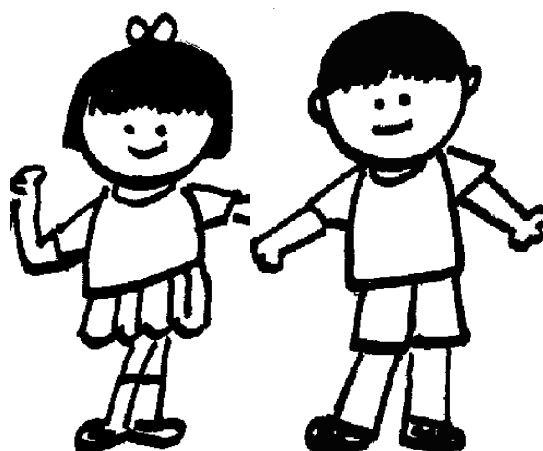


## Child Poverty – It's Everybody's Business!



# MIDDLESBROUGH CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011 - 2014

## **FOREWORD**

Reducing child poverty is a priority for the Local Authority and Middlesbrough Partnership (the local strategic partnership for Middlesbrough).

Child poverty affects many families in Middlesbrough. This influences the life chances of our children and consequently the economic well being of the town, and places demands on the public sector.

It is acknowledged that childhood experience lays the foundations for later life.

Growing up in poverty can damage physical, cognitive, social and emotional developments, which are all determinants of outcomes in adult life.

Low income determines every aspect of families' lives and children's development by influencing:

- living conditions
- levels of education
- the capacity to operate as a supportive family
- community networks
- the stress resulting from the daily struggle to make ends meet.

While some children who grow up in low-income households will go on to achieve their full potential, many others will not.

Reducing child poverty is not simply about lifting children above an arbitrary income line; it is about transforming the experiences, living standards and life chances of disadvantaged families with children, in order to break cycles of poverty that persist across generations.

This document builds on other pieces of work undertaken within the Local Authority and Middlesbrough Partnership rather than being a stand-alone document.

It will be used to ensure that all our partners work collaboratively to tackle child poverty in a way that reflects the local conditions and experiences of our families living in poverty.

Chris Smith (Chair)  
Middlesbrough Partnership

Mike Carr  
Chair of Children and Young People's Trust

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## **PURPOSE OF THE MIDDLESBROUGH CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY**

The purpose of the Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy is to:

- provide a framework within which partners can work together with a shared vision to meet joint outcomes associated with reducing child poverty
- enable a wide range of partners to carry out their statutory and moral duties to reduce child poverty in Middlesbrough
- ensure that the views of families and children are taken into consideration in the shaping of plans to reduce child poverty.

The development of this strategy has involved consultation with statutory partners, the Community and Voluntary Sector and council directorates. The Strategy also reflects new duties under the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Child Poverty Needs Assessment and the Coalition Programme for Government.

Responding to child poverty fits with the wider strategic ambitions locally and if not addressed can undermine the longer-term economic aspirations for the town, therefore the Child Poverty Strategy supports a range of other town-wide strategies including:

- Middlesbrough Sustainable Community Strategy [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)
- Children & Young People's Plan [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)
- Middlesbrough Council Strategic Plan 2011 [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)

It will be used as part of a range of activities undertaken locally within the Local Authority, Middlesbrough Partnership and across wider partners and communities to reduce and respond to child poverty, building on the shared understanding and the extent and nature of the challenge to:

- prevent child poverty
- mitigate the impact of child poverty
- eradicate the root causes of poverty.

If child poverty is to be eradicated it is clear that it needs to be given a high profile and that everybody recognises their role in addressing the root causes.

**Child poverty is everybody's business.**

## **AIM OF THE STRATEGY**

The aim of this strategy is

“ To work together to prevent child poverty, mitigate the impact and eradicate the root cause of Child Poverty in Middlesbrough’

In the short term the focus of this strategy is to:

- narrow the gap between Middlesbrough and the Region
- narrow the gap between the worst wards in Middlesbrough and the best wards within Middlesbrough.

## **CHILD POVERTY IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

Middlesbrough is the most urbanised and densely populated local authority area in the Tees Valley. The total resident population of Middlesbrough is 139,200 living in 58,00 households.

