

CHILD POVERTY MATTERS

Plymouth's Child Poverty Action Plan 2013-2016



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

Please note that this plan remains a working draft document in terms of content and format, and will be reviewed in its current state by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 13th March 2013.

The final action plan will be presented to Cabinet on 21st May 2013.

FOREWORD

Proposed by Councillor Tudor Evans

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Child poverty is essentially a result of poverty in families.

Child poverty matters because it means children suffer both now and in the future!

In 1999, the Government made a commitment to end child poverty by 2020. The Child Poverty Act was published in 2010 to deliver on this and places a number of duties on Local Authorities and other local delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty.

Plymouth has shaped its response to child poverty based on its understanding of child poverty as the outcome of economic, environmental and social factors that can damage a child's development and limit or prevent children and young people from having many of the experiences and opportunities that others take for granted¹.

Income is central to the lives of all families in poverty. This reflects the current national measure which classes families earning less than £251 per week as living in poverty. In Plymouth this equates to 11,560 children, of which 10,190 are aged under 16².

Amidst the deepening economic crisis, it is an opportune time to develop a local plan to tackle child poverty. Falling incomes, unemployment, rising cost of living, reduced economic activity and major changes to the way that welfare assistance is provided are having a real impact on Plymouth families both in the short and long term. For example, stressors such as job loss, home foreclosure, or loss in family savings can place strain on parental relationships and on the family as a whole. It can affect educational achievement of children by reducing families' abilities to provide a supportive learning environment or adequate nutrition, or by forcing a delay or abandonment of higher education plans.

A simultaneous reduction in public sector funding also means that difficult financial decisions will need to be made by the Council and other agencies in the coming years.

This three year action plan will present how it aims to tackle the causes and impact of child poverty, while also acknowledging the limits and challenges presented by the current economic and social environment.

Poverty can be such a destructive force because of its long-term grip on families and communities, holding them back generation after generation. The disadvantages and barriers that parents experience are the source of this long-term impact. These barriers have a detrimental effect on children's progression and well-being, which can impact right through into their adulthood, in turn affecting the subsequent generation. The way that disadvantage perpetuates is shaped by the experiences, attainment and outcomes of children growing up in socio-economic disadvantage and by the way that negative parental activities experienced through childhood may repeat in adulthood³.

¹ Definition taken from the Plymouth Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014

² Based on HMRC definition (Number of children in families in receipt of either out of work (means-tested) benefits, or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of median income. Snapshot at 31 August 2010.

³ Allen, G (2011) 'Early Intervention: the next steps' An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government.

PLYMOUTH'S COMMITMENT TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

Child Poverty in Plymouth is being taken seriously.

Tackling inequalities is a shared priority for Plymouth City Council and its partners, with child poverty a key outcome measure for which there is collective responsibility across all partners. Following a motion agreed at Full Council in July 2011, Plymouth City Council made a firm commitment to tackling child poverty in the city and this is reflected in the Corporate Plan 2012-15.

Prior to this plan, Plymouth has not being reticent in how it works with its most vulnerable families. Much of this work is already taking place under the auspices of existing activity delivered within, but not limited to the Local Development Framework, Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2012-2015, Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 and the Housing Plan 2012-2017.

The upcoming Plymouth Plan, expected in 2014, will lay out the integrated and holistic long term plan for the city up to 2031. One of its key aims is to provide a framework which will draw links and connections between all areas of the Council's business, in order to identify ways in which the objectives of all services can be coordinated to deliver change in the City and to tackle problems including Child Poverty. It is a clear intention that the major themes and issues identified within this child poverty action plan will subsequently feed into those being developed under the auspices of the Plymouth Plan.

DEVELOPING A LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION PLAN

Plymouth City Council, in line with its statutory duty to tackle child poverty and acknowledgement of child poverty as both an adult and child focused issue, has led the development of a local child poverty action plan, working closely with key partners and partnerships. This work has been overseen by the child poverty cross party working group ([insert membership](#)).

As part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, a Child Poverty Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2012 and can be accessed at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#).

