



Essential Strategy Elements

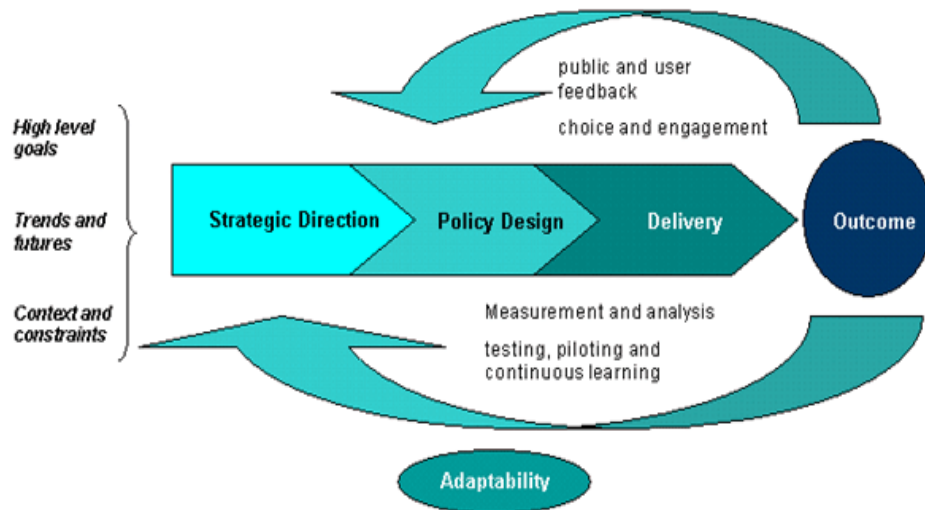
Your local strategy should be viewed as a partnership agreement to achieve common goals: to cut child poverty in half by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. In this section we provide guidance on how to develop an effective strategy that is owned by all partners. Some local partnerships may already be well-placed to deliver on child poverty whilst others may need to consider how their arrangements can better reflect the cross-cutting nature of the problem. Addressing child poverty effectively will require co-ordinated action across all four of the current Local Area Agreement blocks within Local Strategic Partnerships, and existing working arrangements and partnership structures may need to be reviewed as a result. For example, closer working may be required between economic development, children's services, health, and the voluntary sector than is currently the case.

Only your own partnership can judge whether its current arrangements need to be reviewed, but it is sensible from the outset to consider whether or not all relevant partners will be able to actively contribute to the development and subsequent implementation of your strategy. The partners you will need to get involved often operate at different geographical levels. For example, whilst children's services are planned at the local authority level, many economic development functions are planned at regional and sub-regional levels. Establishing the geography which will be covered by your child poverty strategy, and the way that partnerships operating at these different levels will be involved, is therefore an essential first step on the way to developing the strategy itself.

At *Inclusion* and CPAG, we have learned from experience that the most effective strategies contain the following *essential elements*

- Effective Partnership Working – all relevant partners are involved at appropriate levels of seniority
- Robust Knowledge Base – of the current position, trends, opportunities and risks
- Realistic Expectations – of the capacity of existing provision to deliver, taking into account good practice and expertise from elsewhere which can be used to develop this further
- Clarity of Purpose - in the setting of priorities, goals, required actions and milestones
- Resourced to Deliver – identifying how and by whom resources will be made available to support required actions
- Effectively Monitored and Evaluated – to inform on progress, learn lessons and feed back into ongoing strategy development

The diagram below provides a visual representation of the strategy process as an ongoing process¹.



To help you develop your strategy, this paper provides further detail of these “essential elements” and provides some core considerations for you to work through. We recommend that you use these to undertake a quick audit of where you think you are in

¹ adapted from the Government’s Strategy Unit ‘Strategy Survival Guide’, available from www.strategy.gov.uk

the planning process and to identify areas where you are already strong as well as those that will require further work during the development of your strategy.

Effective Partnership Working

Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business, published by HM Treasury in March 2008, details the extensive set of policy objectives² that government has identified as impacting on child poverty. We have appended a table to this paper which sets out all those local partners involved in delivering on these and which will have an interest in the design of your local child poverty strategy. As can be seen, this constitutes a broad range of agencies. Some of these will already be working together in existing partnership structures, for example within Children's Trusts, economic development, and health and social care partnerships.

A key question that you need to ask your partnerships at this point is therefore "How will we ensure all relevant partners are involved in the development of our child poverty strategy?"

Options for involving partners, and ensuring their ownership of the strategy, include establishing formal structures such as a 'Child Poverty Commission' following the example of London, or establishing a cross-cutting group within the existing Local Strategic Partnership in your area. These have the advantage of securing high level ownership of the strategy from key partner organisations. However, getting agreement from partners on the terms of reference and responsibilities for new formal structures is time consuming and may not be appropriate for your area at this stage. In that case, using the current structures that you currently have to assign a lead body or joint leads for the development of the child poverty strategy may be a more realistic option. If you choose to develop your strategy in this way, then make sure that the lead body is clearly accountable within your existing partnership structures and that progress is monitored and reported through these.

