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Welsh Assembly Government

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Welsh Assembly Government

## Consultation Document

# Child Poverty Strategy for Wales

Date of issue: 12 May 2010

Action required: Responses by 12 August 2010





ISBN 978 0 7504 5421 6

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CMK-22-10-135

E5520910

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# Section 1

## Introduction

The Child Poverty Strategy for Wales sets out how the Welsh Assembly Government intends to tackle child poverty and deliver the 13 Broad Aims set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

This introduction (Section 1) provides the rationale for the Welsh Assembly Government's new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and sets out recent developments which have prompted its publication. Section 2 provides the current legislative and policy context, while Section 3 sets out our vision for reducing child poverty in Wales, and ensuring that no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty. Section 4 – the Delivery Plan – outlines the action that we will take to achieve this vision.

**Our vision for 2020 is “a Wales where no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty”. The framework for this Child Poverty Strategy, and its accompanying Delivery Plan, is provided by our 13 Broad Aims for the eradication of child poverty set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.**

### 1.1 How do we measure child poverty?

The Welsh Assembly Government uses a measurement based on relative income<sup>1</sup> – children living in households below 60 per cent of the median income (for households of that type). For a couple with two children, this low income measurement is equivalent to £322 a week (£239 in the case of a single parent with two children).

### 1.2 Poverty and its effect on children and young people

In Wales today, there are approximately 200,000 children living in poverty. Just under half of these children live in families where at least one of the adults is in paid work. For some of these children, their parents and carers will be unable (for a variety of reasons) to provide an environment that allows these children the life chances that all children have a right to expect. A recent review of research on children and families' experiences of poverty concluded that poverty can affect all aspects of a child's life. This ranges from economic and material disadvantage, through to social constraint and exclusion – as well as personal (and often more hidden) issues associated with shame, stigma, sadness and the fear of difference<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> After Housing Costs.

<sup>2</sup> “Living with Poverty: A Review of the Literature on Children's and Families' Experiences of Poverty” Ridge, T. (2009). Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Research Report No. 594.

**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 – and are 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<sup>3</sup>.**

### **1.3 What has happened at the UK level?**

In 1997, the UK Government made a pledge to end child poverty within a generation. At the time, the UK had one of the highest child poverty rates in the industrialised world, as measured by the proportion of children living in families with a household income below 60 per cent of median income. By this measure, child poverty had more than doubled between the late 1970s and mid 1990s. Evidence suggests that a combination of factors led to this position – including rising unemployment and long-term detachment from the labour market; stagnation in wage levels at the bottom and middle of the labour market (as compared to the top); regressive changes to the tax and benefit system; and demographic changes. Significant progress has been made over the last decade, with 500,000 children across the UK being lifted out of relative poverty between 1998-99 and 2007-08. However, recent statistics show that a notable and slightly increasing proportion of children in poverty are in households where at least one parent is in work and so tackling 'in work' poverty is also important.

In 2008, the UK Government set out its vision for eradicating child poverty by 2020 in ***Ending Child Poverty: Making it Happen***. This was based upon four aspirations: More parents in work that pays; financial support that is responsive to families' situations; improvements in children's life chances so that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes; and safe, cohesive communities that support children to thrive.

### **1.4 What has happened in Wales?**

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 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.**

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<sup>3</sup> 2008 Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government.

The latest child poverty figures estimate that 32 per cent of children in Wales are living in households below 60 per cent of the median income<sup>4</sup>. Over the past ten years in Wales and in the UK, the proportion of children living in poverty has fallen by four percentage points (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Percentage of children living in households below 60 per cent of median income (After Housing Costs)**

	1996-97 to 1998-99	1997-98 to 1999-00	1998-99 to 2000-01	1999-00 to 2001-02	2000-01 to 2002-03	2001-02 to 2003-04	2002-03 to 2004-05	2003-04 to 2005-06	2004-05 to 2006-07	2005-06 to 2007-08
<b>Wales</b>	36	36	35	34	34	32	31	28	29	32
<b>GB/UK</b>	34	33	33	31	30	30	29	29	30	30
<b>Scotland</b>	32	31	32	32	30	28	26	25	25	24
<b>N Ireland</b>			30	29	28	28	27	27	26	26

Source: Department for Work and Pensions HBAI data

Note: Figures cover Great Britain to 1997/98-1999/00 and the UK from 1998/99-2000/01.

