

Halton Child and Family Poverty Strategy



HALTON CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY

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Foreword

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, with 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 of child poverty was a priority of 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 our partners, and the communities they work with insist that only by approaching poverty with a ‘whole family’ approach can we hope to 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 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 young people in the Borough.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy outlines the extent of child and family poverty in Halton and our commitment to reducing it. We share the Government's goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and believe that partnership working is the best way to achieve this.

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 Halton just under 26.4% of children live in poverty. This places Halton below the Liverpool City Region average but highlights the considerable task remaining 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

- Low family 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 raising aspirations

- Early intervention

Whole family approach

Providing a single point of access to support services

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

We will be developing an Action Plan to support this Strategy which will set out the detail of how we will tackle the issues.

SECTION ONE: CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CONTEXT

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, works 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 effective 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.

To provide a national focus for action the Government is publishing 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: The Next Steps' (Interim Report) 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 4.

The most recent figures for England from 2008¹ 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 incidents 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) has developed a Child and Family Poverty Framework which is providing a coordinated response to poverty across the Region. Launched in July 2010 the Framework has identified four broad themes to tackle child and family poverty²:

- Raising family income
- Improving outcomes for children
- Mitigating the impacts of poverty
- Improving communications and challenge perceptions

In addition five key actions were identified:

Complete a Liverpool City Region child and family poverty needs assessment to provide an in-depth understanding of the key drivers of poverty in the city region. Develop a child poverty data project to establish a comprehensive, common approach to measuring and monitoring child poverty across the six city region local authorities.

Establish a Child and Family Poverty Commission to act as the driving force behind the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty approach.

Set up a Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Advisory Group who will be responsible for identifying gaps in analysis, reality checking emerging proposals and

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

² <http://www.liverpoolcitystrategyces.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/A-Brighter-Future.pdf>

making recommendations to the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Commission.

Conduct a Liverpool City Region wide formal consultation exercise over the summer in 2010. The intelligence gathered from this exercise will feed into the Liverpool City Region Needs Assessment and help to shape the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Strategy, Action Plan and work streams.

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 million³ remain below the threshold. Of these 726,000 reside in the North West and 167,770 live in the Liverpool City Region⁴.

In our region the task is made harder by lower average wages. Average median wages in all six authorities are below the national average and all but one lies below the average for the North West. The biggest discrepancy is found in Halton where the average annual median wage is £2,297.40 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.

LOCAL CONTEXT

In Halton just under 26.4% of children live in poverty. This places Halton below the Liverpool City Region average. 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 incidence 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.

[Present comparative statistics by way of tables/graphs]

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.

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.

³ Households below average income 2007/2008 (HABI) DWP.

⁴ 2008 HMRC Child and working tax credits statistics (2007/08) and child benefit geographical statistics (August 2008)

Halton child and family poverty targets

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%.

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SECTION TWO: THE 2010 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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

Whilst it remains a significant issue in Halton, the percentage of children under the age of 16 experiencing poverty in Halton has reduced by 0.7% since 2006.

In overall terms, more neighbourhoods experienced a decrease in poverty during 2006-08 than an increase, although for many neighbourhoods' it remains a 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), Windmill Hill and Halton Lea.

The significant 13.2% reduction in the Halton 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 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 resilience of other areas is very relevant to the Borough.

Residents in employment outside Halton are dependent on transport - increasing fuel 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 bad 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.

Low aspirations can be a contributory factor to becoming trapped in poverty. Some families have no experience of anything but benefits which can make it daunting to find work.

SECTION THREE: CURRENT PROVISION

INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of work is already taking place. We have undertaken a review of how the services currently offered in the Borough support our goal of reducing child and family poverty. This section provides a summary of the work.

Health

Services active in this area include - Children's Centres, Environmental Health, Community Health Services, and Halton and St Helens PCT

All families living in Halton have access to a wide range of safety equipment at a reduced price and those on low incomes have access to free equipment to reduce the number of preventable accidents in the home.

Pre School Healthy Eating Scheme, providing healthier options for child nutrition.

Smoking Cessation and Enforcement.

All NHS Halton and St Helens programmes are targeted to reduce the health inequalities that poverty creates. Specific programmes include Breastfeeding Support, Child Safety, Halton Healthy Early Years Status and the Community Food Team.

Halton Healthy Schools Programme and the 15 -19 Years Healthy Weight Pathway support the health of children and young people.

Children and Young People

Services active in this area include - Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Children and Young People's Directorate, Halton Youth Service, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cheshire Constabulary, Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Team, Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre and Barnardo's.

Halton Citizens Advice Bureau Volunteer Legal Adviser training programme provides access to work whilst the Families Advice and Support Project provides a dedicated and enhanced holistic advice service that fast tracks families needing help.

Targeted intervention programmes – aimed at providing basic skills, to improve educational attainment and access to work. In addition to national programmes; CLL - communication, language and literacy, ECAT - every child a talker, ECC - every child a counter, ECAR - every child a reader and ECAW - every child a writer, there is also a one to one tuition programme in all schools that targets children who need extra help.

Narrowing the attainment gap for children in poverty by working with schools to ascertain the factors that are stopping them from achieving their full potential.

Lobbying for changes to local and national policies to support the aim of eradicating child and family poverty.

European Social Fund programmes aimed at young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3 offer a framework of qualifications giving transferrable skills 'on the job'.

KS4 Engagement Service works to prevent permanent exclusions from school. The pupils are often from vulnerable backgrounds. The service aims to support struggling

children through school to allow them to maximise their potential and hopefully go onto further education or training so that they can access good jobs in the future. Barnardo's Safer Futures Service works to ensure that vulnerable children are supported and given access to safe accommodation.

Programmes to reduce teenage pregnancy and substance misuse help to reduce the number of children born into poverty.

Investment in Children's Centres, day care nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools to provide children and young people with the best possible facilities.

Halton Duke of Edinburgh Scheme develops teamwork and leadership skills.

Halton Youth Bank provides young people with a real say in how grant money is awarded in Halton with responsibility for awarding in excess of £275,000 since 2009.

The Respect programme works with people aged from 13 to 16 years old to improve confidence and self-esteem. The project makes young people aware of the consequences of their actions in terms of committing fire crime and/or anti social behaviour. A Chester University evaluation determined that for every £1 spent on the project £3.70 was saved by society.

Prince's Trust Team Programme has worked with over 1,750 young people in the past 15 years. Over 80% of young people engaged with the programme have subsequently accessed full time education, employment or training.

On the Streets works within areas of embedded youth nuisance to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour.

Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Team work with young people in the criminal justice system to reduce the risk of reoffending and increase their chance of accessing employment benefiting society as a whole.

The Divert project is a mental health and Youth Offending Team project which works with all of the young people who are arrested and detained at the Sandymoor Custodial Facility to ensure that they get the right support as quickly as possible.

The Youth Offending Team's reparation project allows young offenders to make a useful contribution to society by undertaking projects that improve residents' quality of life. In addition to giving something back to the community, the tasks give offenders new skills which can help them to reintegrate into society.

Targeted work with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities helps to provide new skills and support for hard to reach families.

Employment and Skills

Services active in this area include - Cheshire Probation Trust, Children's Services, Halton and Warrington Trading Standards, Halton Credit Union, Jobcentre Plus, Halton Employment Partnership, Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, Riverside College Halton and Halton People into Jobs.

Cheshire Probation Trust aim to reduce individual offending by maximising income and access to services that may have a direct effect on poverty.

Adult Learning and Skills Development service offer post 19 learning opportunities for parents of young children.

Kings Cross community parent programme will recruit and train local residents to enable them to support local families. All of the volunteers will complete an initial 8 session training programme.

Budgeting Skills Project provides users with the skills to plan their finances and to avoid loan sharks.

Increasing the effective supply of labour by helping as many unemployed and economically inactive people of working age as possible by providing the skills and training to enable people to move into jobs or self employment.

Helping people of working age in the most disadvantaged groups and areas to move closer to the labour market, compete effectively for and remain in work, and to adjust more quickly to economic change.

Riverside College is the main Further Education provider in Halton offering courses to learners from the age of 14 to adulthood. The College has a particular emphasis on helping students from vulnerable backgrounds to achieve their full potential.

Halton Employment Partnership helps local people to access work. Between February and July 2010 the Partnership helped Tesco to recruit 377 people for a new distribution centre at 3MG. As a result of the support offered 75% of the positions were offered to Halton residents.

Provision of hardship funds for young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) to support them to find employment.

Halton People into Jobs is a Halton Borough Council service which offers Information, Advice and/or Guidance on a range of employment, learning and skills opportunities. The service also provides support for business start-ups in collaboration with local partners.

Welfare Benefits

Services active in this area include – Halton Borough Council Revenue and Benefits, Halton Credit Union and Halton Citizens Advice Bureaux

Ensuring that residents claim their full entitlement of Housing and Council Tax benefits.

Welfare Rights Service provides Quality Marked advice on all welfare benefits and debt negotiation from basic form filling up to and including court attendance. The service supports all residents including those from vulnerable backgrounds and helps people to avoid poverty traps.

Halton Advice Bus takes information about benefits and consumer rights to hard to reach communities, helping all residents to access these services.

Halton Credit Union and Halton Citizens Advice Bureaux both provide support to ensure that people are aware of the benefits they are entitled to and have access to affordable credit.

Transport

Services active in this area include - Children's Centres, Highway Development and Halton Transport.

Children's Centres are planned to ensure that they are easily accessible by families with the majority within walking distance of the most deprived areas.

Local Transport Plan 2 has delivered a number of schemes that are aimed at improving access to transport and removing barriers to employment.

Halton Transport provide assisted home to school transport which includes a commitment to provide assisted travel where a pupil from a low income household lives more than two miles away from their choice of closest secondary school.

Halton transport provide transport for looked after children for school journeys, out of school hours activities and family contact visits and health appointments.

Link To Work and Link To Hospital subsidised taxi services are provided to enable families to affordably access employment and health care outside of the hours of scheduled local bus services.

The supported bus network provides bus services for routes that aren't commercially viable and therefore increases the accessibility of the bus network beyond that offered by commercial operators. The supported network in Halton generates over 400,000 passenger journeys per year. Many of the services provide access to crucial

locations such as medical establishments, employment sites, education and learning centres and also retail and recreational sites.

Housing

Services active in this area include - Affinity Sutton, Halton Housing Trust, Liverpool Housing Trust, Children's Centres, Environmental Health, Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Services, PlusDane Group and Riverside Housing Association.

Social Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords take a proactive approach to helping residents to meet their financial obligations by undertaking financial health checks prior to residents signing tenancy agreements to ensure that they can afford the property. They also undertake benefit checks to ensure that residents are getting all of the benefits that they are entitled to. In approximately eighteen months, one provider has secured in excess of £600,000 of additional income by assisting tenants to access previously unclaimed benefits.

Affordable Warmth Campaigns have been undertaken which advise social housing residents on how to keep warm whilst minimising their energy consumption and therefore bills. Information packs also include information on healthy recipes and the best energy rates. Campaigns have been coordinated with Age Concern and the local Primary Care Trust.

As well as providing information on energy efficiency a number of Social Housing Associations have invested in physical measures to make properties more efficient. Significant investment has resulted in the installation of energy efficient boilers, double glazed windows and insulation.

Halton Housing Trust has developed a three year Financial Inclusion Strategy which supports advice on energy rates, insurance and budgeting.

The New Shoots project provides low cost fruit and vegetables to enable families living in poverty to access fresh food.

Active promotion of credit unions to help families to avoid loan sharks as their services can contribute to families becoming trapped in poverty.

Environmental Health undertake inspections of rented properties to ensure that minimum housing standards are met. Landlords must rectify any issues raised before properties are let. Ensuring that minimum standards are adhered to has a major influence on the health of children and families.

Ensuring that families with a disabled adult or a disabled child have access to social housing. Unsuitable housing affects the whole of family life and can affect health and community inclusion.

Other

Services active in this area include - Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development Department and Risk and Emergency Planning

By working with large employers the Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development Department help to manage and encourage inward investment in Halton, creating new job opportunities in the Borough.

By developing rigorous plans, potential risks that could lead to children and families falling into poverty, such as becoming homeless following severe weather events, are managed.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

The services listed in this section represent a snap shot of provision towards the end of 2010. We recognise that the unprecedented public sector budget cuts which are taking effect in 2011/12 and will continue for at least four years, will threaten some of the services offered. Halton Borough Council has taken a conscious decision to try to protect front line services and the will to tackle poverty remains strong amongst partners too. We aim to continue to make in roads into poverty within the Borough in spite of the difficult economic climate.

