

# LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Halton ■ Knowsley ■ Liverpool ■ Sefton ■ St. Helens ■ Wirral



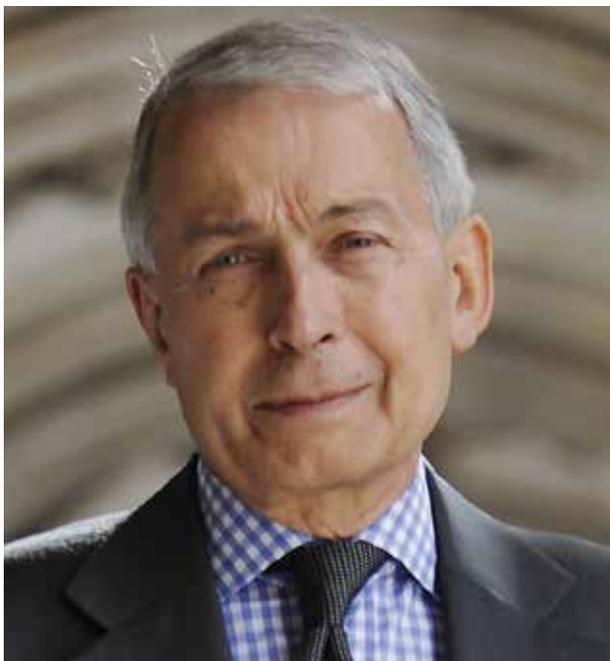
**Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy**  
2015-2018



# Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	8
The role of the Commission	13
Priorities for the Liverpool City Region for 2015-18	15
• Fair employment	
• Birth and school readiness	
• School interventions, Pupil Premium and NEETs	
• Health inequalities and lifestyle choices	
• Transport and accessibility	
Delivery of the strategy	28
Annex 1	32
Our evidence base	
Annex 2	36
What have we achieved?	
Annex 3	45
Policy background	

# Foreword



## **Frank Field**

MP for Birkenhead

Chair of the Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission

The Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy doesn't set out to fight the battles of yesteryear. It is motivated by our mission to influence the life chances of poor children in Merseyside so they can trump their background and be afforded the same opportunities in life enjoyed by their richer peers.

Central to this mission is the goal of ensuring every child in the Liverpool City Region arrives ready for their first day at school. It is by this stage in a child's life, following the foundation years from birth to age five, that all the evidence suggests their future can safely be predicted.

If a child begins their reception year not knowing their own name unless it is shouted at them, using a pencil to stab rather than draw, or failing to respond to the word 'stop', teachers know they are less likely to go on to achieve their full potential.

So a key priority for the Commission between now and 2018 is to identify how many and which children from poor backgrounds in the Liverpool City Region turn up most ready to begin their school life, what are the interventions that have steered them so effectively to this position, and how can we apply these lessons across the City Region to ensure every child has the best start in life.

It is important that we strive to ensure families are able to enjoy a standard of living that provides children with the right environment to flourish in school and increase their life chances. How to improve the pay and working conditions of low-paid working families will be a key focus for us.

There are seven further questions we will address over the next three years:

- What is the best use of Children's Centre funding to achieve this school readiness target?
- What immediate steps are required to ensure no child goes hungry?
- How can Pupil Premium funding be secured in full, and most effectively used by the City Region's schools to produce the best outcomes for poor children?
- How do we ensure every child leaving school is guaranteed an opportunity, which they are ready to grasp, in the world of work or further and higher education?
- How can we develop a second phase of the 'welfare-to-work' agenda, and bring fairness to household bills, so that all parents are able not only to find work but to earn a sufficient income that provides a decent minimum standard of living?
- What steps can we take to close the disparities in health between poor children and their richer peers?
- What further action is required to provide all children, young people and their parents with access to affordable local transport?

Such an approach will enable the Commission to address not only the symptoms, but the drivers and compounders of poverty in the Liverpool City Region.

Key to making this approach a success will be for the Commission to declare and encourage best practice across the City Region, and to shape the policies of local authorities, City Region bodies, and the Government so they are geared towards improving the life chances of poor children in the City Region.

We will also seek to build on our campaigns since 2011 for a substantial and sustainable Living Wage, a fairer deal on energy bills for households reliant on a prepayment meter, implementing a minimum unit price on cheap alcohol, making local transport more affordable, maximising immunisation rates for all babies, and combating smoking during pregnancy.

New questions of course will emerge over the next three years and the Commission will need to adapt its work to reflect the changing policy landscape.

But we have taken steps to reorganise the way the Commission works so it is ready to meet these challenges.

Each member of the Commission will be responsible for progressing and reporting back on each of our main objectives.

We aim to hold four meetings per year, measuring progress on each of our priorities twice a year, so we can report annually to the Liverpool City Region Leaders and Mayor.

And we invite all those organisations and individuals across the City Region with an interest in advancing our work to put themselves forward.

# Executive Summary

This Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy sets out proposals for achieving a long-term shared vision:

**“Working together as City Region Partners we will reduce child and family poverty and maximise opportunities for children and young people in their life chances.**

**We will achieve this through a dual strategy which ensures an ever growing proportion of children and young people are ready for school and life whilst maximising family resources.”**

There has been good progress made in reducing levels of child poverty across the Liverpool City Region since the first Liverpool City Region Strategy was published in 2011, and the strategic approach adopted has produced some positive results. However, whilst the number of children and young people living in

poverty in the Liverpool City Region has fallen to around 82,205, this still represents a quarter of all children. The national median income level has also fallen over the same period which means many children will no longer be classified as living in poverty, despite there being no material improvement to their lives. The reality is that families are increasingly struggling to get by due to higher costs of living, cuts to welfare, and slow growth in wages.

Restoring the national economy is key to improving the lives of the poorest in society. The Liverpool City Region economy has emerged from the recession with a renewed impetus and the City Region's Growth Deal with Central Government presents a unique opportunity to achieve sustained economic growth and increase the number of good quality jobs across the area. But it is essential that the benefits of growth are dispersed to all residents across the City Region and that jobs created pay fair wages to enable decent minimum standards of living.

## Child poverty in the Liverpool City Region: key facts

- 82,205 children in the Liverpool City Region live in poverty (25.6% of all children).
- Child poverty levels in the Liverpool City Region are higher than England as a whole (18.6%), and are highest compared to other northern City Regions.
- The number and proportion of children living in poverty in the Liverpool City Region has been falling since 2008 (27.6%), but is influenced by a fall in national median income over the same period.
- Three out of four children living in poverty in the Liverpool City Region live in a single parent family (76%).
- A third of children living in poverty in the Liverpool City Region (26,590) are aged under 5.

Negotiations between the Liverpool City Region and central government to devolve powers are ongoing at the time of writing and present a powerful opportunity to boost economic growth in the region and change the way services are delivered to improve the lives of families. This strategy and its recommendations will remain responsive to newly devolved powers and will be reshaped wherever the context is changed by devolution.

Tackling poverty and improving life chances is not easy and this strategy proposes a number of ways that we can boost existing efforts by working together on five priorities. The strategy asks that organisations consider their approach in a number of areas and sets out recommendations under five priority areas.

### Aim 1

Ensure the best possible start in life for children & young people to improve their life chances

### Aim 2

Maximise family income

Birth and school readiness

School interventions, Pupil Premium and NEETs

Health inequalities and lifestyle choices

Fair employment

Transport and accessibility



To enable delivery of this strategy's recommendations, a range of actions are requested of various stakeholders.

Individual/Group	Actions requested
<b>Employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a Living Wage, where practical and affordable.</li> <li>• Implement fair employment practices recommended by the City Region Employment and Skills Board.</li> <li>• Recognise that parents need flexible family friendly working policies to meet the needs of their children.</li> </ul>
<b>Early years providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on how Pupil Premium is being used to benefit disadvantaged children in early years settings and adopt the most effective practices.</li> <li>• Ensure childcare is available and sufficiently flexible to enable parents to work.</li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools to confirm appointment of Lead Governor for child poverty and life chances.</li> <li>• Report on the impact of universal infant free school meals on take-up, diet and health outcomes of children, as well as Pupil Premium uptake.</li> <li>• Capture and implement effective practices from City Region projects to raise attainment of disadvantaged pupils.</li> <li>• Develop innovative approaches and incentives for using Pupil Premium funding to increase the transport options available to pupils from disadvantaged families.</li> </ul>
<b>Local authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an online guide that can help parents to determine the type of financial support for childcare that best suits their own situation, and explore the full range of local childcare options.</li> <li>• Ensure that parents of two year-olds taking up funded early education receive targeted employment and skills support, and that wrap-around childcare is available to those parents.</li> <li>• In response to the Childcare Bill, consider where and how childcare markets can be best supported to ensure all parents of eligible 3-4 year olds are able to access 30 hours per week of free childcare.</li> <li>• Share different approaches for delivering foundation years services, and explore new operating models with Children's Centres.</li> <li>• Share evidence of effective strategic approaches to parenting support.</li> <li>• Utilise the Department for Education's free school meal eligibility checking system tool to automatically register children of eligible parents for free school meals on an 'opt-out' basis.</li> <li>• Use evidence from the Liverpool Play Partnership's 'Play Healthy' scheme to explore opportunities for extending holiday food provision, ensuring that children from low income families are adequately fed during school holidays.</li> </ul>

Individual/Group	Actions requested
<b>Jobcentre Plus and employment support providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that parents of two year-olds taking up funded early education receive targeted employment and skills support.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the six GP practices that are nearest to achieving 100% immunisation history of children at ages 2 and 5, establish what they are doing to achieve this and share with all GP practices.</li> <li>• Continue to develop a Liverpool City Region smokefree pilot for pregnant women that draws on local insight.</li> <li>• Develop young advocates through work with children and young people aged 5-19 to stop new smokers and promote smoke free as the norm.</li> <li>• Scope and establish high level strategic activity to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children across the Liverpool City Region.</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully implement and promote extension of the 'My ticket' scheme to all young people under-19.</li> <li>• Introduce further bus Quality Partnership Schemes on key routes to create greater access to employment opportunities in disadvantaged areas.</li> <li>• Support City Region bids for new funding opportunities to build on successful Local Sustainable Transport schemes.</li> <li>• Develop a Cycling Delivery Plan to encourage cycling in disadvantaged areas, and promote sustainable transport options within disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Police</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with young people through the Travel Safe Education Task and Finish Group to limit the dangers and adverse consequences of anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>Central Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin costing the extension of free school meal provision during school holidays.</li> </ul>

# Introduction

Growing up in poverty can affect every area of a child's development and future life chances. We know that the most disadvantaged children are less likely to achieve their academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security. They are more likely to suffer from poor health, live in poor quality housing and unsafe environments. Poverty has blighted the lives of individuals, families and entire communities for generations and is an issue that could undermine the wider social and economic policies across the Liverpool City Region. Growing up in poverty can mean being cold, going hungry, not being able to join in activities with friends, and not being able to afford even one week's holiday.<sup>1</sup>

The perpetuating cycle of disadvantage damages society as a whole. It undermines efforts to achieve sustainable and cohesive communities and has significant resource implications for public services. Improving a child's life chances can have a major positive

impact on growth of the economy as a whole. But worsening child outcomes today could lead to a weaker economy in the future, as those children grow up without the necessary skills to contribute to a strong economy.<sup>2</sup>

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission have predicted that even in very optimistic scenarios, more than one in five children (21%) will be in absolute poverty in 2020, compared to 17% in 2010/11.<sup>3</sup> This would mark the end of the first decade since records began where there has been no reduction in the rate of absolute poverty. They predict that there will also be one in five children (20%) in relative poverty in 2020, compared to 17% in 2010/11.<sup>4</sup>

Child poverty is not inevitable and through this strategy we will continue to use our collective strength to stimulate political will, influence local and national government to tackle child poverty and support individuals and families to turn their lives around and realise their full potential.

## What is child poverty?

There is no single definition of child poverty, but the Child Poverty Act 2010 set out four common income related measures of child poverty:

- **Absolute** child poverty (proportion of children living in households with net income below 60% of the 2010/11 median household income).
- **Relative** child poverty (proportion of children living in households with net income below 60% of current median household income).
- **Combined low income and material deprivation** (proportion of children living in households with an income below 70% of current median household income who also experience material deprivation).
- **Persistent child poverty** (proportion of children experiencing relative poverty for at least three years out of four).

<sup>1</sup> Child Poverty Action Group, (2014). <http://www.cpag.org.uk/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

<sup>2</sup> Save the Children, (2014). A fair start for every child - why we must act now to tackle child poverty in the UK.

<sup>3</sup> Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014). Understanding the parental employment scenarios necessary to meet the 2020 Child Poverty Targets.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing that the Government have proposed to abolish their duty to meet child poverty targets, and instead report on the number of children living in workless families, and educational attainment.

## Why we need a strategy

In 2010 Liverpool City Region leaders agreed to adopt a City Region wide approach to tackling issues related to child and family poverty that would build on strong local and City Region partnerships. Councils have a statutory duty to complete a local child poverty strategy and named local partners have a duty to cooperate to reduce child poverty.<sup>5</sup>

## Liverpool City Region

The Liverpool City Region is home to approximately 1.5 million people, which includes around 347,000 children and young people living in 180,000 families. The City Region consists of the boroughs of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and Wirral.