Our first Child Poverty Strategy, *A Fair Future for our Children*, was published in February 2005. This confirmed that we would take a wide approach to tackling child poverty – through action to combat participation poverty, service poverty and income poverty. In October 2006, we published our own range of 2020 targets across the key areas of income, education, health and housing – as set out in *Eradicating Child Poverty – Measuring Success*. These targets were set in order to measure our progress in tackling child poverty at the Wales level. In 2008, we established new arrangements to report regularly on these targets through the *Children and Young People’s Wellbeing Monitor for Wales* and dedicated pages on the *Statistics Wales* website.

In 2007, the *One Wales Agreement* committed the Welsh Assembly Government to the UK Government pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020, through developing more Wales-specific solutions and through integrating strategies with programmes which remain within the competence of the UK Government. *One Wales* also included a number of new commitments specifically aimed at tackling child poverty, many of which have been or are being delivered. This included a commitment to establish a *Child Poverty Expert Group* to provide evidence based advice on the wider policy requirements necessary to meet the targets for the eradication of child poverty. The Expert Group met for the first time in May 2008 and has provided a series of policy recommendations that have shaped the developed of this Strategy.

## 1.5 Why is a new Child Poverty Strategy needed?

New legislation introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government provides a statutory framework for our commitments to reduce child poverty. The *Children and Families (Wales) Measure*, which became law in February 2010, specifically places a duty on Welsh Ministers to publish a new statutory Child Poverty Strategy for Wales in 2010 and to keep this under review.

<sup>4</sup> After Housing Costs (AHC).

## 1.6 What is the new Child Poverty Strategy looking to achieve?

This new Strategy will set the 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 Strategy aims to:

- 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.
- 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. The intention here is 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.
- 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.
- Place the Welsh Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy within the context of the UK Government's policy priorities for tackling child poverty. This recognises the importance of the UK Government's contribution in the non-devolved areas of financial support and parental employment.

**Tackling child poverty requires action across all levels of Government and its partners. No one institution or organisation can be expected to tackle the complex and inter-related problems associated with child poverty in isolation.**

## 1.7 Evidence Base for the Child Poverty Strategy

Through an analysis of the evidence base carried out in 2009, a series of priority policy actions have been identified as those where the Assembly Government has the greatest potential to reduce child poverty and improve the outcomes of those children and young people living in low income households. By initially focussing action in these areas, we believe we can make progress across each of the 13 Broad Aims set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure and achieve our strategic child poverty objectives.

A more detailed analysis that explains why it is important for the Welsh Assembly Government (and its partners) to focus policy action on the 13 Broad Aims is set out in Annex 1 to this Strategy.



## **1.8 Delivery Plan for the Child Poverty Strategy**

Alongside this Child Poverty Strategy is an accompanying **Delivery Plan**. This outlines the **policy action** that will deliver our 13 Broad Aims for reducing child poverty in Wales and achieve our child poverty strategic objectives. It contains seven chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 8) which are grouped around the Welsh Assembly Government's seven core aims for children and young people. Recognising that certain groups have a higher risk of living in poverty, Chapter 9 of the Delivery Plan outlines policy action designed to help particular vulnerable groups.

Chapter 10 of the Delivery Plan sets out our proposals in relation to partnership working and local delivery through the Children and Young People's Partnerships. Chapter 11 acknowledges the importance of tackling child poverty in rural Wales and in areas of high deprivation. Chapters 12 and Chapter 13 set out plans to monitor outcomes for children and young people living in poverty and evaluate the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

## **1.9 Bi-lingual provision in Wales**

The Welsh Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy will be delivered bi-lingually in Wales. Where appropriate, the delivery of services and support (for example – in relation to social services, health and education) will be delivered bi-lingually to ensure that children in low income families, whose first language is Welsh, are fully included.



## Section 2

### Legislative and Policy Context

This section provides a brief overview of the current legislative and policy context in the UK and Wales – which frames the development and delivery of the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales.