SECTION FOUR: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The needs assessment 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.

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.

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 st Vote
<i>Family aspirations</i>	11
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 nd Vote
<i>Benefit dependency</i>	9
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 st Vote
Cultural challenge/aspirations	7
Early intervention	7
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 nd Vote
Whole family approach (holistic)	6
Flexible single point of access	6
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 st Vote
<i>Mapping service user journeys to future provision</i>	7
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 nd Vote
<i>Info sharing between partners</i>	8
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 Action 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 Region⁵.

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

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

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 will inform the Action Plan.

⁵ 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

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 and skills gaps that 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 raising 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. The interim report was published in January 2011 and highlights the importance of early intervention in improving children's and ultimately adults lives. The report particularly focuses on the 0-3 age group as children's brains develop from 25% to 80% of their full capacity during this period.

Summary of key priorities

In developing this Strategy we have taken account of local needs, consulted with local stakeholders and 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:

Key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton

- Low family 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 raising aspirations

- Early intervention

- Whole family approach

- Providing a single point of access to support services

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 FIVE: IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

Governance

In late 2010 the Halton Local Strategic Partnership established the Halton Child & Family Poverty Group to oversee the development and implementation of the Strategy.

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 Appendix 'x'

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 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 Action 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 also plans relating to employment, skills, housing, transport, health inequalities and safer communities.*
- f) *Report 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 our communities and listened to the views and suggestions of as many families and young people of 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, with an acceptance that only by adopting a sustained 'whole family' approach will we succeed.

Both 'providers' and 'consumers' of key services recognise that in the current difficult financial environment we need to make sure that scarce resources are targeted at those in

greatest need if we are to meet the challenge of delivering sustained progress towards eradicating child and family poverty in Halton.

Therefore it is proposed to consult further with providers and service users during the development of the Action Plan during Spring 2011.

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 shows 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'.

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 halting the development of a problem which is already evident.

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 Section 3 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 & Family Poverty Strategy with key plans and strategies

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



The Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy has been prepared in the context of other key local plans and strategies. It does not stand alone in isolation; it 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

Action Plan

The issues that this strategy commits us to tackle are long term, difficult ones. It may take several years for the work underway to make a lasting impact. Early intervention and prevention in health is a prime example. It can take several years of 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.

The long time scales, 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, an initial twelve month Action Plan will be developed in Spring 2011. It will set out our starting point and agreed progress targets to help us to 'kick start' the delivery on the priorities set-out in this strategy. It is intended that the Action Plan is updated annually up to the next needs assessment in 2013 to keep pace with changes in external legislative, financial and organisational priorities and resources.

In keeping with this strategy, we will develop the Action Plan in consultation with the LCR partners to ensure that our local actions contribute to reducing Child and Family Poverty across the Region. This will include identifying some shared priority areas which can be monitored to establish Regional progress.

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 done 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.

USEFUL LINKS

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

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

Appendix 1 Halton's Child and Family Needs Assessment

Halton's Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment



The front cover image shows visual minutes that were recorded at Halton's Child and Family Poverty Partner Consultation Event (July 2010)

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1. Executive Summary (to be drafted by CRES team)

Two page summary to be written last]

2. Introduction

Purpose of this document

In order to address child and family poverty we need to understand the extent and nature of needs in Halton. This requires an in depth analysis of robust data and research.

Halton Borough Council's (HBC) first Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment draws heavily on both quantitative and qualitative intelligence, as well as information from other local needs assessments to provide a comprehensive picture of poverty in Halton. The needs assessment will be used to determine clear priorities for our local Child and Family Poverty Strategy and provide the foundations for strategic investment.

This Local Needs Assessment forms part of a wider Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment for the Liverpool City Region (LCR). The recommendation to produce a coordinated Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment for the Liverpool City Region was made in the LCR analysis report - [A Brighter Future: Working Together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty](#) (July 2010). This analysis report was the first step towards a crosscutting approach to addressing the causes and consequences of child and family poverty across the City Region.

Halton's Response to Child and Family Poverty

The Halton Strategic Partnership is fully committed to eradicating child poverty in line with the National targets. Child and family poverty affects everybody in Halton either directly or indirectly, so it is in everybody's interests to tackle it. Tackling poverty requires a concerted effort by all partners, particularly where generations of families have been caught in poverty. Eradicating child and family poverty requires partnership working and as a result a wide range of activities can have an indirect affect on it. However the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) has a direct link with eradicating poverty. In recognition of this it is a requirement that the next SCS, which will be launched in 2011, supports the work of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy.

On a LCR basis, Halton shares a commitment to working with partner Local Authorities to improve the life chance of children and families across the LCR and to realise the government's ambition to eradicate poverty by 2020. LCR partners recognise that local areas experience common cross-boundary issues and there is much to be gained by working in partnership. The Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Framework is the key mechanism for joining up work across the city region, both strategically and in terms of delivery. A key element of the Framework is the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment; of which this local needs assessment forms part of.

3. Background

Why do we need a child and family poverty needs assessment?

The requirement for Local Authorities to produce a child poverty needs assessment was introduced by the Child Poverty Act (2010). HBC and LCR partners took the decision to broaden the assessment to cover 'child and family' poverty in acknowledgment that poverty impacts on entire families.

Child Poverty Act

The Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent on the 25th March 2010. This was a landmark occasion for the child poverty agenda as it enshrined in law the Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The Act also has important implications for the way in which Local Authorities are required to address child poverty.

Main requirements of the Act for Local Authorities

Part 2 of the Act places a number of duties on Local Authorities and other local delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty, specific duties include:

Local Child Poverty Needs Assessment - Local Authorities must make arrangements to prepare, publish and keep under review a local child poverty needs assessment.

Joint Child Poverty Strategy - Local joint child poverty strategies must be developed to set out the measures partners propose to take for the purpose of reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty.

Cooperation to reduce Child Poverty - Promotes cooperation between local partners with a view to mitigating the effects of child poverty. Local Authorities can provide staff, goods, services, accommodation or other resources, or the creation of a pooled fund amongst partners, to ensure the requirements of the act are met.

Sustainable Community Strategy – The Act also requires responsible local authorities to take their responsibilities to tackle child poverty into account when preparing or revising their Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Coalition Government's Approach

Crucially, the Child Poverty Act and the commitment to ending child poverty by 2020 has cross-party support. Since coming into power, the Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition has pledged to maintain the 2020 goal and retain the Part 2 duties for local authorities. However the Coalition Government will not issue formal statutory guidance on Part 2 of the Act or lay regulations for local child poverty needs assessments, this means local areas have more flexibility to decide how best to respond to the Child Poverty Act based on local strengths and priorities.

The Coalition Government's approach to tackling child and family poverty is still emerging, however the view of senior politicians remains that for many work is the best route out of poverty.

Emerging Policy Initiatives

The following national policy initiatives and fiscal changes could have a major impact on our local child and family poverty strategy and will be closely monitored over the coming months:

Frank Field's Review of Poverty and Life Chances – Labour MP for Birkenhead, Frank Field has been commissioned to undertake an independent review of poverty. The findings will be published in December 2010 and will include recommendations on life chances and measurements of poverty. The Liverpool City Region has secured strong links with the independent review, as Frank Field has been confirmed as the Chair of the Liverpool City Region and Family Poverty Commission (refer to section 8.2 for further details).

National Child Poverty Strategy –As set out by the Child Poverty Act, the Government will publish the first National Child Poverty Strategy by March 2011. The strategy will form the government's response to Frank Field's Review of Poverty and Life Chances.

Graham Allen's Review on Early Intervention – The independent review being undertaken by MP Graham Allen focuses on how early intervention projects can improve the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children. It is expected to conclude at the end of April 2011 (an interim report will be issued in January 2010)

The National Child Poverty Commission – The Child Poverty Act commits the government to establishing a National Commission to provide expert advice on child poverty strategies. An immediate action of the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Commission will be to establish links with the National Commission to help ensure that that the LCR voice is heard by central government, MPs and other key stakeholders.

Welfare to Work Reforms – the welfare system is undergoing radical reforms to ensure that it pays to be in work. Key elements of this approach include increasing the conditionality of out of work benefits and improving the incentives to work.

Increase in benefit conditionality - In summary, those who can work have the responsibility to equip themselves to find employment. Those who refuse to join a return to work programme will lose the right to claim out of work benefits until they do and people who refuse to accept reasonable job offers could lose the right to claim out of work benefits for three years.

The reforms also involve significant changes to the financial support received by lone parents. From 25 October 2010 some lone parents receiving income support will no longer be entitled to this benefit when their youngest child reaches 7 years old if they are solely claiming income support because they are a lone parent.

- Incentives to work - From October 2010 the national minimum wage will rise from £5.80 to £5.93. People aged 21 will also benefit from the top rate (which was previously only compulsory for workers aged 22 or over) and there are also corresponding increases for younger workers. The government has also announced a single universal credit system which

will replace all other out of work and in work benefits. A single means test will be applied which intends to ensure that everyone will be financially better off in employment. The change will be phased in over two Parliaments.

These reforms, combined with the economic downturn, means that out of work parents will need strong support systems to find and secure sustainable 'family friendly' employment.

Impact of Housing Benefit Reductions – Major reforms to housing benefit were announced in the Emergency Budget (June 2010) which will affect the entitlements of tenants in social and private sector accommodation. The headline changes include:

- Local Housing Allowance will be capped at £250 for a one-bedroom property and £400 for a home of four or more bedrooms (April 2011)
- non-dependents deductions are to be increased (April 2011)
- the Consumer Price Index will be used rather than the higher Retail Price Index to calculate housing benefit uprating. This means benefit increases will lag behind inflation (April 2011)
- Housing Benefit will be cut by 10% for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance for more than one year (April 2013)
- social housing tenants who are deemed to be occupying a property too large for their needs will have their benefit reduced (April 2013).

These reductions will have significant implications for unemployed and low paid working parents who depend on housing benefit to pay their rent. It is also reported¹ that linking housing benefit to the lower CPI could lead to their being no private sector rent cheap enough to be paid for by housing benefit in England. This will impact on local authorities seeking to discharge homelessness duties to the private sector.

Equality Act 2010 - The Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 8 April 2010 and the greater part of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act intends to provide a new cross-cutting legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Equality Act targets discrimination in the work place and is an important step towards closing the gender pay gap; if teamed with flexible working hours and sufficient childcare this could help to lift many families out of 'in-work' poverty. The act also includes provisions to tackle discrimination experienced by people with disabilities; this is strongly welcomed as children with disabled parents face a significantly higher risk of living in poverty than those of non-disabled parents. The government is currently still considering a number of aspects of the Act, not all of which may be brought to force. Areas still being discussed include the socio-economic duty on public authorities.

Comprehensive Spending Review - The Comprehensive Spending review (October 2010) contained an outline of the Coalition Government's Spending

¹ Chartered Institute of Housing

Plans to 2014-2015. The announcements made by the Coalition Government include changes to the provision of welfare benefits and services which support low income families. Important announcements that have implications for children and families in poverty include:

- It was confirmed that a capping system will be established to ensure that no workless family will receive more in welfare benefits than the take home pay of the average working household.
- Sure Start services will be protected in cash terms. It will be refocused on its original purpose of improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and extending 15 hours a week of early years education and care to all disadvantaged two year olds from 2012-13
- From 2011-2012 the percentage of childcare costs that low income families can claim through the childcare element of the working tax credit will be reduced from 80% to 70%
- The Education Maintenance Allowance will be refocused the most deprived areas.
- Child Benefit payments will no longer be made to higher-rate tax payers from 2013. Although this decision does not affect low income households, there are concerns that it could lead to an increase in levels of child poverty. This is because of the cumulative impact of housing benefit reductions, reductions in child tax credit and an increase in working hours for parents to be eligible for working tax credit

The review also set out plans to reduce local government funding by 28% which will affect the services provided by councils to support residents. However, it will not be until the Local Government Settlement is released in December when local authorities will know the full detail around future funding.

Against this changing policy background and tightening fiscal environment it makes sense that we build on our strong local and city region partnerships and join together to address the child and family poverty agenda.

Liverpool City Region's Commitment to Tackling Child and Family Poverty

The Liverpool City Region Chief Executives, City Region Cabinet and City Employment Strategy Board are fully committed to improving the life chances of children and families and the government's ambition to eradicate child poverty by 2020. They identified tackling Child and Family Poverty as one of their key priorities and fully endorsed the development of the LCR Child and Family Poverty Framework. An important element of the framework is the LCR Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment.

