

# Wandsworth Child Poverty Strategy

Draft

	<b>CONTENTS</b>	Page.
1.	<b>INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE</b>	4
2.	<b>WHAT IS CHILD POVERTY?</b>	4
	(a) Definitions	4
	(b) The impact of child poverty	5
	(c) Key consequences	5
3.	<b>NATIONAL DRIVERS AND LEGISLATION</b>	6
	(a) The Government's Strategy	6
	(b) The Child Poverty Bill 2009	7
4.	<b>GROUPS AT RISK OF EXPERIENCING POVERTY</b>	8
	(a) Vulnerable Groups	8
	(b) Lone parent families	8
	(c) Large families	8
	(d) Families with disabilities or mental health problems	8
	(e) Families where the parents have been in care	8
	(f) Teenage Parents	9
	(g) Black and minority ethnic families	10
5.	<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD POVERTY – THE PICTURE IN WANDSWORTH</b>	10
	(a) Impact of Poverty Outcomes	10
	(b) Families dependent on Workless Benefits	11
	(c) Children in families in “in-work poverty”	11
	(d) Where poverty is concentrated in Wandsworth	13
6.	<b>WHAT MIGHT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN TACKLING CHILD POVERTY?</b>	14
	(a) Co-ordinating actions to impact on Poverty	14
	(b) Helping people to move into work	14
	(c) Supporting those in work	15
	(d) Breaking the links between child poverty and poor outcomes	16

	(e) Improving schools and narrowing gaps in educational outcomes	17
	(f) Key issues impacting on effective delivery of the 5 areas for action	18
7.	<b>WHAT WE ARE DOING IN WANDSWORTH</b>	18
	(a) The focus for action locally	18
	(b) Skills support to parents	18
	(c) Maximising Family Incomes	20
	(d) Raising the aspirations of the next generation	20
	(e) Preventing teenage pregnancy and supporting teenage parents	21
8.	<b>IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY</b>	23
9.	<b>THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGING ECONOMY</b>	23
10.	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	23
	Appendix 1 – Supporting Teenage Parents Action Plan	
	Appendix 2 – Skills Support for Parents	
	Appendix 3 – Raising Aspirations Action Plan	

GLOSSARY

CTB	Council Tax Benefit
CTC	Child Tax Credit
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
HB	Housing Benefit
IB/SDA	Incapacity Benefit/Special Disability Allowance
IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index
IS	Income Support
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LDA	London Development Agency
LPIS	Lone Parents Income Support
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PC	Pension Credits
SOA	Super Output Area
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
WTC	Working Tax Credit

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Children's well being is largely, though not wholly, dependent on the wellbeing of their parents. Child poverty might more accurately be described as family poverty.

Children in poor households are likely to have a more negative experience of childhood than those not in poor households. Raising parental incomes is a key aspect of any child poverty strategy together with a strong focus on improving children's outcomes. The Strategy set out below, and the associated work programme, has at its core an ambition to raise family incomes and improve services to alleviate the effects of growing up in poverty.

The Children's Trust arrangement in Wandsworth is already involved in many actions directed at improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children. This is achieved both by improving universal provision and developing targeted programmes, many of which will benefit those living in, or at risk of living in, poverty. Wandsworth's Children's Trust is determined to play its part in realising the Government's aspirations for eroding Child Poverty. The Trust is:-

'... committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020 through the delivery of high quality universal services for all, intervening early to minimise inequality, social breakdown and poor attainment. The Trust will support all parents and particularly lone parents to secure and maintain employment as well as help them to understand and utilise the benefits and support system.'

The Children's Trust is driving change at a local level, harnessing amongst others, the combined efforts of the Children's Services Department, other Council Departments including Housing, Finance, Adult Social Services and Economic Development, NHS Wandsworth, Community Services (Wandsworth), the Police and the voluntary and community sector, together with other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

## 2. WHAT IS CHILD POVERTY?

### (a) Definitions.

The Department for Work and Pensions report 'Measuring Child Poverty' December 2003 sets out a tiered approach to measuring and defining child poverty in the UK over the longer term using 3 key indicator measures:

- i. **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 baseline year of 1998-99 expressed in today's prices;
- ii. **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
- iii. **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.

At a local level the best indicator of child poverty is the number of children in poor families dependent on out of work benefits. These benefits are Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Pension Credits (PC) and Incapacity Benefit / Special Disability Allowance (IB/SDA). However, this measure is likely to underestimate the local number of children in poverty as it does not include children in families where one or more people are working, but their income is not enough to take them above the poverty line. Nationally it is estimated that around 50% of children in poverty are in working families (DWP, In Work Poverty: A Systematic Review, 2009).

**(b) The impact of child poverty**

Growing up in poverty is more likely to have a negative impact on a child's life chances and on their opportunities as an adult. Children living in poverty tend to have lower educational attainment and are more vulnerable in terms of their short and longer term health and well being. Research shows that children who live in persistent poverty have worse outcomes than those who experience temporary poverty. Children's experiences of poverty vary according to when they experience poverty and for how long. Not all children in poverty will experience the same risks or outcomes as their life chances are influenced by many factors and depend on the child's individual circumstances.

However poorer outcomes for children and families do place extra burdens and costs on public services, such as health care and children's services and Communities are affected through increased deprivation and inequalities which reduce social cohesion. The costs of child poverty fall on individuals, families, communities and the taxpayer.

All of the above can have an impact on children's employability as adults, so that children who grow up in low-income households are more likely than others to become unemployed or be employed in low paid jobs. Breaking this cycle requires concerted effort in supporting families for example by helping parents re enter and remain in the job markets and by helping children and young people to raise their aspirations, self esteem, achievement and resilience.

**(c) Key consequences**

**i. Educational achievement and outcomes**

Early social experiences are important determinants of later life chances and children in low-income families can face a 'double disadvantage'. Disadvantaged children tend to attend pre-school education for shorter periods of time than those from more advantaged groups.

