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CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011-2020

INCLUDING

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

AND

ACTION PLAN 2011-2012

HERTFORDSHIRE CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011 - 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The life chances and outcomes for the majority of Hertfordshire's quarter of a million children are good. The county is known for its high quality of life and children and young people benefit from a secure path into adulthood. Hertfordshire has the second highest proportion of young people in education, employment or training in the country.

However, despite this high quality environment, there is still a significant gap between the outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and others in the county. The narrowing of this gap is a key priority.

Child Poverty is defined by the Government (National Indicator 116) as "those families with an income below 60% of median income". According to this definition approximately 13% of children in Hertfordshire – nearly 32,500 children, were considered to be living in relative poverty in 2008.

There are clear links between poverty and outcomes, whether educational, health, or in terms of employment prospects. The interrelationship of these factors is highlighted in The Frank Field Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances (Cabinet Office, 2010) and the Allen Report on Early Intervention (Cabinet Office 2011). The aim to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty and the disadvantages associated with it, are therefore of paramount importance.

The Child Poverty Strategy is not intended to replace existing strategies with a whole set of additional actions, but to recognise that child poverty is everyone's business. Actions to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty are already integral to a number of key Hertfordshire strategies. The Child Poverty strategy draws these together and seeks to ensure that other more specific strategies also incorporate an active commitment to reducing child poverty and mitigating its effects.

Hertfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy, "Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future" includes the long-term objective to eradicate child poverty in the county.

Hertfordshire Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 ("Hertfordshire: County of Opportunity") includes the aim to "mitigate the impact of poverty on outcomes for children".

The Children and Young People's Plan focuses on two key themes: Safeguarding Children and Young People and *Narrowing the Gap between children from the poorest families and all children*. Within this, Priority 10 has the specific objective that "Children and young people thrive in spite of family poverty". Other priorities, in particular priorities 5, 6, 7 and 9, have a direct impact on reducing child poverty and its effects.

Nationally, the Child Poverty Act 2010 places duties on all Local Authorities to take steps to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and to:

- **Co-operate with partner authorities and agencies**
- **Prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment**
- **Publish a joint child poverty strategy for the local area**

What follows is Hertfordshire's response to the national statutory requirement and local commitment to tackling child poverty.

Hertfordshire's Child Poverty Strategy covers short, medium and long term goals.

In the immediate short-term (2011-2012) the strategy is not intended to replace or supersede the objectives within Hertfordshire's Children and Young People's Plan. The following Action Plan builds on the actions in the CYPP. In view of the effects of the recession, and public sector cuts, the aim in the first year would be for the percentage of children in poverty not to rise above 13%.

In the medium term, (2012-2014), the intention is to:

- **Reduce child poverty from 13% to 10%**
- **Take into consideration Government guidance following national consultation**
- **Clarify priorities identified through needs assessment**
- **Engage with local communities identified as priorities through needs assessment**
- **Agree further actions based on the above (including a target reduction in child poverty for 2020)**

In the long term (2014-2020) the intention is to:

- **Monitor and review the impact of the above actions**
- **Review the needs assessment data in the light of current economic circumstances**
- **Set further goals and actions based on the above**

A strategy alone can achieve nothing without the full and explicit commitment of all key partner agencies and stakeholders, including local communities. The action plan therefore includes a general objective of securing the commitment of these partners and communities, with whom the Local Authority will co-operate in order to achieve the other objectives within the strategy. Securing a shared vision and commitment with a clear rationale for tackling child poverty is essential. The strategy recognises and builds on the actions already being taken by partner agencies to reduce child poverty that are integral to their existing and developing work programme priorities.

The Strategy also tackles the reduction of child poverty from a 'Think Family' perspective, recognising that children grow up within families and that little can be achieved for children's life chances without addressing the needs of the whole family.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Strategy's Action Plan reflects the multi-faceted nature, causes and effects of poverty and is therefore divided into four key objectives, based on the four "building blocks" set out in the Government's vision for eradicating child poverty. These are:

Building block 1: employment and adult skills

- supporting families to increase their income by ensuring that parents can enter, stay and progress in work
- promoting opportunities for adults to acquire skills necessary to enter, stay and progress in work and increase their income

Building block 2: financial support

- supporting families to increase take up of benefits and tax credits
- supporting families to acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable them to access fair financial services and to avoid punitive debt recovery action

