



Child poverty proofing local policies

Local authorities and local partners all provide services that can impact on households in poverty. In *Child Poverty: Everybody's Business*, government set out an extensive list of policies at the national level which were being pursued to address child poverty. Many of these have a local dimension. In the appendix to the Essential Strategy Elements section in this toolkit you can find a list of the agencies that we have identified as contributing to *Everybody's Business*. However, in many local areas, these agencies act independently and in some cases individual agencies have overlooked their potential impact on child poverty as they have been focused on other statutory or core obligations.

A common theme throughout the Child Poverty Toolkit workshops was that public services, whilst holding statutory and core responsibilities, also had a strong underlying mission to improve the quality of life for local residents. We were also reminded that the Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities a general power to do anything likely to promote the economic, environmental or social well-being of residents in their area. Ensuring that public services are designed to reduce child poverty is a goal that fits naturally within this power.

This paper sets out ways in which local strategic partnerships and the agencies within these can ensure that child poverty impacts and considerations are considered at the time of developing policy or designing service plans or when making procurement decisions. These are

- Including Child Poverty Indicator (NI 116) within your local LAA and MAA
- Conducting Child Poverty Impact Assessments of policies and service plans
- Conducting Child Poverty Impact Assessment of Procurement Policies

- Introducing a Child Poverty Reduction Principle into contracts with your service providers

Introduce child poverty as a blanket priority for your local strategic partnership and reflect this within your Local and Multi-Area Agreements.

The Government's new performance framework for local authorities and local strategic partnerships¹, sets out a list of 198 national performance indicators that will form the basis of negotiations for new Local Area Agreements (LAA) coming into effect from July 2008. Included in this national set is a specific indicator for reducing child poverty (National Indicator 116).

We strongly recommend that this indicator be included within your LAA and any MAA that you develop with neighbour authorities. This provides for a formal, high level, commitment to be made across your partnership which can subsequently be used to drive forwards improvements in joint working and commissioning of provision in order to improve outcomes.

Carry out a local child poverty impact assessment. This should include two separate exercises: one for strategies and services, and one for the procurement of services.

Child poverty impact assessment on strategies and services. As with the Race Equality Impact Assessment (REIA), your council could introduce a child poverty impact assessment as new local policies and service delivery plans are developed. We recommend the impact assessment be used across all local strategies: welfare to work, education and skills, transportation, housing, health, etc. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring this is a comprehensive assessment of services used by poor and low-income families. Inclusion is currently in the process of developing a child poverty impact assessment tool that can be used for this purpose.

Child poverty impact assessment of procurement policies. The quality of procurement has a direct impact on whether services are working effectively to

¹ The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators, Department for Communities & Local Government, October 2007

reduce child poverty. This can be a tricky exercise, as authorities have to balance their desire for improved child poverty outcomes with a responsibility to obtain value for money. However, if the power of wellbeing is used then it would appear to be permissible for local authorities to procure with some flexibility and take into account the local child poverty impacts of procurement decisions, for example by encouraging greater local employment amongst disadvantaged communities.

We recommend introducing child poverty into your local procurement processes by asking these key questions:

- Are service delivery contracts awarded to providers that have made a commitment to reduce child poverty? What are they doing to turn this commitment into reality?
- Does the procurement guidance issued by the authority include a 'poverty reduction principle' (see below)?
- Is child poverty considered during business case discussions, in contract specifications, throughout evaluation stages, and when outcome payments are made? If not, how does the authority propose to encourage child poverty to be included at these points in the procurement process?

Introduce a 'child poverty reduction principle' for service providers. Government is keen to improve the participation of the private and voluntary sectors in the delivery of local public services. As this process moves forwards, it will be important to make sure that a high quality of service delivery is maintained, regardless of who delivers these services. ***You can make child poverty part of your local definition of quality*** by requiring local bidders to demonstrate they have a record of reducing poverty for their customers. If you decide to take this step, be sure to let us know so that your Council can be highlighted as a good practice example in the Child Poverty Tool Kit.