

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2)-07-06(p.3)Annex A

Child Poverty Implementation Plan – Phase 1 Proposals

Proposal	Implementation
General Policy Proposals	
<p>1. Child Poverty Proofing. All new Assembly Government initiatives and new spending commitments should be subjected to child poverty proofing'. As part of the policy development process the question will be asked: "What positive impact does this proposal have on the lives of the poorest children?". If the answer is 'none' then the proposal should be reconsidered. If the answer is in the affirmative, the proposal will also be reconsidered, with a view to increasing the positive benefit to the poorest children.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government's Policy Gateway Integration Tool already picks up some child proofing and poverty issues from a number of different angles. Officials will look at the tool to see whether existing questions could be strengthened or improved. Officials will examine whether responses to certain questions within the tool could act as a trigger to indicate that further child poverty proofing could be required.</p> <p>Officials will also consider the lessons learnt from the recent review of the Irish Government's Poverty Proofing Guidelines. The Irish Government have now launched revised guidelines for "Poverty Impact Assessment". The primary aim of the process is to identify the impact of policy proposals on those experiencing poverty or at risk of falling into poverty so that this can be given proper consideration in designing or reviewing policies and programmes. A discussion paper on the potential for introducing a similar process for the Welsh Assembly Government will be submitted to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration for consideration shortly.</p>

2. Programme Bending. Within the context of the targets and milestones adopted to measure progress on combating child poverty, the Assembly Government will change the pattern of spend of all current and continuing Assembly Government budgets and programmes to preferentially benefit the poorest children and their families. Each budget round to 2020 will review the extent of Programme Bending and seek to extend it. Programme bending will also entail the poorest children benefiting first and most from new all-Wales initiatives that may be piloted in certain areas, or rolled out gradually across the country. There is a need to reprioritise resources across the entire Welsh public sector to ensure that the needs of the poorest children are met first.

The implementation plan for tackling child poverty is not accompanied by any dedicated financial resources. Therefore, a key issue will be the active engagement and focus of mainstream programme resources on tackling the causes and consequences of child poverty. It is essential that the services and programmes of the Assembly Government, its agencies, local authorities and all other key partners are prioritised or 'bent' to favour activity that benefits the poorest and most disadvantaged children.

The need for programme bending requires a strong and lasting commitment across the Assembly Government, its agencies, local authorities and other key partners to ensure mainstream programmes are delivered in response to the needs identified in the child poverty implementation plan.

As a result of the 2004 Spending Review, the Assembly Government has already provided increased investment in children, especially in the early years, and a number of programmes are aimed at combating child poverty - notably Cymorth and Communities First.

Through the work of the cross-cutting Social Justice and Regeneration Policy Group and the Children and Young People's Co-ordinating Group Communities Directorate officials will regularly assess how existing and future policy can be developed to prioritise activity that will tackle child poverty. Through bi-lateral discussions with other Assembly Government Departments Communities Directorate officials will also advise on how policies and programmes for which those departments are responsible can be tailored to address the needs of the poorest children.

3. Milestones & Targets. The Assembly Government should seek to measure its progress towards the 2020 target of eliminating child poverty by instituting a series of medium-term milestones and longer-term targets. Progress should be reported annually through the Social Justice Annual Report. It is proposed that the Assembly Government emulates the Scottish model as a basis and develops targets covering a range of issues covering, health, education, housing and sports, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the issues that contribute to child poverty.

Existing, strategic targets and milestones will be gathered and reported on in the Social Justice Report but there would need to be further work involving officials across Assembly Departments to develop new targets and milestones.

It is understood that there was a Cabinet commitment in June 2005 to guard against the arbitrary setting of new targets.

In addition to setting targets and milestones to measure progress against objectives, it will be important to have robust evaluation of specific initiatives to tackle child poverty, in order to understand whether they are having the desired effect. This is critically important to the effective targeting of interventions, and ultimately the achievement of the strategy's aims.

4. Dignity for Children Programme. The Assembly Government will progressively co-ordinate its programmes to provide holistic 'wrap around' support for each child in poverty, their family and their community through a new Dignity Programme for children, to be rolled out after 2010. As the current figure of 170,000 children living in poverty diminishes it is likely that those remaining will be in the hardest to reach and in the most acute situation of poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, there will need to be an individually tailored package of support for each child and family. This reflects the approach to eradicating child poverty undertaken in Sweden – a country with the lowest child poverty rates in the world.

