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Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2015

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Vision	1
3. Herefordshire solutions	2
4. Definitions	2
5. National Drivers	2
6. Herefordshire Profile	3
7. Performance Framework	4
8. Key areas of work	
i. My House	5
ii. My Physical and Mental Wellbeing	6
iii. My Education and Skills	7
iv. My Job Prospects	8
v. The Money in my Pocket	9
vi. The Area in which I live, including crime and disorder	10
9. Gap analysis	
10. Resources	11
11. Monitoring arrangements	11
Appendices:	
▪ Strategic links – list of strategies	12

Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2015

1. Introduction

“Out of every five children, one is currently living in poverty. 2 million live in poor housing – crowded rooms, squalid conditions, dangerous buildings too. These kinds of beginnings can hold a child back for his or her whole life. At just 22 months a poor child’s skills already trail behind those of better off toddlers. At age 5 that poor child, even if he or she is very bright, will have been overtaken at school by a less talented but more privileged classmate. By 16 he or she is just half as likely to get five good GCSEs, including English and Maths. And, at the other end of their life, a child born today in England, in the poorest neighbourhoods will still die, on average, 7 years before a child born in the richest.”

Government statement, 2010

Children and young people are growing up in poverty in Herefordshire. The effects of this will resonate throughout their lives, and are entwined with everyone else. They affect the growth and enrichment of society as a whole and affect the way individuals, communities, independent and voluntary organisations, and the public and private sectors use money and people. Successive national governments have recognised the profound impact of child poverty and the relationships with many different areas of society and services. The Child Poverty Act of 2010 has been endorsed by the government that came to power in 2010 and this government published its national strategy for Child Poverty in 2011¹.

In Herefordshire we can make a difference and transform the lives of our children, young people, families and communities together. This strategy is based on Herefordshire’s Child Poverty Needs Assessment, part of our overall Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. It sets out what we will do in the key areas affecting child poverty and also provides the opportunity for others to become involved and target their own activities to make improvements in their own local communities.

2. Vision

In Herefordshire we aim to address child poverty by:

- Preventing poor children from becoming poor adults, breaking cycles of poverty
- Promoting ambition, skills, and capabilities of children and families in poverty enabling them to move out of poverty
- Improving family circumstances including homes to enable children and young people to thrive and take full opportunities in education and be able to work in well paid employment with training and development opportunities
- Creating opportunities for people to meet their economic potential through work

¹ [A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives](#)

3. Herefordshire solutions

Herefordshire's Child Poverty Strategy sets out the areas of work we will focus on for the next four years. Herefordshire Public Services and partners have been working on many of these areas of work for some time; however, this strategy is the mechanism for pulling them together into a coherent strategy focused on tackling child poverty. This strategy, along with the child poverty needs assessment, enables others to think about what they can contribute and determine their own actions to address child poverty. Detailed actions are contained in individual service and business plans.

4. Definitions

Following extensive consultation, *Measuring Child Poverty*² set out a new tiered approach to measuring child poverty in the UK over the long-term.

- absolute low income: this indicator measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms. The level is fixed as equal to the relative low-income threshold for the threshold for the baseline year of 1998-99 expressed in today's prices;
- relative low income: this measures whether the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. This indicator measures the number of children living in households below 60 per cent of contemporary median equivalised household income; and
- material deprivation and low income combined: this indicator provides a wider measure of people's living standards. This indicator measures the number of children living in households that are both materially deprived and have an income below 70 per cent of contemporary median equivalised household income.

The Government monitors child poverty against all three measures with a target attached to the relative low-income measure, recognising that when family income falls below that of others in society, this has additional negative outcomes including inequality of opportunity and social exclusion.

The most familiar definition of Child Poverty is:

Proportion of children under 16 living in families in receipt of Child Tax Credit whose reported income is less than 60 per cent of the median income or in receipt of Income Support or (Income-Based) Job Seekers Allowance.

