

Wiltshire

Reducing Child Poverty Strategy

2011 – 2014

Draft 2.0 June 2011

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Acknowledgments

Strategy prepared by:

Alison Bell, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Wiltshire

Lynda Cox, Head of Performance Management, Department for Children and Education, Wiltshire Council

With grateful thanks to the following for their contributions:

David Bonner-Smith, Police Inspector, children and young people, Wiltshire Police

Haylea Fryer, Economic Development Manager, Wiltshire Council

Phil Morgan, Head of Research, Public health and Wellbeing, Wiltshire Council

Nicole Smith, Head of Housing Strategy and Support, Wiltshire Council

Jackie Tuckett, Partnership Manager, Jobcentre Plus

Document History

Issue No	Date	Status	Reviewed by
Version 1.0	19/11/10	Draft	Task group 22/11/10
Version 1.1	17/12/10	Draft	Task group 17/12/10
Version 1.2	17/01/11	Draft	For consultation
Version 2.0	03/06/11	Draft	For CTB Commissioning Executive 15/06/11 and Cabinet 26/07/11

Introduction

1. Reducing child poverty has been a government target for many years. The [Child Poverty Act](#), which commits this and future governments to eradicating child poverty by 2020, received Royal Assent in March 2010 tasked local areas to produce a child poverty needs assessment and strategy. This strategy document fulfils that requirement. However, it is acknowledged that the huge changes resulting from the national cost pressures which are impacting at the time of writing, both on public services and people's lives, are creating some uncertainty and shifting baselines. Future strategies and action plans will need to build on this document in light of these changes.
2. This strategy has been developed through consultation with the public including children and young people, public sector, private, business and voluntary sector organisations. A separate document containing a summary of responses is available.
3. A child poverty needs assessment sits alongside this strategy and a summary of its main findings is included in this strategy.

Links to other strategies

4. Child Poverty features as a priority in key top-level Wiltshire documents. It is in the "People, Places and Promises: Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026" which is due for adoption in spring 2011. It is woven through the Wiltshire Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011 "Working together to improve outcomes". Also, the Wiltshire Work & Skills Plan (April 2010) which has been informed by a comprehensive Worklessness Assessment, sets out how Wiltshire Council, working with partners through Wiltshire Works, can help deliver a reduction in worklessness and promote economic inclusion.
5. Central government published its national child poverty strategy in April 2011 – "A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families Lives". It covers the period 2011 – 2014. Whilst recognising the importance of income, its aims are also around "strengthening families, encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and proving support to the most vulnerable".

The aim

6. The goal of the Child Poverty Act is to end child poverty by 2020.
7. This strategy supports both the reduction of child poverty in Wiltshire and mitigation of the effects of child poverty. It seeks to provide a view of the causes, barriers and challenges of child poverty, set a shared vision and encourage a co-ordinated approach to address child poverty and its impact.
8. Living in poverty means more than just having a low income. Extensive research and data show that children who grow up in poverty face a greater risk of having poor health, being exposed to crime and failing to reach their full potential. This in turn can limit their potential to earn the money needed to support their own families in later life, and so a cycle of poverty is created. Therefore in order to ensure today's poor children are not tomorrow's poor adults child poverty must be tackled.
9. The Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust partnership and the Wiltshire Public Services Board have both signed up to this strategy and will continue to drive change at a local level to improve outcomes for children and young people.

What is child poverty?

10. Children are said to be living in relative income poverty if their household's income is less than 60 per cent of the median national income. Essentially, this looks at whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole.
11. Using this measure, there are currently 2.8 million¹ children living in poverty in this country and 11,120¹, 11% of the 0 – 19 population, in Wiltshire. Wiltshire compares favourably against the South West average of 15.8% and against the average of comparable local authority areas (12.9%).
12. The Child Poverty Act also sets targets for the government to meet by 2020 on four different measures of poverty – including relative income poverty. The Act sets four challenging UK-wide targets to be met by 2020. These targets are based on the proportion of children living in:
 - relative low income (whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole) - target is less than 10%
 - combined low income and material deprivation (a wider measure of people's living standards) - target is less than 5%
 - absolute low income (whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms) - target is less than 5%
 - persistent poverty (length of time in poverty) - target is to be set in regulations by 2015.

Data for these 4 measures are currently not available at a local level.

