

# Reducing Child Poverty Strategy

June 2010

## **Executive Summary**

Almost a third of children in Newcastle live in poverty. Although in recent years we have made good progress in improving outcomes for children and their families, including the most deprived, the aim of this strategy is to accelerate the good work. We want to narrow the gap in outcomes between children in the most deprived areas and the rest of Newcastle.

Our work is occurring against a background of a severe economic downturn, which is likely to lead to more children living in workless households and therefore at greater risk of being in poverty.

In addition to actions that strengthen the economy, our approach to reducing child poverty is two-fold. First, to reduce the risk of child poverty among out of work and low income families by helping parents into work and training, improving opportunities for career progression and maximising family income. And second, to address the symptoms of child poverty and reduce the chances of future poverty by working with families and children to break the poverty cycle, raising aspirations and attainment and improving health, neighbourhoods and quality of life.

Child poverty is heavily concentrated in specific areas of the city and therefore to reduce child poverty and narrow the gap within Newcastle many of our activities are geographically targeted.

Our activities focus on:

### **1. Employment and skills**

We are increasing opportunities for parents to enter employment, education or training. This will increase family income and the chances of progression to higher paid employment and have a beneficial impact on parental self esteem.

Our priorities are to:

- Offer support to all workless families in Newcastle, beyond that available from Jobcentre Plus, helping them into employment. In addition, to refer those who secure employment to benefits advice services to improve take-up of in-work benefits
- Offer additional support to those made redundant, beyond that provided by Jobcentre Plus, reducing the chances of parents moving into long term unemployment

- Ensure that all lone parents are able to access quality and affordable childcare
- Encourage, and in some cases deliver, training and skills development for parents
- Improve access to employment opportunities within Newcastle City Council, and encourage the adoption of best practice by other partners
- Encourage skills development post-employment via Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain offer

## **2. Financial wellbeing of families**

We are maximising family income - including raising benefit take up, improving debt management, raising financial literacy and increasing access to affordable credit.

Our priorities are to:

- Ensure that all children eligible to receive free school meals take up this entitlement
- Ensure that all families are able to access debt and financial advice
- Increase take up of benefits and tax credits among families
- Promote financial literacy work in schools and with parents through Family Learning
- Encourage employers (and the Council) to promote financial literacy, as part of their workforce strategies

## **3. Improving services to families**

These initiatives have a particular focus on parenting services, including supporting families with disabilities. In addition, we are committed to ensuring that all services across the Council have a 'family focus' so that we consider the circumstances of the whole family when addressing the needs of the child.

Our priorities are to:

- Ensure that all parents who require support in their parenting are able to attend parenting programmes
- Deliver a first class network of services for families, which are integrated and promote early intervention and prevention of child poverty
- Implement a 'think family' approach across the Newcastle Partnership

## **4. Regeneration of local communities**

Many of the children living in poverty live in Newcastle's regeneration areas. We will ensure that physical and social regeneration is raising quality of life and making Newcastle a family-friendly city.

Our priorities are to:

- Ensure that all regeneration plans take account of the need to reduce child poverty
- Enable families and children to live in better homes
- Make homes warmer and easier and cheaper to heat
- Give children and young people the opportunity to influence decisions about their local area

## **5. Raising attainment and aspirations of young people and of their parents**

We are working to raise the attainment and aspirations of young people and of their parents in order to break the inter-generational poverty cycle.

Our priorities are to:

- Improve attainment overall at all key stages
- Close the gap in attainment between those living in deprived areas and the city as a whole
- Increase the number of young people progressing to Higher Education and
- Increase the proportion of young people in employment, education or training

## **6. Addressing health inequalities**

By promoting healthy lifestyles among our young children we will help them to meet their potential.

Our priorities are to:

- Learn from the Lean East campaign and deliver the most effective elements in the west end of the city
- Pilot a targeted task force in areas with the highest teenage conception rates, involving school heads, PHSE (Personal Health and Social Education) leads, school health advisers, youth services, contraception and sexual health (CASH) services, GPs and others

Child poverty is one of the five big challenges identified in our Sustainable Community Strategy. All partners in the Newcastle Partnership are committed to working together to improve outcomes for children and young people who experience poverty or are at risk of poverty. This means sharing information and best practice and ensuring that support is available to the whole family from all parts of the Newcastle Partnership.

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# 1. Introduction: the importance of reducing child poverty

## Our definition of child poverty:

**A child in poverty lives in a family with income and resources far below the average. The result is that families are often unable to afford essential goods and services and the children experience worse outcomes than other children. This can limit their opportunities as adults and the opportunities of their own children.**

Reducing child poverty is a priority for the Newcastle Partnership. It is essential if the city is to meet its vision of becoming a place where residents enjoy equal chances in employment, education, housing and health. The Newcastle Partnership highlighted child poverty as one of the city's five big challenges in its Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and reducing child poverty is one of the priorities in Newcastle's Local Area Agreement (LAA). Reducing child poverty is also a priority for national Government, which has pledged to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020.

We measure outcomes for children in the city against five Every Child Matters domains. Our aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being.

The importance of reducing child poverty in order to achieve this for all children in Newcastle, is summarised in Newcastle's Sustainable Community Strategy:

**“Children and young people who grow up in poverty are less likely to: attend school regularly; stay on at school; obtain qualifications; go on to higher education; and aspire to well-paid employment.**

**Reducing the number of children who grow up in poverty will increase the number of young people with opportunities to succeed as adults. This success will increase the life chances of their children. This is the cycle of opportunity that we want in Newcastle.”**

Prior to the economic downturn, we were making good progress in reducing child poverty. In the North East as a whole, the percentage of children living in poverty fell from 34% to 27% between 1998 and 2005.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, over 40% of children in Newcastle lived in the areas classified as being in the most deprived 10% of

areas in England; by 2007 that proportion had reduced to 35%<sup>2</sup>. For all children aged 0 -18, approximately one in three (19,000) live in the 10% most deprived areas nationally.<sup>3</sup> Our analysis shows that the numbers of children living in the most deprived areas is reducing at a faster rate in Newcastle than in the country or North East as a whole.

But we need to do more. On the Government's preferred measure of poverty, based upon children living in households with relative low income,<sup>4</sup> 29% of children in Newcastle live in poverty. This is significantly higher than the English average of 22%. The city is ranked 37<sup>th</sup> most deprived of the 354 English Local Authorities.