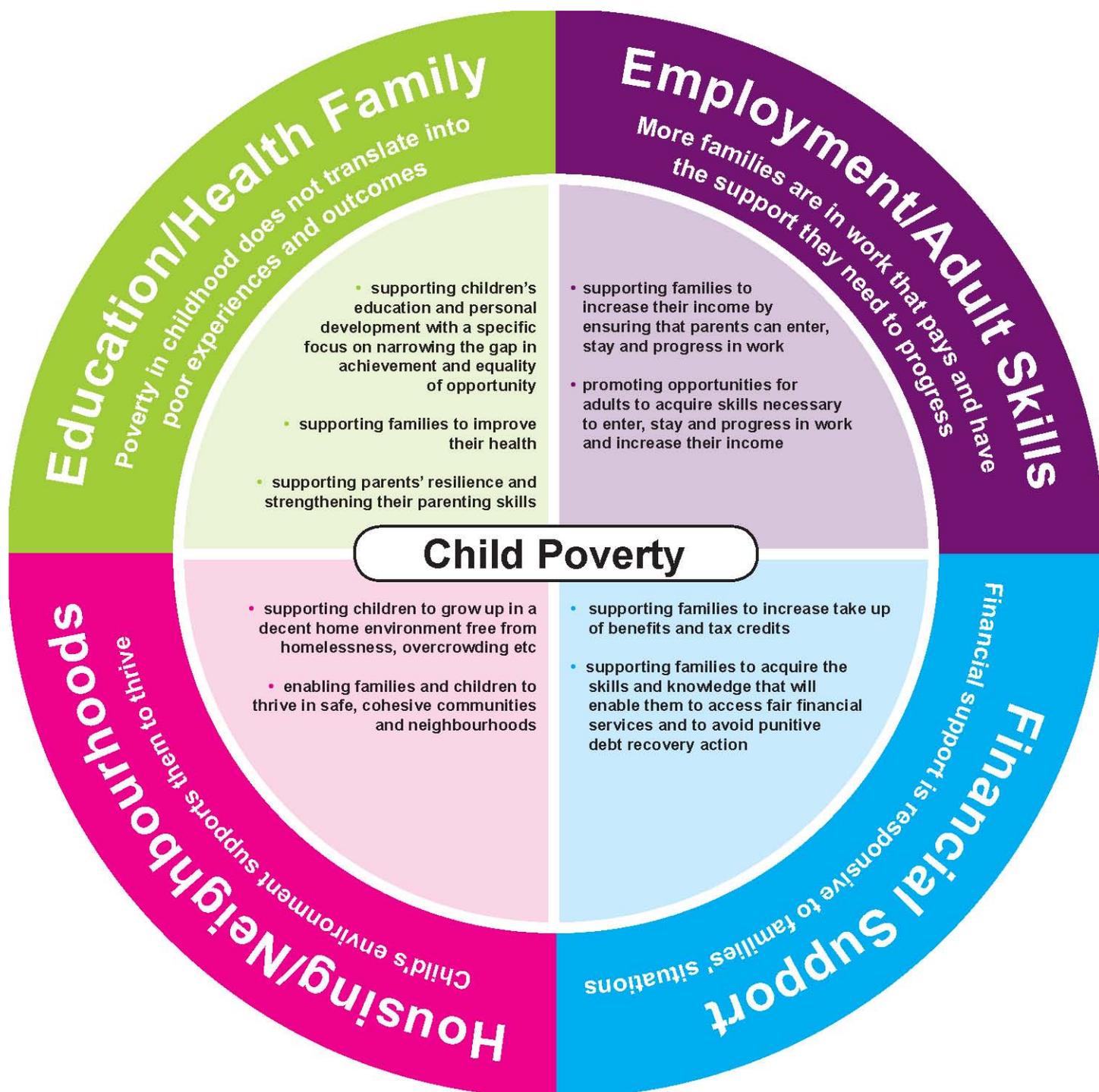
Building block 3: services for children, young people and families, in particular education, health and family support

- supporting children's education and personal development with a specific focus on narrowing the gap in achievement and equality of opportunity
- supporting families to improve their health
- supporting parents' resilience and strengthening their parenting skills

Building block 4: housing and neighbourhoods

- supporting children to grow up in a decent home environment free from homelessness, overcrowding etc.
- enabling families and children to thrive in safe, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods

The four building blocks are illustrated in the figure below.



