



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Welsh Assembly Government

Consultation Document

Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan for Wales

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Overview

This consultation seeks views on the Welsh Assembly Government's new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and accompanying Delivery Plan. The Child Poverty Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for tackling child poverty in Wales and improving outcomes for children and parents living in low income families. The Delivery Plan sets out the policy action the Assembly Government will deliver to achieve this vision.

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure, which became law in February 2010, places a duty on Welsh Ministers to publish a strategy to reduce child poverty, and to keep this under review. This new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and accompanying Delivery Plan fulfils this commitment for Welsh Ministers.

Following the consultation period, it is envisaged that a revised Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan will be published by the Welsh Assembly Government (during Autumn 2010).

How to respond

Online form

To respond to this consultation, please complete the online form – which can be accessed here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/childrenandyoungpeople/cpstrategy/?lang=en>.

Consultation events across Wales

During the three month consultation period, we are holding a number of stakeholder events across Wales. These events will include workshops to facilitate discussion on the content of the Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan, as well as proposals to develop a new approach to integrated family support and improved local partnership working.

In south Wales, workshops will be held as part of the Child Poverty Conference being organised by Children in Wales, Save the Children, the WLGA and the End Child Poverty Network. This conference will be held in Cardiff.

In north Wales, workshops will be held as part of a consultation event with stakeholders on 17 June 2010.

We are also planning to hold consultation events with Communities First Partnerships. These will take place in Talysarn (18 June), Merthyr Tydfil (21 June) and Aberystwyth (30 June).

During the three month consultation period, we will also be holding events with children and young people. These will also take place across Wales.

Further information and related documents

For further information about the consultation

For further information about the consultation process and these events, please visit the Welsh Assembly Government website: <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/childrenandyoungpeople/cpstrategy/?lang=en>.

During this consultation process, we are seeking views on the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales **and** its accompanying Delivery Plan.

We are also seeking views on a Children and Young People's version of the Child Poverty Strategy.

All three documents can be found here: <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/childrenandyoungpeople/cpstrategy/?lang=en>.

Contact Details

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Data Protection

The Welsh Assembly Government is the data controller for all personal data relating to your consultation response.

The Welsh Assembly Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document and where practicable, the responses. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of its author are published along with the response, as this gives credibility to the consultation exercise. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please state this expressly in writing to us.

The Welsh Assembly Government will share consultation responses with officials across the Department to inform the preparation of all future consultations.

Foreword

The continued existence of child poverty in a modern, civilised and progressive country such as Wales is unacceptable to the Welsh Assembly Government.

That is why we have placed the challenge of eradicating child poverty at the very top of our policy agenda. We are committed to doing all that we can, using all the policy and legislative levers available to us, to achieve our 2020 vision of a Wales where no child of young person is disadvantaged by poverty.

If we are to be successful in tackling child poverty, I am clear that we must ensure that all of us with a responsibility to take action to improve the health, economic and educational outcomes for children living in poverty understand that this must be a shared mission and one for which we are **all** accountable. The new legislative framework that is now in place through the Child Poverty Act 2010 and our own Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 means that, for the first time, there will be a statutory framework to drive child poverty action stretching from the UK Government, the Welsh Assembly Government through to local authorities and other public agencies.

I am very clear that there is much that the Welsh Assembly Government can do to reduce levels of child poverty in Wales. And we will not shy away from this responsibility. The increase in the most recent child poverty statistics for Wales underlined the importance of the Assembly Government doing all that we can – to have an even greater focus on reducing the child poverty levels in Wales and increasing the life chances of children living in low income families. There is no doubt that, now in 2010, much more action is needed across Government at all levels – and across its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors – to prioritise the needs of this group of children and the families in which they live.