The economic downturn compounds the need for action. In the year to March 2009, unemployment had increased by over 1.5% in Newcastle, with an additional 2816 people claiming unemployment benefits. It is inevitable that this has been accompanied by an increase in the number of children living in workless households.

## **2. What do we know about children at risk of poverty in Newcastle?**<sup>5</sup>

In order to reduce the number of children living in poverty we need to understand the factors that increase the risk of poverty and the numbers of children in the city affected by those factors.

We know from national evidence<sup>6</sup> that the risk of a child living in poverty increases if a child is:

- Living in a household where no parent is working
- Living in a lone parent household
- Living in a household where someone is disabled
- Living in a large family (with four or more children)
- Living in a family headed by someone from an ethnic minority, particularly someone of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin

Unsurprisingly, the risk of a child being in poverty increases sharply if they live in a workless household. In the North East as a whole, two-thirds of children in workless households are in poverty. In contrast, in households where the only parent/both parents are in full time work, the proportion of children in poverty is just 0.7%. However, one in four households that have part-time, rather than full-time work are in poverty.

The main reason for relatively high rates of child poverty in the North East is lower levels of employment. In 2007, 13,300 children and young people lived in families dependent on workless benefits.<sup>7</sup> This is approximately 30% of all

children in the city, compared with 20% in England. More than two thirds of the children in workless households in Newcastle live with single parents. Overall, one in five children in Newcastle (10,000) is living with a lone parent who is out of work.

Although the probability of being in poverty is much higher in workless families, the greater number of working families means that these account for 45% of children living in poverty in the North East. Child poverty is more prevalent in working households in the North East than nationally because pay levels are generally lower – at 90% of the UK average. This is the other major reason for relatively high rates of child poverty in Newcastle.

In addition to the prevailing strength of the economy,<sup>8</sup> the underlying causes of low-paid work and worklessness are multiple, complex and often inter-related. Low skills can make it difficult to find work and can reduce job stability and progression and this can limit an individual's earning capacity.

Poverty in childhood increases the likelihood of poverty in the future. Poor children are less likely to achieve higher level skills and qualifications, which are critical to enter the workforce and progress in work.

Some parents find it difficult to work. In Newcastle almost 56,000 people (21.6% of the population) reported that they have a limiting long-term illness<sup>9</sup>. One in four children in poverty has a parent with a self-reported disability or a long-standing health condition.

Victims of domestic violence and their children may also be more vulnerable to the risks of poverty. Domestic violence can act as a barrier to education, training, and employment. Compared with women who have not experienced violence, women who report domestic violence victimisation also report more days arriving late to work, more absenteeism from work, more psychological and physical health problems that may reduce their productivity, and greater difficulty maintaining employment over time. Victims and survivors of domestic violence may have to move homes many times which can disrupt their employment and their children's attendance and ability to achieve at school.

Looking at the crime figures for Newcastle, we can see that 83.6% of all recorded victims of domestic violence are female and the majority of abusers are a current or previous partner, husband or boyfriend of the victim<sup>10</sup>. There is a peak in the 20-29 age group and this is the age group most likely to have very young and school aged children living with them.

We also know that children in larger families are at greater risk of poverty. Child Benefit data suggests that 47% of families in Newcastle have one child, and 37% have two children, whereas 16% have three or more children.<sup>11</sup>

The latest school census information shows 18.5% of children in Local Authority schools are from black and ethnic minorities. However the proportion of children from black and ethnic minority groups and pupils with a first language other than English living in the 10% most deprived areas is broadly similar to all other parts of the City. Newcastle is home to more asylum seeker families than other parts of the North East. The Government does not permit asylum seekers to work and the financial support they are entitled to is at a lower level than Income Support.

## **Neighbourhood analysis**

The Index of Multiple Deprivation tells us that child poverty in Newcastle is concentrated in the riverside areas in the east and west of the city with smaller pockets of deprivation in central and western areas. Concentrations of deprivation are illustrated on the map below by the darkest shading of blue, whilst greater affluence is illustrated by lighter shading. Approximately one in three children and young people in Newcastle aged 0 -18 years live in areas which are among the 10% most deprived areas in the country.

Data from Newcastle Neighbourhood Information Service, which measures the vitality of neighbourhoods shows that there is a substantial gap between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the city, although there has been a slight narrowing of the gap in the last five years. A number of poorer outcomes for children are associated with living in the most deprived areas.

There is a substantial gap in educational achievement between children living in the most deprived areas and their peers. This is apparent at foundation stages and continues throughout their education. At key stage 4 (GCSE and equivalent) the gap between Newcastle and the national average has reduced considerably, but the gap in achievement between young people from the most deprived areas of the city and their peers has not reduced.

24% of children in Newcastle local authority schools have special educational needs. The proportion of children with special educational needs is substantially higher in the most deprived areas.

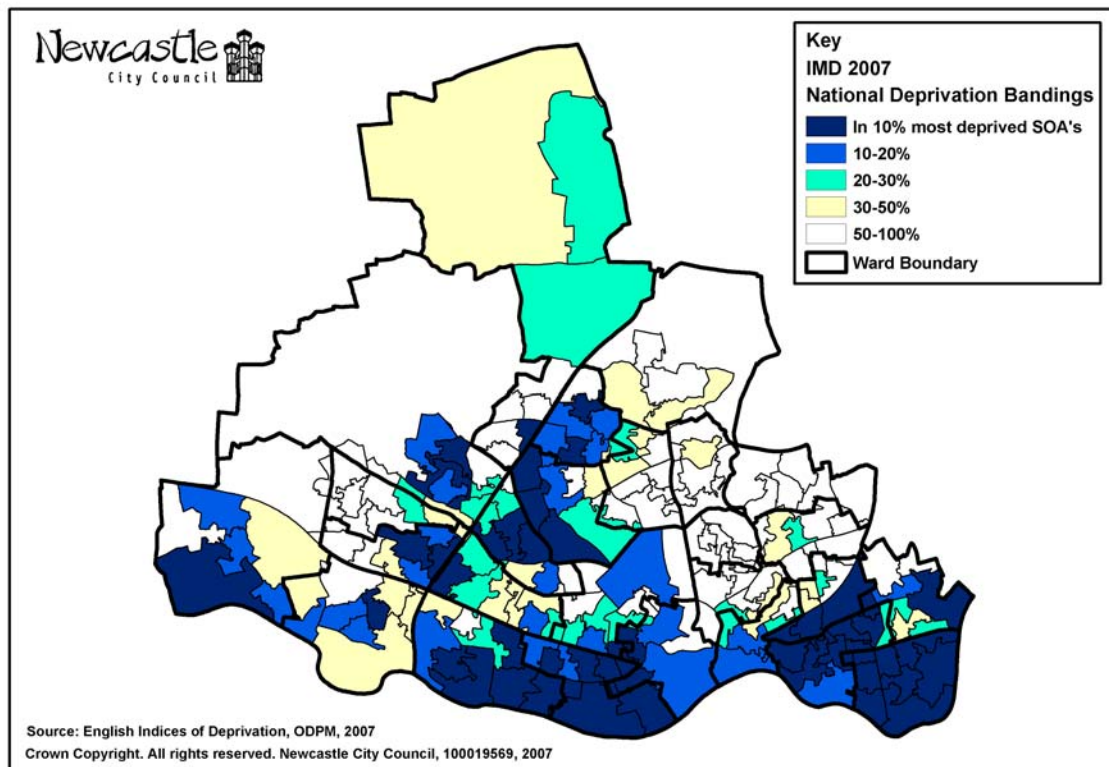
In general, areas of high deprivation tend to have high numbers of reports of domestic violence incidents and this is also the case in Newcastle. The wards which are amongst the most deprived in the city have the highest number of reported domestic violence incidents.

