,449
Wirral	£25,320
Knowsley	£23,442
Liverpool	£23,067
St Helens	£22,794
Sefton	£22,321
Halton	£22,149

## LOCAL CONTEXT

In Halton just under 26.4% of children live in poverty. This places Halton below the Liverpool City Region average of 27.9%. The most recent figures from 2008 reveal that in total there are 6,550 children living in poverty in Halton. Of these 5,520 children live in out of work families and 1,030 live in households classified as in-work. This underlines that whilst being in work reduces the likelihood of child poverty it doesn't guarantee that children will be lifted out of poverty, particularly when there is only one working adult in the household.

***[Insert some comparative statistics by way of tables/graphs here]***

Whilst the Child Poverty Act requires local authorities to undertake a child poverty needs assessment, Halton in line with the Liverpool City Region has chosen to broaden the definition to child and family poverty. This recognises that child and family poverty are linked and are therefore best tackled together.

<sup>2</sup> Households below average income 2007/2008 (HABI) DWP.

<sup>3</sup> 2008 HMRC Child and working tax credits statistics (2007/08) and child benefit geographical statistics (August 2008)



We share the Government's target of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and we want to start work as quickly as possible towards this goal. We know that this is a very challenging target which is made all the more challenging by the lower average household income in Halton compared to the North West and England and the economic uncertainty. We believe that paid employment is the best way out of poverty, although it is not a guaranteed route, the majority of people who find paid work are able to move out of poverty.

The uncertainty over the number of jobs that will be lost in the coming years and the number that will be created makes it hard to forecast how easy it will be for people to move into employment and we recognise that slow growth will make it much harder to meet the targets. However the need to tackle child and family poverty remains regardless of economic conditions so we remain committed to achieving the targets.

### **What we are already doing to combat poverty**

Tackling poverty has been recognised as a major issue in Halton for a number of years, and there has been a considerable effort by partners to tackle specific aspects of poverty both through their own services, and as members of the Halton Strategic Partnership's neighbourhood renewal and working neighbourhood fund programmes.

Brief details of three examples of recent and current work aimed at breaking the poverty 'cycle' in Halton are:

#### **1. Family Learning**

Low levels of attainment, and in some cases aspiration, are recognised as leading to inter-generational poverty. One consequence of this are high levels of benefit dependency and poverty within 'workless' households.

One of the ways partners have worked hard to break this 'cycle' is through the provision of imaginative family learning services, designed in consultation with service-users and offered at over 20 venues across Halton, often in non-traditional settings and venues.

Halton's proportion of adults without any qualifications is falling, staying-on rates post-16 are improving steadily and we have worked hard to reduce young people categorised as 'NEET' (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

The results of this concerted effort are clear to see in the excellent GCSE results that were achieved by students in Halton in 2011. The percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades increased again to 83 per cent, which is above the national average.

The percentage attaining five or more A\* to Cs, including English and Maths, increased by six percentage points to 56 per cent, broadly in line with the national average and represents Halton's best ever result. Given the socio economic make up of Halton, this is a real achievement which reflect the hard work of the students, parents, teachers, governors and the close working relationship between school's and Halton Borough Council.

#### **2. Financial advice and access to affordable credit.**

A range of partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector have worked together over many years in Halton to design and offer a range of services to help our poorest and most vulnerable residents maximise their income, tackle multiple debt problems and address

housing and employment issues. Mobile outreach and evening advice surgeries have also been offered.

One success story is the budgeting officer working in Halton's thriving Credit Union, who in 2009/10 worked with over a hundred clients and helped them to save/write-off a total of £749,444 of debt. 98% of these clients were parents with dependant children.

### 3. Team Around the Family

Team Around the Family ('TAF') is Halton's Children's Trust approach to meeting needs that are above universal but that do not require a specialist service response, ensuring that families in Halton receive an appropriate level of service in a seamless way.

TAF includes services delivered from Children's Centres and family support services, including Halton's Family Intervention Projects (FIPs). Access to TAF services is via the multi-agency Integrated Working Support Team (IWST), which includes Social Care (Social Services) and Primary CAMHS (Primary Mental Health) provision

The main elements within Halton's TAF model are:

- ✓ Via the Integrated Working Support Team (IWST) element of Team Around the Family, the delivery of an assessment, triage, consultation and signposting service for professionals/practitioners across all agencies and sectors working with families in Halton. This entails a comprehensive knowledge of, and joint working processes with, the full range of partner and commissioned services in the Borough.
- ✓ Delivery via IWST of the single point of entry to all services that work with families experiencing multiple problems. This includes commissioned services and partner services in the voluntary and community sectors, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and NHS, Housing providers, specialist debt, welfare and legal (housing) support, Adult Learning, Drug and Alcohol services etc. The purpose of this structure is to ensure that families can access optimal bespoke packages of support while telling their 'story' once only.
- ✓ Support to agencies and practitioners in creating multi-agency plans to support children and families using the Common Assessment process.

