

Poverty and social inequalities in Belfast:

A corporate framework for action Draft for Development Committee, 22 November 2011

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1. Purpose of this document

This document describes a framework that brings together a number of key council services and activities to ensure realistic and appropriate corporate support for the growing number of our residents and their families who are experiencing poverty during the current economic downturn.

The framework:

- 1. Offers a broad definition of poverty and its causes;
- 2. Briefly examines the growing levels of poverty amongst Belfast's residents;
- 3. Explains the supporting role and contributions council can make in supporting residents (while recognising the key role of other agencies);
- 4. Describes specific actions we can take (either directly or in a supporting or advocacy role); and
- 5. Outlines a method for measuring the impact of these actions.

This document, if approved by the council, would then form the basis of a public consultation process to test its viability and assess its equality impact.

2. Background

There is a growing consensus within the council that we have a worthwhile contribution to make in helping to alleviate the effects of the most severe economic downturn that Belfast has faced in a generation. Members are currently considering a package of measures to support the city's residents and businesses during this difficult period.

The economic downturn, alongside the ongoing public sector cuts, is expected to have the greatest impact on the city's families in poverty. Recent research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies¹ states that, based on the latest economic forecasts, 'absolute child and working-age adult poverty are predicted to rise continuously in the UK between now and 2014'.

It is, of course, not within the council's gift to end poverty in Belfast (nor to end the economic downturn). But with some additional co-ordination; a greater focus on the barriers faced by those in poverty who wish to use our services; and by offering a strong supporting and advocacy role with our partners; it is possible to make our services more accessible, better targeted and ultimately more effective for those most in need.

Poverty in Belfast

Poverty remains one of the most persistent and significant issues facing Northern Ireland with Belfast being particularly badly affected. Nearly half of our city's population live in some of most deprived Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland².

OFMDFM's Central Anti-Poverty Unit states that 'people are considered to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to prevent them

¹ Child and Working Age Poverty and Inequality in UK Institute for Fiscal Studies, October 2011 <u>http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/comm121.pdf</u>

² <u>http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk</u>

from enjoying a standard of living, which would be regarded as acceptable by society generally.' $^{\rm 3}$

Across Europe a more quantitative definition of household poverty is 'one with an (equivalised) income that is 60% or less than that of the median household income in the year'.

Under this definition around 20% of Belfast's population live in relative poverty (which is higher than the EU average of 16%)⁴ In absolute terms this works out at around £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for an adult with two dependent children under 14.

Causes of poverty

The causes of poverty are many and varied. Perhaps unsurprisingly poverty is most strongly associated with worklessness. Children's poverty in particular is directly linked to living in households where no adult is employed. But households at the fringes of the labour market are also at substantial risk because of low wages – the 'working poor'.

Benefits and tax credits, that are supposed to act as a safety net, are sometimes too low to protect families from poverty. Chronic ill health, poor education and living in a deprived area can all contribute.

In terms of who is mostly at risk of poverty, households headed by a lone parent with dependent children are at risk; pensioners when they are entirely dependent on state pensions and associated benefits, and ethnic minorities.⁵

While concentrations of such 'at-risk' households can be mapped to particular parts of Belfast, it is important to note that such households can exist in any part of the city – and are often 'hidden' in statistical analyses.

3. The role of government

The elimination of poverty requires major and sustained fiscal and monetary interventions at national and regional levels.

Northern Ireland Government Departments have the major statutory responsibility and the resources for directly tackling the causes of poverty in Belfast, especially Department for Social Development, Department for Employment and Learning, Belfast Education and Library Board and Belfast Health Trust. It is obvious that there are a wide range of necessary interventions to be made at this level such as early years programmes; neighbourhood renewal,; economic development initiatives, tackling worklessness; health interventions; education and skills; and tailored support for families and older people. The Executive has made commitments to many of these strands of work in its Lifetimes Opportunities and Child Poverty strategies⁶.

