

Cylchlythyr | Circular

HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy

Date: 03 February 2012
Reference: W12/06HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales and other interested parties
Response by: **09 March 2012**
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This circular sets out for consultation HEFCW's draft Child Poverty Strategy and it seeks to engage Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Institutions and other parties, including those with an interest in equality and diversity issues, in the further development of this Strategy.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular sets out for consultation HEFCW's draft Child Poverty Strategy and it seeks to engage Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Institutions and other parties, including those with an interest in equality and diversity issues, in the further development of this Strategy.
2. HEFCW's draft Child Poverty Strategy is attached as **Annex A**. The Strategy is in draft form to enable us to take account of consultation and engagement responses we receive, prior to publishing the final Child Poverty Strategy by 31 March 2012

Background

3. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body (WGSB). We are supported by the Welsh Government and others to use funding strategically to enable universities and colleges to deliver high quality teaching, learning and research and to ensure that they effectively to the culture, society and economy of Wales.¹
4. Our draft Child Poverty Strategy sets out how HEFCW is required by the Welsh Government, to produce, consult on and publish its Child Poverty Strategy by 31 March 2012.
5. This Strategy sits beneath our *Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13*². It sits alongside the *HEFCW Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education, published in February 2011*³.
6. The Strategy's purpose is to promote a clear understanding of our commitment and contribution to eradicating child poverty.

About HEFCW's commitment to equality and diversity

7. HEFCW's Equality Scheme confirms our commitment and statutory responsibilities in relation to the 2010 Equality Act. However, our strategic intentions extend beyond compliance. To further inform our understanding of the nature of, and trends in, under-representation, we work with universities and colleges in Wales, and other relevant bodies, to ensure that our policies and practices take account of the needs of individuals under-represented in higher education, including individuals with protected characteristics. We support higher education institutions to protect and respect the rights of all groups in society and to be fair and transparent in their treatment of all applicants and students.

¹ Further information about HEFCW can be found at: www.hefcw.ac.uk

² HEFCW's Corporate Strategy can be found at http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/corporate_documents/corporate_documents.aspx

³ HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education can be found http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars_2011.aspx

Policy development and timeline

8. HEFCW's draft Child Poverty Strategy has been developed in consultation with its Council and Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC). Officers have also discussed the draft with a number of individuals and organisations during its development.
9. Given the extent of the consultation we have already undertaken in relation to the strategic priorities and initial actions, we are confident that our draft Child Poverty Strategy will make a positive contribution to the Welsh Government target to eradicate child poverty by 2020.
10. As part of our policy development processes, we have undertaken an internal equality impact screening to consider its impact on individuals with protected characteristics and individuals under-represented in higher education. While no issues of concern were raised, given the significance of the policy document, the panel recommended that we invite wider engagement in the development of the draft Strategy.
11. In addition to our usual consultation processes, we are inviting responses specifically on the equality and diversity implications of the draft Strategy. This level of engagement aims to ensure that the draft Strategy, and its implementation, does not impact negatively on, nor has unintended consequences for, individuals with protected characteristics or individuals under-represented in higher education. We also welcome comments more generally on the content of the Child Poverty Strategy as a whole.
12. Following the consultation and engagement process, we will revise the draft Strategy to take account of the feedback received. The final Strategy will be published by 31 March 2012, following approval by our Council.

Equality and diversity implications of the draft strategy

13. In responding to this circular, we would particularly welcome your views, on the Strategy, including:
 - i. the extent to which the Strategy will contribute to the Welsh Government's intentions to eradicate child poverty in Wales by 2020;
 - ii. the extent to which the Strategy will encourage cultural change and proactive approaches, thereby ensuring that actions contributing to the eradication of child poverty are fully integrated into our own and the higher education sector's policies and priorities;
 - iii. the extent to which our proposed strategic objectives and priorities will help young people participate effectively in education and training; and

- iv. whether there are any aspects of the Strategy or its implementation that might impact negatively on, or have unintended consequences for, individuals with protected characteristics or individuals under-represented in higher education.

