

PSA Delivery Agreement 9: Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020

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VISION

1.1 Every child deserves the best start in life, free from financial poverty and material deprivation. The Government is committed to its pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

1.2 Childhood experience lays the foundations for later life, therefore it is vital to provide children and young people with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential as adults. Children who grow up in poverty are less likely to stay on at school, to attend school regularly, to get qualifications or to go on to higher education, and more likely to become young parents, locking whole families into intergenerational cycles of deprivation. Reducing the number of children who are born into poverty will increase the number of children born into opportunity, and will enhance their opportunities as adults and subsequently the life chances of their children, thus perpetuating a virtuous circle. While the Government recognises that bringing up and supporting children is largely the responsibility of parents, the state has a role in helping parents to do the best they can for their children. The Government wants to support, protect and enable all children to enjoy a good quality of life.

1.3 The Government's commitment to halve child poverty by 2010-11 is a key milestone on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020. The *Child Poverty Review*¹ articulated the Government's comprehensive strategy for tackling child poverty. The Review set out a number of work strands to:

- provide financial support;
- increase employment;
- tackle material deprivation; and
- improve children's life chances.

1.4 This Delivery Agreement builds on the *Child Poverty Review* and the *Opportunity for All* series² and outlines the contribution that Government departments and delivery partners will make towards reducing child poverty.³ The ambitions of this Delivery Agreement are more specific than the wider ambitions of the Child Poverty Review; it focuses on the policies and actions that will have a quantifiable impact by 2010, and those which contribute towards the creation of a virtuous circle to lift children out of poverty.⁴

¹ *Child poverty review*, HMT, July 2004.

² www.dwp.gov.uk/ofa.

³ In line with the definition used in the national statistical collection, the Family Resources Survey, this Delivery Agreement is focussed on children under the age of 16 (or under 18 in formal education or training), and therefore does not include those aged 16 and over who are not in full time education, employment or training and does not specifically cover the children of asylum seekers.

⁴ This should be read alongside other PSA Delivery Agreements aimed at improving outcomes for children, families and young people (PSAs 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 20).

Indicators

2.1 The Government remains committed to its historic target to halve child poverty by 2010-11 and will use the following three indicators, which are the result of extensive consultation, published in *Measuring Child Poverty*,¹ to best target action over the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review:

- **Indicator 1: the number of children in absolute low-income households**

This indicator measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms.

- **Indicator 2: the number of children in relative low income households**

This measure is the European standard and captures the extent to which incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the rising incomes of the population. This indicator has a national target attached; and

- **Indicator 3: the number of children in relative low-income households and in material deprivation**

Poverty is not just about income; and reducing child poverty means improving the standard of living for children. The higher income threshold used in this indicator will include children in families with high unavoidable costs, such as housing, which can adversely impact on living standards and leave people with low disposable income, even if income is above the 60 per cent median line. This indicator will also better capture the extra costs faced by families with disabled children.

¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/consult/2003/childpov/final.asp>

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DELIVERY STRATEGY

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

3.1 Reducing poverty through work: one-half of children in households with relative low-income are in households without work¹ and the Government will continue to deliver employment programmes to provide employment opportunities for all. The Government will reduce poverty by tackling worklessness, by making work a sustainable route out poverty, and by addressing barriers to work such as availability of childcare.² However, one half of children in households with relative low-income are in working households³ – and in order to ensure that work pays, retention and progression are critical.

3.2 Reducing poverty through raising incomes: reform of the provision of financial support for families has been a key driver behind the fall to date in the number of children in relative low-income households. The Government's support will continue to be based on the principle of progressive universalism - help for all, and extra help for those who need it most. Financial support will be predominantly delivered through a combination of Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Child Benefit, and through the reform of the Child Support Agency.

3.3 Tackling poor living conditions: government departments will work together to tackle the experience of poverty children have today. Government will focus on housing, fuel poverty and financial inclusion.

- Housing has a key role in influencing the overall living standards of a family. Poor housing can affect the standard of living that children are able to enjoy. If a home is overcrowded or in poor condition, it can affect health and educational attainment and can impact negatively on life chances.
- Fuel poverty can adversely affect children as family income by reducing the income available for other essential goods and services.
- Many low-income families face barriers to using their money effectively. Families who are unable to access mainstream financial products and services may face difficulties in day-to-day money management, find it harder to plan for the future and manage lumpy spending, and be more vulnerable to financial distress. This prevents rising incomes from feeding through to improvements in living conditions.