Twenty percent of households living in Middlesbrough have children, with almost half in single parent households.

Middlesbrough has some of the worst deprivation in the country.

The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that Middlesbrough is ranked eighth most deprived local authority out of 326 local authority areas and was ranked ninth (IMD 2007) and tenth (IMD 2004), this showing a steady increase in deprivation.

The 2010 IMD shows 13 of Middlesbrough wards are in the top 10% of deprivation nationally, five of which have increased deprivation levels from the IMD 2007 position.

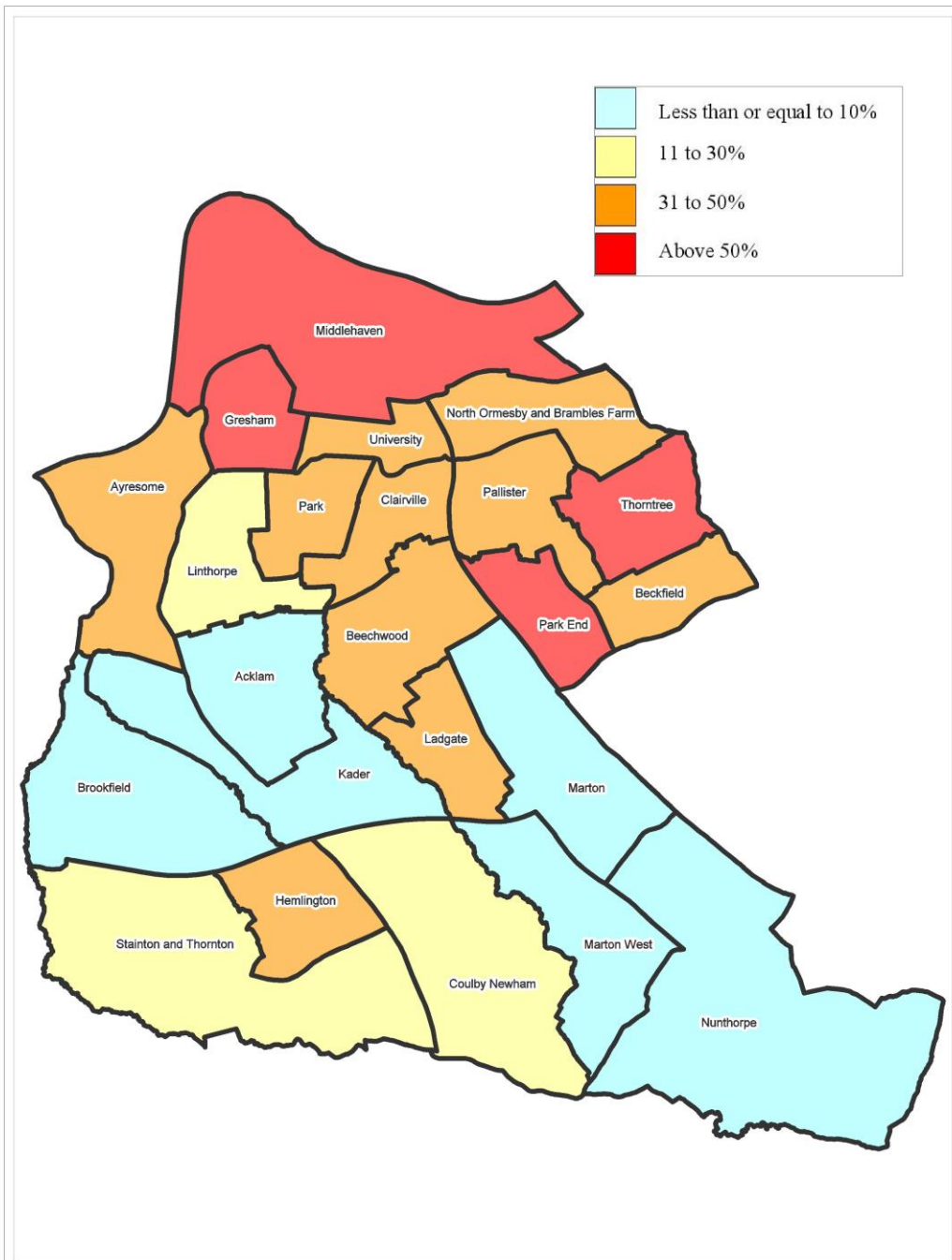
These wards are Thorntree, North Ormesby and Brambles Farm, Park End, Gresham and Ayresome.