² See Appendices A, B and C, *Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business*, Available from: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget/budget_08/documents/bud_bud08_child.cfm

Regardless of decisions that you make relating to structure, there will be a need to conduct an effective consultation to inform your strategy so that agencies can identify their contribution to eradicating child poverty in your area and make the links between this and other planned provision. This may require you to consult in two phases. Firstly to obtain information that will assist you with the mapping of existing plans and provision and then subsequently in relation to your draft strategy and recommendations.

Robust Knowledge Base

Strategies should utilise the best available evidence from a wide range of sources.

These sources should include

- statistical evidence
- expertise of local public service providers
- experience of service users

It is important to note that there will always be gaps in knowledge that cannot be addressed immediately. What is important is that these gaps are logged and that proposals to address them are included in your initial strategy so that your knowledge base improves over time.

In this toolkit we provide a data tool that identifies local authority level statistical information to inform your initial discussions. However, you will often need to drill down to lower levels of geography in order to identify particular concentrations of child poverty in your local area. You may also need to consider the plans of regional and sub-regional agencies concerning labour market and economic development issues for your area. The data tool should therefore be used to provide a starting point for consideration of issues in your area and to bring together key partners to discuss what more is needed to understand the problem locally.

Bringing local partners together in a workshop environment to discuss the information provided by the Data Tool is recommended as a key step in the development of your local strategy, and also gives an opportunity for local service providers to bring their expertise to the process.

Statistical and other information, including feedback from service users, can also be obtained from existing services and programmes, by bringing together details of current monitoring returns and management information as part of a wider mapping exercise. We recommend that you use the table of possible partners identified in the Appendix to request information that may help you to better identify where and how relevant services are currently being provided.

Realistic Expectations

An effective strategy needs to appreciate the constraints under which existing provision operates, whilst also developing capacity further by drawing on good practice and expertise from inside and outside your own partnership.

Provision can be constrained for a large number of reasons – sometimes this can be a lack of skills in the local labour market which affects the quality of service delivery; sometimes it is due to legal or statutory obligations which must be met in the way that services are delivered; and sometimes provision is constrained because of a lack of financial resources prevents delivery at the scale required to address the problem. Mapping exercises and consultations with providers should seek to establish how these constraints currently operate so that these can be taken into account when the partnership sets its priorities, targets and milestones.

It may be that the constraints you identify can be addressed as part of the strategy. For example, you could look at developing a workforce strategy to improve the skills of staff in key service areas or to help them to cross-refer to other provision that exists; seek local freedoms and flexibilities from national requirements through the Local and Multi-Area Agreement processes; and redeploy financial resources to better reflect your priorities. Whatever measures you identify, you will need to consider the likely time-frames that will be required to achieve these, and reflect these in the targets and milestones that you set within your strategy.

You should also seek to identify and establish good practice. This may be practice that exists within your own area or it may be external to it. In the Appendix we identify a number of pathfinder and pilot programmes which, although they may not be operating

in your own area can still be useful to identify how constraints on delivery are being tackled elsewhere and can provide a direction of travel for you to explore in your own strategy.