3.4 Focusing delivery on at-risk groups: it is essential to better understand the needs and the multiplicity of barriers that some families face and the Government will focus on reducing poverty among disadvantaged groups by improving communication and prioritising the provision of public services. It will also strive to ensure everyone has equal access to public services, so that no group is prevented from achieving outcomes similar to those experienced by the rest of society.

¹ Two-fifths of poor children live in lone parent families, the majority of whom are without work. One in eight poor children are in couple families not in employment.

² Government's strategy to provide employment opportunities for all are set out in PSAs 2 and 8.

³ Half of all children in poverty are in households in which at least one adult works, the majority of which are couple families.

- **For lone parents:** the Government will continue to drive forward employment programmes to help lone parents enter and sustain employment.
- **For large families:** the Government will continue to raise the child element of the Child Tax Credit at least in line with earnings until the end of this Parliament, which will disproportionately help children in large families.
- **For Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families:** the Government will focus on reducing worklessness and on removing barriers to childcare for BME families, set out below. The Government will continue its drive to provide a sufficient supply of suitable and sustainable accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- **For families with a disabled member:** reducing poverty for families with disabled members will involve improving employment opportunities, breaking down barriers to childcare and ensuring that every parent is aware of, and has access to, the financial support available to contribute towards the extra costs of disability. The Government will spend £340million pounds to improve outcomes for disabled children, including a £35 million childcare accessibility project, set out below.

3.5 Engaging with users: The Government will work in partnership with Local Government, the third sector and other delivery partners. The Government recognises the primary role of parents in tackling child poverty and the role that local adult, family and children's services play. To ensure that public services are well delivered and help parents, Government will engage with delivery partners and external stakeholders to ensure services flex to meet the needs of families, parents and children.

3.6 Establish clear governance and accountability mechanisms throughout the delivery system: accountability is not just about central Government; there needs to be clear responsibility through the whole delivery chain to ensure services delivered on the ground improve outcomes for children.

REDUCING POVERTY THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

Supporting parents into work

3.7 To support parents into work, the Government will focus on: lone parents, couple parents and disabled parents. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for Welfare to Work policy and funding and monitoring the activity of Jobcentre Plus (JCP). Over the 2007 CSR years DWP will:

- continue the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) nationally. To date, about one in two lone parents who join NDLP move into work⁴. DWP will continue the New Deal Plus pilots for Lone Parents, expanding these to cover all of London;
- continue compulsory Work Focussed Interviews (WFI) for those claiming benefits. From April 2008, all lone parents will be required to attend a WFI at least twice a year;
- consult on a proposal that from October 2008, lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 or over will no longer be entitled to claim Income Support

⁴ *New Deal for Lone Parents: Second synthesis report of the Nation Evaluation*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. W163, Evans M. Eyre J, Millar J and Sarre S, 2003.

solely on the grounds of being a lone parent, and that from October 2010, the age of the youngest child should be brought down to 7.⁵ JCP will provide more frequent WFIs to support lone parents to move in to suitable work, and support to ensure lone parents are able to combine work with parental responsibilities;

- roll out In Work Credit to lone parents nationally from April 2008 at a rate of £40 a week or £60 in London;
- extend key, effective elements of New Deal Plus to couple parents in London and other pilot areas and provide more adviser support through joint claims for parents claiming Job Seekers' Allowance. DWP will look at how to help those potential second earners in couples who want to work; and
- continue to manage a number of employment schemes aimed at disabled people. In 2008, new Employment and Support Allowance will replace the current Incapacity Benefit system.

Ongoing consultation and evaluation

3.8 Regular performance monitoring and engagement with parents, stakeholders and delivery partners will inform policy and delivery. The Government will use data from the Labour Force Survey to assess progress in increasing the numbers of lone parents in employment and reducing the numbers of children in workless households. DWP will continue the practice of developing lone parent policy in consultation with stakeholders and lobby groups.

Retention and progression

3.9 DWP and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) will:

- support retention and progression in work by developing an integrated employment and skills service building on the recommendations from the *Leitch review on skills*,⁶ including a new adult careers service in England, working in partnership with JCP;
- learn lessons from the Employment Retention and Advancement pilot, which aims to help people into paid jobs, encouraging them to work full time and advance to more secure and better paid positions; and
- work with JCP and the Learning and Skills Council to deliver improvements in the provision of work relevant training for JCP customers to support sustainable employment and progression. This will include assessing all new JSA applicants' basic skills needs, and improving support for those cycling between work and benefits through a full skills health check.

Removing barriers to employment for disabled people

3.10 The Office for Disability Issues will develop a cross-government, five-year strategy to deliver independent living for all disabled people. This strategy will seek to improve the choice and control that disabled people have over the assistance they need and to prevent a silo-based approach to addressing disabled people's needs. This strategy should help to remove some of the current barriers to employment for disabled parents.