Middlesbrough has the highest rate of child poverty in the northeast currently at 34% compared with 23% regionally and 21.3% nationally.

Looking at Child Poverty across wards in Middlesbrough shows that there are huge differences in the levels of Child Poverty across Middlesbrough, they vary from 5% to 60%. That means the levels of child poverty in Thorntree are twelve times higher than Nunthorpe and Marton West.

15 of the 23 wards in Middlesbrough experience levels of child poverty above the national average.

# Map Showing Levels of Child Poverty by Ward in Middlesbrough



## Middlesbrough Child Poverty

Head of Service:		Ref:	
Service Area:	Performance and Policy	Scale:	
Created by:	L M Robertson	Date:	24th March 2011

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Source End Child Poverty [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

## **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The Child Poverty Act 2010 has committed this and future governments to eradicate child poverty by 2020. The Coalition's Programme for government stated: 'we will maintain the goal of ending child poverty by 2020'

The act defines the following levels of poverty:

- Relative low income poverty
- Absolute low income poverty
- Persistent low income poverty
- Material deprivation

The most well known measure is relative low-income poverty, often referred to as the 'headline measure'. The figures given are for the relative low-income measure *after housing costs*. The Government targets are tracked using figures *before housing costs*, which show a lower rate of poverty because the costs of housing are so high.

In 1998/99 there were 4.4 million children in the UK living below the poverty line. By 2008/09, this had been reduced to 3.9 million children; it is predicted that this will fall further to 3.5 million in 2011<sup>1</sup>

The progress made is significant partly due to investment in tax credits, child benefit, jobs growth, lone parent employment and support from services such as Sure Start.

However, despite the progress one in five (21.3%) children throughout England, are classified as living below the poverty line (before housing costs). In some areas this rises to over half. In comparison the areas with the lowest levels of child poverty differ by a factor of 10 compared with the highest, already well below the target level for 2020.

The Child Poverty Act requires local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and work with local partners on reduction and prevention of child poverty in their area. The scale of the task and the action needed is clearly greater for those areas with the highest rates of child poverty.

## **CURRENT AND FUTURE PRESSURES ON CHILD POVERTY**

The change of government has had a significant impact on the policy, operational and economic environment. There are many policy developments that will impact on the way we shape the strategy to tackle child poverty in Middlesbrough. In particular changes in the social welfare system will impact on the circumstances of many families that are living in poverty.

The change of government is also impacting on how the Council and its partners operate in the future. The emergence of policy drivers such as the localism agenda

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts that when data is available for the 2011, it will show child poverty has fallen to 3.5 million children

and the Big Society, amongst others, provide the basis on which local services can be developed to provide an increasingly focused approach to service delivery.

### **Spending Settlements**

Spending settlements that have been provided by central government for 2011/12 and 2012/13 tend to be less favourable for those local authorities with the higher rates of child poverty. This is particularly significant to Middlesbrough.

### **Relative low income and absolute low-income poverty**

Although the recession has made life harder for many low-income families, its full impact has been lessened by direct investment in financial support for families in the final years of the previous government. Similarly, investment through child tax credits by the coalition Government will protect against the full impact of spending cuts for at least two years. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has predicted that levels of relative and absolute low-income poverty will start to rise again in 2013, in part due to social security and welfare benefit cuts.

### **Material Deprivation**

The experience of poverty in low-income families has been exacerbated by rapidly rising prices, particularly food and fuel. This is likely to continue.

At the same time those families who face poverty without a parent in work will be hit by the reductions to benefits like Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, and Employment and Support Allowance. Other benefit cuts will hit both in work and out of work parents in low-income families, such as the cap on housing benefit and the three-year freeze on child benefit.

Low-income families with a parent in work may be under threat of redundancy for many public sector jobs.