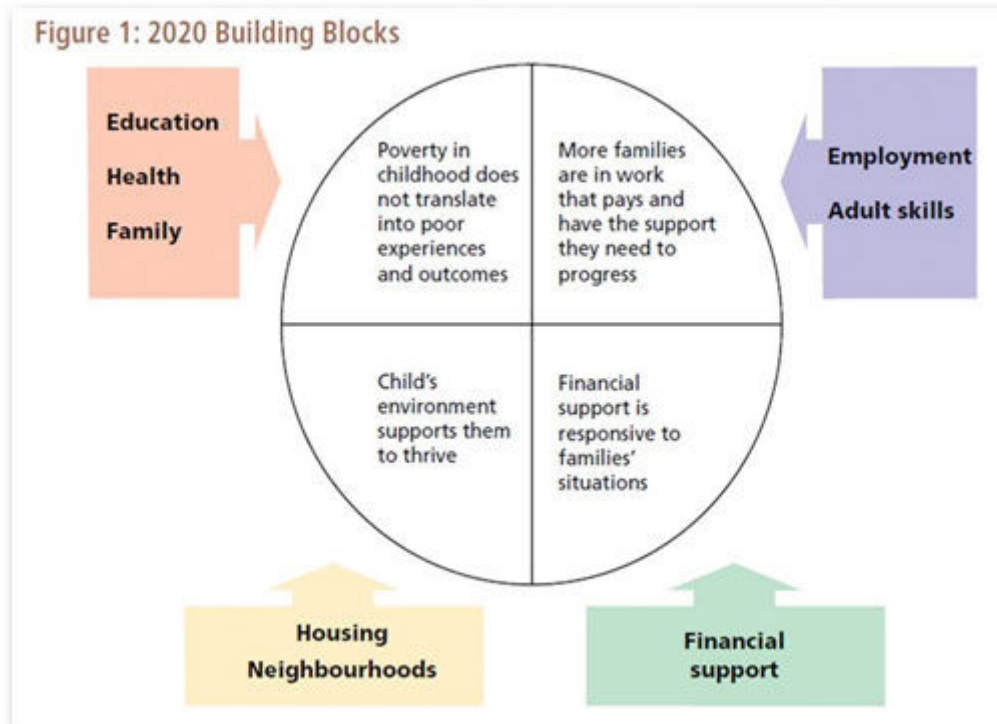
13. The central government Child Poverty Unit has collated an extensive library of [research](#) and [data](#). Particularly relevant to Wiltshire is the research report about cost of living in rural communities. "Country Life: tougher to make ends meet"² says that people living in rural communities need to spend 10-20% more than those in urban areas to reach a minimum acceptable living standard. This is due to things such as the need to run a car, higher energy bills and the location of rural services. This is further exacerbated as pay levels for many rural workers are often lower than those working in urban areas.

¹ These figures are as at 2008

² Country Life: tougher to make ends meet – Nov 2010 Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Commission for Rural Communities

The building blocks to combat child poverty

14. Nationally, it has been suggested that there are 4 key building blocks which work together to prevent, reduce and mitigate the effects of poverty.



Education, health and family

- ensuring access to quality education for all children and young people and narrowing the gap in attainment of different groups
- improving physical and mental health outcomes for all children and parents, reducing health inequalities and improving support for those with disabilities and poorer health
- reducing pressures on families and strengthening their capabilities by providing as much support as possible.

Housing, neighbourhoods and communities

- ensuring all children grow up in decent homes that support their health and education
- taking action on neighbourhoods, play and green spaces, transport and crime to ensure all children can thrive in safe and cohesive communities, with equal access to work, cultural and leisure opportunities.

Adult skills and employment

- building on successes in education to ensure all adults have the skills necessary to enter, stay and progress in work
- ensuring more parents can enter, stay and progress in work (including childcare), to help parents balance work and family life and ensure those in work can escape poverty.

Financial support

- ensuring financial and material support remain an important public service; provided through a modern welfare system that recognises the additional barriers families face, while maintaining incentives to work.

What works?

15. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services³ has reviewed a variety of child poverty publications, toolkits and guides to produce the key components of a child poverty strategy:

- effective multi-agency partnerships which draw on the experience, resources and expertise across the whole area
- sufficient and sustained resources
- active participation of children, young people, families and communities
- differentiated approaches to address the needs of different groups or areas in the community
- monitoring and evaluation focused on outcomes rather than outputs.