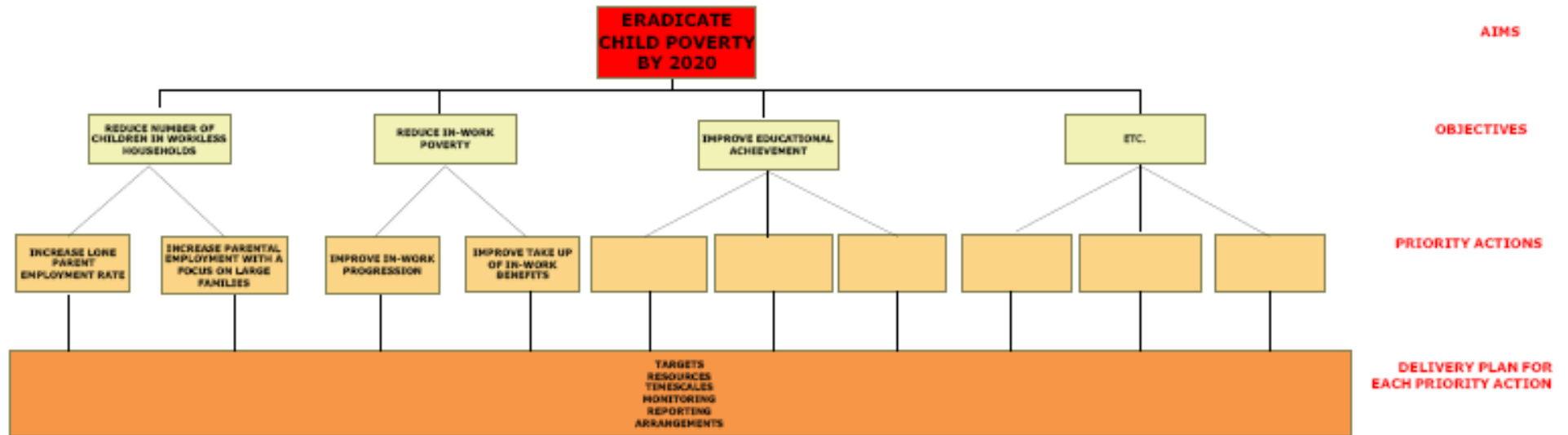
Clarity of Purpose

Your strategy should define the outcomes it is designed to achieve. Your strategy needs a clearly stated, long-term aim to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. However, objectives should be set which break this aim down into specific strands of the strategy against which progress can be further planned and measured.

For example, you may wish to adopt objectives to reflect specific local problems (and proposed solutions) that you have identified in the earlier stages of your strategy's development. This may mean setting objectives to improve outcomes for specific groups (e.g. lone parent households), areas (e.g. specific geographies with high concentrations of child poverty) or services (e.g. better integrating employment, skills and children's services). Objectives could also be set to improve the way that your partnership works together and develops (e.g. developing joint commissioning processes or 'child poverty proofing' policies and plans)

Each of the objectives will need to be measurable. You will need to be able to report on whether or not these have been achieved, and will also be able to further unpack them into a set of proposed actions that you intend to take. Although this approach breaks down your overall aim into a hierarchy of objectives and actions you will also need to make sure that the action plans make relevant links with each other (see diagram, below).

Figure 1: Hierarchical Breakdown of a Child Poverty Strategy



Once you have a clear idea of your aim, objectives and the priority actions that you intend to take, you may want to distill these into a vision or mission statement which can be used to keep your strategy on track and which can be used to provide a clear message to stakeholders and the wider public about the core principles which underpin your partnership and strategy. Use the library section of the website to look up examples of other strategies and vision statements to help you, but make sure that the mission you set for yourself genuinely reflects the key local priorities that you have identified. And when you have developed your strategy, please share this on the website so that others can learn from you.

Resourced to Deliver

Your action plans need to contain targets and also identify the resources that you will deploy to achieve these.

Targets have three main components.

- (i) The scale of the action you wish to take,
- (ii) The quality of the action you wish to achieve, and
- (iii) The timescale you wish to deliver over.

All three of these components will have resource implications. Resourcing is also not just about funding, although this is an important part of it. But, it also covers the human resources, including skills and knowledge, as well as technological resources that are required to deliver against your targets. The table, below, provides an example of how a proposed action can be broken down into a target and the resource implications of the target's component considered as a result.

Table 1: Example of Target Setting and Resource Considerations

Proposed Action	Target	Resource Considerations
To increase the numbers of lone parents in employment	To increase lone parent employment (i) by 3% per annum (ii) lasting for a minimum of 26 weeks (iii) by 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 3% per annum – how many is this in absolute numbers? How many are achieved at the moment? What’s the scale of the gap and what are current costs and delivery arrangements? How do we intend to improve performance, by buying more or being more efficient? If the latter, how will this be done? What is the additional resource requirement (human or financial) based on what we know from current provision? (ii) Does current provision deliver 26 week employment? Is there a quality shortfall and what would be required to deal with this? Do improvements need to be made in terms of in-work support? How will these be supported? (iii) What is the per annum cost? What is the available budget? Can the two be reconciled?

Of course, not all proposed actions will be resource negative. Some will be designed to release resources which can be invested in other areas to help deliver your strategy. This will often be the case if you have identified new and innovative ways of working that you wish to pilot or adopt. But here too, it is important to be as specific as possible about the amount and nature of the resources that are being released, when this is expected, and how these will be transferred to support other areas of your strategy. Some resources cannot easily be transferred without first making additional investments (e.g. staff moving from one area of work to another may need re-training in order to be effective).

Effectively Monitored and Evaluated

Your strategy will need to be monitored and evaluated with performance reported and objectives and action plans revised over time. It is important that any targets set within your strategy are therefore capable of being monitored. To do this you need to allocate responsibility for targets and know where, when, and how this information will be provided to you.

Where the required level of information does not exist, you may wish to include actions in your plan to obtain this for the future (for example, by setting an objective to improve management information across your partnership and breaking this down into actions for specific service areas to develop appropriate systems within a set timescale).

