

Expert Advisory Group on
Solutions to Child Poverty

Solutions to Child Poverty: Our Initial Proposals

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Expert Advisory Group

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The Challenge

Mandate: to advise the Children's Commissioner on how to reduce child poverty and mitigate its effects

Context

1. NZ has unacceptable levels of child poverty
2. Child poverty is costly and affects everyone – about \$6 billion per annum
3. Child poverty can be reduced ... but there are no inexpensive silver bullets – we need an evidence-informed, comprehensive, sustained effort
4. There is a widespread recognition across the community that action is required

The Nature of the Problem?

1. Low family incomes, inadequate child assistance and poorly targeted resources
2. Low take-up rates for many child-related benefits
3. Relatively low employment amongst sole parents
4. A poorly designed child support system
5. Poor quality, unaffordable, overcrowded houses
6. Inequitable access to many social services, including health
7. Poorly integrated information and service delivery systems
8. No plan, no authoritative child poverty measures, no targets

Specific Proposals: A Child Poverty Act

- We need a plan
- Measures, targets, reporting
- Legally mandated
- Our proposed targets are ambitious, but realistic:
 - *to reduce overall child poverty by at least 30-40% within 10 years*
 - *to reduce those living in severe and/or persistent poverty by over 50% within 10 years*

Specific Proposals: Income and Employment

Short-term measures:

- Improve tax/welfare system

- Rebalance Family Tax Credits to favour young children and larger families
- Index all child-related benefits
- Incentivise high take-up rates

- Improve child support

- Pass on a proportion of payments
- Government underwrite of payments

Specific proposals: Income and Employment

Longer-term policy framework:

- Focus on children's developmental needs, tilt assistance to young children, and incentivize paid employment that is appropriate to age of child
- Establish a Child Payment – universal for the first 6 years, targeted thereafter
- Undertake an independent review of all child-related benefits

Specific Proposals: Housing

- Improve the quality and quantity of housing
 - Prioritize housing in the National Infrastructure Plan
 - Establish a Warrant of Fitness for all rental accommodation
 - Extend subsidies for insulation and heating
- Enhance the supply of social housing
- Re-focus the Accommodation Supplement and Income-Related Rent subsidies
- Enhance opportunities for home ownership

Specific Proposals: Māori

- Develop measures of Māori well-being and set targets to eliminate the disparities in rates of poverty for Māori children
- Better outcomes in education, health, employment & justice
- Develop a strategy to prevent Māori homelessness
- Better integrated health & social services for Māori children, including parenting programmes
- Support trusted workers and develop integrated service hubs

Specific Proposals: Pasifika

- Develop measures and indicators using Pasifika understandings of identity and success
- Focus on making progress in Auckland especially
 - Overcrowding
 - Employment
 - Education
 - Health promotion
 - Justice
- Ensure government services have effective links with Pasifika community and church groups
- Encourage high-quality research to drive innovation & responsiveness in public services for Pasifika children

Specific Proposals: Health

Short-term:

- Support free primary health care for all children from 0-6 years especially after hours
- Apply principle of 'proportionate universalism'
 - Reduces stigma
 - Common assessment framework and pathway for all children from before birth to identify and respond to needs, shared by all health practitioners

Longer-term:

- Expand free primary health care progressively to all children (0-17)
- Improve information systems via a unified enrolment system
- Develop a national plan to improve child nutrition
- Establish youth-friendly health and social services in all low-decile secondary schools

Specific Proposals: Education

- Continue to implement ECE work programme
- Develop a national strategy for food in schools
- Incentivize schools and ECE centres in disadvantaged areas to become 'full service schools' or 'community hubs'
- Improve access to after-school care and holiday programmes
- Expand the Teen Parent Units

Specific Proposals: Other

Other specific proposals cover:

- Community & local initiatives
- Debt
- Substance abuse
- Gambling
- Research needs

Next Steps

1. Consultation and feedback (6-7 weeks)
2. Revise proposals (October/November)
3. Release Final Report (mid December)

Go to www.occ.org for copies of the Report and detailed Working Papers, and on options for providing feedback.

Want to give feedback?

Your feedback on the Expert Advisory Group's proposals is important and welcomed. The Group want to know if the ideas in the paper will work in your community. They want to know what proposals you would prioritise and if they have missed any crucial ideas. They are keen to hear about what is happening in your community to reduce child poverty and mitigate its effects.

The Group is interested to know your views on:

- Which proposals will be effective in reducing child poverty?
- Which proposals are less likely to be effective?
- What are the most important proposals to reduce child poverty?
- What needs to be done first and why?
- What is missing from the package?

How you can provide feedback at www.occ.org

Online: [SurveyMonkey](#)

Email: childpoverty@occ.org.nz

Post:

FEEDBACK ON CHILD POVERTY SOLUTIONS

Office of the Children's Commissioner

PO Box 5610

Lambton Quay

Wellington 6145

Facebook: [Children's Commissioner's Facebook page](#)

Please send your feedback by 12 October 2012.

Events

Gisborne/Tairawhiti Hui

Community event

Tuesday 11 September 2012

11am to 2pm, (lunch provided)

Te Poho o Whirikoka, Te Wananga o Aotearoa, 630 Childers Road Gisborne

Wellington

Workshop on Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand

Hosted by the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, Victoria University Wellington

Wednesday 19 September: 9am to 4pm

Civic Suite No 1, Wellington Town Hall

Registration is free. To register or further information email igps@vuw.ac.nz or call (04) 4635307

Auckland

Workshop on Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand

Hosted by the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, Victoria University Wellington

Friday 21 September, 2012

9am to 4pm

More information to follow

Christchurch

Tuesday 25 September, 2012

Please hold the date.

More information to follow

Nelson

Wednesday 26 September, 2012

7.30pm to 9.30pm