#### 2.1 UK Government

It is recognised that many of the levers to tackle child poverty, particularly to reduce income poverty, lie with the UK Government through action on tax and benefits and in relation to employment support programmes. On that basis, the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to working closely with the UK Government and to complementing UK Government programmes with initiatives at the Wales level.

The UK Government is committed to a renewed drive over the next decade to prevent child poverty in the future and eradicate it by 2020. The **Child Poverty Act** enshrines in legislation the commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. It defines success in eradicating child poverty and establishes a framework to monitor progress at a national and local level.

In summary, the Child Poverty Act places a duty on the UK Secretary of State to meet the following child poverty targets by 2020:

- Relative poverty: Less than 10 per cent of children living in relative low income poverty.
- Material Deprivation: Less than 5 per cent of children living in combined material deprivation and low income.
- Absolute low income: Reduce the proportion of children who live in absolute low income to less than 5 per cent.
- Persistent Poverty: Percentage of children living in relative poverty for three out of four years (target level to be set by 2015).

**The Child Poverty Act will drive progress towards meeting the UK Government's child poverty targets. Given the importance of UK Government action on financial and employment support to helping low income families in Wales, this is key to eradicating child poverty by 2020.**

## 2.2 The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

We have made early use of new law-making powers to add weight to our action to tackle child poverty. The **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010** demonstrates our commitment to providing support to those families and children in greatest need. The Measure seeks to deliver a strategic and joined up approach to addressing child poverty and places a specific new duty on Welsh Ministers to develop a child poverty strategy.

We recognise the key role played by other partners in the shared fight against child poverty. Therefore, the legislation places new duties upon Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, and a range of named public agencies in Wales – so that action on child poverty is a statutory requirement across a number of key public organisations.

**Welsh Ministers are required to choose objectives relating to each of the 13 Broad Aims, identified in the Measure as being the most important in tackling child poverty at the Wales level.**

On 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010 those parts of the Measure that place a duty on Welsh Ministers and Local Authorities to prepare and publish child poverty strategies came into effect. The remaining child poverty duty provisions will come into effect by Commencement Order. To support this, we will issue new regulations and guidance to local partners affected by the new duties.

**The new legislation on child poverty represents a new statutory framework to harness action to reduce child poverty – spanning the UK Government, the Welsh Assembly Government and through to our partners at the local level.**

## 2.3 The Equality Act

The Equality Act will give Welsh Ministers the power to impose a socio-economic duty on certain public authorities in Wales. The duty will mean that certain public authorities must have due regard (when taking decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its function) to reducing inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.

In deciding how to fulfil this duty, a public authority (to which the duty is applied) must take into account any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers. The provisions contained in the Equality Act 2010 will further strengthen our commitment to eradicate the underlying causes of child poverty.

## 2.4 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

In 1991, the UK Government ratified the **UNCRC** and in doing so agreed to report on the progress it makes on implementation. In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government adopted the UNCRC as the basis of policy making for children and young people. Since this time, we have adopted a progressively rights based approach to policy making for children and young people, working towards realising all of the rights within the UNCRC.

Ahead of the September 2008 report on progress, the UN Committee asked a number of supplementary questions about key priorities for the future. Sixteen priorities were identified for Wales and submitted to the UN Committee. Priority number one related to tackling poverty for children and young people in Wales.

### Overview of Articles 22, 24, 26 and 27 of the UNCRC state that:

“Children have the right to good quality health care and a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Children who are refugees should also enjoy these rights. The Government should help families who cannot afford this”.

***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Ratified by the UK Government in 1991.***

In its Concluding Observations, the UN Committee suggested that the State Party should ensure an adequate standard of living which is essential for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, by making best use of available resources to reduce poverty and inequalities in all sectors; better account for children’s budgeting in order to realise delivery of policies and legislation; and give appropriate assistance to families and prepare children for adulthood by providing training and education.

The 16 priority areas for Wales (and action undertaken or planned in relation to addressing them) is set out in the action plan – “**Getting it Right**”. This was published in November 2009, and sets out actions for taking forward the UNCRC over the next five years.