There are 82,205 children living in poverty in the Liverpool City Region which represents 25.6% of all children. This is the highest of all other northern City Region areas and much higher than the national figure of 18.6%, serving to highlight the scale of the challenge which we face in the Liverpool City Region. However the national median income level has also fallen from £478 per week in 2008/09, to £453 per week in 2012/13<sup>6</sup>. Which means many children will no longer be classified as living in poverty, despite there being no material improvement to their lives.

Current levels of poverty in the Liverpool City Region are not new. There have been significant levels of income inequality for many years, linked to economic stagnation in the north of England, and the growing economic growth imbalance between the South East and the rest of the country. It is not enough to tackle child poverty without attempting to address these wider issues of inequality. However the

higher scale of child poverty in the Liverpool City Region compared to other northern City Regions shows that the north-south divide alone cannot be used to excuse high levels of poverty and there are other structural economic and social factors that must be addressed.

The Liverpool City Region like other northern City Regions has been badly affected by the economic downturn with increased levels of unemployment and low wage growth. The Government's austerity programme has served to exacerbate the effects on the poorest families in the City Region through reductions to benefits and tax credits and imposition of benefit sanctions, set against the ongoing 'squeeze' on the cost of living. However, evidence suggests that the Liverpool City Region has begun to take steps towards a strong recovery. Since the depths of the recession an additional 31,000 private sector jobs have been created locally, whilst at the same time unemployment did not reach the levels that many thought might have been the case. The Liverpool City Region is now the second best performing sub-national economy amongst peers based on economic growth between 2011 and 2012 and the best performing in the five years up to 2012. It is important to ensure that economic growth produces benefits for all residents in the Liverpool City Region, and specifically helps poorer residents to improve their own economic positions.

<sup>5</sup> Local authorities, Police, Youth Offending Teams, Probation Service, Transport Authorities, National Health Service, and Jobcentre Plus. At the time of writing, the Welfare Reform and Work Bill would abolish this duty.

<sup>6</sup> DWP (2014). Households Below Average Income.

## Our approach

In 2011 the first Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy for the Liverpool City Region was launched. The vision and aims that we set out in that strategy continue to represent our long-term approach up to 2020, which was the national deadline to eradicate child poverty. In that document we set out a commitment to review our strategy every three years to make sure we remain focussed on the most current and pressing needs within the City Region. This strategy sets out our refreshed approach and sets out our shorter-term priorities for the next three years (2015-18).

The original strategy set out a full case for bringing about change including comprehensive evidence and rationale for our long-term approach up to 2020.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the strategy a number of innovative practices to address child and family poverty have been initiated across the Liverpool City Region. The following case studies highlight some successes.

### Case study

#### Getting by? A year in the life of 30 working families in Liverpool

Liverpool's Action Group on Fairness and Tackling Poverty commissioned a groundbreaking piece of research ('Getting By') to track the lives of 30 working families in Liverpool over the course of a year, and chart the depth of poverty amongst working families. Through weekly spending diaries tracking their income and expenses, and regular in-depth interviews, it reveals the challenges faced in their daily lives during 2014. The report has provided valuable insight into the experiences of working families and the struggles they face and has been used as a key piece of evidence in developing this strategy.

### Case study

#### Monitoring use of Pupil Premium to help the most disadvantaged pupils

The Liverpool City Region has led the way in raising the profile of how schools have spent their Pupil Premium funding. Surveys conducted showed that there has been a wide range of choices made by schools, supporting the notion that funding is best used to meet local needs. Many schools used funding for additional staffing to provide smaller group sizes, and specific successes identified have included tracking and analysis of pupil progress to enable effective targeting of Pupil Premium spending. Findings were fed back to schools to offer ideas for new ways to use the funding that may not have previously been considered. Following the Liverpool City Region's lead, Ofsted has subsequently placed a greater emphasis on schools' performance in driving up standards among children who are eligible for Pupil Premium funding by holding schools accountable for the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils.

<sup>7</sup> Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission (2011). <http://www.frankfield.com/campaigns/liverpool-city-region.aspx>

## Case study

### School readiness assessment

Primary schools were requested to randomly select pupils in their Reception class, and identify their achievement against six criteria of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The findings supported the previously reported trend that fewer children were prepared for their first day at school. The overall results were communicated to the Department for Education to assist with their development of a school readiness indicator, ensuring that the Liverpool City Region voice is at the forefront of school readiness policy development.

In response to this valuable work, local authorities in the City Region have adopted different approaches to increasing school readiness of children. For example Liverpool City Council developed a best practice 'School Readiness Model' based on the renowned programme devised by Caroline Webster-Stratton which was rolled out across all Children's Centres in Liverpool. Schools in Wirral have worked closely with the University of Cambridge to develop and pilot a set of 12 measures to assess readiness for school, which will eventually be rolled out across all Wirral schools.

## Case study

### Support for minimum unit pricing (MUP) of alcohol

In response to the Commission's recommendation to introduce a 50p minimum unit price and bylaw to reduce alcohol related harm, the City Region Cabinet accepted a recommendation led by Champs for a minimum unit price of alcohol and co-ordinated action to promote such a change. Following the Government's u-turn in 2013 on a commitment to introduce MUP, work was reinvigorated to facilitate introduction of a bylaw by local authorities. A working group was established to update legal advice and draft a bylaw, and work on a communications plan for those local areas looking to implement a bylaw.



# Our vision, aims and priorities

We maintain our long-term vision up to 2020 that:

**“Working together as City Region Partners we will reduce child and family poverty and maximise opportunities for children and young people in their life chances.**

**We will achieve this through a dual strategy which ensures an ever growing proportion of children and young people are ready for school and life whilst maximising family resources.”**

In the original strategy we identified two overarching long-term aims to deliver our vision: (1) Ensure the best possible start in life for children and young people to improve their life chances; and (2) Maximise family income.

Based on detail from the Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Needs assessment, changes to the national and local policy landscape, and further insight provided by City Region partners such as Liverpool’s ‘Getting By’ report, the Commission has decided to focus on the following five priority areas over the next three years.

Chapter 3 looks at each of these priorities in more detail, and sets out what activities we will undertake to add value to local work. It is expected that local authorities will continue to produce their own local delivery plans based on the overarching framework that we set out here and the Commission will continue to monitor local progress in delivering those plans.

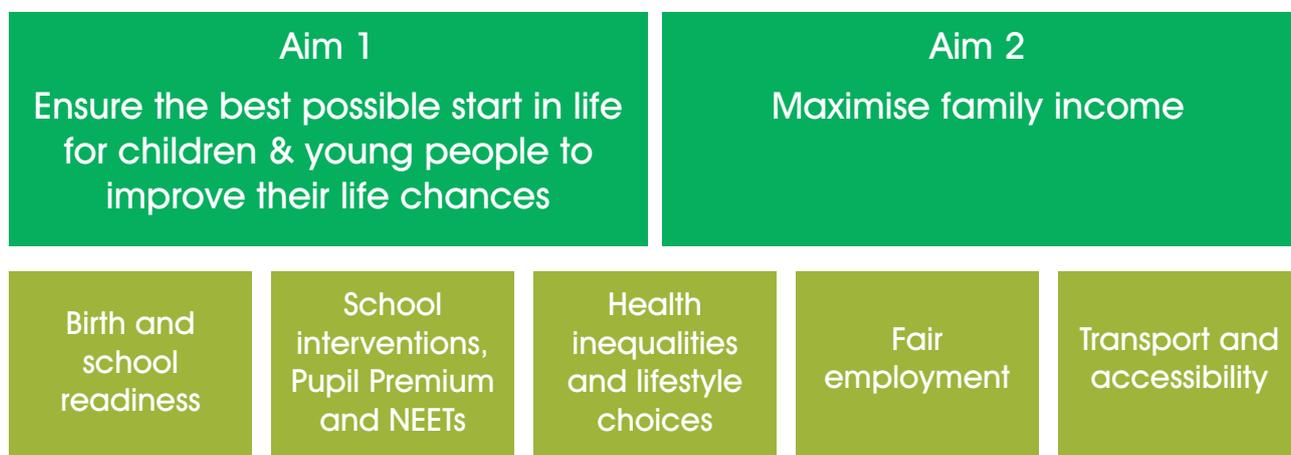


Fig 1  
Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances priorities 2015-18

# The role of the Commission

The Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission was established in 2011 to guide the Child and Family Poverty agenda across the City Region and provide a focus for tackling child poverty. Its purpose is to advise the City Region Leaders and the Mayor on approaches to tackling poverty and to make recommendations.

The Commission utilises the skills and expertise of leaders from a range of fields to share best practice and find practical ways to overcome challenges that transcend local authority boundaries or are common across a number of areas.

The Commission is chaired by Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead. Other members include councillors, academics, representatives from the community, private and public sectors, health, police, housing and transport. This arrangement helps to ensure that all local authorities and partners have a representative to raise issues and communicate key messages.

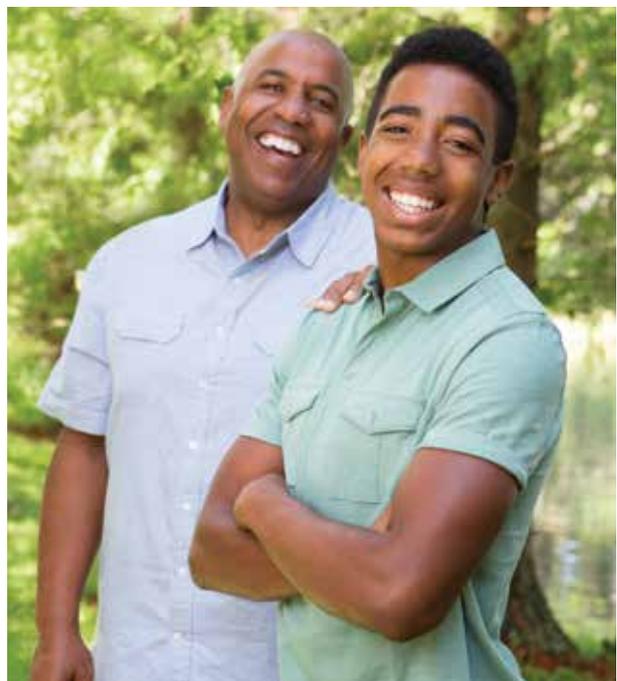
The Commission doesn't deliver services directly, but can make recommendations for action to the Liverpool City Region Leaders and Mayor. Commission members lead on delivering specific projects set out in the recommendations of this strategy, and can request members to provide pooled resources to pilot projects and commission research.

The City Region approach aims to capitalise on the knowledge and skills within the City Region and maximise exchange of knowledge. Where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding, research will be commissioned to build on existing local, regional and national research projects (such as Margaret Whitehead's 'Due

North' report<sup>8</sup>), and ensure alignment with common national lobbying issues, particularly alongside other City Region areas that will be facing the same issues.

In this context there will be a key role for the Commission to present a strong case to the Department for Education for protection of essential funding for early help interventions that can tackle child poverty at the earliest possible point, and produce local and national social returns on investment.

In conjunction with development of this strategy the Commission has conducted a self-review of how well it has worked over the last four years to identify improvements that can be made to ways of working. Four guiding principles have been established that will underpin all work undertaken by the Commission in delivering our priorities up to 2018 (see below).



<sup>8</sup> Whitehead M (2014). Due North: The report of the Inquiry on Health Equity for the North.

## Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission guiding principles 2015-18

1. Ensure all work undertaken by the Commission is **effectively communicated** and receives the profile required to effect change, meaning that strategic decisions taken across the Liverpool City Region consider their impact on child poverty and life chances ('poverty proofed').
2. Identify, share and encourage implementation of **best practice** between City Region partners for successful programmes and interventions that have been shown to reduce child poverty or improve life chances, with a view to influencing commissioning decisions.
3. **Hold organisations to account** for their role in reducing child poverty, and adopt a 'call-in' function to request attendance at meetings.
4. Establish a robust evidence base of 'what works' to inform **stronger lobbying** of central Government, ensuring that the Liverpool City Region voice is heard in national debates around child poverty.

This is intended to ensure that delivery of our priorities is focussed on specific activities in which the Commission is best placed to make a difference, using our collective strength to encourage other partner organisations in the Liverpool City Region to learn from and adopt successful approaches.

Whilst the Commission continues to represent the Liverpool City Region's voice for child poverty and life chances, further opportunities will be explored as part of the fourth guiding principle to connect with other poverty and fairness commissions across and country to create a common voice for major lobbying issues.

Negotiations between the Liverpool City Region and central government to devolve powers are ongoing at the time of writing, and could change the way in which some services covered in this strategy are funded, commissioned and delivered. The Commission will remain responsive to such changes and will reshape recommendations where they are impacted by devolution agreements.

# Priorities for the Liverpool City Region for 2015-18

## Priority 1: Fair employment

Parental employment has traditionally been viewed as the best route out of poverty, and the Government's national child poverty strategy places parental employment as one of its key strategic priorities.

The Liverpool City Region has historically had higher than average levels of unemployment compared to other parts of the country and comparator City Region areas, and the majority of children growing up in poverty in the City Region live in a workless household.