A series of consultations have been undertaken to support the development of the child poverty action plan for Plymouth as follows:

- Consultation to agree a local definition of child poverty - 27 May to 31 July 2012
- Consultation event on the child poverty needs assessment as the basis on which to develop Plymouth's child poverty plan -15 October 2012
- Consultation on the draft child poverty plan - 12 December 2012 to 31 January 2013.

The Needs Assessment and consultation feedback have been consistently used to inform and shape each step of the plan's development process. All documents can be accessed at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#).

A LOCAL APPROACH TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

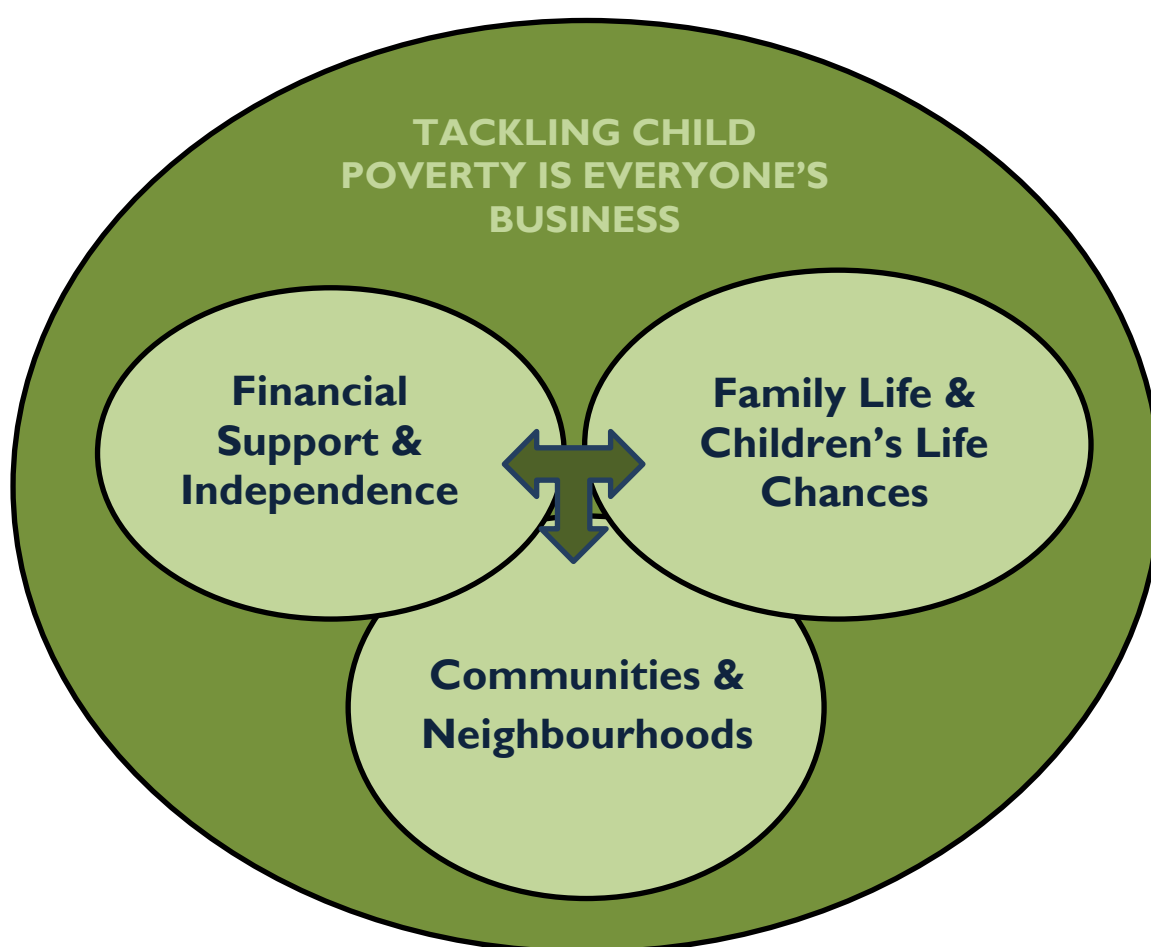
As part of achieving the city's vision "to become one of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone", the child poverty action plan for Plymouth aims **to reduce child poverty and mitigate its impact** over the next three years.