This is the adoption of community linked, multi-agency work that can identify those most at risk at an early stage and prevent social exclusion.

It is recommended that a new holistic intervention and support programme should be established, based on the 'On Track' research project operating at Tylerstown in the Rhondda and at Maesteg near Bridgend. That aim of the 'On Track' project is to prevent crime and anti-social behavior by targeting and delivering services to children aged between 4 and 12 years of age and their families who are considered to be at risk of becoming offenders later in life. The project is in its fifth year and it is intended that it will run for seven years.

The projects work closely with local partnerships of key statutory and voluntary agencies. Services provided include home visiting, parent- school partnerships, in-school support, pre-school education, parent training, family therapy, health and specialist services.

	<p>The objectives are to establish effective models for service delivery and inter-agency co-operation.</p> <p>Officials will consider the results of the ongoing evaluation of the ‘On Track’ project, and links with other programmes such as ‘Flying Start’, with a view to submitting further advice to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration on a wider programme for children living in the deepest poverty.</p>
<p>5. Social Equality by 2030. The Assembly Government should commit itself to a target beyond 2020; that there will be Social equality for all children in Wales up to the age of five by 2030. The achievement of such a target will mean that the key indicators of health, educational attainment, access to services etc will become disconnected from the accidental socio-economic circumstances into which the child is born, and will remain so, in this first instance, up until the age of 5.</p>	<p>Formal adoption of this commitment would fulfil the First Minister’s pledge to go beyond the UK child poverty target and further close the opportunity gap (particularly in terms of health and education) between the most affluent and poorest children.</p> <p>Success in achieving the target will depend upon continuing to mainstream Assembly Government resources to tackle the causes of child poverty combined with an ongoing commitment to targeted support programmes e.g Flying Start and Communities First and to services which support children in need, including disabled children, looked after children and care leavers, who have poorer life outcomes than their peers.</p>
<p>Specific Policy Proposals</p>	
<p>6. Family income maximisation initiatives. The Assembly Government will implement programmes of ‘family income maximisation’ working with partners in the voluntary and statutory sectors, as well as Communities First Partnerships where appropriate. These programmes will encompass benefit advice, debt advice, better financial education, and an expansion in the Credit Union movement, to put Credit Unions within reach of every low income family.</p>	<p>A mapping exercise underway on the availability and scope of advice services (including welfare/benefit/debt advice) will inform this work. Communities Directorate officials will work with partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions, Legal Services Commission and Citizens Advice Cymru to explore the possibility of a family income maximisation programme focussed on the most deprived communities. It will be important to link this work into the LSC's Strategy for the Community Legal Service, including the establishment of Community Legal</p>

Advice Centres (CLACs) and Networks (CLANs) across Wales. Officials have already flagged up the importance of family income maximisation initiatives in this context and established that alternative delivery locations (i. e. in Integrated Children's Centres or Flying Start Schools) will be important in getting services through to the most disadvantaged people. Pilot CLANs and CLACs are due to start in Wales from during 2006-07

It will also be important to link this work with the commitment in the Assembly Government's Childcare Strategy to raise awareness amongst low income families about help with childcare costs through the tax and benefit system (Proposal 8 below).

7. Public Sector Career Ladders. The Assembly Government will develop proposals to boost the career development of the lowest paid

by the installation of 'career ladders' in the Welsh public sector, based on the model of the Scottish NHS.

Communities Directorate officials will work with colleagues in Public Sector Management Wales Division and the Scottish Executive to explore the best model for taking this proposal forward. We will work with the trades unions to ensure that a social partnership approach is developed to this dimension of our action on child poverty.

8. Integrated Children's Centres and Flying Start Schools. The Assembly Government will examine the future role of Integrated Children's Centres and associated outreach work, as well as the role of 'Flying Start' schools in the delivery of child poverty initiatives such as family income maximisation, basic skills provision (including financial literacy) and increasing the take up of the Child Trust Fund in Wales.

The Assembly Government childcare strategy "Childcare is for Children" recognises that significant numbers of parents on low incomes do not know about help with childcare costs from the tax credit system. It commits to working to ensure that Flying Start, integrated centres and childcare settings play their part in initiatives to maximise income through face to face advice, and mounting a communications campaign regarding the Working Tax Credit.