A range of poorer health outcomes throughout life are linked to deprivation. Life expectancy at birth is lower in the most deprived areas of the city. There is a gap of 12.6 years in life expectancy for men within the city. The proportion of people with a limiting long term illness also tends to be higher in the most deprived areas of the city.

Teenage parenthood can be both a cause and a consequence of poverty. The teenage pregnancy rate in Newcastle has reduced but remains above the national average. Teenage pregnancy rates are much higher in the most deprived areas compared with the city average.

There is clear evidence that breastfeeding has health benefits for both mother and baby. However, levels of breastfeeding, are lowest in the most deprived areas of the city.

The Newcastle Obesity Strategy tells us that in Newcastle one in three children is overweight or obese. In Newcastle there is evidence that there is a higher rate of overweight and obesity among children in year 6 living in deprived areas compared to the city as a whole.



High demand on public services in deprived areas can affect access to and quality of service provision, and a lack of safe, pleasant spaces exacerbates children's experiences of deprivation. Many of our actions to reduce child poverty will therefore focus on these areas.

### **3. Persistent Poverty**

A study by the National Centre for Social Research<sup>12</sup> analyses the persistence of low income from a large scale longitudinal study of families with children. The definition of poverty used is that of 'income below 60% of total equivalised disposable family income before housing costs'. Persistent poverty is defined as being below this low income threshold in at least three of the four annual observations (Families and Children Study, FACS) from 2001 to 2004. Approximately 20% of families were below the income threshold in any one year but 38% of families experienced at least one year of low income during the period. 12% of families experienced persistent poverty and 26% were "temporary poor", that is poor in one or two years of the four year period.

Children in persistently poor families were more at risk of poor outcomes compared to the temporary poor including:

- Having a long term illness or disability
- Going without regular exercise
- Being suspended or expelled from school
- Being in trouble with the police
- Living in bad housing
- Lacking a number of material deprivation items (see below)
- Facing three or more of the above negative outcomes

Family work status is the factor most closely associated with the risk of persistent poverty. Being continuously out of work is strongly related to the risk of persistent poverty, both for lone parents and couples. The risk of persistent poverty was high for couple families where only one parent worked, particularly if that was the mother. Other factors associated with persistent poverty included not having access to a car (lone mothers), having a black or ethnic minority mother and parents with no qualifications (couples).

We need to carry out further work in order to understand the extent and impact of persistent poverty on the living standards of children and their families in Newcastle. One way of doing this will be to consider measures of material deprivation alongside relative low income as part of our strategy to reduce child poverty and its impact.

### **4. Poverty and material deprivation**

Measures of child poverty based upon relative income are useful, but do not take into account costs of living (e.g. housing costs), or other influences on quality of life. Material deprivation measures consider whether families can afford certain items that could be considered 'necessities' such as those listed in the table

below. Recent analysis,<sup>13</sup> found that, on six of these nine measures of material deprivation, poverty is less prevalent in the North East than in England as a whole. Despite this, the Newcastle Partnership's aspiration is to reduce material deprivation further and to improve living standards in the city.

### Material deprivation of children (Bradshaw, 2009)

Children would like to have this but cannot afford	North East	North West	Yorks & Humber	London	England
1) Enough bedrooms for every child over 10	20.4	15.0	18.6	23.1	16.4
2) Celebrations on special occasions	1.7	2.8	3.1	9.8	4.2
3) Leisure equipment such as sports equipment or a bicycle	6.0	6.9	6.6	14.8	7.6
4) A holiday away from home at least 1 week a year	33.9	32.4	30.6	39.8	31.4
5) A hobby or leisure activity	6.1	6.9	5.4	10.5	6.9
6) Swimming at least once a month	8.4	9.6	10.8	15.1	11.2
7) Have friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight	8.2	8.0	6.7	11.9	7.8
8) Go on a school trip at least once a term	5.6	6.2	3.5	9.2	5.7
9) Go to a playgroup at least once a week	5.7	6.0	6.7	9.5	6.8

We are carrying out some research with children and young people in Newcastle which will give us a better understanding of the impact of poverty on living standards and quality of life in the city. Young people in Walker were asked how a lack of money affected children and families:

- Some people who don't have money for Christmas feel sad because they can't afford to buy for their children. (Boy, 10)
- I'd like to go ice-skating if I had more money. (Boy, 8)
- I'd like to go to Disneyland. (Girl, 9)
- Young people want football strips and boots but can't afford it because they don't have jobs, they cost £60. (Boy, 9)

- It's important to be active but you have to buy stuff to be active like a trampoline, or a swimming pool in the summer. It's important to keep fit. Or a bike; go on bike rides. (Girl, 9 and Boy, 8)
- At my school we are going on a trip that costs £210 and some people can't go on school trips because it's too expensive which is unfair (Boy, 10)

This research will be completed in 2010 and will help to shape future strategies and action plans.

## 5. National policies for reducing child poverty

Current national policies to reduce child poverty involve:<sup>14</sup>

- An economic strategy to maximise employment
- Policies to encourage entry to work
- Policies designed to make work pay, including the national minimum wage, improvements in in-work benefits (child tax credits, working tax credits and child care tax credits)
- Improvements in out of work benefits
- Large increases in public expenditure on education, health, transport and childcare.

The Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty is explained in the following documents which have informed this Reducing Child Poverty Strategy:

- **Every Child Matters** (2003) has "achieve economic wellbeing" as a key outcome for all children.
- **Working for Children** (DWP) focuses on moving more lone parents into work, training and in-work support.
- The **Child Poverty Review** identifies the need for action simultaneously in a number of policy areas such as welfare rights, health, education and housing to increase the collective impact on poverty.
- **In Work Better Off** (Green Paper, 2007): the Government's proposal for full employment.
- **The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures** (2007) sets out how the Department of Children Schools and Families and the Department for Work and Pensions and the Child Poverty Unit will coordinate work across government to break the cycle of poverty from generation to generation to achieve the goal of halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020.
- **Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business** (2008) puts a renewed emphasis on regional and local action to support national activity and announces a series of Child Poverty Pilots.

- The **Child Poverty Act** (2010) has the intention of increasing momentum, building consensus and creating a shared mission in society to make child poverty everybody's business. It places a duty on local authorities to cooperate with local partners to reduce child poverty and mitigate its effects.

## 6. Newcastle's approach to reducing child poverty

Our aim is to reduce the number of children living in poverty in Newcastle. We will do this by focusing on those most at risk, including those areas of the city where poverty is concentrated. By taking action in these areas we expect to reduce child poverty levels in the city overall, as well close the gap in outcomes experienced by children living in the most deprived areas of the city compared to the city average.

The actions that the Newcastle Partnership will take to get more families into work and to strengthen the economy (in order to provide jobs and career advancement opportunities) are central to this strategy. In addition to these actions, our approach to tackling child poverty is to:

- Reduce the risk of poverty amongst out of work families and low income working families by taking a range of actions to maximise family income; and
- Counteract the symptoms of child poverty and reduce the chances of future poverty by working with families and children to break the poverty cycle, raise aspirations and attainment and improve health, neighbourhoods and quality of life.

We follow the "Think Family" approach which means that when we respond to the needs of a child or young person we consider the problems or issues affecting the whole family. The most disadvantaged families may have complex or multiple problems that require specialised services from a number of different Council departments and service providers.

Of course, many of the actions that will help to reduce child poverty are core functions of the Council, Jobcentre Plus, Newcastle Futures, Higher and Further Education Institutions and other partners. This Reducing Child Poverty Strategy is not about that 'mainstream activity'. Instead, we highlight our assessment of the areas where there are gaps in this mainstream provision and the Newcastle Partnership's objectives for further activity. This strategy contains an action plan to address some of the current gaps.

Some of the outcomes we have already achieved are highlighted in section 7 below. We will learn from and build on the progress we have already made in these areas.

A key part of our approach is to listen to what children and young people and parents and carers, tell us. Our Children's Services Participation Unit is working with children and young people in Newcastle to:

- Give young people from areas in Newcastle with high levels of child poverty a voice, using creative methods including storytelling and animation/film
- Investigate their views, concerns and ideas on how to improve where they live and barriers to participation
- Find out their ideas for youth provision and engagement activities
- Investigate how to improve negative attitudes in the local community towards young people
- Find out reasons for low aspiration and for young people not accessing education, training or employment

### **Strategic Framework**

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Local Area Agreement provide the strategic framework for our actions to tackle child poverty.

The themes identified in the SCS will support the reduction of child poverty. They are:

- Strengthening the economy
- Improving the wellbeing, health and independence of communities
- Managing environmental impact
- Creating and sustaining quality places to live
- Providing safe, inclusive, cohesive and empowered communities
- Improving outcomes for children and young people

A series of delivery partnerships are responsible for delivering on these themes. Within this framework, the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People and the Employability Action Plan are the key delivery plans for reducing child poverty in Newcastle. Workless families, lone parents and young people not in education employment or training (NEET) are priority groups in the Employability Action Plan. Improving outcomes for vulnerable groups such as homeless families, BME communities and children with disabilities are priorities in the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People. Many of these families have experienced poverty and are more likely to be in persistent poverty. We will work with all of the delivery partnerships to ensure that, where relevant, their plans and strategies demonstrate the contribution they can make to reducing child poverty.

## **7. Our objectives for reducing child poverty**

### **Employment and Skills**

The Partnership's work in this area is led by Newcastle Futures and other members of the Economy Delivery Partnership, building on the mainstream provision of Jobcentre Plus and education providers.

**To help reduce child poverty, we aim to build on the mainstream activity by:**

- **Offering support to all workless families in Newcastle, beyond that available from Jobcentre Plus, to help them into employment. In addition, referring those who secure employment to benefits advice services to improve take-up of in-work benefits**
- **Offering additional support to those made redundant, beyond that provided by Jobcentre Plus, reducing the chances of parents moving into long term unemployment**
- **Ensuring that all lone parents are able to access quality and affordable childcare**
- **Encouraging, and in some cases delivering, training and skills development for parents**
- **Improving access to employment opportunities within Newcastle City Council, and encouraging the adoption of best practice by other partners**
- **Encouraging skills development post-employment via Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain offer**

Until the economic downturn, the focus of Newcastle Futures has been to provide support for clients in 'priority groups', which are groups who are relatively far from the labour market. This include families with neither parent working, lone parents and young people not engaged in employment, education or training.<sup>15</sup> Our experience (and Government guidance) is that these groups often face multiple barriers to getting a job, and are the most likely to benefit from help, beyond that which is provided by Jobcentre Plus. The Newcastle Futures Partnership provides support for these groups to help them into a job and support them once they are in work.

The economic downturn is posing additional problems for residents who are being made redundant. We have therefore set up three Resource Centres which will increase our capacity to support residents and help agencies to channel their services more effectively. Activities will include:

- **Job search and job hunting techniques (including access to the internet for job searching)**

- Skills assessment via LSC Next Steps, with increased access to higher skills partners such as Northumbria and Newcastle Universities and Newcastle College
- Mental health and well being advice
- Debt advice
- Access to other services (such as benefits maximisation)

The Council has formed a Local Employment Partnership (LEP) with Jobcentre Plus, to improve access to jobs within the Council. The Council is also increasing the number of new apprentices starting this year from 34 to 115. As one of the major employers in the city, these changes will have a direct impact on the labour market. The Council will subsequently look to spread examples of best practice to other institutions.

