The London Child Poverty Pledge

Why make a child poverty pledge?

Child poverty matters because children who live in poverty lack many of the opportunities and experiences of their peers, and can suffer hardship, deprivation and exclusion. These negative experiences can lead to worse outcomes in childhood and beyond. Child poverty has effects that go beyond the individual: poor children tend to have lower educational attainment, and low skills and productivity will stunt economic growth, limiting the UK’s ability to compete in the global economy. Poorer outcomes for children and families place extra burdens and costs on public services, such as health care and children’s services and affect everybody’s day to day experiences of safety and well-being. Communities suffer through increased deprivation and inequalities which reduce social cohesion. Ending child poverty will therefore bring benefits to children, families, society and the economy in the UK.

Children are classified as living in poverty when their family income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income, equalised by household type. This may be a complicated definition, but is widely recognised to reflect the point when families’ incomes fall significantly below those of others in society, and they suffer from inequality of opportunity. Using this measure, 31% of children in Inner London live in poverty.¹

Tackling child poverty in London requires national, regional and local government, delivery agencies and their partners to do more to help families to raise their incomes, and to improve the outcomes of children and their families.

By signing the London Child Poverty Pledge, these organisations can make a strong and lasting shared commitment to increase their focus on child poverty and improve the impact of their services on parental employment, child poverty and the outcomes of poor children in London.

Who can sign the pledge?

The pledge is for any organisation that delivers services for families in London - including regional arms of delivery agencies; local authorities; children’s services; health services; housing services; employment services; colleges; schools; children’s centres and any other public service and third sector providers.

These organisations already attempt to offer high quality services, and to generate the best possible outcomes for all their customers or service users. By signing the child poverty pledge, they are recognising that, to tackle child poverty, they must increase their focus on the additional needs of poor parents and families, and attempt to make particular improvements to the services offered to, and the outcomes generated for, London’s poor families.

What does the pledge involve?

¹ Using a Before Housing Cost Measure
The pledge sets out a number of high-level activities which all organisations can take to improve the impact of their work on parental employment and child poverty. This set of activities has been developed by the Child Poverty Unit working in consultation with partners across London, and is based on analysis and experience of what makes a difference.

Each organisation that signs the pledge will also specify at least one new action that it will take under each theme. These actions should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. The Child Poverty Unit and other partners will be able to provide further advice for organisations as they decide which actions to adopt, and London Councils have produced specific guidance and examples for Local Authorities. It is important that organisations specify a set of actions that demonstrate real change and improvement in their ways of working.

EXAMPLE:

Under the heading ‘We will work to ensure that as an employer, our policies and practices enable London’s parents to find and progress in suitable and fulfilling jobs; to balance work and family life; and to earn a decent wage.

An organisation might specify that:

- ‘From January 2009, we will offer all staff flexible working opportunities from the first day at work.’
- ‘From October 2008, we will ensure all staff in our organisation, and sub-contracted agencies, are paid the London living wage.’
- ‘In autumn 2008 we will make specific commitments under the London Employer Accord to opening up job and skills opportunities. These will include signing the ‘Skills Pledge’ as a first step towards investing in the skills and development of our employees and working with the Accord to open up x jobs to previously workless people.’
- ‘In January 2009 we will offer a specific programme for lone parents returning to work, which includes offering them flexible working opportunities; specific confidence building activities; information about childcare options and financial support; and mentoring from other lone parents within the organisation.’

The type of activity specified will depend on the size and nature of the organisation, and what they are already doing.

How can I sign up to the pledge or find out more?

Organisations should contact the Child Poverty Unit to confirm that they are willing to commit to the pledge. They should then specify the particular actions that they will take on the attached form, and return this to the unit. All signatories will be invited to join Ministers, the Mayor, and other London leaders for the Child Poverty Summit on 19th November.

If your organisation wants find out more about the pledge, or to sign up to the pledge, please contact Sally Knock in the Child Poverty Unit on 0207 3407622 or email sally.knock@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk
THE PLEDGE

We will do more to help London’s poor families to raise their incomes, and to improve outcomes for poor children and their families.