Communities Directorate officials will need to work colleagues in the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills to take this proposal forward and ensure that it complements the work to be undertaken on wider advice services (Proposal 6 above).

Officials will also liaise with HM Customs and Revenue on the Child Trust Fund recommendation.

9. Increasing Arts and Sport Council activity in deprived communities. The Assembly Government will establish a target –driven role for the Arts and Sports Councils for Wales in Communities First areas and in town centres that serve them.

All Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) are formally required, as a condition of their annual budget allocation, to prioritise Communities First areas in their own programmes. The Communities Directorate has regular bilateral meetings with officials from ASPBs to advise on how that requirement can be implemented through the ASPB's own programmes.

The Arts Council of Wales major arts participation survey "The Arts in Wales" shows that there are clear discrepancies in both attendance and participation in the arts based on geographical location and social grade. Someone in a managerial or professional occupation is three times more likely to benefit from public money invested in the arts than someone living in a Communities First area.

The Assembly Government is committed to addressing social inequalities in access to the arts and culture in Wales. The Culture Minister has remitted the Arts Council of Wales to "actively address participation rates for social groups and individuals who have traditionally had fewer opportunities and greater obstacles. The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) regularly reports to the Culture Committee on work it has undertaken in Communities First areas. SCW has been tasked with delivering 'Climbing Higher' targets of a 20% increase in adult activity levels as well as giving priority to access for the most excluded/disadvantaged.

The actions to be taken in the fields of arts and sports bodies may act as a model for focusing the attention of other Government-sponsored organisations on the child poverty agenda.

10. Review of Cymorth. The Assembly Government will review the role of Cymorth and its relationship to the Communities First programme.

The first stage evaluation report of the Children and Young People's Framework partnerships and Cymorth suggested that there was a need for greater clarity between Communities First, Cymorth and the wider children and young people's planning processes. A response to this report has been agreed at the Cabinet Subcommittee for Children and Young People. Officials from DELLS and SJR will work together to review the interlinking of these programmes.

11. Summer Holiday Activities. The Assembly Government will work in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association to set minimum standards for structured provision of summer holiday activities.

The Assembly Government's play strategy "Play in Wales" commits to develop standards for a wide variety of play provision, that will be mandatory for play funded by specific grant and will give a lead to other provision. They will encourage children and young people to be included in planning and designing local play facilities. However, there is no funding currently identified to establish a requirement for the provision of summer holiday playschemes. Many such schemes are currently funded with the assistance of Cymorth funding; others are funded at LA discretion from mainstream recreation resources.

The Assembly Government also provides funding of £250,000 per annum for ContinYou Cymru (a registered charity and the Welsh arm of one of the UK's leading community organisations) to provide support and guidance to schools, LEAs and partner organisations in the sustainability and development of out of school hours learning.

The aim is to provide opportunities and activities that young people take part in voluntarily outside normal school lessons. These activities may take place before the start of the school day, at lunch-times, after school, at weekends or during school holidays. Activities cover a wide range of interests and purposes including

	<p>sporting and outdoor activities, play development, catch-up educational programmes, residential programmes and community services/ volunteering schemes</p>
<p>12. Play Provision. The Assembly Government will require local authorities across Wales to provide good quality outdoor play areas, with an immediate emphasis on the most deprived communities.</p>	<p>The play strategy commits to including in the Children Act 2004 statutory planning guidance a requirement for local partners to co-operate in the planning for children’s play needs. There is work in hand to set standards of quality but no current funding available to impose a requirement for local authorities to provide.</p> <p>Communities Directorate officials will work with colleagues in the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and the WLGA to explore the scope for taking this proposal further forward.</p>
<p>13. Children’s Review of Planning Law Guidance. The Assembly Government will develop new terms of reference for a review of planning law in Wales with the aim of promoting play and road safety as well as physical regeneration, with an immediate focus on the needs of deprived communities.</p>	<p>Communities Directorate officials will work with colleagues in the Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside to explore the possibility of such a review.</p> <p>Officials are currently reviewing the Technical Advice Note (TAN) dealing with sport and recreation and, as part of this, children’s needs will be considered; this is due for consultation in the summer. Planning policy covers physical regeneration and aims to cater for the needs of all sections of the community, including children.</p> <p>EPC officials will work closely with the Communities Directorate with regard to reviewing planning guidance, particularly those aspects relating to children</p>