

The Joint Agreement on Child Poverty

Objective

The objective of the Joint Agreement is to demonstrate high level agreement from both the Welsh Assembly Government and other organisations to the shared goal of eradicating child poverty.

Policy Context

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to working to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and halving it (against the 1997 rate) by 2010. Many of the means of achieving this ambitious goal lie in the hands of the UK Government. However there remains much that can be done to tackle child poverty in Wales through action across the Welsh public sector. It requires strong partnership working within the Assembly Government itself and with its external partners.

The *One Wales* document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals to create a fair and just society and underlines the need for cross-cutting policies and programmes to tackle child poverty. The Assembly Government's agenda for improving the lives of children and young people has been set out in a number of key documents. *Children and Young People: Rights to Action* (January 2004) sets out a commitment to the UN Convention on the rights of the Child which has been translated into seven core aims. Core Aim 7 reflects the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment that no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty.

The Assembly Government's *Child Poverty Strategy* (February 2005) identified three aspects of poverty around which action should be focused – income poverty, participation poverty and service poverty. Policy has also been shaped by the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* (May, 2006) and the associated 2010 milestones and 2020 targets paper, *Eradicating Child Poverty – Measuring Success* (October 2006)

The Children Act 2004 provided legislation for Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) and guidance sets out the role of Children and Young People's Partnerships in developing local action to address child poverty. Local authorities and their partners are required to work together to decide on strategic vision for services, priorities and targets to improve the lives of children and young people. Agreed priorities in respect of action on child poverty are set out under Core Aim 7 in the Plan but actions in other sections of the plan which also have an impact on child poverty are cross-referenced to Core Aim 7.

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales (February 2006) aims to contribute to the achievement of the seven core aims for children and young people by improving quality and reducing variations in service delivery through the setting of national standards. These standards have been set not just for health and social care but also for other local government services which have a strong influence on the health and well-being of children, such as education, housing, leisure and transport.

Other key strategies which play a role in defining the Assembly Government's approach to tackling child poverty are the *Appetite for Life Action Plan* (February 2008), *Local Vision, statutory guidance on developing and delivering community strategies* (March 2008), *Spatial Plan* (March 2006), *Designed for Life – a World Class Health Service for Wales* (April 2005), *All Wales Youth Offending Strategy* (June 2004) and *Extending Entitlement, support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales* (July, 2002). In addition the *Public Health Strategic Framework for Wales* which is currently under development has a Task and Finish group on Children and Young People.

An assessment of the Welsh Assembly Government's progress to date on tackling child poverty and its future direction is outlined in a Written Statement (February 2008) which was issued by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government. The Written Statement sets out a three strand approach to tackling child poverty:

- Strand 1 – Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people;
- Strand 2 – Financial inclusion initiatives;
- Strand 3 – Encouraging greater uptake of the UK Government tax and benefits support.

A further Written Statement providing an update on key issues was published on 16 July 2008.

From November 2008 progress on cross-cutting child poverty targets will be measured by a three yearly Child Well-being Monitor.

Funding

The funding of the Welsh Assembly Government's commitments below has already been agreed and will be delivered as part of existing programmes. Similarly public agencies will use existing budgets to deliver their actions on child poverty.

Welsh Assembly Government's commitments

The 2008 Written Statement asserts that eradicating poverty and improving the life chances of our children and young people is at the top of the list of priorities for the Assembly Government but acknowledges that tackling child poverty in all its forms is both complex and cross-cutting. The Written Statement sets out the detailed work programme that the Welsh Assembly Government has put in place to tackle child poverty.

To assist in reaching the 2020 goal of eradicating child poverty and to provide strategic direction to other organisations in Wales on child poverty, the Welsh Assembly Government commits to:

- Provide leadership and strategic direction to the public sector in Wales towards the aim of tackling and eventually eradicating child poverty.