It is important to be clear what this plan can achieve within the next three years.

There is already a significant breadth of excellent work being undertaken across the city to tackle child poverty, and this plan will celebrate rather than duplicate existing areas of good practice.

This plan aims to add value to existing activity by directing resources to those gaps and areas of additional need, identified through the needs assessment and consultation, where most impact can be made over the next three years.

Child poverty is a complex issue that cannot be achieved with a single faceted approach. This plan will use four overarching themes to outline its approach, as shown below.



Each theme represents the factors that have the largest and most direct impact on child poverty, based on evidence based frameworks designed to assist the development of local child poverty strategies. These include the 'Building Blocks Framework'⁴ developed by the Child Poverty Unit, and the framework outlined within the National Child Poverty Strategy: 'A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives'⁵.

⁴ Child Poverty Needs Assessment Toolkit, Local Government Improvement and Development, 2010

⁵ HM Government (2011) A new approach to child poverty: Tackling the causes of disadvantage and transforming families' lives

SECTION II: WHAT PLYMOUTH WILL DO

This section presents each theme in turn as follows:

- Overview of local needs⁶
- What we want to achieve
- Good practice case studies
- Existing plans and strategies
- What we will focus on over the next three years
- Action Plan

While each theme is presented separately, it is essential they not be understood as isolated from each other – they are not and the interrelationships between each are central to the success of this plan.

THEME I: FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND INDEPENDENCE

Unemployment is widely considered to be one of the key drivers of poverty. As well as being a major source of income, work generally improves people's well-being and mental and physical health, with positive implications for their children⁷. The quality of employment rather than employment in itself is a key factor. Individuals can suffer recurrent poverty as they become caught in a low pay/no pay cycle caused by insecure low paid work. Jobs that are not of high quality in terms of pay, conditions, flexibility and sustainability will not break the poverty cycle and can be detrimental to health and well-being in the long-term.

It is recognised that for a significant number of people, employment is unlikely to provide them with an adequate household income. Recent successes in driving down child poverty show that supporting parental employment and subsidising low paid employment are effective in reducing poverty⁸.

It is more expensive to be poor! For example, people on low incomes often end up paying more for the services they need because they cannot access mainstream financial products. Households using a pre-payment gas or electric meter are more likely to be in fuel poverty than those using other payment methods⁹. Many families living in poverty live in areas where public transportation isn't readily available or affordable, and can't afford to own a car. Unmanageable personal debt can drive a cycle of poverty and distress that is very difficult for families to escape. It reduces household income available to spend, creates further pressures on parents and relationships, and in extreme cases has a significant impact on children's quality of life and life chances.

⁶ The full needs assessment can be accessed at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#). Key implications identified within the child poverty needs assessment can be found in Annex I.

⁷ Waddell, G and Burton, K (2006) 'Is Work Good for your Health and Well-Being?' The Stationery Office; Black, C (2008) 'Working for a healthier tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's Review of the health of Britain's working age population'

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Department for Energy and Climate Change (2011) Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics. DECC, London. www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/Statistics/fuelpoverty/2181-annual-report-fuel-poverty-stats-2011. Pdf.