Single parents are particularly susceptible to unemployment, and 46% of single parent households in the City Region are not in employment. Children in single parent families are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty as children in couple families. In the City Region 76% of children in poverty live in a single parent family. Often, single parents with few qualifications and skills can find that the only work which matches their limited hours of availability and skills levels is low paid and part-time; resulting in many single parents being financially better off not working.

## Childcare

Lack of access to affordable and flexible childcare can be a key barrier that prevents parents from obtaining and maintaining sustainable employment; with single parents facing a greater burden of childcare costs. Despite additional financial help to families, research suggests that childcare costs remain a major burden for families, with the price of childcare having increased by 32.8% since 2010, well above the rate of inflation.<sup>9</sup> It is a common issue across many areas for both parents to be employed and struggling to pay for childcare, leaving them with lower levels of disposable income to provide every-day essential items. In addition to this, low paid work often does not allow flexibility for parents to take time off when children are ill or require extra help and support.

Childcare can consume a significant proportion of family income, and inflexibility in the range of childcare available can present a barrier to entering employment, or working more hours. Government policy supports childcare in three main ways: through tax free childcare vouchers, the childcare element of Universal Credit/Tax Credit, and free early years education entitlement for all 3-4 year olds and means tested provision for the 40% most disadvantaged 2 year-olds. The Government has also published a Childcare Bill that will extend free early years education for 3-4 year olds to 30 hours a week for families where both parents are working from 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Rutter J (2015). Childcare costs survey 2015. Family and Childcare Trust.

Whilst this help for working families is welcome, it will require sufficient capacity within nursery and pre-school provision in the maintained, private and not-for-profit sectors. It is essential that providers receive enough funding to deliver high quality early years education to enable the market to meet this new demand. It is equally important that providers utilise this opportunity to ensure they respond to childcare demands and offer suitably flexible childcare arrangements to meet the needs of working parents.

The myriad of different types of financial support means there is potential for many families to get caught up in a confusing system where they don't know which type of childcare support system works best for them - typically families employed under zero-hour contracts whose childcare costs and wages vary from month-to-month.<sup>10</sup> The Childcare Bill will require local authorities to publish information about provision of childcare in their local area, and it is crucial that local authorities are able to provide clear information to inform parents about help with childcare costs.

Lack of affordable childcare can be one of the key contributors to 'in-work' poverty for many families, such as when assistance with childcare costs does not adequately incentivise parents to increase their hours of work.

## Low pay

In recent years in-work poverty has outstripped out-of-work poverty in the UK for the first time since records began. Currently over half of all people in poverty in the UK live in a working household<sup>11</sup>, and nationally around 58% of children who live in poverty have at least one parent in paid work<sup>12</sup>. Our evidence suggests that at least 38% of all children in poverty in the City Region are now living in a family with a parent in-work.<sup>13</sup> The 'Getting By' report commissioned by Liverpool's Action Group on Poverty shows the issues faced by these families through their own voices.<sup>14</sup>

Low pay is arguably the largest growing factor of poverty in the UK and is a common feature of work available to poorer families<sup>15</sup>. While the Government's plans to introduce a 'National Living Wage' of £7.20 per hour (for over 25s) from April 2016 is welcome, it falls short of the £7.85 per hour 'UK Living Wage' promoted by the Living Wage Foundation. The Living Wage has emerged as an alternative means to ensure pay taken home by an employee is enough to cover the costs of a basic standard of living for families. The Living Wage Commission argue that one in every five workers in the UK is paid less than they need to maintain a basic, but socially acceptable standard of living.<sup>16</sup>

We know that in the Liverpool City Region median pay for full time and part time work is lower than the national average (though it does compare well with other City Region areas), and at least one in every five residents earns less than the current 'UK Living Wage' of £7.85 per hour.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Rutter J, Hope A and Lugton D (2014). The childcare support gap. Family and Childcare Trust.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014). A UK without poverty.

<sup>12</sup> CPAG (2015). Stop in-work poverty. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/stop-work-poverty>

<sup>13</sup> Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission (2014). Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment Refresh 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Praxis (2015). Getting By? The lives of 30 working families on low incomes.

<sup>15</sup> Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2014). Living Wage and the role of local government

<sup>16</sup> Living Wage Commission (2014). Work that pays: The final report of the living wage commission.

<sup>17</sup> NOMIS (2014). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2014.

## Insecure work

Low-paying sectors are characterised by precarious jobs that fail to provide steady employment.<sup>18</sup> Research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provides evidence that many families experiencing in-work poverty can find themselves trapped in cycles of 'low-pay, no-pay'. This is because they are more likely to work in insecure employment and have low skills.<sup>19</sup> The national Commission on Vulnerable Employment has highlighted that there are particular sectors which are vulnerable to lower levels of pay including: care, hospitality, and facilities management<sup>20</sup> - sectors that are strongly represented in the City Region's economy.

There has been a widely publicised increase in the use of zero-hour contracts across the UK in recent years that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours. Official statistics show that the number of people employed on zero-hours contracts has risen from 119,000 to 744,000 between 2005 and 2015<sup>21</sup>. This is likely to be an underestimate as ONS have also indicated through a survey of employers that there were 1.5 million employee contracts that did not guarantee a minimum number of hours in January 2015.<sup>22</sup>

For some people these can be the right sort of employment contract for them, giving choice and flexibility in working patterns. However, they can offer less security to low income families, with little idea from one week to the next as to how much money they will earn. It is estimated that around 33% of individuals on zero hours contracts want more paid work, compared to 13% on other forms of contract.<sup>23</sup>

It is not yet known what the full scale of zero-hour contract employment in the City Region is, but the City Region Employment and Skills Board will be examining the use and practice of zero hour employment contracts, and the impact this has on the City Region economy.

The Government has pledged to tackle employers' abuse of zero-hours contracts through the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 which puts an end to the use of exclusivity clauses in contracts that do not guarantee any hours. This will go some way to allowing workers to look for additional work to boost their income, but does not address the underlying instability of being employed under such a contract.

There is a clear role for business representatives and unions to work together, with the support of Government, to develop industry-led, industry-owned, sector-specific codes of practice on the fair use of zero-hours contracts, as the reality of the situation is likely to be different across sectors. There is an ongoing need to ensure that economic growth deals made across the City Region are undertaken with a firm understanding of the impacts they have upon child poverty, and that they offer sustainable growth where the benefits are distributed across all levels of the income spectrum.

### Actions we will take under this priority

Our strategy to promote paying a Living Wage and offer better employment conditions will involve the following actions:

- Join the North West Living Wage Network to support spreading of best practice for implementing a Living Wage amongst City Region employers, where practical and affordable. Utilise the collective voice of the Commission to promote the network's approach of accreditation, procurement and incentives for local employers.
- Work with and support the City Region Employment and Skills Board in promoting fair employment practices across the City Region.

<sup>18</sup> CPAG (2015). Stop in-work poverty. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/stop-work-poverty>

<sup>19</sup> Thompson S (2015). The low-pay, no pay cycle. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment (2008). Hard work, hidden lives.

<sup>21</sup> ONS (2015). Contracts with No Guaranteed Hours 2015.

<sup>22</sup> ONS (2015). Analysis of employee contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours.

<sup>23</sup> Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2014). Living Wage and the role of local government.

- Request local authorities to work with Jobcentre Plus, and employment support providers to ensure that parents of two year olds taking up funded early education are specifically targeted with employment and skills support that encourages starting work or training, and that wrap-around childcare is sufficiently affordable and flexible to enable those parents to sustain and increase their employment opportunities.
- Work with local authorities and the community and voluntary sector to develop an online guide that can help parents to determine the type of financial support for childcare that best suits their own situation, and explore the full range of local childcare options; recognising their relative merits (e.g. quality, flexibility and cost).
- In response to the Childcare Bill, consider where and how childcare markets in the Liverpool City Region can be best supported to ensure all parents of eligible 3-4 year olds are able to access 30 hours per week of free childcare.

## Priority 2: Birth and school readiness

The Foundation Years (from pregnancy to age 5) are a window of opportunity for engaging with families. Experiences during these years of rapid development can have a major impact on future life chances. It is widely acknowledged that poverty during these years has a significant influence on children's outcomes, and that positive parenting is key to giving children the best start in life<sup>24</sup>.

Despite progress in this area our needs assessment shows that a lower proportion of children in the Liverpool City Region are ready for school when they leave Reception Year compared with the rest of England, with 50% of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (at age 5), compared with 52% across England.<sup>25</sup>

### Children's Centres

Sure Start Children's Centres were introduced to deliver a range of early years and family services to improve outcomes for pre-school children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged. Children's Centres offer some of the highest quality early education available as well as providing crucial support for parents.<sup>26</sup>

It is known that the ongoing reduction in local government funding is placing great pressures on local authorities to rationalise and target their services. Set against this financial context, there is value to investigating new approaches to Children's Centre provision that ensures foundation years services can continue to be delivered, specifically to low income families who have little or no support from their extended family or community.

Frank Field's independent review of poverty and life chances called for a greater role for social growth in delivering Sure Start services, such as through mutuals, co-operatives, social enterprises, and in particular volunteer workforce models that aim to strengthen the resilience of families and communities, and increase participation in developing the offer of Children's Centres. This is a clear avenue to be explored by local authorities in their strategic capacity, and is in line with the national agenda for public service reform.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Field F (2010). The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults, London: Cabinet Office.

<sup>25</sup> Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission (2014). Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment Refresh 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart K (2014). 'The future of early years education' in Early years: valuable means and effective ends: Centre Forum.

<sup>27</sup> Field F (2010). The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults, London: Cabinet Office.

There are examples of other city region areas in the country such as Greater Manchester who have looked to develop new integrated early years delivery models to increase the number of children who are ready for school and to improve outcomes for all children in their early years. There is potential to learn lessons from other delivery approaches in order to explore new methods for delivery of Sure Start and early years services across the Liverpool City Region.

The Early Intervention Foundation was established in 2013 to champion effective use of early intervention to tackle the root causes of social problems for children from conception to early adulthood. The Foundation assesses evidence to find the best early intervention practices and has established an evidence base to support local authorities and charities in implementing early intervention programmes for children and families. The Foundation's evidence provides a valuable resource that should be utilised within the Liverpool City Region in developing new delivery approaches to early years.<sup>28</sup>

## Parenting support

Parental involvement and the quality of the home learning environment are major factors that can contribute to differences between children from low income backgrounds and their peers, and there is arguably more to do to support and encourage parents to help children benefit from the best early education can offer<sup>29</sup>.

Parents learn about parenting primarily through their own parents, as well as friends and professional advice and information.<sup>30</sup> The relationship between a parent and child is crucial to positive parenting practice. Formal parenting support plays a key role in increasing parenting skills, however parenting support across local authorities, community and

voluntary services can be fragmented and inconsistent.

Liverpool City Council, in conjunction with Barnados developed a strategic approach to parenting in 2014 to bring together all parenting services in the city. This approach aimed to increase the number of children experiencing positive parenting through a co-ordinated approach that uses parents own views as to the best methods to increase engagement and take-up of parenting services that target the most disadvantaged and disengaged groups.

## Early years Pupil Premium

Since April 2015 early years settings have received Pupil Premium funding for disadvantaged 3-and-4 year olds in order to help prevent young children from low-income families from falling behind before they have even started school. Providers have the freedom to decide how to use the early years Pupil Premium. However it is not clear at the moment what providers plan to spend their Pupil Premium funding on, or what Ofsted's plans are to monitor the impact of this.

## Actions we will take under this priority

Our strategy to support birth readiness and school readiness will involve the following actions:

- Work with Children's Centre leaders, Clinical Commissioning Groups, and the community and voluntary sector to share different approaches for delivering foundation years services, and explore new operating models with Children's Centres.
- Commission research to investigate strategic approaches undertaken across the City Region that ensure parenting support is targeted at the

<sup>28</sup> Early Intervention Foundation (2015). <http://www.eif.org.uk/>

<sup>29</sup> Ofsted (2014). The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills: Early years.

<sup>30</sup> Lexmond J, Bazalgette L and Margo J (2011). The home front. London: Demos.

most disadvantaged groups. Evaluate which methods are most effective in improving take-up for low income parents and develop a case for adoption of approaches that are proven to work.

- Undertake research to understand how early years settings in the City Region are using Pupil Premium funding and build up an evidence base on the most effective investments that improve the school readiness of disadvantaged children. Develop methods to disseminate and encourage early years providers to use the evidence and adopt the most effective practices.

## Priority 3: School interventions, Pupil Premium and NEETs

Achievement in school is fundamentally linked to children's future life chances and healthy children are best able to learn. A high quality school can help to reduce the gap in outcomes between pupils in poverty and those in higher income households.

### Free school meals

High quality free school meals play an important role in tackling child poverty as they provide a nutritious meal and relieve some of the financial pressures faced by parents. However some families miss out on their entitlement and fail to claim this benefit. The Department for Education provides a free school meals eligibility checking system that enables local authorities to check quickly and determine if a parent can claim free school

meals by linking benefits information from government records. It is known that some local authorities use the system to automatically register all eligible children, but there is inconsistency in the use of the system between different areas.<sup>31</sup>

Free school meals were rolled out to all infant school pupils from September 2014. While this is a welcome policy, the impact on the children most in need in terms of take-up, attainment and health is not yet fully known. There were some initial concerns that universal free school meals could potentially lead to a reduction in free school meal registrations as a whole, and in turn a reduction in the amount of Pupil Premium funding that schools are able to claim to use to help their disadvantaged pupils. It is still largely unknown as to what the impact has been on free school meal registrations in the Liverpool City Region.