³ OFMDFM Central Anti-Poverty unit <u>http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality/central-anti-poverty-unit.htm</u> (accessed 11 October 2011)

⁴ 'Poverty in Belfast', M. Morrissey (2008)

⁵ ibid

⁶ <u>http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/central-anti-poverty-unit</u> (access 7 November 2011)

The role of the council

The Belfast City Council framework does not seek to supplant this government role. We only have a specific range of limited interventions at our disposal. However, the framework proposes that the council can play an important role with an emphasis on working in partnership with Government, and others, as a key local service provider and as an advocate for our citizens experiencing poverty.

Belfast City Council can make important contributions that will have a direct impact on our residents by:

- 1. Ensuring that our services are more accessible to those in poverty;
- Looking for opportunities to make more effective and targeted use of our existing resources;
- 3. Working with our partners (both statutory and community based) to enhance their and joint service delivery; and
- Raising awareness of the plight of an increasing proportion of our city's population who are experiencing poverty and playing an advocacy role for those most at risk.
- 5. Effectively engaging people in or at risk of poverty, particularly in areas in and around interfaces where the legacies of conflict are most stark

These contributions are by no means insubstantial. Given the large number of services that we deliver at a local level, there are clear opportunities for the council to have a direct and positive impact at modest cost to the rate-payer.

Practical examples

There are a number of practical ways in which the council could adapt or extend its existing work in modest ways to more effectively address issues of poverty. For example, on a small scale we offer many programmes at both our leisure centres and our community facilities. Decisions around the design of such programmes, their pricing, opening times and their promotion can inadvertently impede those in poverty from availing of them.

Similarly, there are existing significant strands of work supporting programmes in twelve Neighbourhood Renewal areas; our fuel stamp programme; and our support for advice services across the city. We have recently begun work with Land and Property Services to directly promote their Rate relief programme to communities through our leisure and community centres. Our employability and skills programmes (such as the HARTE programme), our programmes for local economic development, job creations and support for social economy enterprises all directly address worklessness – one of the root causes of poverty in the city.

On a citywide scale our contribution to the new Belfast Health Development unit and the Belfast Strategy Partnership offer many opportunities to influence the design and implementation of a large raft of health and wellbeing programmes and activities that are closely associated with those living in poverty.

The wider impact

There is strong evidence from urban development research, including the council's own research for State of the City⁷, that the presence of persistent poverty and social inequality has profound negative consequences for the long term success of the entire city. Directly addressing the issue not only can have positive outcomes for those families directly affected but contributes to sustainable urban competitiveness. The bottom line is: Belfast cannot be competitive if a large percentage of its population live in poverty.

There are other strong arguments for our role. It would:

- 1. Align the council to the emerging regional and national policies including OFMDFM's *Lifetime Opportunities* and Child Poverty strategies.
- 2. Encourage opportunities for economies of scale and integrated place-based approaches that do more for less.
- Reduce the cost to the council and the wider economy. (Recent research estimates that child poverty costs £25 billion each year in costs to the Exchequer and reduced GDP⁸.)
- 4. Raise the council's profile as a key citywide local service provider that supports communities across the city.
- 5. Support people to deal with the legacies of the conflict.

⁷ 'Belfast: Competitive City?', Michael Parkinson (2008)

⁸ This research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that child poverty represents 71% of Social Services' spend across the UK.

4. Action plan 2012 to 2017

The action plan outlines specific interventions that the council can take over the next five years to address poverty and inequalities broadly arranged under the existing corporate themes. In a period of budget constraints the plan emphasises the role that existing work can play. Accordingly, many of the actions below identify opportunities to harness the potential of existing initiatives and ongoing strands of core council work. (There are a small number of new initiatives which are identified in the table.) Most actions have attached budgets and or staff time needed. Also, we have identified existing or potential income for various actions in the plan below.