5. National Drivers

The Government's national Child Poverty Strategy sets out a new approach to tackling poverty up to 2020. Strengthening families, encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and providing support to the most vulnerable are at the heart of this strategy. It is set against the backdrop of the Child Poverty Act 2010, which established income targets for 2020 and a duty to minimise socio-economic disadvantage. It has also been developed in the context of a Spending Review that placed a very high priority on improving the life chances of children and the protection of vulnerable families, while also making crucial progress in reducing the nation's fiscal deficit.

² [Measuring Child Poverty](#)

The Government's focus is on "combating worklessness and educational failure and preventing family and relationship breakdown with the aim of supporting the most disadvantaged groups struggling at the bottom of society." It is important to recognise the context in which a child is raised, alongside factors including education and income.

The national strategy has been informed by independent reviews by Frank Field MP³ and Graham Allen MP⁴. As a result, the Government is working on developing new life chances indicators, taking account of Field's recommendations and those in Dame Clare Tickell's review of the Early Years Foundation Stage⁵.

6. Herefordshire Profile

This Child Poverty Strategy has been informed by a comprehensive [Child Poverty Needs Assessment](#) which was completed in March 2011 and which will be updated on an annual basis as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. National data is released two years in arrears and relates to a snapshot date of 13 August each year. 2010 data suggests that 4,370 children under the age of 16 were living in poverty in Herefordshire at the snapshot date in 2008. From data released in 2011, this figure had risen to 4,685 at the snapshot date, a 0.9% increase. Further detailed statistics are also available on the [Facts and Figures website](#).

The needs assessment examines child poverty by the impacts that it may have on the life chances of an individual under the themes of:

- My House
- My Physical and Mental Wellbeing
- My Education and Skills
- My Job Prospects
- The Money In My Pocket
- The Area In Which I Live
- Crime And disorder In My Area

Those areas of Herefordshire recording the highest levels of child poverty for children under 16 are Golden Post-Newton Farm and Leominster-Ridgemoor, both of which are mentioned consecutively within the theme areas studied.

Whilst employment is one of the most successful routes out of poverty, it is not a guarantee. A combination of low wages in low skilled jobs may limit total earnings. A child's risk of being in poverty falls from 58 per cent to 14 per cent when one or both parents is working; however, various constraints exist, not least transport costs to work and availability of affordable child care, which may prevent parents entry to employment. Herefordshire is fortunate in that unemployment rates are comparatively low with some 76.2% of all people in employment and just 5.3% unemployed. Comparative unemployment rates regionally and nationally are 9.3% and 7.9% respectively.

Whilst the county has a comparatively high employment rate, the average wage levels are much lower. This has an effect on people's circumstances as well as the economy as a whole and wealth of the county. A key factor in Herefordshire is the number of part time workers and especially female workers, who receive mean wages below both the regional and national averages. Insufficient family income is a significant contributor to child

³ [Independent Review on Poverty and Life Changes](#)

⁴ [Early Intervention: Next Steps](#)

⁵ [Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning](#)

poverty. Income maximisation is therefore a critical part of the solution, and steps to address this include economic growth and job opportunities, building adults skills and experience to progress into higher paid work, enabling child care, and ensuring clear advice and guidance is available to maximise benefit take up. In addition, appropriate legal advice on debt management can positively address child poverty.

Poor development in childhood and negative experiences can impact on educational attainment and ultimately employability. Whilst the attainment of pupils eligible to free schools meals at key stage 4 has risen consecutively in recent years in Herefordshire, a gap still exists between these children and their peers. In 2010, this gap stood at 30 percentage points, slightly wider than the 28 percentage points recorded nationally.

Whilst it is true that the highest levels of child poverty are recorded in Hereford city and the market towns, poverty can be particularly prevalent in rural areas where it may be harder or more costly for families to access services and opportunities. People in the lowest income group in rural areas spend, on average, almost 50 per cent more than urban equivalents on transport. The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) and the Rowntree Foundation have published research (2010) that shows that people in rural areas need to take home up to 24% more than those in urban areas in order to reach an acceptable living standard. For example, a single person living in a hamlet will need £18,600 a year to get by, compared with £14,400 for the same person living in an urban area.