National and local statistics indicate that children living in poverty achieve less well. The national gap between the percentages of Children eligible for Free School meals achieving five good GCSEs compared to other children was 13.5% in 2008. In Wandsworth the gap is smaller at 17.1% and whilst narrowing, it remains unacceptably wide. Similar gaps are evident in other areas of education and training as the following indicators illustrate:-

Table 1.

Indicator number	Name	Academic Year	Wandsworth score
NI 81	Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19	2007/08	13.70%
NI 82	% of young people in receipt of FSM at academic age 15 who attain level 2 qualifications by age 19	2007/08	71.40%
NI 102A	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stage 2	2007/08	18.00%
NI 102B	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for FSM and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stage 4	2007/08	16.70%
NI 106	Gap between the proportions of 15year olds eligible for FSM and those not eligible for FSM progressing to higher education at the age of 18 or 19.	2006/07	15.00%

Note:- The most recent available comparative data has been used.

#### ii. **Health Outcomes**

Children who experience poverty are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes. They are more likely to be born prematurely, have low birth weight, and die in the first year of life. Children from unskilled, working-class backgrounds where poverty is more likely are three times as likely to have a mental disorder as children from professional backgrounds. Children living in deprived areas are significantly more likely to be obese. Growing up in poverty is also associated with a substantially higher risk of teenage pregnancy. Teenage parenthood can have a negative impact on a mother's health and also the outcomes of her children.

### 3. NATIONAL DRIVERS AND LEGISLATION

#### (a) **The Government's Strategy**

In 1999, the Government announced its aim to eradicate child poverty by 2020. The Government strategy is split into four broad themes – set out in “Child Poverty: Everybody's Business”.

1. **Increasing employment and raising incomes:** helping people who can work to move into employment and progress in work (e.g. childcare)
2. **Financial and material support:** providing additional resources to make sure that work pays and to help families who cannot work (e.g. tax and benefit system)
3. **Ensuring that communities are safe, sustainable places where families can thrive** (e.g. New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund)
4. **Improving poor children's life chances:** improving opportunities and outcomes for children from low income families. (e.g. Every Child Matters reforms)

National Government has control of many of the key financial levers for raising family incomes, such as child benefit, child tax credits, and the relationship of these mechanisms with Housing and Council Tax benefits.

**(b) The Child Poverty Bill 2009**

The purpose of the Bill, introduced in June 2009, is to enshrine in law the Government's commitment to eradicate Child Poverty in the United Kingdom (UK) by 2020.

**(i) New Targets**

The Bill places a new duty on the Secretary of State to meet the following UK wide income poverty targets by 2020:

- **A relative low income target** – The Bill specifies a target for children who live in households that have low incomes compared to the rest of society.
- **A combined low income and material deprivation target** – The Bill specifies a target that relates to children who live in households that experience both a low income and a low standard of living.
- **An absolute low income target** – The Bill sets a target of below 5% of children who live in households that have an equivalised<sup>1</sup> net income of less than 60% of the median income in financial year beginning 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 (taking into account inflationary charges).
- **A persistent poverty target** – This relates to the percentage of children living in households whose equivalised income has been less than 60% of the median net household income for at least 3 of the last 4 years.

**(ii) New duties for the Secretary of State**

The Secretary of State has a new duty to publish a child poverty strategy evaluating progress toward the four targets above as well as setting out future action. The strategy will be revised every 3 years.

A Child Poverty Commission is to be established which the Secretary of State must have regard to when preparing and publishing the child poverty strategy.

**(iii) New duties for local authorities**

The Bill proposes placing a range of new duties for local authorities including a specific duty to:

- Cooperate with partners including Jobcentre Plus, the NHS and the Police to tackle child poverty at a local level
- Undertake a local child poverty needs assessment
- Develop and produce a joint child poverty strategy.

In 2007 Wandsworth Borough Council together with its partners undertook a major piece of work examining the national and international reports and studies about child poverty; assessing the nature of child poverty in the borough including its incidence and auditing the activity and programmes already in place which impacts on child poverty. This strategy and supporting action plan flows from that work. A summary of some of the characteristics of child poverty that emerged from the earlier piece of work have been replicated in this strategy to provide context.

---

<sup>1</sup> Equivalisation is an economics technique in which members of a household receive different weightings; household income is then divided by the sum of weightings to yield a representative income.

#### **4. GROUPS AT RISK OF EXPERIENCING POVERTY**

##### **(a) Vulnerable Groups**

Many workless families with children experience a number of factors likely to make a move into work more difficult including: a large family with three or more children; a youngest child under 5; or caring responsibilities. For many, difficulties due to ill-health or disability can also be an important factor.

Some groups are more vulnerable and have a higher risk of experiencing poverty at some time during their lives. These include the groups listed below -

##### **(b) Lone parent families**

Of the 400,000 children in workless households in London, 70% of these are in lone parent households (280,000 children). The major difference between employment rates for lone mothers and couple mothers is that couple mothers are much more likely to undertake 'mini-jobs' of less than 16 hours.<sup>2</sup> Lone mothers generally seek work that offers considerably more than 16 hours per week as the benefits system discourages 'mini job' work for lone parents; earnings of above £20 a week are deducted from benefits. Employment rates for lone and couple mothers differ little when employment of 16 hours or more is considered.

##### **(c) Large families**

The proportion of large families has declined, with now only 10% in a family with 4 or more. However, children in families with 4 or more children are more likely to be poor than those in smaller families nationally, 40% of families with 4 or more children are in poverty. Caring responsibilities can make finding suitable work more difficult for parents in larger families. Parents in large families are more likely to have one or a combination of the following characteristics which are associated with a higher risk of poverty. They are not working; from ethnic minorities; have had their first child at a younger age; be less educated; and have a young child. Large families have a higher risk of child poverty independent of these factors as the tax and benefit system favours small rather than large families.<sup>3</sup>

##### **(d) Families with disabilities or mental health problems**

Children in families with one or more disabled adults face a high risk of poverty at 31%.<sup>4</sup> One in four children in poverty lives in a family with at least one disabled adult. Mental health represents a particular barrier – only 24% of adults with long-term mental health problems are in work. Employment rates for disabled parents are much lower in London than in the rest of the UK: for example, while 69% of disabled fathers in couples are in employment in the rest of the UK, only 55% are in employment in London.