The Children's Trust also has a number of initiatives to improve access to childcare, including increasing the take up of support for childcare costs through Working Tax Credit and initiatives to provide information and reassurance to parents. It also undertakes a number of skills initiatives, which include activities aimed at enhancing the employability skills of young people, and encouraging their progression in learning and employment. These include:

- Young Apprenticeship programmes in Engineering and Health
- Enterprise activities
- ESF Youth Participation Project
- Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme
- Development of Foundation Learning Tier provision

#### **Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- Targeted initiatives to reduce worklessness such as Newcastle Futures are increasing the number of parents moving into work. For example, between April 2007 and December 2008, 1,079 lone parents registered with Newcastle Futures and 579 (54 per cent) moved into employment.
- The percentage of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) in Newcastle has decreased year on year from 15% in 2003 to 8.5% in 2008/9, narrowing the gap to the national figure of 6.7% (2007/8).

### **Case Study: Newcastle Futures**

Newcastle Futures Customer Coordinators provide a case management service across the city, based in the premises of partner agencies in order to build relationships with unemployed parents. As part of this service the Customer Coordinators deliver Steps to Excellence Courses in Sure Start Children's Centre. These are personal development courses that help parents to raise their self esteem and identify future goals. On completion of the course parents continue their action plan towards their goal with various partners within the Newcastle Futures Partnership.

## **Financial wellbeing of families**

There are a number of well established services in Newcastle which provide financial guidance and help to residents and families. This includes the Council's Welfare Rights Service, which had over 8800 clients in 2008/9, Citizens Advice Bureau, Moneywise Credit Union, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), Trading Standards, Supporting People, and National Energy Association.

We have brought these agencies together in a Financial Inclusion Partnership whose priorities are linked to the Government's priority areas for tackling financial exclusion.<sup>16</sup> The priorities are:

- Access to financial services
- Debt and credit
- Money management skills
- Income maximisation

**In addition to this work, in order to reduce child poverty, the Financial Inclusion Partnership's priorities are to:**

- **Ensure that all children eligible to receive free school meals take up this entitlement**
- **Ensure that all families are able to access debt advice and affordable credit**
- **Increase take up of benefits and child and working tax credits among families**
- **Increase the provision of financial literacy projects in the city**

At present, a quarter of children in local authority schools are registered for free school meals. But the Newcastle Partnership believes that there are many other children who are not registered. In addition to undertaking a campaign through schools to raise awareness, the Council's Welfare Rights Service is working with

Revenue and Benefits Service and Customer Service Centres to actively identify children missing out on their entitlement.

The debt, financial and benefits advice services reach all parts of the community. For example, 'Quids for Kids' is a programme to improve the take up of benefits and tax credits focusing on families with disabled children, low income, from black and minority ethnic groups, lone parents and vulnerable young adults such as care leavers.

Through our Healthy Schools programme we are also looking at how the curriculum in our local schools helps our children and young people learn about money, budgeting and debt.

Newcastle Citizens Advice Bureau is delivering a project, called Horizons, to help lone parents learn more about financial literacy. They are also delivering a Money Made Clear project which gives guidance on budgeting, saving, borrowing, mortgages and insurance. Both projects are free to clients and are independent, impartial and completely confidential.

The Financial Inclusion Partnership is also looking at ways to promote more affordable types of credit for people who do not have easy access to mainstream finance and who may take out illegal or doorstep loans. Linked to this, we are training front-line staff on the consequences of debt and illegal loans and making them aware of the alternatives available in Newcastle.

**Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- We are increasing family incomes through benefit take-up. Newcastle Welfare Rights Service advised over 1500 families (2006-8) and the annualized benefit claims for working tax credits were £960,000 for Working Tax Credit and £381,000 for Child Tax Credit.
- The Welfare Rights BME Team assisted clients to gain £172,000 in Working Tax Credits and £477,000 in Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit in 2007/8.

### **Case Study: Welfare Rights Black and Minority Ethnic Team**

The team aims to increase awareness and benefit take up among the BME communities in Newcastle, including the Chinese community. 2.6 Welfare Rights Officers, fluent in all the South East Asian languages spoken in Newcastle offer assistance with claims and three open door advice sessions, including a women only advice session which saw 343 women in 2007-2008. The BME team focuses on the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, where poverty levels in the UK are highest, and on BME women in particular, who face more barriers into employment. New migrant communities are also a focus for the service. The Chinese community is also supported with a specialist advice session.

### **Improving services to families**

The Children's Trust is continually building on its provision for families.

#### **Our objectives related to reducing child poverty are to:**

- **Ensure that all parents who require support in their parenting are able to attend parenting programmes**
- **Deliver a first class network of services for families, which are integrated and promote early intervention and prevention**
- **Implement a 'Think Family' approach across the Newcastle Partnership**

By mainstreaming the use of the Common Assessment Framework and 'Team around the Family' approach we will strengthen this whole-family focus to our services.

Newcastle has a well established network of services for families, which are increasingly integrated and provided by a range of public and voluntary sector agencies in the community. For example, Sure Start Children's Centres provide early learning and childcare, health and employment services as well as information and guidance for parents. There are currently 18 Sure Start Children's Centres providing city wide coverage.

Extended Services through Schools are making a significant contribution to preventing child poverty by providing childcare, parenting support including family learning, and a wide range of activities for children including study support, access to specialist support services and community access to adult learning. 71% of primary schools and 64% of secondary schools are providing breakfast activities for children compared to 40% and 61% nationally. Targeted Youth Support is provided as part of the Integrated Youth Strategy alongside programmes such as Volunteering, Things to Do and Places to Go and Transforming the Youth Service, and targets those young people at risk of not

being in employment, education or training using persistent absence data to identify young people.

The Children's Trust is implementing parenting programmes that both engage and challenge parents to develop their skills and confidence. We are helping all partners to 'Think Family' and the City Council is using Area Based Grant alongside the Think Family Grant to provide intensive support through Family Intervention Projects (FIP) for families who are experiencing multiple problems. Achieving stability can be the first step on a pathway to employment or training for families with complex needs.

Our approach means putting families at the centre of services. For example, the Centre West Support for Families Project was developed after talking with parents in the school playground about what they would find helpful. We also recognise that families in vulnerable circumstances need targeted support to enable them to help their children to achieve, for example, using the STEPS to Personal Excellence programme to work with parents to raise their self esteem and to create a positive attitude towards new opportunities.

Newcastle has an extensive network of support services in place for victims of domestic violence including refuge provision for women and BME women, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, a non mandatory programme for perpetrators of domestic violence, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), a Sanctuary Scheme, and a Specialist Domestic Violence Court and Forced Marriage Court both based in Newcastle. These services aim to provide a coordinated response for victims and their children and to prevent future incidences.