Housing quality is one of the wider determinants of health, and poor housing conditions can trigger negative health effects and poor educational attainment in children. In Herefordshire, poorer housing conditions are more commonly found in the private rented sector, much of which is pre-1919 housing, and much of which is in the “hard to heat, hard to treat” category. Many rural dwellings in Herefordshire also lack a mains service infrastructure such as gas, water and drainage.

Proximity to services, both safeguarding and preventative as well as entertainment and play has a marked impact on families in rural communities. Young people in these areas are less likely to engage in after school activities, prevented from doing so by the time and money required to access these and the availability of transport. Transport, its availability and cost, can play an important part in whether adults and young people in Herefordshire access services and employment.

7. Performance Framework

A fundamental part of our approach is not to prescribe all the activities required to address child poverty, but to present the key issues facing Herefordshire in an informed, accessible way and to be clear about what Herefordshire Public Services will do for its part. The needs assessment and strategy have been developed in consultation with a variety of other organisations, including private, voluntary and community organisations.

It is important that, collectively, we focus on activity that has a strong track record of delivering change, whilst also enabling local innovation together. The strategy can be used by local partnerships, private, voluntary and community organisations to think what they can do to take part in addressing child poverty, to put thought into action and to pledge their involvement. We will collect these pledges and use them to assess how we

are achieving our aims in Herefordshire. Local intelligence from all partners will be used to update the needs assessment annually.

8. Key areas of work

The strategy follows the needs assessment in setting out the key areas of our work. Each section establishes what we are aiming to achieve, why it is important and what we will do. The key partners for delivery are listed although it is acknowledged there are many other agencies and organisations that will also have an impact eg the third sector.

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My House

What are we aiming to achieve?

For children in Herefordshire to live in safe, warm and healthy homes, thus contributing to maximising their positive health and educational life opportunities

Why is this important?

- The total cost of poor housing is calculated to be in excess of £600 million annually to the NHS, and the costs to society may be greater than £1.5 billion, per year.
- The House Condition Survey in Herefordshire (2006) indicated that over 9% of dwellings had serious Category 1 Hazards and over 40% failed the Decent Homes Standard. Most of these were in the private rented sector.
- Many homes in Herefordshire are “hard to heat, hard to treat homes”: expensive to heat.
- In 2008, 29.3% of Herefordshire residents were in fuel poverty (latest figures from DECC).
- Housing inspections reveal that damp and mould, excess cold, electrical safety, fire safety, risk of falls and overcrowding are common hazards found in Herefordshire homes.
- There is a shortage of affordable social housing in Herefordshire, with over 5,000 households on the waiting list (April 2011), most of them families. In addition, there are over 1900 empty properties (April 2010).
- Herefordshire has the worst affordability ratio in the West Midlands. This means that for those on lower earnings, a house at the bottom end of the market currently would cost them 9.3 times their annual earnings

What we will do?

- Improve housing conditions in all tenures (private rented, social, owner-occupied)
- Prioritise for action all referrals from partners, in relation to children in alleged poor housing conditions
- Continue to prevent illegal evictions & harassment of families by landlords.
- Work towards addressing overcrowding of homes in the county
- Provide disabled facilities/amenities for children in terms of access or egress within the home.
- Bring 390 empty properties back into use in Herefordshire by 2013
- Use the Joint Housing and Social Services protocol for early intervention where children are at risk of homelessness.
- Expand the Women’s Aid outreach support service to offer support to children living in the community affected by domestic abuse
- Work in conjunction with SHYPP to prepare a Teenage Parents Homelessness needs analysis.
- Set a target of 264 affordable housing (both built or acquired) to be delivered in what is still a fragile housing market.
- Continue the delivery of the National and Local Mortgage Rescue Scheme

Main partners for delivery:

Herefordshire Public Services – Homes and Community Services

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My Physical and Mental Wellbeing

What are we aiming to achieve?