##### **(e) Families where the parents have been in care**

Children in care are more likely to have come from families that have experienced chronic unemployment and poverty. Their early development and socialisation is heavily influenced by this experience and the consequences of low self worth, esteem and aspiration are compounded by their experience of neglect and abuse. This is particularly true for children admitted into care as adolescents and results in an increased risk of mental health problems, substance misuse, offending and

---

<sup>2</sup> Simmonds and Bivand 2008, Can work eradicate child poverty?

<sup>3</sup> Child poverty in large families - JRF

<sup>4</sup> Ending Child Poverty – Everybody's Business

imprisonment. The impact of these experiences is long-lasting and can lead to a cycle of poverty and social exclusion as they become parents themselves.

**(f) Teenage Parents**

There is a strong correlation between poverty and high rates of teenage conceptions and pregnancy. There is very strong evidence that girls who leave school by the age of 16 without any academic qualifications are many times more likely to become pregnant than those who remain in school. This relationship remains true even if other factors such as social deprivation are taken into account. (N.b work on raising aspirations of vulnerable girls).

Rates of teenage pregnancy are highest among deprived communities, so the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy are disproportionately concentrated among those who are already disadvantaged. Deprivation explains about three quarters of the area variation in teenage conceptions. Other risk factors include poor educational attainment, experience of violence, being in care, and being a child of a teenage mother themselves. Many young people share several of these risk factors and have a very high chance of becoming a teenage parent. Multiple risk factors may also explain the over-representation of some ethnic minorities amongst teenage parents.

Low educational attainment has a strong effect over and above deprivation. On average, deprived wards where less than 40% of girls achieve 5 GCSEs, have under 18 conception rates twice as high as similarly deprived wards with more than 60% of girls gaining 5 GCSEs (accelerating the strategy to 2010)<sup>5</sup>.

According to a University of Southampton Study on the consequences of teenage parenthood,<sup>6</sup> teenage mothers are more likely to experience disadvantage in adulthood and are more likely to be in receipt of benefits, live in social housing, have experienced relationship breakdown, live in workless households and have poor physical and psychological health.. Children of teenage mothers suffer lower education attainment, a higher risk of economic inactivity, and of becoming a teenage mother themselves (may be a result of lower standard of living experienced by many teenage mothers, owing in part to the poorer earning partners that they pair with).

The researchers from the University of Southampton also found that children born to teenage mothers do not differ from children born to older mothers in their language development, social development, or motor skills. However, they do fare worse in two areas: accidents and behavioural problems. The higher rate of accidents is attributable to a higher rate of anxiety and depression among teenage mothers, rather than age per se. The higher level of behavioural problems among children of teenage parents was also related to the mother's mental state, rather than any difference in parenting skills. Lack of a co-residential partner and poor housing conditions were factors which identified teenage mothers most at risk of depression and anxiety.

---

<sup>5</sup> Teenage Parents: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010 – Department for Education and Skills 2006

<sup>6</sup> Berrington et al (2005) Consequences of Teenage Parenthood: Pathways which minimise the long term negative impacts of teenage childbearing  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW52.pdf>

**(g) Black and minority ethnic families**

More than a third of all ethnic minority families live in poverty. Children from ethnic minorities face a particularly high risk of growing up in poverty: 58 % of Pakistani or Bangladeshi children live in poverty, compared with 19 % of white children. This is closely linked to labour market disadvantage and in particular the significant barriers that some ethnic minority groups face in entering and progressing in work. There are also differences in the characteristics of poor families in different ethnic groups. For example, lone parent families account for only a small share of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi children in poverty, but they make up over two-thirds of Black Caribbean and Black African children in poverty.

**5. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD POVERTY – THE PICTURE IN WANDSWORTH**

**(a) Impact of Poverty Outcomes**

Child Poverty has numerous causes and many characteristics. What is not in doubt is that poverty has a direct influence on outcomes for children and young people. Children who experience poverty commonly experience outcomes which include lack of opportunities, poor physical and mental health, low educational attainment in childhood, more likely to become teenage parents, more likely to engage in substance misuse and alcohol abuse and more likely to be exposed to crime and anti social behaviour as victims and perpetrators. Those who live in persistent poverty have worse outcomes than those who experience temporary poverty.

Relative to the national picture, deprivation affecting children in Wandsworth is increasing. Of the 174 local super output areas (SOAs) in Wandsworth, 74 now measure amongst the 25% most deprived SOAs nationally (compared to 64 in 2004)<sup>11</sup>. However, the picture is varied, as there are now 24 SOAs in the 25% least deprived SOAs nationally (compared to 20 in 2004).

The IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) 2007 shows 30% of Wandsworth's under 15 population to be living in some degree of poverty, (based on the overall performance against all of the indicators below), ranking Wandsworth 14<sup>th</sup> in London .

- *Children aged 0-15 in households claiming Income Support (Source: DWP, 2005)*
- *Children aged 0-15 in households claiming Income-Based Job Seekers' Allowance (Source: DWP, 2005)*
- *Children aged 0-15 in households claiming Pension Credit (Guarantee) (Source: DWP, 2005)*
- *Children aged 0-15 in households claiming Working Tax or Child Tax Credit whose equivalised household income (excluding housing benefits) is below 60 per cent of the median before housing costs (Source: HMRC, 2005)*
- *Children aged 0-15 in households claiming Child Tax Credit (who are not eligible for Income Support, Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance, Pension Credit or Working Tax Credit) whose equivalised income (excluding housing benefits) is below 60 per cent of the median before housing costs (Source: HMRC, 2005).*

**(b) Families dependent on Workless Benefits**

In 2007<sup>7</sup>, 25% of children were in families dependent on workless benefits. However this varied greatly by ward; three wards (Latchmere, Roehampton and Queenstown) had over 40% of children living in a family dependent on workless benefits. Over 30% of all children in Wandsworth in 2007 who were in a family dependent on workless benefits lived in one of these three wards.

Wandsworth was ranked 62<sup>nd</sup> of 454 boroughs across Great Britain on this measure.