Families will therefore face multiple pressures on both their incomes and their outgoings.

## **Persistent Poverty**

While unemployment remains at a high level, the threat of persistent poverty due to lack of opportunities for those out of work to gain employment will increase.

Wage stagnation will also threaten to leave families below the poverty line for longer where parents are receiving low wages.

## **Life Chances**

In the independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances carried out by Frank Fields “The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults” found that children’s life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in their first five years of life.

It is recognised that early years and childcare are an important factor towards reducing child poverty because it helps parents to go out to work.

It is family background, parental education, good parenting and opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years that matter more to children than money, in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life.

Later interventions can be effective but the most effective and cost effective way to help is in the earliest years of the child’s life. The importance of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and raising parental aspirations is essential.

Should we see the increases in income poverty, material deprivation and persistent poverty talked about above, along with the expected access to services, the life chances of children from low-income families will be negatively affected. This is because inequality would then be expected to increase; this is known to be associated with lower levels of social mobility, educational outcomes, which are crucial to life changes and social mobility, are also known to be undermined by lack of material resources, limiting a child’s capacity to take advantage of educational and developmental opportunities both within the home and at school.

Source End Child Poverty [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

## **Government Child Poverty Strategy**

In light of the coming cuts and growing costs of living, there is a risk of child poverty deteriorating greatly in the years ahead.

The Government has published its first Child Poverty Strategy to tackling poverty for this Parliament and up to 2020. "Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives"

The Government is committed to eradicating child poverty by addressing the root causes of poverty and not just the symptoms. It recognises that poverty is about more than income, and that income measures and targets do not tell the full story about the causes and consequences of childhood disadvantage that underpins low achievement, aspiration and opportunity across generations.

The key focus of the strategy is to:

- strengthen families
- encourage responsibility
- promote work
- guarantee fairness and provide support to the most vulnerable.

## **MIDDLESBROUGH - AN AREA AT RISK**

This strategy is underpinned by a Child Poverty Needs Assessment, which has been drawn from a number of needs assessments including:

- Children and Young People Needs Assessment 2011-2014 [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)
- Children and Young People Plan 2011-2014 [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)
- Middlesbrough's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2011-2014 [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)
- Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010 [www.tees.nhs.uk](http://www.tees.nhs.uk)
- Tees Valley Economic Assessment 2009/2010 [www.teesvalleyunlimited.gov.uk](http://www.teesvalleyunlimited.gov.uk)

The evaluation and analysis of the needs assessments tells us:

- tackling child poverty is a complex issue
- poverty means so much more than income
- the same geographical areas of the town are affected by poverty
- children from poorer areas are less likely to perform well at school
- children from poorer areas are more likely to participate in risk taking behaviour – i.e. become teenage mums, drink, take drugs and become involved in crime
- the same children are likely to be NEETs
- parents are likely to be low skilled, have low income jobs
- poorer families will have financial issues

- strong health links between low birth weight and poverty
- higher number of children who live in deprived areas are subject to child protection plans
- children within the deprived areas are more likely to enter the Youth Justice System.

Earlier within the strategy we talked about the factors that are impacting on tackling child poverty nationally, these are significant to Middlesbrough.

- Middlesbrough has some of the worst deprivation in the country. 13 of the wards are in the top 10% nationally
- Middlesbrough Council received one of the highest spending cuts
- Over a quarter of Middlesbrough's working age population receive key benefits compared with 20.5% regionally and 15.9% nationally
- 92% of children benefit from tax credits
- Middlesbrough has a high dependency on public sector jobs and inevitably will see greater relative increases in their level of deprivation due to the job losses
- Middlesbrough is a comparatively low wage economy, even compared with the rest of the Tees Valley which itself is lower than the national average.

It is against this backdrop that Middlesbrough needs to develop its strategy for child poverty.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

A key feature in developing the Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy has been the participation of children, young people and families and the engagement of partners in its development. The following is a brief summary of key events, which have assisted in the production of the Strategy:

### **Child Poverty Forum**

In July 2010 Middlesbrough Partnership held a Child Poverty Forum for all key stakeholders to:

- hear regional and local perspectives of child and family poverty
- consider how issues associated with child and family poverty can be addressed
- identify the characteristics of child poverty
- identify work that is been done locally
- consider gaps in services, what do we need to do differently, which partners need to be involved
- identify the key core causes of poverty in Middlesbrough.