Further information / responses to

- 14. Email responses should be sent to rachel.ogorman@hefcw.ac.uk by **9 March 2012**.
- 15. For further information, contact Jane Johns (tel 029 2068 2219; email jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk).

HEFCW's Draft Child Poverty Strategy 2012/13 to 2013/14¹

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

1. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body responsible for funding higher education (HE) in Wales². As such, we receive funding from, and are accountable to, the Welsh Government. We are an intermediary body between the Welsh Government and the higher education sector in Wales. We provide advice to the Welsh Government on the funding needs and wider concerns of the HE sector and we promote Welsh interests in the wider UK HE area.
2. We distribute funds for education, research and related activities at eleven higher education institutions. We also fund higher education courses at further education colleges. Our vision is to develop and sustain internationally excellent higher education in Wales, for the benefit of individuals, society and the economy, in Wales and more widely. Our Corporate Strategy 2010/11 to 2012/13 sets out our strategic actions to deliver the Welsh Government's Strategy for Higher Education *For our Future: The Twenty First Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*, published in November 2009³.
3. Through our funding system, HEFCW supports the HE sector in Wales in a number of priority areas set by the Welsh Government, including promoting learning and teaching development, particularly the quality of the learning experience, encouraging activities in higher education that support business and the community; and widening access to higher education.
4. We will manage our contribution to the eradication of child poverty through our widening access policy area, including the Reaching Wider Programme. Our widening access policies are designed to ensure equity, opportunity and success in higher education for learners. Our priority is to ensure that learners, across all age ranges and backgrounds, fulfil their potential as students, lifelong learners, citizens and employees, regardless of perceived or actual social and/or economic barriers.
5. Our Reaching Wider Programme was established in 2002, as a widening access mechanism to raise educational aspirations and widen access to learning. The Reaching Wider Programme provides a higher education-led regional, collaborative approach to widening access to higher education. The three Reaching Wider Partnerships, in north and mid, south east and south west Wales, include members from further education institutions, schools, local authorities and other education providers.
6. HEFCW is committed to working with the Welsh Government, Welsh higher education institutions and other stakeholders to contribute to the Welsh

¹ The Child Poverty Strategy relates to the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014. This period is within the academic years 2012/13 to 2013/14.

² For further information about HEFCW see: www.hefcw.ac.uk

³ The Welsh Government Strategy for Higher Education: [For our Future](#)

Government's anti-poverty agendas, including contributing to the eradication of child poverty.

Introduction

7. HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy sets out our intentions to contribute to delivering the Welsh Government's commitment to the eradication of child poverty, as set out in its *Child Poverty Strategy for Wales*⁴. Our Strategy fulfils a statutory duty on us as a 'Welsh Authority' to publish a Child Poverty Strategy⁵.
8. This Strategy sits beneath our Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13.⁶ It should be read in conjunction with *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education*⁷ (known as our *WA Approach*), which provides a complete picture of our widening access strategic intentions.
9. The purpose of this Strategy is to promote a clear understanding of our commitment to the eradication of child poverty to the higher education (HE) sector, our partners and for learners. Our intention in establishing the Strategy is to be: challenging in our aspirations; clear on our agenda for action; realistic in managing expectations; and transparent in providing a mechanism for measuring progress and demonstrating success.
10. This Strategy has been informed by HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee and discussions with a range of individuals and organisations. It has been subject to statutory consultation and engagement with the Welsh Government and Local Authorities⁸. In addition we have engaged with a range of stakeholders and undertaken a full equalities impact assessment.
11. We recognise the links between issues of equality of opportunity and access to employment, with higher percentages of people with some protected characteristics being in low paid employment or workless⁹.

Background

Definitions of Poverty and the Eradication of Poverty

12. Definitions of poverty are usually based on household income data. The main measure is 60% of median UK household income, after adjustment has been made for household size. The latest available figures, for 2009/10, set the cash figures at 60% median income per week at:

⁴ [Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy](#)

⁵ Section 5 of The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 outlines the specific duties on Welsh Authorities, including HEFCW.

⁶ [HEFCW Corporate Strategy 2010/11 – 2012/13](#)

⁷ [HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education](#)

⁸ Please note this paragraph sets out our intentions to engage stakeholders in the development of this Strategy.