#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income			
	Contributing to Better opportunities for success									
1	Raising skills and reducing worklessness	 Complete the HARTE programme Maximise opportunities through Titanic Quarter partnerships including: At least 25% of those recruited by Titanic Belfast from long-term unemployed Extension of apprenticeships and graduate recruitment to other companies in TQ Identify joint initiatives with Belfast Employment and Skills Board to address employment challenges of target groups Supporting skills programmes through our community centres Support Learn 2 Earn programme Support Jobs on the Move 	Development	DEL, Invest NI	1,2,3,4,5	£134,000 (3y) 1 full time secondme nt 1 full time secondme nt 1 full time secondme nt £428,076 (£7,636 BCC) £202,443 (£5,000 BCC) - £784,000 (£25,000 BCC)	£325,999 (3y)			
2	Actively support development of social economy projects	 Provide advice and guidance to social economy enterprises that wish to apply for council tenders Continue delivery of 'Meet the Buyer' events Set up a social economy enterprise database Assign a dedicated member of staff as first point of council contact for social enterprises 	Development & Property and Projects		2,3,4,5	£15,000 per program me; 1 day a week officer time	£7,000 (ERDF) and £1,000 (participants)			

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#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income
3	Develop community tourism enterprises ⁹	 Evaluate the current tourism infrastructure along the relevant tourism corridors (as part of the Integrated Tourism Framework) Engage the communities in relevant areas to raise awareness and potentials of social economy enterprises Arrange necessary training and advice provision Contribute to setting up at least one social economy enterprise per tourism hub 	Development	NITB	2,3,4,5	£360,000	
4	Ensure full inclusion of marginalised people through the council's employment programmes	 Under the Young people's Employment Initiative programme secure up to 10 placements in the council each year for the long term unemployed 	Finance and resources	DEL	1,2,3	App. 5 days a week (2 officers spending	£126,000 (ESF)
5	Through Disability Framework ensure people with disability have full access to employment opportunities new	 Provide at least 30 work experience placements for people with disabilities Evaluate success of placements Continue engagement with Government's new Workable programme Continue monitoring reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and our employees with disabilities 	Disability Action Group - HR		1,2,3,4,5	£138,346 App. 5 days a week (2 officers spending 50% of their time)	£32,690 (Disability Action)
6	Provide support to older people who seek employment opportunities new	 Monitor and enhance volunteering opportunities for older people 	HES/Communit y Services		1,2,3,4,5	1 day a week	£25,000 (EU funding for volunteer exchange)

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⁹ The Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework was launched in March 2011. One of the key themes within the framework is to develop local tourism destinations to extend the tourism offer outside the city centre, spread the benefits of tourism and in general lift the standard of visitor experience across the city. The local destinations identified are based on their potential to add to the Belfast tourism offer. They are: Belfast Hills, Connswater Community Greenway, Cathedral Quarter, Gaeltacht Quarter, Lagan Corridor, Lisburn Road, North Belfast Cultural Corridor, Queen's Quarter, Shankill Quarter and Titanic Quarter

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	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years	Budget/	Income
#							
					delivered	time	

Contributing to Better care for Belfast's environment

7	Assist in development of a regional food scheme to provide people in poverty with healthy food	 Assess the extent of possible support and prepare a business case Disseminate information about the project and processes internally and externally Commence project delivery (if feasible) 	HES/ Dev PBDU support	CHNI	1,2,3	Staff time – 1 day a month
8	Reducing fuel poverty	 Investigating the possibility of piloting a 'Warm Zones' approach in two socially deprived areas of the city to demonstrate a proof of concept of reducing fuel poverty and carbon emissions Explore funding opportunities for delivery of new energy efficiency powers 	HES/Dev PBDU support		1,2,3	Not establishe d yet
9	Continue fuel stamp initiative and aim to promote it to all households in need	 Ensure that the most vulnerable have access to the scheme Mainstream the fuel stamp initiative with existing internal resources 	HES		2,3	40,000 per year and 1 full time officer

