

**6.1** Looking ahead to the Government's long-term goal to eradicate child poverty by 2020, the child poverty review has considered whether the existing strategy is the right one. The Government still believes that the most efficient and sustainable way of reducing child poverty will involve:

- ensuring decent family incomes through full employment and a modern tax and benefit system based on the principle of progressive universalism;
- helping parents who can work into work through active labour market policies, making work pay, supporting family friendly working practices, tackling the barriers to employment, and helping progression in work;
- support for parents in their parenting role so that they can confidently guide their children through key life transitions; and
- delivering excellent public services that improve children's lives in the short term and help break cycles of deprivation in the long term.

**6.2** Making further progress requires cross-Government action. The new suite of Public Services Agreements (PSAs) for the 2004 Spending Review will play a key part. In particular the new set of floor targets, aimed at levering up the performance of public services in deprived areas towards the national average, will make an important contribution. Annex C lists the PSA targets that contribute to tackling child poverty.

**6.3** The preceding chapters have provided an overview of the key policies for the 2004 Spending Review and the longer term that are designed to improve poor children's immediate outcomes and break cycles of deprivation through enhancing equal opportunities.

**6.4** The child poverty review has reinforced the importance of the contribution of a wide range of public services in tackling child poverty in a sustainable way – financial support for families and getting parents into work need to be complemented by mainstream public service interventions that meet the needs of poor families and children. Action is therefore required across a number of fronts if child poverty is to be reduced in a sustainable manner. Moreover, measures which help tackle child poverty can help achieve wider Government objectives: in furthering the goal of employment opportunity for all; reducing social exclusion; improving the health of the nation and in preventing crime.

**6.5** Tackling child poverty involves cross-Government effort. While the child poverty target is owned by HM Treasury and the Department for Work and Pensions, it is clear that several other departments have had and will continue to have major contributions to make. Following the publication of *Every child matters*, children's services have been brought together under a new Minister for Children and Families. These changes will support more joined-up policy development and delivery for early years services, education, parenting support and wider children's services. Action has already been taken to combine a range of children's policy areas in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), for example Children's Social Services and Family Policy, and to give DfES the lead role in co-ordinating a 'Change for Children' programme to implement the Green Paper across Government. The programme of change for children will be developed and delivered through the broadest possible partnership and on the basis of a new relationship between Government and all those concerned.

**6.6** It is also vital to work in partnership with the Devolved Administrations to tackle child poverty. Responsibility for public services such as education, health and housing, is devolved to the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, who therefore have a key role to play in breaking cycles of deprivation for poor children. This shared agenda is reflected in *Opportunity for all*, which summarises the strategies in place to tackle poverty and social exclusion in the Devolved Administrations.

**6.7** The child poverty review consulted with the Devolved Administrations to learn from best practice in these areas, and the Government will continue to work together with the Devolved Administrations through the Joint Ministerial Committee on child poverty.<sup>1</sup>

## WORKING WITH KEY PARTNERS

**6.8** Tackling child poverty requires more than just central government intervention. The child poverty review has benefited from a wide range of contributors. The Government wants to build on this productive collaboration.

### Voluntary and community sectors

**6.9** The voluntary, community and faith sectors (VCS) contribute to the child poverty agenda in a range of ways: providing input and advice on policy development; helping to shape services at the local level; delivering statutory services; and delivering voluntary services. The ability of the VCS to innovate and drive forward reform has been critical in shaping the Government's approach to tackling child poverty.

**6.10** Earlier chapters highlighted specific policy areas where the VCS have and will continue to have prominent roles. For example in delivering parenting support, the Children's Fund and Sure Start Local Programmes.

**6.11** The Government will drive forward the role of the VCS in public service delivery and reform through implementing the conclusions of the voluntary and community sector review. This review is exploring in greater depth the practical advantages the sector can bring to public service delivery and reform; setting out strategies for the sector's involvement in key areas; and developing a jointly-owned action plan to build a more effective and stable partnership between the VCS and local public sector bodies. Interim findings of this review are set out in the 2004 Spending Review White Paper, and final findings of the review will be reported in the autumn.

### Local authorities

**6.12** As well as working with the VCS, the child poverty review's consultation process reinforced the crucial role played by local authorities. This is encapsulated in one of the seven shared priorities for public services agreed by central government and the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2002: *improving the quality of life of children, young people and families at risk, by tackling child poverty, maximising the life chances of children in care or in need and strengthening protection for children at risk of abuse*. The other six shared priorities also have links with the child poverty agenda.<sup>2</sup> From 2005, the revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) will consider councils' delivery against local needs under the shared priorities in a strengthened and more locally-focused Corporate Assessment, together with a single service block for children and young people.