We, in the Assembly Government, are unique in having a statutory duty upon us to promote sustainable development and we see tackling child poverty as an integral component of our approach. Sustainable development means taking the long term view. It means acting now to provide for the longer term wellbeing of our people and communities, so that all citizens in Wales are able to play a full part in society. Action to help children in low income families is therefore critical. Social justice and sustainable development are inseparable. Our determination to give our children the best start in life is also shown in our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We know that the complex and wide ranging nature of the causes and effects of child poverty mean that the policy interventions that need to be in place to deal with the associated issues must be comprehensive. That said, and in these particular economic times, we must keep as much focus as possible on those policy interventions that have the greatest chance of success in meeting our 2020 vision.

Our new Child Poverty Strategy provides an important new framework for the action that the Assembly Government will take to achieve our 2020 vision and, more specifically, our three new strategic child poverty objectives. We are setting out a coherent approach to tackling child poverty across the whole of the

Assembly Government and in doing so set the policy direction on child poverty action in Wales. We are also setting out a new direction for developing more effective local delivery arrangements to meet the needs of low income families.

We understand that local communities, individuals and organisations operating at grass roots level are best placed to understand the issues facing children living in poverty. We are therefore seeking your views on the strategic direction provided by this new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and our accompanying Delivery Plan. I very much hope that you will engage with us over the coming months so that we can – collectively – ensure that our final strategy is one that gives us the best chance of delivering better life chances that children in poverty have an absolute right to expect.

Huw Lewis
Deputy Minister for Children

What are the main issues?

The Welsh Assembly Government is seeking views on a new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and accompanying Delivery Plan. This new Strategy sets out our vision for reducing child poverty in Wales by 2020. Specifically, it provides strategic direction for the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to tackling child poverty and improving outcomes for those children and young people living in low income households. The framework for the new Child Poverty Strategy has been provided by the 13 Broad Aims that are set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. The scope of the Broad Aims demonstrate that the causes and the effects of child poverty are complex, multifaceted and cut across a number of policy areas. The Strategy's accompanying Delivery Plan sets out existing and planned policy commitments (from across the Assembly Government) that will help us deliver our vision for tackling child poverty in Wales.

Children and young people growing up in poverty are vulnerable in a number of different ways. We know they are more at risk of poor health, poor educational attainment, have lower skills and aspirations. They are also more likely to be low paid, unemployed and welfare dependent in adulthood. Although many children from low income families will not experience these outcomes, it is important to note that, on average, children who grow up in poverty are at a disadvantage.

The risk of growing up in poverty is higher for some children. Children living in workless households are particularly vulnerable: Approximately half of all children in Wales who live in poverty are in workless households. A key strategic objective of this new Strategy is to reduce the number of workless households in Wales. Tackling in-work poverty is also important, however, and improving the skills of parents to enable them to access employment that pays well is also a strategic objective for this new Strategy. Finally, the Strategy has a strategic objective to reduce the inequalities that exist in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

We want to use the consultation process to hear your views on whether these three strategic objectives are the right ones – and whether the policy action we set out in the Delivery Plan (that ranges across the 13 Broad Aims of the Measure) will enable us to achieve these strategic objectives and our vision for 2020.

Where are we now?

Since its inception, the Welsh Assembly Government has consistently made it clear that reducing child poverty is a fundamental element of its social justice agenda. Many of the issues that are associated with tackling child poverty are within the responsibility of the Assembly Government. This includes improving the health, education and economic outcomes for children in low income families.

In the late 1990s, child poverty in Wales was higher than in the rest of the UK. Figures then converged with those in other parts of the UK. In the period 2003-04 to 2005-06, they were lower in Wales than for England for the first time, although still higher than in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The latest child poverty figures, however, estimate that 32 per cent of children in Wales are living in households

below 60 per cent of the median income (After Housing Costs). This represents approximately 200,000 children.

With the view to tackling child poverty in Wales, this new Child Poverty Strategy will provide the framework for a coherent approach to tackling child poverty across the Welsh Assembly Government. The intention is not to re-state existing strategies and plans, but to reference these as appropriate and be clear how they combine to tackle an issue that is multi-faceted. In particular, it will set the policy direction on child poverty action at the Wales level so that there is clarity on what the Assembly Government's contribution to tackling child poverty will be. We want to demonstrate how the Assembly Government itself will address the needs of low income families with children and ensure that our range of policies, resources and services will improve outcomes and reduce the inequalities that currently exist.