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes also concludes priority outcomes are:

- maximising of family income – a mixed economy of provision is required, which can help the jobless into work, help those in work to progress, and financially support those unable to work
- narrowing outcome gaps for children and young people living in poverty, particularly in education and health.

Local Needs Assessment

16. Wiltshire has an estimated total population of 456,100 persons. There are approximately 89,200 children aged 0-15 yrs. The area is predominantly rural, covering 325,500 hectares, population densities across the county do vary markedly. Wiltshire as a whole is characterised by its 'rurality' and is notable for the scale of its military presence, which is one of the largest in any county in the UK. Military personnel constitute around 3.3% of the total population, and the total number of military personnel and their dependants is estimated to be around 30,000 (6.6%). The greatest concentrations of deprivation are in the towns, with three local

³ C4EO Research Summary 1 Child Poverty January 2010

areas in Wiltshire, two in Trowbridge and one in Salisbury, being in the most deprived 20% of such areas nationally. There is scattered deprivation across the whole rural area.

17. This strategy is supported by a comprehensive needs assessment which gives detailed evidence of both national and local child poverty gained through analysis of data and direct input from stakeholders and families. Detailed below are the high level findings.

CHILDREN AT GREATEST RISK OF POVERTY⁴

18. Some groups of children living in particular circumstances are known to be at a greater risk of living in poverty:
- **Lone parents** - children of lone parents are at greater risk of living in poverty than children in couple families. Before housing costs over a third, 35%, (50% after housing costs) of children living in lone parent families are poor, compared with less than a fifth, 18%, of children in couple families.
 - **Large families** - children in large families are at far greater risk of poverty than children from small families: 40%, of children in families with four or more children are poor, compared with under a fifth, 19%, of children in one-child families.
 - **Children with disabilities** - disabled children are more likely than their non-disabled peers to live in poverty as a result of lower incomes (because parents need to look after disabled children and so cannot work) and the impact of disability-related additional costs (an impact which is not captured by official figures).
 - **Children with disabled parents** - children with disabled parents face a significantly higher risk of living in poverty than those of non-disabled parents. The main reason for this is that disabled parents are much less likely to be in paid work, and also suffer the impact of additional disability-related costs which sap family budgets.
 - **Children who are carers** - for some children, it is not just a lack of income which affects their life chances, it is a chaotic family life, lack of stability, upheaval or the focus on someone else's needs. Children in care, young carers, children living with a disabled parent and children living in households with drug or alcohol misuse or domestic violence all have experiences or responsibilities that can blight their childhood and make it more difficult for them to focus on their education and achieve good outcomes.
 - **Children who have teenage parents** – national data shows that children of teenage mothers have a 63% increased risk of being born into poverty compared to babies born to mothers in their twenties.
 - **Children growing up in social housing** - children living in households living in social housing (either local authority or housing associations) face a high risk of being poor. 49% of children in local authority accommodation are poor before housing costs (rising to 58% after housing costs). Poor children in social housing are also a large proportion of all poor children.
 - **Black and minority ethnic children** - children living in households headed by someone from an ethnic minority are more likely to be living in a poor household. This is particularly the case for those households headed by someone of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, where well over half the children are living in poverty.
 - **Asylum seekers** - there is no robust quantitative data on asylum seekers. However the parents in this group are prohibited from working and are only entitled to safety net support at a lower level than the usual income support/ Jobseekers Allowance safety (which itself is paid below the poverty line).
 - **Traveller and gypsy children** - there is a severe lack of robust quantitative data on Gypsy and Traveller families, including poverty. However, both practice knowledge and other studies show that some have few financial resources.
 - **Children with a parent in prison** – it is recognised that these children are more likely to be living in poverty.

⁴ Children at Greatest Risk of Poverty available at <http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk/At-Greatest-Risk-of-Child-Poverty>

- **Children leaving care** - young people leaving care are likely to face multiple disadvantages including poverty. Those entering care are also much more likely to have experienced poverty. This is a consequence of their pre-care, in-care, leaving care and after-care 'life course' experiences.