Why do we need a LCR wide Child and Poverty Needs Assessment?

Child and family poverty is symptomatic of many factors that link to labour market dynamics. Given that the LCR is a functional economic area, it would have proved extremely difficult for local areas to produce cogent needs assessments for their district in isolation. It was therefore recommended that a City Region wide assessment be developed to provide the most realistic basis for making progress in tackling poverty.

Overview of LCR Needs Assessment

The LCR Needs Assessment consists of an overarching city region child and family needs assessment which examines cross boundary drivers of poverty and six supporting local authority needs assessments that explore issues at borough and neighbourhood level.

Appendix one illustrates the relationship between the local and city region child and family poverty needs assessment with other key local, city region and national strategies.

Halton's Approach to Tackling Child and Family Poverty

Halton's Strategic Partnership is committed to eradicating child poverty inline with the national goals. The detail of how we intend to do this is contained in the Halton Child and Family Poverty Strategy. The Strategy has been developed with the findings of this Needs Assessment as the building blocks to ensure that we fully understand the scale and scope of the problem in Halton.

We have chosen to undertake this Needs Assessment in cooperation with the LCR partners in recognition of the fact that tackling persistent poverty requires an understanding of the problem in the wider sub-region.

The Strategy is built on the premise that paid employment is one of the best ways out of poverty so the focus is on supporting residents into employment through maximising educational opportunities and providing support to access employment.

The Strategy also recognises that paid employment isn't a guaranteed route out of poverty so it also focuses on ensuring that residents get the maximum support from the benefits system that they are entitled to.

4. Local context

Introduction

Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy outlines a long-term vision for bringing about sustainable improvement to our Borough and has been developed and agreed by Halton Strategic Partnership. Sustainability is about balance: meeting the social, environmental and economic needs of today without compromising the needs of the communities of tomorrow.

This Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton (2011 – 2026) builds on our previous community strategy published in 2006. We have prepared it with input from our local community, partners and voluntary sector and detailed analysis of the Borough, reported in the 'State of the Borough Report'. It sets out the vision and priorities for Halton to 2026 and provides an important focal point for the future well-being of the Borough. Its aim is not to identify every issue affecting the Borough, but to focus on major ones which, if addressed, would make a real difference. It will work as a living document which can be adapted to reflect changing needs, achievements and new challenges.

A key purpose of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to ensure that the resources available to the partnership are targeted and used effectively to bring about improvements in the borough. This means:

- Being clear and agreeing about what we need to achieve so we are all pulling in the same direction;
- Maximising the funding we can generate or draw in to benefit Halton and developing our own resources and the capacity to help ourselves;
- Co-operating to be more effective, cutting out duplication and waste, and pooling the budgets, knowledge and efforts of different organisations and groups where this makes sense;
- Listening and responding to what matters most to people locally;
- Targeting what we do to where it can make most difference;
- Doing the kind of things that experience has shown will really work and be successful;
- Checking on progress, letting people know how we are doing, and adjusting where necessary to keep on track.

A general overview of conditions in the Borough

Local Population

Halton is one of six local authorities making up the Liverpool City Region – the natural economic area or labour market. The Borough has a population of 118,700 people occupying 54,000 households.

Since 2001, the population of Halton has increased steadily to its current estimate of 118,700 (2009). The total population rose from an estimate of 118,500 in 2008; this rise was found in the Older People age-range (65+). This group went from 16,800 in 2008 to 17,100 in 2009. While the 0-15 and working age populations stayed the same.

The Halton population profile matches the general shape of that for England & Wales. A few key points, showing comparisons with the England & Wales profile, are highlighted below:

Halton has a higher proportion of:

- Children and Young People, aged 1-24
- Older working age, aged 45-59

Halton has a lower proportion of:

- Younger working age, aged 25-44
- Older People, aged over 60

In the long term (2008-2023), Halton's population is projected to grow by 4% from 118,500 to 122,900. This is still lower than the North West region which is projected to grow by 5% and nationally which is projected to grow by 11%. In Halton, younger people (0-14 year olds) are projected to grow by 7%, working age (15-64 year olds) are projected to decline by 6% with the older people age group (65+) projected to grow by 43% from 16,900 in 2008 to 24,200 in 2023.

Following national and regional trends, Halton's population continues to age with older people making up an increasing proportion of the population. The growth in older people will increase the demands for both formal and informal support. While small decreases in the working age population mean there are fewer people to provide and pay for this additional support.

There are a number of other notable characteristics of the borough's resident population:

Notable Characteristics

- About 96% of Halton residents are 'White British'. This is comparable with the other districts in Merseyside except for Liverpool, where the figure is closer to 88%
- Halton has a higher than average proportion of lone parent households (1 in 10 households), which are particularly concentrated in Halton Lea, Norton South and Windmill Hill
- The proportion of single person households in Halton is lower than average

Local Economic Overview

The Jobs Market

There are five businesses located within Halton which employ over 1,000 people, these are; Halton Borough Council, Community Integrated Care, Warrington & Halton Hospital, O2 (UK) Ltd and Ineos Chlor vinyls.

Halton has three town centres (Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea) and the quality and image of these shopping centres play an important role in securing economic growth and prosperity.

Widnes is the largest of the three town centres containing approximately half a million square feet of retail floorspace in over 350 separate units and boasts both an indoor and an outdoor market.

Halton Lea is the second largest (behind Widnes) of the three town centres and includes a custom built elevated covered shopping mall with 4 dedicated multi storey car parks (offering 1,950 free spaces). The enclosed centre contains approximately 51,000 square metres of floorspace on two levels, comprising a main shopping level and a balconied floor.

Runcorn Old Town is the smallest of the three town centres being about a quarter the size of Widnes or Halton Lea, comprising approximately 14,000 Sq.M. (150,000 Sq.Ft.) of retail floorspace in over 160 separate units.

Manufacturing accounts for around 15% of jobs located in Halton, this is more than the national level of 10%.

Part-time employment is slightly lower than the national average. Self employment is low but is becoming increasingly important as a work option.

Notable numbers

- Job density (the ratio of total jobs in an area compared to the number of working-age residents) is slightly lower in Halton at 0.75 compared to 0.79 nationally.
- Public sector jobs accounts for 15%, compared with 20% nationally

Qualifications and Skills

The education and skills base of the population is relatively weak. 16.8% of working-age residents do not hold any qualifications; higher than the national rate of 12.3%. Many local businesses rely more on people who commute from outside the Borough who have higher skills and qualifications. The impacts of this are seen in wage levels, the average weekly full-time wage for a Halton resident is £438 which is £58 below the national average. In comparison, the average weekly full-time wage for people working in Halton (not necessarily a Halton resident) is £482.

Notable numbers

- At 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.

Working Age Benefits

Overall 'out of work' benefits are high at 20% in Halton compared to 13% nationally. Entrenched benefit dependency is reflected in particularly high numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Employment Support Allowance (ESA) for two or more years; making the task of getting people into work more difficult. Lone Parent Benefit claimants and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants are also higher than nationally.

Notable numbers

- About 11% of working age people claim Incapacity Benefits/ESA (8,530 people) compared with 6.3% nationally; with 78% of all IB claimants claiming for 2 years or more.
- Halton's JSA claimant level is 5% of the working age population compared to 3.5% nationally.
- Halton's Lone Parent Benefits claimant level is 2.8% of the working age population compared to 1.8% nationally.

Financial Outlook

Looking to the future, for our residents there is a stark economic reality that, if the recession deepens, then many more are vulnerable and not just people in less deprived areas; if it improves, then recovery is likely to take longer as there will be fierce competition for jobs including those who are skilled and have recently been made redundant.

In purely financial terms, inflationary pressures, and the rise in VAT will have a disproportionate impact on those with lower incomes. For those with mortgages, interest rates rising even to 2% or 3% (historically very low) from the current 0.5% rate could lead to even greater difficulty.

Deprivation

As a result of its industrial legacy, particularly from the chemical industries, Halton has inherited a number of physical, environmental and social problems. We have been working to resolve these issues ever since the borough was formed in 1974.

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems more associated with its urban neighbours on Merseyside. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2007 is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used. It shows for example that overall, Halton is ranked 30th nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived), which is third highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 10th highest in the North West, although this is an improvement on being fifth highest in 2004. Other authorities, St Helens (47th), Wirral (60th) and Sefton (83rd), are all less deprived compared to Halton.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2007 suggests that deprivation has improved in the borough, since ranking 21st in 2004 there has been a decrease in 2007 to the 30th most deprived Authority in England. The proportion of Halton's population in the top category (i.e. the top 20% of super output areas) has also decreased from 50% in 2004 to 47% in 2007. However, there is still room for improvement. Halton's concentration of deprivation has improved from 20th worst in England in 2004 to 27th in 2007. Concentration is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. Of England's 975 'Super Output Areas', which form the top 3% most deprived areas within England, eight are situated in Halton. The most deprived neighbourhood in Halton is ranked 306th out of 32,482 and is situated in Central Runcorn. Much has been done but clearly there is still much to do.

The category that contains the largest percentage of Halton's households is defined by ACORN as 'hard-pressed', containing 37% of Halton's households. According to the ACORN definition this is the category that contains the poorest areas of the UK. These people are experiencing the most difficult social and economic conditions in the whole country. However, Halton also has a high percentage (27%) classed as "comfortably off". Again according to the ACORN profile these are well educated and mostly prosperous people living in our major towns. These people have a cosmopolitan outlook and enjoy their urban lifestyle.

Liverpool City Region Context

Halton's local economy is deeply interconnected with the wider Liverpool City Region economic area. The Liverpool City Region has a population of 1.5m covering the boroughs of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. Around 90% of residents live and work in the City Region; this is one of the most contained employment markets in the country².

Economic activity is widely spread across the Liverpool City Region:

² LCR Employment and Skills Strategy and Commissioning Framework

- Liverpool as the commercial, cultural and transport hub and a world-class city for business and knowledge.
- Sefton as the base of the primary port at Seaforth and the classic tourist resort of Southport.
- Halton has chemicals and the science and technology base of Daresbury, together with a significant logistics and distribution base for the City Region at 3MG.
- Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral provide key business locations for advanced manufacturing and logistics for the City Region.

It is important to highlight that on many economic indicators LCR has enjoyed an absolute improvement over 5 years; however the position on LCR's performance relative to England is more mixed.

Notable numbers

If LCR mirrored the England average currently the region would have:

- 46,000 less people without any qualifications
- 26,400 more people with a level 2 qualification (equivalent to 5 GCSEs)
- 43,800 more people with a level 4 qualification (equivalent to a Degree);
- In addition if LCR met the Governments 80% employment rate it would need to move an additional 120,000 more people into work

Impact of public sector spending reductions

The public sector is a major employer in the LCR accounting for around 200,000 jobs and making up a particularly large percentage of employment in Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral. Approximately 35% of LCR's jobs are in public administration, education or health, which is markedly higher than the wider economic hinterland's.

Given this reliance on public sector, it is anticipated that the national reductions in public expenditure will have a significant impact on LCR employment and consequently child and family poverty rates. A recent national study by Experian³ has found that all six LCR areas are amongst the 20% least resilient districts to economic shocks, such as public sector cuts.

³ Local Economic Resilience, Experian (2010)

5. Why child and family poverty matters

Children growing up in poverty are deprived of a fair start in life. A child from a poor family is:

- More likely to experience unsafe environments
- More likely to suffer social isolation
- More likely to experience a wide range of health inequalities
- More likely to suffer from poverty of aspiration
- Less likely to achieve their academic potential
- Less likely to gain access to the services designed to meet their needs

These early inequalities often continue into later life and limit children's chances of achieving economic wellbeing and escaping poverty.

The intergenerational cycle of poverty is not just damaging to the lives of children and families it is detrimental to society as a whole. It undermines our wider efforts to achieve sustainable and cohesive communities through our key partnership strategies.

Notable numbers

- Children growing up in poverty are 37 times more likely to die as a result of exposure to smoke, fire and flames
- Children in disadvantaged families are three times as likely to suffer mental health disorders
- Children in poverty are twice as likely to be homeless or trapped in bad housing
- Nearly one in five girls and more than one in four boys in receipt of free school meals (a key poverty indicator) leave school without at least five GCSEs
- Paid work is not on its own, a guarantee of being free of poverty. Over half the children in poverty are in households where one or more parent is in full-time work.

Poverty also has significant resource implications for the public sector. Tangible costs include those of remedial services and the foregone taxes and benefits resulting from the reduced future employment and earning prospects of those who grow up poor.