### **Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- Parents receiving one to one parenting support, including 13 families participating in Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), have reported greater confidence in parenting skills. There has been an 89% reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour from 376 recorded incidents for 11 families in the 6 months prior to their engagement with the Anti-Social Behaviour Family Intervention Project (ASB FIP) to 43 incidents in the 6 month following acceptance on to the project. 5 of the adults from 11 families progressed to education, employment or training during ASB FIP involvement.
- We had 96% retention rates and 99.8% achievement rates on mainstream Family Learning programmes in 73 venues in the academic year ending July 2008. This is based on 2,509 parent/carers enrolments and 1,298 child enrolments.

### **Case Study: Changing Trax**

The Changing Trax programme provides 24 hour, 7 days a week support to families where parental substance misuse is placing the children at risk. The aim is to work in partnership with parents to change their behaviour and prevent the children becoming looked after. The Strengthening Families Programme provides training for parents and children to improve relationships and in doing so improve school attendance, reduce anti-social behaviour and the use of alcohol or drugs. Many of the families are in receipt of benefits and have significant debts. As the work progresses the emphasis of the intervention changes from parenting and substance misuse issues to working with parents on their aspirations for themselves and their children. The support provided by Changing Trax is part of the pathway to employment and training for a very vulnerable group of families.

### **Regeneration of local communities**

The Council's regeneration programme is designed to improve the circumstances of residents living in the most deprived areas of the city. To achieve this we need a strong focus on the social regeneration detailed in our other child poverty objectives, as well as on physical regeneration.

Regeneration in the city is concentrated in five neighbourhoods:

- Byker/Ouseburn
- Elswick
- North Central
- Scotswood/Benwell
- Walker Riverside

We want to improve quality of life and access to local services and opportunities for all families and children in these areas. Each of the areas is covered by a regeneration plan.

**Our priorities in relation to child poverty are to:**

- **Ensure that all regeneration plans take account of the need to reduce child poverty**
- **Enable families and children to live in better homes**
- **Make homes warmer and easier and cheaper to heat**
- **Give children and young people the opportunity to influence decisions about their local area**

We will focus on making improvements to the location, accessibility and quality of local services, including parks and green spaces. YHN have begun to work with Groundwork and community groups to improve public spaces.

To improve access to public transport networks we are working with Nexus to ensure fares are affordable and people are able to move around the city to take up education, work and leisure opportunities.

YHN are working to provide more family-sized homes which are warm, safe, secure and within reach of a range of services. We are tackling fuel poverty in the city by providing a range of measures to heat and insulate homes in order to reduce bills.

We are also looking at how we can encourage access to a range of affordable housing types and tenures within neighbourhoods. The aim is to support the local economy and promote a sense of ownership of the community and neighbourhood.

It is essential that our residents have the ability to influence the physical development of their area. We are working with children and young people and their parents, through our U Decide programme, to understand their priorities for play and community safety and to give them some choice about how money is spent in their neighbourhood.

#### **Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- Fewer neighbourhoods (Lower Level Super Output Areas) are within the 10% most deprived nationally (comparing IMD 2007 with IMD 2004)
- Newcastle Warm Zone has reduced fuel bills by over £3 million p.a. (2007/08 prices). In the four years to June 2008 NWZ completed over 67,000 fuel poverty assessments, 13,600 benefit checks and secured £5.25 million in additional benefits
- Direct participation in decision making is significant in raising the aspirations of the whole community. Through Participatory Budgeting children have had a direct say in the allocation of over £3.4 million

#### **Case Study: Newcastle Warm Zone (NWZ)**

Newcastle Warm Zone aims to significantly reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency across all of the city's 120,000 households by offering an integrated package of free or discounted insulation and heating measures together with benefits advice and energy efficiency advice. Insulation is free to those in fuel poverty, YHN tenants, over 60s and households with children aged 5 and under. The earlier years of the project were focused on wards with the highest levels of deprivation. Delivery has also led to estimated reductions in carbon dioxide emissions in the region of 25,000 tonnes each year.

## **Raising the attainment and aspirations of young people and of their parents**

The goal in Newcastle is to provide excellent education provision, to improve attainment at all key stages and to continue to increase the percentage of schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.

### **Our priorities in relation to child poverty are to:**

- **Improve attainment overall at all key stages**
- **Close the gap in attainment between those living in deprived areas and the city as a whole**
- **Increase the number of young people progressing to Higher Education and**
- **Increase the proportion of young people in employment, education or training**

Attainment in Newcastle (using the key measure of 5 GCSEs A\* - C including English and Maths) is below the national average (39.2% in Newcastle compared to 47.6% nationally in 2008). There is a gap in attainment at all key stages between those children living in deprived areas of the city and Newcastle as a whole. There is also a significant gap in attainment between children entitled to free school meals (FSM) and non FSM pupils. Only 19.4% of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved 5 GCSEs A\* - C in 2008.

A greater proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) live in the most deprived areas of the city compared to the city as a whole.

Breaking this link between disadvantage and attainment is a key objective of this reducing child poverty strategy. Aspiration is crucial to this, so it is positive that 54% of young people in Newcastle reported that they wanted to continue to Higher Education when they leave school (Tell Us 2008) which is the same as the national average.

Schools and Newcastle College are leading a range of initiatives to raise attainment and to break the link between disadvantage and low attainment. Many of these initiatives involve partners in the statutory and voluntary sector. These initiatives are helping to provide:

- Support for the development of communication, language and literacy skills in early childhood
- Challenge to primary schools and early years settings and targeting and support for vulnerable and under-performing pupil groups
- Targeted funding and interventions which are raising awareness of Higher Education

- Adoption of the Aim Higher Curriculum by all Secondary Schools
- Tailored NEET Preventative and Remedial Strategies to potential NEET young people and vulnerable groups
- The offer of out of hours learning in all schools
- Parent Support Advisors linking schools and parents across the city
- A Family Learning Service that is nationally recognised for its innovation, quality and responsiveness to the needs of parents
- A Science City programme which is undertaking a 3 year, £1.77million initiative to give both adults and young people opportunities to be involved in science activities. The initiative will turn their ideas into projects that can improve their neighbourhoods and encourage them to study science, train in scientific skills and find jobs
- Enterprise Champions who will work with young people from disadvantaged communities in secondary and special schools, helping to develop social enterprises in schools and to integrate enterprise into the curriculum

**Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- The gap in attainment between vulnerable groups of children and young people and their peers has narrowed.
- Pupils from the 10% most deprived areas are making better than expected progress between 11 and 16 as measured by Key Stage 2 – 4 CVA (Contextual Value Added)
- Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education in Newcastle is 20.3% (2008/09) which is broadly in line with the national figure of 20% (2006/07)

### **Case study: Moorside Primary School**

Moorside is an inner city primary school where many of the children are living in workless or low income families. There are 43 community languages spoken at the school. The school has improved the attainment of children and engaged parents in learning by working in partnership with many partners including local residents appointed as link workers, the wider community, parents and extended families.