OVERVIEW OF PLYMOUTH'S NEEDS

- Plymouth has high levels of deprivation with a number of neighbourhoods among some of the most deprived in the country. The 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation highlights that Plymouth is just above the bottom 20% of local authorities for levels of deprivation, being ranked 72 out of 326. Plymouth is most deprived in the domains of income and employment scale.
- One in five Plymouth children are living in poverty based on household income levels. The highest rate of child poverty can be found in North Prospect with 57.6% of children in poverty in one Local Super Output Area (LSOA) alone. Five other LSOAs have over 50% of children in poverty and these can be found in the neighbourhoods of Devonport, Stonehouse, City Centre & North Prospect / Weston Mill.
- While the majority of child poverty is located in the South West and North West of the city, there are growing pockets in more affluent parts of the city. As the majority of data predates the recession, actual levels of child poverty could be higher than reported in this needs assessment.
- Welfare Reform changes are estimated to impact 20% of the city's population, and will disproportionately affect some of Plymouth's most vulnerable families. This will lead to growing difficulty to manage household finance within an already challenging economic climate which has seen the costs of living rise significantly. While more data is required to understand the level and types of household debt across the city, there are clear indications of a growing need for workless and low income households to manage increased financial pressures including payment of bills, credit cards, vulnerability to loan sharks/personal debt.
- In-work child poverty poses a significant risk to the city. Plymouth residents have a lower than average rate of pay and Plymouth has a high level of part-time workers.
- Overall, Plymouth has a lower qualified workforce, due in part to outward migration of people with higher qualifications in addition to a perceived lack of basic employability skills including literacy, numeracy and communication.
- Nearly 70% of children in poverty in Plymouth live in lone parent families with Barne Barton having by far the highest rates.

For more detailed information please refer to the child poverty needs assessment at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#).

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- More parents are in work that pays
- Financial support is responsive to families' situations

CONNECTING WITH EXISTING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Local Economic Strategy (LES)	The LES identifies the economic development priorities necessary to deliver a step change in economic growth to 2026. Its aspirations are to increase competitiveness, diversify knowledge, improve the skills base of the workforce, build sustainable, well connected and inclusive communities and intensify the overall business base of the city. This will attract private investment, raise incomes and help tackle economic and social exclusion.
Local Development Framework (LDF) / Local	The LDF provides the spatial planning framework for the development and growth of the city. Together with the LTP, it provides a strategic framework for

Transport Plan (LTP)	the spatial development of the city.
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WHAT ALREADY EXISTS – AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Selected Case Studies – currently being collated		
Plan for Jobs	Children’s Centres – Basic Literacy/Numeracy	Community Economic Development Trust
Job Clubs in Children’s Centres	Plymouth Community Homes – learn for free	Foodbank and Timebanking
Urban Enterprise	1000 Club	Benefit take up campaigns

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

	Objective	Actions (DRAFT)	Lead
Promote work as the best route out of poverty			
1.	Develop and deliver a comprehensive skills plan for the city, in line with the future growth agenda for the city.		
2.	Promote the adoption of the Living Wage across both public and private sector employers.		
Income management and maximisation			
3.	Develop cooperative approaches to maximise household income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Energy Cooperative ▪ School Food ▪ Cooperative child care ▪ Tobacco control ▪ Digital access ▪ Cooperative food purchasing ▪ Cooperative child care 	
4.	Provide budgeting advice and support for families affected by the current economic climate and welfare reforms, including debt management guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Credit Union ▪ Advice Plymouth ▪ Debt management action plan 	
5.	Maximise the impact of financial inclusion activities by joining up commissioning across partner agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smoking cessation 	

THEME 2: FAMILY LIFE AND CHILDREN'S LIFE CHANCES

Parents living in poverty are much more likely to be facing a range of issues other than material deprivation which may affect their parenting. These include low levels of education and few qualifications, lack of access to jobs and services, isolation, mental/physical ill health and domestic violence.

With regards to achievement, the successes that individuals achieve during their adult life can be predicted by the level of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that children already possess on their first day at school.¹⁰ While the gap is slowly closing between attainment levels of those on free school meals and other children are smaller than in previous years¹¹, children growing up in poorer families still emerge from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment¹².

The relationship between poverty and ill-health is bi-directional: poverty contributes to ill-health and ill-health contributes to poverty. There is a social gradient in health – the lower a person's social position, the worse his or her health. Children born into low income households are more likely to experience health problems from birth and accumulate health risks as they grow older. In addition, they are less likely to access healthcare.

