

## **Child Poverty**

**20 February 2008**

**Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government**

The Assembly Government is driving forward a cross cutting agenda for improving the lives of children and young people, based on partnership working and implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All our policies and programmes for children and young people are required to contribute to seven core aims that summarise these rights. Core aim 7 states that we must ensure children and young people in Wales are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Eradicating poverty and improving the life chances of our children is at the top of the list of priorities for the Assembly Government Cabinet and for me in my capacity as Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.

Tackling child poverty in all its forms is complex and cross-cutting. It requires strong partnership working with our external partners – in the UK Government and with our external partners in both the public and the private sectors, as well as within the Welsh Assembly Government itself.

The UK Government's targets to halve child poverty by 2010/11 on the way to eradication by 2020 remain. Significant progress has been made with 600,000 fewer children in relative poverty in the UK in 2005/06 than in 1998/99. The package of reforms to the personal tax and benefit system outlined in the UK Budget 2007, will help lift a further 200,000 children out of poverty by 2008/9. Additionally, the measures outlined in the October 2007 PBR/CSR will reduce the numbers of children in poverty by an additional 100,000.

Although a substantial number of the key levers to meet the child poverty targets are reserved to Westminster, I am determined that the Assembly Government must continue to do whatever it can to help achieve our shared child poverty objectives so that we can go on making a significant contribution to improving the life chances of our most disadvantaged children, and building on that further.

### **Progress to Date**

Evidence shows that we have made good progress in recent years. Poverty rates for children here have come down to below the GB average for the first time. An analysis of child benefit statistics tells us that the number of children in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the 1998/99 median income (after housing costs), held constant in real terms, fell by around 100,000 in Wales between 1989 and 2006. However, there is no room for complacency with 28% of children in Wales still living in households with incomes below 60 per cent of the median and we know that there has been less progress on the downward trend very recently.

Assembly Government policy in this area has been shaped in recent years by the report of the independent Child Poverty Task Group in June 2004; our Child Poverty Strategy, 'A Fair Future for our Children', published in February 2005 and by the proposals set out in the Child Poverty Implementation Plan, published in May 2006. Many of those proposals have been taken forward. These include publication of specific cross cutting milestones and targets on child poverty, child poverty proofing of strategic policies and programmes for their impact on child poverty and reviewing the role of the Cymorth grant programme. Other proposals have been reflected in our 'One Wales' agreement and work is ongoing.

My Cabinet colleagues and I are fully aware of the need to continue to build on the impetus to our efforts in Wales. We have already provided a range of policies and programmes in place across the Assembly Government aimed at tackling child poverty and investment in the early years continues to be a strong feature of this third Assembly Government. However, we need to be sure that these policies are working and that they are proofed to deliver the further improvements necessary.

### **Future Direction**

Future action will focus on three strands:

Strand 1 - Improving life opportunities for disadvantaged children;

Strand 2 - financial inclusion initiatives; and

Strand 3 - Encouraging greater uptake of the UK Government tax and benefits support.

### **Strand 1 – Improving Life Opportunities for Disadvantaged Children**

In tackling child poverty we recognise children and young people are rarely disadvantaged in just one parameter of their life experience. To give our most vulnerable children and young people the best start in life we must identify those who are at greatest disadvantage and intervene effectively and early in life to promote their opportunities and mitigate the barriers to a better life.

The Assembly Government itself is determined to utilise all the tools at its disposal in tackling child poverty. Using our new powers we have already begun the process of reforming the law in relation to vulnerable children in Wales, including action on child poverty.

A draft Legislative Competence Order giving effect to this commitment was laid in the Assembly on 9 July 2007. The LCO will seek to allow the Assembly to have broad powers to make Measures across a wide spectrum of social welfare for children and young people in Wales. It will provide us with the powers to take forward some of our early actions in tackling child poverty and to bring greater accountability at national and local level to this agenda, building on existing anti-poverty programmes such as Flying Start, Cymorth and Communities First. The LCO will also allow the Assembly Government to rationalise and consolidate the law and to bring forward coherent policies that are best suited to Wales for children in care, those leaving care and other children living in vulnerable families.