Contributing to better support for people and communities

		•					
10 N 10 N 10 P	Ensure maximum delivery of Neighbourhoo d Renewal programme commitments	 Continue coordination and monitoring of the council's delivery of across twelve Neighbourhood Renewal areas. 	Development	Various	2,3,4	£60,000 per year plus 2 officers dedicating ½ to this action	
a c d a 11 a ((e e l u	Increase access to cultural development and outreach initiatives across the city (via the emerging integrated Cultural strategy) new	 Extend the pilot outreach programme to children and young people Through Creative Legacies funding increase access to Section 75 categories and other marginalised groups Through City of Festivals project remove barriers to access of marginalised groups Extend the development and outreach of our culture and arts programmes (via 	Development	DCAL	2,3	165,000/ 5 hours per week £73,600 and 5 hours per week	- £300,000 (Peace III) £300,000 (Peace III) - £73,600 (DCAL)

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:	#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income
			community festivals fund)					
1	12	Develop community gardens in the areas of need new	 Evaluate the scheme of four delivered projects Develop new initiatives 	Parks and Leisure	РНА	1,2,3,4	£58,000 (1Y)	£42,000 (Public Health Agency)
1	13	Support & fund advice provision infrastructure in Belfast	 Continue providing over £800,000 in funding Ensure capacity building support to Advice consortia Maximise the uptake of the Rate relief (especially by older people) Support extended outreach activity of the advice providers 	Development	DSD	1,2,3,4,5	£350,000 per year £12,500 2,000	£450,000(DS D) per year
1	14	Community Support Development Programme with our partners	 Develop Active Communities programme across the city Delivery by a community network (Belfast Community Sports Development Network) 	Parks and Leisure	Sport NI	1,2,3,4,5	3 days per week	£2.28 million (Sport NI)
1	15	Develop capacity building through Community Development Framework	 Confirm and implement the council's community development strategy to support core community capacity at the neighbourhood level Actively engaging people in poverty around the interface areas to create conditions for removing peace walls 	Development, All		1,2,3,4,5	£45,000 and ½ day a week officer time	

Contributing to Better Services

16 	Explore feasibility of a 'Belfast Pass' ¹⁰ at a reduced rate for people on low incomes <u>new</u>	 Undertake a feasibility study and prepare a business case If feasible deliver the new concept 	Development	NITB, BVCB	2,3	£12,000 (50% NITB) - budget for reduced rate not establishe d yet	£11,700 (from sales)
17	In partnership with the Public Health Ag <u>ency</u>	 Target up to 200 people who live in the most deprived areas. (There are currently 110 people participating) 	Parks and Leisure	РНА	1	½ a week for one officer (6 months)	£13,200 (Public Health Agency)

¹⁰ The 'Belfast Pass' card is a simple concept based on the platform of free public transport (Metro/Ulsterbus and rail) with the added bonus of 90 discounts and offers in attractions, tours, restaurants, shops and activities.

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#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income
	provide free access to leisure facilities in the most deprived parts of Belfast						
18	Ensure all children have access to parks and playgrounds	 Map the provision of parks and playgrounds across Belfast 	SNAP unit to support P&L		1,2	Staff time – 1 day a month	
	Contributing to	Better Value for Money					
19	Explore development of 'social clauses' in our procurement, project and regeneration spend new	 Set up of the inter-agency Social Clause Delivery Forum When legislative powers are passed to councils: Set up a Task and Finish team Undertake a feasibility study Prepare a business case for the council Implement a pilot project Undertake evaluation of the pilot project If successful roll-out across the council 	Properties and Projects (PBDU to support research)		1,2,3,4,5	No budget assigned yet – 1 full time secondme nt	
20	Develop indicators to measure the impact of regeneration on health and poverty in Belfast-new	 Pilot the indicators and methodology Identify target audience and provide training on the use of the tool 	HES		1,2,3	3 days a week	£40,000 (Urbact)
21	Ensure a maximum social impact of our regeneration projects new	 Explore the potential of setting up GEMS for North Foreshore, Titanic and Northern Fringe at Gasworks Develop evaluation and monitoring system that measures social impact Link it to the indicators on the regeneration impact 	Development		1,2	Budget not defined yet; ½ day a week officer time	
22	Regularly monitor, report, evaluate and improve the Framework	 Undertake a study of available performance indicators Prepare a performance Framework Monitor Framework on an annual basis 	Development		1,2,3,4,5	£ 20,000; 1 day a month officer time	