Table 2

	Families	Children	
		No.	% of 0-18s
Lone parent	4,300	8,300	16.5%
Sick/disabled	1,800	3,100	6.2%
Unemployed	400	900	1.8%
Other	100	200	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,600</b>	<b>12,400</b>	<b>24.7%</b>

*\* JSA; Incapacity Benefit; Severe Disablement Allowance; DLA and IS. Figures based on a 5% sample of cases.*

Lone parent households are by far the most dependent on these benefits with approximately 60% of lone parents with dependent children being in this position.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, around 10% of other households with dependent children had one or more adults claiming these benefits.

It is no surprise that the age of children seems to have an impact on take up of out of work benefits; 30% of the dependent children in lone parent families, and 19% in sick/disabled, were aged under 5.

Children in large families are more likely to live in households dependent on workless benefits. 41% of children in families with 4 or more children are dependent on workless benefits, compared with 19% of those in families with 3 or fewer children. Less than 5% of families in the borough are made up of 4 or more children, however, children in these families account for 22% of the children dependent on workless benefits. 73% of these are dependent on LPIS.

**(c) Children in families in “in-work poverty”**

The limitation of using benefits data to tell us about children in poverty is that it excludes from analysis children in families where one or more people are working, but their income is not enough to take them above the poverty line.

The period 2003-08 saw a continuous fall in the number of children in poverty who belong to workless households. This is also reflected in a long term decline in the number of lone parents claiming income support. However, as a result of this decline in worklessness, the share of children in poverty represented by children in working families has grown. Tax credit data (Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit) can be

<sup>7</sup> Most recent available figures for children

<sup>8</sup> Changes have been made to the eligibility conditions for Lone Parents claiming IS. Currently only Lone Parents with a child under the age of 12 can claim IS - this will be reduced to under the age of 10 from October 2009 and to under the age of 7 the following year. This is part of the wider Government policy of addressing the skills gap, getting more people into paid employment and reducing child poverty

used to estimate the numbers of local families in in-work poverty. Using the stratification of the HMRC data for in-work families, the order of the most income deprived is listed below:<sup>9</sup>

- i. Families receiving WTC and CTC
- ii. Families receiving CTC above the family element
- iii. Families only receiving the family element of CTC

Groups a) and b) are approximately equivalent to working families on combined incomes of under £20,000.

Table 3. Receipt of child / working tax credit 2007-08

	Families	Children
Working tax credit and child tax credit	4,850	8,670
CTC only, above the family element	1,310	2,580
Total	6,160	11,250

A further 3,080 working families with 4,580 children receive Child Tax Credit at the family element or below (families on incomes above £20k). Child tax credits can also be claimed by out of work families. 6,970 families with 13,390 children receive CTC whilst being out of work, or receive equivalent amounts via the child and related allowances in IS or income-based JSA and will be included in table 3 above.

55% of all households with children in Wandsworth are in receipt of either Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, or both. 4,850 households or 16% of households with children are in receipt of both Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) at the same time (group a above). 6,160 families with 11,250 children receive WTC and CTC or CTC above the family element (groups a and b above). This is 21% of households with children and is a reasonable proxy for those in low income work, however, not all those families eligible for WTC and CTC are currently in receipt of it, and some of those in receipt of it may be taken above the poverty line by having their income supplemented by these tax credits.

As with workless benefits, in-work benefits are disproportionately taken up by lone parents. 42% of working families in receipt of tax credits in Wandsworth are lone parents. This compares with 33% across London. The corollary of this is that a smaller proportion of families in receipt of tax credits are couple families. This may be an indication of higher incomes among two adult households in Wandsworth compared with other London boroughs. "Paycheck" household income data for 2008, produced by CACI Ltd, showed that compared to London in general, Wandsworth

<sup>9</sup> Families receive maximum amounts of WTC and CTC (if entitled to both) if their annual income is below £6,420 (2008-09). Receipt of WTC thus represents very low paid employment, probably part time. If the family annual income is above this threshold the maximum amount is reduced by 39p for every pound over the threshold. First WTC is reduced, and then the child element of CTC followed by the family element of CTC. The family element of CTC will not be reduced until the annual income is over £50,000. Therefore the most income deprived families will receive both WTC and CTC (both elements), less income deprived will receive both elements of CTC and no WTC, less deprived families will only receive the family element of CTC and the least income deprived families will not receive any CTC.

has a higher proportion of working households and a higher proportion of those households have two earners.<sup>10</sup>

(d) **Where poverty is concentrated in Wandsworth**

Combining figures from Tables 2 and 3 for families on workless benefits, receiving WTC and CTC or CTC above the family element suggests that in 2007 some 23,650 children in just over 12,760 households were in some degree of poverty. This is highly concentrated in a relatively few wards and in particular groups of the Borough residents as summarised below:

- i. **Part time or low paid work:** The lag in availability of DWP and other data means that we do not have an up to date picture of the impact of the recession. It is expected that those in part time and low paid work will be most vulnerable to increases in unemployment but whole new sections of the population may now be vulnerable.
- ii. **Lone parents:** Lone parents are a key group. 33% of all households with dependent children in Wandsworth are lone parent households. This is only slightly higher than the London figure of 31% (Census 2001 figures). However, Lone parents on income support represent by far the greatest share of claimants of workless benefits with dependent children in Wandsworth. Measures that are successful with this group will have greatest impact on reducing numbers of children in poverty. However, 30% of lone parents dependent on benefits have a child under 5. The 3 wards with the highest numbers of LPIS claimants are Latchmere, Roehampton and Queenstown.
- iii. **Latchmere, Queenstown and Roehampton Wards** Of the one in four children living in families dependent on workless benefits, 40% were in Latchmere, Queenstown and Roehampton wards. As a function of policy, identifying the original three areas for Surestart Children's Centres was based on the top 20% of deprived super output areas and it is not surprising therefore that 2 of the 3 areas are Roehampton and Battersea including Latchmere and Queenstown wards.
- iv. **Council and ex Council Housing:** Many of the families who are accommodated in social housing are also exposed to the factors which contribute to child poverty. As a major landlord therefore the Council's Housing Department has a direct role to play in any strategy to eradicate child poverty. There is also a need to look at ways of linking housing services provided by local authorities and other registered social landlords to employment services and to other areas of local authority activity. When homeless families are placed in, or move between temporary accommodation, there are strong arguments for offering them accommodation within easy reach of children's schools where this is deliverable within the realities of the supply of temporary accommodation and a priority for the family concerned. In 2002 the Government set a general target for all boroughs to reduce the number of families with children in bed and breakfast to emergency use only, and then for a maximum period of six weeks by April 2004. The Council maintained full compliance with the terms of the regulations during 2008/09 and the Director of Housing has proposals in place to maintain the successful achievement of this target in 2009/10. The Government also aims to reduce the levels of temporary accommodation occupied by the homeless by 50% by 31st