OVERVIEW OF PLYMOUTH'S NEEDS

- There is a greater concentration of families with multiple and/or complex needs living in the most deprived areas of the city. Multiple and complex needs may include lone parents, disability, health problems, parenting problems or social isolation amongst others.
- There is a significant attainment gap at all levels, from early years foundation stage, Key Stage 2 (primary schools), Key Stage 4 (secondary school) and post 16 education, between those eligible for Free School Meals and those not. Research indicates that, without effective intervention, this trend is established at a very early age and continues with the child into adulthood.
- There are inequalities in life expectancy with life expectancy lower in more deprived areas. For example the average life expectancy for people in Devonport is nearly 13 years less than those in Chaddlewood.
- Despite improvements in recent years health outcomes for families in the most deprived areas of Plymouth are less positive than their more affluent neighbours with lower rates of breastfeeding (at birth), higher rates of teenage pregnancy, and higher rates of low birth weights, smoking and childhood obesity.

For more detailed information please refer to the child poverty needs assessment at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#).

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Ensure that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor experiences and outcomes

¹⁰ Field, F. [The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults](#), 2010, HM Government

¹¹ Aldridge, H. et al, [Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2011](#), 2011, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

¹² Goodman, A. and Gregg, P., [Poorer children's educational attainment: How important are attitudes and behaviour?](#) 2010, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

CONNECTING WITH EXISTING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Health and Wellbeing Strategy (due 2013)	This Joint Strategy will set out the overarching framework to address the health and wellbeing needs of Plymouth's local communities and citizens. It will also act as a key driver for tackling health inequalities and improving health outcomes for individuals and communities.
Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014	This plan outlines how partners across the Children and Young People's Trust will work together to achieve better outcomes for children and young people under five priorities: i. Equip young people with skills, knowledge and opportunities to make a successful transition to adulthood, ii. Improve levels of achievement for all children and young people, iii. Tackle child poverty, iv. Provide all children with the best possible start to live, and v. Tackle risk taking behaviour.
Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy	This strategy seeks to deliver Plymouth's commitment to families and young people to make positive change to their lives together. It aims to reduce vulnerability and improve outcomes for children, young people and families by responding early to young people's needs.
Healthy Child Programme	A public health programme for children, young people and families, which focuses on early intervention and prevention. Focuses on screening, immunisations, developmental reviews, information and guidance on parenting and healthy choices. Aims to identify families who need additional support or are at risk of poor health outcomes.

WHAT ALREADY EXISTS – AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Selected Case Studies – currently being collated		
Stoke Damerel Community College	Narrowing the gap activity in schools / use of pupil premium	HENRY / Children's Centres
Smoking Cessation	Family Intervention Programme	Parents Apart (Routeways)
Honicknowle Partnership of Extended Services (HoPES)	Parent Support Advisors	Families with a Future Programme
Schools Catering	Libraries – Community Hubs	Family Information Service

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

	Objective	Actions (DRAFT)	Lead
Raise the aspirations of parents, children and young peoples			
6.	Targeted parenting support, with particular focus on separated families		
Further strengthen joint commissioning efforts with schools aimed at delivering better outcomes for children and young people, with a focus on:			
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental mental health • Domestic abuse • Parental drug and alcohol misuse • Parental worklessness • Absenteeism from school 		

	• Disability		
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THEME 3: COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Neighbourhoods play an important role in the socialisation of children. Individuals judge their position in society in relation to their neighbours, so growing up in a deprived neighbourhood often leads to lower aspirations. Young people may copy or learn antisocial behaviour from other people in the area so that poor behaviours are normalised. The poorer the neighbourhood, the more likely it is to have high rates of crime, poor air quality, lack of green spaces and safe places for children to play¹³.

Families living in poor housing are more likely to suffer from a range of health problems including poorer mental health and cognitive development as well as respiratory and stomach problems. Those growing up in the poorest households are more likely to suffer enduring physical and mental health problems in adulthood and have increased risk of severe, long-term and life-limiting illness. Children in these households are more likely than their more affluent peers to have difficulty in sleeping, studying or playing at home which can affect their health, their school lives and their social participation¹⁴.

