

Social Justice & Regeneration Committee

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Date: 19 October 2006

Venue: National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Title: Child Poverty Implementation Plan: Update on progress

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Committee on the progress being made in taking forward the first phase of proposals within the Child Poverty Implementation Plan.

Summary / Recommendations

Committee Members are asked to note the progress to date.

Background

The Child Poverty Implementation Plan developed by the Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration contains a range of general and specific policy proposals. Phase 1 of the Plan was considered and agreed by Cabinet on 3 April 2006 and subsequently presented to this Committee on 3 May. Communities Directorate officials are in the process of implementing the proposals in conjunction with colleagues from across Assembly Government Departments.

Consideration

Milestones & Targets

Alongside the general and specific policy proposals contained in the Plan, Cabinet agreed that the Deputy Minister should seek to pull together a range of cross-cutting 2010 milestones and 2020 targets to measure progress towards the Assembly Government's stated goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020. The proposed milestones and targets cover four main policy areas of Income and Work; Education; Health; and Housing.

During June and July the Deputy Minister has held a series of bi-lateral meetings with the Ministers for Education and Lifelong Learning; Environment Planning and Countryside; Health and Social Services; Enterprise, Innovation and Networks and with the First Minister to agree the milestones and targets that the Assembly Government would adopt to measure progress in reducing child poverty. In the main, the proposed targets have been taken from existing targets agreed with relevant portfolio Ministers and are informed

by Departmental strategic plans such as the 'The Learning Country 2'. The milestones and targets paper will incorporate commitments on child poverty reduction from a number of my Cabinet colleagues and commits the Assembly Government to monitor our progress regularly in achieving these milestones and targets. The paper is scheduled to be launched by my Deputy Minister on Monday, 23 October in the Senedd.

Child Poverty Proofing

The first of the general policy proposals contained in the Deputy Minister's Plan recommends that all new Assembly Government initiatives and new spending commitments should be child poverty proofed. Agreement has been reached to revise the existing Policy Gateway Tool - used by officials to ensure policies are developed and delivered to meet the Assembly Government's strategic agenda and its commitments to sustainable development, equality of opportunity and social justice - to address deprivation and child poverty. One question now addresses the policy impact specifically on deprived communities and the other on the eradication of poverty – especially in respect of children and their families. This not only highlights child poverty, but also addresses the issue that not all deprived people are part of a deprived community. Information about what can be done to help eradicate child poverty will also be incorporated into the general guidance on the Policy Gateway to raise awareness of the issues relating to child poverty and what officials need to do to make sure their policies are better addressing the issue

The Policy Gateway process and the tool itself will be reviewed early in the Assembly Government's third term. My officials have re-iterated that the impact of new policies on child poverty should be a strong feature in any new tool and in the accompanying guidance adopted by the Assembly Government.

In addition, an exercise has been undertaken within my portfolio to identify spending on children's service and initiatives. This will inform work being taken forward across the Assembly Government and will be the subject of a paper to be presented to the Cabinet Sub Committee on Children and Young People in the near future.

Government of Wales Act

During its consideration of the Plan, Cabinet also agreed that the Deputy Minister should be encouraged to consider and consult key partners on the potential use of new Government of Wales Act powers to implement more far-reaching proposals, post 2007, to combat child poverty. During July, the Deputy Minister met a range of organisations, such as the umbrella End Child Poverty Network, Save the Children and the WLGA to elicit views on this issue, including a proposal to demand of the public sector a minimum level of engagement with children in poverty.

In addition to consideration of a potential legislative measure, unique to Wales, other non-legislative processes are under consideration. For example, and in the context of the recommendations emanating from the Beecham Review, this could involve including targets or standards to reduce child poverty as part of the development of 'Partnership Action Contracts' which seek to deliver agreed national and local outcomes shared between service providers. My officials are also involved

in developing guidance on the preparation of Children and Young People's Plans, under the Children Act 2004 where it is proposed to introduce a requirement for strategic planning in respect of child poverty.

Other issues

Research has been instigated into public sector career ladders and into the potential to pilot the proposed Dignity for Children Programme. Building on the success of the "On Track" model this aims to provide a holistic 'wrap around' support system for each child in poverty, their family and their community. Advice has been provided in the development of a range of policies and documents including the Technical Advice Notes on Sport on Recreation and Transport.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

Cross Cutting Themes

The nature of child poverty policy is that it is cross-cutting in scope. Equality of opportunity and sustainable development will also be considered in further developing and implementing the proposals.

Action for Subject Committee

The Committee is asked to note the progress to date and the proposed further action.

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