For every child in Herefordshire to have an equal chance of a healthy childhood and developing a healthy lifestyle for adulthood

Why is this important?

- Research suggests that the working-age obese may be 15-20% less likely to be in employment than the non-obese, all other things being equal
- Locally, in 2008-9 almost 1 in 10 children in Reception and nearly 1 in 20 children in Year 6 were obese
- Across Herefordshire estimated rates of binge drinking vary from 13.3% to 24.2% of the total population, averaging at 16.8% for the county
- ONS estimates indicate a correlation between higher levels of binge drinking and local areas of deprivation
- Central ward showed the highest under 18 conception rate in 2009 at 85.9 per 1000 girls aged 15-17, almost three times the county average of 31.2
- The simple act of a mother and father being interested in their children's education alone increases their chances of moving out of poverty as an adult by 25 percentage points
- Lower income mothers are less likely to breast-feed but those low income mothers who breast-fed for 6-12 months had the highest scores of any group on quality parenting interactions at age five.
- It has been shown that a reduction in income and worsening mental health tend to lead to a reduction in parenting capacity; however, increases in income alone did not necessarily improve parenting capacity.
- The dental health of children in Herefordshire is poor; 39% of 5 year olds in Herefordshire have experienced tooth decay, compared to 29% in the West Midlands and 31% in England.

What we will do?

- Promote safe alcohol consumption amongst children, young people and pregnant women thus supporting those that drink unsafe amounts
- Promote Start4Life programme across Herefordshire
- Provide breastfeeding support to new mothers
- Provide 8-13 year olds with information, advice and guidance on how to maintain health lifestyles, with particular emphasis on smoking and drinking alcohol
- Provide opportunities for active sport, play and leisure
- Understand the issues and needs of young people around sexual health and substance misuse (including tobacco and alcohol) and then improve the services we provide
- Provide support for sexually active young people across all localities within Herefordshire:
- Continue to implement and expand existing programmes which aim to improve dental health by promoting toothbrushing using family fluoride toothpaste and the uptake of fluoride varnish.

Main partners for delivery:

Herefordshire Public Services – Health and Wellbeing

Wye Valley NHS Trust

Herefordshire Public Services – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services

Early Years settings, schools and colleges

Halo

Herefordshire Public Services – People’s Services

Third sector providers

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My Education and Skills

What are we aiming to achieve?

For all young people in Herefordshire to realise their potential and achieve economic independence by:

- enabling all children to be given the best start in life
- raising aspiration
- reducing the gap in attainment for those young people in vulnerable groups
- reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Why is this important?

- In 2010, the gap between those pupils eligible to free school meals who achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSE including English and Maths and those who were not was 30 percentage points.
- The gap in attainment is already evident when pupils are assessed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of the Reception year.
- In general, 18 year old labour market entrants are more likely to be in higher status jobs at 19 than 16 year old entrants.
- Skilled trade vacancies account for the greatest proportion of vacancies that were hard-to-fill due to a lack of skills in the labour market

What we will do?

- Expand the number of places available in the market for 2 year old free education through settings and childminders.
- Support early years settings to ensure smooth entry to school for children and provide clear transition documentation.
- Deliver accredited parenting programmes in groups and 1:1 in Children's Centres, together with family learning programmes, including work related skills
- Work with schools, colleges and providers to raise aspirations of young people and ensure pastoral support is available to enable them to achieve.
- Work with schools to identify early those learners most at risk of disengaging and becoming NEET.
- Ensure interventions occur when young people have been identified as at risk of being NEET.
- Develop programmes to raise intergenerational aspirations in targeted geographical areas
- Encourage work based learning across the county both in Key Stages 4 and 5.
- Ensure that future developments in Herefordshire are used to benefit the local community via the development of skills academies, e.g. in construction and retail

Main partners for delivery:

Early Years settings, schools, PRUs, sixth forms, colleges

Herefordshire Public Services – People's Services

Herefordshire Public Services – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services

Third sector providers

My Job Prospects

What are we aiming to achieve?