A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008) estimates that child poverty costs the public sector around £12 billion a year. Of this approximately 60 per cent funds personal social services, school education and police and criminal justice.

Whilst calculations of this nature cannot be exact the estimates serve to highlight the growing urgency to address child and family poverty collectively and particularly given the increasing pressures on public finances.

6. Partners involved in tackling child and family poverty

No individual service or organisation can eradicate poverty by working alone. Child and family poverty is a complex issue that requires a multiagency response.

The Child Poverty Act, names several partners that have a statutory duty to cooperate and support efforts to reduce poverty, these are:

- The district authorities (other than the local authority) who deliver key services including housing benefits and securing local facilities for families
- Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities
- Job Centre Plus
- The Police, Youth Offending Service and Probation Trusts
- Transport Authorities

We recognise that this not an exhaustive list and there are additional key partners that can help us to reduce and respond to child and family poverty. Our approach to tackling child and family poverty to date has involved a wide spectrum of public services, the private sector, community and voluntary organisations and children and families. Some of the engagement activities are described below:

A Brighter Future – Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Consultation Event for Halton

In July 2010 a consultation event was undertaken with local partners in Halton to gain an understanding of the impact of child and family poverty. Group discussions were held to gain an insight into the perceived barriers and opportunities to tackling child and family poverty locally and across the LCR.

Appendix 1 provides a detailed list of the partners we are engaged with on this agenda and how they are involved. It also identifies partners that we need to work with in the future.

7. What does child and family poverty look like in Halton?

This section of Halton's child and family poverty needs assessment sets out the main evidence of the depth and spread of poverty in the Borough based on quantitative data, alongside the qualitative intelligence that highlights the nature of the causes and consequences of poverty.

A large volume of data has been considered in preparing this assessment; however, much of the data often reinforces or duplicates other intelligence, so to include all of it might only serve to obscure the key messages. More detail is available in the [State of the Borough](#) document or on request from the Research team; Research@halton.gov.uk

For example, data on Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility reflects patterns of benefits dependency – patterns that are described using DWP data in some detail in this section - so data on FSM itself will not be included here. Issues around social housing and ethnicity are also not covered extensively here, but relevant data can be found in the State of the Borough.

Social housing in Halton is of high quality in terms of all official measures of liveability, and therefore the housing itself may be considered to have little impact on child and family poverty. The location of a property, however, will be much more significant, but that is again reflected in the other data analysis and maps included here.

In terms of ethnicity, a national or regional analysis might suggest that ethnic minority groups are at greater risk of poverty, but this becomes more complex when examining local areas. For example, in Halton, where a small proportion of the population are in BME groups (around 2.5%), there is no evidence that they are more likely to experience low or poverty-level incomes or higher levels of worklessness than any other group. Anecdotal evidence suggests the contrary – many in the local Asian community are known to be employed in the medical professions, for example. Even in thriving BME families, cultural factors – diet, for example - may still have an impact on general child wellbeing. These issues require greater study before inclusion in the assessment.

Some data has specifically been excluded from this analysis, namely data from:

- The 2001 Census – This reflects conditions 10 years ago.
- The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 – Whilst published in 2007, much the data used to compile this is now 5 years old, and it also uses 2001 Census data.
- The Child Wellbeing Index 2009 – Again whilst published in January 2009, the data used to compile this is predominantly from 2005 and from the 2001 Census.
- The 2008 Place Survey – The methodology prescribed for this survey resulted in heavy structural bias towards older age groups in the population. As a reflection of this, weighted results calculated to remove

this bias were sometimes as much as 12% points different from the un-weighted results.

These data sources are extremely useful when contemporary, but at the moment they represent significant intelligence gaps. The next Census is of course due to take place in March 2011. The next IMD refresh has been subject to national consultation and it is not yet clear if an IMD 2010 will be developed. The Place Survey has been cancelled and, while there are some discussions across the City Region about a potential alternative to this, there are no central government plans. The Child Wellbeing Index was developed in response to consultation on the IMD 2007 and was in many ways experimental. There are no clear plans to develop it further.

New data used in this assessment

Given the weaknesses in the data sources referred to above, it is necessary to seek alternatives that are equally comprehensive, comparable at national, regional and sub-regional level, reliable, and as contemporary as possible. In addition to generally available data from central government sources, three key data sets have been used in this assessment:

- **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) data on out-of-work benefits claimants;** this data relates specifically to benefits dependency, its primary purpose is to describe the distribution of poverty, as opposed to wider 'wellbeing'.
- **Halton Vitality Index;** The Halton Vitality Index (HVI) has been developed by the Council's Research & Intelligence Unit to enable monitoring of deprivation at a neighbourhood level to take place and to assess whether the gap is narrowing across the borough.
- **Experian Economic Resilience Index;** this has been recently produced by Experian for the BBC, and is being used in this assessment to provide some evidence about the impact of the recession and subsequent government measures.

The DWP measure of child poverty

The DWP currently defines child poverty in terms of the proportion of dependent children in a Local Authority who live in households whose equivalised income is below 60% of the contemporary national median. This level of income is experienced by many who are actually in work, so both in-work and out-of-work poverty are equally important.

Data has recently been released by Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC) illustrating the number of children in households experiencing relative poverty, based on the above definition. This data is available at Lower Super Output Area level. There are 79 SOAs in Halton, each covering around 1,600 residents.

There now exists three years of data – 2006-2008 - providing an opportunity to look at the change in poverty over that period in the run up to the global financial crisis and subsequent national recession. Clearly, poverty is not likely to have

improved since then. The latest data, 2008, Halton had 26.4% of children living in poverty. This equated to 6,550 children.

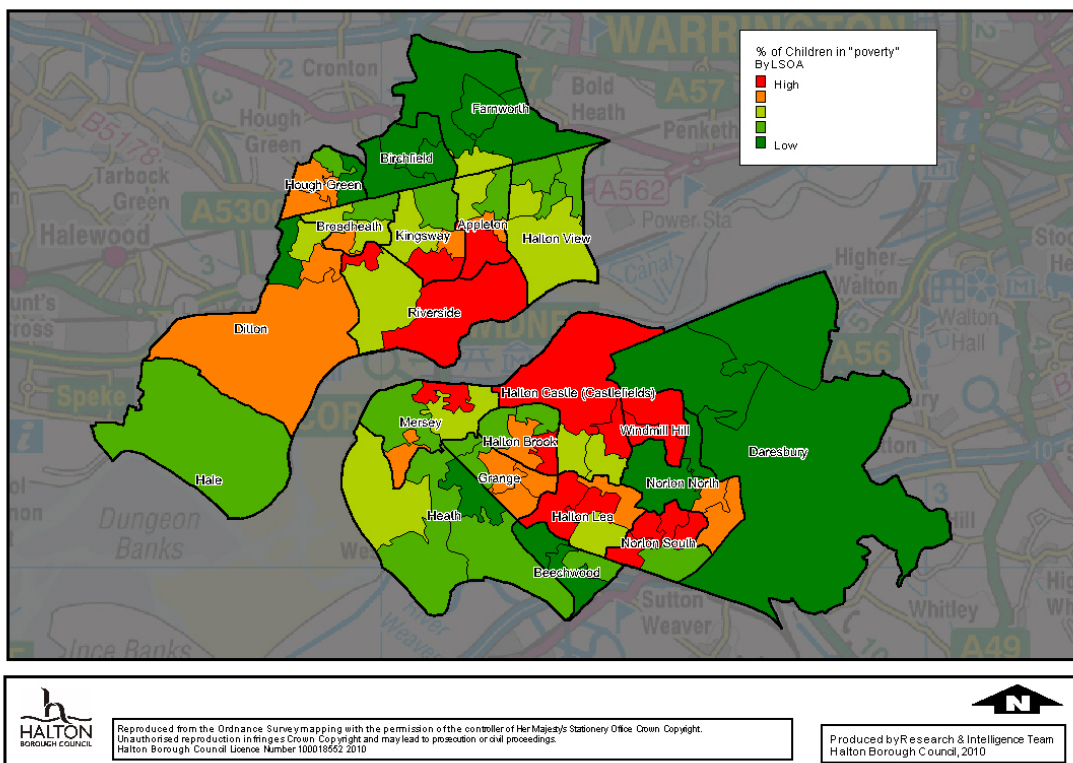
% of Children (under 16) in "Poverty" 2006-2008

District	2006	2007	2008
Halton	27.1%	26.7%	26.4%
Knowsley	34.6%	35.0%	33.8%
Liverpool	36.7%	37.1%	35.6%
Sefton	25.3%	25.7%	25.4%
St Helens	21.1%	21.2%	20.7%
Wirral	25.0%	25.5%	25.2%
England	21.8%	22.4%	21.6%

Source: Her Majesties Revenue and Customs Data

The map below shows the data at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA).

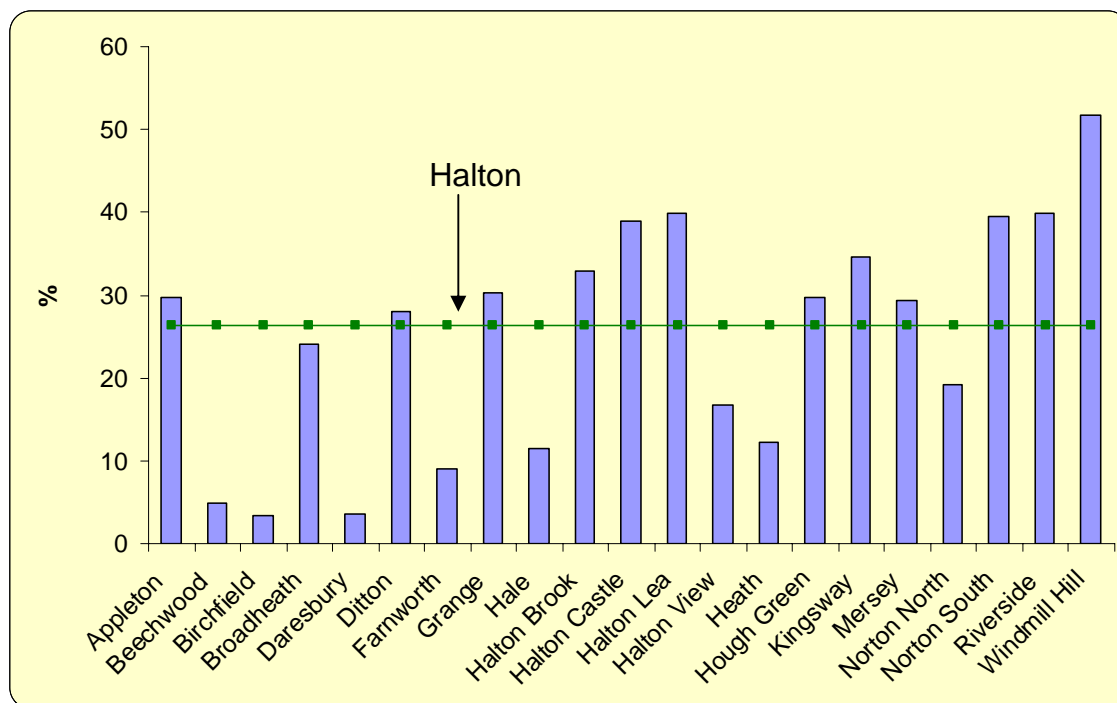
% of children in poverty by LSOA (2008)



Source: Her Majesties Revenue and Customs Data

The chart below shows the data by ward comparing it to the Halton overall figure. 12 of the 21 wards in Halton have a higher figure than the Borough overall. The ward with the highest percentage of children in “poverty” is Windmill Hill ward where over 50% of children are living in “poverty”.

% of children in poverty by ward (2008)



Source: Her Majesties Revenue and Customs Data

The table below compares the number of children (under 16) living in “poverty” by “in work” and “out of work” for 2008.

In work and out of work “poverty” 2008

District	Out of work	In work
Halton	5,520	1,030
Knowsley	9,265	1,165
Liverpool	24,695	3,295
Sefton	6,980	1,300
St Helens	8,155	1,670
Wirral	12,650	2,240

Source: Her Majesties Revenue and Customs Data: “Out of work” families are classed as children living in Income Support/Job Seekers Allowance families. “In work” are children living in families claiming child tax credit & working tax credit or child tax credit only with an income <60% median income.

The number of children in benefit recipient families (not necessarily conforming to the DWP Child Poverty indicator) has been calculated separated by the

HMRC. In 2008-09, Halton had 7,550 children in households claiming out-of-work benefits and 7,480 children in households claiming in-work benefits.

