

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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

Targets & Milestones – Measuring Success

In order to create the policies that will give our children the best start in life, we must first better understand the barriers they currently face – there is no simple definition of poverty.

When we say that one in four children in Wales is living in poverty for example, what does that mean? This figure refers to the most simple and most commonly used indicator of income poverty. That is to say those children live in a household where the income is below 60% of the median household income in the current year.

The statistics used to measure poverty in the UK are based on the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data published by the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government – A Fair Future for Our Children – proposes adopting the DWP tiered approach to measuring child poverty, rather than income poverty on its own. This covers:

An indicator of absolute low income

- the number of children living in households with an income below £210 per week (present value).

Relative low income

- children living in households with an income below 60% of median equivalised household income before housing costs. This is the most widely used indicator in the EU.

Material deprivation

- children living in households that lack certain goods and services and have an income below 70% median equivalised household income. This attempts to measure living standards as well as relative income.

In addition to these three main indicators, this Implementation Plan proposes the development of a set of key targets and milestones against which our commitment to eradicate child poverty can be measured and assessed. The text below sets out four major policy area where this approach will be applied, and identifies a number of key target areas. It proposes a format in which targets will be developed,

identifying the current position, and setting a medium term milestone (2010) and long term (2020) target, to which the Assembly Government would commit itself. The specific milestones to be set out within each policy area will be the subject of discussion with stakeholders in general and with those organisations involved in the preparation of the Child Poverty Strategy, in particular.

A. Income & Work

1. Number of children in relative low-income households

Most recent figures show that child poverty in Wales has fallen further and faster than any other part of the United Kingdom, and now stands at the UK average. Milestones will be set to reduce this proportion further, in line with the commitment to abolish child poverty within a generation.

2. Proportion of children living in workless households

In Spring 2005, 17.3% of children in Wales lived in workless households compared to 16.0% in the UK as a whole. Milestones will be set to bring the Welsh figure to the UK position and to reduce it further.

3. Benefit take up

A higher proportion of the population in Wales relies upon benefits for weekly income, but there are key benefits where take-up lags behind the UK average. Milestones will be set to increase the take-up of relevant tax credit and benefits – Housing Benefit, Income Support and so on – relevant to children and families.

4. Access to registered Childcare places

More childcare places are needed to reduce barriers to work. The poorest communities currently have the lowest number of childcare places. Milestones will be set to increase the overall pool of childcare places and to give priority to the poorest communities.

5. Child Trust Fund

Deposits of Child Trust Fund vouchers have been lowest in most disadvantaged areas. Yet research clearly demonstrates that children from least well-off families have most to gain from asset based welfare policies. We will work with the credit union movement to increase the deposit rate of the CTF in Wales, and to do so in a manner which increases the collective use which can be made of this substantial new asset.

B. Education

1. Early Years

We will establish and develop the Flying Start programme for 0 – 3 year olds, with a renewed focus on early years intervention for those children identified at social and educational ‘risk’. We will roll out the radical Foundation Phase programme to all primary schools in Wales, to build further on the investment which Flying Start will have provided. We will set milestones for the development of these early years programmes and for benefits which they will bring to disadvantaged children.

2. Attainment in primary schools

The number of 7 year olds attaining level 4 at key stage 2 provides a powerful predictor of later attainment. Through our investment in early years and primary education we will set milestones and targets to reduce the proportion of children who fail to attain this level in English or Welsh, Maths and Science, beginning with those schools located within Flying Start areas.

3. Attainment in secondary schools

Assisted by the new funding available through the Assembly Government’s RAISE programme, we will set new milestones and targets for achievement at secondary school level. We will develop a portfolio of indicators, based on average point scores in GCSE, Vocational and other qualifications, and within the new 14 – 19 curriculum, to ensure that young people are properly rewarded for their skills and abilities and are provided with the help they need to improve educational attainment. In particular, we will set targets to reduce the proportion of children leaving secondary education in Wales without qualifications of any kind.