Anecdotal feedback suggests that there are some children across the Liverpool City Region for whom the free school meal they receive is their only proper meal of the day. It is important for schools to identify and address these cases early as it can have a major impact on children's health and ability to work effectively at school, as well as increasing the risk that they go hungry during school holidays.

### Holiday hunger

Some families who are on a 'financial edge' during term time and who qualify for free school meals can find that having to feed their children during the summer holidays places them under increased financial and emotional pressure. Evidence from the Trussell Trust, as well as independent foodbanks suggests that foodbanks across the country have seen a rise in demand during the summer holidays.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom (2014). Feeding Britain: a strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

The Liverpool Play Partnership's Play Healthy scheme tackles this issue by providing free breakfasts and lunches to children attending playschemes during school holidays, and saw 7,185 children fed during the 2014 summer holiday. Projects are also being piloted in Birkenhead through the 'Feeding Birkenhead' scheme and provide activities during the school holidays such as breakfast clubs, communal cooking and eating courses, physical play sessions with lunch provided, and lunchbox distribution sessions.

## Narrowing the attainment gap

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely to get good GCSE results. Our needs assessment shows that 35% of pupils in the City Region who were eligible for free school meals achieved 5 GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics, compared with 66% of pupils who are not eligible.<sup>33</sup>

The Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to provide schools with additional funds to tackle educational inequality. Ofsted Inspection reports now include a commentary on the attainment and progress of pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium and evaluate how this compares with other pupils and have highlighted a clear link between a school's overall effectiveness and the impact of Pupil Premium.<sup>34</sup> However it is still too early to find any specific evidence that Pupil Premium has narrowed the gap in relation to how different schools are spending Pupil Premium funding,

The Liverpool City Region has led the way in raising the profile of how schools have spent their Pupil Premium funding. Surveys conducted by the Commission show that there has been a wide range of choices made by schools, supporting the notion that funding is best used to meet local needs, and that the majority of schools have used funding for additional staffing to provide smaller group sizes.

Forty five primary schools in the Liverpool City Region have been recognised and congratulated by the Minister for Schools for consistent high attainment of their disadvantaged pupils between 2012 and 2014 in reading, writing and maths.

Local authorities in the Liverpool City Region have implemented different approaches to narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and there has been evidence of success. Halton introduced a scheme in 2011 to link schools that have a small attainment gap with those who have a larger gap, and provide peer mentoring and support. Following introduction of the programme in 2011, Halton saw a reduction in the performance gap at age 11 from 21% to 12% in 2011-12, and a reduction in the gap at age-16 of 3%.

The Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) project was launched in Wirral in 2012 to provide schools with precision information on pupils who are in most need of extra support, at the times it is likely to have the greatest impact. This has allowed schools involved in the pilot to target interventions at underperforming pupils to have the greatest impact on closing the gap.

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

There is also clear evidence that the poverty attainment gap has a direct impact on school leaver destinations and young people's future job market success.<sup>35</sup> It is believed that young people who do not achieve 5 GCSEs A\*-C including English and maths are more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET). Low educational attainment is both an indicator of child poverty and a factor that increases the chances that poverty is sustained through the teenage and adult years.

<sup>33</sup> Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission (2014). Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment Refresh 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Ofsted (2014). Pupil Premium: an update.

<sup>35</sup> Sосу E and Ellis S (2014). Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The City Region has made significant progress in reducing the proportion of all young people who are NEET in recent years. Levels have dropped from 9.8% in April 2012 to 6.7% in January 2015. Despite successes in reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET, it remains a key issue for the Liverpool City Region. Research suggests that parental worklessness has significant links to young people being both NEET and NEET for long periods of time. However it is not parental worklessness in itself that is the key driver leading to a young person being NEET, but instead the number of other factors that typically face workless families such as not being happy at school, being bullied, bullying other children, feelings of lack of control and risky behaviours.

This means that policies to tackle poverty that are targeted solely at getting parents back into work are unlikely to produce large benefits for their children. Instead there should be an adequate focus on intervening directly with young people to address the other factors to prevent them becoming NEET.<sup>36</sup>

The Co-operative Councils Innovation Network argue that a fragmented and nationally controlled skills system means that opportunities can be missed to equip young people for the realities of their local job market. In response to this, some areas have looked to use co-operative approaches to get the best return on investment in skills. Co-operative approaches to employability, based on partnership with business and individuals can play a key role in helping workless young people into jobs at a lower cost and increase private sector investment in employment and skills.<sup>37</sup>

Within the Liverpool City Region, Knowsley Council has commissioned a partnership of four voluntary organisations to deliver a programme of employability, personal and

social skills development to apprenticeship applicants and other unemployed young people. Over the duration of the programme, 165 participants were trained, 82 supported with application skills and 134 with interview skills, and 67% progressed to a positive destination of further education, training, apprenticeships, jobs, volunteering or work placements.

### **Actions we will take under this priority**

Our strategy to support effective school interventions and support for young people who are NEET will involve the following actions:

- Encourage local authorities in the City Region to use the Department for Education's free school meals eligibility checking system tool to automatically register eligible children for free school meals on an 'opt-out' basis.
- Commission research to monitor implementation and impact of Universal Infant Free School Meals in the City Region, specifically assessing the impact on take-up of free school meals, attainment, diet, and health outcomes of children, as well as Pupil Premium uptake, and contingency plans for potential ending of government funding. Report the findings to infant school heads, their networks and to Central Government.
- Recommend that Central Government implement the All Party Parliamentary Group's inquiry into hunger and food poverty (Co-chaired by Frank Field) to begin costing the extension of free school meal provision during school holidays.
- Work with the Sustainable Food Cities Network to sign up to a pledge on Government Action on Food Poverty and request City Region local authorities to sign up.

<sup>36</sup> Schoon I, Barnes M, Brown V, Parsons S, Ross A and Vignoles A (2012). Intergenerational transmission of worklessness: evidence from the millennium cohort and longitudinal study of young people in England, Institute of Education & National Centre for Social Research.

<sup>37</sup> Co-operative councils Innovation Network (2015). Unlocking our wealth: a cooperative deal for community resilience, jobs and growth.

- Monitor the success of the Liverpool Play Partnership's 'Play Healthy' scheme in ensuring that children from low income families are adequately fed during school holidays and use evidence to explore opportunities for extending holiday food provision in other areas in the City Region.
- Undertake research to capture effective practices from Halton's 'Closing the Gap' peer mentoring and support programme and Wirral's 'Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Young People' project, and effectively disseminate practices considered to be most effective to the other local authorities in the City Region.
- Commission an independent review of 16-25 skills provision across the City Region through the City Region Participation and Skills Strategy group, and use the findings to influence the post-16 skills offer across all local authorities.

## Priority 4: Health inequalities and lifestyle choices

The links between health inequalities and child and family poverty are well evidenced at a national and local level. Children in poverty are more likely to have been born prematurely, have low birth weight and face a higher risk of infant mortality. There is a direct correlation between areas with high numbers of children living in poverty, low breastfeeding rates, high smoking prevalence at time of birth and low immunisation uptake. A healthy pregnancy - without smoking or alcohol, a healthy diet and with good mental health - is more likely to lead to a healthy birth which in turn contributes to better health later in life.<sup>38</sup>

## Smoking

The Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment shows that prevalence of smoking at the time of delivery is reducing across the City Region, but is still higher than that seen nationally.<sup>39</sup> Aside from the health effects, smoking can absorb a considerable proportion of a low-income family's income with around a quarter of their annual income spent on purchasing tobacco<sup>40</sup>. The dual importance of this issue on both child health and family finance means that targeting smoking in pregnancy is of uttermost importance.

As an example of positive work within the City Region, Public Health Liverpool has undertaken research to gain insight into how to reduce smoking and alcohol use during pregnancy, specifically looking at the influence on women of their partners' smoking habits. Through interviewing and focus groups with midwives and women who were pregnant or had recently given birth, valuable insight gained has been used to influence Liverpool's alcohol in pregnancy strategy and shared with midwifery leads and other wider stakeholders. It is important that local insight such as this is effectively used to influence wider City Region approaches to reducing smoking and alcohol use during pregnancy.

## Immunisations

Inequality in take up of vaccines can worsen social inequalities that already exist. Our needs assessment shows that Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) immunisation rates for children aged 2 have increased from 90.2% to 95.3% since we published our first needs assessment in 2011, and for children aged 5 from 84.9% to 91.5%. Though the take up rate for 2 year olds now exceeds the World Health Organisation's target of 95%, there is

<sup>38</sup> Field F (2010). The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults, London: Cabinet Office.

<sup>39</sup> Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission (2014). Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment Refresh 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Tobacco Free Futures (2014). Smoking impact on debt and child poverty.

an argument to be had that immunisation is an unfinished agenda and we should strive for the highest possible immunisation rate coverage across all GP practices in the City Region, reducing variation between local GP practice populations. This would help ensure that no child is disadvantaged through preventable ill health. Methods for increasing uptake of MMR immunisations are well evidenced<sup>41</sup>, but we believe local examples of practical effective practice will add additional value in encouraging lower performing GP practices to adopt good approaches that have been proven to be effective locally in increasing take up rates, specifically around local hard to reach populations.

## Healthy Child Programme

The Healthy Child Programme is a public programme for children, young people and families which focuses on early intervention and prevention. It offers a universal programme of screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews, information and guidance on parenting and healthy choices.

Responsibility for commissioning the range of services delivering the Healthy Child Programme for children aged 0-5 (including Health Visiting and Family Nurse Partnership) will transfer to local authorities in October 2015. Given the importance in making healthy progress during a child's early years, it is essential that the transfer of this programme across the City Region is safe, effective and seamless. This will require partners to be fully engaged in this process to ensure co-ordinated planning in bringing together the range of different services that make up the programme.

The Liverpool City Region benefits from a Public Health Collaborative, Champs, enabling professionals and partners to work together to improve health and wellbeing in Cheshire

and Merseyside. Directors of Public Health collectively commission a set of lifestyle programmes that help to deliver their public health targets, including tobacco control, alcohol, healthy weight and more. Our recommended actions to reduce health inequalities will be delivered primarily through Champs, with collaboration and support from other City Region partners.

## Actions we will take under this priority

Our strategy to target health inequalities and lifestyle choices will involve the following actions:

- Identify and engage with the six GP practices in the City Region that are nearest to achieving 100% immunisation history for children at ages 2 (vaccinations are at 13 months) and 5 (vaccinations are given at 3.5 years), and the six with the lowest rates. Investigate and establish what the better GP practices are doing to achieve those rates, and share with GP practices across the City Region.
- Continue to develop a Liverpool City Region smokefree pilot for pregnant women led by Halton and Knowsley that draws on relevant local insight, and invite other local authorities to take part once the scheme has shown evidence of successful impact on pregnant smokers.
- Develop young advocates through work with children and young people aged 5-19 to stop new smokers and promote smoke free as the norm, led by Tobacco Free Futures and commissioned by Directors of Public Health.
- Scope and establish high level strategic activity to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children across the Liverpool City Region.

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<sup>41</sup> Garder B, Davies A, McAteer J and Michie S (2008). How can MMR uptake be increased? A literature review and intervention feasibility study, University College London.

## Priority 5: Transport and accessibility

A comprehensive and affordable transport network is important for people to access education, training or employment, to socialise and to play an active role in local communities. Good transport networks can ensure that communities stay well connected to opportunities and not only helps people to get to places of work, but also keep friendships which are crucial to maintaining good mental health.

### Accessibility

Access to services and opportunities remains a key transport issue in the Liverpool City Region. For low income families, high transport costs can have a major impact on their lives and is a clear contributor to social exclusion and isolation from services and opportunities. To successfully connect people to opportunities, transport should be:

- **Available** - the transport network should be within easy reach of where people live and take them to and from places they want to go to, at times and frequencies that match working patterns and social activities. People also need to be kept informed of the services that are available via a variety of communication methods that are user friendly and easily understood.
- **Affordable** - people should be able to use the transport network at a cost that does not prohibit their ability to travel.
- **Accessible** - vehicles, infrastructure and walking routes must be designed in such a way that everyone is able to use them with relative ease.

- **Acceptable** - people should be able to use the transport network with ease, in comfort and feel safe while travelling or waiting.<sup>42</sup>

There is a wealth of evidence showing that the performance of transport networks can be crucial enablers of economic growth. While sustainable transport networks are a key objective, it is imperative that people from the most socially excluded communities in the region (where there are high levels of worklessness and deprivation) have the ability to access these networks to benefit from key services, employment and training opportunities.

While there are identified transport barriers which restrict accessibility, there are also many people-focussed barriers such as skills, aptitude, and low travel horizons.

### Sustainable travel

Sustainable travel therefore has a key role to play in making affordable and sustainable transport opportunities available to address wider issues such as unemployment, poverty, social isolation, provide access to healthcare and recreational facilities as well as offering active travel options that contribute to good health. Substantial investment in sustainable transport, such as cycling, walking and public transport for shorter journeys can play a key role in providing transport opportunities to increase the horizons of low income families, address the issue of transport affordability, as well as addressing public health issues such as childhood obesity.