- Maintain the Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People to make sure that cross-cutting responsibilities for children and young people, including in respect of child poverty, are co-ordinated effectively across government.
- Work closely with other UK Government departments to explore shared solutions to reach our child poverty objectives through the work of the Four Nations Forum on Child Poverty.
- Implement the Child Poverty Strategy, *A Fair Future for our Children* by focusing policies and programmes on combating income poverty, participation poverty and service poverty.
- Ensure that the policy proposals set out in the *Child Poverty Implementation Plan* are taken forward as part of the wider action to tackle child poverty.
- Monitor progress against milestones and targets in *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success* through the Child Well Being Monitor for Wales from 2008.
- Support the Child Poverty Expert Group to monitor the targets and provide the Assembly Government with evidence based advice on further and wider policy requirements necessary to meet the targets drawing on national and international evidence.
- Deliver a financial inclusion strategy to ensure an integrated approach to family income maximisation.
- Develop and implement a coherent set of policies, programmes and individual grant schemes which contribute to the reduction of poverty and work with partners to ensure continued effectiveness when funding is mainstreamed as part of ongoing grants.
- Ensure the challenges and needs of children and young people in rural areas are considered and addressed.
- Ensure that a coherent Assembly Government approach and local joint action are reflected in Children and Young People's Plans that effectively demonstrate progress against Core Aim 7 outcome measures, some of which are yet to be developed.
- Monitor, evaluate and provide a strategic overview of the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales*.
- Support the ongoing learning from the Save the Children-led project established to support action to reduce child poverty at the local level.
- Work with non-devolved agencies which operate within Wales to influence their policies in order that they also prioritise work to eradicate child poverty.

Other organisations' commitments

A wide variety of organisations work with the Welsh Assembly Government and other partners to reduce child poverty in Wales including local authorities, NHS

trusts, local health boards, the police, fire and rescue services, town and community councils and third sector organisations. Many of these work together through Children and Young People's Partnerships, Communities First Partnerships, Local Service Boards or Community Planning Partnerships to ensure a holistic approach to child poverty. A number of organisations are already committed to existing statutory duties that impact on tackling child poverty. The aim is to ensure that all public organisations that shape the outcomes of children living in poverty co-operate to prioritise their needs.

Signatories agree that the following activities provide a means for organisations, where appropriate, to assist the Welsh Assembly Government to take forward the Three Strand approach to child poverty outlined in the 2008 Written Statement.

Strand 1: Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people

- Ensure that, as far as possible, the policies and initiatives developed by the organisation make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people living in poverty.
- Develop, monitor and evaluate initiatives that will improve outcomes for those children and young people living in poverty in line with existing policy requirements.
- Monitor and improve on the numbers of children and young people who live in poverty and participate in schemes or initiatives that are open to all children and young people.
- Provide training and development to appropriate staff involved in outreach work so that they are able to understand the needs of children and young people living in poverty and respond to those needs.
- Ensure that organisations are visible and accessible to the community, thereby encouraging integration with children and young people living in poverty and encouraging them to take-up the opportunities provided by the organisation.
- Involve children and young people in the development and assessment of appropriate strategies in order to ensure such strategies are 'fit for purpose' and that the children and young people themselves benefit from their participation.
- Prioritise Communities First areas in annual programmes whilst recognising there are pockets of deprivation elsewhere in the local areas
- Ensure that children and young people can access services that promote health and well-being and prevent ill-health.
- Reduce the number of children and young people who are homeless or living in inappropriate accommodation.
- Take action as an organisation and work with the families of children and young people living in poverty to help them lead safer lives.
- Support partners to help them meet their child poverty objectives.

Strands 2 & 3: Financial inclusion & greater uptake of UK Government tax & benefit support

- Promote the take-up of benefits and tax credits.
- Ensure that administration processes relating to benefits for families with children are efficient and effective, drawing on best practice available elsewhere.
- Ensure the provision of free structured activities for all children and young people which will particularly benefit those living in poverty
- Train relevant professionals to identify when children and young people are living in income poverty and to advise families (via an informal signposting system) which agencies will be able to help reduce the level of poverty.
- Promote initiatives that will help the financial well being of families including ensuring that people have appropriate skills in place and providing training to help increase skill levels.
- Develop recruitment methods and provide working opportunities that will benefit the parents of children and young people living in poverty.
- Encourage and publicise initiatives to reduce the costs of education.
- Undertake research and evaluation into how children and young people can be lifted out of poverty thereby producing an evidence base that could be used to influence policy development.

For more information on the Joint Agreement, visit our WebPages at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/childpoverty/?jsessionid=xhDDJLmB1G2rHh1hGGYvy1Wd1cdjJwL2zGQT7mMGJL9f91nt1kvV!-1868201774?lang=en>

Or contact us at:

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