### **Halton child and family poverty targets are that by 2020**

- Relative low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in families with net income below 60% of the median to less than 10%.
- Combined low income and material deprivation – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and live in a household where the net income is less than 70% of the median to less than 5%.
- Persistent poverty – to reduce the proportion of children that experience relative poverty for 3 or more consecutive years (target to be set by 2015).
- Absolute low income – to reduce the proportion of children who live in households where the net income is less than 60% of the average net income in 2010 to less

than 5%. By fixing the comparator income at 2010 levels this indicator allows changes in average net income to be ignored. This is particularly important during recession as a fall in average net income will lead to a reported fall in the number of people in poverty using the other indicators.

## SECTION TWO: THE 2010 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Halton Borough Council has undertaken a comprehensive Needs Assessment with the Liverpool City Region (LCR) partners. We are required to undertake a Needs Assessment but in recognition of the importance of this process we have gone beyond the minimum requirement by working with the LCR authorities.

The Needs Assessment provides information about the level of child poverty in Halton and also highlights the areas where poverty occurs within the borough. The Assessment uses statistical information from national sources and from local sources but also uses information gathered about people's experiences of poverty and services that are offered in the borough to tackle poverty. By using all of the information the Needs Assessment provides a detailed view of poverty in Halton.

The factors that contribute to child and family poverty can be complex and deep rooted and we believe that it is important to undertake the analysis with our sub regional colleagues in order to get a clear picture of the common issues that we face. The Liverpool City Region is made up of the five Merseyside authorities and Halton, and recognises that the six authorities share common issues and act as a single economic and employment area. By undertaking a coordinated assessment the LCR is in a stronger position to tackle the issues.

### KEY MESSAGES

In overall terms, more neighbourhoods saw a fall in poverty during 2006-08 than those where it increased. However, for many neighbourhoods' it remains a very significant issue.

The average annual household income in Halton is £46 lower than the LCR average, £3,323 lower than the North West average and £5,492 lower than the England average.

Halton also contains the two wards with **the highest** average household incomes of all LCR wards in 2009. This highlights the considerable variation of household income across fairly short distances within the Borough.

Halton has a disproportionately high number (12,500) of people who are dependent on out of work benefits such as Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Income Support Allowance, and this dependency is very high across a relatively large part of the Borough, particularly in the wards of Halton Castle (Castlefields estate), Windmill Hill and Halton Lea.

The significant 13.2% reduction in the Halton Job Seekers Allowance ('JSA') claimant count suggests that the local Employment, Learning and Skills partnership has been effective in getting people off this benefit, particularly in comparison to elsewhere in the LCR. However, the destinations of these people (in terms of work and wage level) are less clear, and may contribute to the evidenced increase of in-work poverty.

Whilst not a direct indicator of general poverty, data on lone parent benefit claimants can be used to highlight neighbourhoods where some children are most likely to be living in relative poverty conditions, with potentially less parental or carer support, and limited potential for the household to move out of poverty.

The prevailing economic conditions create challenging circumstances for any district, but Halton's underpinning economic weaknesses make these challenges far more daunting. Halton has a narrow economic base and in common with the LCR the local economy and

jobs market is overly reliant on the public sector. This means that the area will be disproportionately affected by public sector budget cuts. In addition the Borough has a relatively low skills base which makes it harder for residents to access the full range of jobs available in the Borough.

The Borough ranks as highly resilient in terms of the export trade and foreign owner businesses resident in Halton. This is offset by the low rankings around community variables. Halton's resilience rankings for life expectancy and claimant count are amongst the lowest in the country.

Halton is heavily dependent on neighbouring areas and the wider City Region labour market for jobs, meaning that the economic resilience of other areas is very relevant to the Borough.

Residents in employment outside Halton are predominantly reliant upon the private car for their journey to work - increasing fuel and motoring costs will become a major pressure on their ability to afford to retain jobs.

Children and families living in poverty are more likely to experience a wide range of health inequalities. Examples of health related impacts include - children growing up in poverty are 37 times more likely to die as a result of exposure to smoke, fire, and flames; they are three times as likely to suffer mental health disorders; twice as likely to be homeless or trapped in unsuitable and/or poor housing.

There is a relationship between poverty and educational attainment, for example nearly one in five girls and more than one in four boys in receipt of free school meals leave school without at least five GCSEs. Whilst free school meals aren't a direct indicator of child poverty it does illustrate the link between poorer households and qualifications.