Key Messages

Whilst it remains a significant issue in Halton, the number of families experiencing both in-work poverty and out of work poverty in Halton has reduced since 2006.

In overall terms, more neighbourhoods experienced a decrease in poverty during 2006-08 than an increase, although for many neighbourhoods' it remains a significant issue.

Halton Vitality Index

The Halton Vitality Index (HVI) has been developed by the Council's Research & Intelligence Unit to enable monitoring of deprivation at a neighbourhood level to take place and to assess whether the gap is narrowing across the borough. It's not been developed to replace the Index of Multiple Deprivation or to be compared to it but to offer a more up to date monitoring tool given the delay in updating the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It should also be noted that the data used to inform the IMD 2007 was largely based on 2005 data.

The table below shows the 13 indicators that have been used to produce the HVI 2010. The indicators were chosen due to the following reasons:

- Aim to include a limited number of indicators covering a range of relevant issues
- Data available at significant level to enable small area - Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) - comparisons
- The data had to be easily available to the Research & Intelligence unit
- The index should be updated and reported at least annually

Each of the 13 indicators used are standardised, which results in each indicator having an average score of 10. The scores are added together to produce an overall score, therefore an 'average' area has a score of 130. A more detailed methodology is available from research@halton.gov.uk.

Details of the 13 indicators used in the Halton Vitality Index

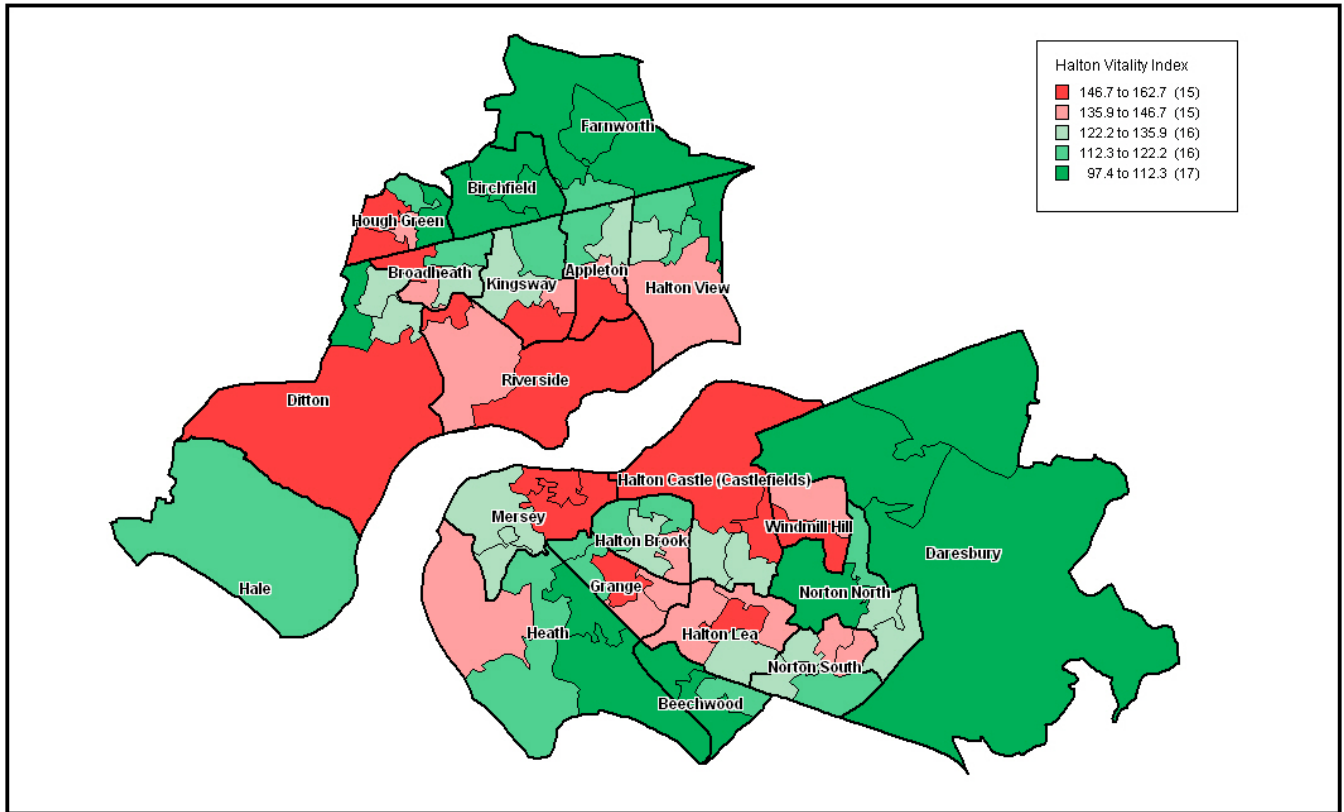
Theme	Data	Definition	Source
Housing	Relative House Price	Using average house price of LSOA*, with Halton average as a base (Halton=100)	Land Registry
	Council Tax Band A	% of properties within Council Tax Band A	Council Tax Register
Unemployment & Income	Unemployment rate	% working age pop claiming JSA (average of last 12 months JSA claimant counts) - rolling 12 months data	Nomis
	Working Age Benefit Recipients	% working age pop receiving key benefits ¹ (average of last 4 quarters' counts) - rolling 12 months data	Nomis
Community Safety	Burglaries by households	No of burglaries in households crimes as a rate per 1,000 households - rolling 12 months data	Co-Star Cheshire Police
	Anti-Social behaviour	No of ASB incidents as a rate per 1,000 population - rolling 12 months data	Co-Star Cheshire Police
Education	GCSE 5+ A*-C inc English and Maths	% of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE's at grades A* to C including English and Maths	HBC
	NEET	% 16-18 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs)	Connexions
Health	People needing care	% of total pop claiming Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance (average of last 4 quarters' counts) - rolling 12 months data	Dept Work & Pensions
	Standard Mortality Ratio	Standard Mortality Ratio (Halton=100)	Halton & St Helens PCT
Sustainable Communities	Long-term vacancy	% households vacant for more than 6 months	Council Tax Register
	Physical environment	No. of criminal damage to dwelling crimes plus no. of deliberate fires as a rate per 1,000 households - rolling 12 months data	Co-Star / Cheshire Fire
	Population change	% total population change from previous years estimate to latest years estimate	ONS


**The results of the HVI will be available at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) geography. These are areas that are smaller than wards and tend to have a population of around 1,600. There are 79 in Halton.*

¹*Key benefits include Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (Incapacity Benefit), Lone Parents and Others on income related benefits.*


The map shows the scores for the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) across Halton. The red areas are the more deprived areas according to the HVI whilst the dark green areas are the least deprived.

Halton Vitality Index, May 2010 scores for LSOAs in Halton





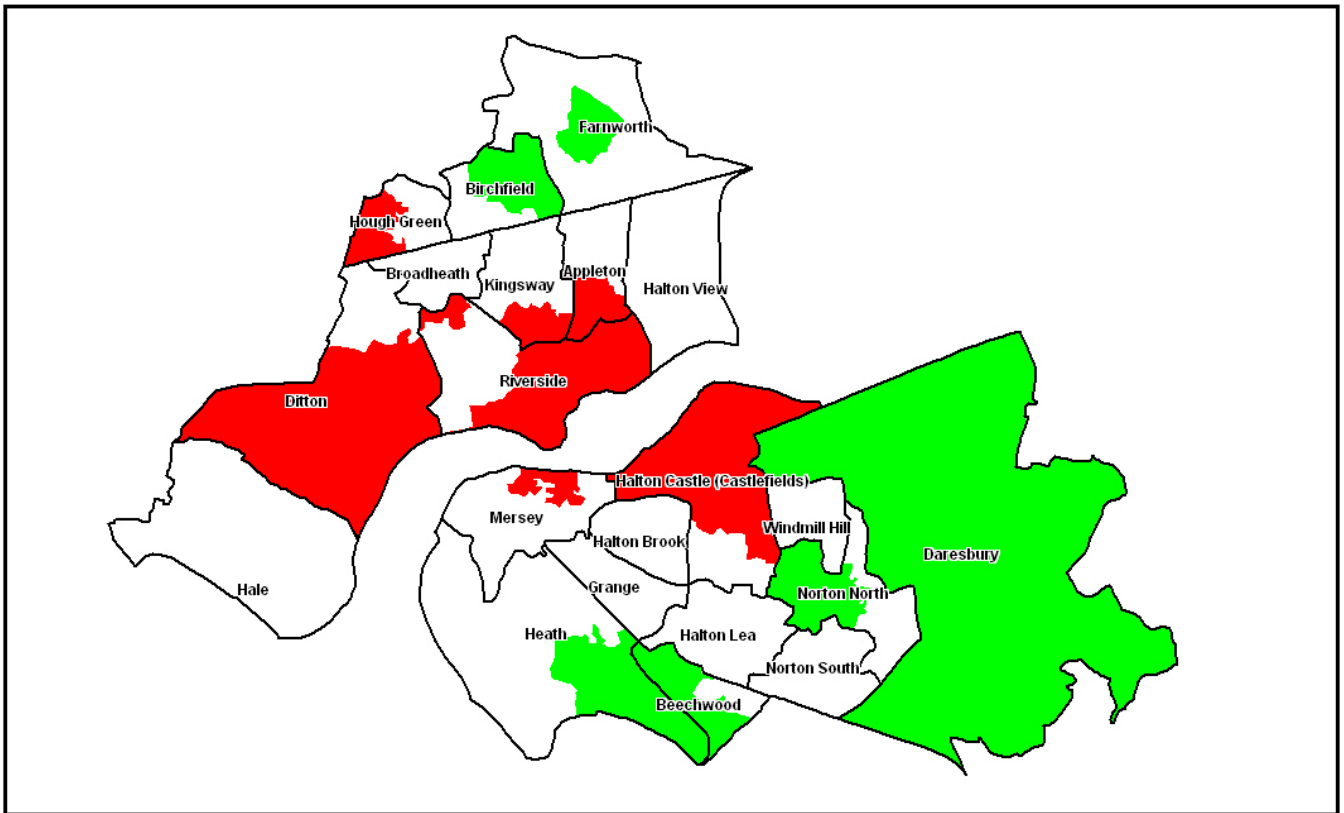
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Produced by Research & Intelligence Team
 Halton Borough Council, 2011

Kingsway ward contains the most deprived LSOA whilst Birchfield ward contains the least deprived LSOA. To help narrow down the areas in need of most improvement, the next map highlights, in red, the top 10 most deprived LSOAs from the HVI and in green the top 10 least deprived LSOAs.

Top 10 most and least deprived LSOAs according to the HVI, May 2010



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Income Statistics

For this analysis, we have looked at household income statistics available from a research company called CACI. The product - PayCheck profiles all 1.6 million postcodes in the UK using information on over 4 million households from lifestyle surveys and Census and Market Research data. Firstly, we have looked at how Halton compares in terms of average household income to the rest of the sub-region.

Average Household Income (2009)

District	Average Household Income (£)
Halton	£29,916
Knowsley	£28,143
Liverpool	£26,380
Sefton	£30,659
St Helens	£30,223
Wirral	£34,452
North West	£33,239
England	£35,408

Source: CACI Income Data, 2009

Average household incomes in all LCR districts are lower than the national average. Halton has the fourth highest household income (£29,916) of all LCR districts.

What differences exist throughout Halton?

The ward with the lowest average household income in Halton is Windmill Hill (£23,721.56). This is the only ward in Halton to have an average household income lower than £25,000.

Conversely, there are two wards in Halton with an average household income greater than £50,000. These are Birchfield (£56,421.36) and Daresbury (£51,943.27). These are the two highest average household incomes of all LCR wards in 2009.

Average Household Income (Ward) (2009)

Ward Name	Mean Income 2009
Windmill Hill	£23,721.56
Halton Castle (Castlefields)	£26,212.29
Halton Lea	£26,927.17
Appleton	£27,123.56
Grange	£27,174.24
Norton South	£28,389.73
Mersey	£28,458.31
Riverside	£28,548.85
Kingsway	£29,889.04
Broadheath	£30,153.86
Hough Green	£30,391.42
Halton Brook	£30,477.09
Ditton	£30,632.13
Halton View	£31,617.88
Heath	£34,122.17
Hale	£37,371.32
Norton North	£39,986.28
Farnworth	£40,321.17
Beechwood	£42,141.86
Daresbury	£51,943.27
Birchfield	£56,421.36

Source: CACI Household Income 2009

Key Messages

The average household income in Halton is lower than the LCR, regional and national average.