⁹ [An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in Wales](#) (May 2011), Welsh Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods.

- £256 for a lone parent with two dependent children under 14 years;
 - £346 for a couple with two dependent children under 14 years¹⁰.
13. 'Eradication' of child poverty is defined by the Welsh Government as no more than 5% of children living in low-income households¹¹.

Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy

14. In November 2009 the National Assembly for Wales passed the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 making statutory provision to take forward the Welsh Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty in Wales by 2020. It also requires Welsh Ministers to produce a Child Poverty Strategy.
15. The Welsh Government consulted on its Child Poverty Strategy and Draft Plan in August 2010 and HEFCW's response to the consultation is available from us. The Strategy set out the Welsh Government's intention to establish a statutory framework to harness action on child poverty across Welsh Authorities¹².
16. The Measure places a duty on Welsh Authorities to produce a child poverty strategy and to demonstrate how they intend to improve the life chances of children and young people¹³. Welsh Authorities, such as HEFCW, must identify one or more aims of the Measure, most relevant to their business, and set out their priorities, objectives, actions and functions to be exercised in contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales.
17. The 13 broad aims of the Measure, listed in **Appendix A**, recognise that the causes and effects of child poverty are complex, multi-faceted and inter-related.
18. The Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy for Wales identifies the following three strategic objectives which will deliver the 13 broad aims of the Measure to:
- i. reduce the number of families living in workless households;
 - ii. improve the skill level of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment;

¹⁰ These figures are net of income and council tax and after housing costs (largely rent or mortgage interest) have been paid. Statistics are also published on a 'before housing costs' basis and this latter definition is used by the Welsh Government in defining the 'eradication' of child poverty in Wales.

¹¹ This definition of low income household is on a 'before housing cost' basis,

¹² Welsh authorities are defined in section 6 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 as: 'The Welsh Ministers; A Local Authority; A Local Health Board; A Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority; A National Park Authority in Wales; The Countryside Council for Wales; The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; The Public Health Wales National Health Service Trust; The National Museum of Wales; The Arts Council of Wales; The National Library of Wales; The Sports Council for Wales.

¹³ Welsh Ministers and Local Authorities have their own specific duties and guidance. Welsh Authorities which are members of Children and Young People's Partnerships are exempt from producing these strategies.

- iii. reduce the inequalities that exist in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.
19. Welsh Authorities are required to demonstrate how their strategic priorities contribute to supporting the above objectives to provide a 'clear line of sight' between nation and local action.
 20. The Welsh Government will use the following indicators to measure progress against its three strategic objectives:
 - iv. Number of children living in workless households;
 - v. Percentage of working-age adults with no qualifications;
 - vi. Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Maths at Key Stage 4;
 - vii. Looked After Children per 10,000 population under 18 years of age;
 - viii. Percentage of live births weighing less than 2,500 grams;
 - ix. Number of children living in workless/low income families reaching health, social and cognitive development milestones when entering formal education.

HEFCW's Strategy Context

21. Our Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13 represents our action plan to deliver the Welsh Government's expectations for higher education, as set out in: *For our Future: The Twenty First Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*, published in November 2009.
22. *For our Future* identifies the Welsh Government's twin priorities for HEFCW and the HE sector as enhancing social justice and supporting a buoyant economy. Both priorities also underpin our contribution to eradicating child poverty.
23. Our Corporate Strategy identifies our intention to:

'Develop a higher education system in Wales where all who are able may benefit from higher education, where the student learning experience is of high quality and where graduates are equipped for the world of work and their roles as citizens.'
24. The five key Corporate Strategy themes of: widening access; the student experience; skills; knowledge transfer; and research, identify the areas of our strategic focus. These are not discrete policy areas and they will contribute, as appropriate, to supporting our contribution to the eradication of child poverty.

HEFCW's Contribution to the Welsh Government's Strategic Objectives and the Children and Families Measure's Broad Aims

25. Given our Corporate Strategy focus on social justice and supporting a buoyant economy, HEFCW is well-placed to work with the higher education sector to

contribute to the second and third strategic aims of the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales outlined above. In contributing to these objectives we will prioritise the following broad aim, of the Children and Families Measure (see **Appendix A**):

i. to help young persons participate effectively in education and training.