By the age of 19, only 14.3% of Halton residents have achieved a NVQ level 3 qualification, compared with 22.6% nationally. Almost 17% of working age residents in Halton have no qualifications, compared with 13.8% regionally and 12.3% nationally.

Inter-generational welfare dependency, worklessness and low aspirations can become accepted as the norm, perpetuating poverty from one generation to another. Some families have no experience of anything but benefits which can make it daunting to find work.

## SECTION THREE: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

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### INTRODUCTION

Work to reduce the causes and effects of poverty is not new, and significant work has been undertaken across Halton for a number of years on these issues.

Building upon this work it is the needs assessment that provides the basis for determining the priorities for Halton. In addition a workshop was held with stakeholders drawn from across Halton to ascertain what the key priorities should be. The workshop was well attended underlining that the desire to tackle child and family poverty is strong in the Borough.

Participants were asked to nominate actions that will help to reduce poverty in the area and then vote on which were seen as the key priorities. We have drawn heavily on the outcomes of this workshop in the development of the key priorities. The full results of this exercise are shown in Appendix 1.

In addition to this, the following national reviews have informed our work:

#### **Frank Field's review of Poverty and Life Chances**

In June 2010 Frank Field MP was commissioned by the Prime Minister to provide an independent review on poverty and life chances. The review resulted in the publication of "The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults" in December 2010. The findings of this review have been taken into account in the development of this Strategy and have informed the Development plan.

Some of the key messages from the review include the assertion that child poverty in its broadest sense is about more than household income and that income is not the dominant cause of restricted life chances. As a result measures that solely focus on income, whilst helping to address financial poverty, are not effective in tackling the wider issues such as poverty of aspiration, financial exclusion, physical and mental wellbeing and skills gaps that all contribute to intergenerational and persistent poverty.

We agree with this conclusion and support the model of providing strong support structures for families which provide tangible benefits to them. This is reflected in the priorities identified in the stakeholder workshop which are outlined in this chapter. In particular an emphasis on aligning services to needs, information sharing and supporting aspirations which were all strong themes, support these goals.

In addition the review found that focusing on the foundation years from 0-5 years of age is key. This aspiration was also highlighted at the workshop with early intervention identified as a key issue and focusing on the foundation years being seen as important.

#### **Graham Allen review of Early Intervention**

In June 2010 the Government requested that Graham Allen MP lead a review of early intervention. His interim report was published in January 2011. It highlights the importance of early intervention in improving children's and ultimately adults' lives and strongly recommends that early intervention actions are improved and expanded upon. He particularly focuses on the 0-3 age group as children's brains develop from 25% to 80% of their full capacity during this period.

The final report (*‘Early Intervention; Smart Investment, Massive Savings’*) was published in July 2011, and makes recommendations for how the expansion of early intervention services could be financed.

### **Summary of key priorities**

In developing this strategy we have taken account of local needs, consulted extensively with local partners and listened to the views and suggestions of a range of adult and young people. We have also considered the latest national research in this area to develop a set of priorities that will provide the biggest benefit to the residents of Halton.

As a result of this process we have identified the following:

#### **A. Key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton**

- Some families feel that they will never move out of poverty which restricts their aspirations
- A cycle of benefit dependency which can be an intergenerational issue

#### **B. Key priorities to tackle child and family poverty in Halton**

- Cultural challenge and realising aspirations
- Early intervention
- Whole family approach
- Providing a single point of access to support services

#### **C. Key issues to overcome first to tackle child and family poverty in Halton**

- Ensuring that support services meet the needs of target groups now and in the future and are easily accessible
- Improving the sharing of information between partners to provide greater support to customers

## SECTION FOUR: IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

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### Governance

In late 2010 the Halton Child & Family Poverty Group was established by the Halton Strategic Partnership.

The Group was formally inaugurated in November 2010 and, in addition to statutory partners prescribed by the Act, membership includes representatives from the voluntary sector and service users. Organisations represented on the group are set-out in Annex 2.

The key functions of the group are to;

- a) *Oversee the preparation and publication of a local child poverty needs assessment that understands the drivers and characteristics of child and family poverty in Halton, as prescribed in the act.*
- b) *Ensure all statutory partners are represented and engaged to carry out their duty to co-operate to reduce, and mitigate, effects of child & family poverty in Halton.*
- c) *Set-out a vision for reducing child and family poverty in Halton through the publication of a Child & Family Poverty Strategy which sets-out the contribution that each partner will make to address the issues and challenges raised in the needs assessment.*
- d) *Agree in consultation with statutory and wider partners, the delivery and monitoring of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy Development Plan.*
- e) *Ensure that child and family poverty issues and needs are taken into account in the preparation of plans and strategies such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, Children & Young People's Plan, Local Economic Assessment, and other plans and strategies relating to employment, skills, housing, transport, health and wellbeing and safer and stronger communities.*
- f) *Report periodically on progress to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board.*

Administrative support is currently provided by Halton Borough Council.