<sup>1</sup>The terms of reference for the Joint Ministerial Committee on poverty are to consider joint or co-ordinated action by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations to tackle poverty and social exclusion; and to facilitate exchanging information and best practice.

<sup>2</sup>Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities; promoting the economic vitality of the localities; meeting local transport needs more effectively; transforming the local environment; creating safe and stronger communities; and raising standards across schools.

**6.13** The new Children Bill, which was presented to Parliament in March 2004, places a duty on children's services authorities to make arrangements through which key partners will co-operate to improve the well-being of local children. The Bill makes provisions for joint area reviews, which will be conducted under a new framework for integrated inspection of children's services and will allow for themes of national significance, including action to reduce disadvantage, to be pursued and reported. A consultation on the framework is in progress. Relevant results from the reviews will feed into a local authority's CPA. Performance on leading and delivering children's services, improving well-being and tackling poverty will be key drivers of an authority's overall CPA score in the revised Assessment, to be introduced from 2005.

**6.14** Many local authorities have undertaken a range of activities and strategic work that support the national child poverty agenda. The LGA has provided a summary of the various ways in which local authorities can and have contributed:<sup>3</sup>

- maximising take-up of tax credits and benefits among eligible households;
- acting as community leaders, promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities through partnerships with local organisations;
- promoting employment through linking with Jobcentre Plus to promote the public sector as an employer of choice. This is being achieved through recruiting a diverse workforce, expanding opportunities for lifelong learning, being a family-friendly employer and promoting in-work benefits;
- delivering key public services: education, social services, housing, regeneration, transport and leisure facilities; and
- establishing a new model for delivering children's services in a joined-up way.

**6.15** Looking ahead, central Government wants to make sure it supports local authorities in their contribution to the child poverty agenda. The Government is therefore establishing a 'child poverty accord' with the LGA to consolidate this. Partners<sup>4</sup> will work together to:

- improve employment rates, as set out in 'Helping the hardest to reach into work', the Partnership Accord between the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and the LGA;
- narrow inequalities of opportunity, for poor children, especially educational opportunities; and
- improve the full range of local services for children (including childcare and other early years activities, cultural and leisure activities, and family support services) including those for disabled children, in the context set out in *Every child matters: next steps*, and ensure that the promotion of opportunities for poor children is a priority in this work.

**6.16** Partners will work jointly to achieve these outcomes, including by:

- promoting the UK national strategy for tackling child poverty, as set out in *Opportunity for all* and the *UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion*, including ensuring that Government publications reflect the contribution of local government and the services it provides;

<sup>3</sup> *Child poverty and local government: the local authority contribution to eradicating child poverty*, Local Government Association, September 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, the Inland Revenue and the Local Government Association.

- promoting the take-up of benefits and tax credits locally by learning from best practice, building on the LGA's 'Quids for Kids' campaign, and sharing information about local take-up rates;
- where appropriate, working with local authorities considering including targets in their second generation Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) which contribute to the eradication of child poverty, for example on take-up of benefits and tax credits or increasing educational opportunities for vulnerable children. The Government is keen to support local authorities in designing a model, outcome-based group of LPSA targets and appropriate indicators which can be adapted to reflect local circumstances and priorities; and
- sharing research and evidence which bears on the eradication of child poverty.

## FURTHER PROGRESS

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**6.17** The Government has demonstrated its commitment to tackling child poverty. It has set and extended challenging targets. It has directed unprecedented resources towards poor children. It is meeting the challenge of making sure mainstream public services deliver for poor children, and has responded to the growing coalition of support for action in developing the next steps.

**6.18** The public can hold the Government to account on its plans and achievements. *Opportunity for all* will continue to publish details of a range of indicators that relate to child, family and community outcomes. The range of relevant PSA targets and government departments' reports of their progress provide further accountability.

**6.19** This review has demonstrated that policies to reduce child poverty can help meet wider Government objectives. In addition, planned spending must reflect the latest evidence and it is likely that further increases in spending will require better knowledge of what works and for whom. Departments will continue to work on this, alongside the research community, in the run-up to the 2006 Spending Review. This will ensure a continued drive towards the Government's long-term goal of eradicating child poverty.