

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

DATE: 14th November 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise and
Strategic Director Policy and Resources

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

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek the Board's endorsement of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy, 2011 – 2013.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

2.1 **That the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy, 2011-2013 be formally endorsed.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 At your March meeting you considered an early draft of the Strategy and it was agreed that the final version should be brought to a future meeting for formal endorsement.

3.2 Briefly, the 2010 Child Poverty Act, which received all party support, created a Government commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. Specific duties imposed upon local authorities and designated partners include:

- To co-operate to mitigate the effects of child poverty
- To prepare a local child poverty needs assessment
- Child poverty to be taken into account when preparing or revising the Sustainable Community Strategy.

3.3 Whilst poverty can be measured by income alone, the European Union's working definition of poverty has been adopted by authorities in the Liverpool City Region;

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

3.4 This definition recognises that poverty is not just about income but about effective exclusion from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities;

for example;

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

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

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

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

3.8 Halton has been an active partner and participant in this work, which has facilitated the adoption of common definitions, the sharing of data and good practice across the city region authorities.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 One of the key outputs of the collaborative approach across the LCR is the report, '*A Brighter Future: working together to tackle child and family poverty*' (Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Framework Analysis Report), published last summer. This has been a helpful resource in the development of our Strategy. It has also helped to gain a better understanding of cross boundary child poverty issues and assisted in identifying opportunities to join up activity across the city region

4.2 Halton's own detailed Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment was completed and published in December 2010. A copy can be downloaded by following this link; [Halton Child Poverty Needs Assessment](#)

4.3 It is currently planned to undertake a fresh needs assessment in 2013.

4.3 The strategy has been subject to extensive consultation; it has benefited from input from a range of organisations and groups, particularly with regard to the Development Plan, colleagues engaged on drafting the Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Wellbeing Strategy and the Halton Child and Family Poverty Steering Group.

4.4 The strategy has been endorsed by the Halton Strategic Partnership and the Halton Children's Trust Board, and was formally approved at

Executive Board on 13th October 2011. The Strategy is annexed to this report.

5.0 SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

5.1 Key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton identified;

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

5.2 Key priorities to tackle child and family poverty in Halton;

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

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

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

5.4 There is a strong correlation between Halton's key issues and priorities with those of our LCR partners.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING & SKILLS

6.1 Children in families where their parents are in work are much less likely to be poor in income terms. Also, paid employment can offer a sustainable route out of poverty for the longer term; because work is good for the physical and psychological health of parents and hence of their children. Finally, we know that children who grow up in workless households are themselves much more likely to be poor in adulthood.

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

7.0 NEXT STEPS

7.1 The Strategy's Development Plan reflects the fact that this is the first time that many of the partners have worked together on this specific topic, and the difficulty in setting concrete actions at this time.

7.2 The Steering Group believes that the Development Plan will provide the flexibility needed to remain effective and relevant. One consequence of this flexibility is that further work is underway to integrate the strategy within the emerging sustainable community strategy performance monitoring framework, along with appropriate 'SMART' indicators and outcomes.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 The Strategy is a statutory requirement upon the borough council and its key partners, and is a genuinely 'cross-cutting' challenge. A point recognised by its identification as a such in the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy.

8.2 Child and family poverty has also been recognised in the Halton Children's Plan, but if we are to make sustained progress in a time of great economic uncertainty it needs to be embedded into the work and priorities of **all** partners working with children and their families.

8.3 We know that children in families where their parents are in work are much less likely to be poor in income terms. Also, paid employment can offer a sustainable route out of poverty, because work is good for the physical and psychological health of parents and hence of their children. Finally, we know that children who grow up in workless households are themselves much more likely to be poor in adulthood.

8.4 The need for the Strategy to be embedded into all of the council's relevant priorities to varying degrees has an especially strong resonance in the areas of Children, Young People and Families and also the Employment, Learning and Skills agendas, as work is the best route out of poverty for most families and their children

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

9.2 Achieving an effective approach to eradicating Child and Family Poverty in Halton requires strong strategic leadership from key partnership such as the Trust and the Halton Strategic Partnership. This is being addressed through the establishment and activities of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Steering Group, and also participation in the LCR Child and Family Poverty Commission.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

An Equality Impact Assessment of the draft strategy was undertaken by a multi-agency panel, with its key recommendations taken into account when developing the strategy's Development Plan.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
'A Brighter Future: working together to tackle child and family poverty'	Rutland House, Halton Lea	Nick Mannion Nicholas.mannion@halton.gov.uk 0151 906 4885