### Consultation

As well as involving a wide range of our partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors at each key stage in the development of the strategy, we have also gone out into Halton's communities and listened to the views and suggestions of many families and young people in Halton on the three key questions;

- What do you think are the causes of child and family poverty in Halton?
- What should our priorities for action be?
- Where should we start?

The response has been overwhelmingly consistent and positive; that only by adopting a consistent and sustained 'whole family' approach will we eradicate child and family poverty in Halton.



Both 'providers' and 'consumers' of key services recognise that in the current difficult financial environment we need to make sure that scarce resources are carefully and sensitively targeted at those in greatest need if we are to meet this challenge and deliver sustained progress towards eradicating child and family poverty in Halton.

### **Links to Other Plans & Strategies**

The Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy has been prepared in the context of our other key local plans and strategies. It does not stand alone in isolation; it is an overarching high level strategy that is connected to a wide and varied range of other plans strategies that deal with specific topics and co-ordinate the delivery of services and projects.

Therefore, this Strategy has been prepared to align with other key partnership plans and strategies. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship, the Strategy sits within a matrix of these plans that allow the Halton Strategic Partnership to deliver improvements that make a real difference to the people of Halton.

### **Challenges**

At a time of major, and ongoing, reductions in the financial resources available to many key partners we are faced with the challenge of 'delivering more with less', without sacrificing quality.

Therefore, if we are to tackle the deep-rooted underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton, it is only by working closely together towards shared tightly focused priorities that we will be able to have a significant impact on the underlying problem, and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The primary challenge facing us will be to make effective early intervention and prevention with those families in the greatest need. In terms of definition, 'prevention' refers to activities to stop a problem arising in the first place. 'Early intervention' is activity aimed at helping to stop the development of a problem already evident before it becomes overwhelming.

Thus, the distinction between the two terms relates to the stage of problem development. Evidence shows that this early action can reduce a dependency culture emerging and can lead to improved quality of life.

There is considerable evidence in Appendix 1 that this is the way many of our partners are already working together in Halton. The challenge is to make this the way we all work.

There are also the emerging 'localism', 'personalisation' and 'Big Society' agendas, all of which will have an impact to some degree or another on the child & family poverty agenda. Finally, there are the radical changes to welfare benefits, with the introduction of the single Universal Credit welfare benefit and the allied Work Programme, both of which will have a significant but as yet undetermined impact on the income and lifestyles of many families in poverty.

Figure 1: Integration of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy with other key plans and strategies

# Integration of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy with Key Plans and Strategies



The Halton Child and Family Poverty Strategy has been prepared in the context of other key local plans and strategies. It does not stand alone in isolation but is a crosscutting strategy that is linked to a multitude of detailed strategies that deal with specific topics and coordinate the delivery of services and projects

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty to demonstrate that we have taken action to consider equality issues in the development of this Strategy.

This has been undertaken by way of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which is the name of a process by which we have examined the Strategy in order to minimise the potential for discrimination against one or more groups that include people with one or more 'protected characteristics': - age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, religion/belief, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

A copy of the EIA is available for inspection.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

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The issues that this Strategy commits us to tackle are long term difficult ones. It will take several years for the work underway to make a lasting impact. Early intervention and prevention in health, poverty and employability are examples.

It will take several years of sustained hard work before we will see a decrease in patients attending GP Surgeries and hospitals with established illnesses and a reduction in obesity, smoking and drinking to excess. Each of which in turn reduce people's capacity to fulfil their potential through learning, employment and prosperity.

The long timescales, together with the impact of the many current changes mentioned earlier mean we need to be flexible to cater for the unforeseen and allow partners to adapt to constantly evolving legislative and financial structures.

Therefore, the Development Plan covers the period from 2011-13 and is open to review at any stage. It sets out our starting point and sets partners progress targets to help to 'kick start' the delivery on the priorities set-out in this strategy. The Development Plan will be regularly reviewed with periodic progress reports to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board.

The end date for the Strategy and Development Plan is 2013. This is when the next child and family poverty needs assessment will be undertaken and the ramifications of some of the major national policy and legislative changes currently underway will be clearer.

In keeping with the Strategy, the Development Plan has been developed in consultation with our wider LCR partners to ensure that our local work contributes to reducing Child and Family Poverty across the city region.