In spite of this, Halton contains the two wards with the highest average household incomes of all LCR wards in 2009. This highlights the variation of household income across the Borough.

Out-of-work benefits claimants

Benefits claimant data from the DWP has been as part of a specific data sharing agreement with the Liverpool City Region. This includes claimant data for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance (IB/ESA), and Lone Parents benefits (LP). It is provided at Output Area (OA) level (areas of roughly equal populations: approximately 40 households or 120 people). This data has been made available for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, and therefore provides the opportunity to study change over time, as well as duration of claims. Because this data relates specifically to benefits dependency, it should be considered as a close proxy indicator for poverty, as opposed to wider 'wellbeing'.

The volume of data provided is enormous as is the number of ways in which it can be analysed. In this assessment, we have focused on three of the most telling perspectives:

- 1. Long-term IB/ESA claimants.** The vast majority of IB/ESA claimants have been receiving these benefits for over two years. This reflects the entrenched nature of poverty.
- 2. Short-term JSA claimants.** Those claiming JSA for less than six months represent those with the greatest potential to get back into work and provide one way of identifying the potential to reduce poverty in specific parts of the Borough. They also represent those most at risk of becoming longer-term unemployed, so this is a key group to monitor and where interventions might have greatest significance in terms of reducing poverty.
- 3. Lone Parents benefits claimants.** This data is one of the most direct sources of intelligence about the number and location of households where child poverty is definitely an issue.

Incapacity Benefit / Employment Support Allowance

Incapacity Benefit (IB) / Employment Support Allowance are the key contributory benefits for people who are incapable of work because of illness or disability. In order to qualify for IB, claimants must be incapable of work, not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay and have sufficient National Insurance contributions. Due to recent changes in the state pension age, percentage of population receiving IB/ESA have been calculated using a working age population cohort of 16-64 for both men and women.

In May 2010, more than 12,500 residents were claiming IB/ESA in Halton.

Knowsley had the highest IB/ESA claimant rate of all LCR districts in February 2010 (12.9%). This was greater than the LCR, NW and England and Wales averages (10.9%, 8.8% and 6.5% respectively).

From February 2009 to February 2010, IB/ESA claimant rates in Knowsley increased by 0.1 percentage point. IB/ESA claimant rates in LCR also increased over this period, from 10.8 to 10.9. Regional and national rates remained stable over this time.

IB/ESA working age claimant rates % (February 2009 – February 2010)

District	Feb-09	May-09	Aug-09	Nov-09	Feb-10
Halton	10.7	10.7	10.7	10.8	10.9
Knowsley	12.8	12.8	12.8	12.8	12.9
Liverpool	12.1	12.1	12.1	12.1	12.1
Sefton	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9
St Helens	10.5	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.4
Wirral	9.9	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
LCR	10.8	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9
North West	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8
England	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5

Source: NOMIS, DWP WACG

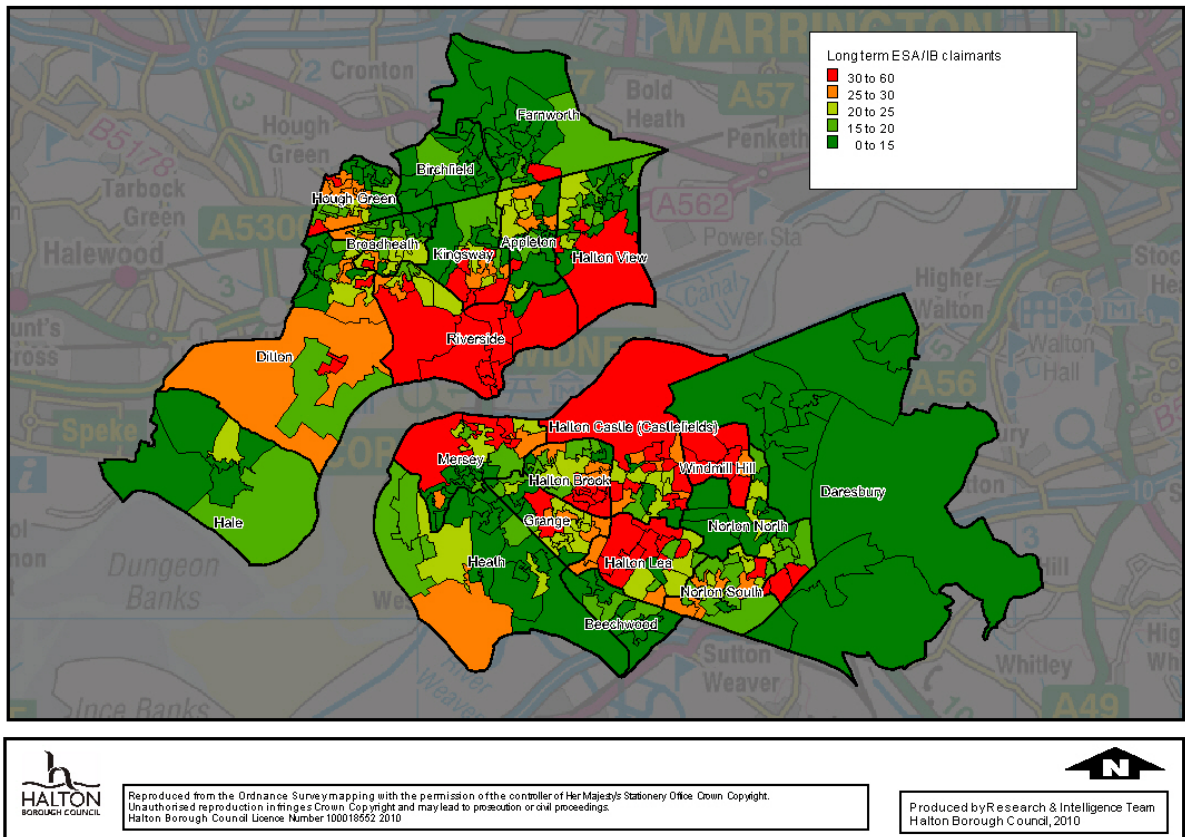
Long-term IB/ESA claimants

The following map shows the distribution of IB/ESA claimants who have been receiving one or other of these benefits for at least two years.

The red and dark green areas on the map have the higher numbers of claimants.

Based on the nature of the data used, this map can be interpreted to illustrate the areas where claimant dependency is most entrenched in the Borough.

Number of IB/ESA claimants



Source: DWP

Key Messages

Halton has a disproportionately high number (12,500) of people who are dependent on IB/ESA, and this dependency is entrenched across relatively large parts of the Borough, particularly in the wards of Halton Castle (Castlefields), Windmill Hill and Halton Lea.

Job-Seekers Allowance

In September 2010, Halton had the lowest number of JSA claimants of all LCR districts (3,904).

Compared with the same point in the previous year, Halton experienced the second greatest percentage decrease in claimant count (-13.2%) compared with other LCR districts.

JSA claimant count (September 2010)

District	Sep-09	Sep-10	% change in JSA claimant count
Halton	4,498	3,904	-13.2
Knowsley	6,289	5,591	-11.1
Liverpool	21,514	19,422	-9.7
Sefton	8,678	8,055	-7.2
St Helens	5,710	5,099	-10.7
Wirral	10,353	8,481	-18.1
LCR	57,042	50,552	-11.4
North West	199,744	178,176	-10.8
England	1,408,051	1,251,142	-11.1

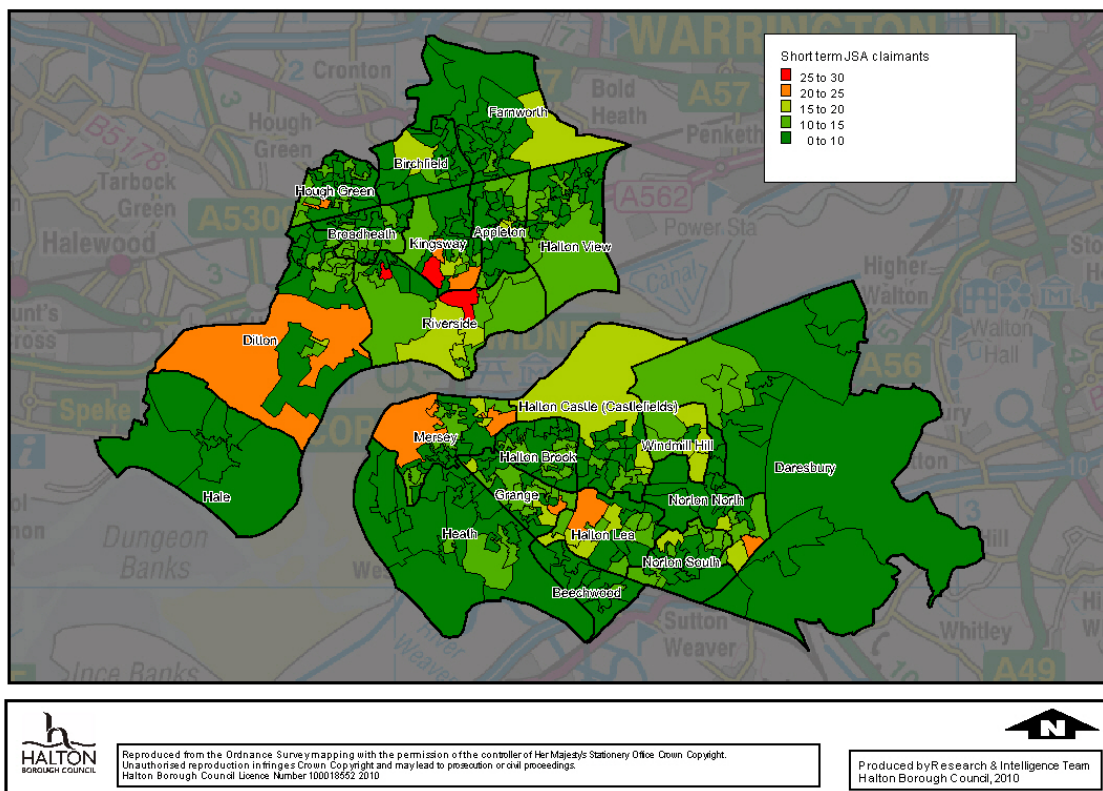
Source: NOMIS, JSA claimant count [downloaded 27/10/10]

Short-term JSA claimants

The red and dark green areas on the map have the higher numbers of claimants. The general pattern suggests that short-term JSA claimants are widely distributed across all areas of the Borough. The implication is that whilst the numbers are small relative to IB/ESA claimants, if they fail to enter or re-enter employment, and become longer-term unemployed, this will impact in most areas; the effect will not be concentrated in specific neighbourhoods.

Based on the nature of data used, this map can be interpreted to show those areas where there is greatest potential to move people from unemployment and into work. These areas are key to directly limiting perhaps the main cause of poverty.

Number of JSA Claimants



Source: DWP

Key Messages

Among all benefit claimants, those on JSA for less than 6 months offer the best hope of return to work, and work is the most effective way out of poverty.