Cities strategy

3.11 DWP, with local partners, will pilot the Cities Strategy model in 15 cities to tackle inner-city deprivation. Key stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors will come together to form consortia and will pool resources and expertise to deliver a

⁵ *In Work, Better Off*, DWP, 2007.

⁶ *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*, Leitch review of skills, HMT, December 2006.

significant improvement in the working-age employment rate, particularly for disadvantaged groups. The pilots will test whether local areas are able to deliver more if they combine their efforts behind shared priorities and are given more freedom to try new ideas and tailor services to local needs.

The role of Jobcentre Plus

3.12 JCP is a key stakeholder in local strategic partnerships, providing a co-ordinated focus across childcare, child poverty and the Welfare to Work programme. JCP also plays a vital co-ordinating role in the use of available funding streams to support the development of integrated Welfare to Work services tailored to the needs of the local community. Over the CSR07 period JCP will:

- deliver the majority of DWP's employment programmes, and provide increased WFI to lone parents; and
- reform the system of Job Outcome Targets used to measure performance. To increase the focus on child poverty outcomes, a new 'child points premium' has been introduced, so additional points are awarded for placing into work any client who has children. This will provide incentives ensure that services are targeted more towards those in greatest need. JCP will use the views and experiences of clients, gathered through interviews, focus groups and observation of delivery, to inform future policy thinking and enhance service delivery.

Increasing take-up of formal childcare

3.13 To help parents enter and sustain work, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), DWP and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will work with delivery partners to continue implementing the National Childcare Strategy. Work will continue to stimulate demand for formal childcare by improving information for parents about the benefits, choices and financial help available. The Government will ensure that increased demand for childcare is met through new duties on local authorities and the roll out of Children's Centres and Extended Schools. The Government will also invest £35m to improve the provision of childcare for families with disabled children.⁷ This will start in 10 pilot local authorities, with best practice rolled out in 2010-11.

The role of DCSF

3.14 The DCSF will:

- communicate the benefits of formal childcare, with evaluation of current communications activity from April 2008. Over £1m will be invested in 2007-08 in national advertising and direct mail on the benefits of formal childcare and the support available, especially targeting black and minority ethnic communities. Success will be measured in terms of response rates to the helpline number (with the expectation of reaching over a million families). Outreach projects in 6 local authorities across the country will develop and test ways to engage BME families in formal childcare (September 2007 – March 2008). By March 2008 there will also be pilots in 3 London local authorities to train parents as advocates of formal childcare as well as the results of focus group work to identify the best methods of communication to use with different communities by December 2007;

⁷ As recommended in *Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families* HM Treasury and DfES, May 2007.

- fund free childcare: 50,000 parents who are in training will receive free childcare over 2008-10 and by September 2010 all three and four year olds will be entitled to 15 hours per week of free provision. Delivery will focus on increasing take-up of the offer by lower income families through better targeting of information; and
- provide dedicated revenue funding of £4bn to local authorities over 2008-11 through the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant. This will enable Local Authorities to support a diverse and sustainable childcare market and to roll out 3,500 Sure Start Children’s Centres, one for every community by 2010. By 2010 all primary schools and secondary schools will provide access to a varied menu of activities and a safe place to be from 8am to 6pm. Dedicated start-up funding will be available for Extended Schools in 2008-09. Extended schools guidance makes clear that children with disabilities or special educational needs must be able to access all the services.

Improving access to the childcare element of working tax credit

3.15 HMRC will improve access to the childcare element of Working Tax Credit by increasing the visibility of the support available for formal childcare through its website and by working with Local Authority Children’s Information Services. HMRC will more quickly make payments to people who are moving off benefit into work, especially where support for formal childcare costs forms a part of their claim. HMRC will review the Guidance Notes and Claim Form to make the childcare element as simple as possible.

3.16 DWP will provide targeted financial support through Jobcentre Plus to parents entering work through all the New Deal programmes to help with attendance at job interviews.

Identifying the childcare needs of Jobcentre Plus clients

3.17 JCP will:

- help local authorities deliver employment and training advice and support through Sure Start Children’s Centres in the local community. JCP Childcare Partnership Managers and local authority Children’s Information Services will play a key role in delivery; and
- ensure staff are able to identify the childcare needs of clients and signpost them to further information and support such as the childcare element of Working Tax Credits. A desk aid is currently being developed for use by frontline JCP staff from November 2007. DWP are currently exploring the possibility of an explicit measure of using the proportion of Working Tax Credit recipients claiming the childcare element as a proxy for the use of formal childcare by low-income families. JCP will be incentivised by new Job Outcome Targets to place parents into work.