## Halton Children and Family Poverty Strategy Development Plan 2011-13

### Outcome: Child and Family Poverty is eradicated in Halton

Our strategy is a statement of the fundamental commitment by the partnership to ultimately eradicate child and family poverty in Halton by 2020. It provides us with a cohesive overview and facilitates better co-ordination of our efforts towards this objective.

However, this is the first time many partners have worked together on this specific objective. Therefore, this development plan has been written to raise awareness, increase our knowledge and improve the way we work together to tackle child poverty during these initial stages. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to lay down a solid foundation for our work over the coming years on this vital issue.

This document outlines some of the key outcome indicators which will measure the extent to which poverty is being reduced and families are supported to move out of poverty, some performance measures for partners to assess their contribution to this, and the actions and processes which will support the eradication of child and family poverty in Halton.

The following key objectives have been identified as methods to reduce poverty, within these a number of actions have been identified to assist.

- Objective 1: Supporting families to achieve their aspirations
- Objective 2: Working with the whole family
- Objective 3: Working more closely between partners
- Objective 4: Mapping services/New ways of working
- Objective 5: Maximise income

It is important to note that there is not a single indicator which will measure child and family poverty in Halton. The indicators and measures in this document have been chosen to illustrate how progress could be made across areas of work which together may improve the position for families according to the objectives and may assist in reducing poverty in the long term. It is best described as a dotted line between the outcome of reducing poverty with these indicators and measures contributing to the whole.

## Key actions to be undertaken

Objective One: Supporting families to achieve their aspirations			
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b> (all 2013 unless stated)	<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	<b>INTENDED IMPACTS</b>
Work with 14 – 19 year olds to enable pathways into HE and employment and decrease participation poverty		Children and Enterprise Directorate – HBC	More young people progressing into higher education from deprived neighbourhoods.
Providing 12 -19 year olds with music making and other creative learning opportunities		LOOSE MUSIC	More young people accessing service from deprived neighbourhoods
Targeted support to reduce the outcome gaps at school between children in care, disadvantaged children, and their peers.		Children and Enterprise Directorate - HBC	Reduced attainment gap between children in care, disadvantaged children and their peers.
Better support to parents re/joining the employment market.		DWP/Jobcentre Plus	Lower proportion of benefit claimants with children
Deliver children’s Centre core offer – early intervention for families		Children and Enterprise Directorate - HBC	More vulnerable families able to access range of services to improve quality of life, and access to childcare.
Increase the staying-on rates for post 16 year olds		Children and Enterprise Directorate - HBC	More young people continuing in full time education post-16. A reduction in the NEET rates in deprived neighbourhoods.

Objective Two: Working more closely between partners			
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b> (all 2013 unless stated)	<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	<b>INTENDED IMPACTS</b>
Providing premises at a peppercorn rent to support Halton Credit Union in Widnes	Opening 2011	Halton Housing Trust	Premises open for business
Cross promotion of financial inclusion services		Halton and Warrington Trading Standards	Increased take-up rates of services on offer Reduced levels of irresponsible lending.
Complete A-Z employment offer from attracting business to the Borough to supporting local people into jobs		Halton Employment Partnership Group	Less unemployment, especially in worst performing neighbourhoods. A greater proportion of jobs with new/expanding employer filled by local people.
Embed the Integrated Working Support team as the first point of contact for professional needing support and advice.		Children and Enterprise Directorate	Vulnerable families receive timely and relevant support from appropriate partners/agencies.
Joint Commissioning of services through Children's Trust		Children's Trust Children & Families Partnership Commissioning Board	Inclusion of challenging targets for service access and provision for poorer families.

Objective Three: Working with the whole family			
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b> (all 2013 unless stated)	<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	<b>INTENDED IMPACTS</b>
Assisting families affected by substance misuse		Children's Trust Children & Families Partnership Commissioning Board	More clients with dependant children accessing substance misuse services.
Healthy Lifestyle education		Children's Trust Children & Families Partnership Commissioning Board	Lower obesity, smoking etc rates in poorer families.
Embed the Integrated Working Support team as the first point of contact for professional needing support and advice. CAF process is used and understood.		Children and Enterprise Directorate	Vulnerable families receive timely and relevant support from appropriate partners/agencies in order to meet their needs.
Continue to embed "Team around the Family" principles to ensure whole family approach to service delivery		Halton's Children's Trust	More successful outcomes for poorer families.