Parents and grandparents attend a range of events at the school working alongside their child in the classroom and learning how to support their child's learning. Parents are supported in their own learning through advice and guidance on family learning opportunities provided by local partner agencies.

Over a period of 3 years 397 parents and carers have participated in Family Learning; enrolling on 77 courses and 56 parents and carers obtained national accreditation. Many others have gone on to college and Further Education. The school holds awards events where children see their parents receiving certificates and accreditations.

Ofsted judged that the school "makes a real difference" to the lives of pupils, helping them to make outstanding progress academically.

### **Addressing health inequalities**

There is a strong link between social and economic deprivation and poor health. The Health Profile for the city (2009)<sup>17</sup> suggests that the health of children in Newcastle is significantly worse than the national and regional average with regard to rates of teenage conception and tooth decay. It is significantly worse than the national average (but better than the regional average) with regard to smoking and breastfeeding and worse than national but similar to the regional average with regard to obesity. However children are significantly more physically active in Newcastle than in the region or nationally.

Our priorities are to:

- Improve the general health of children in Newcastle e.g. through the Active Newcastle strategy and the campaigns to increase take-up of immunisations and to reduce smoking
- Reduce the level of health inequality between different parts of the city through actions on specific LAA targets such as obesity, breastfeeding and teenage conceptions

**The priorities in relation to child poverty include:**

- **Learning from the Lean East campaign and delivering the most effective elements of the campaign in the west end of the city**
- **Piloting a targeted task force in areas with the highest teenage conception rates, involving school heads, PHSE (Personal Health and Social Education) leads, school health advisers, youth services, contraception and sexual health (CASH) services, GPs and others**

**Outcomes we have already achieved:**

- The 'Teenage Kicks' Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) Outreach Team worked with 1,243 young people most at risk of becoming teenage parents and those living in 'hotspot' areas of the city in 2008/9
- Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6 (NI 56) has decreased slightly. The percentage of children and young people participating in at least 2 hours of PE and sport each week has increased from 79% in 2007/08 to 92% in 2008/09, compared to 78% nationally (2007/8).
- 24,000 children and young people have accessed free sports and leisure activities through FUSION Programme

**Case Study: Lean East**

This is a partnership of health, local authority and community organisations delivering a programme addressing the issue of overweight and obesity. It targets ten schools and their surrounding communities in the East End of Newcastle. The aim is to provide opportunities for children and families to eat healthily, have fun and take part in more exercise together. This is achieved by developing a portfolio of activities: On the Go, free fruit and milk to schools, a smoothie bar project, cooking skills in the community, family cooking, bicycle maintenance and trips, Hoops for Health (Newcastle Eagles), breastfeeding resources and training, weight management and nutrition skills training, putting the fun into exercise (Newcastle Gymnastics Association), health trainers and social marketing campaigns. One of the strengths of the Lean East partnership is that there is a wide range of services and organisations working together and so signposting and providing support is built into the programme so that diverse needs can be met.

There is a statistically significant association between participation in the Lean East Programme and behaviours associated with a reduction in obesity including increased fruit and vegetables consumption, a reduction in sweet and savoury snack consumption at home and school, increased walking, running, cycling and swimming.

## 8. Working in partnership

Tackling child poverty requires action at national, regional and local level in a range of policy areas. A key part of this strategy is to ensure that there is ownership and a commitment to tackling child poverty across agencies at every level and that agencies work together towards this goal. All partners across the Newcastle Partnership have a role to play in reducing child poverty.

In practice this means that partners will work together, share information, and good practice and signpost families to each others services. We will use the Common Assessment Framework to give families access to a range of family support provided by the agencies that are best placed to help them.

For example, the Welfare Rights Service works alongside the Revenues and Benefits Service to increase benefit take up; Newcastle Futures works with Jobcentre Plus and local training providers to access the right employment support for parents; and Children's and Adults' Services, Your Homes Newcastle, Barnardos and substance misuse and mental health services work together with parents to provide bespoke and intensive family intervention and support services.

### **Working in Partnership Case Study: Lorraine's Story**

Lorraine is a lone parent with 2 pre-school children. She left school at 16 with some low grade GCSEs in several subjects then had a number of temporary jobs and a period of unemployment before becoming pregnant at 18 years old. She has recently started working again and is delighted that her family income has increased and her children are settled with a local registered child minder. Her mental well being has improved in recent months and her confidence and personal skills have developed enormously.

Lorraine approached the Information and Resource Service (IRS) at the Sure Start Children's Centre for support in claiming benefits after having her first child. Over a period of time she was encouraged and supported to attend a baby group, training courses, exercise sessions and engage with family support services. Via the service she received support on budgeting and debt advice from an organisation called A4e. Lorraine more recently sought information about getting English and Maths qualifications and the IRS worker accessed help from Newcastle Futures (including going with her to an initial appointment). IRS worked with Newcastle Futures, Jobcentre Plus lone parent advisors and Families Information Service, to enable Lorraine to engage in accredited training, secure funding for and find good quality local childcare. Lorraine continued to use IRS to search for job vacancies and help in completing application forms for jobs and benefits.

“I found it great to be able to see someone close to home who I could ask about benefits. I didn’t have a clue about who could look after my children or where to find out about childcare. It was so useful having someone introduce me to child minders.” (Lorraine)

## **9. Governance**

The Newcastle Partnership has established a Child Poverty Steering Group to address the challenge of child poverty. The Steering Group has taken responsibility for developing this strategy. It includes the Director of the Local Strategic Partnership and representatives from Council departments responsible for children’s services, housing, regeneration, and welfare rights alongside Newcastle Futures, Health Services, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector. This has enabled us to identify opportunities for services to work together and to contribute to objectives outside their core areas of responsibility.

We have created a Child Poverty Programme Board to make sure this strategy and action plan are delivered and to monitor the outcomes. The Board is chaired by the Executive Director of Children’s Services and will report to the Economy Theme Management Board and the Children’s Trust Board who are jointly accountable for the child poverty targets in our Local Area Agreement.