Securing high quality local provision

3.18 Local Authorities are key delivery partners. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents from April 2008: In addition to providing funding, the Government has set down statutory guidance on assessing the sufficiency of childcare as well as securing sufficient childcare.⁸ Childcare – as an outcome delivered in partnership with local government – will be performance managed through the local government National Indicator Set and externally assessed through Comprehensive Area Assessment from 2009 – with a risk assessment led by the

⁸The sufficiency duty applies in both England and Wales.

Audit Commission jointly with other inspectorates including Ofsted. Current inspection arrangements will continue until 2009. This includes:

- in line with the statutory guidance on needs assessment,⁹ local authorities are expected to consult with local parents, children and delivery partners on the provision of childcare. The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to conduct a detailed analysis of local parental demand and fully to involve private and independent settings and the third sector in the delivery of Children's Centres, Extended Schools and wider childcare provision;
- regional networks of authorities will develop and share best practice on implementation of these new duties, complemented by pathfinders¹⁰ for extending the free entitlement and by the experience from the Childcare Implementation Project;¹¹
- local data on access to the childcare element of working tax credit will be provided to enable authorities to measure and manage local performance on take-up of childcare; and
- other key elements of the Childcare Act 2006 will be implemented over 2008-11. This includes the duty to improve outcomes for children at age 5 and narrow the achievement gap between children, which is underpinned by statutory targets,¹² and the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage which, along with Ofsted inspection, will provide reassurance for parents that standards of care will be consistent and of high quality. Further detail can be found in the action plan for the ten year childcare strategy.¹³

Measuring parental demand and perceptions

3.19 The Government is determined to ensure that parents are able to choose childcare provision which best meets their needs and those of their children. DCSF runs a major national, annual survey of parental demand for childcare, which gathers parents' perceptions of childcare and patterns of use, which can be analysed by family income and working status.

REDUCING POVERTY BY RAISING INCOME

Financial support for parents

3.20 Over the CSR07 period, HM Treasury will continue to make decisions about the levels of financial support at Budget and Pre-Budget Reports. The Government will increase the child element of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) at least in line with earnings until the end of this Parliament, a projected increase of 14 per cent over the next three years. Budget 2007 announced that in April 2008, the child element will rise by £150 a year above standard earnings indexation.

Maintaining high take-up

3.21 HMRC is responsible for the operation of the financial support system. The Government is committed to maintaining the very high level of take up of both the CTC and Child Benefit, and to do this, HMRC will:

⁹ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/sufficiency.

¹⁰ Currently 20 authorities (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/flexibleentitlement).

¹¹ Nov 2005-Nov 2006, to explore local practice in implementing the Childcare Strategy. www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/childcare/implementation

¹² See PSAs 10 and 11.

¹³ *Choice for parents, the best start for children: making it happen an action plan for the ten year strategy: Sure Start children's Centres, extended schools and childcare*, DfES/DWVP, May 2006 (<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/tenyearstrategy/>).

- build on the work of the Tax Credits transformation programme, including to develop, test and implement a service delivery model which is tailored to individual need;
- improve its processes, signposting and communications relating to the additional support available to low-income families who automatically qualify for those benefits because of their entitlement to Child Tax Credit. A review is identifying areas of current difficulty and to set improvement priorities;
- deliver the Health in Pregnancy Grant from April 2009. Every mother will be eligible for the Grant, worth up to £200, from the 29th week of their pregnancy. This additional support will help promote maternal and children's health by encouraging an improvement in diet during pregnancy; and
- explore how it can align, where it makes sense, the delivery of Tax Credits and Child Benefit and to enable transactions for Tax Credits and Child Benefit to be completed in one contact - by whatever method the customer chooses, so that all the necessary changes will be made for both tax credits and Child Benefit ensuring they receive the correct entitlement as quickly as possibly.

3.22 HMRC will develop a communications strategy before March 2008 specifically to help build and maintain relationships with tax credits customers. The department recently carried out customer research to gain an understanding of the barriers preventing take up of tax credits. Current communications may act as a barrier for some customers, particularly those with low levels of literacy.¹⁴ To counteract this, the department will develop communications products that identify and fill communication gaps, are clear and comprehensible and deliver a clear set of key messages to ensure that customers understand how the tax credit system works.

3.23 In response to user feedback that prompt payment is vitally important, particularly to those taking up employment following a period on welfare benefits, HMRC is placing a high premium on making payments quickly to new claimants, prioritising those from claimants moving into work, and other vulnerable groups such as the disabled and lone parents.