GEOGRAPHICAL ASSESSMENT

19. An analysis by HMRC demonstrated that in 2008 Wiltshire had 11,120 children living in poverty, which represents 11.0% of children. This compares well with other local authority areas in the South West of England, but masks the fact that of the 281 lower super output areas, 42 have over 20% and 9 have over 30% of children living in poverty.

Lower Layer Super Output Area's (LSOA)	Children in families in receipt of Child Tax Credit (<60% median income) or Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance		% of Children in "Poverty"	
	Under 16	All Children	Under 16	All Children
1. Melksham North - north east	145	160	44.3%	42.7%
2. Trowbridge John of Gaunt - Studley Green	205	230	43.1%	41.9%
3. Salisbury St Martin - central	110	125	39.2%	38.0%
4. Chippenham Hill Rise - north west	135	150	34.4%	33.6%
5. Trowbridge drynham - Lower Studley	185	200	34.3%	33.5%
6. Wootton Bassett North - central	115	135	32.9%	32.3%
7. Salisbury Bemerton - south	135	150	31.3%	31.3%
8. Salisbury Bemerton - west	145	160	31.4%	30.3%
9. Chippenham Queens - east	95	105	31.3%	30.1%
10. Trowbridge Adcroft - Seymour	115	130	31.2%	29.8%

20. These areas match the top ten areas according to Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2010) with the exception of Wootton Bassett North – Central and Chippenham Hill Rise – north west which don't appear in the IMD top ten and are replaced by Westbury Ham and Calne Abberd - south. These geographical areas of deprivation have remained fairly constant over time.

THEMATIC ASSESSMENT

Jobs

21. Historically worklessness has been a major cause of children living in poverty. However, the underlying causes as to why adults are out of work are complicated and issues differ for those long term unemployed versus those who have recently lost their job.
22. The number of people defined as 'long term unemployed' (i.e. over 6 months) is 1555 as of October 2010, and of these 730 had been claiming JSA for 12 months or more (i.e. the 'very long term unemployed'). Job Centre Plus data shows that 70 people have been claiming JSA for 2 years or more. To improve young people's outcomes and outlook on life, it is vital that the cycle of dependency on benefits is broken and young people aspire to a career or work life.
23. An estimated 2,900 people were let go by Wiltshire's workplaces between December 2007 and December 2009. The hardest hit workplace economies in terms of the volumes of losses are Salisbury, Chippenham and Trowbridge (each losing around 1,000 jobs, 600 jobs and 400 jobs respectively).
24. A recent national study by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that due to the recession 'in work' poverty has increased as a result of reduction in hours and wage freezes.

Nationally the proportion of poor children living in working households increased to 61% in 2008/9 from 50% in 2005/6. In numbers terms this translates to 1.7 million poor children in working households compared to 1.1 million in workless households.

Economic situation

25. Nationally unemployment has doubled which is attributed to the recession. In Wiltshire over the same time period unemployment has trebled, but remains under the national rate, this is before the impact of public sector job losses.
26. National data illustrates that Wiltshire is not so dependent on Public Sector jobs as others areas (Wiltshire 22.3%, Great Britain 21.8% and the South West 22.6%).

Education

27. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to leave school without qualifications. Local authorities measure the attainment gap in a standardised way, which enable comparison with other areas.
28. The first measure is at Foundation Stage Profile which measures achievements of children aged five against 13 assessment scales. The gap between the average score of all children and the average score of the lowest achieving 20% of children is calculated and Wiltshire has been successful in reducing this gap (2007 – 35.5% to 2010 29.2%, which compares favourably against a national average of 32.7%).
29. There are also measures of attainment at Key Stage 2 and GCSE level in English and Maths for children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) compared with children who are not eligible for FSM. This is measured as a percentage difference or “gap”. The aim is for the gap to reduce, but as the tables illustrate below this gap in Wiltshire is persisting and is higher than the gap nationally.

	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %	2010 %
NI 102A Attainment Gap FSM/non FSM Key Stage 2 inc English and Maths				
Wiltshire	24	31	31	27
Stats Neighbours	29	27	27	26
England	24	22	22	21
NI 102B Attainment Gap FSM/non FSM GCSE inc English and Maths				
Wiltshire	32	38	28	36
Stats Neighbours	32	33	32	33
England	28	28	27	28

Source: Research and Statistics SFR32/2010 SFR34/2010 and LAIT

30. Absenteeism rates and exclusion rates in Wiltshire are similar to national rates.

Transport

31. Getting to work, getting to school or college and getting to child care is all dependent on transport. Poor public transport can mean that low income families are forced into car ownership; reducing the money they have available to spend on other things. As yet we have no hard data to demonstrate this need in Wiltshire, but anecdotal reports support the prioritisation of this thematic area.