The Government is increasingly recognising the health benefits of active travel. A report published by the Department for Transport in November 2014<sup>43</sup> highlights that any scheme which shows a benefit of £4 for every £1 spent (4:1 benefit cost ratio) is very high value for

<sup>42</sup> Local Transport Plan Merseyside (2011). A new mobility culture for Merseyside - the third Local Transport Plan for Merseyside.

<sup>43</sup> Department for Transport (2014). Claiming the health dividend: a summary and discussion of value for money estimates from studies of investment in walking and cycling.

money. The benefit cost ratio for active travel initiatives is 28:1.

**“Evaluation of sustainable Travel Towns project has demonstrated a significant shift from car to more sustainable modes (including walking and cycling), and the potential for active travel policies to deliver significant health benefits and a very high value for money”<sup>44</sup>**

## Road safety and safe transport

Safety while travelling is a key aspect with road accidents and anti-social behaviour higher in areas associated with poverty. Merseytravel co-ordinates the Travel Safe partnership which includes Merseyside Police and the British Transport Police. Education of children is an important part of this so they are aware of the dangers and the consequences of anti-social behaviour.

Through the Bikeability programme young people are provided cycling training so they can travel by bike safely. The extension of 20mph speed limits across urban roads will have a positive effect on cyclist safety, but there is also a need to consider patterns of pavement parking and parking in cycle lanes.

## Affordability of travel

Affordability of travel remains a major issue highlighted by children and young people in the Liverpool City Region with bus fares in Merseyside having more than doubled over the last 15 years. High transport costs is a growing concern for many young people wanting to progress onto further education or to access a school that specialises in a field that they are interested in, but not located in their local area.

Merseytravel has worked with bus operators in Merseyside to introduce 'My Ticket', a low cost all day bus travel ticket for children and young people aged 5-15 that offers all day travel across the Merseyside bus network for £2. Evidence suggests that the scheme has been extremely successful in reducing travel costs for children and young people, and in the first year 1.6 million 'My Tickets' were sold which now averages at 37,000 per week during term time. The project has become financially sustainable after just 12 months, meaning that the revenue from additional journeys make the scheme profitable for operators despite the reduction in fares. At the time of writing, agreement has been reached to extend eligibility to all young people aged under-19, in line with the extension up the age of 18 for young people to be in compulsory education or work-based training.

## Transport planning

The creation of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in 2014 has given a new level of importance to transport planning in the Liverpool City Region by bringing together responsibility for strategic transport decision making in Merseyside and Halton.

A key challenge for the City Region is to connect residents, particularly those in deprived communities, with current and future employment opportunities. For journeys under-two miles, walking and cycling are the most cost-effective alternatives to driving and using public transport and play a key role in helping to address inequalities by improving access to employment.

Ensuring that investment sites in the City Region provide wider and safer opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport use will help to alleviate transport poverty: supporting people to access work.

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<sup>44</sup> Department for Transport and Department of Health (2010). Active Travel Strategy.

A Transport Plan for Growth has been developed to bring together the Local Transport Plans of Merseyside and Halton and provides a single strategic framework and delivery plan for transport in the Liverpool City Region. The plan supports actions to increase the travel information available to help people make sustainable transport choices that suit their needs, make public transport fares more affordable, and support people living in the most disadvantaged areas to access employment and training opportunities.

Implementation of the Transport Plan for Growth will be of fundamental importance to deliver this strategy's aims to reduce child poverty and increase life chances, by supporting growth in employment and skills, improving health and wellbeing, and increasing connectivity of communities. By the same token, effective delivery of this strategy will make a key contribution to the Transport Plan for Growth's success, particularly in relation to its 'connecting communities' theme.

### **Actions we will take under this priority**

Our strategy to improve transport accessibility will involve the following actions:

- Work with Merseytravel to promote the 'My ticket' scheme for young people following extension to all young people aged under 19.
- Continue to introduce further bus Quality Partnership Schemes on key routes to create a more co-ordinated local public transport network, with increased accessibility and affordability, and greater access to employment opportunities in disadvantaged areas.

- Utilise the Commission's collective voice to support City Region bids for new funding opportunities to build on Local Sustainable Transport schemes that have proven successful, creating greater opportunities to support improving access to key opportunities.
- Continue to work with schools to develop innovative approaches and incentives for using Pupil Premium funding to increase the transport options available to pupils from disadvantaged families.
- Assist Merseytravel in developing their Cycling Delivery Plan by providing evidence and recommendations for schemes to encourage cycling in disadvantaged areas, and ensure that sustainable transport options for disadvantaged communities amongst others are at the forefront of the plan.
- Support the work of the Travel Safe Education Task and Finish Group to limit the dangers and adverse consequences of anti-social behaviour.



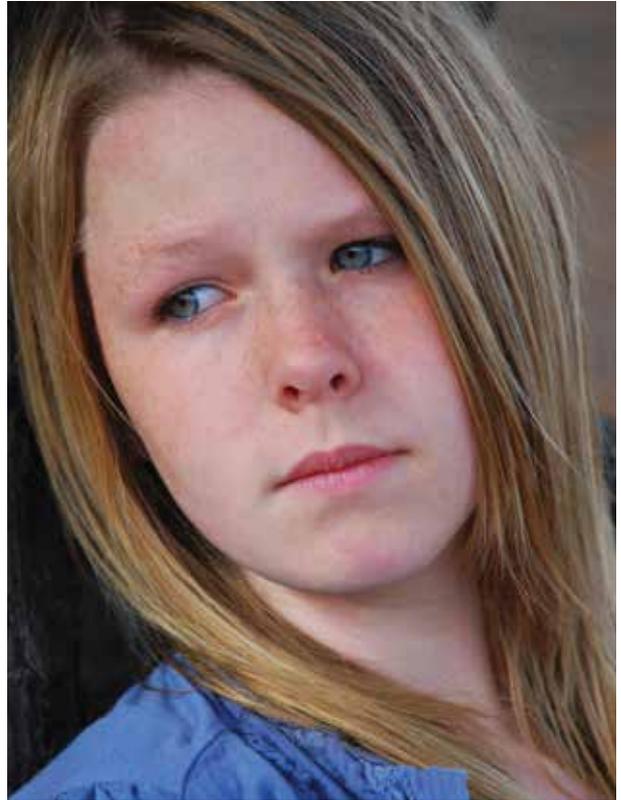
# Delivery of the strategy

The Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission will continue to oversee the successful implementation of this strategy.

## Commission approach

Four key principles have been identified for the Commission going forward to ensure maximum effectiveness and impact. Delivery of the strategy's recommendations will be based on activities that encompass these four key principles.

It will be a requirement that all activities undertaken by the Commission to deliver the recommendations set out in this strategy will need to meet the first principle and also prove how they meet at least one of the other principles.



## Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission guiding principles 2015-18

1. Ensure all work undertaken by the Commission is **effectively communicated** and receives the profile required to effect change, meaning that strategic decisions taken across the Liverpool City Region consider their impact on child poverty and life chances ('poverty proofed').
2. Identify, share and encourage implementation of **best practice** between City Region partners for successful programmes and interventions that have been shown to reduce child poverty or improve life chances, with a view to influencing commissioning decisions.
3. **Hold organisations to account** for their role in reducing child poverty, and adopt a 'call-in' function to request attendance at meetings.
4. Establish a robust evidence base of 'what works' to inform **stronger lobbying** of central Government, ensuring that the Liverpool City Region voice is heard in national debates around child poverty.

## Implementation

Commission members will be assigned roles for leading on delivery of the recommendations outlined in this strategy. Meetings of the Commission will be focussed around themes to take forward recommendations under each theme.

Lead Commission members will establish working arrangements for each recommendation within their remit. Support from operational officers within Commission member's organisations will be provided on this basis, and operational officers will be expected to attend appropriate themed Commission meetings. Lead Commission members will draw up delivery plans for each recommendation within their remit.

The success of the strategy will depend on individuals, groups and organisations delivering change on the ground and detail of what is expected from different organisations is set out in the table on the following page.

It remains the responsibility of individual local authorities in the City Region to produce their own council level action plans based on the broad set of priorities for action set out here. Progress on delivering local child poverty plans will be reported to the Commission annually.

## Impact

We will develop an overarching Liverpool City Region child poverty indicator dashboard that will be reported to the City Region Leaders and Mayor annually.

We will also produce an annual report each year to set out the activities we have undertaken and achieved in relation to the recommendations set out in this strategy, and look to publish and communicate the report in a high profile manner.

To examine the wider impacts on outcomes for children and families over the three years of this strategy we will undertake a refreshed needs assessment in 2018 that will include specific benchmarks for the current position in 2015 and examine how outcomes have improved for children and young people in the intervening years.

Evaluation of outcomes will include qualitative evidence of children and family's own views as to how their experiences of poverty and low income have changed over the course of this strategy.

## Arrangements for review

This refreshed strategy acts as our delivery plan for 2015-18. We will refresh the strategy again in 2018 to ensure that our approach remains responsive to changes in policy, legislation, social conditions, economic trends and local needs.



To enable the Commission to deliver this strategy's recommendations, a range of actions are requested of various stakeholders.

Individual/Group	Actions requested
<b>Employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a Living Wage, where practical and affordable.</li> <li>• Implement fair employment practices recommended by the City Region Employment and Skills Board.</li> <li>• Recognise that parents need flexible family friendly working policies to meet the needs of their children.</li> </ul>
<b>Early years providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on how Pupil Premium is being used to benefit disadvantaged children in early years settings and adopt the most effective practices.</li> <li>• Ensure childcare is available and sufficiently flexible to enable parents to work.</li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools to confirm appointment of Lead Governor for child poverty and life chances.</li> <li>• Report on the impact of universal infant free school meals on take-up, diet and health outcomes of children, as well as Pupil Premium uptake.</li> <li>• Capture and implement effective practices from City Region projects to raise attainment of disadvantaged pupils.</li> <li>• Develop innovative approaches and incentives for using Pupil Premium funding to increase the transport options available to pupils from disadvantaged families.</li> </ul>
<b>Local authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an online guide that can help parents to determine the type of financial support for childcare that best suits their own situation, and explore the full range of local childcare options.</li> <li>• Ensure that parents of two year-olds taking up funded early education receive targeted employment and skills support, and that wrap-around childcare is available to those parents.</li> <li>• In response to the Childcare Bill, consider where and how childcare markets can be best supported to ensure all parents of eligible 3-4 year olds are able to access 30 hours per week of free childcare.</li> <li>• Share different approaches for delivering foundation years services, and explore new operating models with Children's Centres.</li> <li>• Share evidence of effective strategic approaches to parenting support.</li> <li>• Utilise the Department for Education's free school meal eligibility checking system tool to automatically register children of eligible parents for free school meals on an 'opt-out' basis.</li> <li>• Use evidence from the Liverpool Play Partnership's 'Play Healthy' scheme to explore opportunities for extending holiday food provision, ensuring that children from low income families are adequately fed during school holidays.</li> </ul>

Individual/Group	Actions requested
<b>Jobcentre Plus and Employment support providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that parents of two year-olds taking up funded early education receive targeted employment and skills support.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the six GP practices that are nearest to achieving 100% immunisation history of children at ages 2 and 5, establish what they are doing to achieve this and share with all GP practices.</li> <li>• Continue to develop a Liverpool City Region smokefree pilot for pregnant women that draws on local insight.</li> <li>• Develop young advocates through work with children and young people aged 5-19 to stop new smokers and promote smoke free as the norm.</li> <li>• Scope and establish high level strategic activity to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children across the Liverpool City Region.</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully implement and promote extension of the 'My ticket' scheme to all young people under-19.</li> <li>• Introduce further bus Quality Partnership Schemes on key routes to create greater access to employment opportunities in disadvantaged areas.</li> <li>• Support City Region bids for new funding opportunities to build on successful Local Sustainable Transport schemes.</li> <li>• Develop a Cycling Delivery Plan to encourage cycling in disadvantaged areas, and promote sustainable transport options within disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Police</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with young people through the Travel Safe Education Task and Finish Group to limit the dangers and adverse consequences of anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>Central Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin costing the extension of free school meal provision during school holidays.</li> </ul>

# Annex I

## Our evidence base

We have considered a range of evidence to inform development of this strategy.

A review was undertaken of our first strategy to evaluate what we have achieved since it was published. We specifically looked at what we have delivered against each of the actions set out in the strategy, and where there is scope for further work. A summary of this is set out in Annex 2.

We have also consulted with a range of City Region partners and conducted a workshop to identify local insight of the issues and pressures facing children, families and services, and carefully considered the findings in developing our priorities and actions in this strategy.

We have undertaken a refreshed needs assessment of child and family poverty in the City Region to draw out the key changes and emerging issues since we published our first

needs assessment in 2011. The refreshed needs assessment document accompanies this strategy and sets out the current position in the Liverpool City Region, how conditions have changed since 2010, and new pressures faced by low income families. The section below is a summary of the key findings of the needs assessment.