26. In addition, we expect that we will also make some contribution:

ii. to reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children; and

iii. to provide parents of children with the skills necessary for paid employment.

27. Our commitment to helping young people to participate effectively in education and training aligns with our response to Welsh Government *For our Future* expectations that:

i. inconsistencies in access and opportunity are addressed;

ii. participation is maximised through different and more flexible ways to experience higher education, including through part-time study; and we will:

iii. refocus our approach to widening access to higher education.

Needs Assessment

28. To establish our strategic priorities we have undertaken a needs assessment which utilises data available to HEFCW. Details of our needs assessment can be found in **Appendix B**.

Strategy Objectives and Priorities

29. Our objectives and priorities, set out below, aim to support the eradication of child poverty. They sit largely within the widening access Corporate Strategy theme through which we aim to:

ensure equity, opportunity and success in higher education.

30. The following priorities underpin our aim of contributing to the eradication of child poverty. Specifically, we will:

i. target learners of all ages across Wales;

ii. prioritise recruitment from Communities First areas in Wales;

iii. develop higher level learning and skills in the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute area;

iv. support looked after children and care leavers to and through higher education;

v. encourage participation in higher level skills and the priority sectors;

vi. deploy widening access resources to meet our strategic objectives;

Delivering our Priorities

31. To deliver our priorities, we aim:
 - i. To target learners of all ages across Wales.
32. We recognise that children living in poverty are often from families where educational aspirations and achievement is low: parents or carers have few educational qualifications and their expectations for their children are often the same. Research indicates that adults with low or no qualifications are less likely to progress through adult learning than people with ‘middling’ qualifications.¹⁴ Therefore, our widening access policy targets potential learners of all ages to enable HEIs to engage with communities, parents, carers, and young people who have the potential to benefit from higher education and to positively influence family members and neighbourhoods. We recognise that all-age engagement enables the development of learning communities and families that learn together.
 - ii. To prioritise recruitment from Communities First areas in Wales
33. A unique feature of widening access policy in Wales is the prioritisation of recruitment to, and success in, higher education by people of all ages from Communities First areas. HEFCW, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, is expected to engage with the relevant Communities First strategies and plans and we will continue our long-term commitment to contribute effectively to this agenda.
34. We recognise that the second phase of the Communities First Programme will support the Welsh Government’s anti-poverty agenda and thus our widening access policy commitments are clearly aligned with both the Welsh Government’s Communities First Strategy and the Child Poverty Strategy. While higher education will contribute towards all three Communities First strategic outcomes, as set out in the Communities First consultation, its most significant contribution will be to the ‘Learning Communities’ objectives.¹⁵
35. The Wales Audit Office report, *Communities First* (2009) identifies two complementary strands as fundamental to the effective regeneration of these communities: local partnership working; and programme ‘bending’, or alignment, to direct resources from appropriate public programmes and organisations towards Communities First areas¹⁶. We recognise the potential for our widening access objectives to continue to contribute to tackling deprivation and improving the prospects of people in these designated communities.

¹⁴ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Findings, informing change*, July 2011: www.jrf.org.uk

¹⁵ [Welsh Government Communities First consultation](#). The three Communities First themes from April 2012 will be: Prosperous Communities, Learning Communities and Healthier Communities.

