

# Progress in Tackling Child Poverty in England – Local Authority approaches

Presentation for Glasgow's Healthier Future Forum

Dr Julie Nelson

15<sup>th</sup> December 2011



# Background to the research

- Commissioned by LGA
- Short study, November 2010 to March 2011
- Evaluated LA progress in relation to new duties under the Child Poverty Act (2010)
  - Cooperation
  - Understanding needs
  - Development and delivery of a strategy
- Based on in-depth telephone interviews with 43 strategic personnel across nine case-study areas – all chosen as examples of promising practice



# Status of Child Poverty

- Tackling child poverty generally considered high priority. Influencing factors:
  - Scale of deprivation/demographics of LA
  - Impacts of budget and restructuring
  - Extent to which child poverty viewed as ‘cross-cutting’
  - Views of elected members
- Concerns about lack of statutory, prescriptive guidance and support for LAs:

*‘My fear is that unless organisations are compelled to work together to tackle child poverty, they will retreat into their own silos and only do their core business.’*



# Cooperation

- Most local child poverty partnerships well developed
- Key ingredients for success:
  - Commitment to a common goal + an outcomes focus
  - Good leadership, and effective use of people's time
  - Cross sector representation; operational and strategic
  - Involvement of VCS
- But:
  - involving private sector and children and young people is difficult
  - Pooling budgets is challenging



# Understanding Need

- Most partnerships had already completed CPNAs
- The biggest challenge was accessing and sharing data. Why?
  - Data protection
  - Different data-collection processes
  - Encouraging data sharing
  - Incorporating qualitative data
  - Gaining 'real time' data



# Developing the Strategy

- Most partnerships had drafted their strategies and were beginning to consolidate their plans
- Generally a relatively smooth transition from CPNA to strategy. What aided this?
  - Continuity of representation
  - CPNA viewed as a *'prelude to the strategy'*
  - Links between needs in CPNA and actions in strategy
  - CPNA and strategy *'live documents'*
- But, children and young people were rarely involved. Why?
  - High-level document; cost; sensitivity; 'false promises'.



# Case study: children and young people's views as a strategy development starter

In this LA area the leaving care service helped young people to create a DVD about the realities of living with disadvantage.

The DVD was shared at the local strategic child poverty partnership meeting and its messages were *'taken on board'* by the group.

The views and experiences of the young people were used to inform sections of the strategy and the DVD was used as a powerful tool to help launch the strategy across the Local Strategic Partnership.



# Impact of the Strategy

- Although strategy development well underway, there were concerns about impact. Why?
  - Budget reductions and service reconfiguration
  - Impact of economic climate on families
  - Challenge of tackling inter-generational poverty
- So, what were LAs doing to maximise impact?
  - Small, specific, manageable steps
  - Focusing effort at the level of the family/locality
  - Targeting specific ‘need’ groups
  - ‘Poverty-proofing’ all LA strategies



# From Strategy to Action

- Almost all case-study areas already adopting various interventions to tackle child poverty
- In most areas these were pre-existing interventions aiming to:
  - reduce worklessness
  - improve financial literacy
  - improve health outcomes
  - give children the best start in life.
- But, one area had planned a coordinated CP intervention project as a result of its CP strategy



# Case study: Effective implementation planning

This child poverty partnership developed frontline training for a wide range of staff, who did not necessarily typically work with families in poverty.

Additionally, a new service – the ‘multi-agency bus’ was developed, jointly coordinated by CAB, the Credit Union and the LA benefits team.

Families are able to visit the bus (which parks near the places that they visit) for a ‘financial health check’ while their children are being cared for.



# Recommendations for effective practice

- Keeping the profile high:
  - **Policy**: ‘morale boosting’, funding, Big Society
  - **LAs**: partnership positioning, elected member ‘buy in’,
- Effective collaboration:
  - **Policy**: advice on budget pooling, evidence of ‘what works’, ways to attract the private sector
  - **LAs**: Diverse representation, outcomes focus
- Ensuring impact:
  - **Policy**: ‘prescription’, timely prevalence data, guidance on data protection, CPNA/strategy guidance
  - **LAs**: wider than children’s services, family focused



For further details on NFER's Child  
Poverty Work, please visit:  
[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

or contact

Julie Nelson at: [j.nelson@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:j.nelson@nfer.ac.uk)