---

<sup>10</sup> Local Housing Market Assessment - Paper No. 09-521 -  
[http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000297/M00003072/AI00013297/\\$PaperNo09521.docA.ps.pdf](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000297/M00003072/AI00013297/$PaperNo09521.docA.ps.pdf)

December 2010. This aim was set out in the former ODPM's five year housing plan published in January 2005 and entitled, "Sustainable communities: homes for all". The 'target' was met by the Council in January 2009 and there are proposals in place for building on this during 2009/10.

- v. **Teenage Parents:** 67.9%<sup>11</sup> of teenage parents in the borough are not in education, employment or training (NEET), compared with only 5% of all 16-18 year olds in the borough. There were 43 births to under-18s in Wandsworth in 2007 which accounted for 0.87% of all births. Reducing teenage pregnancy would not therefore make a large impact on reducing child poverty. However, all the evidence suggests that teenage pregnancy and parenthood is a symptom of a particularly entrenched cycle of poverty and disadvantage, and by targeting teenage parents there is an opportunity to prevent the transmission of that disadvantage to the next generation.
- vi. **Long Term Benefit Claimants:** Long term benefit claimants accounted for 43% of all working age claimants who had been on benefits for 5 years or more in August 2008. Among those claiming Lone Parents Income Support, for 46% the duration of the current claim was 5 years or more. 61% of those on Incapacity Benefits have claim duration of 5 years or more. For Incapacity benefit, Roehampton has the highest number of claimants, followed by Latchmere, then Queenstown.
- vii. Wandsworth currently supports a small number of families who have no legal right to be living in this country and who therefore have no recourse to public funds. These families are vulnerable to poverty, poor health and anxiety. The focus of the Council's support is to ensure that the needs of the family are met within the family. The support is provided jointly by Housing and Children's Services. Part of the focus of that work is put pressure on the Borders and Immigration agency to resolve their immigration status so that they are either returned to their country of origin or are entitled to work benefits.

## 6. WHAT MIGHT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN TACKLING CHILD POVERTY?

### (a) **Co-ordinating actions to impact on Poverty.**

Dealing with child and family poverty is a shared responsibility between national and local government with national government holding the main levers. At a local level a key task is to help coordinate the actions of various agencies and programmes and to bring focus to the work which given the prevailing local conditions will have the greatest impact on poverty.

Local data on children in poverty demonstrates that the main factors driving child poverty in London and in Wandsworth are to do with household structure and employment. In light of this evidence, and evidence about what works in tackling child poverty, five broad areas for action are identified below.

### (b) **Helping people move into work**

- i. **Create employment opportunities** - In particular part-time and flexible working and improved matching of mothers seeking employment to available opportunities. This would include 'mini jobs' as well as thought offering longer

---

<sup>11</sup> As at 20/04/09

- hours. This calls for improved matching of both couple and lone mothers seeking employment to available opportunities and better incentives for employers to provide flexible opportunities.
- ii. **Raise qualification levels** - The strong relationship between the employment rate of mothers and their level of qualifications identifies a need to ensure that girls and women are supported and encourage both during and post school to achieve their full potential. This would include English language training where it is needed and high quality careers and training advice.
  - iii. **Childcare & flexibility** - Some evidence exists to suggest that for many parents the decision not to work is based on calculations about the trade-offs between the benefits and costs of working given the costs of caring for children. For the last two years the London Development Agency and the DCSF have experimented with subsidising childcare providers in return for offering more flexible provision for lower income parents working part-time. Demand for these places was extremely high, suggesting there is considerable unmet demand for affordable, flexible childcare.<sup>12</sup>
  - iv. **Vulnerable adults** – The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) identified vulnerable adults with children as a priority group. This was on the basis that the challenges faced by those adults (e.g. alcohol and substance misuse, mental health and learning difficulties, domestic violence, homelessness/unable accommodation) could materially impact on their children and represent critical risks. Support for these groups of adults together with those with physical disabilities is highly likely to extend benefits to their children.
- (c) **Supporting those in work**
- i. **Career progression:** Appropriate models of career advancement are needed targeting in particular lone parents, and encouraging employers to provide in-work training for those in part-time and low paid jobs.
  - ii. **Quality and sustainability of jobs:** If parents are to stay employed and progress, they need to be matched with sustainable job opportunities.
  - iii. **Childcare:** Evidence exists which suggests that low-paid workers frequently shift between working and not working. In particular, there is a strong seasonal pattern of work exits among mothers (around school holidays), which causes work instability and does not help progression<sup>13</sup>. This demonstrates the importance of childcare availability, extended school provision and out of school care. There is also evidence to suggest that some lone parents in part time jobs would like to work longer hours, if suitable childcare was available.<sup>14</sup> Childcare also needs to be affordable so that it does not eliminate or make marginal the monetary benefits of working.
  - iv. **Increasing uptake of in-work tax credits/in-work housing benefit.** There is far more financial support available for lower income working families than is widely believed, including housing benefit and support for childcare costs through the working tax credit. Awareness of, or these entitlements is low and this is partly due to the design and accessibility of these types of support. They are more complex than they need to be and seeking to react to changes in family circumstances in 'real time' can result in delays and administrative errors.<sup>15</sup> There is a need to actively market this financial support and provide advice and information on an outreach basis.