Data

32. There has been recognition during the compilation of the needs assessment that more up to date data would inform the further development of the child poverty strategy.

Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances

33. Frank Field's "The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults"⁵ found that "... children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years that together matter more to children than money, in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life. The things that matter most are a healthy pregnancy; good maternal mental health; secure bonding with the child; love and responsiveness of parents along with clear boundaries, as well as opportunities for a child's cognitive, language and social and emotional development. Good services matter too: health services, Children's Centres and high quality childcare." The report notes that differences in skill levels are impacted by 22 months of age. It acknowledges that later interventions can be effective but stresses that the most effective and cost effective way to help is in the earliest years of a child's life. It also stresses the importance of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and raising parental aspiration.

34. The two overarching recommendations of the report are:

- To prevent poor children from becoming poor adults the Review proposes establishing a set of Life Chances Indicators that measure how successful we are as a country in making more equal life's outcomes for all children. These include child, parent and environmental factors.

"Nothing can be achieved without working with parents. All our recommendations are about enabling parents to achieve the aspirations that they have for their children."

- To drive this policy the Review proposes establishing the 'Foundation Years' covering the period from the womb to five. The Foundation Years should become the first pillar of a new tripartite education system: the Foundation Years leading to school years leading to further, higher and continuing education.

35. The report suggests a number of specific recommendations including:–

- Central government should move funding to early years and expand the new Fairness Premiums to begin in pregnancy.
- Sure Start centres should re-focus on the most disadvantaged families.
- Schools should be held to account for reducing the attainment gap.
- Central government should ensure that parenting and life skills are reflected in the school curriculum.
- A new measure of severe poverty should be developed to identify the very poorest children.

⁵ "The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults". Frank Field December 2010. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances.

What's happening to tackle child poverty in Wiltshire?

36. Many things are currently happening in Wiltshire which reduce, prevent and mitigate the effects of child poverty. Services are often allocated in line with social deprivation need. The actions described below give a flavour of the support available, mainly through the public sector. It does not claim to be a comprehensive listing⁶ and it is acknowledged that a huge amount of support is provided through the voluntary sector and within local communities.

Education, Health and Family

- Sufficiency of **child care provision**, eg nurseries, child minders, monitored with an action plan to develop further affordable childcare in areas/communities of need.
- **Three and four year old Free Entitlement (foundation years)** - a universal offer for 15 hours per week for parents to use in a flexible way. The aim is to enable parents to access part time work while their childcare costs remain low. Take-up in Wiltshire is high with over 90% of those eligible taking up their offer. There is an element of additional funding specifically given to deprived children at our settings. This is to help compensate for the effects of poverty and ensure the child has a better start to their education. A second element gives additional money to very small childcare settings in rural areas where closure would prevent children from accessing their Entitlement.
- **Free education and childcare to 2 year olds** from the most vulnerable families. Families to be offered additional support from children centres alongside childcare and these are helping parents with parenting, family learning and to search and get ready for work.
- **Social Inclusion Funding** for parents on low income or benefits prior to the child taking up the universal 4 year old Free Entitlement to early education.
- **Taster Sessions** for parents to try out childcare before they return to work. This is now offered to all low income parents and parents of disabled children to give confidence to return to work.
- **Children's Centres** working in local areas to coordinate work that will raise aspirations of both parents and children early on, and strengthen support to families. Some of the support on offer includes:
 - **Family support and outreach workers**
 - Access to **training opportunities, including key skills**
 - **Advice around finding childcare** and understanding the free entitlement of 15 hours childcare.
 - **Simple cooking and household budgeting**
 - **Job vacancy board** updated regularly and close links with Jobcentre Plus
 - The Trussell Trust situated in the children's centre at Elim, Salisbury runs a food bank to allow **low cost food basics** that they buy in bulk.
 - **Support for teenage parents** and links with midwives
 - **Debt counselling and money management**
 - **Nursery equipment loan** or saving schemes
 - Providing **access to Credit Unions**
 - Support from **Health Visitors**.
- **Family Information Service**, aiming to streamline access to information, advice and guidance to parents. This includes outreach work to advise on choice of childcare as well as assessing for levels of working tax credits including the childcare element of this. An "estimator" is targeted towards parents where their financial circumstances have changed, in

⁶ The information was correct at the time of writing the strategy but it is acknowledged that there is a turnover of schemes and support available at any one time.

particular parents with new babies as it was found that these parents are the ones most likely to need a reassessment of their entitlements to benefits.