## 2.5 Seven Core Aims

The Welsh Assembly Government has developed the **7 Core Aims** as an approach to policy that summarises the relevant Articles of the UNCRC under each core aim. This provides a policy context for the UNCRC in Wales – and is the basis for all policy relating to children and young people. The 7 Core Aims state that 0 to 25 year olds in Wales should:

- Have a flying start in life.
- Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.

- Enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.
- Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
- Be listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
- Have a safe home and community.
- Not be disadvantaged by poverty.

We remain committed to ensuring that the new Child Poverty Strategy for Wales is founded on the basis of the UNCRC, and that delivering one is crucial to delivering the other. In line with this, the Child Poverty Strategy's Delivery Plan is structured around the UNCRC and the 7 Core Aims.

## Section 3: Eradicating Child Poverty by 2020: Our Vision, Strategic Objectives and Policy Action

This section outlines our vision for child poverty in 2020. It summarises our new legislative Broad Aims that underpin this Strategy. It also confirms the strategic objectives that we will adopt and the policy areas that we will concentrate upon – to eradicate child poverty **and** improve the life chances of those children and young people currently living in poverty.

### 3.1 Our vision for 2020

#### **Our Vision**

**The Welsh Assembly Government's vision for 2020 is a Wales where no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty.**

Delivering this vision will require a renewed focus on providing services, including financial support, to families living in poverty. For the most part, direct financial support from the tax and benefits system must come from the UK Government. But we must ensure that families in Wales have access to the right information about tax and benefits. For the Welsh Assembly Government, a range of policy priorities will provide more effective and targeted support to low income families.

Realising this vision is a key component of our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). While freedom from poverty may not be explicitly recognised as a fundamental human right in that document, there is no doubt that child poverty is the most significant barrier to children and young people in Wales accessing their rights as outlined in the UNCRC.

At the half way point in its pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020, the UK Government has committed itself to policy action on financial and employment support that is intended to achieve these income-related targets for the UK as a whole. These targets, however, will not be achieved without action by the Welsh Assembly Government.

### 3.2 Our overall aims to reduce child poverty in Wales

To achieve our vision of a Wales in 2020 where no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty, we are committed to focussing policy effort that will deliver the following 13 Broad Aims – as set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure. 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:

- Work with the UK Government to increase the income of families with children.
- Ensure that, as far as possible, children living in low income families are not materially deprived.
- Promote and facilitate paid employment for parents in low-income families.
- Provide low-income parents with the skills needed to secure employment.
- Help young people take advantage of employment opportunities.
- Support the parenting of children.
- Reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children and young people.
- Help young people participate effectively in education and training.
- Reduce inequalities in health between children and between their parents, so far as necessary, to ensure children's well-being.
- Reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between children's parents, so far as necessary, to ensure children's wellbeing.
- Help young people participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their community.
- Ensure that all children grow up in decent housing.
- Ensure that all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities.

### **3.3 Our Strategic Objectives**

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure requires Welsh Ministers to choose objectives relating to each of these Broad Aims. In accordance with this duty, we have identified three strategic objectives for its first Child Poverty Strategy for Wales – which cut across all Broad Aims.

Our three strategic objectives for the Child Poverty Strategy are to:

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



Figure 3.1 highlights how policy action across the 13 Broad Aims will deliver the Strategy’s three strategic objectives – which (in turn) will allow us to realise our vision for 2020.



**We are clear that this Strategy must also explain how we will achieve the three strategic objectives that we have set ourselves. The accompanying Delivery Plan outlines the existing and planned policy commitments from across the Assembly Government that will help deliver the 13 Broad Aims of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure and achieve the Child Poverty Strategy’s strategic objectives. We will put in place robust arrangements to ensure that progress is monitored and regularly reviewed.**

### 3.4 Measuring progress

To measure our progress against our three strategic objectives, we will use the following strategic indicators:

- Number of children living in workless households<sup>5</sup>.
- Percentage of working age adults with no qualifications.

<sup>5</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government will also use a range of additional indicators to measure progress in relation to outcomes for children living in poverty. These indicators are highlighted in Chapter 2 to Chapter 8 of the Delivery Plan.