The outcome from the event was that the Child Poverty Strategy should:

- learn from previous experiences and build on the good practice that is currently taking place
- consider how we can shape services differently
- address the needs of the whole family

- reinforce that child poverty is everyone's business
- aim to narrow the gap between the highest deprived wards and those wards with lower deprivation.

### **Child Poverty Steering Group**

A Child Poverty Multi Agency Steering Group was set up to champion child poverty and to ensure that Middlesbrough fulfils its statutory duties to be established through the Child Poverty Bill.

The membership of the steering group involved key representatives from Middlesbrough Partnership and Middlesbrough Council.

The responsibility of the group is to act as a conduit for ensuring child poverty issues were adequately addressed and that information was shared between Middlesbrough Partnership Thematic groups, partner organisations and Middlesbrough Council departments.

### **KEY CAUSES OF CHILD POVERTY IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

Preventing child poverty is a challenging ambition. We have identified the three key causes of child poverty where we need to intervene in a coordinated way:

1. **Low aspiration** – individuals lack the motivation and support to achieve their potential.
2. **Low income** – family income is insufficient to ensure a good quality of life.
3. **Poor Environment** – physical, social and emotional surroundings have a negative impact upon life chances.

By addressing the three causes in a coordinated and joined up way, we are more likely to have a sustained impact on reducing child poverty in the short, medium and long term.

### **MIDDLESBROUGH'S APPROACH TO REDUCING CHILD POVERTY**

Our aim is to reduce the number of children living in poverty in Middlesbrough. We will do this in partnership by focusing on those most at risk, including those areas of the town where poverty is concentrated. It is anticipated that by taking action in these areas it is expected that we will reduce child poverty levels in the town overall, as well as close the gap in outcomes experienced by children living in the most deprived areas of the town compared with the town average.

The three key causes of Child Poverty in Middlesbrough are considered in turn below, with their impact and our approach to addressing them:

- low aspiration;
- low income;
- poor environment.

### **Low Aspiration**

Raising aspirations in our children and young people is important because they influence outcomes.

Young people generally have good perceptions about education provision and have positive attitudes and aspirations. These are not always fulfilled with education underachievement at school leaving age.

Raising aspirations is complex and requires a multi agency approach.

It is clear that there is a direct link between deprivation and outcomes for children and young people.

It is recognised that young people and parents are influenced by their surroundings. The people and places where they live influence young people and their parents. Family background is the strongest influence on young people's educational aspirations.

There is robust evidence that suggests young people with higher educational aspirations have greater motivation and achieve higher educational attainment than their peers, as do those whose parents hold higher educational aspirations for them.

There are parents in Middlesbrough who have had bad experience of schooling and do not see the benefit of education; this attitude perpetuates low aspirations.

Within Middlesbrough there are 13 wards (IMD 2007) in the top 10% most deprived in England. The analysis shows that these wards have a direct correlation with consistently poor outcomes in education, employment and health inequalities.

In partnership we will work towards:

- encouraging aspirations to drive achievement
- using achievement to drive further aspiration
- providing educational and employment opportunities to enable people to achieve their aspirations
- encouraging a culture of achieving aspiration in families
- breaking the cycle of generational low aspiration.

## **Low Income**

Secure and stable employment is the key to preventing and reducing poverty.

It is considered that employment may be the best route out of poverty for many, although it is recognised that some families are unable to work or have greater barriers.

The preponderance of low paid, low skill, insecure employment – ‘poor work’ means that for some people getting a job will not constitute a step on the ladder up and away from poverty.

Estimated gross weekly household income 2007/2008 indicates only nine wards have a household weekly above the Middlesbrough average, the University ward being the lowest income base showing £370 per week.