We will work to ensure that...

... as an employer, our policies and practices enable London’s parents to find and progress in suitable and fulfilling jobs; to balance work and family life; and to earn a decent wage.

... parents and their families receive continuous and comprehensive support as they enter, stay and progress in work.

... children, parents and families do not experience difficulties or delays in accessing support due to avoidable bureaucracy or boundaries between services.

... the needs of all poor families are understood and reflected in our strategic plans and priorities.

... the impact and effectiveness of services is maximised, and outcomes for poor children and families are improved, as a result of strong partnership working with local, regional and national partners.

... child poverty remains a priority across all relevant areas of our work, promoted by a ‘child poverty champion’ on our senior leadership team.

... all families - including the most disadvantaged - experience a high quality service from skilled and responsive staff, who understand the contribution that their work makes to ending child poverty, and can identify which customers are parents and tailor their support accordingly.

... the views and experiences of children, young people and parents, including those from disadvantaged groups, shape the services we develop, commission, fund or deliver.

... services are continuously improved on the basis of robust evidence about what works in tackling child poverty.
Child Poverty Pledge Action Plan

If you are willing to sign up to the London Child Poverty Pledge, please complete the form below to explain the specific actions that your organisation will be taking to deliver the pledge. These should be new actions, which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound and which will make a clear difference to the outcomes of poor families in London.