### What does child poverty look like in the Liverpool City Region?

The number of children and young people living in poverty in the Liverpool City Region has fallen since we published our first strategy from 89,785 (27.6%) in 2008 to 82,205 (25.6%) in 2012.<sup>45</sup>

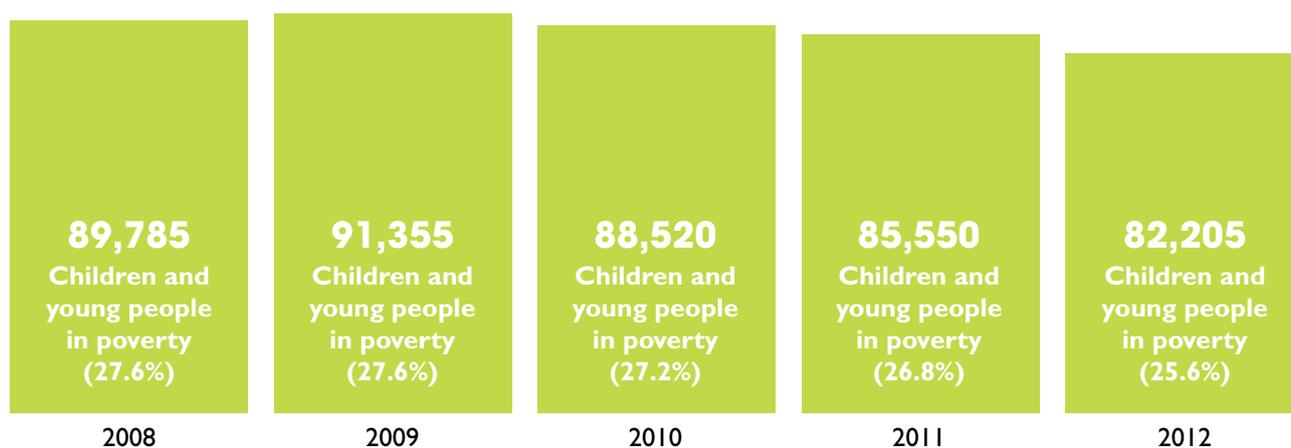


Fig 2  
Number of children in poverty in the Liverpool City Region

<sup>45</sup> HMRC (2014). Children in low income families local measure. Data published is subject to a two year lag.

Fig 3 below shows the distribution of child poverty at Lower Super Output area across the Liverpool City Region. It shows that despite differences in the average child poverty rate between local authorities in the City Region; all boroughs contain some pockets of very high child poverty.

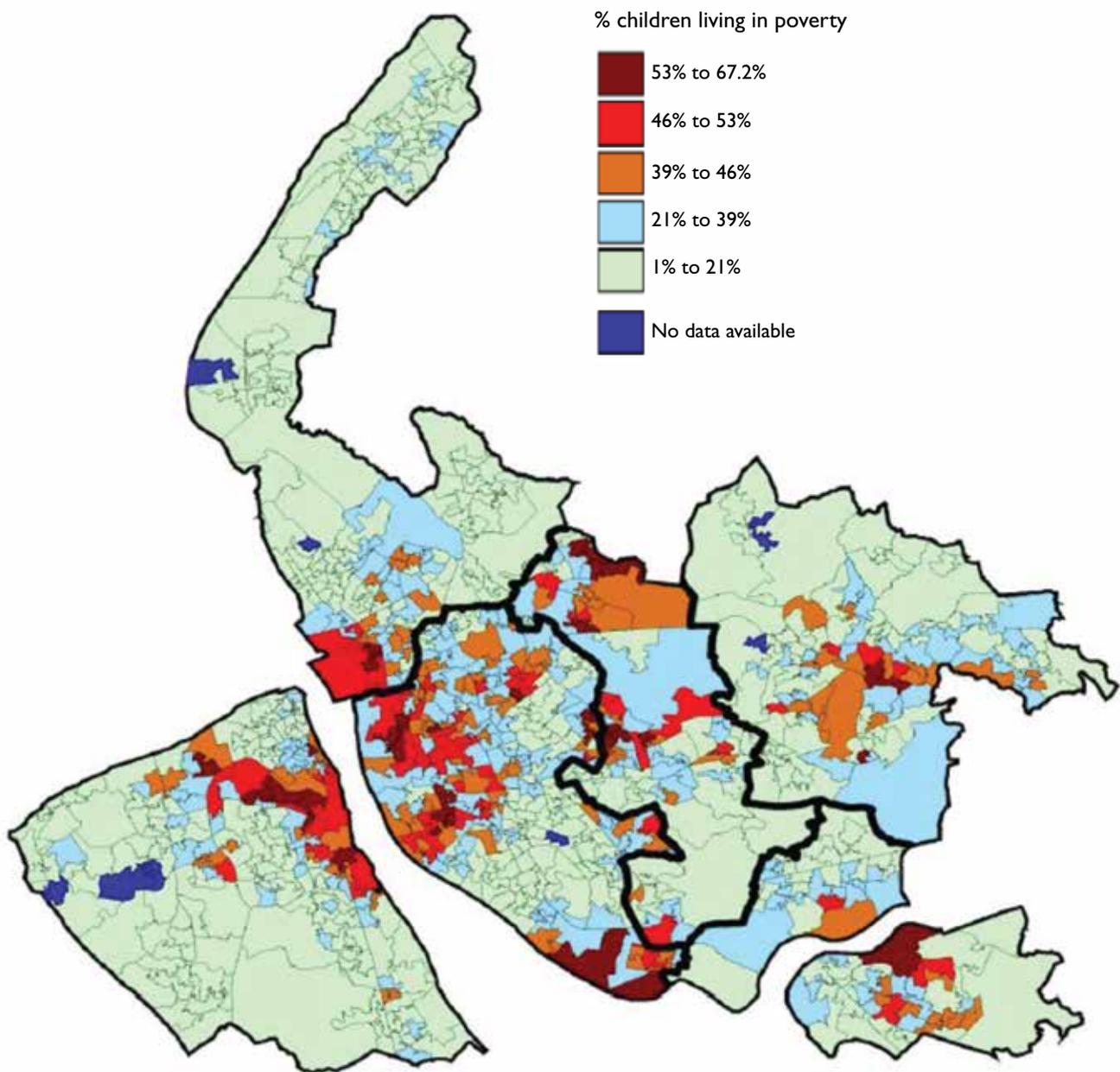


Fig 3  
Percentage of children living in poverty across the Liverpool City Region, by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA).

City Region Area	Children in poverty (%)
Greater Manchester	22.7
Leeds City Region	19.3
Sheffield City Region	21.5
North Eastern	21.7
<b>Liverpool City Region</b>	<b>25.6</b>
England	18.6

Fig 4  
Proportion of children in poverty: City Regions (2012)

The Liverpool City Region has a higher proportion of children living in poverty than any comparator City Region areas, though all comparator City Region areas have higher proportions of children living in poverty compared to England as a whole.

The majority of children in poverty in the Liverpool City Region live in single parent families (76%), which is higher than the England average (70%).

A high proportion of children living in poverty in the LCR (89%) live in households claiming an out-of-work benefit, compared to the England average (84%)

In the Liverpool City Region 32% of children living in poverty (26,590) are aged under-5, which is similar to the England average (33%). The 0-4 age group is the only group where children living in poverty has continued to increase since 2008 whereas all the other age groups have decreased.

However it is commonly accepted that this measure of poverty is unduly influenced by the level of national median income, which has also fallen over the same period (2008-2012) from £478 per week in 2008/09, to £453 per week in 2012/13<sup>46</sup>. This means the 60% median threshold for being recorded in poverty has dropped from £287 per week, to £264 per week over the period. The implication is that there will be some children in the City Region who are no longer recorded in poverty under this local measure, despite no overall improvement to their family's income or financial situation.

	Children in poverty		Rank in England (out of 325)
	Number	%	
Halton	7,190	24.7	39
Knowsley	10,605	29.8	12
Liverpool	29,040	31.1	7
Sefton	10,705	19.2	104
St.Helens	9,035	23.7	43
Wirral	15,630	22.4	56
<b>Liverpool City Region</b>	<b>82,205</b>	<b>25.6</b>	-
England	-	18.6	-

Fig 5  
Number; proportion and rank of children in poverty (2012)

This suggests that the true numbers of children in poverty in the City Region may not have fallen to the extent that the official figures suggest. This is supported by alternative child poverty statistics produced by the End Child Poverty campaign which shows the proportion of children in poverty before, and after housing costs are taken into account. Analysis of the figures indicate that once housing costs have been taken into account, potentially at least 38% of children in poverty in the Liverpool City Region are living in working households, with the true proportion likely to be even higher.<sup>47</sup> This is because housing costs are likely to have a greater impact on working households, whereas housing costs for out of work households' will be covered in the main by Housing Benefit.

<sup>46</sup> DWP (2014). Households Below Average Income.

<sup>47</sup> End Child Poverty (2014). <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>



Our refreshed needs assessment examines the wider determinants of child poverty and life chances to give a more rounded view of the current position in the Liverpool City Region.

In summary, a number of determinants have shown improvement since 2011 including:

- Children on Free School Meals are achieving higher Key Stage 2 results than the national Free School Meal cohort.
- More children are being immunised at ages 2 and 5.
- Breastfeeding initiation has continued to improve.
- There are fewer Jobseekers Allowance and Lone Parent claimants.
- There are fewer families living in households defined as living in fuel poverty.

A number of determinants have shown deterioration since 2011 including:

- More children are measured as being obese at Reception and Year 6.
- The proportion of working age residents in part-time employment is increasing whilst full-time employment is on the decline.
- The average hourly earnings for residents in part-time work is considerably lower than that for residents in full-time work.
- Children eligible for Free School Meals are underachieving at Key Stage 4 in comparison to the national Free School Meal cohort.

# Annex 2

## What have we achieved?

We have made some good progress in delivering our first strategy and have undertaken a range of activities to drive forward the recommendations for action that we originally put forward.

Our first strategy set out 43 individual recommendations across two aims and seven strategic action areas.

1. Support effective parenting and drive improvements in Foundation Years services.
2. Enhance children's social and emotional development and reduce gaps in educational achievement.
3. Promote prevention and early intervention approaches to reduce health inequalities.
4. Influence an improvement in the quality of place and support strong communities.
5. Improve access to suitable financial services and support families to make good financial decisions.
6. Optimise employment opportunities by removing barriers to good quality and sustainable employment.
7. Support parents to progress in the workplace.

We made a number of 'asks' of different groups and individuals across the City Region and various stakeholders were tasked with the responsibility to deliver the actions, with the collective role of the Commission playing a crucial role in securing progress.

We have had some good successes, such as our work with Children's Centres to improve collaboration across the City Region and boost engagement with the poorest children. However, we recognise that delivery of the actions has been mixed, with some not yet started, and others started but not yet completed. In total 14 actions have been completed since 2011, whilst a further 24 actions were started but not yet completed.

We have reviewed delivery against our 43 actions to determine where our biggest successes have been, and where there is scope for further steps to be undertaken. The findings show that our activities have tended to focus most on early years services and financial inclusion matters. Whilst these are both key areas in which the Commission can secure progress and make a significant difference to the lives of children and families, it does mean we may have paid less attention to other areas highlighted in the original strategy. This has provided us with evidence that a tighter focus on a smaller number of priority areas and actions going forward will allow us to make a greater difference.

The following sections provide a summary of progress we have made against each of the original seven strategic aims, including a schedule of progress, and case examples of projects in which we have had our biggest successes.

## Support effective parenting and drive improvements in Foundation Years services

We have developed a significant amount of work around this strategic action and had some positive successes. This includes our work to develop a school readiness assessment, our work to co-ordinate activities across the City Region to increase contact that Children's Centres have with the poorest families in their areas, and parenting support programmes across the City Region.

We facilitated the creation of a pan-City Region Children's Centres Leaders' Group in 2012 to take forward delivery of our early years actions. The group has proven to be a valuable asset in sharing best practice around engagement with the poorest families and providing a joined up approach between Children's Centres in different boroughs of the City Region.

### Key achievements

- Work to boost parenting support has helped to influence parenting strategies across the City Region to adopt a focus on improving parenting services and increasing take-up of both universal and targeted services.
- Establishment of a Children's Centres Leader's Group to take responsibility for delivery of children's centre actions and share effective practice. E.g. engagement with the poorest families in their areas.
- Facilitation of a Symposium for Children's Centres Leaders that was attended by over 60 people. The symposium gave the opportunity to raise wider awareness of the aims and actions of the Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy amongst the early years community, and share examples of good practice between Children's Centres that would not normally have contact with each other - for example Granby Children's Centre's innovative approach to data analysis.

- Campaigned within the City Region to highlight the need for importance of early language and communication development of children, and requested local authority cabinet members for children's services to ensure that local authorities undertake activities to promote awareness amongst practitioners, parents and providers.

## Case study

### School readiness assessment

The Liverpool City Region has made good strides in raising the issue of school readiness. Evidence has been gathered of the effectiveness of Foundation Years services in ensuring a greater proportion of children in Reception year are ready for school. Primary schools were requested to randomly select pupils in their Reception class, and identify their achievement against six criteria of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The findings supported the previously reported trend that fewer children were prepared for their first day at school. The overall results were communicated to the Department for Education to assist with their development of a school readiness indicator, ensuring that the Liverpool City Region voice is at the forefront of school readiness policy development.