Contributing to City Leadership

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#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income
23	Fully integrate the equality framework into corporate planning new	 Undertake an audit of inequalities in the council Prepare improvement plans 	Good Relations unit		1,2	None – 1 day a week staff time	
24	Ensure current poverty & inequalities data on CityStats new	 Include poverty & inequalities related indicators in area profiles Share profiles with external partners Use the information to influence decision making Annual inequalities briefing for Members (including impact of the framework, issues to be addressed, statistics, etc.) 	Development		1,2,3,4,5	Staff time – 1 day a month	
25	Maximise investment and funding streams to support council work on poverty & inequalities new	 Through the Eurocities Social Affairs Forum explore the funding opportunities for the council Actively engage in the post 2013 lobby for future structural funds Explore for the opportunities under the new Eurocities Lifelong Learning Working Group Complete (and undertake) two sports bids to tackle violence in sports and better use parks Continue influencing at a European level for funding streams to tackle inequalities Explore alternative finance arrangement for people in poverty with our partners (e.g. microfinance) 	Development		1,2,3,4,5	Attendanc e at 3 Fora meetings Input into 2 consultati on/lobby responses - 3 days research, 4 days meetings - 1 day/mont h, 7 days preparati on and 2 inward visits - Research 3 days, 3 meetings	€400,000 (£342,325) secured Potential to secure up to €500,000 (£427,871)

(Draft) Poverty and social inequalities in Belfast

#	Action	Detail	Lead	Partners	Years delivered	Budget/ time	Income
26	Exchange best practise with European and national partners	 Engage with partners at events, seminars and meetings Continue engagement in the Eurocities Task Force on Roma and the I am Roma project through the Belfast Health Trust Continue participation in Belfast in Europe group and contribute to joint projects Commemorate the EU Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the generations Use the relevant best practise examples in the poverty Framework delivery Undertake one lead project at a European level 	Development & Health and Environmental Services		1,2,3,4,5	3 meetings per year, input into 2 consultati on responses 3 meetings per year 4 meetings per year 5 days research and developm ent Under PROGRES S – difficult to estimate time	Travel and accommodat ion reimbursed through PROGRESS
27	Undertake supporting research with external partners	 Contribute to, and support, research on inequalities and overcoming barriers to participation 	Development		1	£20,000/ 1 day a month	
28	Develop partnerships and build political legacy	 Contribute to development of NI Child Poverty Framework Actively lobby the governmentIdentify appropriate issues for structured and active lobbying of Government Build partnerships to deliver different projects 	Chief Executive's		1,2,3,4	1 day/mont h	

5. How will we measure our impact?

The council places greater emphasis on creating effective performance management systems that allow us to better to measure the impact of our services across the city. This framework will utilise the approaches and data gathering techniques emerging from these systems to assist with measuring the impact on poverty in the city.

What we measure, and how it will be measured, are influenced by a number of factors:

- the measurable reality of poverty in Belfast
- the many inter-connected factors that contribute to it
- the particular subset of these factors on which the council can have a positive impact
- ✓ the strands of council work which can contribute to this impact

Bearing this in mind we are developing indicators with the following characteristics:

- ability to identify levels of poverty at a small area level
- their relevance to our corporate themes
- direct, unambiguous measures of progress
- available across different socioeconomic groups, geographies and over time
- have a direct link with interventions
- consistent with the decision-making cycle
- easy and inexpensive to collate
- ✓ understandable
- politically agreed

(The council is developing a Quality of Life matrix which will include a set of indicators to measure the economic, social and environmental impact of council's policies and projects. There will be an obvious overlap between the matrix's indicator sets and those of the poverty framework and it will be important that results and processes are shared.)