Evidence shows that a high number of children in care are from socially disadvantaged families with complex needs and where poverty is frequently an associated causal factor. Building on the Children First programme we will consult later this summer on a strategy for vulnerable children to provide greater support to children and vulnerable families so that those children can live in safety and good health in their family home.

### **Early Years and Education**

Our 'Flying Start' initiative is targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales, recognising the evidence that children within areas of multiple deprivation suffer additional effects of disadvantage. It builds on and complements existing valuable work done under the Sure Start theme of the Cymorth grant scheme. There is provision of £31 million for Flying Start in 2007-08. The Budget provides for a 10% increase in the scope of the programme over the next 3 years. This will mean an extra 1,600 children will benefit from the programme – 17,600 children in total.

The programme is based on international evidence of the interventions that support improved outcomes for children in the long term and includes free, good quality childcare, additional health visiting, and parenting programmes. The programme is currently targeted at a deliberately limited number of school catchment areas in order to invest intensely but may be widened in future years in the light of evaluation.

We will be introducing the Foundation Phase from September which recognises that each child is different and it is vitally important that the opportunities they are given foster a positive attitude to education. The Foundation Phase encourages children to become self-reliant, enjoy challenge and acquire positive attitudes to learning. It is about developing children's aspirations, motivation and socialisation. The future benefits of the Foundation Phase will lead to a reduction in disaffection and support those children facing disadvantage and poverty of opportunity.

Raising educational attainment levels and, in particular, narrowing the gap in performance between those children from low income families and their contemporaries is a fundamental component in the fight to tackle child poverty and reduce the effects of disadvantage. The RAISE programme is specifically targeted at disadvantaged pupils in order to raise levels of performance. £16m has been allocated to tackle the link between social deprivation and underachievement in Wales in each of 2006/07 and 2007/08. Of this, £14.6m has been allocated to schools each year with £1m set aside to support the education of Looked After Children.

As a further benefit to our most disadvantaged children our free school breakfasts programme began in Communities First areas and is now available to all schools wishing to participate.

Provision of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is crucial. Total expenditure on SEN provision by LEAs in 2007-08 is budgeted to be £307 million. This represents an increase of 6.5% on the previous year's budget. A further £7.7m was allocated through the local government settlement this year in recognition of the increasing costs of providing for the complex needs of children with SEN, of which £1.7m is particularly to support provision of specialist services for children with autism. In addition, substantial additional support has been made available to Local Authorities through a number of specific grant schemes that can be used to support pupils with SEN and disadvantaged groups.

Rather than introduce a compulsion to participate in learning beyond the age of 16, our vision, as set out in One Wales is to transform learning provision for young people by providing attractive, flexible learning options matched by enhanced support and guidance. If enacted, our proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008, will make this a legal entitlement for all learners. We believe that by increasing the quantity and quality of the options available to young people they will want to continue to participate in learning and training and will be able to see the value in doing so.

To underpin 14-19 Learning Pathways, we also need a strengthened set of obligations on providers. Our Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008 proposes placing a duty on local education authorities, schools and further education institutions to cooperate in the delivery of a local options menu for young people.

We will also shortly introduce a consultation document aimed at reducing the proportion of young people outside of the system - those not in education, employment or in training (NEET). This will be the first in a series of themed papers making proposals to address issues identified in Skills that Work for Wales - our draft skills and employment strategy. The paper will propose changes so that we have efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging young people who become NEET; a full range of learning options to meet demand - to

engage young people through sufficient provision at every level and in every style of learning and more targeted and intensive learning and personal support as well as careers advice and guidance to make sure young people know how to access education, training or employment and to enable them to overcome sometimes significant personal barriers to participation.

Improving both basic and work related skills are important elements in our child poverty strategy. The policies already set out in the Assembly Government's basic skills strategy, 'Words Talk, Numbers Count' and in the 'Skills and Employment Action Plan 2005' aim to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. A new Skills and Employment Strategy for Wales has recently been published for consultation.

## **Employment Support**

Acknowledging the crucial role of childcare in reducing disadvantage and increasing employment rates we have made a commitment to progressing provision of universal, affordable childcare, with additional budget support during this Assembly term, including extended free, high quality childcare for 2yr-olds in areas of greatest need. The Childcare Act 2006 will require local authorities to secure sufficient childcare places for parents who want to work or train, as far as is reasonably practicable, with particular reference to the parents of disabled children, those wishing Welsh-medium provision and those in receipt of Working Tax Credit.