¹⁶ *Communities First*, Wales Audit Office (July 2009). See: www.wao.gov.uk

36. Communities First areas are the key target group for our Reaching Wider Programme and a priority group for universities widening access provision.
- iii. To develop higher level learning and skills in the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute area
37. We recognise that not all poverty or economic upskilling needs are based within Communities First areas. A region of particular social and economic deprivation in Wales is the five unitary authority areas in the Heads of the Valleys¹⁷. Within the area: only **64%** of the working age population is in employment, compared with 71% across Wales as a whole; residents are less likely to be in skilled or professional jobs (only **50%** compared with 62% for Wales as a whole); and the average earnings for residents in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent are **20%** below those in the rest of South East Wales.
38. The Welsh authority with the highest rate of severe child poverty is Blaenau Gwent, where the estimate is 20%. Blaenau Gwent has the 24th highest rate of severe child poverty amongst local authorities in Great Britain. Severe child poverty is also high in Torfaen (18%), Caerphilly (18%), Rhondda Cynon Taff (17%) and Merthyr (16%). In Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Caerphilly nearly one in six children live in severe poverty.
39. Therefore, we will work with the Welsh Government and the University of Glamorgan and University of Wales Newport to address the learning and skills needs in the Heads of the Valleys area by providing opportunities to access higher learning and skills. With increased local access to learning and a greater choice of courses more local people can access pre-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate-level study locally, meet local business needs for skilled staff and improve their economic and social circumstances. We will monitor the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) programme to ensure it contributes effectively to individuals' personal development and community regeneration.
- iv. To support looked after children and care leavers to and through higher education
40. As outlined above, we recognise the role that family, intergenerational and community learning can play in creating learning cultures in homes and neighbourhoods, contributing to reducing child poverty in Wales and providing parents with skills to access higher level learning and employment. We acknowledge the sector's commitment to raising the educational aspirations and supporting the life chances of children without family support: those young people in care and care leavers. All Welsh HEIs have achieved the Buttle UK Quality Mark. The Quality Mark for Care Leavers, launched in 2006 by the then Frank Buttle Trust (now Buttle UK) is a statement of commitment which higher education institutions sign up to, thereby agreeing to meet certain criteria related to supporting care leavers. We will work with Buttle UK

¹⁷ UHOVI unitary authorities are: Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

and HE institutions to encourage the further development of support for children in care and care leavers and to disseminate effective practice¹⁸. We will encourage the sector to take a multi-agency approach to developing further such innovative approaches which improve the learning choices and chances of families, communities and care leavers.

v. To encourage participation in higher level skills and the priority sectors

41. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation research indicates that:

‘Qualifications clearly increase the likelihood of being employed. Some 90% of those with an above level 3 qualification were employed compared with 75% for mid-levels and 60% for those with the lowest levels of education. These proportions have not changed much over the last ten years.’ and

‘Across the working-age population as a whole, (aged 16 to 64) those with the lowest qualifications were hit hard by the recession and saw a drop of almost 10% in their employment rate over the three years from 2007.’¹⁹

42. We recognise that parents with care commitments often require different ways of accessing higher level learning and skills to enter or return to the workplace. New pathways to learning include clearly defined progression routes from post-16 learning and the workplace. We will work with regional higher education partnerships to improve progression routes from further to higher education, on a regional basis, to highlight local opportunities for continued learning. We will encourage the development of flexible learning opportunities, including part-time, technology-enhanced and blended learning provision, workbased learning, the use of accreditation of prior learning and increased information, advice and guidance to identify and respond to learners’ needs. We will increase Foundation Degree provision which will provide greater diversity and flexibility in design, duration and delivery to match learner needs, employer demands and improve employment opportunities.

43. In relation to subjects of a broader importance in Wales, we will work with the National HE STEM Programme in Wales to develop learning opportunities in science, engineering, technology and maths (STEM) subjects²⁰. We will also promote modern foreign languages learning, in response to the Welsh Government’s Making Languages Count Strategy and we will work with the Sector Skills Councils to ensure that vocational qualifications are fit for purpose. These different ways of accessing learning will enable more people to access higher education and higher-level employment opportunities while maintaining their family commitments and/or existing employment. In addition,

¹⁸ The Frank Buttle Trust became [Buttle UK](#) on 1 March 2011.

¹⁹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation [Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011](#),(p5).
www.jrf.org.uk

²⁰ <http://www.hestem.ac.uk/partners/wales>

we will support fair access to the professions, higher level skills and the priority sectors, in order to promote social mobility and establish pathways out of poverty.

vi. To deploy widening access resources to meet our strategic objectives

44. During the Corporate Strategy period we have reviewed our widening access objectives and resources to ensure alignment with Welsh Government expectations. We published *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education* (known as our 'Approach') in February 2011, following stakeholder engagement. Our *Approach* references this Child Poverty Strategy and will support its delivery.