4. Number of 16-18 year olds not in Employment, Training or Education

The responsibility of government does not end when young people conclude their compulsory education. Young people not in employment, training or education are concentrated in particular communities and are disproportionately drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will set new milestones and targets to reduce the proportion of young people in this position in Wales, starting with those areas where current non-engagement is most concentrated.

5. Entry into Further and Higher Education

The Rees Report demonstrated that, for the most part, young people from all communities in Wales who have the necessary qualifications at the age of 18 proceed to higher education. The task for government in Wales is to increase the proportion of young people from disadvantaged communities who reach the age of 18 in that position. This requires the development of new and flexible pathways at school and at further education. We will set new targets and milestones for participation and achievement in both further and higher education, so as to ensure that young people from the whole of Wales have more equal chances of making the most of their talents and abilities.

6. Educational attainment for looked after children

Up to March 31 2005, only 35% of looked after children in Wales achieved 2 GCSEs. The Welsh Assembly Government has an existing target is 75%. Of looked after children, those leaving school in the same year, 58% failed to achieve a single GCSE or equivalent qualification. Using the new £1 million pound investment set aside for improving the educational attainment of looked-after children we will set new targets and milestones for the reduction of those social and educational barriers to achievement amongst the looked-after population, and a subsequent increase in attainment. The Welsh Assembly Government has set up a Stakeholder Group which will look at this aspect as part of an overview of all areas of the education of looked after children.

7. Educational attainment amongst adults

Living conditions for children depend most crucially upon the earning power of their parents. Adult earnings, in turn, depend most closely upon the skills which parents can use to obtain employment and command an income. We will set targets and milestones to reduce the number of working age adults in Wales with no qualifications and to increase the participation rates in adult learning.

C. Housing

1. Number of families with children living in temporary accommodation in Wales

In 2004-05 there were 9,856 households accepted as homeless. 4,638 (47per cent) were households with dependent children or a pregnant household member.

There were 3,349 households in temporary accommodation in Wales at the end of March 2005 compared with 2,890 a year earlier.

Within this total there were 761 households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation (up from 691 households at end March 2004); 242 of these households were families with children.

Milestones will be set to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children and thereafter to reduce the reliance upon temporary accommodation more generally

2. Number of Children living in Overcrowded Conditions

Currently 83% of households in Wales classified as living in overcrowded conditions (failing to meet the bedroom standard) have dependent children. [Milestones will be set to reduce the number of children living in households that are overcrowded.](#)

D. Health

1. Infant mortality rates

Infant mortality rates in Wales are below those in other UK countries, but rates vary widely within Wales. Milestones will be set to reduce the rate of infant mortality in poorest communities, to bring them in line with those in the best off households in Wales

2. Low Birth Weight

Babies with low weight at birth are known to be at higher risk of a range of problematic health outcomes. We will set milestones and targets to raise the birth weight of those in the lowest quartile, aiming to bring them in line with the current average.

3. Teenage Birth (<16)

At present Wales has high levels of teenage pregnancy and rates are highest of all in the most disadvantaged areas. Milestones will be set to reduce variation between local health board areas, and to reduce the rates in all areas.

4. Childhood Obesity (10-15)

Childhood obesity is becoming more common not only in Wales, but throughout the developed world. We will set milestones to reduce the prevalence here in Wales.

5. Levels of dental decay amongst children living in Wales

There is a widening gap between the oral health of children from the least well off and the most well off families in Wales. We will set targets and milestones to reduce that gap, building on the successful dental fissure sealant scheme and other oral health initiatives.

6. Childhood accidents

Accidents in childhood do not fall at random across the population. Children from poorest homes are most likely to suffer from accidents, both within the home and outside. The Chief Medical Officer has already set a target for a reduction in pedestrian injuries to children aged 0 – 14 from motor vehicle accidents of 35% by 2012, with additional commitments to reducing the incidence, severity and mortality ratios in those communities where health outcomes are worst. We will develop these targets and milestones, so as to reduce further the impact of accidents upon poorest children.