

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

21 February 2013

CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Child Poverty Act obtained Royal Assent on 25 March 2010. This legislation ensures sustained action must be taken to tackle child poverty by local government and their partners.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the report

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Measuring success

The Act sets four challenging UK-wide targets to be met by 2020. These targets are based on the proportion of children living in:

- relative low income (whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole) – target is less than ten per cent
- combined low income and material deprivation (a wider measure of people's living standards) – target is less than five per cent
- absolute low income (whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms) – target is less than five per cent
- persistent poverty (length of time in poverty) – target is to be set in regulations by 2015.

Strategy for change and accountability

The Act establishes an accountability framework to make sure progress is continuously made and the 2020 goal is met.

The Government is required to produce child poverty strategies that run through to 2020 and are refreshed every three years. The strategies will set out what action is

needed to meet the targets in the Act. The Government will be held to account on the effectiveness of these strategies and on the progress made through annual progress reports to Parliament.

Local responsibility

Local authorities (LAs) and their partners know the challenges their residents face better than anyone else, including central government. This knowledge allows them to shape their services to fit the needs of their residents and use their resources most effectively.

Because of this, the Act puts a duty on all LAs and their partners to cooperate to tackle child poverty in their area. They are required to prepare and publish a local needs assessment and also to prepare a joint local child poverty strategy.

A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives sets out the Government's approach to tackling poverty for this Parliament and up to 2020. At its heart are strengthening families, encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and providing support to the most vulnerable. This strategy meets the requirements set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010, focuses on improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children, and sits alongside the Government's broader strategy to improve social mobility. The core ways to achieve this are:

- A stronger focus on ensuring that families who are in work are supported to work themselves out of poverty, families who are unable to work are able to live with dignity and not entrenched in persistent poverty, and that those who can work but are not in work are provided with services that will address their particular needs and help them overcome barriers to work.
- A stronger focus on improving children's future life chances, by intervening early to improve the development and attainment of disadvantaged children and young people throughout their transition to adulthood.
- A stronger focus on place and delivering services as close to the family as possible, by empowering local partners and ensuring that local diversity can be recognised, and developing strong local accountability frameworks.

C4EO were tasked to develop a draft Child Poverty Strategy for Rutland which was refreshed in November 2012 (see attached)

Recommendations to tackle child and family poverty in Rutland

The following recommendations for Rutland's approach to tackling child poverty are based on the existing priority themes and a review of priorities for action from other Child Poverty Strategies.

Rutland County Council and its partners will:

- Act to keep the proportion of children in Rutland living in relative poverty below 10% across the county as a whole and reduce the proportion in wards exceeding 10% on current data to 10% or below by 2014.

- Target both those wards where the percentage of children living in poverty exceeds 10% and those with the highest absolute numbers of children living in poverty to ensure outcomes in these areas are improved and children and families can thrive in safe, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods from which they can access the services and facilities they need.
- Support families to acquire the skills and knowledge to access responsive financial support services, money management and debt crisis support.
- Raise aspirations and improve the life chances for children and families so that poverty in childhood does not lead to poor experiences and outcomes.
- Support families with complex problems compounded by poverty and disadvantage.

We will achieve this by:

- Embedding child poverty activity into core delivery of services by Rutland County Council and its partners.
- Taking a whole family approach to working with families, assessing needs and ensuring children and families receive appropriate services and support to lift themselves out of poverty.
- Take a targeted approach to working with the children, families and communities in most need, engaging effectively with the most disaffected and hard to reach families.
- Use early intervention approaches and maximize the role of children's centres and other early years settings to break the cycle of disadvantage and improve outcomes for children and families.
- Increase achievement of 78 points across EYFS and ensure that levels of educational attainment across the county are maintained and the gap in achievement and attainment is narrowed between results for the county as a whole and the wards and communities in which child poverty is most prevalent.
- Engage partners in the voluntary, community and private sectors in plans to tackle child poverty.
- Adopt an outcomes and evidence based approach to developing interventions and services to impact on child poverty, including robust performance management and evaluation to measure impact and share learning.

Next steps

The Families First Board will be asked to approve the priority themes and recommendations within the action plan that will contribute to the shared aim to tackle child poverty and improve outcomes and life chances for the poorest in Rutland's communities.

An action plan is being developed for 2012-14 by a task and finish group covering the priority themes mapping the work that is taking place within the local authority and external partners to address child poverty.

Once approved, the Child Poverty Strategy will be refreshed annually by the relevant reference group with representation from all partners. The Child Poverty Needs Assessment will be refreshed alongside the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment with input from the relevant reference group. In addition, the strategy and needs assessment may be revised in response to significant changes to communities as and when they occur, for example, new forces families arriving at Kendrew Barracks.

Child and family poverty will be included in Rutland's Sustainable Communities Strategy to ensure work to tackle poverty is embedded in plans for continued economic prosperity for Rutland.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	H	The action plan should cover 2012-14 so is already overdue. However this has not had a negative impact on work being undertaken to reduce child poverty overall.
Viability	L	The work is already taken place within the Local Authority and partners.
Finance	L	Recommendations will be implemented within existing resources.
Profile	M	National profile is high but locally we are delivering well below the national target of reducing child poverty by 10%
Equality and Diversity	L	The strategy has a particular focus to ensure that areas of deprivation are targeted.

Background Papers
Child Poverty Strategy

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A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.