Measures of Success

45. The following Corporate Strategy measures will provide the key indicators of the impact of our Child Poverty Strategy:

Communities First areas

46. The Communities First measure monitors improved access and progression for people of all ages in locations where such opportunities are low, including the Heads of the Valleys, and it is a proxy measure for social class and multiple-deprivation. This measure seeks:

A 10% rise in the proportion of all Welsh domiciled students studying higher education courses at higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales who are domiciled in the Welsh Communities First areas from 15.6% in 2008/09 to 17.2% in 2012/13.

Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute

47. The UHOVI measure takes account of the extent to which more people in Wales, including in the Heads of the Valleys, experience higher education and are equipped with higher level skills. This measure seeks:

The absolute participation rate within Welsh higher education providers of students in the five Universities of the Heads of the Valleys Institute unitary authorities will rise by 8% to the current national average by 2012/13 (from 2.5% to 2.7%).

Part-time Study

48. The part-time measure is designed to assess the increase in the number of graduates equipped for the world of work and for their role as citizens. This measure seeks:

The total number of part-time students studying higher education courses in higher education institutions and further education

institutions in Wales will rise from 54,714 in 2008/09 to 59,000 in 2012/13.

49. In addition we will monitor sector performance against a range of poverty-related indicators associated with young people and adults using a 'basket of measures' approach. These indicators will measure sector progress and trends against the baseline academic year 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009. The basket of measures will include:
- i. Socio-economic class indicators of participation in higher education;
 - ii. Students from low participation neighbourhoods;
 - iii. Students in receipt of the Assembly Learning Grant (ALG);
 - iv. Students in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance;
 - v. Part-time students in receipt of a fee waiver;
 - vi. Recruitment from ethnic groups which are under-represented in Welsh higher education, including black Afro-Caribbeans, young white working class males;
 - vii. Applicants and acceptances of:
 - (i) care leavers to higher education institutions in Wales; and
 - (ii) Welsh domiciled care leavers to Welsh and UK HEIs²¹.
50. Our Corporate Strategy measures relate to the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2013. During this period, our Corporate Strategy will be reviewed and further developed to reflect Welsh Government strategic priorities from 2013. The basket of measures indicators cover the entire Strategy period.
51. HEFCW will publish annually sector progress against its Corporate Strategy measures and statistical information can be found on our website²².
52. In addition, we will also continue to encourage all Welsh Higher Education Institutions to retain the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education.

Equality and Diversity

53. In developing this Strategy we have undertaken an internal, initial equality impact screening. We will publish the draft HEFCW Child Poverty Strategy as part of our statutory consultation process, and we will engage fully with universities, stakeholders and other providers in the consideration of the impact of this policy on groups with protected characteristics.
54. We will publish, as an appendix to the final version of the Child Poverty Strategy, a summary of our consultation responses, including responses relating to engaging stakeholders in its equality impact assessment.

The Strategy Period

²¹ We recognise that there are unavoidable limitations with this dataset.

²² HEFCW statistical information is available at: www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications

55. The Welsh Government requires that the Strategy period is published by 31 March 2012 and that it covers the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014.

Reviewing the Strategy

56. The Welsh Government requires that the Strategy be reviewed by 31 March 2014. Our review process will include involving the HEFCW Student Experience Teaching and Quality Committee, a Council sub-committee, in an annual review of progress towards achieving our objectives, taking account of new and emerging Welsh Government policies and priorities for higher education²³. This Committee includes representation from Welsh Government, the Higher Education sector and the National Union of Students.
57. We will publish the Strategy on our website and make it available at our offices in compliance with the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy regulations.

²³ The Student Experience Teaching and Quality Committee will review the Child Poverty Strategy each academic year from 2012/13.