---

<sup>12</sup> Capital Gains

<sup>13</sup> Simmons and Bivand (2008)

<sup>14</sup> Simmons and Bivand (2008)

<sup>15</sup> Capital Gains

(d) **Breaking the links between child poverty and poor outcomes**

Not all children growing up in poverty will experience negative outcomes. Protective factors include: <sup>16</sup>:

- **Educational attainment** - A further challenge for schools and colleges in keeping options open for young people at the end of compulsory education is to narrow the gap in attainment at levels 2 and 3 between those young people eligible for free school meals (as a poverty indicator) and those who are not (see page 4). The gap for both levels has decreased in Wandsworth but it is still significant especially at level 3 where it has a direct relevance to the number of young people who can move into higher education. The impact of improving the above will also be to further reduce the number of young people in Wandsworth who are not in Education, employment or training.
- **Positive parenting style / Parental involvement in child's education** – Positive parenting and parental involvement are both protective factors against the negative consequences of growing up in poverty. This raises the issue of the balance to be struck between the positive effects of parents being in work, and the positive effects of children receiving parental care in the home which means that some parents prefer to remain at home, especially in the first few years of a child's life. Research evidence demonstrates that parents have most significant impact on a child's education. This is greatest when a child is young. Some studies have even sought to correlate the link between a child's birth weight and better outcomes later in life. The Wandsworth Children's Trust Parenting Strategy will contribute to delivering aspects of the Child Poverty Strategy.
- **High quality early years education and care** – The integrated approach to service delivery characterised by Children's Centres and the "team around the child" approach is fundamental to supporting parents and giving children the best start in life. Whilst much of the Early Years Service is universal in nature the capacity to target support in an integrated way provides genuine opportunities to reinforce good parenting skills and child behaviours that will allow them to thrive.
- **Good social and emotional skills** – Families that are resilient and confident are more likely to overcome the pressures and demands that inevitably will come their way. A whole school approach to wellbeing that emerges from schemes such as the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Programme or the individual skills that emerge from initiatives linked to the Healthy Schools programme will help children and young people to face future challenges. At all levels children need access to support that will meet their mental health needs.
- **Reducing inequalities in health** – Poverty in childhood has a major impact on health and well being. Many poor families are in hard to reach groups and are unable or don't access services. Universal and targeted services need to adapt their approach so that they are accessible to all groups This could include using bi lingual health advocates, providing services in different places and at different times and closer working with voluntary sector groups. Crucially a review of

---

<sup>16</sup> Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business

the balance between universal services accessible to everyone whether they need them or not and the provision of more targeted services to address those most in need is required. Some of the key areas of health concern are set out below:-

**Preconception and antenatal care** - We need to develop more creative approaches to promoting good health before and during pregnancy need to be developed. Women from the most disadvantaged groups tend to start pregnancy in poorer health, attend services later and have lower birth weight babies.

**Postnatal period** – Women from disadvantaged groups tend not to breast feed, have higher rates of depression, babies are at increased risk of sudden infant death and general health of babies is poorer. Uptake of immunisations may also be poor.

**Older children** - Children from a disadvantaged background experience more accidents, are more likely to have speech and language difficulties and behaviour concerns. They also have an increase risk of physical health problems, obesity and poor dental health.

**Young Adults** - health inequalities continue into adult life with key areas of concern being sexual health, teenage pregnancy, smoking, alcohol and drug use. General poor physical health also continues with increased risk of diabetes, obesity and mental health concerns.

- **Improving Deprived neighbourhoods** – All parts of the borough need to be served by first class services. These services however need to reflect the profile and characteristics of each individual ward as far as this is possible. In some cases such as Children's Centres priority has already been given to the most deprived areas. Where certain services are, for example, less accessible such as play facilities in parts of the south of the borough creative ways should be considered in order to remedy any deficiencies.

(e) **Improving schools and narrowing gaps in educational outcomes**

At every stage of a child's life, supporting their attendance and engagement in learning is a key determinant to their propensity and risk of experiencing/living in child poverty.

- i. **Early Years** - At the start of the school career, high quality pre-school early years education and experience is paramount. Children who fall behind at this stage have considerable difficulty in making up progress. Key factors in achieving more equal outcomes are the provision of high quality early years education, and the extent to which pupils stay on in school beyond the end of compulsory education.
- ii. **Transition from Primary to Secondary school** - At this stage, income has much more of an impact on pupil progress (as opposed to starting points) than at primary school. Pupils receiving free school meals who meet expected levels at Key Stage 2 have much higher risks of falling behind at Key Stage 3.
- iii. **Options at the end of compulsory education** - A variety of options for pupils at the end of compulsory education is a feature of educational systems that do better for lower income children. It is therefore crucial to keep the range of options as open as possible particularly as the raising of the participation age gets closer. This will mean ensuring that a full range of programmes are available including apprenticeships, the Foundation Learning Tier and part time education with training as well as the more traditional options. When children move to secondary school, they are forming expectations about their own future role in society, influenced by both what happens in and out of school. If Young

People feel that the options available to them at age 16 are unsuitable - for example, if only academic options are available – they may start downgrading their expectations long before they take their GCSE's. Equally whilst the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is comparatively low in Wandsworth this group will be at a much higher risk of poverty.

(f) **Key issues impacting on effective delivery of the 5 areas for action**

A number of issues will affect the 5 areas for action and the positive impact on addressing child poverty in Wandsworth but two issues are paramount in ensuring a positive outcome.

- i. **Supporting and engaging parents** - It is essential that parents and carers have access to clear, accurate, accessible and up to date information. Services need to be targeted to engage hard to reach and vulnerable groups. For example Child poverty rates are extremely high in both the private and social rented sectors. Programmes need to assist parents with social and living skills, literacy, numeracy, healthy eating and cooking so that they can encourage and support their children as they grow and develop.
- ii. **Integrating universal and targeted services** - Offering more flexible opening times and a wider range of venues from which programmes are delivered should encourage children, young people and their families to access a wide range of support programmes. The programmes should promote good social and emotional development through access to positive activities and an increased focus on personal, social and emotional skills.

