



Monmouthshire Tackling Poverty Programme of Intent 2015-17

Introduction

Poverty reduces life-chances and prevents people from fulfilling their potential and results in poorer educational and health outcomes for individuals. It also imposes enormous costs on society through lower productivity, reduced social cohesion and increased demands on public services. In Monmouthshire poverty is often hidden and in small pockets. Our purpose is to identify those who are affected by poverty and provide a coherent range of services which support people to overcome barriers, allowing them to fully participate in society and engage in education, training and employment.

Relative income poverty

Poverty in Wales is a relative concept; people are described as living in poverty if they are considerably worse off than the majority of the population. In 2004, the European Commission provided the following definition:

“People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation...”

So while, poverty can be defined and measured in various ways, the most commonly used approach is **relative income poverty**. Each household’s income, adjusted for family size, is compared to median income. Those with less than 60 per cent of median income are classified as poor. This ‘poverty line’ is the agreed international measure used throughout the European Union.

Material deprivation, a proposed measure in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, highlights the consequence of long-term poverty on whether households can afford necessary goods and activities. Material deprivation is an important indicator because it can affect educational, health and behavioural outcomes.

Welsh Government

Welsh Government Tackling Poverty objectives are outlined in Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016; and Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. Our approach is to tailor the implementation of the Tackling Poverty objectives to meet local needs.

- Preventing Poverty by giving people the best start in life. Breaking the link between socio-economic disadvantage, health inequalities, educational under-achievement and impaired life chances.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Nobody is left behind People are Confident, Capable and Involved Our County Thrives

- To help people to improve their skills, enhance the relevance of their qualifications and remove barriers to employment.
- Mitigate the impact of poverty through the provision of a coherent programme of support targeted towards those who are disadvantaged by poverty and/or health inequality.

Monmouthshire's Single Integrated Plan

Monmouthshire's Single Integrated Plan 2013-17 is the main vehicle for addressing inequality and tackling poverty. Working in partnership with the community, service providers and employers we recognise that tackling poverty is a cross-cutting theme where cooperation is critical in the delivery of our Plan to ensure that; ***nobody is left behind, People are Confident, Capable and Involved and Our County Thrives.***

Monmouthshire's Draft Tackling Poverty Action Plan, which pulls together all the Local Service Board (LSB) partnerships' poverty-related Performance Indicators, is the main vehicle for ensuring that tackling poverty is prioritised whilst avoiding duplication of effort.

We recognise the importance of 'employment in good jobs' in tackling poverty and will continue to focus on creating opportunities for employment and self-employment. Working in partnership with the Business, Employment and Skills Partnership we will continue to make the connections in relation to skills, employability, entrepreneurship and job creation.

Collaboration with GAVO and third sector organisations is an important part of our approach. Volunteering provides valuable experience and builds confidence, communication and employability skills, whilst third sector providers contribute a range of services which compliment local authority provision, statutory services and Welsh Government funded programmes.

How Poverty looks in Monmouthshire

The Strategic Needs Assessment undertaken to inform the production of the Single Integrated Plan recognised the disparity in wealth across the county and in key factors such as life expectancy. There are clearly identifiable areas in our towns where people are disadvantaged and this sense of 'pockets of deprivation' is often exacerbated as many are close to areas of affluence. The ranges that exist in Monmouthshire can be significant. For instance in Cantref (Abergavenny) 26.2% of the population are in receipt of income-related benefit compared to 4.3% in Usk.

Poverty in Monmouthshire is also characterised by the rural nature of the county. Rural deprivation adds an additional dimension to our work to tackle poverty as the majority of the population live in settlements of less than 2,500 people. We know that 22.4% of Monmouthshire Lower Super Output Areas are in the most deprived 10% in Wales for access to services, making it the 6th most deprived local authority in Wales in this domain. Analysis of life expectancy, which is a key indicator of health inequality, shows a difference between the least and most deprived areas in Monmouthshire of 13 years for males and 10 years for females.

Other characteristics of rural deprivation include increased social isolation, higher transport costs and fuel poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates it costs 10-20% more to achieve a basic adequate standard of living in rural than urban areas mostly due to increased transport and heating costs. People without transport remain geographically isolated, unable to access services, activities and job opportunities.