3. BASELINE NEEDS ANALYSIS – SUMMARY

(For Child Poverty Needs Assessment with full needs analysis data see appendix 1)

Overall, Hertfordshire is one of the least deprived areas in England. In August 2008, 32,415 children (including 28,965 under-16s) were identified as living in poverty (13.1% and 13.7% respectively). This rate is around the same as in previous years, and is consistently lower than the average across England (20.9%). However, there is some evidence that child poverty may have increased since 2008: the number of pupils eligible for free school meals increased between 2009 and 2010.

The general prosperity of the county is not evenly spread, and there are a number of pockets of deprivation. Broxbourne and Stevenage have the highest levels of child poverty in the county (17.6% and 18.6%). In eleven out of 190 wards, more than a quarter of under-16s were in poverty, with Waltham Cross having the highest rate (34.2%). Due to its larger overall population, however, Dacorum has the largest number of children living in poverty (4330).

The available data indicates that over half of children living in lone-parent families are in poverty, compared to less than 5% of children in couple families. This disparity is much the same across England.

Levels of adult employment in Hertfordshire are generally high, although data indicates that almost a fifth of children in Broxbourne and Stevenage are living in 'out of work' families, compared to less than 10% in East Hertfordshire, St Albans and Three Rivers. These figures are consistent over a number of years.

Outcomes for children and young people in Hertfordshire are generally good and often improving, but this is not the case for all. Child poverty and overall deprivation is often closely linked with a number of important indicators of life chances:

- Significant gaps in the educational achievement of children from poorer families and their peers are already apparent at the Early Years Foundation Stage, and these widen as children progress through education: In 2010, 31% of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved the benchmark of 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths, compared to 66% of other pupils. This gap of 35% is wider than the national average.
- The proportion of young people in the poorest areas who are not in education, employment or training (currently around 9%) is around double the rate in Hertfordshire overall. Progression to higher education is also less common among young people from poorer families.
- Breastfeeding tends to be slightly less common in more deprived areas, while levels of childhood obesity tend to be higher.
- Rates of teenage pregnancy are generally higher in more deprived areas.

In surveys around a quarter of young people say that money is a significant worry for them, although it is difficult to say whether this is more common among children from poorer families.

Surveys of the general population indicate that the quality of life in poorer areas is often worse than in other parts of Hertfordshire. For example, people in the most deprived areas are less likely to say that they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, or that people from different backgrounds get on well together. People

in these areas are also much more likely to report problems with crime and anti-social behaviour.

4. PRIORITIES BASED ON NEEDS ANALYSIS

There are a number of areas within Hertfordshire with higher levels of poverty among families with dependent children. These are highlighted on pages 6 and 7 of the Needs Assessment. In view of this and the above summary, the following measures should focus on those areas: (though not exclusively, as there are also pockets elsewhere)

- Measures to increase employment prospects for young people and families in pockets of deprivation, particularly in Broxbourne, Stevenage and Waltham Cross (including childcare sufficiency, links between Jobcentre Plus, children's centres and other sources of information and advice)
- Measures to increase the availability of financial information and advice in the above identified areas.
- A focus on improving the educational achievement of children at key stages 2 and 4 in identified areas of deprivation.
- A focus on healthy eating, breastfeeding and physical activity, particularly in deprived areas such as Broxbourne, Stevenage and Watford, in order to reduce levels of obesity.
- A continued focus on measures aimed at reducing levels of teenage pregnancy in areas where rates are higher.

5. LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

The Child Poverty Strategy is closely linked to:

- **Hertfordshire 2010: A Brighter Future” (Sustainable Community Strategy**
- **Hertfordshire Corporate Plan 2009-2012 (“Hertfordshire: County of Opportunity”)**
- **Children and Young People’s Plan 2010-2011**
- **Hertfordshire’s Economic Development Strategy**
- **NEET Strategy**
- **District and Borough Council Homelessness Strategies**
- **Hertfordshire Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy**
- **Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan**
- **Community Safety Plan**

6. KEY PARTNER AGENCIES

The following is not an exhaustive list. **Child poverty is everyone’s business and all agencies and organisations, statutory and otherwise, have a part to play in reducing child poverty and mitigating its effects.**