## 7. WHAT WE ARE DOING IN WANDSWORTH

(a) **The focus for action locally.**

A great deal of work undertaken by the Council and its partners though not specifically designed to reduce child poverty will contribute either to reducing its incidence and/or impact. The preceding paragraphs provide a glimpse of the broader agenda that will influence child poverty. This strategy does not intend to capture all the activity but rather to focus on a number of work streams identified from the earlier analysis of the data and consultation with partner agencies. These areas which are summarised below form the basis of the action plan which is attached to this strategy.

An analysis of the main causes of child poverty in Wandsworth indicates that the prevalence of lone parents who are economically inactive or in low paid work appears to be a significant factor although there are, of course other factors too. The mechanisms for dealing with child poverty cluster around two main objectives, increasing income and maximising uptake of benefits. First this involves making sure parents understand the benefits and support system and second helping parents secure employment and supporting them when they are employed.

(b) **Skills support to parents**

There is already a significant amount of resource in place to support the most vulnerable families in the borough. In order to maximise the potential impact for Wandsworth families however there is a need to co-ordinate activity and align resources more effectively. Key partners in this area include: Children's Centres, Jobcentreplus, Lifelong Learning, the Family Information Service, Extended Services, education and training providers, Housing and the Economic Development Office.

A Work Skills for Parents Group comprising partners identified above have worked on developing practical strategies to support parents. The main elements of that Strategy are summarised below:-

- i) Effective integration of services in localities  
Key actions will include:
  - Mapping existing provision in order to inform future work and priorities
  - Setting up a small implementation group in each locality with a focus on child poverty to develop initiatives and projects to improve employment and skills
  
- ii). Ensure effective communication to maximise participation  
Key actions will include:
  - Evaluating information provided on employment/skills initiatives and support and ensuring that the is easily accessible through a range of media
  - Creating a map of services which professionals working in the field could use to help them in signposting and referring
  - Planning themed community advice days which will act as an introduction to the various services available and use existing events to raise awareness on skills support for parents
  - Increasing participation and engagement in a range of support programmes using case studies and success stories to motivate others
  
- iii) Develop an appropriate range of courses to support skills development and employability  
Key actions will include:
  - Consulting parents on training/support needs in order to access opportunities and develop appropriate programmes to meet local needs
  - Providing access to Skills for Life provision through coordinated planning across services for the provision of ESOL, Literacy and numeracy courses
  - Piloting new employment-focused programmes offering vocational programmes and support programmes to help with application forms and CVS
  
- iv. Coordinate and improve outreach provision to better meet the needs of families  
Key actions will include:
  - Effective use of outreach/key workers to provide information on training, job opportunities, benefits and other related services and raise the level of outreach work in each locality.
  
- v). Work with Jobcentre Plus and the Adult Careers Service to ensure that families can access high quality advice and support  
Key actions will include:
  - Evaluating and identifying specific coverage of Wandsworth and the current support available
  - Collating and distributing job opportunities to Children's Centres and other community venues
  - Promoting the additional support programme offered by Jobcentre Plus

**(c) Maximising Family Incomes**

The Work Skills for Parents Group as part of its brief examined maximising family incomes. The main elements of the Strategy it proposed are summarised below:-

- i) Support families in managing budgets and making financial decisions  
Key actions will include:
- Rolling out the Commissioning of the Citizens Advice Bureau to run an advice service on debt once a month in each Children's Centre, following a successful pilot project
  - Investigating the feasibility of establishing a credit union in Wandsworth (EDO)
  - Offering courses that develop financial literacy, particularly in terms of managing the family income
  - Targeting support and information to families from Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Family Information Service
  - Providing training for staff who work with families, including staff of voluntary organisations, on helping families to manage their money
- ii) Maximising uptake of financial entitlements  
Key actions will include:
- Promoting take-up of in-work support such as In Work Credit, Child and Working Tax Credits, e.g. through workshops
  - Encouraging the take-up of council tax and housing benefit where there is an entitlement to these benefits
  - Ensuring that customers receive the correct level of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit
  - Dealing promptly with both new claims to HB and CTB and changes of circumstances reported by customers receiving those benefits
  - Roll out the programme of Jobcentre Plus outreach Advisers in Children's Centres to assist with maximising take up of financial incentives, provide information on childcare and support available and provide additional support to get parents back into sustainable employment.
- iii) Promoting affordable childcare  
Key actions will include:
- Promoting take up of Childcare element of Child Tax Credits, Care to Learn, funding from Colleges, and other schemes through the Family information service, family support services, adult service and others
  - Working with partners (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, South Thames College) to provide comprehensive and coherent information on paying for childcare and availability of support
  - Continue to seek additional funding from LDA etc. to subsidize local childcare

**(d) Raising the aspirations of the next generation**

The part that learning plays either through formal or informal education featured in earlier paragraphs of this Strategy document. Raising the aspirations of the next generation group propose that this aspect of the Strategy is based on a number of related yet separate programmes. The aims are set out below:-

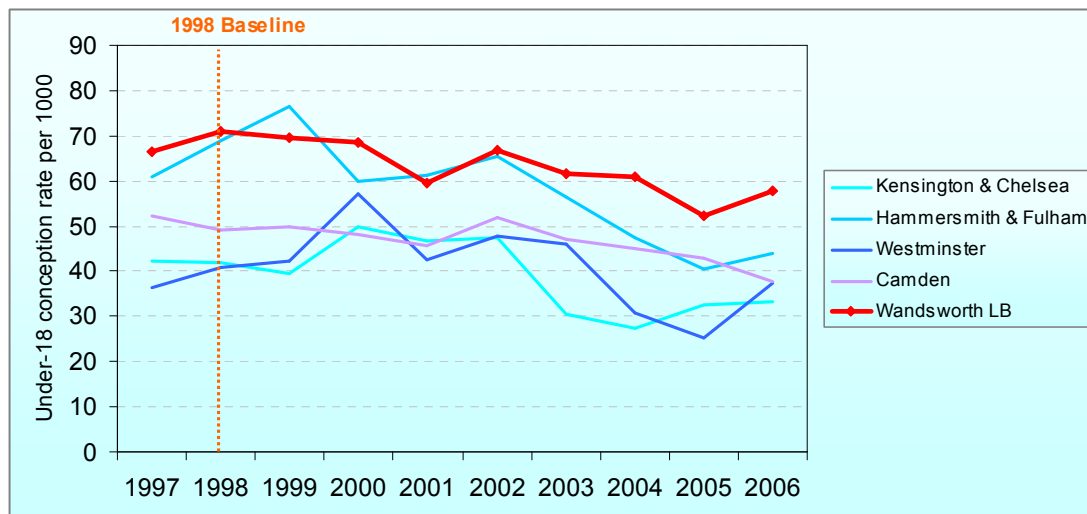
- i) Increase awareness and understanding of higher education opportunities  
Key actions will include:

- Introducing university visits at an earlier age and offering a university visit to all year 7 pupils in the borough
  - Training a range of student ambassadors of year 8 and 9 pupils
  - Work with South Thames College to explore progression opportunities
- ii) Increase awareness and understanding of possible career choices  
Key actions will include:
- Developing a coordinated programme of work to bring a range of professionals and local employers into schools to talk about their work
  - Developing a range of work shadowing opportunities, particularly targeting some of the borough's larger employers including the Council and Health service
- iii) Encourage entrepreneurship  
Key actions will include:
- Identifying local business people to hold and engage involvement in entrepreneurship fairs targeting year 9,10 and 11 pupils
  - Promoting entrepreneurial skills through existing information, advice and guidance services
- iv) Improve information, advice and guidance  
Key actions will include:
- Developing a scheme to train older and previous students in Wandsworth schools and colleges to mentor and act as role models for primary school pupils
  - Providing a careers advice guidance service that is tailored to individual pupil needs offering a range of support service including the mentoring and shadowing programmes above.
- v) Promote parent involvement  
Key actions will include:
- Promoting opportunities for parents / carers to find out and learn more about higher education opportunities utilising existing programmes including extended schools, family learning and parent support programmes
  - Promoting opportunities for parent learning and their engagement in a range of educational opportunities

(e) **Preventing teenage pregnancy and supporting teenage parents**

The teenage pregnancy rate in Wandsworth is much higher than the level of deprivation would predict and Wandsworth has a much higher rate of under-18 conceptions than its statistical neighbours (see graph below).

Table 4



Wandsworth has in place a multi-agency teenage pregnancy prevention strategy and action plan which includes:-

- i) Ensure that all young people know about sexual health and contraceptive services and receive quality SRE (sex and relationship education)  
Key actions will include:
  - Using innovative media such as texting, bus stop posters and websites
  - Identifying and offering follow up support of young women post termination
  - Extending the 'Brook and Men' services specifically aimed at young men
  - Developing a Peer Education project to promote Sexual health and SRE services and education
  - Developing a programme of SRE improvement programmes in schools
  - Explore with NHS Wandsworth the options for applying for next wave of Family Nurse Partnership
  
- ii) Reduce under 18 conceptions by targeting high risk vulnerable young people  
Key actions will include:-
  - Developing and delivering a 'Raising Aspirations' project.
  - Identifying and supporting vulnerable girls and young women through targeted outreach work
  
- iii) Review and improve support for young parents  
Key actions will include:
  - Improving the monitoring and take up of services for teenage parents
  
- iv) Pilot a DCSF funded project to support teenage parents  
Key actions will include:

- Delivering a modular accredited training consisting of “Lifestyle Management” and Better Futures”
- Supporting NEET (Not in education, employment or training) teenage Parents to obtain accredited qualifications and access employment opportunities
- Improving tenancy support and sustainability for teenage parents

## **8. IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY**

Implementing the Strategy will involve the combined efforts of a range of agencies including the voluntary sector. Some aspects can be pursued by individual agencies and departments others will require varying degrees of co-ordination and co-operation. To deliver the strategy an action plan will be prepared setting out arrangements for implementing the specific and focused activities summarised in Section 7 above. The previous study into child poverty drew together a suite of performance indicators that can serve as proxy measures for poverty. These will be used selectively to help monitor progress. More importantly however for assessing the success of the Strategy will be performance achieved against the narrower set of indicators which will be related to the specific activities that will be described in the action plan. It is proposed that the Strategy will be continuously kept under review and formally reviewed annually.

## **9. THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGING ECONOMY**

An economic downturn can affect progress in eradicating child poverty in both a material and psychological way, especially as employment prospects worsen. The capacity of public services to respond to these new demands may also be restricted as investment in those services is constrained. Therefore whilst the Children’s Trust’s ambition to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty should remain steadfast the speed of progress is bound to be affected.

In a recession, planned welfare-to-work measures may not bring the previously projected large increase in the number of lone parents with jobs. The employment rate of lone parents is projected to be the same in 2010 as it was in 2006 (previously it was projected to rise sharply). This is due to recession counteracting the effect of new welfare-to-work measures to get lone parents into work.

Furthermore, in a recession, children are more likely to fall into severe poverty. Overall it is possible that recession will bring a net increase in children’s hardship even though it does not raise the child poverty total. This is likely to raise the cost of tackling child poverty, since it is more expensive to lift children out of severe poverty. For the purposes of local initiatives directed towards raising parental incomes and improving outcomes of children in poverty the likelihood is that meeting the targets set out by the Government and the strategic objectives described in this paper will become more difficult in the context of a recession.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

The mechanisms proposed for tackling child poverty set out in this Strategy are two fold. First promoting a general awareness of the incidence of child poverty in the borough and an understanding about how existing and future programmes can and should play a part in reducing its prevalence and its impact. Second focusing on a discrete set of activities identified because they address the main underlying causes of poverty in Wandsworth or appear central to ameliorating its negative effects. These activities then need to be implemented and their impact monitored and evaluated. This process needs to involve relevant staff in all services working with

children and is a key part of the work of Wandsworth Children's Trust. It is expected that the Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis with the focus for the second element in particular changing over time.

Draft