Appendix A

The Thirteen Broad Aims of the Welsh Government's Children and Families Measure 2010

The following thirteen broad aims of the Measure provide the framework for the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan for Wales:

- i. To increase income for households including one or more children with a view to ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, there are no households in the relevant income group²⁴;
- ii. Ensuring that, so far as reasonably practicable, children living in households in the relevant income group are not materially deprived²⁵;
- iii. To promote and facilitate paid employment for parents of children;
- iv. To provide parents of children with the skills necessary for paid employment;
- v. To reduce inequalities in educational attainment between children;
- vi. To support parenting of children;
- vii. To reduce inequalities in health between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the well-being of their children);
- viii. To ensure that all children grow up in decent housing;
- ix. To ensure that all children grow up in safe and cohesive communities;
- x. To reduce inequalities in participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities between children and between parents of children (so far as necessary to ensure the well-being of their children);
- xi. To help young persons participate effectively in education and training;
- xii. To help young persons take advantage of opportunities for employment; and
- xiii. To help young persons participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

²⁴ For the purposes of this broad aim, the 'relevant income group' in relation to a household, is every household including one or more children where household income is less than 60% of the median income in the UK.

²⁵ For the purposes of the broad aim, the 'relevant income group' in relation to a household, is every household including one or more children where household income is less than 70% of the median income in the UK.

Appendix B HEFCW Child Poverty Strategy Needs Analysis

Child Poverty in Wales

1. Child poverty in Wales is rising²⁶. The latest figures show that 33% of children and young people in Wales live in a context of income poverty. This is defined as living in a household at 60% or less of UK median income. Of the four regions of the UK, Wales also has the highest levels of severe child poverty: 14% across all of Wales with pockets as high as 20% in the South Wales valleys. Severe poverty is defined as households living at 50% or less of UK median income.
2. The implications for children and young people growing up in a context of poverty and deprivation are well-documented and far reaching for both them and for society. Outcomes include a greater likelihood of being five times less likely to leave school without qualifications as their more affluent peers, and to be more likely to be drawn into anti social behaviour and crime.
3. It is recognised by the Welsh Government that as well as supporting immediate household need, public authorities in Wales must contribute to tackling these long term outcomes for children from low income households thus breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.
4. Only by its policies to deliver better health, educational and social outcomes for children and young people from low income backgrounds can the Welsh Government support families, adults and young people in attaining better economic outcomes. The Welsh Government can achieve this only in partnership with Local Authorities and Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies, such as HEFCW. The Welsh Government sets out its expectations for HEFCW and the sector to contribute to social inclusion and promoting a buoyant economy in its strategy for higher education *For our Future*.

Education

5. Raising standards of education and skills development at each stage of an individual's education is essential for countries that want to achieve sustainable and equitable economic growth and prosperity. Blanden *et al.* (2005) note that the UK has one of the highest associations between social class and educational performance in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

'Education can be considered to be both a cause and effect of inequality. Having few or no qualifications and lacking basic skills can produce negative outcomes in terms of employment, income, standard of living, health and public engagement. Varying allocation of resources to children from different socio-economic backgrounds has been linked to lower test scores and low

²⁶ All references to be included prior to publication.

participation rates in higher education. People from disadvantaged backgrounds often perform less well at school and gain fewer qualifications than those from more advantaged backgrounds. Advantage or disadvantage can also be passed down through generations, where a person's educational attainment is related to that of their parents. But at the same time, it is mainly through education that disadvantaged people can become empowered to succeed economically and integrate more fully with mainstream society.'

6. Participation in higher education has been shown to have positive social and economic benefits including improved employment opportunities and earning potential, besides other health and general wellbeing benefits. Young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds show a much higher likelihood of continuing their education than those from lower socio-economic strata where mothers with lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to construct an emotionally and cognitively supportive environment for their children.
7. It is very clear from research that educational disadvantage starts from a very young age. The gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged tends to widen as children age and progress through the education system. Negative effects on reading skills increase with age, as does awareness of performance, humiliation, anxiety and other negative emotions associated with poor reading which persist into adulthood. Higher paying jobs, including access to the professions, are blocked to these individuals and the cycle of poverty continues.
8. The educational environment experienced by children from an early age has long lasting consequences. It has been shown that the activities and roles engaged in by mothers affect the cognitive development of their children which endures well into the 5th and 6th decade of the child's life. The early years therefore, have obvious and well documented implications for the quality and quantity of young people entering further and higher education.
9. *The Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances*, commissioned by the Prime Minister and chaired by Frank Field, highlights the importance of early years learning and The Welsh Government has put in place various early years initiatives in an attempt to improve later pupil performance, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
10. In order to support young people's access to appropriate qualifications and skills HEFCW recognises the essential nature of 'early intervention', including support for parents. Institutional widening access and Reaching Wider provision supports children's transition from primary to secondary school and for parents to participate in family learning activities. All universities provide crèche facilities, including after school care for parent students.
11. The correlation is very strong between the quality of the home learning environment and educational outcomes further down the line. The correlation is also strong between poor quality home learning environments and low socio-economic status. The pre-school and primary school environment can largely make up for a less supportive home learning environment but good