The affordability of good quality childcare is a critical factor and assistance is provided through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Overall, the number of childcare places registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales has increased by 13,000 since 1999. The Inspectorate registered 795 new settings in 2006-7, compared with 612 new childcare settings in 2005-6 and 517 settings in 2004-5.

In addition, Genesis Wales deployed European Social Funds to support 10,000 beneficiaries, with advice, confidence building and childcare to remove barriers to work and training. The Assembly Government is currently preparing a successor project to Genesis Wales. If approved, it will be firmly rooted in the Lisbon Agenda to increase employment and reduce economic inactivity.

Work is the best route out of poverty for most poor people and increasing economic activity levels by helping more people into jobs remains a key priority. That strategy is evidenced by the successful work we have carried out with Jobcentre Plus to scope and develop the Want2Work initiative. The programme, which provides help to those people already on benefit to voluntarily move into sustained employment, has already exceeded its target to help a thousand people into work this year; by October 2007 the programme had already helped over 1,750 people into work. Building on this we are now working with Jobcentre Plus to expand Want2Work into other areas across Wales where there are higher rates of disadvantaged people who want help and support to find work.

Since many children living in poverty are in families headed by a lone parent it is therefore vitally important that lone parents are helped and supported throughout the transition to employment and training. By working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, this Assembly Government is supporting the New Deal for Lone Parents which offers work focussed support, financial incentives and childcare advice and provision. This environment of help and support must continue as we strive to attain our targets for lone parent employment and as the UK Government's Welfare reform programme is implemented in Wales.

The Assembly Government has also worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on a project to tackle worklessness in some of the most deprived wards in the UK.

The 'City Strategy' project aims to deliver a significant improvement in the working age employment rate, particularly for disadvantaged groups. It will provide the help these people need to find and remain in work, and to improve their skills so that they can progress in employment. The 'Cities Strategy' pathfinder areas in Wales are the Heads of the Valleys and Rhyl, both of which are now delivering against challenging targets set by DWP to reduce worklessness, benefit dependency and child poverty.

### **Health Interventions**

The link between poverty and poor health is well established. One of the most effective ways of setting all our children on the road to good health is by giving them the opportunity to have a strong nutritional basis for the future. Breastfeeding provides the best first food for babies. Research shows that women who leave education the earliest and who have the lowest incomes are the least likely to breastfeed their babies. The Assembly Government's Breastfeeding Strategy, "Investing in a Better Start", has been established to increase the breastfeeding rates in Wales. We have funded 22 Breastfeeding Peer Support Schemes to focus on the needs of the youngest mothers across Wales and health professionals and volunteers are working together in areas of greatest social need.

The Children's National Service Framework will contribute to the achievement of the Assembly Government's seven core aims for children and young people by improving quality and reducing variations in service delivery through the setting of national standards. These standards have been set not just for health and social care but also for other local government services which have a strong influence on the health and well-being of children.

The Assembly Government is working closely with the National Public Health Service to identify actions which will assist in the achievement of the health related milestones and targets in 'Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success'. Action plans relating to low birth weight/infant mortality and teenage conceptions are under preparation for Ministerial consideration.

We know that there is considerable variation in the prevalence of dental decay across Wales but the situation is worse and deteriorating in deprived areas. On 13 November 2006 the Minister for Health and Social Services announced the development of a National Oral Health Action Plan for Wales. This will set out to provide a long-term plan of action designed to improve oral health with a range of actions designed to achieve that goal. It will encourage individuals to take better control of their oral health, guide dental practices to focus more on preventive care and enable commissioners to tackle long standing oral health inequalities. In doing so it will also work toward achieving the Assembly Government's child poverty targets.

Smoking rates are highest among disadvantaged groups and are one of the main determinants of health inequalities. Therefore, we have put in place a co-ordinated programme of smoking prevention initiatives. We are funding 'Stop Smoking Wales' an initiative which provides advice and support to smokers who want to give up and focuses particularly on the needs of disadvantaged groups when developing and delivering its services. The Assembly Government is also supporting the roll-out across Wales of the ASSIST peer support programme, which aims to educate young people in Year 8 about the risks of smoking and encourage them not to smoke. The programme is initially targeting schools in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. In addition, Smokebugs is a club for 9-11 year-olds who pledge to remain smokefree and the Smokefree Class Competition is targeted at 11-13 year olds in all secondary schools in Wales.