For all people in Herefordshire to meet their potential through work by:

- breaking down individual barriers to work
- creating opportunity for employment
- boosting economic growth that in turn creates additional employment

Why is this important?

- Parental employment is the single biggest determinant of family income and living in a household where no adult is working puts a child at a 63 per cent risk of relative poverty.
- In a recent residents survey, 23% of respondents thought “Job Prospects” one of the most important factors of quality of life and 26% also thought it was one of the factors that most needed improving.
- Locally, one area is in the top 10% national decile for employment deprivation, Golden Post-Newton Farm.
- The highest levels of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are concentrated in the area south of the River Wye in Hereford City.
- A report by the Commission for Rural England found more than a quarter of parents interviewed in rural Children’s Centres did not feel that the childcare available locally adequately met their needs.

What we will do?

- Run basic skill and life long learning courses to gain confidence and skills to enter the workforce
- Work with schools to ensure that children and young people receive information, advice and guidance on their career options, specifically those young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET
- Provide employment advice and guidance in Children’s Centres
- Raise the profile of apprenticeships within Herefordshire and ensure that the entitlement to apprenticeships is accessible to young people throughout Herefordshire.
- Encourage entrepreneurial skills within the county including running business booster programmes and training voucher schemes to enable small companies to take the next steps in their development and enter new markets

Main partners for delivery:

Local businesses

Job Centre Plus

Third sector organisations

Herefordshire Public Services – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services

Herefordshire Public Services – Homes and Community Services

Herefordshire Public Services – People’s Services

Hereford Futures

The Money in my Pocket

What are we aiming to achieve?

For every young person in Herefordshire to manage their lives in a way that means they can achieve their potential by:

- equipping young people with the skills to manage their lives, including budgeting, bills, accessing support
- enabling people to make sound financial decisions in a legally operating market

Why is this important?

- Evidence from children shows that they will modify their own needs in response to their family's financial difficulties
- Latest published statistics show 13.6% of children in Herefordshire are living in poverty.
- Three areas in Herefordshire have over one third of children living in poverty; Golden Post-Newton Farm, Leominster-Ridgemoor and Leominster-Gateway
- Those areas with the highest proportions of pupils claiming free school meals also have the highest proportions of children living in poverty.
- Compared to both regional and national figures, the weekly work-based earnings of Herefordshire residents compares poorly and appears to be worsening
- Low income families are more likely to rely on the subprime finance market and/or illegal forms of money lending such as 'loan sharking'
- There is a correlation between disability and low income
- Locally, enquiries to CAB regarding debt in 2009-10 were up by 16% on the same point in the previous year – similar to trends regionally and nationally.

What we will do?

- Work with schools and colleges to assist them to deliver economic awareness education including budgeting, debt management, bank accounts and bills.
- Work with schools and colleges to identify sources of grants/ funding to ensure young people from low income families are not disadvantaged in education by an inability to pay for trips/ text books/ equipment.
- Work with the post 16 education providers in Herefordshire to ensure an equitable method of distributing the Government's new Bursary scheme:
- Provide pre-contract and post-contract advice on consumer credit matters through appropriate and targeted means
- Enforce consumer credit legislation in a proportionate manner in accordance with the council's prosecution policy
- Signpost individuals to appropriate advice on income maximisation, benefits, debt management and forms of credit, credit advisors and providers
- Support vulnerable consumers and those with additional needs to resolve disputed credit agreements and credit brokerage issues at the earliest opportunity
- Publicise and encourage communities to use credit unions

Main partners for delivery:

Local businesses

Job Centre Plus

Third sector organisations

Herefordshire Public Services – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services

Herefordshire Public Services – People’s Services

Herefordshire Public Services – Health and Wellbeing

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The Area in which I live, including crime and disorder

What are we aiming to achieve?