- Percentage of pupils achieving KS4 (CSI) in receipt of free school meals.
- Looked after Children per 10,000 population aged under 18.
- Percentage of live births weighing less than 2,500 grams.
- Number of children living in workless/low income families reaching health, social and cognitive development milestones when entering formal education<sup>6</sup>.

### 3.5 Policy Action for the 2010 Child Poverty Strategy

To deliver the three strategic objectives we have identified a series of **priority policy actions**. These are set out in Table 3.1 below, mapped within the Broad Aims of the Measure.

**Table 3.1 Delivering the 2020 Vision: Broad Aims and Policy Action of the 2010 Child Poverty Strategy for Wales<sup>7</sup>**

Broad Aim	Priority Policy Actions for the Strategy		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<b>Working with the UK Government to increase the income of families with children</b>	<p>Continued promotion of the take-up of UK Government and WAG-specific benefits.</p> <p>Influence UK Government to invest in financial support for families and meet the UK Bill child poverty targets.</p> <p>Influence UK Government to take action on parental employment, skills and financial support for families.</p> <p>Better targeting of advice services.</p>	<p>More support for employers (particularly for low paid workers) to provide better on-the-job training, raise skill levels and wages.</p>	<p>More support to increase high-quality jobs in Wales.</p> <p>Improved financial capability.</p>

<sup>6</sup> We need to establish comparative data on the development outcomes of children from low income families, as they enter full time education. Proposals on how best to achieve this will be issued during the consultation period.

<sup>7</sup> Short, medium and long term refer to the anticipated timeframe for achieving specific policy actions – which cover the next one, three and five years.

Broad Aim	Priority Policy Actions for the Strategy		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
	Greater prioritisation of low-income households with children.		
<b>Ensure that, as far as possible, children living in low income families are not materially deprived</b>	Easier access to mainstream financial services, including affordable credit and savings facilities. Help with debt advice, credit unions and Child Trust Funds.	More effective targeting of advice and assistance to fuel poor households.	Greater promotion of family-friendly working practices in the public and private sectors. Greater encouragement of energy/utility companies to reduce their charges and provide practical help to families on low income.
<b>Promote and facilitate paid employment for parents in low-income families</b>	Increased help for parents to find and remain in employment. Support for the wider and more accessible advertising of job vacancies.	More emphasis on working with employers to improve job flexibility for parents. Stronger incentives for employers to promote flexible working. Greater encouragement for public and voluntary sector employees to take part in Local Employment Partnerships.	Improve childcare provision, including before and after school hours, in school holidays and in the public sector.
<b>Provide low-income parents with the skills needed to secure employment</b>		More action to develop the education and skill levels of future parents. Greater encouragement for community focused schools to provide	

Broad Aim	Priority Policy Actions for the Strategy		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
		parenting support and adult education.	
<b>Help young people take advantage of employment opportunities</b>	More emphasis on training and job creation for young people aged 18-25.		
<b>Support the parenting of children</b>	Increased emphasis on boosting levels of parental skills.	More emphasis on family support programmes (such as integrated family support services).  More emphasis on action within community focused schools to combat child poverty.	
<b>Reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children and young people</b>	Better guidance, training and support for schools on recognising and tackling child poverty.	More action to develop the education and skill levels of future parents.	Increased emphasis on policies and programmes that address inequality in educational outcomes and experiences in school for children and young people living in poverty.
<b>Help young people participate effectively in education and training</b>	Increased emphasis on activities aimed at boosting education, training and skills for young people at risk of being NEET.	Prioritise the development of community-focused schools as major contributors to tackling child poverty and improving inclusion.	
<b>Reduce inequalities in health between children and between their parents, so far as necessary, to</b>	Greater acknowledgement of the wider benefits of work for families' health and wellbeing.	More emphasis on policies designed to improve nutrition amongst children and young people.  More emphasis on educating parents about the importance of diet	Maintaining focus on the health policies in place to meet the Assembly Government's health-related child poverty targets.  Continued emphasis on

