

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Policy & Resources and  
Strategic Director Children and Enterprise

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

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Board for the formal adoption of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy, 2011 – 2013, included as an appendix to the report

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board approves the Child & Family Poverty Strategy.**

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 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.
- To produce a local joint child poverty strategy.

- 3.2 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.”***

- 3.3 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)

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

- 3.4 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').

Therefore, in anticipation of the Child Poverty Act the CES Board 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.

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.

#### **4.0 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 and is appended to the draft Strategy.
- 4.3 It is currently planned to undertake a fresh needs assessment in 2013.
- 4.4 The draft strategy has been subject to extensive consultation and has benefited from input from the Children's Trust, particularly 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.
- 4.5 The strategy was formally endorsed by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

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

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

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

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

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

5.3 Key issues to be tackled as an early priority;

- To ensure that support services meet the needs of target groups now, and in the future, and are easily accessible
- Improve the sharing, and quality of information, between partners to provide a better response and greater levels of longer-term support to service users.

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

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

6.1 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.

6.2 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 we will need to undertake further work to integrate the strategy with the emerging sustainable community strategy performance monitoring framework.

## **7.0 POLICY AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

7.2 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.

- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 There are no direct current financial implications for the Council in the adoption of this strategy.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 8.1 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 agenda, 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 varied across the borough. It is important that there is a common understanding of the issue and a wide awareness of the child and family poverty strategy and activity amongst our partners. This risk will be addressed through an effective and robust communication plan within the Development Plan.
- 9.2 Achieving an effective approach to eradicating Child and Family in Halton requires strong strategic leadership from the Council. This is being addressed through the establishment and active participation of the Halton Child & Family Poverty steering Group, and also the LCR Child and Family Poverty Commission.

## **10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

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

## **11.0 REASON FOR DECISION**

- 11.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 places a duty upon the Council and key partners to complete a child poverty needs assessment and a strategy for the elimination of child poverty across the local authority by 2020.

## **12.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

12.1 The option of not developing a strategy for the elimination of child poverty in Halton is precluded by the duties placed upon the Council by the Child Poverty Act 2010.

12.2 The process of developing the strategy has been overseen by a multi-agency steering group, chaired by the portfolio holder for Children, Young People and Families.

12.3 During the development of the Strategy over 30 partner organisations and services have participated together with a wide range of local residents and service users.

### **13.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

13.1 Immediately upon formal adoption by the Council and partners; October 2011.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>LCR 'A Brighter Future: working together to tackle child and family poverty.'</b>	<b>Rutland House, Halton Lea</b>	<b>Nick Mannion</b>
<b>Liverpool City Region Child &amp; Family Poverty Needs Assessment.</b>	<b>Rutland House, Halton Lea</b>	<b>Nick Mannion</b>