Monitoring of performance towards your strategy therefore takes place by gathering information of performance against targets and assessing whether or not these have delivered the actions that you set out within your strategy. Reporting this performance regularly and taking the time to reflect on problems and issues in delivery is important throughout the lifetime of your strategy. A routine progress assessment can and should be carried out every time your partnership meets. This can be as simple as a routine data update for your LSP. To keep partners current in between meetings, you may choose to develop an email update or a child poverty stats/ targets bulletin for circulation.

High level indicators, such as those included in the data toolkit, will also tell you whether your actions and the performance you are witnessing against your targets is feeding through into an overall improvement in the level of child poverty in your area. Making sense of the information requires a greater degree of *evaluation*. In particular, there is a need to consider whether or not the actions you have taken have resulted in the achievement or otherwise of your objectives and how these have contributed to progress towards meeting your aim.

Whilst individual targets may have been met you may not find that this has sufficiently impacted on child poverty levels. This would indicate that there maybe a need to change the actions you are taking, to re-prioritise, or to change your objectives. Alternatively, the failure could be due to external factors. This effectively takes you back

to the start of the strategic planning process and requires a comprehensive review of the strategy.

We recommend that the period of your strategy cover a three year period and that in the closing months of year two you conduct a comprehensive evaluation which will take you back to the start of the strategic planning process, giving you an opportunity to review your current partnership arrangements, update your knowledge base, revisit aims and objectives, establish new priorities and actions and consider resources.

Appendix: Potential Partners & Policy Objectives contained in Tackling Child Poverty: Everybody's Business

Possible Local Partners	Everybody's Business Policy Objectives
<p>Employers and their representative groups Regional Development Agencies Regional skills partnerships Sub-regional economic partnerships City Strategies (where these exist) Employment and Skills Boards (where these exist) Jobcentre Plus Learning and Skills Council Local authority regeneration and economic development Trades Unions Advice Services Adult learning providers including FE and HE sectors and third sector Employment services providers Lone parent and family support groups Racial Equality Councils Ethnic minority groups especially Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali groups Primary Care Trusts and health support agencies including drug action teams, and alcohol addiction services. National Offender Management Service and agencies working with offenders including Social Enterprises New Deal for Communities Working Neighbourhoods Fund commissioners and provision</p>	<p>Fair standards for those in work Increased Skills Support for lone parents and partners Support for other disadvantaged groups Regeneration in deprived areas</p>
<p>Children's Trusts Children's Centres Schools, Academies, Colleges and Universities</p>	<p>Meeting the needs of parents and their children Policies to improve children's life chances</p>

³ These agencies have been awarded Youth Sector Development Funding from April 2008 to expand innovative work with young people with difficult problems including substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, coping with disability and homelessness.

<p>Childcare providers</p> <p>Local authority special educational needs services and commissioners</p> <p>Kids Company, UK Youth, Fairbridge, Speaking Up, and LEAP³,</p> <p>Information, Advice and Guidance services</p> <p>Young carers support groups</p> <p>Early years education providers</p> <p>City Challenge programmes in London, Greater Manchester, and the Black Country</p> <p>Education Improvement Partnerships</p> <p>Choice Advisers</p> <p>Personalised Learning provision</p> <p>Parent Support Advisers,</p> <p>Family Literacy Language and Numeracy (FLLN) provision in the most disadvantaged areas</p> <p>LSC Wider Family Learning provision and commissioners</p> <p>Early Learning Partnerships</p> <p>Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders</p> <p>Respect Parenting Pathfinders</p> <p>Criminal Justice agencies responsible for Parenting Contracts and Orders</p> <p>Creative Partnerships</p> <p>Cultural activities pilots in schools</p> <p>Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund provision and commissioners in Local Authorities</p> <p>Local Authority sections responsible for securing access to positive leisure time under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act</p> <p>Youth agencies, and third sector support</p>	<p>Early Year's Education</p> <p>School education</p> <p>Post-compulsory education Support for Parents</p> <p>Positive activities</p>
<p>Credit unions and Community Development</p> <p>Finance Institutions</p> <p>Money advice services</p> <p>DWP Now Let's Talk Money Campaign</p>	<p>Financial capability and inclusion</p>

Benefits Agency (social fund) Money Guidance Pathfinders Schools (Key Stage 3 and 4 PHSE) Skills for Life financial literacy providers	
Planning Authorities – regional and local government CABE space and environmental services Highways and transportation departments Police and criminal justice authorities Local Safeguarding Children Boards Youth Offending Teams	Support for all communities Regeneration in deprived areas Safety & Crime
Primary Care Trusts Sports and health promotion provision Children’s centres and extended schools Mental health services for children with severe and complex needs and their parents Agencies identified in Teenage Pregnancy: Next Steps	Health services
Family Pathfinders Family Intervention Projects Family Nurse Partnerships	Joined Up services for families at risk