<b>Objective Four: Mapping services / New ways of working</b>			
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE (all 2013 unless stated)</b>	<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	<b>INTENDED IMPACTS</b>
Map current services and identify areas of collaboration	By end Sept 2011. Feed into 2012/13 business plans	Child and Family Poverty Group	Partners working together to eliminate gaps/overlaps in service provision.
Explore opportunities offered by the DWP/ESP programme for families with multiple problems.	Starts late 2011 to 2014	TBC	Better identification and co-ordinated support for families with multiple problems.
Identification of appropriate SMART targets and indicators	November 2011	Child Poverty Steering Group	Better targeting of scarce resources to points of greatest need and impact.

Objective Five: Maximise income			
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b> (all 2013 unless stated)	<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	<b>INTENDED IMPACTS</b>
Ensure that existing and new benefit claims are dealt with as quickly and accurately as possible		Revenues and Benefits administration - HBC	Fewer families resorting to doorstep and other unaffordable credit.
Support adults into employment		Halton People Into Jobs	Less unemployment, especially in worst performing neighbourhoods.
Attract and secure employment generating investment in the Borough. Ensure a good spread of skill requirement.		Development and Investment Services - HBC	Increased skill levels amongst local labour force. Increasing jobs in new and growing sectors of the economy. A greater proportion of jobs with new/expanding employers filled by local people.
Improve quality and range of the housing stock		HBC/Housing Partnership	Fewer families in unsatisfactory accommodation on social housing waiting lists.
Developing Financial Literacy		Halton CAB	Increased take-up of affordable credit and/or fewer repossessions/bankruptcies.
Provide supported bus services to key education and employment sites		HBC - Transport	More young people continuing in full time education post-16. Greater proportion of jobs with new/growing employers taken by local people.

This Development Plan is not exhaustive. Nor is it fixed, being subject to periodic review by the Halton Child & Family Poverty Steering Group on behalf of the Halton Strategic Partnership.

### **Outcome Indicators**

*Additional indicators may also indicate reduction in poverty for particular groups and/or improvements in ability to move out of poverty:*

- *Children in Care attainment*
- *Attainment gap for free school meals*
- *Reduction in percentage of children eligible for free school meals*
- *Benefit claimants with children reduction*
- *Reduction in unemployment*
- *Reduce the number of families in unsatisfactory accommodation on social housing waiting lists*
- *Reduction in the number of repossessions*
- *Reduction in the number of bankruptcies*
- *Increase in the proportion of young people continuing in full time education post-16*

### **Performance Measures**

The following measures may be used to indicate progress made with specific partners or specific programmes of work. *Please note that these are not in any specific order.*

- Numbers of young people accessing LOOSE music from deprived neighbourhoods
- Increase the number of Halton Credit Union premises across Halton
- Increase take up rates of financial inclusion services
- Proportion of new/expanding employer jobs filled by local people
- Increase the number of clients with dependent children accessing substance misuse services
- Reduction of obesity in poorer families
- Reduction in smoking rates in poorer families
- Increase speed and accuracy in dealing with benefit claims for new and existing claimants
- Reduce the number of families in unsatisfactory accommodation on social housing waiting lists
- Reduction in the number of repossessions
- Reduction in the number of bankruptcies

## USEFUL LINKS

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National Child Poverty Strategy - "A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives"

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/CM-8061.pdf>

Frank Field review 'The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults'

<http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>

Graham Allen review 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps'

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/g/graham%20allens%20review%20of%20early%20intervention.pdf>

National Child Poverty Unit

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/child-poverty/>

Halton's Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment

<http://cid-9104d6a5e629b08f.office.live.com/self.aspx/ChildPoverty/CPFNeedsAssessment.pdf>

Department for Work and Pensions

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/child%2Dpoverty/>

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/child-poverty>

Child Poverty Action Group

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/>

End Child Poverty

<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/>

## GLOSSARY

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**Liverpool City Region** – The LCR comprises of the five Merseyside Authorities of Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, Wirral and St Helens, plus Halton in Cheshire. The grouping recognises that these areas have similar underlying issues which can be best tackled through joint working.

### Government definitions of Child Poverty

*Relative low income* - The relative low income target is that less than 10% of children who live in qualifying households live in households that fall within the relevant income group. A household falls within the relevant income group, in relation to a financial year, if its equivalised net income for the financial year is less than 60% of median equivalised net household income for the financial year.

*Combined low income and material deprivation* - The combined low income and material deprivation target is that less than 5% of children who live in qualifying households —  
(a) live in households that fall within the relevant income group, and  
(b) experience material deprivation.

A household falls within the relevant income group, in relation to a financial year, if its equivalised net income for the financial year is less than 70% of median equivalised net household income for the financial year.

Regulations must specify the circumstances in which a child is to be regarded as experiencing material deprivation in a financial year.