3.24 The Disability and Carers Service (DCS) delivers benefits to assist parents with the additional costs of disability, and over the CSR07 period will:

- raise awareness and take-up of benefits available by working with Department of Health to improve the delivery of benefit advice to patients and by giving all people with long-term health issues – and their carers – information on their health and social care needs and signposting people to information and advice about benefits using the 'information prescription'. DCS will distribute new information leaflets to various external organisations including Citizens Advice Bureaux, DIAL, GP surgeries and Health Centres by 2008; and
- reduce barriers to financial support by simplifying the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) process by developing and trialling new forms which are

¹⁴ Literacy levels are particularly low among some tax credits recipients. It is estimated that 26 per cent of tax credit customers with an income less than £10,000 have a reading age below 11 years old.

more responsive to individual customer needs. The DCS's Working Group for Children will work with parents and families to improve the claiming process for children and their carers, including developing improved DLA claim forms specifically for child cases.

The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission

3.25 Subject to Parliament's approval, the Child Support Agency will be replaced by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC). It will commission work from other providers to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way. The system has been redesigned with child poverty as the main focus throughout, focusing support on the poorest families first. The implementation of reforms is expected to see a further 650,000 eligible parents with care benefit from the child maintenance that they are entitled to. The following proposals in particular are expected to have an impact on child poverty:

- by the end of 2008, parents with care, on benefit, on the old scheme will benefit from the £10 a week disregard. This will see an additional 55,000 children benefit from maintenance;
- from 2010-11 the Government will significantly increase the amount of maintenance that parents with care on benefit can keep before it affects the amount of benefit that they can receive; and
- tougher and more effective enforcement is expected to reduce the number of non-resident parents who do not comply with the system.

3.26 JCP will:

- deliver out-of-work benefits to clients; and
- continue to play a proactive role in ensuring that parents are directed to information and support about tax credits, benefits and child maintenance. Although JCP would no longer have the responsibility for referring applications to the Child Support Agency, it would continue to interact with some of the most vulnerable people in society, whose children have the most to gain from having a maintenance arrangement.

Promoting financial inclusion

3.27 In March 2007 the Government published *Financial inclusion: the way forward*, setting out its vision for taking forwards work to promote financial inclusion.¹⁵ In the long-term the Government's commitment will involve mainstreaming financial inclusion into departmental budgets. In the next spending period, the Government will:

- establish a new Financial Inclusion Fund of £130 million for new and ongoing initiatives to promote financial inclusion, maintaining the current level of intensity of action. BERR will provide ongoing support for money advice;
- establish a ministerial working group to determine detailed priorities for financial inclusion policy, and publish a detailed action plan after the CSR; and

¹⁵ *Financial inclusion: the way forward*, HM Treasury, 2007.

- extend the life-span of the independent Financial Inclusion Taskforce to evaluate progress and advise the Government, working to new terms of reference reflecting the post-CSR action plan.

3.28 DWP will continue to manage the Social Fund, which provides a safety net of grants and interest free loans for the most vulnerable in times of need.

3.29 DCSF will integrate financial capability into the secondary school curriculum through a new economic well-being and financial capability strand within a non-statutory revised curriculum for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education; publish updated curriculum guidance for all Key Stages to help teachers plan their provision; and develop a dedicated programme of support for personal finance education in schools, including developing new Child Trust Fund branded curriculum resources and a new continuing professional development training module for teachers.

TACKLING POOR LIVING CONDITIONS

Improving housing quality

3.30 To improve housing,¹⁶ Communities and Local Government (CLG) will:

- continue to drive forward policy to help local authorities and arms length management organisations and, through working with the Housing Corporation, registered social landlords, to deliver decent homes;
- monitor progress towards the targets for the provision of affordable housing made in the Housing Green Paper and will set the Housing Corporation additional targets in March 2008, and may include one for larger homes to tackle overcrowding; and
- continue its drive to increase the number and quality of authorised sites for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

3.31 One of CLG's Departmental Strategic Objectives is to increase housing supply and as part of this DSO it will focus on reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. CLG will:

- work with Local Authorities to ensure their statutory strategies for preventing homelessness and for ensuring that sufficient accommodation and support is available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are effective and inclusive;
- continue proactively supporting Local Authorities with large numbers of households in temporary accommodation in developing strategies for preventing homelessness and providing more settled homes;
- provide direct revenue funding to Local Authorities and third sector bodies to support activities which prevent and tackle homelessness; and
- work with DCSF in partnership to improve local links between housing authorities and children's services, to minimise the impact of homelessness on children.

¹⁶ See also PSA 20.