**Money Advice Unit
Jobcentre Plus
Family Information Service
Think Family Project Board
District and Borough Councils
Registered Social Landlords**

**HCC Children, Schools and Families (CSF)
HCC Adult Care Services (ACS)
Hertfordshire Constabulary
Community Safety Unit
Hertfordshire Community Health Service
Voluntary and Community Sector Service Provider Organisations
Private Sector Service Provider Organisations
Children's Centre Partners
Schools**

7. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW, DELIVERY, MONITORING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strategic countywide, high-level ownership of the strategy will reside initially with Herts Forward, which is Hertfordshire's Local Strategic Partnership. The CSF Childhood Support Services Team will have the strategic overview.

Delivery of the actions will need to be driven at a local level and this will be through local Children's Centres and Local School Partnerships.

At a countywide level, monitoring will be within the framework of the CYPP progress monitoring during 2011-2012. A methodology for monitoring the actions and their impact, in consultation with local communities, will need to be established at a *local* level. This is an action within the preliminary objective of the strategy.

HERTFORDSHIRE CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011 – 2020 ACTION PLAN 2011-2012

PRELIMINARY OBJECTIVE To ensure Hertfordshire's Child Poverty Strategy is developed and delivered in co-operation with all key partner authorities and agencies and in consultation with local communities (CYPP 10.4)			
Action	Timescale	Lead Agency	Measures of success
Report to Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership Executive	8 th March 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	HCTP endorsement of the Child Poverty Strategy
Child Poverty Strategy Conference	10 th March 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	Participation from strategic and operational managers from all key partner authorities and agencies
Consult with all partner agencies on Strategy via online survey and conference	15 th April 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	Participation in survey from all key authorities and agencies
Consult with local communities about their needs through Children's Centres	31 st March 2012	CSF Childhood Support Services	Evidence of consultation from all Districts in the county.
Consult with Strategic Partnerships Unit	31 st March 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	Child Poverty Strategy incorporated in work on refresh of Herts Forward (Local Strategic Partnership) Sustainable Community Strategy
Develop methodology for ongoing monitoring of delivery and impact	30 th September 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	Local monitoring and community consultation mechanisms in place within Local Partnerships
Agree medium and long term Action Plan following consultation process	31 st December 2011	CSF Childhood Support Services	Action plan agreed by all partners

OBJECTIVE 1: To promote employment and training and support adults in gaining the skills to obtain employment			
Action	Timescale	Lead Agency	Measures of success
<p>Children's Centres and other outreach arrangements deliver multi-agency approaches to help families in poverty become more employable, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobcentre Plus • Family learning opportunities (HAFLS) • Childcare Sufficiency • Family Information service / Family Services Directory <p>(CYPP 10.2)</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Centres • CSF Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS) • Jobcentre Plus • Childhood Support Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monthly monitoring returns from Jobcentre Plus reveal increase in employment of families in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment • Regular monitoring returns from HAFLS reveals increase in numbers of learners on Individual Learning Record, as reported to SFA (Skills Funding Agency) in wards within priority areas identified within Needs Assessment • Increase in uptake of childcare places in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment • Increase in number of requests for information in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment
<p>Establish and implement strategy for increasing the volume and range of apprenticeship opportunities available. (CYPP 9.3)</p>	March 2012	CSF Services for Young People	Data reveals an increase in uptake of apprenticeships in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment
<p>Continue to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) through NEET strategy and tailored packages of learning and support particularly for vulnerable groups. (CYPP 9.4) Ensure that all young people, particularly in identified disadvantaged areas, are able to access relevant advice and appropriate work experience to enable them to make informed career choices (CYPP9.2)</p>	March 2012	CSF Services for Young People	Reduction in the number of young people NEET in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment

OBJECTIVE 2: To ensure that information and help is available to enable families receive the financial support they need			
Action	Timescale	Lead Agency	Measures of success
<p>Ensure that those in poverty receive the financial support they are entitled to, by improving access to money advice and information services (CYPP 10.3) through work with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAB • Children's Centres • Family Information service / Family Services Directory 	Ongoing	Money Advice Unit	Performance Data from MIU demonstrates improved take up of financial advice in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment
Build financial capacity among families to support informed decision making and avoidance of debt	March 2012	CSF Childhood Support Services	Increase in number of requests for information in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment

OBJECTIVE 3: To ensure that services for children, young people and families, in particular education, health and family support reach those families at risk of being adversely affected by poverty			
Action	Timescale	Lead Agency	Measures of success
<p>Implement Think Family / Family Intervention Projects and embed lessons learned from this work to shape emerging family-based early intervention arrangements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Family ("Scaffold") Teams • Police C2 East Herts FIP • South Oxhey FIP • District-based Housing Challenge FIP workers • Think Family Parenting Practitioners 	31 st July 2011	Think Family Project Board	<p>Sustainability plan agreed for Think Family / Family Intervention / parenting support initiatives across the county</p> <p>Decrease in number of Children Centre communities with rates of Children in Need referrals above 10 per 1000 population of children under 5, particularly in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment.</p>
<p>Enhance parenting support to strengthen family relationships and the home environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning of evidence-based parenting programmes, targeting parents in communities with high rates of Children In Need referrals (CYPP 10.1) 	Sept 2011	Childhood Support Services	Increase in % take up of places on evidence-based parenting programmes
<p>Continue to promote children's centres in local communities to increase the numbers of children registered with their local children's centre (Corporate Plan) and Improve support and information to parents and carers in children's centres,</p>	Ongoing	Childhood Support Services	<p>50% of families in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment on low income registered with their local children's centre</p> <p>80% of the 40 Children's centre communities with highest levels of disadvantage have a</p>

<p>in particular those areas identified as being affected by poverty (CYPP 6.4)</p>			<p>graduate leader in place.</p>
<p>Promote awareness amongst parents, staff and strategic partnerships of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating, breastfeeding and physical activity, focusing on parts of the county with the highest levels of obesity, such as Broxbourne, Stevenage and Watford. (CYPP 5.1;5.2;5.3;5. 4)</p>	<p>31st March 2012</p>	<p>Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust</p>	<p>Reduction in % of children who are overweight and obese (statistics from measurement of children in Reception and Year 6) in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment</p> <p>Increased breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks especially in Needs Assessment priority areas</p> <p>Increased percentage of children walking or cycling to school and participating in PE and sport, especially in Needs Assessment priority areas</p>
<p>Support schools and early years settings to offer effective support to accelerate the progress of specific underachieving groups and pupils, particularly those in low income families and priority areas affected by poverty (CYPP 7.1)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>CSF Standards and School Effectiveness</p>	<p>Improvement in attainment levels at Early Years Foundation Stage and key stages 2 and 4, particularly in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment</p>
<p>Provide a framework to support schools in sustainable work with vulnerable groups including extended services, parent support workers and one to one tuition (CYPP 7.2)</p>	<p>31st March 2012</p>	<p>CSF Childhood Support Services</p>	<p>Framework established to provide support to schools to sustain extended services, including parent support, particularly to disadvantaged families.</p>
<p>Strengthen support and preparation for the world of work, for underachieving pupils aged 14-19, particularly those from 20% most disadvantaged super-output</p>	<p>31st March 2012</p>	<p>CSF Head of 14-19 Strategy</p>	<p>Reduction in percentage of young people aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)for 6 months or longer</p>

areas, and including children looked after, specific disadvantaged BME groups (CYPP 7.3)			
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OBJECTIVE 4: To enable families and children to thrive in decent environments and safe, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods			
Action	Timescale	Lead Agency	Measures of success
Improve access to housing advice and support for vulnerable families and those that are / under threat of homelessness.	Ongoing	District and Borough Councils	Information collected in District and Borough Council Homelessness Strategies reveals that fewer families are homeless or under threat of homelessness in priority areas identified within Needs Assessment Reduction in numbers of households living in temporary accommodation.
Ensure that actions in other strategies that relate to improving the environment (e.g. Community Protection Unit action plans, Local Transport Plan, Community Cohesion Strategy, Play Strategy) make an explicit link to the impact on reducing Child Poverty and mitigating the effects.	Ongoing	CSF Childhood Support Services	Other strategies/partnership action plans recognise impact on and effects of child poverty even when this is not identified as the primary objective
Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities Proactively change access, services, and spaces in local communities so that the environment positively impacts on children's development.	Ongoing	District and County teams. (planning, road safety and environment)	Professionals making decisions about changes to the built or natural environment, actively engage with local communities (particularly in areas of child deprivation).