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Nobody is left behind People are Confident, Capable and Involved Our County Thrives

The average house price in Monmouthshire is £242,000 compared to an all Wales average of £161,000. More significantly 'entry' level properties are in excess of £50,000 more than the Wales average. The average house price is seven times more than the average income; critically the 'first home' ratio is 10:1 (2013 data). This restricts the ability of those on low incomes to enter the housing market, indicating the relative lack of affordability of housing in our county.

The rising cost of living, static incomes, changes to benefits or unemployment can lead some people to struggle to pay for the essentials such as heating and food. Despite being a relatively wealthy county, Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the use of Food Banks in recent years and now has Food Banks in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth.

To address poverty we are driven by an ambition to align national and local initiatives to deliver a coherent range of services which are well publicised and accessible. For example;

- Early Years and Childcare, Flying Start, Families First, the Acorn Project, JAFF / Team Around the Family and Pupil Deprivation Grant.
- Our Integrated Youth Offer, Employment and Training Support, Jobs Growth Wales, Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.
- Strategies to improve financial, economic and digital inclusion for those most affected by poverty.
- Supporting People Strategies to prevent homelessness and enable independent living; and Older People Strategies to address the issues faced by older people in Monmouthshire.

Partnership Groups, Governance and Accountability

Welsh Government has developed the role of the Anti-Poverty Champions in each local authority area to provide a point of focus and "sponsorship" across the wide range of programmes, policies and initiatives that help prevent and address the effects of poverty. The Corporate Anti-Poverty Champion for Monmouthshire sits on the Gwent Anti-Poverty forum.

The Gwent Anti-Poverty Priorities for 2015-16 are:

- Improved Employment Pathways
- Healthy Lifestyles: Mental Health
- Child Obesity
- Sharing Best Practice

The Corporate Anti-Poverty Champion and the Elected Member Anti-Poverty Champion are the strategic leads for anti-poverty in Monmouthshire.

The Corporate Anti-Poverty Champion has oversight of the poverty-related actions and targets for each of the partnership groups which are tasked with delivering the Single Integrated Plan's nine key outcomes. Please refer to Single Integrated Plan Vision, Themes and Outcomes. **See Annex 1**

Regular updates and reports will be provided to the Programme Board and Local Service Board

Tackling Poverty Performance Indicators

Our Local Service Board (LSB) partnerships are instrumental in ensuring that we focus our efforts and resources to prevent poverty and mitigating the effects of poverty. We already have identified key performance indicators which relate to the poverty agenda and our focus moving forward will be to

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Nobody is left behind People are Confident, Capable and Involved Our County Thrives

regularly review them with each partnership to ensure that they are aligned to national initiatives and local needs, whilst ensuring an intelligence-led approach to targeting those in need. Consequently, the performance indicators may be subject to change as we refine our approach.

PI's for Preventing Poverty...

Supported by Flying Start, Families First Programmes, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, Integrated Youth Offer and Creating an Active Monmouthshire:

- Proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% of the median
- Percentage of Flying Start children aged 3 who reach developmental milestones
- Percentage of Flying Start children who do not reach developmental milestones at 2 but achieve these at 3
- Setting up early identification systems across schools to identify those on Free School Meals or low achieving so additional support can be provided
- Percentage of low birth weight babies
- Percentage of 4-5yr olds over-weight or obese

PI's helping people into work...

Supported by Business, Employment and Skills Partnership, Integrated Youth Offer, Families First Programme:

- Unemployed persons as a percentage of the Economically Active population aged 16-64
- Percentage of young people 16 -24 who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Percentage of children achieving KS4 L2T including English / Welsh and Maths
- Percentage of secondary school pupils supported by the Pupil Referral Service achieving nationally recognised qualifications
- Percentage attendance at Primary Schools
- Percentage attendance at Secondary Schools

PI's for Mitigating the Impact of Poverty

Supported by the Financial, Economic and Digital Inclusion Partnership, Flying Start, Families First Programme and the Integrated Youth Offer:

- Percentage of Households where homelessness is prevented for at least 6 months
- *(n) Additional (Affordable) Housing Units Built / Percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year that were affordable. (awaiting clarification)*

Next Steps:

- Monmouthshire's "Draft" Tackling Poverty Action Plan will be presented to the Programme Board in December 2015, for review and sign-off prior to LSB in January 2016.
- The approach we are taking is to make tackling poverty a cross-cutting theme, with the establishment of a multi-agency Tackling-Poverty Working Group that will oversee the integration, alignment and reporting of national and local anti-poverty programmes.