### **Improving Life Chances**

We are committed to working across Government to improve service delivery and outcomes for children with disabilities. A newly established Task Group comprising members of the Disabled Children Matters Campaign and senior officials has been set up to advise Ministers and take work forward in this important area. In addition, the Children and Young People Cabinet Committee will play a vital role in co-ordinating policy and programmes for disabled children and will help to tackle issues of fragmentation and complexity of service provision, which can be particularly acute for families of disabled children.

Young carers face particular disadvantage and need additional help and support. This is one of the five priority areas for action under the Assembly Government's Carers' Strategy. Our young carers' policies are based on the general principle that young carers should not be expected to undertake inappropriate levels of caring that have an adverse effect on their personal development. Through the establishment, in 2006, of a new participatory structure the Assembly Government is able to listen to young carers themselves so that they have a say in what the priorities should be and to ensure that they can participate in the development of policies that affect them. There are young carers' projects in every local authority area in Wales, operated by voluntary sector organisations, with places for over 1,500 young carers. And we are currently reviewing our "Caring for Young Carers" training resource for schools and will be publishing a report in the Spring.

Improving access to sport and physical activity for disadvantaged children is key and we fully recognise the importance of ensuring the availability of adequate play facilities. Our new network of integrated children's centres incorporates free open access term time play facilities in all local authorities in Wales.

'Planning Policy Wales' aims to protect playing fields from development, except where this would enhance existing provision, where alternative provision can be made, or where there is excessive provision in a particular area. Local authorities should set out policies for sport and recreation in their local development plans. They must also consult the Sports Council for Wales before granting planning permission where development affects a playing field, or land used as a playing field in the last 5 years. We are working to strengthen the safeguards already in place.

The Assembly Government will also continue to invest £5m a year to provide free access to local authority swimming pools for children and young people during school holidays and will explore extending the scheme to other activities and at weekends to encourage easier access to sport and physical activity.

Recognising the links between child pedestrian casualties and poverty, we have provided funding to local authorities to implement schemes that help children walk and cycle to and from school safely. In 2007-08 we allocated £5.1 million to projects across the country. This takes our support for the programme to £27 million since its inception in 1999-2000. A new Safe Routes in Communities programme will be operational from April helping to improve road safety and develop walking and cycling links within local communities.

### **Children and Young People's Participation**

The Assembly Government's approach to children and young people's participation is based on the principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 sets out the right of all children and young people to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure which affects them. "Rights to Action" sets out the Assembly Government position in more detail.

In order to take forward participation at a national level in Wales, we are supporting a Participation Consortium which is facilitated by Save the Children Cymru and involves representatives from children and young people's umbrella organisations throughout Wales. There are also many initiatives taking place to raise awareness of participation within

Assembly Government departments and to train children and young people on how to become involved in our work.

Extending Entitlement aims to promote access to 10 entitlements for young people across Wales. Each Entitlement for young people within this agenda aims to ensure that young people aged 11-25 have the opportunity to access a range of support and services as and when they need them in order to make informed life choices. During the past three years, through ESF funding, partners across Wales have undertaken additional work with over 40,000 young people to improve their access to entitlements and improve skills.

At a national level the Clic project has been the information and advice project for young people aged 11-25 and has provided information for young people on a range of topics of interest linked to wider resources. Amongst other topics this has included information on money and includes links to other sources of advice and information.

### **Community Based Intervention**

The spatial element and the value of targeting resources cannot be ignored. To that end, addressing child poverty is one of the key priorities for Communities First as the Programme moves into its Communities Next phase. We are now consulting on our vision for Communities Next and we will be working with partners to ensure that initiatives to address child poverty work with and through the Communities First Partnerships as much as possible. Communities Next also envisages a greater emphasis on income generation and improving job prospects. This will make an important contribution to the fight against child poverty; improving these circumstances for families is recognised as the most effective way of lifting children out of poverty.