The Strategy will also set a direction for developing more effective local delivery arrangements to meet the needs of low income families, including a coherent approach to evidencing progress and a stronger framework for delivering better outcomes. We want to use the consultation process to hear your views on these proposals.

The evidence base

An evidence based approach has been used to develop the Child Poverty Strategy and its accompanying Delivery Plan. During 2009, analysis was undertaken to assess where policy action by the Assembly Government could have the most impact – in terms of reducing child poverty and improving outcomes for children and young people. Furthermore, the Child Poverty Delivery Plan includes an Evidence Annex – which sets out why it is important to focus policy effort across the 13 Broad Aims of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, and why we have our three strategic objectives for reducing child poverty in Wales.

Our strategic objectives

As noted earlier, our three strategic objectives for the Child Poverty Strategy are:

- To reduce the number of families living in workless households.
- To improve the skill level of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment.
- To reduce the inequalities that exist in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

By having these objectives, we intend to:

- Address the needs of low income families with children in all parts of Wales, and ensure that policies, resources and services from across Assembly Government Departments are aimed at improving their outcomes and reduce the inequalities that currently exist.

- Respond to the strong evidence that points to employment as the most sustainable route out of poverty. In so doing, we will promote and facilitate paid employment opportunities for families with children (including the delivery of support mechanisms such as appropriate and high quality childcare and providing parents with the skills necessary for paid employment).
- Maintain a focus on early years investment backed by the evidence that this is the most effective chance of long-term success in transforming the life chances of children from low income families.

What will change – Local Delivery and Partnership Working

Our vision is that from 2010, there will be a clear “line of sight” setting out the action that the Assembly Government will take to tackle child poverty – that can in turn influence developments at local area and community level.

We know that families living in poverty need coherent support, tailored to their individual circumstances. The priority is to develop local partnership working that offers this support, across the range of issues that might be relevant, including unemployment, education, health, housing, parenting, benefits, debt, skills, and substance misuse. At the same time, support needs to remain simple to access from the perspective of the family.

In summary, what we need is local delivery that is:

- **family-focused**, offering families help to improve their chances of escaping poverty, including getting help getting into work and the right information on benefit issues, as well as help to improve the outcomes for children, with the emphasis on working with families and increasing their ability and confidence to meet challenges;
- **bespoke**, tailoring help to individual family circumstances, where necessary bending programmes to fit individual family circumstances that are perhaps outside of the norm;
- **integrated**, with help from different organisations effectively coordinated and ensuring that there is a seamless progression for families between different interventions and programmes;
- **pro-active**, seeking out families who can benefit from early preventative help and engaging them in longer term change;
- **intensive**, with a vigorous approach, and relentless focus, adapting the package of interventions as a family’s circumstances change, and maintaining that effort with families to ensure successful outcomes; and
- **local**, reflecting the circumstances of local communities, such as the differences of delivering in rural compared to urban areas, and with effective links into communities.

A great deal of good partnership work is already being done in Wales by a wide range of agencies, under the leadership of the Children and Young People's Partnerships. Some "Team around the Child" approaches show great promise to bring professionals and practitioners from multiple agencies together to deal with families in a holistic way. However, even the best approaches are not yet delivering for families in a fully integrated way – for example, by including the income and employment issues needed to tackle poverty.

In light of the above, we intend to use the consultation period for the draft Child Poverty Strategy to engage local delivery partners in a series of workshops, to discuss how local delivery models can be shaped to provide a "**Team around the Family**" approach – for families living in poverty.

Questions we would like you to consider:

- 1. What are your views on our three strategic objectives for our new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales?**
- 2. What are your views on the policy action we set out in the Delivery Plan?**
- 3. Do you think the policy action set out in the Delivery Plan will enable us to achieve our three strategic objectives and our vision for 2020?**
- 4. What is the best way to integrate local multi-agency support for families living in poverty?**

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

PLEASE ENTER HERE:

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Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