OVERVIEW OF PLYMOUTH'S NEEDS

- Plymouth has high levels of families with children living in overcrowded housing.
- The number of homeless families requiring temporary accommodation remains stubbornly high despite intervention to prevent this from happening.
- 33% of Plymouth's private sector stock across the city is old and considered non decent – this equates to around 30,000 private sector homes of which 9,500 are occupied by 'vulnerable' residents in receipt of qualifying benefits. There is not enough data at present to determine how many house families living in poverty.
- Social housing, located predominantly in the West of the city is often well maintained and more energy efficient than older private sector housing. The age, condition and tenure of private sector housing stock in Plymouth is of concern and may be impacting on the health of the most vulnerable families.
- Deprived neighbourhoods in the city are most likely to experience higher levels of crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse. However patterns of youth offending across the city are less clear cut with less deprived areas seeing similar number of offenders as the more deprived areas.
- Further work needs to be undertaken to better understand how services currently target those groups considered more vulnerable to poverty and whether their needs have been fully considered in service planning.

For more detailed information please refer to the child poverty needs assessment at [Plymouth City Council - Child Poverty](#).

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Child's environment supports them to thrive.

¹³ Marmot, M (2010) 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' p. 78

¹⁴ Hawthorne et al. (2003) 'Supporting children through family change.' Joseph Rowntree Foundation

CONNECTING WITH EXISTING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Housing Plan 2012-2017	This plan lays out the city's housing ambition and priority objectives for developing, improving and investing in people's homes, neighbourhoods and communities.
Alcohol Strategy (Due 2013)	Sets out how the city will minimise alcohol related harm and promote responsible drinking. Includes a focus on i. Changing knowledge, skills and attitudes towards alcohol, ii. Providing support for children, young people and parents in need, and iii. Creating safer drinking environments.

WHAT ALREADY EXISTS – AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Selected Case Studies – currently being collated		
Whitleigh Partnership / Big Local	Intensive Youth Support Team	Community Hubs / Neighbourhood Regeneration
Family Group Conferencing	Domestic Abuse – DASH training, Freedom Project	Community Greenspace Trust

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

	Objective	Actions (DRAFT)	Lead
Provide decent homes for Plymouth families			
8.	Improve housing standards in the private rental sector		
Enable communities to lead change and self-manage their neighbourhoods			
9.	Facilitate the greater use of community assets and social capital across the areas of highest deprivation in Plymouth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools based catering assets. ▪ Community Economic Development Trust ▪ Community assets transfer policy ▪ VCS Contract review ▪ Neighbourhood working review 	

THEME 4: CHILD POVERTY IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS

At the heart of the child poverty plan is the need to increase visibility and ownership of the child poverty agenda amongst key stakeholders, partner agencies and communities.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

	Objective	Actions	Lead
Leadership and Ownership			
10.	Embed child poverty within key citywide plans and strategies including the Plymouth Plan, the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Operating plans of major partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cabinet to endorse Child Poverty Action Plan and review how major plans reflect and impact on child poverty ▪ OSMB assesses budget decisions for child poverty impact ▪ SMT, Directorate and Partner/Partnership Champions confirmed 	
Raising the profile of child poverty as everyone’s business			
11.	Deliver an annual standing conference on Child Poverty.		

SECTION III: DELIVERING THE PLAN

GOVERNANCE

Options to be discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

COSTING THE STRATEGY

Costing of the strategy and action plan is currently underway. Effective delivery of the child poverty strategy is highly dependent on having a comprehensive understanding of how resources are currently being commissioned against child poverty outcomes across Plymouth City Council and its partners. In addition the strategy will identify areas and opportunities where further pooling and alignment of resources may be required around common outcomes, for example within the early intervention and prevention strategy commissioning processes.

For existing plans and strategies, it is expected that commissioning of services to support child poverty outcomes will take place based on agreed priorities within approved budgets and resources.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE

The most well-known measure available at present for capturing relative low income poverty¹⁵ is 'the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of median income'.