We have identified a basket of indicators classified under the following headings:

- 1. Low income & employment
- 2. Children and young people
- 3. Communities
- 4. Adult wellbeing

Details of each indicator are available upon request or via the council's **Citystats system**.

Internal indicators

There are a number of internal indicators which while not directly measuring the impact of our work on poverty, will contribute to the direct measurement of the performance of the action plans' various initiatives. These include:

Corporate theme	Proposed Performance indicator	Frequency
City leadership	Total amount of leveraged money targeted at social inclusion projects	Quarterly
Better opportunities for success across the city	Number of young people long-term unemployed who went through	Annually

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	 council's programmes (HR) Percentage of jobs through regeneration projects that are given to local people Number of set up social economy enterprises 	
Better care for Belfast's environment	 Percentage of all housing stock in fuel poverty The number of people through environmental projects (food scheme, community gardens) 	Annually
Better support for people and communities	 Total amount of claw-back benefits drawn by the advice services Percentage of people who feel the council's work helps them play a bigger role in decision-making 	Quarterly Annually
Better services	Percentage of people satisfied with council's services	Biennially
Better value for money	 Percentage of the council's contracts with at least 5% of spend towards social clause 	Annually

The monitoring process will involve a longitudinal assessment of poverty:

- Agreeing indicators to measure progress
- Setting targets to provide benchmarks
- Identifying a system(s) to house the data.
- Regular collation, analysis, review and response in relation to the future indicator data.

6. What happens next?

This is a draft document that needs input from all our stakeholders – the more people and organisations we engage the more meaningful and effective this framework will be. Thus we are planning a series of phases before we launch the final document:

- Public consultation December February 2012
- Feedback analysis and redrafting of the document in February
- Final strategy to go through council internal decision making processes in March
- Final framework to the committee in April
- The implementation to commence April/May 2012
- Development of a detailed action plan
- Process of incorporating it into units' business plans

Appendix: Who have we engaged with to date?

We have discussions with a large number of stakeholders about the framework and the types of work that the council could usefully contribute. To date, while acknowledging the limited role of the council, there has been an overwhelming positive response to the creation of the framework.

Internally, officers have been keen to investigate how their work can contribute to delivering the framework while externally there has been enthusiastic support for the council in taking a proactive stance in pursuing this work.

Internal council stakeholders

- Members
- Health and Wellbeing group
- Chief Officers Management Team
- Policy Officers Group
- Departmental managers
- Heads of Service
- Various officers

External stakeholders

- Age NI (Provided advice)
- Barnardos (Facilitated eight research events with young people who are affected by poverty or disability)
- Equality Commission (Provided advice)
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- NICVA (provided advice)
- Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network (Facilitated six research events with people affected across the city)
- OFMDFM (Provided direction)
- Save the Children (Provided advice)
- Council for Homeless Northern Ireland
- Women Support Network (Facilitated six research events with women in poverty)

Development Committee

(As of August 2011)

Alderman Christopher Stalford (Chairman) Councillor Conor Maskey (Deputy Chair)

Alderman May Campbell Alderman Tom Ekin Alderman William Humphrey Alderman Bob Stoker **Councillor Janice Austin** Councillor Tom Hartley Councillor Máire Hendron Councillor Colin Keenan Councillor Bernie Kelly Councillor John Kyle Councillor Lee Reynolds Councillor Nichola Mallon Councillor Jim McVeigh Councillor Caoimhín Mac Giolla Mhín Councillor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir Councillor Gavin Robinson Councillor Guy Spence Councillor Andrew Webb