*Absolute low income* - The absolute low income target is that less than 5% of children who live in qualifying households live in households falling within the relevant income group. A household falls within the relevant income group, in relation to a financial year, if its equivalised net income for the financial year is less than 60% of the adjusted base amount. “The adjusted base amount”, in relation to a financial year, is the base amount adjusted in a prescribed manner to take account of changes in the value of money since the base year.

- “the base amount” means the amount of median equivalised net household income for the base year;
- “the base year” means the financial year beginning with 1 April 2010.

*Persistent poverty* - In relation to a financial year (“the relevant financial year”), the persistent poverty target is that less than the target percentage of children who have lived in qualifying households during each of the survey years have lived in households that have been within the relevant income group in at least 3 of the survey years.

The survey years are—

- (a) the calendar year that ends in the relevant financial year, and
- (b) the 3 previous calendar years.

The target percentage is a percentage to be prescribed by regulations made before 2015.

A household falls within the relevant income group, in relation to a calendar year, if its equivalised net income for the year is less than 60% of median equivalised net household income for the year.

Instead of exercising the power conferred by subsection (3) of the Child Poverty Act, the Secretary of State may by regulations amend this section so as to substitute a different persistent poverty target for that set out in subsections (1) to (4).

Regulations under subsection (5) may only be made—

- (a) before 2015, and
- (b) with the consent of the Commission.

## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

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#### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AND WHY

The following tables provide a summary of a workshop undertaken to determine key priorities for tackling child and family poverty in the Borough. Participants were able to suggest any measures that they felt would positively impact on poverty and then through a series of votes participants were asked to rank the measures to ascertain the key priorities.

The first task asked participants to identify the underlying causes of poverty in Halton having seen a presentation of the needs assessment.

The most important factor was identified as 'Family aspirations' followed by 'Cultural acceptance'. In Halton low aspirations are believed to be a key factor holding children back from achieving their full potential. In particular a lack of positive role models, lack of academic ambition and a fear of further education is restricting the academic achievements of Halton's young people which leads to a cycle of low paid employment and increases the likelihood of becoming dependent on benefits in adult life.

However it is recognised that low aspirations are often a *result of* living in poverty rather than the *cause of* poverty. In many cases families living with the day to day grind of poverty do have aspirations but they often feel that there are too many barriers in their way to achieve them. This is important because if the barriers can be removed people are often very committed to improving their own lives.

When asked to identify the second most important issue 'Benefit dependency' was seen as the key issue followed by 'Lack of secure employment'. Both of these issues are related to low aspirations but also highlight the need to support people in finding employment through providing individuals with the necessary skills to access employment and ensuring that the right mix of jobs are available in the Borough.

What are the underlying causes of child poverty in Halton?

Issue	1 <sup>st</sup> Vote
<b>Family aspirations</b>	<b>11</b>
Cultural acceptance	9
Lack of secure employment	3
Lack of long-term investment in services	3
Benefit dependency	1
Lifestyle	1
Educational attainment (post 16)	1
Financial lifestyle	0

Issue	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vote
<b>Benefit dependency</b>	<b>9</b>
Lack of secure employment	7
Cultural acceptance	3
Lifestyle	2

Family aspirations	2
Financial lifestyle	2
Lack of long-term investment in services	1
Educational attainment (post 16)	1

Having identified the key causes of poverty the group were then asked to determine the key actions to mitigate the issues.

The group identified 'Cultural challenge/aspirations' as the key area of focus. This follows on strongly from the priority causes. Alongside this 'Early intervention' was also highlighted as the best way to bring about long term change.

When asked to select the second most important actions 'Whole family approach (holistic)' and 'Flexible single point of access' were chosen. Adopting a whole family approach recognises that intergenerational poverty is a serious issue and an holistic approach is necessary to break the cycle of poverty. Adopting a flexible single point of access recognises that the range of services offered can be confusing and people would benefit from a simpler system which guides them to the most appropriate service as quickly as possible.

What should our key priorities be?

Issue	1 <sup>st</sup> Vote
<b><i>Cultural challenge/aspirations</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Early intervention</i></b>	<b>7</b>
Focus on 0-5 years	5
Whole family approach (holistic)	4
Education – parentcraft	4
Identify 'frequent flyers'	2
Best practice evidence	1
Flexible single point of access	0
Celebration of success	0

Issue	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vote
<b><i>Whole family approach (holistic)</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Flexible single point of access</i></b>	<b>6</b>
Cultural challenge/aspirations	5
Early intervention	3
Identify 'frequent flyers'	3
Best practice evidence	2
Education – parentcraft	2
Focus on 0-5 years	1
Celebration of success	1

In the third task participants were asked to select the issue that should be tackled first. The most popular choice was 'Mapping service user journeys to future provision' with 'Info sharing between partners' a close second.