Broad Aim	Priority Policy Actions for the Strategy		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
<b>ensure children's well-being</b>		and exercise, using a 'whole family' approach.	reducing health inequities between low income and other families.  <i>Deliver Our Healthy Future</i> , the new public health strategy for Wales.
<b>Reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between children's parents, so far as necessary, to ensure children's wellbeing</b>	Continued free access to low-income families to cultural, sporting and leisure activities.	Delivery and monitoring of the new duties on Welsh authorities, through the Children and Families (Wales) Measure.  Delivery of the new duties on Welsh authorities on play.	
<b>Help young persons participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their community</b>	Establish a new national survey of children and young people in Wales.	More action to raise the aspirations of children and young people living in Wales.	Build on the strong record of the Assembly Government to date in supporting children and young people's rights under Article 12 of the UNCRC.
<b>Ensure that all children grow up in decent housing</b>	Improvement in the administration of Housing Benefit and in take-up.  Increasing the amount and quality of affordable housing in Wales in line with the	Maintaining focus on policies in place to meet child poverty housing targets, which includes reducing the number of families in temporary accommodation and	

Broad Aim	Priority Policy Actions for the Strategy		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
	One Wales target.	those in overcrowded accommodation. Greater focus on those families living in social housing, where child poverty and economic inactivity is concentrated.	
<b>Ensure that all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities</b>		Support marginalised groups (including low income families) to encourage their full participation in community life.	

By prioritising the policy action set out in Table 3.1, 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.

### **3.6 Delivery at the Local Level**

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 co-ordinated 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.
- **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.

### **3.7 A Stronger Focus on Outcomes**

All local delivery models need to be more focussed on improving the outcomes of children and young people and their families living in poverty.

Our proposed priorities to achieve this are:

- (a) To develop a set of measures for Children and Young People's Plans that will link evidence of progress at the national and local level. This will include measures in relation to the 13 Broad Aims from the Children and Families (Wales) Measure and (where data are available) the strategic indicators set out in paragraph 3.4 above.

- (b) To support this by improving the evidence base where appropriate. Annex 1 to this Strategy has highlighted that children from families living in poverty tend to fall behind (in developmental terms) from an early age. It is particularly important, therefore, to have comparative data on the developmental outcomes of children living in poverty – at the local authority level. Proposals on how best to achieve this will be issued shortly.
- (c) To ensure performance management frameworks for education, health and social services are coherently aligned to support effective local delivery. We intend to run workshops with local delivery partners during the consultation period on our child poverty strategy to seek views on how current performance management frameworks could be improved.
- (d) To make much greater use of joint inspection by Estyn, CSSIW and HIW and others. This will help to put the spotlight on the effectiveness of joined-up delivery and local multi-agency delivery – in relation to key issues. This includes mental health services for children and the quality of childcare in the early years. The Welsh Assembly Government will be developing proposals (in conjunction with Estyn, CSSIW, HIW and others) to take this forward.
- (e) To highlight and disseminate good practice, identified not only through inspection but also from research and experience outside Wales. Views are invited on how best this can be achieved.
- (f) To focus with local delivery partners on what needs to be done to raise the skills of front line delivery staff.

Allied to this approach, we remain keen to encourage local shared budget arrangements. Given the current forecasts for pressures on public service spending, we need to explore creative ways to deliver more from the Welsh pound. The type of integrated joining up of delivery we are seeking provides opportunities to identify more efficient ways of working. We will seek views on this as part of the consultation process of the Child Poverty Strategy.

Chapter 10 of the accompanying Delivery Plan identifies how Children and Young People's Partnerships could be supported to develop more effective local delivery arrangements, including a coherent approach to evidencing progress.

In addition to reflecting the new duties on child poverty, the Children and Young People's Planning Guidance includes the following priority themes on which the Assembly Government will place particular emphasis, both in the context of child poverty and more generally. These are:

- Support for families, including parenting, childcare, financial and material wellbeing, and intervention when needed.
- Support for children with additional learning needs and/or disabilities.
- Support for the social, emotional and psychological needs of children and young people.
- Action to reduce the number of young people who are NEET and youth unemployment.



- Action to tackle educational underachievement.
- Support for interagency work on child protection.

There is a clear read across between these themes and our 13 Broad Aims for the eradication of child poverty.