Evidence shows that at below 60 per cent of the median income, material deprivation becomes a significant problem with families struggling to meet basic needs like food, heating, transport, clothing and the extra costs of schooling like equipment and trips.¹⁶ The links between material deprivation and living below 60% median income are strong and the correlation between poor outcome and children living on relatively low income is too strong to ignore.¹⁷

The problem with having a single finance based indicator for child poverty is that it cannot capture the complexities of the issue, as outlined in the Introduction. It is therefore proposed to develop a basket of meaningful indicators that would help to capture any impact on a broad range of factors contributing to child poverty locally. A proposed basket of outcomes indicators can be seen overleaf:

¹⁵ Child Poverty Act 2010 – defined by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, 2009 (formerly National Indicator 116)

¹⁶ Child Poverty Map of the UK, March 2011, Campaign to End Child Poverty

¹⁷ The importance of income in measuring and tackling child poverty, Save the Children, June 2012

Indicator Description			
Family Life and Children's Life Chances	Inequality gap in achievement by 19	Communities and Neighbourhoods	Proportion of children in poverty
	Free School Meals/ Non Free School Meals achievement gap		Working adults seeing mental health services
	Special Educational Needs//non Special Educational Needs achievement gap		Time to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims
	Proportion of children achieving the expected level of achievement		Proportion of households on waiting list for social housing
	Under 18 conception rate		Amount of new affordable housing
	Working age population qualified to at least Level 2		Financial Support and Independence
	Percentage of live births under 2.5kg	Overall employment rate	
	Life expectancy at birth	Proportion of children in workless households	
	Proportion of obese / underweight children	Proportion of take up of child care by low income working families	
	Proportion of persistently absent children	Working age people with access to public transport	
	Rate of children in need per 1000 children	16-18yr old young people not in employment, education or training	

Targets will be agreed in conjunction with the development of the detailed action plans.

ANNEX I – KEY IMPLICATIONS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Financial Independence and Support

- In-work child poverty poses a significant risk to the city - the income based measure of child poverty, while a significant indicator of material deprivation does not capture a large number of in-work low income families. Evidence suggests that such households now at an increased risk of child poverty fall just above the 60% median rate but are struggling following substantial changes to the welfare system and rising costs of living.
- The direction and scope of the future growth of Plymouth is intrinsically linked to the city's ability to sustainably reduce its numbers of children living in poverty. Key issues that will need to be addressed include the creation of higher paid and higher quality employment opportunities in line with regional and national averages, alongside a strengthening of efforts to raise the skills levels of adults and young people in line with what employers demand. This must include a focus on basic skills including literacy and numeracy alongside other employability skills. This will also provide additional opportunities for many parents to engage with their own children's learning for example reading books before bedtime and supporting their child with homework.
- The constant number of young people from the most deprived areas who are not in education, employment or training alongside worrying trends of youth unemployment must prompt much closer dialogue and agreement between schools, colleges of further education and employers to ensure that the emerging skill sets are matched with job availability and the needs of employers.
- Financial top ups for low income families in the past have succeeded in lifting a significant number of families out of poverty. For some families it is the difference between being able to heat the home or buy food. The reduction in household income following the introduction of structural welfare reforms is likely to have most impact on Plymouth's most vulnerable families – this will severely impede the city's ability to reduce its child poverty rates and action to mitigate such impact is urgently required. It will also be essential to ensure that joined-up advice and guidance can make a real difference and enable people living in poverty to navigate their way through understanding the new benefit entitlements.
- Quantitative and qualitative data point to a growing and worrying trend of out of work and in-work low income families being less able to manage their finances. With upcoming changes in the payment of benefits along with rising living costs, this is likely to result in marked increase in demand for both debt and budget management advice services. Opportunities to reduce household costs for vulnerable families including energy bills and repayment of debt should be explored, for example expansion of credit bank facilities, programmes to promote energy efficiency e.g. insulation, creation of local energy cooperatives and increased installation of water meters in most deprived areas.
- The child care sufficiency audit shows that parents are generally happy with the range and cost of childcare provided across the city, links with the growth agenda need to be more closely formed to ensure that any growth in the employment market, including training and education, are matched with accessible and affordable child care opportunities. The expansion of the free entitlement for disadvantaged two year olds will add a new pressure on existing childcare places. The need to secure sufficient childcare places for disadvantaged two year olds will become part of the Local Authority's statutory duties from September 2013. It has been identified that there will be a predicted shortfall of approximately 350 places in 2013 and a further 1,350 from 2014 when the offer is extended to 40 % of all eligible two year olds in Plymouth.