Mapping of services was seen as a key tool in firstly simplifying the system for users and secondly in identifying which services provide the best support for lifting people out of poverty. This relates strongly to the identification of a single point of access as an important measure for helping people to access services more easily.

Increased information sharing between partners also figured strongly. This category of action supports the whole family approach where information sharing between partners is key. It

also supports early intervention and raising aspirations as a range of partners can provide a much broader overview of the contributory factors that lead to poverty than any one partner can. Once all of the factors are known, services are much better positioned to provide the right support to help families to escape poverty.

What should we tackle first?

Issue	1 <sup>st</sup> Vote
<b><i>Mapping service user journeys to future provision</i></b>	<b>7</b>
Info sharing between partners	6
Community engagement – priorities	4
Multi-agency co-located teams	4
Targeted information services	3
Online multi-agency directory of services	3
Communications – what’s happening?	1

Issue	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vote
<b><i>Info sharing between partners</i></b>	<b>8</b>
Mapping service user journeys to future provision	6
Community engagement – priorities	3
Communications – what’s happening?	3
Multi-agency co-located teams	2
Targeted information services	2
Online multi-agency directory of services	1

### Financial Exclusion

In addition to the work undertaken through the needs assessment and the outcomes of the stakeholder workshop, this Strategy and the resulting Development Plan have been shaped by an assessment of the prevalence and effects of financial exclusion in Halton, which has been undertaken by Halton and Warrington Trading Standards.

Financial exclusion can mean that individuals have limited or no access to:

- **Bank Accounts:** vulnerable individuals can find it difficult to obtain bank accounts and difficult to understand how to use their account to avoid unnecessary bank charges. Individuals can be refused a bank or building society account because they cannot provide identity documents to show who they are and where they live. Many banks and building societies only accept a driving licence or passport, which some low-income families do not have. Basic bank accounts provide essential financial services such as enabling people to pay their bills by direct debit, pay in cheques and cash, and make cash withdrawals 24 hours a day and receive income and benefit payments.
- **Personal Credit:** vulnerable individuals can find it difficult to obtain personal credit from mainstream low-cost lenders.
- **Insurance:** vulnerable individuals can have difficulty accessing insurance products, particularly home contents insurance, either because they haven’t got the income to pay for a policy or because the area where they live attracts higher premiums.
- **Savings:** many individuals on lower or fixed incomes can find it difficult to get savings started and experience difficulty in accessing savings accounts.



- **Financial Advice:** individuals can find it difficult to get simple and independent explanations of financial services and easy access to money management information.
- **Employment:** not having a bank account often acts as a barrier to employment as more and more employers prefer to pay wages directly into a bank account.

Certain groups are at high risk of financial exclusion: social housing tenants, those who are unemployed, those claiming benefits and lone parents. There is an established link between social housing and child poverty and in Halton every Lower Super Output Area that has high levels of child poverty also has a high proportion of social housing - the highest correlation in the Liverpool City Region<sup>4</sup>.

The demographic profile of Halton provides the following estimates of those at high risk of financial exclusion:

<b>Groups at high risk of financial exclusion</b>	<b>Estimated numbers 'at risk' in Halton</b>
<b>Tenants</b> of Social Rented Housing	13,245 households
People who are <b>unemployed</b> and claiming Job Seekers Allowance	4,110 people (May 2010)
People <b>claiming health-related benefits</b>	8,420 people (May 2010)
<b>Lone parents on income support</b>	2,200 people (May 2010)

It should be noted that any one individual may experience several of these risk factors together and so it is difficult to estimate the actual number of households or people that are at risk of financial exclusion.

The need to tackle financial exclusion within the Borough will be a key consideration in the development of the Development Plan.

<sup>4</sup> A Brighter Future: working together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty, Child and Family Poverty Framework Interim Analysis Report, Liverpool City Region, 2010, pg 30

## ANNEX

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### Annex 1 Halton's Child and Family Needs Assessment

### Annex 2 Membership of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Steering Group

	Organisation
1	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families, HBC. (Chair)
2	Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Board, HBC
3	Operational Director for Learning & Achievement. HBC
4	Halton & Warrington Youth Offending Team
5	Job Centre Plus
6	Cheshire Constabulary
7	Local Transport Authority
8	Halton Childrens' Centre Manager
9	Halton & Warrington Trading Standards
10	Halton Citizens Advice Bureau
11	Halton Parents & Carers Forum
12	NHS Halton & St Helens

Partnership and Administrative Support is provided by Halton Borough Council

[As at July 2011]