



# Child Poverty Bill ~ Overview & Update

## Background

Tackling child poverty is a priority of government. In 2008, the Government set up the Child Poverty Unit to co-ordinate cross-government working to develop a truly integrated approach – from financial support to transport, housing to health, education to employment – that attacks the root causes and consequences of poverty right across the board. The Unit focuses on progressing the Government's strategy to eradicate child poverty for the long term.

In January 2009, the consultation document *Ending Child Poverty: Making It Happen* was published. This made the case to legislate the commitment to end child poverty as a priority for future governments, setting out the Government's '2020 vision' of tackling the root causes of poverty by prioritising co-ordinated and sustained action across all areas and levels of government.

A Government Bill has been introduced to end child poverty by 2020 and to ensure that sustained action is taken by national government, the Devolved Administrations, and local government to tackle the causes as well as the consequences of child poverty.

## The Bill

Government is required to meet 4 challenging UK-wide targets by 2020:

1. **Relative poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income to less than 10%. This target measures those families that are poor compared to the rest of society. The target is firmly in line with the best in Europe;
2. **Combined low income and material deprivation** – to reduce the proportion of families who live in material deprivation and have low income to less than 5%. This target measures the living standards of families experiencing the effects of poverty more widely;
3. **Persistent poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children that experience long periods of poverty. Research demonstrates that long periods of poverty have a damaging effect on a child's life chances and that the risk of escaping poverty decreases the longer the period in poverty. The target will be set in secondary legislation when the required data is available. The Government expects that sufficient data will be available before 2015;
4. **Absolute poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children in absolute low income to less than 5%. This target measures the income of families against a level held constant over time. Consultation responses indicated that it was important to include this target to provide an assessment of real terms growth in incomes, which can be particularly important in times of recession.

## Sustainability

The Government must publish a UK-wide child poverty strategy, revised every three years until 2020. The strategy will set out a clear vision of a society in 2020 where levels of child poverty have been reduced to amongst the best in Europe and where children are not adversely affected by economic and social deprivation. Child poverty is about more than just low incomes; the strategy will set out steps to improve children's wider well-being.

## **Accountability**

The Government must publish annual progress reports to Parliament stating the progress made towards the targets and the measures set out in the child poverty strategy. Additionally, an expert Commission will be established providing advice, which the Government must have regard to when preparing its child poverty strategies. To further boost accountability, the Commission's advice must be published.

## **Local Action**

Many local partnerships have had considerable success in tackling child poverty. But meeting the challenge of eradicating it across the country requires additional effort from all local authorities and their delivery partners to prioritise tackling child poverty and improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families. Local authorities and their partners have a duty to co-operate in tackling child poverty by conducting local needs assessments and producing joint local child poverty strategies.

## **Progress to Date**

This Bill was originally laid before Parliament in the 2008-09 session and progressed as far as committee stage in the House of Commons. A carry-over motion to the 2009-10 session was agreed by the House of Commons and the Bill was re-presented to Parliament on 19 November 2009. First Reading in the House of Lords took place on 10 December. This stage is a formality which signals the start of the Bill's journey through the Lords. The Second Reading, a general debate on all aspects of the Bill, takes place on 5 January 2010.

## **Next Steps for “Unlocking ESF Potential” Participants**

London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium is currently working with Greater London Enterprise on the **Unlocking ESF Potential** Project to assist third sector organisations in using ESF. Our aim is to help London-based organisations currently or previously funded by ESF or keen to attract ESF, to strengthen services around employment and training. For London groups (involving parents) interested in ESF-supported activity to combat child poverty, funding opportunities will arise under Priority 1 of the ESF London Programme.

If you would like more information, please contact Ray Phillips [rayp@lvstc.org.uk](mailto:rayp@lvstc.org.uk) at LVSTC by email or telephone 0845 262 2006 / 020 7538 4309.

*December 2009*