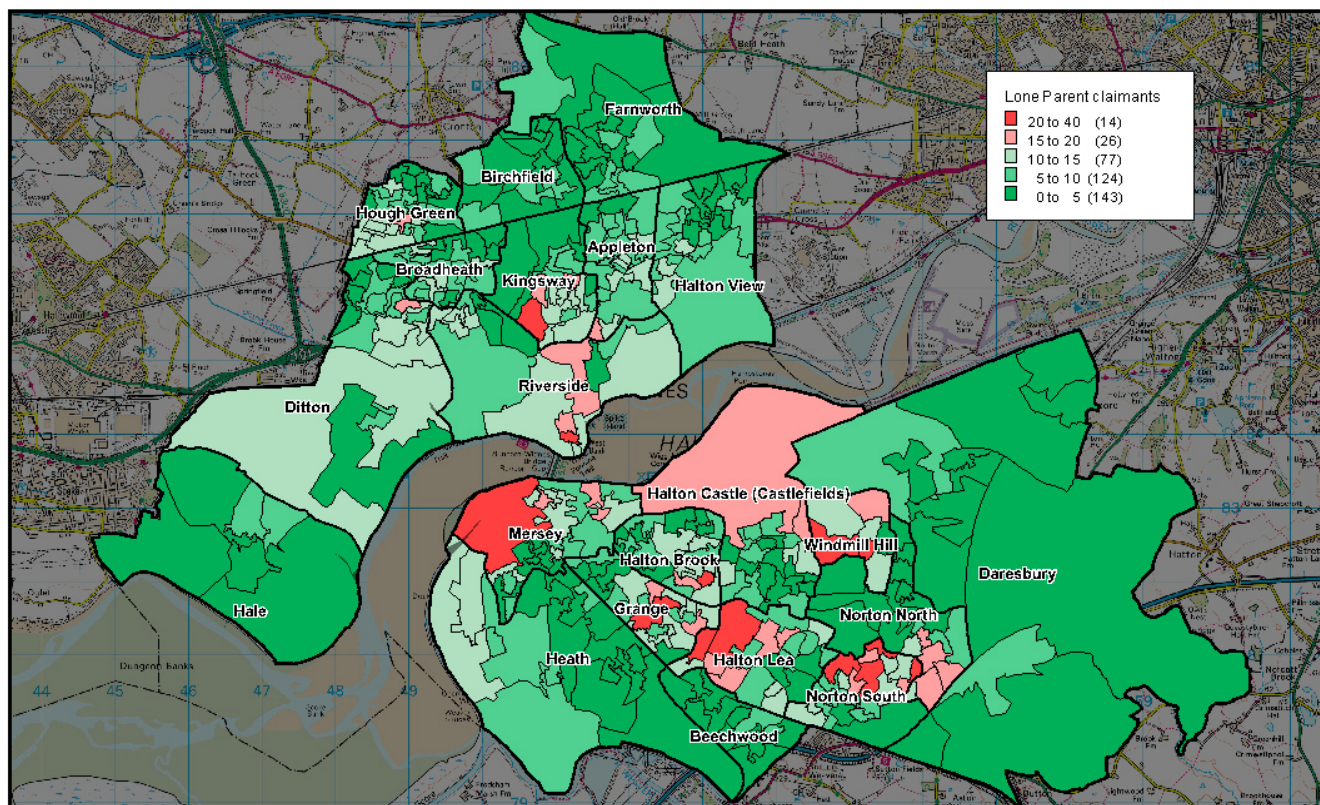
The evidence of a large reduction in the Halton JSA claimant count suggests that the Borough has been effective in getting people off this benefit, particularly in comparison to the LCR. However, the destinations of these people (in terms of work and wage level) are less clear, and may contribute to the evidenced increase of in-work poverty.



Lone Parent benefits claimants

Again, numbers are not as high as IB/ESA claimants, but they are greater than short-term JSA claimants. On the map below, the darkest green OAs each has 25-35 Lone Parents claiming benefits; the yellow OAs have five or fewer.

Based on the nature of the data used, this map can be interpreted to highlight areas where a specific group of children are definitely affected by poverty-level household incomes alongside other factors that are likely to impact on their general wellbeing.

Number of Lone Parent benefit claimants




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 Produced by Research & Intelligence Team Halton Borough Council, 2010

Source: DWP

Key Messages

Whilst not an 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 support, and limited potential for the household to move out of poverty.

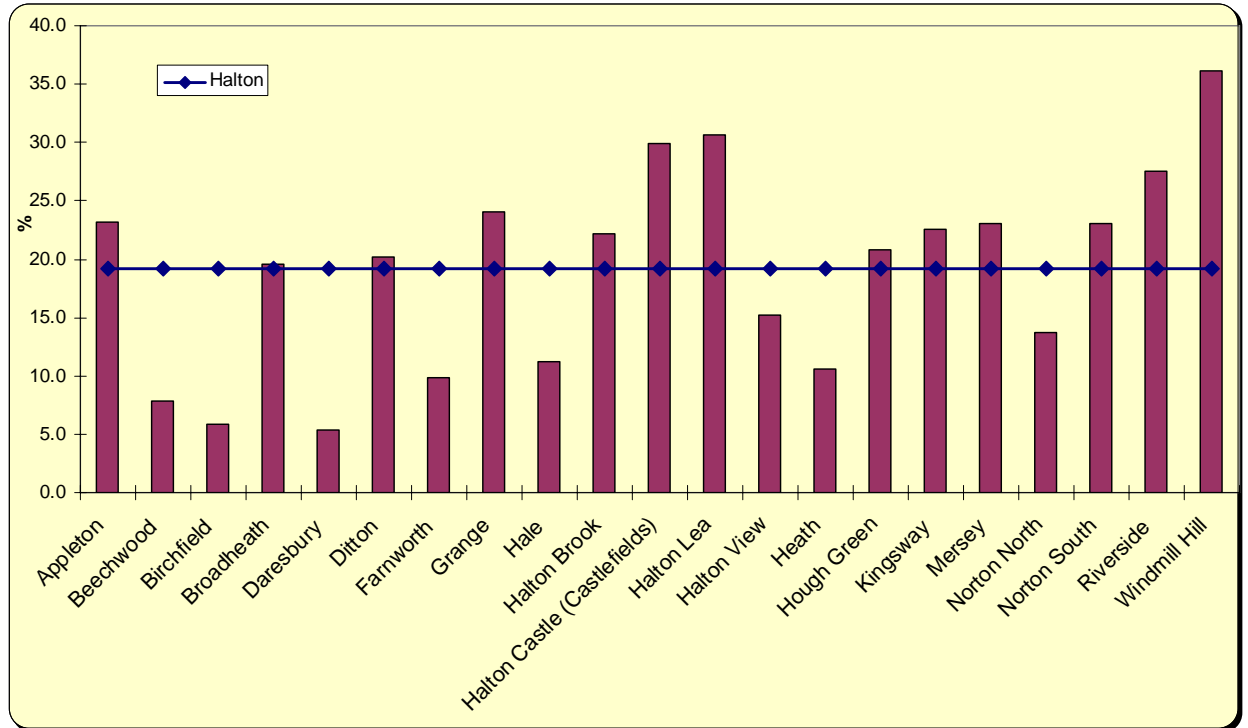
Out of work' benefits

The benefits included within the calculation are Job Seekers Allowance, ESA (Incapacity Benefit), Lone Parents and Others on income related benefits. The number of these claimants are released on a quarterly basis, these figures are then given as a proportion of the working-age population (16-64).

Working Age Client Group data is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, an advantage of this dataset is that double counting of claimants on more than one benefit has been removed so that users will get a more accurate picture of worklessness at a small area level.

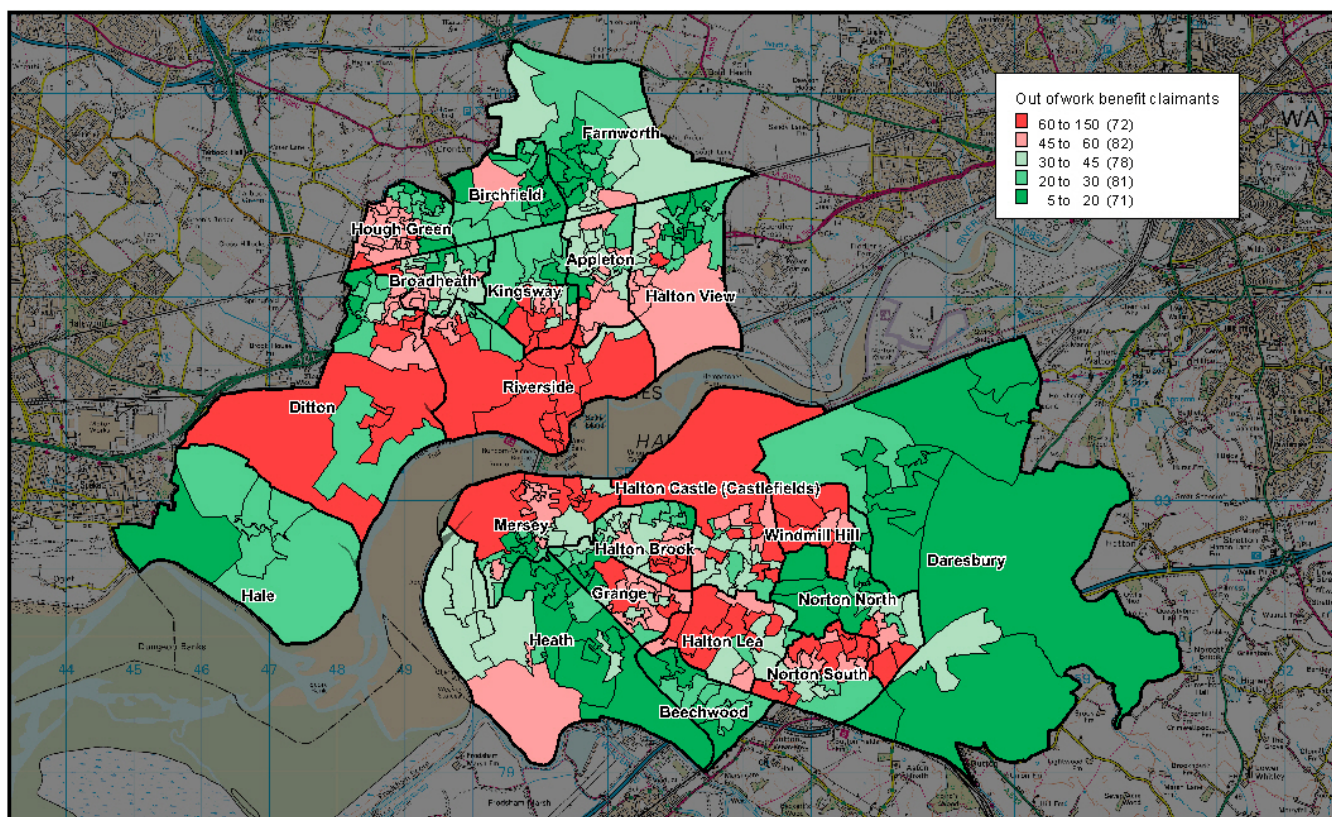
19.1% of the working age population are claiming 'out of work' benefits in Halton. Windmill Hill ward has the highest percentage of claimants with 36.2% of the working age population claiming 'out of work' benefits.


Working age people claiming out of work benefits, Halton and Wards, May-10



Following piloting with Local Authorities, the out of work benefits claimant figures have been released at Census Output Area (which are spatial areas containing around 80-150 households). These figures enable us to identify pockets of 'out of work' benefit claimants at small area, the figures are shown on the following map for the Census Output Areas in Halton.


Out of work benefit claimants, Census Output Areas in Halton, May-10





HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Produced by Research & Intelligence Team
Halton Borough Council, 2010

Experian Economic Resilience Index

Resilience is a concept used to describe the ability of an area to withstand and respond to shocks in the external environment. Experian (the company that produces 'Mosaic') recently created an index in order to rank districts in terms of their resilience.

It is important to note that this research does not report the local areas which will suffer the greatest amounts of public sector cuts. The work ranks areas in terms of their ability to respond to economic shocks, such as public sector cuts. The factors that underpin regional resilience have been based on 4 broad themes:

- Business
- Community
- People
- Place

Underneath each of the four themes sit a number of variables – 33 in total - dictated, in part, by how much data was available at local authority level. As such, data can be sorted and analysed by variable allowing an understanding of which factors impact local economic resilience and how these compare across geographies.

The table below is an extract from a larger one that illustrates the Overall Index of Resilience and theme ranks out of 324 lower tier local authorities. The extract has been selected to show only districts within the North West, and the portion of the table that includes all of the LCR districts.

The higher the rank, the less resilient a district is. The table is presented in descending order with the least resilient at the top. The cells in the table are colour-coded to highlight national quartiles (Red = worst, Green = best); so it is clear that all of the LCR districts are in the worst quartile for overall resilience.

Halton’s rank overall is 283 out of 324. The Borough fares better under the ‘Place’ theme (ranked 206) than under the ‘Business’, ‘Community’ and ‘People’ themes; however, the general picture is unsurprisingly one of relatively low resilience.

Overall Index of Resilience

LA	Resilience	Business	Community	People	Place
Barrow-in-Furness	318	315	250	297	313
Burnley	314	294	285	253	324
Tameside	307	307	271	248	279
Pendle	305	296	289	240	308
Blackpool	303	244	273	320	321
Hyndburn	301	301	262	312	232
Oldham	300	302	304	263	237
St Helens	299	310	301	282	179
Rochdale	298	286	322	266	281
Wigan	296	309	266	262	216
Wirral	288	314	307	144	172
Liverpool	287	281	323	268	214
Knowsley	285	257	308	305	238
Halton	283	267	315	281	206
Sefton	274	293	290	230	113

Source: Experian Economic Resilience Index

The following page provides an overview of the detail measures underpinning Halton’s resilience ranks within each of the themes.