Please sign the form, and send a copy to the Child Poverty Unit.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLEDGE COMMITMENT</th>
<th>ACTION TAKEN TO DELIVER THE COMMITMENT</th>
<th>WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WILL IT MAKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will work to ensure that...</td>
<td>From January 2009, we will offer all staff flexible working opportunities from the first day at work.</td>
<td>Offering flexible working opportunities makes it easier for parents to balance work and family life - helping them to enter and stay in work. This change will make it easier for parents to enter employment in our organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...as an employer, our policies and practices enable London’s parents to find and progress in suitable and fulfilling jobs; to balance work and family life; and to earn a decent wage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ACTION</td>
<td>HOW ACTION WILL BE IMPLEMENTED</td>
<td>WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WILL IT MAKE</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>We will work to ensure that...</td>
<td>In Jan 2009 we will extend new ways of working across the Council &amp; regularly review employment policies to ensure they recognise the strengths of our diverse population. We will arrange HR functions to ensure each department has specialist advice close to staff. The Council will offer an employment scheme for care leavers and children looked after to improve their access to employment and training opportunities.</td>
<td>Further develop the infrastructure to support NWW enabling parents to manage childcare responsibilities. Reviews of policies will ensure decent wages and conditions for Lambeth parents. In-house HR support will ensure parents have the support needed to remain in the workplace. This scheme will offer at least two placements per year per dept opening pathways to opportunities within the Council or partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...as an employer, our policies and practices enable London’s parents to find and progress in suitable and fulfilling jobs; to balance work and family life; and to earn a decent wage.</td>
<td>We will strengthen our partnership with Jobcentre Plus and support events planned for 2008/09, mostly run in Children’s Centres and with some creche spaces. Support Discovery Week events in Children’s Centres. We will plan with partners to provide Children’s Centre facilites to provide bespoke training for parents, e.g. NVQ TA, outreach jobsearch services, etc.</td>
<td>Further events will encourage and support lone parents into work. Discovery events build confidence, engage with employers and address barriers to help parents to move closer to the labour market. Additional training in communities provides a secure and familiar setting for parents to access pre-employment skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>...parents and their families receive continuous and comprehensive support as they enter, stay and progress in work.</td>
<td>We will extend our use, across the partnership, of the Common Assessment Framework to 11 yrs plus, through the Targeted Youth Support. We are relaunching our Children’s Services Directory, based on feedback from parents and carers increasing the number of services listed from 400 to 1100. The Council and its partners will be developing the use of joint service centres.</td>
<td>This will simplify referral for all children, young people and families in Lambeth and improve access to services. The Directory will provide improved and easy access to information for families. Developments in joint service centres in localities will provide further integrated service delivery and enable easy access.</td>
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<tr>
<td>...children, parents and families do not experience difficulties or delays in accessing support due to avoidable bureaucracy or boundaries between services.</td>
<td>Our Strategic Partnership has launched Lambeth’s Sustainable Community Strategy with worklessness as its key focus. One of the Council’s priorities is &quot;more opportunities for children and young people”. The Children &amp; Young People’s Service will develop a departmental child poverty strategy by March 09.</td>
<td>Tackling worklessness by increasing employment will reduce poverty through improved family incomes, break benefit dependency and facilitate better family support services. All children achieving their full potential is a priority for the partnership. The CYPS strategy will ensure that worklessness is embedded in all staff objectives and housing and leisure strategies address child poverty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>... the needs of all poor families are understood and reflected in our strategic plans and priorities.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the impact and effectiveness of services is maximised, and outcomes for poor children and families are improved, as a result of strong partnership working with local, regional and national partners.</td>
<td>Under Targeted Youth Support in Lambeth we will deliver our plans for the integration of youth support services. We will implement programmes to deliver our 14-19 strategy. This will include the roll-out of diplomas and apprenticeship schemes. The extended early learning entitlement is being introduced to Lambeth parents in September 2008. We will work proactively with the “every pound counts” campaign for families where there is a child living with a disability or ill health.</td>
<td>Vulnerable young people and their families will be empowered to shape services. Ensuring the 14-19 curriculum is relevant to all will enable access to training and employment and break the cycle of poverty. This will be achieved in partnership with businesses, LSC, Jobcentre Plus and other partners. Every parent with a 3 or 4 year old will have 15 hours entitlement for 38 weeks of the year across a wide range of good quality provision to raise achievement. Advisers will ensure that families are receiving the welfare benefits and tax credits to which they are entitled ensuring that some of our most vulnerable children are not missing out.</td>
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<td>...child poverty remains a priority across all relevant areas of our work, promoted by a ‘child poverty champion’ on our senior leadership team. [Please give the name and email address of your champion]</td>
<td>Phyllis Dunipace Executive Director Children &amp; Young People's Service London Borough of Lambeth <a href="mailto:pdunipace@lambeth.gov.uk">pdunipace@lambeth.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>The authority and partnership will further develop the role of child poverty champion to ensure we meet our general duty as champion for parents and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... all families - including the most disadvantaged - experience a high quality service from skilled and responsive staff, who understand the contribution that their work makes to ending child poverty, and can identify which customers are parents and tailor their support accordingly.</td>
<td>We will implement our workforce development strategy and plan across the Children &amp; Young People’s Strategic Partnership. Reducing NEET will continue to be a priority for the service with a renewed focus as the remaining cohort have specific and complex issues.</td>
<td>Children, young people and their families will benefit and be supported with an integrated and skilled workforce which understands the needs and issues affecting them. These skills will include accurate assessment and appropriate referral. NEET figures will be reduced for young people with the most complex needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the views and experiences of children, young people and parents, including those from disadvantaged groups, shape the services we develop, commission, fund or deliver.</td>
<td>Research and consultation with children, young people and families will continue to be used to develop service delivery.</td>
<td>The commissioning process will be strengthened to ensure services best match the needs of young people in Lambeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... services are continuously improved on the basis of robust evidence about what works in tackling child poverty.</td>
<td>Child Poverty will be built into the service performance framework and embedded into the planning and performance objectives.</td>
<td>Continuous improvement of the service offer will lead to improvements for all children living in, or at risk of, poverty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have committed to making a Pledge to do more to help London’s poor families to raise their incomes, and to improve outcomes for poor children and their families. I will take forward the actions set out above to deliver this commitment.

Signed: Date 17/9/08

Name and Job Title: Phyllis Dunipace, Executive Director

Name of Organisation: London Borough of Lambeth

Please send this action plan to Sally Knock, Child Poverty Unit, Ground Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P, 3BT. Please keep a copy for your records.