- **Additional support programmes in schools** to improving pupil progress including one to one tuition in English and maths, Every Child programmes targeting intensive support in numeracy, reading and writing in the primary schools and special educational needs support.
- **Extended services** provision providing a range of services including breakfast clubs and, in disadvantaged areas, children can have free access to after school activities.
- **Parenting programmes**
- **Family learning events** offered across the county and accreditation of settings as Investors in Families.
- **Parent Support Advisers** linked to schools work in local areas to provide parenting programmes, 1:1 parenting support, advice about children's behaviour and attendance at school and advice about family relationships, aspirations and signposting to support for minority ethnic language support.
- **Assisted places schemes** to give access to residential activity centres in Wiltshire
- **Young Carers service** working with young people who have "significant" caring responsibilities due to parental disability, illness or issues such as substance misuse.
- A range of services for children in need through social care (e.g., **parenting support**).
- Actions to **reduce teenage conceptions**, raise aspirations and **support teenage parents** to engage in education, training and employment.
- **Family intervention projects** which give intensive support to families experiencing significant problems which sometimes include financial issues. Support includes parenting programmes, reducing antisocial behaviour, mental health support and drugs & alcohol support.
- Health services from conception to 19 years are targeted according to the principle of **progressive universalism** in line with the national **The Healthy Child Programme**
- To inform the delivery of targeted support to the most vulnerable families of 0-4 yr olds we have undertaken mapping of the Health Visitors caseloads, to **match resources with needs**. This is typical in many services.
- **"Baby Friendly"** breastfeeding Initiative in Wiltshire.
- Partners in Literacy (PiL) is to support more families to **promote literacy in the home**
- Wiltshire Sustainable Parenting programme which provides practical information on how to **reduce the consumption, waste and costs**.

Employment and adults skills

- Phase 2 of the **Action for Wiltshire** Programme to tackle the effects of the recession and impacts of the public sector cuts in the county.
- The **Wiltshire Potential Future Jobs Fund** is providing 495 long term unemployed 18-24 year olds with a break into the labour market and improving their long term employability prospects.
- A one-off programme "Wiltshire Work Grant" to provide **new job opportunities for 40 2 year+ unemployed people** is currently being developed by Jobcentre Plus and Wiltshire Council.
- The **Jobcentre Plus Adviser Flexibility** pilot is running in Wiltshire, Swindon, Dorset and Somerset for two years to offer a more flexible and individualised approach to those that are workless.
- Delivery of a project to **improve entry level 3 numeracy skills and Level 1 Literacy**.
- A **financial literacy skills** pilot project is being developed.

- **'Wheels to Work'** Project - a moped loan scheme for people aged 16+ living in Wiltshire without access to private transport and in areas of insufficient public transport to access employment & training.
- **Positive engagement activities** for young people at risk of social exclusion and programmes of support for young people **not in education, employment or training**.
- **Increasing access to higher Education** through the establishment of an HE centre at Wiltshire College and links being maximised with neighbouring universities.

Housing and neighbourhoods

- Approaches to **keep people in their own homes** during the recession, through effective information, advice, support and specialist services specifically geared towards the needs of children, young people and their families.
- Effective partnership responses to the issue of affordable housing, with a particular focus on **increasing the supply of family-sized accommodation**.
- Ensure that our social housing stock meets national target of 100% of homes to meet the **Decent Homes Standard**.
- Improving homes with low **energy efficiency for households** on income based benefits
- **Accommodation projects** aimed specifically at homeless young people.
- **Housing Association projects** around worklessness aimed at residents and community engagement.
- Wiltshire Housing Partnership has agreed **local lettings plans** to help create sustainable communities.
- £6 million on **supported bus services and community transport**, which doubles the level of public transport that would otherwise be available. 50% of rural households have access to an hourly or better weekday daytime bus service, 90% to a daily or better weekday service. The spending includes £500,000 on evening and Sunday bus services (virtually none of which would be provided without Council funding).
- **Community transport** is being encouraged and the Area Boards have each been allocated £5,000 for initiatives to improve transport for young people.
- **Post-16 education transport scheme** provides a guarantee of transport, at a flat rate annual charge, to the local sixth form or FE College. Payments can be made in instalments to reduce the burden.