The Child Poverty Steering Group will continue to meet and will support the Child Poverty Programme Board by identifying further opportunities for agencies to share information and work together.

## **10. Performance Management**

We are developing a Child Poverty Performance Management Framework. This will include a number of national indicators as well as data from the Tell Us Survey and Place Survey. We will use the framework to set milestones and goals for individuals, families and groups and to measure the contribution of different projects to reducing child poverty. We will report progress annually to the Children’s Trust Board, Economy Delivery Partnership and relevant council scrutiny committees.

We will monitor a number of indicators which will cover our six objective areas. This will help us to understand the impact of the action that we take on our target to reduce child poverty. For an interim period we will use the National Indicators below. These indicators are part of our Local Area Agreement but were not necessarily developed to measure child poverty. We will review these indicators and where appropriate we will develop alternative measures.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Interim Child Poverty Indicators</b>
<b>Headline Indicator</b>	NI 116 Proportion of children in poverty
<b>Increasing Employment</b>	NI 152 Working age people on out of work benefits NI 153 Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods*
<b>Financial Wellbeing</b>	NI 118 Take up of formal childcare by low income working families.
<b>Regenerating Communities</b>	NI 187 % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with low energy efficiency rating* (and Newcastle Warm Zone estimate of households in fuel poverty) NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation NI 158 % non decent council homes
<b>Support for Families</b>	NI111 First time offenders (aged 10-17) NI 115 Substance misuse by young people
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	NI 53 Prevalence of breast feeding at 6 -8 weeks from birth* NI 112 Under 18 Conception Rate* NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in year 6*
<b>Raising Attainment and Aspirations</b>	NI 102 Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stage 2 & 4 NI 92 Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education training or employment (NEET)*
* indicates those measures where the National Indicator would be able to be analysed locally by areas of deprivation to provide a more robust measure of child poverty	

We will consider developing appropriate measures regarding:

- Access to affordable childcare
- Take up of in work benefits, tax credits and free school meals
- Volunteering and training
- Access to / take up of affordable credit
- Financial literacy and access to money advice
- Family learning
- Raising aspiration
- Parenting support
- Dental decay
- Retention/progression in paid employment
- Access to services in areas of deprivation

## 11. Resources

The multifaceted nature of our work is reflected in the amount of resources supporting activity to reduce child poverty.

Targeting resources at the communities experiencing the highest level of deprivation is essential if we are to narrow the gaps in outcomes for children in these areas compared to the rest of the city. Funding for schools is weighted to reflect levels of deprivation and Children's Services use a funding formula weighted to reflect deprivation when they commission services.

The funds listed here are those that will have most direct impact:

- Area Based Grant Flexible Fund will support activity in deprived areas of the city
- We have been able to secure European Regional Development Funding to match Working Neighbourhoods Funding to assist delivery of the ENTERPRISE Action Plan
- We receive specific funding for schools, Children's Centres, extended services and parenting support
- Choosing Health funding is aligned with Working Neighbourhoods Fund to address key health inequalities
- We receive specific funding to provide intensive intervention to support families at risk who experience high levels of poverty. This funds services such as Changing Trax, Anti-Social Behaviour and Child Poverty Family Intervention Projects and the Youth Crime Action Plan
- We receive specific funding for parenting support including Parenting Early Intervention Projects and Parenting Experts
- Voluntary sector partners have accessed funding to support Financial Wellbeing. For example, the Citizens' Advice Bureau has funding to support lone parents with financial literacy and Five Lamps has been awarded money from the DWP to deliver low cost loans to people without access to credit

## 12. Action Plan 2010 – 2011

Although there is already a considerable amount of work going on across all of the themes of this strategy, we have identified six further projects which will address some of the gaps in our current approach.

This is a one year action plan. We will develop a further action plan in April 2011 when this strategy is reviewed.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Relevant theme of strategy</b>	<b>Lead department / agency</b>	<b>Review date</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Conduct a benefit, tax credit and free schools meals take up campaign to encourage income maximisation	2,3	Welfare Rights Service	April 2011	WNF Core Funding
Embed child poverty considerations in Area Based Regeneration Strategies	1,2,3,4,5,6	Area Based Regeneration	April 2011	Core Funding
Develop and implement the 'school gates' project	1,2,5	Jobcentre Plus / Newcastle Futures / Welfare Rights / CAB / Family Learning / YHN	April 2011	Jobcentre Plus
Identify opportunities and venues for establishing Self Organised Learning Environments	4,5	Play and Youth Service / Kids Kabin / Newcastle University	September 2010	Beacon Legacy Product
Complete a Child Poverty Needs Assessment incorporating the views and experiences of children and young people in Newcastle	1,2,3,4,5,6	Policy and Research / Participation Team	September 2010	Beacon Legacy Product
Implement Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy in schools to maximise opportunities for those most at risk of poverty	3,5,6	Integrated Services	April 2011	Disadvantage Subsidy, DCSF

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- 1 Bradshaw (2009), "The prevalence, characteristics and distribution of child poverty in the North East Region". University of York
- 2 Source School Census, January 2007
- 3 GP registrations data, Newcastle PCT, 2006
- 4 The Government's main measure of child poverty is children living in relatively poor households – defined as those 'below 60 per cent of contemporary median equivalised household income'. An interim measure of children living in households in receipt of out of work benefits has been used to calculate the figures provided here.
- 5 Drawn from Bradshaw (2009) and Child Poverty in Newcastle: Evidence Summary (2008) unless otherwise stated.
- 6 Department for Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Income: an analysis of income distribution 1994/5 – 2006/07, National Statistics, 2008
- 7 Source: DWP, April 2007
- 8 DCSF, DWP and HMT (2008) "Ending child poverty: everybody's business"
- 9 2001 Census
- <sup>10</sup> Northumbria Police, November 2009
- 11 Child Benefit Statistics, HMRC 2005
- 12 Department for Work and Pensions, Circumstances of Persistently Poor Families with Children: Evidence from the Families and Children Study (FACS), 2008
- 13 Bradshaw (2009), "The prevalence, characteristics and distribution of child poverty in the North East region". University of York
- 14 DCSF, DWP and HMT (2008) "Ending child poverty: everybody's business"
- 15 Other priority groups for Newcastle Futures include members of the BME community and those receiving incapacity benefits.
- 16 Promoting Financial Inclusion, HM Treasury 2004
- 17 Newcastle Joint Strategic Needs Assessment