In response to this valuable work, local authorities in the City Region have adopted different approaches to increasing school readiness of children. For example Liverpool City Council developed a best practice 'School Readiness Model' based on the renowned programme devised by Caroline Webster-Stratton which was rolled out across all Children's Centres in Liverpool. Schools in Wirral have worked closely with the University of Cambridge to develop and pilot a set of 12 measures to assess readiness for school, which will eventually be rolled out across all Wirral schools.

## Enhance children's social and emotional development and reduce gaps in educational achievement

We have undertaken a significant amount of work under this action area including extensive investigation of how schools are spending Pupil Premium funding, designing a specification for each local authority to appoint a lead Governor for life chances, reporting on effective practices within each local authority on raising the aspirations of children, and feeding recommendations and examples back to local authorities. We are particularly pleased that Ofsted have incorporated our key message that schools should be held accountable for how they use Pupil Premium funding to improve the chances of the most disadvantaged pupils, and now include this within their school inspection regime.

### Key achievements

- Monitored progress on narrowing the attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not, received regular updates on local authority initiatives to reduce the gap, and regular reporting of target setting for children on free school meals.
- Written to schools to request that the importance of parenting is reflected as far as possible in all subjects in the secondary curriculum, and began to develop subject specifications for how this can be delivered across the secondary curriculum.
- Worked with local authorities to improve data sharing between primary and secondary schools to ensure pupil transitions take place effectively. Successful responses have been developed including Liverpool City Council's Pupil Tracker system that shares information on pupil's prior attainment, attendance and other issues between primary and secondary schools.

- Developed a role specification for a Governor for Life Chances in schools and requested that schools use the specification to create the role on their own Governing Bodies.
- Received information on the most effective practices to raise aspirations of children and the most effective projects in supporting parents, and fed lessons learned back through to Cabinet Members for Children's Services.

### Case study

#### Monitoring use of Pupil Premium funding to help the most disadvantaged pupils

The Commission wrote to all schools in the City Region in 2011 to ask how they were planning on spending their Pupil Premium funding. The results showed that there was a wide range of choices being made by schools, which supported the notion that funding is used to meet local needs. The majority of schools used funding for additional staffing to provide smaller group sizes, but there were different views taken on how to achieve this. The findings were fed back to schools to provide schools with ideas for new ways to use the funding that may not have previously been considered.

Ofsted has now placed a greater emphasis on schools' performance in driving up standards among children who are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. Schools are held accountable for the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils, the progress made by those students, and the in-school gap in achievement between those pupils and their peers. We have shared with schools the most innovative approaches to using the funding based on how the most successful schools at narrowing the gap have used their Pupil Premium money.

## Promote prevention and early intervention approaches to reduce health inequalities

Investigating ways to reduce health inequalities in children and young people has proven to be one of our most prolific areas of activity. We have conducted a significant amount of work to facilitate sharing of best practice on vaccination and immunisation rates for children, and have also met with central Government to press for a change to immunisation incentives for GPs. This has coincided with MMR immunisation rates across the City Region at ages 2 and 5 reaching all time highs.

### Key achievements

- Established a breastfeeding sub-group of the Commission to investigate innovative approaches to increasing breastfeeding rates and the incentive methods that have been proven to work.
- Worked with City Region partners to promote a minimum unit price of alcohol and gained approval from the City Region Cabinet in 2012. Following the Government's rejection of minimum unit pricing in 2013 the Commission has continued to input into the City Region's minimum pricing working group (via Champs).
- Worked closely with City Region planning departments to build the case for introducing supplementary planning guidance (SPD) on take away provision near to schools. This has resulted in some local authorities introducing an SPD such as St. Helens which was one of the first in the country to do so.
- Met with the Department of Health to present the case for changing the financial incentive structure for immunisations so that general practices are rewarded for increasing immunisation rates to

95%. Central Government support for the proposal was obtained, and would be considered when the national GP contract is next reviewed.

- A Play Healthy project has been developed in Liverpool to provide free food in the form of breakfast, lunch and health activities at summer 'playschemes' operating in the city. This has been sustained through the major holiday periods and saw 7,185 children fed during the 2014 summer holiday.

### Case study

#### MMR Immunisation

A Vaccination and Immunisation event was held in May 2012 to share best practice. Following this, a North West Immunisation transition group was established to manage the risks during the transition of the health system, and ensure appropriate links to the successor organisations on child health - National Commissioning Board, Public Health England, Local Authorities and Health and Wellbeing boards.

Childhood vaccination rates, including the teenage girls HPV vaccine and the MMR vaccine, are now at an all time high in Merseyside. This is down to commitment by parents, GP practice teams, school nurses, and specialist immunisation teams who support families who find attending for their jabs difficult. The floor expectation for all vaccinations is now 95%, with an aspiration that all children will have all of their due vaccines. In meeting this expectation, Merseyside general practitioners are achieving over and above their national contract, in order to do the best for their patients.

## **Influence an improvement in the quality of place and support strong communities**

There has been a range of work conducted under this strategic action area led by our housing association partners, local authorities, Merseyside Police and Merseytravel. Whilst much of the activity undertaken forms a core part of existing duties, we feel our focus on child poverty and life chances, and the strategic partnership role of the Commission has provided the impetus to deliver further action in these areas.

### **Key achievements**

- Merseyside Police's Youth Strategy was launched in 2010 and is underpinned by dedicated Neighbourhood Officers who work closely with Safer School Officers and the Youth Offending Service to identify young people who are on the periphery of crime. The teams have a specific focus on providing help and support to improve the 'life chances' of young people, divert them from offending, and raise their aspirations in life.
- Housing associations across the City Region have worked closely with local authorities to implement the Government's 'bedroom tax' and benefit cap policies. Through the City Region Financial Inclusion Forum we have been able to identify what works well for housing associations in mitigating the impacts, and share the findings through the forum. This has included sharing of data and development of public information around welfare reforms to ensure those affected are able to seek appropriate advice and support.

### **Case study**

#### **Sharing knowledge to improve road safety**

The Merseyside Road Safety Partnership has been able to share knowledge from across Merseyside local authorities, police, fire and rescue, Merseytravel, and Highways Agency to develop action plans setting out initiatives to improve the safety of the groups most at risk of being killed or seriously injured. The partnership has made significant progress with rolling out the introduction of 20mph zones on residential roads across Merseyside. This involves a number of projects, ranging from the introduction of road humps to reduce speed to improved signage on residential routes.

For example, in Liverpool, the city has been divided into 7 areas for implementation and achieved an estimated reduction of 54 collisions per year. In Sefton low speed zones have been introduced within local community areas, concentrating on local residential areas and local centres. This has led to an 8% reduction in accident levels within the borough.

## Improve access to suitable financial services and support families to make good financial decisions

We have made some good progress in leading work across the City Region to increase financial inclusion for low income families.

### Key achievements

- Established the City Region Financial Inclusion Forum to lead on sharing financial inclusion best practice between organisations within the City Region (see case study opposite).
- Hosted a financial inclusion workshop attended by a range of organisations involved in financial inclusion activities to identify best practice in promoting benefit take-up, with findings shared between financial inclusion leads within local authorities.
- We recommended in our original strategy for a review of utility companies' approaches to offering tariffs. Since then, Central Government has introduced a legal requirement for energy companies to let customers know the best tariff for each individual's own circumstance.
- Five digital inclusion hubs have been established in Liverpool to improve access, skills and knowledge in communities where there has been low uptake.

### Case study

#### City Region Financial Inclusion Forum

The City Region Financial Inclusion Forum was developed with a remit to share best practice across City Region organisations. A Financial Inclusion Workshop was held in March 2012 for all those involved in financial inclusion activities. The forum identified a lack of awareness amongst the community about the purpose of credit unions and what they provide. The Forum established six areas of focus for their work:

- Supporting the doubling of Credit Union membership in the City Region to 80,000 by 2017;
- Awareness raising of forthcoming welfare reform changes;
- Education to understand differences between work and benefits for Year 10 onwards;
- Surcharged and differential services (fuel and banks);
- Digital inclusion and Internet access;
- Enhanced use and coordination of Children's Centres.

The Forum has undertaken a campaign to promote Credit Union membership and through the Forum's impetus, housing associations across the City Region have reviewed what more they could do to encourage Credit Union members, including requiring tenants to be members of Credit Unions, which is being explored legally.

## Optimise employment opportunities by removing barriers to good quality and sustainable employment

Our work within this area has tended to focus most closely on tackling the key transport barriers to sustainable employment. We have worked closely with Merseytravel and Halton Borough Council as they have delivered a number of schemes that fulfil our actions to tackle barriers that are preventing parents and young people from accessing employment opportunities.

In addition to our transport focus the Commission has received updates on Work Programme performance data and monitored trends relating to working parents. The Commission's recommendations relating to Work Programme activity have been fed through the Employment and Skills Board to ensure appropriate collective impact with welfare and work programme providers.

The Commission has worked closely with local authorities in the City Region as they have developed localised apprenticeship schemes to target gaps in apprenticeship provision. For example Liverpool's scheme was launched in September 2011 and to date 56 roles have been created including; Accountants, Solicitors, ICT Specialists, Fitness Instructors, Social Workers, HR Specialist and Registrars.

### Key achievements

- Lobbied Central Government to consider changes to the tax credits system to better reflect the needs and aspirations of families. We hope our recommendations will be taken forward as Universal Credit is extended to replace Child Tax Credits and Working Tax Credits.
- Undertaken focus group meetings with Children's Centre leads and managers to

explore the range of activities undertaken by Children's Centres to support parents in the journey back into work.

- Launched a 'City Bike' cycle hire scheme within Liverpool which has seen a roll out of 1,000 bikes for hire across various locations in the city.
- Delivered the Bikeability programme to more than 11,000 schoolchildren in Merseyside primary schools, giving them road skills and increased confidence.
- Provided free travel training to assist people who need extra support to use public transport independently, and who are about to start new employment, or need the confidence to travel to interview and training.
- Successfully delivered three packages of Local Transport Fund schemes to promote sustainable travel access to employment opportunities in Merseyside (see case study opposite).
- Worked with Merseytravel to introduce the 'My Ticket' all day bus travel ticket for children and young people. Evidence suggests that the scheme has been extremely successful in reducing travel costs for children, young people and parents.

## Case study

### Sustainable transport schemes to make work and education accessible

Merseytravel has been able to secure three Local Sustainable Transport Fund packages of schemes worth £30 million.

In 2011 Merseytravel was awarded £4.87 million of this funding to focus on a series of interlinked packages of activity to optimise employment opportunities. There has been considerable success in delivering these packages:

- Engaged with over 180 businesses.
- Piloted a community transport service from Kirkby to Jaguar Land Rover to improve access to employment opportunities.
- 40 NEETS have been supported via Connexions Greater Merseyside, issuing bus passes that enabled five to undertake fork lift truck training.
- An additional 480 interventions achieved by the travel teams, with 325 receiving a travel solution such as a scooter, bike or travel pass. The travel teams receive in the region of 30 calls a week from job seekers requesting travel assistance. This includes in the last months over 500 people seeking employment in the Jaguar Land Rover supply chain.

Halton Borough Council have worked in partnership with Riverside College, Jobcentre Plus and the Youth Cabinet through the Local Strategic Partnership Transport Board to ensure the needs of jobseekers and students are understood and solutions are developed that encourage journeys to be made by sustainable modes of transport.



## Support parents to progress in the workplace

Under this area of our strategy we have been able to develop close links with the Employment and Skills Board (which acts as the lead body for employment and skills in the City Region), and feed our recommended actions into the Board for delivery.

We set out an action in our original strategy to investigate the feasibility of implementing the Living Wage within the City Region. Moves to implement a Living Wage by City Region employers have been piecemeal so far and there is inconsistency across City Region partners as to their approach to the Living Wage.

This is one of the contributing factors for why we have decided to take forward 'Fair employment' as a priority within this strategy.

We have been able to conduct some important work to encourage employers to offer more flexibility in their employment practices and in particular employer investment in childcare.

### Key achievements

- Facilitated a visit from the Resolution Foundation in 2012 on the issue of employer support for childcare to conduct research with employers and out of school childcare providers in Liverpool and Sefton (see case study opposite).
- Held discussions with the Employer Coalition to press the case for a more flexible approach to employment.
- Liverpool's Poverty Action Group developed a poverty dashboard to bring together data on benefit uptake, food bank usage, housing and unemployment data, and GP data for anxiety and depression. The dashboard gives an understanding of issues faced by local people and the key barriers to entering good quality employment and progressing in the workplace.

## Case study

### Employer support for childcare

The Commission facilitated a visit from Resolution Foundation researchers to explore issues related to employer support for childcare with retailers in Liverpool One and issues related to afterschool programmes with providers in Sefton. These issues were chosen because the Commission had published a report on childcare highlighting gaps in provision for atypical hours and school-age childcare and because these issues are also particularly important for the low to middle income group which is the focus of the Resolution Foundation. The key findings of the exercise were that:

- There is evidence that employers of highly skilled, highly paid employees are investing in support for childcare, but childcare was not high on the list of priorities for retailers.
- Employers were prepared to offer flexibility to existing employees to help them manage childcare issues to the extent that this was sustainable for the business.
- In a low wage labour market such as retail, the business case to invest in childcare is weak compared to highly skilled sectors.
- The retail sector has been moving away from employing parents altogether because it had shifted to offer small hours contracts of no more than 12 hours a week.
- Some retailers do offer childcare vouchers and felt that they could do more to raise awareness about vouchers within their organisations. They felt that Government could do more to raise awareness of vouchers and their benefits among employers.
- Retailers would be prepared to direct employees to childcare provision if a provider decided to establish a nursery particularly targeted at city centre retailers.