For all children in Herefordshire to feel safe, secure and confident by:

- working to reduce crime
- stimulating creativity and exploration in children and young people particularly through access to quality play groups and outdoor adventure.
- providing full access for children and young people, families to services.

Why is this important?

- A quarter of children living in rural England are living in poverty.
- The effects of geographical isolation on individuals and families is significant both in terms of financial impact as well as social interaction.
- Young people in rural areas are less likely to take part in out-of-school activities than children in urban areas, because of the disadvantage of fewer options and distance.
- NSPCC findings acknowledged significant challenges to delivering child protection services in rural areas with service users spread over a much wider geographical area making face-to-face delivery more difficult and expensive.

What we will do?

- Work with communities to take ownership of, and responsibility for, green spaces (eg South Wye Regeneration Partnership and the development of Belmont and Haywood Country Park as a community asset)
- Improve business capability, access to services and a range of benefits for residents through investment in the broadband infrastructure.
- Develop the play buildings project to improve the quality and range of play grounds in the county
- Provide access to leisure and swimming facilities at reduced rates for targeted groups
- Promote special campaign to encourage reading with children, including annual reading challenges and improved access to neighbourhood libraries
- Prevent young people from entering the Criminal Justice System by identifying issues at an early stage and offering appropriate support.
- Target resources on those offenders most at risk of re-offending and / or causing harm to the community.
- Raise awareness on internet safety, fire safety, road safety, drug and alcohol, social behaviour and healthy eating to years 5 and 6 through the Crucial Crew project.
- Increase the percentage of service users exiting drug treatment successfully.
- Work with community and voluntary groups to deliver community projects addressing a range of issues, including drug and alcohol misuse, access to services, and community engagement

Main partners for delivery:

Herefordshire Public Services – Homes and Community Services

Herefordshire Public Services – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services

Halo

MATAC, including West Mercia Police and West Mercia Probation Trust

Herefordshire Public Services – People's Services

9. Gap analysis

Implementation of the strategy and the associated monitoring of progress will identify gaps where there is currently limited or no provision in place to address them. Parental capacity and aspiration has been one such area which is addressed in part through the strategy but which may require additional provision and focus in the future. Where gaps are identified, Herefordshire Public Services and partners will work together to address them.

10. Resources

There are no dedicated resources for work around combating child poverty. The pledges and actions outlined in this strategy are a combination of the work that individual services undertake that will contribute towards combating child poverty.

11. Monitoring Arrangements

Progress against the achievement of the strategy and identification of gaps will be assessed through the following ways:

- Reviewing progress quarterly against specific actions through the countywide partnership arrangements including The Herefordshire Partnership, The Health and Wellbeing Board, The Economic Development Partnership, The Schools Strategic Group and The Safeguarding Boards
- Reporting on those activities that are contained in the Joint Delivery Plan for Herefordshire Public Services which contribute to the delivery of the child poverty strategy in line with the agreed performance reporting cycle for Herefordshire Public Services
- Reporting against a range of indicators in an annual report commissioned by the Children and Young People's Partnership Forum, chaired by the Director of People's Services.
- Running a series of workshops for partners through the Children and Young People's Partnership Forum focusing on case studies in each of the key areas of work
- Updating the child poverty needs assessment annually, as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Then updating the strategy to ensure effective progress.

Strategic links – list of related strategies and reports

- Economic Development Strategy
- Housing In Herefordshire Strategy Action Plan 2011-2012
- Joint Herefordshire and Shropshire Housing Strategy (currently out for consultation)
- Healthy Housing Strategy (draft at present)
- Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Empty Properties Strategy
- “Yes We Can” Plan 2011-2015
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Director of Public Health’s Annual Report
- South Wye Regeneration Partnership Action Plan and the action plans of the advisory groups
- NEET Strategy (in development)

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