As with all our citizens, the accommodation needs of children and young people are an integral element of our National Housing Strategy, 'Better Homes for People in Wales' and strands of the Strategy focus specifically on children and young people's accommodation needs. In terms of the quality and appropriateness of homes, the linkages to academic attainment and well-being of our children are recognised and influential factors like overcrowding and 'unfitness' are being tackled through the measures introduced by the Health and Safety Rating System.

Our agenda to prevent homelessness and improve the conditions of people in temporary accommodation as set out in our Homelessness Strategy has secured dramatic improvements in the numbers of families in Bed and Breakfast establishments. From September 2006 to September 2007 the numbers of families in B&B dropped from 134 to 32, a fall of 76%.

In addition, our Supporting People programme provides assistance to tackle the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable groups such as young single homeless and young offenders. In 2001 the Assembly Government introduced the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order which extended the protection of homelessness legislation to young people who are aged 18-20 and who at any time in their lives have been in care. The Order also obliges local authorities to secure housing for people in this age group who are at risk of sexual or financial exploitation, as well as all 16 and 17 year olds.'

The commitment to tackle overcrowding in households with dependent children forms part of our child poverty targets outlined in '*Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*' and we have recently consulted on overcrowding in Wales seeking views on how the current space standard and bedroom standard might be amended. This has been followed up by a more targeted approach to individual authorities. Supporting families coping with disability is paramount and the Assembly Government abolished the means-test for Disabled

Facilities Grants for disabled children in September 2005 in order improve the application process and access to these grants.

### **Strands 2 & 3: Financial Inclusion and uptake of UK Government support**

Maximising family income is crucial. It is true that many of the issues involved in over-indebtedness and the potential solutions are not devolved but we will continue to work across Government to ensure that Wales benefits from UK level resources and initiatives. The recently announced Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed that the Financial Inclusion Fund for 2008-11 will contain £130 million. Wales has previously benefited from the Fund to the tune of almost £4.4 million and we will ensure that we receive the appropriate proportion of this new funding to tackle financial exclusion across Wales.

The Assembly Government is itself able to make significant in-roads to address financial exclusion and we will publish a comprehensive Financial Inclusion Strategy later this year to bring all this work together. We will build on the foundations laid by the Review of Over-indebtedness and will include activity to bolster financial literacy in schools, support the credit union movement, improve access to debt advisers and challenge illegal money-lending.

‘One Wales’ commits the Assembly Government to ensuring that comprehensive benefit advice is available in all local authority areas. Work to identify the gaps in advice provision has begun and this will also take into account the future delivery of advice services, as outlined in the Legal Services Commission/Assembly Government policy document “Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales”.

We will build on the work already undertaken in partnership with local authorities in Wales and the Third Sector in successfully increasing uptake of Council Tax Benefit, and will extend this to include Housing Benefit. We will ensure that an integrated approach is taken to income maximisation to ensure people, including low income families with children, take up the benefits to which they are entitled. We will build stronger relationships and clearer referral systems between local authorities and JobCentre Plus by building on the good practice of existing initiatives such as Link Age and Better Advice, Better Health. We will also seek to ensure that improvements in benefit uptake should be a priority for all programmes that interact with vulnerable families.

Recognising the importance of early intervention, improving financial literacy education in schools is a priority. The changes we plan for our curriculum in Wales will outstrip and exceed in scope those recently announced by the UK Government. By September 2008 financial literacy will be formally taught to all children – under both the personal and social education and mathematics frameworks for all children from ages 7 to 19 and 7 to 16 respectively.

Credit unions make an invaluable contribution to increasing access to financial services for disadvantaged social groups. We are committed to establishing this form of social enterprise throughout Wales. We have already invested £1.75 million in the credit union movement in Wales including £250,000 in 2007-2008. Credit unions now operate in 21 of our 22 local authority areas. There is, of course, work still to be done in developing the capacity of credit unions to expand the vital services they provide and in moving them towards financial sustainability.

Many credit unions in Wales have already developed partnerships with local schools and are contributing to the provision of this essential part of the curriculum. All credit unions offer junior membership which allows young people access to secure savings accounts and advice on money management. We are committed to extending this involvement and will invest a



further £1.25 million over the next three years in developing credit unions and enabling them to provide credit union access for all secondary school pupils by 2011.