Theme	National Rank
Business	267
Community	315
People	281
Place	206
Business Variables (50% Weighting)	
% Vulnerable Sectors	294
% Resilient Sectors	281
High Growth (Knowledge) Sectors	168
Business Births	114
% Self Employed	315
Days Beyond Terms (DBT)	210
Foreign Owned	10
Exporters	4
Exporting SICs	7
Adaptive Capacity	133
Insolvency Rates	272
ABI Resilient Employees	267
Business Density	318
ABI Vulnerable Employees	82
Community Variables (17% Weighting)	
Life Expectancy Male	319
Life Expectancy Female	323
Claimant Count	300
Vulnerable to LT Unemployment	280
Vulnerable to declines in disposable inc	97
Social Cohesion	250
% wards amongst 10% most deprived	150
People Variables (17% Weighting)	
NVQ4 + (APS)	297
No Qualifications	297
% Emp as Corporate Managers	271
% Emp in Elementary Occupations	190
Earnings	274
Working Age Population (Growth)	80
Place Variables (17% Weighting)	
House Price	263
Number of Pupils A*-C (age 16-19)	137
Total Crime	264
ERV commercial office space	166
Previously Developed Land (PDL)	66
Greenspace as % of total Land	246

It's worth noting that Business variables account for 50% of the index; however, Halton's residents are heavily dependent on businesses in neighbouring districts for jobs. It is therefore the resilience of these areas that are of greater significance.

Key Messages

Prevailing economic conditions create challenging circumstances for any district, but Halton's underpinning economic weaknesses make these challenges far more daunting.

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 resilience of other areas is very relevant to the Borough.

Residents in employment outside Halton are dependent on transport - increasing fuel costs will become a major pressure on their ability to afford to retain jobs.

This index does not provide a definitive measure of resilience, but does support a general and important message about the economic fragility of the Borough.

Additional qualitative intelligence

Whilst there are many individual data sets from different sources that could be analysed and interpreted separately to tell us about Child and Family Poverty, the Experian Resilience Index and HVI data already take a number of these into account. Therefore, this report focuses on those key sources of information together with information from DWP around out-of-work benefits. Qualitative information has been structured in the same way to support the quantitative data. However lots of information has been gained about how people feel about and view Child and Family Poverty that has not been captured above and these comments are noted below:

Qualitative Intelligence

- The complexities of the benefits system can prevent people from claiming what they are entitled to. There are also issues around people being unaware they are entitled to benefits. This can cause a low take up, which results in people not being able to lift themselves out of poverty.
- A culture of worklessness can create cultural barriers with many

parents not having experience of work or higher education. In turn this can result in low expectations of adults (professional and parental) with nobody expecting poor children to achieve further embedding the culture of worklessness onto children. The result is a spiral of deprivation that is unbroken.

- It is difficult to shift aspirations. Some families have no experience of anything but benefits which can lead to a lack of aspiration to work. This needs to be challenged and people need to be equipped to utilise the services available to them to move off benefits and into work.
- Public Transport can be expensive and unreliable. There are also issues around accessing Public Transport particularly after 6.00pm limiting peoples ability to work shifts etc. Residents also perceive there to be a lack of transport, this prevents them for looking for work outside of their areas.
- Halton needs to attract more high value / waged employment. There also needs to be more self employment help. Whole package needs to be looked at so people have:
 - The skills to move into employment.
 - Access to decent and affordable childcare.
 - Access to support is available in the transition from benefits and employment and for a short period during employment in the early stages.
- There is too much focus on academic qualifications; it is important that children have access to cultural opportunities and character building experiences. Employers therefore need to put greater emphasis on volunteering and life experience, rather focusing solely on qualifications when selecting applicants.
- There is limited access to bank accounts and affordable credit. An opportunity could be to promote the importance of bank accounts which may encourage service users to use other channels to borrow money if needed. This may help families in poverty ensure they are not paying back more than they should be and that they can afford and avoids the use of "loan sharks" where people repay far more than they have borrowed, further pushing them into poverty.
- Not all services are being accessed by those who need them most. Reasons include lack of awareness, transport, services not meeting needs of those in poverty. There is also the issue of culture and attitudes of those in poverty and within service – e.g. sometimes school provision for those living in poverty is stigmatised (FSM).
- Opportunity to make better use of services in Halton – e.g. mini-buses not used during holiday periods, Children's centres not open at weekends

8. Governance

Leadership and Governance in Halton

The child and family poverty agenda in Halton has strong senior level commitment from the council and our partners.

The Halton Child & Family Poverty Group

A Child & Family Poverty Group was established by Halton Borough Council last Spring upon the Act coming into force. Its role was to oversee the delivery of the Child Poverty Needs Assessment. This group has now been expanded to include senior level officials from both the borough council and partner organisations; including those named as having a duty to cooperate in the Child Poverty Act, such as the Primary Care Trust, Police and Jobcentre Plus. It is part of the Halton Strategic Partnership (LSP) structure and is currently chaired by the council's Operational Director for Policy & Performance, who is also its lead for Child & Family Poverty. The Halton Borough Council executive board member for Children, Young People and Families, Councillor John Swain, has accepted the inclusion of the child and family poverty issue within his portfolio, demonstrating the high priority and strategic commitment to the deployment of resources on measures to reduce and mitigate child poverty in Halton.

The Steering Group is responsible for taking forward the key messages and next steps from this Child and Family Poverty needs assessment and will oversee the development of Halton's Child and Family Poverty Strategy. To ensure accountability, the Group will regularly report on progress on the development of the strategy and its implementation to the Halton Strategic Partnership, Halton Borough Council's Executive Board and Halton Children's Trust, enabling elected members to exercise their scrutiny role.

LCR Leadership and Governance

Child and Family Poverty Commission

Chief Executive's of the LCR Local Authorities and LCR Cabinet agreed to establish a Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Commission to formalise the City Region's high level commitment to tackling child and family poverty. The Commission will act as a conscience for the work across the City Region and as a focus.

Membership

Membership of the Commission will involve strong leaders and influencers on this agenda. Frank Field MP for Birkenhead, as well as leader of the national Independent Review of Poverty and Life Chances will chair the LCR commission. Other membership will involve Executive Members from each city region council – representing both Children's Services and Economic Development and chief officials from the police, health and the Community and Voluntary Sector.

This arrangement will ensure that all local authorities have a representative to raise issues and communicate key messages; there will also be thematic linkages with local areas through the presence of health, police and CVS.

Officer's Forums

The City Region has established two working groups to provide operational and analytical support to enable the Commission to fulfill its role. These groups are:

- Child and Family Poverty Data Group and
- Child and Family Poverty Advisory Group.

Appendix Four illustrates the overall governance structure for Halton and the City Region.

(For further information on the role of the LCR Child and Family Poverty Commission refer to LCR Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment.)

9. Next steps

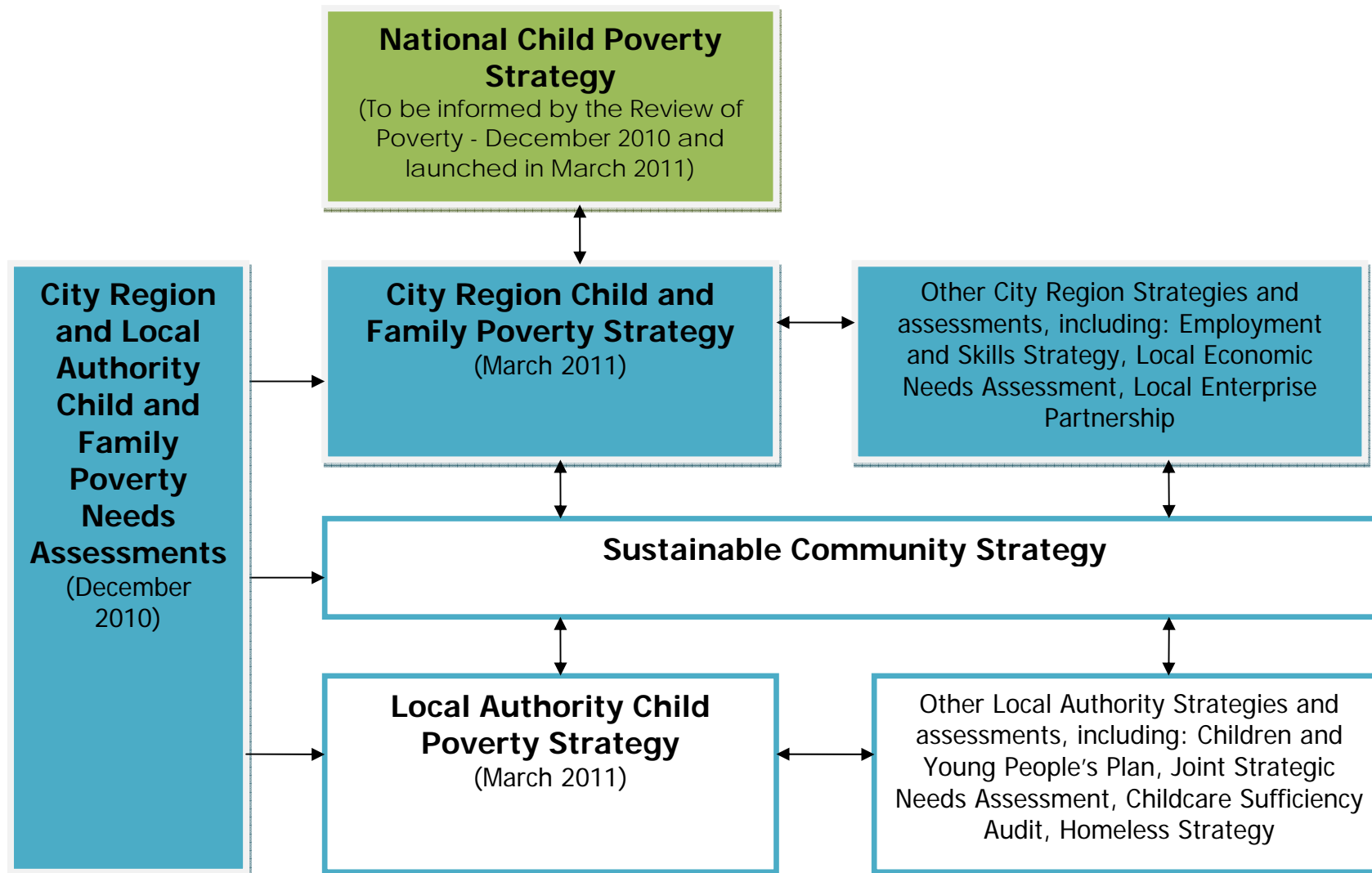
Next Steps

This needs assessment has been conducted during a time of significant policy and fiscal change. It will not be until the Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2010 that the council will have a full understanding of what resources will be available to it in the forthcoming years. The outcome of this settlement will have significant implications for future service delivery.

The next stage of the process is to develop a Child and Family Poverty Strategy which will outline how the issues raised in this needs assessment will be addressed. The Strategy will be launched in April 2011 which provides an opportunity for the implications of the Finance Settlement to be taken into account. The resulting action plan will provide the detail of how the gaps in service provision can be tackled with the resource available.

The Strategy will be the key mechanism for transforming services and targeting investment to where it is most needed.

Relationship between National, City Region and Local Strategies



Appendix 2

Partner Engagement -

	Consulted on the local child and family poverty needs assessment	Member of Halton Child & Family Poverty Group	Key Delivery Partner for Halton's Child & Family Poverty Programme	To be engaged with in the future
Police*	✓	✓	✓	
Youth Offending Team*	✓	✓	✓	
Probation Service*	✓	✓		
Local Transport Authority*	✓	✓		
Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health *	✓	✓	✓	
Strategic Health Authority*		✓		
Jobcentre Plus*	✓	✓	✓	
Children	✓		✓	
Parents	✓		✓	
Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families	✓	✓	✓	

Children & Young Peoples Services - HBC	✓		✓	
Childcare Providers	✓		✓	
Connexions Service	✓		✓	
HBC Employment & Economic Dev.	✓	✓	✓	
Registered Social Landlords	✓	✓	✓	
Fire & Rescue Service	✓		✓	
Halton Credit Union	✓		✓	
Community & Voluntary Sector in Halton	✓	✓	✓	
Halton Citizens Advice Bureau	✓		✓	
HBC Welfare Rights Team	✓	✓	✓	
Halton's Children Centres	✓		✓	
Halton & Warrington Trading Standards	✓	✓	✓	
HBC Policy Team	✓	✓	✓	

* Statutory Partner