## Policy background

The way that we set out to tackle child and family poverty and improve life chances continues to be influenced by government policy, economic conditions, local governance, delivery structures, and best practice evidence gained from independent research.

### National context

#### Child poverty Act 2010

The Child Poverty Act 2010 was enacted in 2010 and represented a landmark piece of legislation to eradicate child poverty by 2020, including a framework to monitor progress at a national and local level. It set out in legislation a requirement for Central Government to meet four child poverty targets by 2020, to publish a strategy every three years to meet the targets, and to report annually on progress.

Part 2 of the Act places a number of duties on local authorities and other local delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty. Specific duties include:

- Publication of a Local Child Poverty Needs Assessment;
- Publication of a Joint Local Child Poverty Strategy;
- Promote cooperation to reduce Child Poverty between local partners with a view to mitigating the effects of child poverty.

At the time of writing, the Government had just published the Welfare Reform and Work Bill which contains provisions to repeal almost all of the Child Poverty Act, including the local duties (see Welfare Reform and Work Bill below).

#### National targets

Our original strategy was set against the Government's four targets for eradicating child poverty by 2020, and represented the City Region's collective contribution to achieving those national targets. Despite a widespread belief that the Government is set to miss the targets by a wide margin, this strategy continues to represent the City Region contribution towards those targets.<sup>48</sup>

- **Absolute child poverty** (proportion of children living in households with net income below 60% of median household income for the year 2010/11).
- **Relative child poverty** (proportion of children living in households with net income below 60% of current median household income).
- **Combined low income and material deprivation** (proportion of children living in households with an income below 70% of current median household income who also experience material deprivation).
- **Persistent child poverty** (proportion of children experiencing relative poverty for at least three years out of four).

<sup>48</sup> Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014). Understanding the parental employment scenarios necessary to meet the 2020 Child Poverty Targets.

At the time of writing, the Government had announced that they will be replacing the four targets with an alternative measure of child poverty that is focussed on worklessness and educational attainment. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill, contains provisions to do this (see Welfare Reform and Work Bill below).

### **National child poverty strategy**

The Coalition Government published their first national child poverty strategy in 2011 to provide the framework for ending child poverty by 2020. It centred on tackling the causes of poverty rather than the symptoms.

A new national child poverty strategy was published in 2014 covering the years 2014-17. It builds on the Government's existing approach and draws on a range of existing Government policies to evidence action in the following three areas:

- Support families into work and increase their earnings;
- Improve living standards of low-income families; and
- Prevent poor children becoming poor adults by raising their educational attainment.

The national strategy asserts that agencies outside of Central Government have a key role to play in ending child poverty. It is essential that local partnerships, businesses and the community and voluntary sector should work together across local areas to transform the lives of the poorest children.

### **Welfare reform**

The Government's programme of welfare reform has initiated one of the widest reaching programmes of welfare reform that the country has ever seen, including introduction of Universal Credit, the 'bedroom tax', localisation of council tax support (including a 10% cut to overall funding), benefit cap, alongside reductions to the childcare element of working tax credit, freezes to working age benefits, and reduced rates of Local Housing Allowance.

It is expected that between now and 2020, changes to the tax and benefit system will see child poverty increase by around 1 million children nationally<sup>49</sup>. On top of that, households already in poverty face further reductions in income, intensifying and prolonging their experience of poverty.

### **Children and Families Act 2014**

The Children and Families Act contains provisions which impact on a number of key determinants of child poverty. This includes an overhaul of the adoption and family justice system, extension of the Special Educational Needs system, reform to childcare, and changes to employment policy to support better parenting. Implementation of these reforms will potentially have a positive effect on life chances of children and young people in the City Region.

### **Health and Social Care Act 2012**

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 the role of local authorities in the health system is extended through Health and Wellbeing Boards, and public health commissioning responsibilities have transferred to local authorities. The aim was to strengthen democratic legitimacy and ensure that commissioning is joined up across the NHS, social care and public health. The Act also restructured the way primary health services are commissioned and delivered, and has had major implications for child health services.

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<sup>49</sup> Child Poverty Action Group (2014). <http://www.cpag.org.uk/cpla/toolkit>

## Childcare Bill 2015/16

The Childcare Bill will provide for an increased entitlement to 30 hours a week of free childcare (for 38 weeks of the year) to be made to eligible working parents of three and four year olds. It will also require local authorities to publish information about provision of childcare in their local area.

## Summer Budget 2015

The Government's summer 2015 Emergency Budget statement contained announcements which will directly impact on family income, some of which will inevitably affect low income families - both positively and negatively.

- A compulsory National Living Wage for those aged over 25 of £7.20 per hour from April 2016, with the aim to increase up to 60% of average earnings by 2020. While this will help increase income for the lowest earning residents, it falls short of the Living Wage Foundation's level of £7.85.
- Limit public sector pay increases to 1% up to 2020.
- Working age benefits frozen for four years.
- Child element of tax credits and Universal Credit limited to first two children
- Lone parent benefit claimants will be expected to prepare for work when their youngest child turns two, and look for work when they turn three.
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group will be reduced to the same level of benefit as Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA).
- Annual household benefit cap will be reduced to £20,000.
- Replace Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies have identified that 13 million families could be negatively affected as a result of the changes to benefits and tax credits announced in the Budget 2015.

## Welfare Reform and Work Bill

The Welfare Reform and Work Bill was published at the time of writing and will implement some, but not all, of the measures announced in the Summer Budget 2015. In addition, the Bill will repeal almost all of the Child Poverty Act 2010:

- The local duties to produce a needs assessment, strategy, and for named partners to co-operate will be repealed;
- Four national child poverty targets repealed;
- Duty for the national government to publish a strategy repealed;
- Name and remit of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission changed so that it becomes the Social Mobility Commission;
- A new duty on the Secretary of State to report annually on measures of children in workless households and the educational attainment of children in England at the end of Key Stage 4.

## City Region context

Liverpool City Region authorities have a strong track record of working together in partnership on shared strategic priorities. City region partners recognise that failure to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty will mean many children growing up in poverty today will become parents of children in poverty tomorrow and this can only have a negative impact on the economic prospects of the sub-region. Child poverty was identified as a priority for the City Region in 2010 and with it a Child and Family Poverty Framework was commissioned to join up efforts across the city region.

The creation of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Combined Authority has given the City Region additional levers to build on existing approaches to increase employment and skills and address barriers to the labour market, placing businesses and leaders in a key leadership role for addressing some of the drivers of child poverty.

The City Region approach has been strengthened further in recent years following agreement with Central Government over the City Region Growth Deal that brings together

local, national and private funding, as well as new freedoms and flexibilities to focus on four key priority areas identified in the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan. It is intended that this will create a total new investment package of £262.3m for the City Region, and by 2021 will create at least 10,000 new jobs. The City Region will have flexibility over management of projects within the deal in order to deliver the greatest economic benefits to the area.

This strategy has been formulated using a range of evidence and focuses on areas that we can make the biggest difference to tackling child and family poverty using the City Region arrangements. This strategy is not a standalone document and continues to support and be supported by other key City Region strategies including:

- Merseyside Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and Halton LTP3.
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority: A Transport Plan for Growth (2015)
- Liverpool City Region Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan
- City Region Skills for Growth Sector Plans



## Independent research

There is a wealth of recognised literature and research that informs our thinking around the drivers of child and family poverty, and the most appropriate methods to tackle the causes and symptoms.

Our approach set out in this strategy remains influenced by a number of high profile national reviews, as well as new research published by respected research organisations.

### **The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults (Frank Field MP, 2010)<sup>50</sup>**

The Field review was commissioned by the Coalition Government during its initial months in office in 2010 to inform thinking about child and family poverty, and approaches to tackle it. The review concluded that the UK needs to address poverty in a fundamentally different way to make real change to children's life chances as adults. The main recommendations from the review were for Government to establish life chances indicators to measure equality in life outcomes for children, and for national and local government to establish the 'Foundation Years' as equal status and importance as primary and secondary school years. This review was a fundamental influence on our original strategy, and remains so.

### **Early Intervention: The Next Steps (Graham Allen MP, 2011)<sup>51</sup>**

At the same time, the Coalition Government also commissioned Graham Allen MP to conduct a review of early intervention. The review called for political parties to make a long-term commitment to early intervention to provide children with the essential social and emotional security they need to realise their full potential. He suggests that provision

of successful evidence-based early intervention programmes remains hindered by institutional and financial obstacles, and makes a number of recommendations to encourage the roll out and adoption of proven cost effective early intervention programmes.

### **State of the nation 2014 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014)<sup>52</sup>**

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's State of the Nation report assesses the Government's progress towards achieving the child poverty targets. The report assesses what the UK Government is doing, what progress is being made, and what is likely to happen in the future by examining the role of employers and professions, councils and colleges, schools and universities, parents and charities. The findings concluded that:

- It is almost certain that the target to reduce child poverty to below 10% by 2020 will not be met;
- Changes to welfare and fiscal policy are hitting the poorest hardest, making it even harder to reduce child poverty;
- Britain is increasingly unequal, and social mobility is failing to address this;
- There is no clear plan from any party that will make a big difference to this.

The Commission makes 12 recommendations, and include introducing new child poverty targets to give a more rounded view of poverty, ensuring that the working poor are protected from further welfare and fiscal changes, making a commitment to the UK becoming a Living Wage country by 2025 at the latest, ensuring that all children are school ready by 2025, and launching a national parenting campaign.

<sup>50</sup> Field F (2010). The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults, London: Cabinet Office.

<sup>51</sup> Allen G (2011). Early Intervention: The Next Steps, London: Cabinet Office

<sup>52</sup> Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014). State of the Nation 2014: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain. London.

### **A UK without poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014)<sup>53</sup>**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2014 overview of poverty reasserts the case for tackling poverty, and presents policy options available to central and local Government. There is no single response that will succeed on its own, but there is a need to account for the nature of jobs at the bottom end of the labour market, the cost of essential goods and services, and choices that affect whether people are able to reach their potential. At the time of writing, Joseph Rowntree Foundation was developing these ideas further and will publish the UK's first costed, evidence-based anti-poverty strategy for all ages. We have used the evidence from this work to shape our response as new evidence and recommendations emerge.

### **A Fair Start for Every Child (Save the Children, 2014)<sup>54</sup>**

Save the Children produced this report out of increasing concerns over observations of the increasing scale of child poverty and need for early intervention across the country. It sets out policy options for policy makers to consider in response to years of flat wage growth, recent pressure on social security spending, and the rising cost of living including the 'poverty premium'. It calls for a fair start for all children by the age of 11 and identifies key asks of Government to achieve that:

1. Every family to have access to high-quality and affordable childcare;
2. A minimum income guarantee for the families of children under five; and
3. National mission for all children to be reading well by 11.

### **Getting by? A year in the life of 30 working families in Liverpool (Praxis, 2015)<sup>55</sup>**

This valuable piece of research was commissioned by Liverpool's Mayoral Action Group on Poverty and describes the experiences of thirty Liverpool families in low paid employment over the course of a year. Through weekly spending diaries tracking their income and expenses, and regular in-depth interviews, it reveals the challenges faced in their daily lives during 2014. They are typical of many families across the Liverpool City Region and provides valuable insight into the 'real issues' being faced by low income working families through their own voices.

The evidence from this report has influenced a number of the recommendations put forward in this strategy, specifically in relation to low pay, employment conditions and the cost of childcare under the priority for 'Fair employment'. The report also offers valuable insight into the costs of living faced by working families, particularly in relation to transport and school costs, as well as the impact of low income on family health.

### **Due North - report of the Inquiry on Health Equity for the North (Inquiry Panel on Health Equity for the North of England, 2014)<sup>56</sup>**

The University of Liverpool, Centre for Local Economic Strategies jointly published this major report to identify actions that can reduce the gap in health between the north and the rest of England and between different socioeconomic groups within the north. The report details that the root causes of health inequalities are the same across the country - differences between groups in poverty, power and resources needed for health. It is the severity of the causes that is greater in the north and results in the north having persistently poorer health than the rest of England.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014). A UK without poverty.

<sup>54</sup> Save the Children, (2014). A fair start for every child - why we must act now to tackle child poverty in the UK.

<sup>55</sup> Praxis (2015). Getting By? The lives of 30 working families on low incomes.

<sup>56</sup> Inquiry Panel on Health Equity for the North of England (2014). Due North: the report of the Inquiry on Health Equity for the North.

The report highlights how northern agencies can make the best use of newly devolved powers to do things more effectively and equitably and sets out what organisations and communities in the north can do for themselves to address unfair differences in health. Agencies need to come together to prevent poverty and promote prosperity through provision of high quality early years education and childcare, to promote a living wage; to use joint spending power to promote good employment; and to improve the quality and affordability of housing.

The findings of the report offer valuable additional evidence to supplement what we already know about child poverty locally. The recommendations both support the existing approach we are undertaking in the Liverpool City Region to tackle child poverty, and also evidence what more we can do in developing actions to deliver our priorities.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

CHILD POVERTY AND LIFE CHANCES COMMISSION



*Knowsley Council*