- The areas of greatest concern within Plymouth are the lower levels of accessibility of city residents who can reach key employment areas of Belliver, Estover and Langage. Those residents living in the most deprived areas will find it takes more than 30 minutes with their journey often requiring a change of bus to reach these areas. Those who are employed in shift work with early morning starts or late night finishes are more disadvantaged as bus services are fewer and further between at these times. A triangulation of further research and planning is required to better understand the links between, but not limited to, areas of employment and training, child care provision and public transport routes.
- Children in lone parent households are more likely to be in poverty than those in two parent households, accounting for 70% of all child poverty households. Strategies to tackle child poverty will need to take account of this group, for example supporting adequate childcare options and flexibility for those who wish to work.

Family Life and Children's Life Chances

- Children living in poorer households are much more likely to face multiple family based issues both as a cause and as a result of poverty. There is a clear need for targeted, joined up support to be provided to these families but it is essential that such support be based on the needs of the family as a whole rather than the individual members in isolation of each other. Ease of access to such support will be critical to what is often a disenfranchised and isolated group of families.
- Key areas to be addressed should include parental and child emotional wellbeing and mental health, domestic abuse, worklessness and skills, along with healthy lifestyle issues including alcohol misuse and smoking. The need to enable aspirations within such families will also play a key part in improving outcomes for these children. The current programme for prevention and early intervention addresses many of these concerns but service provision must not be limited to children and young people focused services only. Provision should extend to services for adults, including health, as well as services aimed at improving housing, reducing worklessness and building adult skills. A real challenge in the current economic climate will be how to provide targeted support to those families at risk of poverty, who so often miss out on services and support that are diverted to meet more complex needs.
- While it has reduced in recent years, the significant gap in educational attainment at all levels, from early years through to post 16 education between children and young people in the least and most deprived areas of Plymouth contributes to an on-going cycle of poverty within families. It is essential that continued efforts both inside and outside the school environment are targeted towards children from the most deprived areas. Additional resources such as the Pupil Premium should be used to aid this process in collaboration with services that work alongside families in recognition of the importance of family life and relationships to enhance the learning experience of children and young people.
- There are profound and well established health inequalities across Plymouth. Health issues of concern with regards to children's outcomes include teenage pregnancy, low birth weight, breastfeeding, childhood obesity, smoking and mental health, all of which correlate directly with areas of highest deprivation.
- While interventions that target individual lifestyle behaviours can have limited impact, it is essential to also look at improving health status by addressing the social determinants of health, or the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Using this approach, the health status of children and parents can be improved through factors such as education, employment, working conditions, housing along with good quality health care services.

Communities and Neighbourhoods

- There are serious concerns about the numbers of families with children who are living in non-decent private sector housing. While not all will be considered as living in poverty, the waiting list for social housing remains substantial and with limited data available, assumptions must be made that a large proportion are living in the private rented sector. This may also account for the constant numbers of families presenting as homeless each month. That the majority of old housing stock in many deprived areas is social housing gives some level of assurance that these homes are better maintained.
- However, the issue of overcrowding cannot be resolved without an increased number of new and affordable homes being built that are able to house larger families in particular. However, the obstacles facing low income families from buying their own home will not be overcome in the current climate and innovative ways to enable poorer families to live in decent houses will need to be found in the short and long term.