home learning environment is always the most powerful determinant of educational attainment. By the time children reach secondary school children from less supportive home learning environments face greater learning challenges than their peers. It is essential, therefore, that the education sector in Wales aspires to promote a full integration of educational opportunities for children and young people from low income backgrounds at the earliest opportunity. This will result in young people who are better prepared to be successful in further and higher education.

12. The largest inequalities in the attainment of GCSEs can be found between children of parents belonging to different socio-economic groups. For instance, in 2002, 77 percent of the children with parents in higher professional occupations in England and Wales gained five or more higher grade GCSEs, more than double the proportion of children with parents in routine occupations (32 percent).
13. HEFCW supports the higher education sector, through policies and funding mechanisms, to provide educational interventions for children and young people. Such interventions are designed to support key learning transition points and to prepare them for access into further and higher education²⁷.
14. We recognise the impact of the UK economic downturn and the implications for the economic outcomes of children and young people from low income backgrounds.

Citizenship and cultural engagement

15. Socio-cultural outcomes for children and adults living in poverty are also significant, with children and their families less likely to visit libraries and places of educational interest such as museums. This limited perspective further impinges on their chances for social mobility.
16. The Jones Review of higher education stated:
[a key purpose of HE is to] ...‘develop cultural and civic values such as tolerance and social cohesion, in order to have a wider and positive influence on social and political development, and cultural and creative expression...’
and

...‘The development of our HE system and an increased emphasis on the importance of international links provide a major opportunity for Wales to increase its presence on the world scene and to attract highly skilled people, as well as private investment, to Wales, for the benefit of our society’.
17. We will encourage higher education institutions to champion cultural awareness and identity, in a global context. We will support opportunities to learn Welsh and to study through the medium of Welsh, and we will work with HEIs to promote appreciation of international cultures and languages. We

²⁷ Key learning transition points include: from primary to secondary school, subject choices and attainment of level 2 qualifications, subject choices and attainment of level 3 qualifications, progression to FE/HE and lifelong learning.

acknowledge that in these ways we will be contributing to democratic and civic values.

Employment and Income

18. Unemployment in Wales has increased by to 8.4% bringing the total to 122,000 unemployed in Wales. Wales faces the second highest regional unemployment rate behind the North East of England. The £81bn of spending cuts announced by the UK Treasury is being rolled out across the UK and will have further impact on job losses.
19. More than half of the households in Wales who find themselves in the 60% or less of median UK income bracket are experiencing 'in work poverty', i.e. one or more adults in the household is working.
20. It is a commonly held view that, in the current climate, the growth of the SME sector in Wales will play a significant part in driving growth and job opportunities through both employment and self employment.
21. HEFCW plays a significant role in supporting the sector to deliver advice, up-skilling and re-training opportunities for both employment and self employment for young people and adults. Given the current macro-economic and employment conditions within which we are aiming to improve the economic outcomes for young people from low income backgrounds we must take account of two principal forms of support for young people:
 - ensuring they are appropriately qualified and skilled for the emerging job market; and
 - supporting personal confidence in their ability and preparedness to secure employment during economic downturn by offering opportunities for them not to stagnate while they search for work.
22. Our Child Poverty Strategy, linked to our Corporate Strategy, will coordinate our actions to contribute to the eradication of child poverty, including collaboration with other education providers, to play its full part in a seamless educational service for the children and young people of Wales that supports them from their school years into adulthood.