The Child Trust Fund provides every child with a valuable asset. Parents and guardians need to have a wide variety of account options to encourage as many as possible to deposit the voucher. We are already delivering, with local authorities, a Child Trust Fund Reimbursement Scheme for 'looked after' children, which reimburses authorities up to £50 per year per child in their care. We will also invest £2.5m from 2009/10 via a Welsh premium to the Child Trust Fund which will provide an additional payment of £50 to every child, rising to £100 for the most disadvantaged, as they enter full-time education. We also intend to build on the work of Assembly Government funded pilots to encourage as many credit unions as possible to begin offering Child Trust Fund accounts.

### **Delivering Change**

Acknowledging the importance of joined up policy development and delivery, we have taken steps at national level, through setting up a Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People, chaired by the Minister for Children, to make sure that cross-cutting responsibilities for children and young people, including in respect of child poverty, are coordinated effectively across Government.

A support group of senior officials from the relevant policy departments with a Ministerial Chair has been established to support the work of the Cabinet Committee. This will ensure that Government action in respect of poverty is fully coherent and focussed. This responds to the comments of the Deputy Children's Commissioner in her latest report, published last October, in which she urges full and coherent implementation across all our programmes that focus on child poverty.

Ensuring that tackling child poverty is a top priority across the whole of the Welsh public sector is also key. When the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty LCO comes into force, we will seek to introduce a Measure to establish a duty on public agencies to make and demonstrate their contribution to ending child poverty by consolidating existing legislation and ensuring that all public bodies in Wales operate under consistent statutory duties.

I am aware that the new legislative process is lengthy and so in the shorter term the Assembly Government will work collaboratively to develop a voluntary agreement, in full consultation with the sectors concerned, to confirm existing statutory requirements and highlight areas where a number of organisations are tackling child poverty. This will help to ensure that public agencies prioritise child poverty. A number of public agencies have already been working to take action on child poverty. For example, using Assembly Government funding two local authorities – RCT and Gwynedd – are taking part in a 2 year pilot project led by Save the Children and the WLGA to ensure that action on child poverty is at the top of the list of priorities for local government.

Action is needed at both a national and local level. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities are responsible for taking a lead in local Children and Young People's Partnerships to develop Children and Young People's Plans. These 3 year strategic plans set out the agreed priorities for improving outcomes that direct the work of all partners, including in relation to child poverty.

Local authorities working with their partners can play a significant role in addressing child poverty. Action taken to provide advice on benefits, affordable housing, services for homeless families and, effective support for vulnerable children can increase quality of life for the most disadvantaged.

In addition to these internal arrangements, I have agreed the establishment of an independent Child Poverty Expert Group, to be chaired by Huw Lewis AM. The Group will be asked to provide me with evidenced based advice on the wider and further policy requirements necessary to meet our 2010 and 2020 child poverty targets. This Group is currently being established in accordance with the rules on public appointments and will begin its work in April 2008.

In view of the significant implications for Wales on those issues that are non-devolved the Assembly Government will maintain close contact with the new Whitehall Child Poverty Unit. A meeting of key officials took place on 22 January where it was agreed that a new official level Child Poverty Four Countries' Forum on child poverty will meet quarterly to strengthen the links across the UK Governments as we strive to meet the child poverty targets.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In response to the findings of the UNICEF report earlier this year, our view is that child poverty should be set firmly in the wider context of overall child well-being. A recent review of Welsh data, to check whether the picture in Wales differs from that being described for the UK as a whole in the report, has demonstrated the importance of us having easy access to up-to-date and reliable data on child well-being in Wales. Therefore, from September 2008, the Assembly Government will be producing a three-yearly Child Well-Being Monitor, to track the quality of life of children and young people in Wales across a range of dimensions, including child poverty. The Monitor will be the vehicle by which progress on our cross-cutting child poverty targets will be measured.

Tackling the scourge of child poverty is a fundamental component of this Assembly Government's social justice agenda. Our new programme of partnership government outlined in the 'One Wales' agreement reaffirms our commitment to doing everything in the Assembly Government's power to assist in reaching the goal of eliminating child poverty by 2020.