There are clear links with low paid work and financial exclusion. In 2007 the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) commissioned Experian to map the extent of financial exclusion across 10,000 wards in the United Kingdom. Thirteen of Middlesbrough’s 23 wards were ranked as Septile 7, the most financially excluded. Park End ranked as the 10<sup>th</sup> most financially excluded in the UK and Thorntree the 13<sup>th</sup>.

In partnership we will work towards:

- enabling people to break the cycle of benefit dependency
- encouraging a culture of work in every household
- enabling people to maximise their employability and economic potential and income
- encouraging the provision of higher quality opportunities for learning and employment
- enabling people to escape the ‘Low pay – No pay’ trap.

## **Poor Environment**

Living in a poor environment can affect our health and wellbeing. Having a clean and healthy environment is vital for everyone’s quality of life.

Fuel Poverty can have an effect on families and children. The effect of Fuel Poverty on children is primarily on physical health, which in turn might affect overall well-being and educational achievement.

Belonging to a vibrant environment that promotes good physical and mental health is not only essential but also a factor that influences people's ability to enter employment and reach their full potential.

In many cases people who are socially and economically disadvantaged often live in the worst environments, thus impacting on their quality of life and life chances, having poor or ill health as a symptom and a cause of poverty.

In partnership we will work towards:

- ensuring that living conditions are a positive influence on a child's quality of life
- encouraging a safe, supportive and caring family environment
- preventing poverty having an impact upon the physical and mental health of children
- preventing poor physical and mental health constraining opportunity
- preventing poverty of opportunity.

## **IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE STRATEGY**

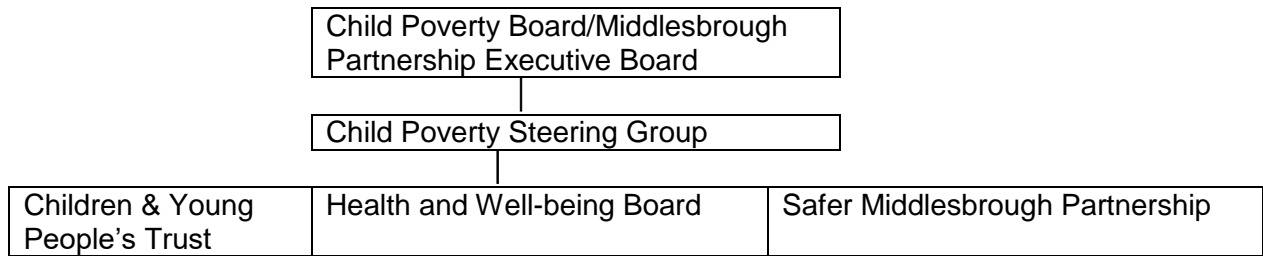
Tackling child poverty is everybody's business. If child poverty is to be eradicated it is clear that it needs to be given a high profile and that everybody recognises their role in addressing the root causes highlighted in this strategy.

A strong strategic framework is an essential part of the response to Child Poverty. This is such a significant and crosscutting issue that needs to be overseen at the highest level. The leadership of tackling child poverty lies with Middlesbrough Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership, whose Executive Board now acts as the Child Poverty Partnership Board.

The LSP thematic partnerships will play a key role in ensuring:

- child poverty is a priority in key strategies and plans
- leadership and accountability for child poverty is clear
- there is a key focus to partnership working
- impact is measured and progress reviewed on a regular basis.

## Governance Structure



The Child Poverty Steering group, with membership from a range of agencies and links to each Thematic Partnership, will be responsible to the LSP to ensure that:

- Child Poverty is tackled across the LSP
- Child Poverty is a high priority within individual services and organisations
- the impact of activity is monitored
- progress is reported on a regular basis
- a periodic review of progress against child poverty needs is undertaken to capture the complexity of the issue.

As child poverty manifests itself most acutely in areas of multiple deprivation, the focus of this strategy is to work to reduce the levels of child poverty in the most deprived areas of Middlesbrough and as a result reduce the level of Child Poverty in Middlesbrough as a whole, therefore we will monitor:

- the impact that is being made on bringing areas out of deprivation
- how Middlesbrough is performing against other local authorities – the Government will determine key child poverty indicators
- the impact of individual partners organisations to child poverty through their own actions, targets and indicators, contained within their own strategies and plans.