Financial support

- Through Jobcentre Plus, regular **group information support meetings** for low-income lone parents receiving Income Support.
- **Benefit take-up** campaigns.
- **Wiltshire Advice Line**.
- The establishment of a **single credit union** for Wiltshire and a **loan fund**.
- **Family focussed Trust Funds** which give grants to children in need.
- Wiltshire Money supports a number of projects to promote **financial inclusion**.

Key priorities for Wiltshire

37. Child poverty is a complex issue and benefits from an integrated approach. Specific groups of people will be more vulnerable and will gain from a targeted action. The following key priorities are identified, together with the activities above, to improve the delivery of services and the lives of some of the more vulnerable families in Wiltshire.

Strategic Objective 1 – Provide support to the 0-5 year olds in disadvantaged families

38. Evidence suggests that children's lives are significantly shaped during their first 5 years of life so it is vital to support the optimum physical, psychological, emotional, social and educational development of children.

What do we need to do?

39. Further develop the role of the children's centres and other early year settings, and continue to strengthen the links between health services and children's centres. Children's Centres need a continued focus on the most vulnerable families and to provide strong outreach services. They need to provide targeted support to ensure good health, appropriate development and successful early education of young children. This will include working with the Family and Parenting Commissioning Group to develop the family support role, including supporting the benefits of paid employment.
40. Deliver the **Healthy Child Programme**, which focuses on both physical and mental health, to all children 0-19 years within available resources and specifically target families with 0-4 year olds.

Strategic Objective 2 – Narrowing the Educational Attainment Gap

41. A child's education is key to ensuring that they have appropriate knowledge and skills for the future and that they are prepared for working life. A culture for learning is key together with early identification of vulnerable children and targeted support both within school and from other agencies.

What do we need to do?

42. Support and encourage the take-up of free childcare places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to support early educational development and give children the best start in life.
43. Schools and settings need to continue to address the attainment gap to ensure that children and young people have the education and skills they need for life and the aspirations to succeed. Schools are already working to improve outcomes for children in receipt of free school meals and they will receive additional funding through the new pupil premium from April 2011.

Strategic Objective 3 – An inclusive Wiltshire with an appropriate job for everyone and economic opportunity for all

44. Worklessness is a major cause of children living in poverty. Barriers to employment for parents include:

- not being able to manage family finances
- partnership breakdown
- debt
- fear of leaving the benefit system
- English for speakers of other languages
- housing issues
- not being able to access affordable, trusted childcare
- training and employment services inaccessible for parents
- lack of skills, confidence, motivation and aspiration
- chaotic lives
- health problems which could be the result of any of the above

What do we need to do?

45. The Wiltshire Work and Skills Plan will help to tackle worklessness. It includes specific “people priorities” including young people, women, people with disabilities, low skilled, long-term unemployed, over 50’s and carers. It identifies five priority themes and a detailed action plan for addressing worklessness priorities:

- Encourage appropriate jobs growth
- Tackle cultural and attitudinal barriers to work both for employers and employees
- Improve skills, confidence and self esteem of employees
- Improve in-work sustainability eg transport links, childcare.
- Address institutional issues eg transport, technology, family friendly employers.

46. Tackle financial exclusion through a range of initiatives including education on financial capability, measures to help tackle fuel poverty, responses to rising cost of travel, advice on benefits, affordable credit, and training for front-line workers. Support individuals in crisis and maintain the CAB Wiltshire Advice Line for people needing urgent advice on finance and debt.

Strategic Objective 4 – Consolidated, geographic approaches to child poverty

47. Due to the dispersed nature of child poverty in Wiltshire there is a need for good quality information, advice and guidance across the whole county to support families in poverty. Arrangements will differ from community to community. In areas of high poverty a more targeted, multi-agency approach is beneficial.

48. 9 lower super output areas in Wiltshire have over 30% of children living in poverty. Given this concentration of disadvantaged households there would be merit in a geographical approach.

What do we need to do?

49. Continue to promote integrated working across services, tailored approaches and community responses to issues in specific areas. This could include support to enable parents to work and support to parents to maximise their potential income, including benefits take-up where eligible and support for housing issues. Children’s centres are a key part of this.

Strategic Objective 5 - Keep child poverty in the spotlight
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50. It is important to promote and progress the aims of this strategy and maintain engagement from partner agencies, including the private and voluntary sectors.

What do we need to do?

51. Local partners to sign up to a reducing child poverty charter.

52. Improve the collection and analysis of information to better inform this strategy and its delivery plan.

53. The creation of a multi agency child poverty task group, accountable to the Children and Young People's Trust Commissioning Executive, to develop and oversee a top level action plan.

54. The Children and Young People's Trust Commissioning Executive and the Public Services Board to receive regular updates regarding progress.

Monitoring Arrangements

55. Reducing child poverty is “everyone’s business” and therefore implementing this strategy will involve actions from a number of agencies including the voluntary and private sectors. The complexity of the cause and effects of child poverty mean that it is often difficult to directly attribute specific actions to specific impact.
56. At the time of writing this strategy, National Indicators have been abolished; central government is considering data collection and performance indicators, and the proposed public health outcomes framework has still to be published. However, assuming that data remains available, a number of key indicators could be used in a scorecard to monitor progress, examples are listed below.

Children living in poverty

- *Proportion of children in poverty (NI 116)*
- *Foundation years attainment (NI 72 & 92)*
- *Achievement of pupils in receipt of free school meals (NI 102)*

Parental employment

- *Overall employment rate (NI 151)*
- *Working age people on out of works benefits (NI 152)*
- *Working age people claiming out of work benefits in worst performing neighbourhoods (NI 153)*

Linked to take up of child care

- *Take up of childcare by low income families (NI 118)*

Linked to housing

- *% of Decent Council Homes (NI 158)*
- *Total number of affordable homes delivered (NI 155)*
- *Total number of families living in temporary accommodation (NI 156)*

Health

Link to Public Health outcomes framework – domain 2 tackling wider determinants of health eg:

- *16-18 yr olds not in education, employment or training*
 - *First time entrants to the Youth Justice system*
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57. Monitoring of actions to achieve the progress related to the Key Priorities and scorecard indicators identified in this strategy will be monitored by the individual lead organisations. However the composite picture needs to be reviewed regularly and this will be achieved by an annual review which will be reported to the Children and Young People’s Trust partnership and the Public Services Board.

Equality and Diversity

58. The whole aim of this strategy is to improve equalities. Any adverse or positive impacts from an equalities perspective have been incorporated within the identified issues in the strategy and delivery plan. For example, it is recognised in the section “Children at greatest risk of poverty” that some groups of people are more likely to be impacted by poverty and therefore there needs to be awareness of the potential risks.
59. The delivery plan will be a live working document and hence there will be an opportunity to review progress from an equalities perspective. This demonstrates best practice as the equalities issues are embedded and addressed within the documents. Lower level action plans will also be reflecting and addressing equalities issues.

Risk Assessment

60. At the time of writing the UK is emerging from recession and the current government is implementing a major spending reform, reducing budgets in many public services and making many changes. It is difficult to know how these changes will impact this strategy. Unemployment of the working-age population has risen in recent years and studies⁷ have also show that the proportion of children living in poverty in working families has also risen due to employers avoiding redundancies through reduction in hours/pay rates.
61. The new Welfare Reform programme will replace the current benefit structure with a universal credit being phased in by 2013. This is intended to make transition between different types of benefits and employment easier. The Government is also making changes to the way Housing Benefit is calculated from April 2011. These changes should have a positive affect on poverty however, there could be adverse impact to large families and it is likely to prove problematic when setting baselines and monitoring progress.
62. Locally, provision of services is being reviewed by all partner agencies in light of budget and policy changes. There is a risk that some of the activities outlined in this strategy will reduce and/or be delivered differently in future. The needs assessment, strategy and delivery plan will need to monitor this change, its impact and any unforeseen consequences that may arise as a result of any changes.
63. As specific risks arise, they will be considered and escalated through the Child Poverty Task Group, Children and Young People’s Trust Board and Public Services Board as appropriate.

END

⁷In-work poverty in the recession, Institute for Public Policy Research September 2010