
CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Scrutiny on the progress of the Child Poverty Strategy for Darlington.

Summary

2. Darlington's Child Poverty Strategy was published in October 2011 and accepted by Council in November 2011.
3. The Strategy outlined a series of priorities:
 - (a) Economy and Skills;
 - (b) Financial Inclusion;
 - (c) Early Years and Health;
 - (d) Early Intervention and Prevention, and
 - (e) Housing and Sustainable Communities.
4. This report outlines the progress made so far in addressing the priorities outlined in the Child Poverty Strategy.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members: -
 - (a) Note progress on the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy;
 - (b) Note the recommendations made by the North East Child Poverty Commission at paragraph 48 with regard to future policy options, and;
 - (c) Note the impact that current and planned welfare reforms are likely to have on child poverty and the groups most likely to be affected.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

Darlington Child Poverty Strategy;
Darlington Child Poverty Needs Analysis;

Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action – North East Child Poverty Commission
 Measuring Child Poverty: A Consultation on Better Measures of Child Poverty – Department for Education/Department for Work and Pensions

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report
Health and Well Being	Child poverty is linked to poor health outcomes including under 18 conceptions, healthy life expectancy, obesity and disabled children.
Carbon Impact	Unfortunately Child Poverty and the associated fuel poverty will have a detrimental impact on individuals.
Diversity	In terms of equality and diversity there are no specific implications for the Protected Characteristics. Darlington has identified geographic areas which impact on vulnerable families and the actions taken to mitigate child poverty in these areas.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Looked after children; first time entrants to the Youth Justice System; pupils who have been excluded from school; NEETs; children receiving Free School Meals; children with three or more siblings; children with a disability; young carers; long term unemployed and those who are benefit dependent; those who may be drug or alcohol dependent; parents/carers with mental health issues; lone parents; teenage parents; parents/carers with low level or no qualifications, and parents/carers in low paid work.
Budget and Policy Framework	No
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Supports the delivery of priorities identified within One Darlington: Perfectly Placed as outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy
Efficiency	N/A

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. Darlington's Child Poverty Needs Analysis was published in November 2010 and was followed by the Child Poverty Strategy in October 2011.
7. Child poverty is defined as a family earning less than 60% of the median average income. As of 31 August 2010 there were 4,815 children living in poverty in Darlington, equating to approximately 21% of all children and young people. This is a decrease of 145 from 2009 and mirrors a national downward trend. It is however worth noting that this downward trend is as a result of median income levels dropping rather than income levels of poor families rising.
8. Research at both a national and local level has shown that growing up in poverty can have a negative impact on children and young people and affect their life chances at a later date.
9. Analysis of the data and information contained within the Needs Analysis showed that need is most concentrated within the following ten wards:
 - (a) Cockerton West (41.4%);
 - (b) Northgate (37.3%);
 - (c) Park East (36.2%);
 - (d) Central (33.2%);
 - (e) Haughton East (33.2%);
 - (f) Lascelles (32.6%);
 - (g) North Road (29.9%),
 - (h) Bank Top (28.4%);
 - (i) Eastbourne (27.5%), and
 - (j) Lingfield (24.8%).
10. In terms of individuals and communities the following groups were found to be most vulnerable to child poverty and its associated negative effects:
 - (a) Looked after children;
 - (b) First time entrants to the Youth Justice System;
 - (c) Pupils who have been excluded from school;
 - (d) NEETs;
 - (e) Children receiving Free School Meals;
 - (f) Children with three or more siblings;
 - (g) Children with a disability;
 - (h) Young carers;
 - (i) Long term unemployed and those who are benefit dependent;
 - (j) Those who may be drug or alcohol dependent;
 - (k) Parents/carers with mental health issues;
 - (l) Lone parents;
 - (m) Teenage parents;
 - (n) Parents/carers with low level or no qualifications, and
 - (o) Parents/carers in low paid work.

11. Further analysis was undertaken to assess the level of equality within each North East Local Authority in relation to child poverty. The analysis demonstrated that Northumberland, Stockton-on-Tees, North Tyneside and Darlington had high levels of inequality in relation to child poverty, indicating that poverty is concentrated within small geographical areas within these Authorities.

12. The resultant Strategy outlined a series of key priorities and actions to be taken forward, as highlighted below:

(a) Priority 1: Economy and Skills:

- (i) Action 1: Identify gaps in employment support service provision and develop and formalise an employability framework with clear progression routes between services;
- (ii) Action 2: Plan that childcare provision is affordable and accessible across the Borough;
- (iii) Action 3: Enhance people's skills in relation to the job market and align education to business needs.

(b) Priority 2: Financial Inclusion:

- (i) Action 1: To plan for and mitigate the effects of welfare reform by establishing a core group of relevant organisations to identify impacts of welfare reform on residents and develop appropriate organisational responses.

(c) Priority 3: Early Years and Health:

- (i) Action 1: Promote healthy settings for children and young people;
- (ii) Action 2: Tackle health inequalities including alcohol misuse, drug use, obesity, teenage pregnancy and smoking.

(d) Priority 4: Early Intervention and Prevention:

- (i) Action 1: Ensure that early intervention and prevention work is embedded across all partner services;
- (ii) Action 2: Investigate the feasibility of a Families at Risk Team;
- (iii) Action 3: Greater use of risk factors to identify families in need and ensure that assessments are effective.

(e) Priority 5: Housing and Sustainable Communities:

- (i) Action 1: To mitigate the effects of fuel poverty.

Progress Against Priorities

Priority 1: Economy and Skills:

Action 1:

13. Work has been ongoing within the Economic Regeneration team to map the current provision with regard to employment support and to identify any gaps. In June 2012 the Business Engagement Team published the Darlington Employment Handbook outlining the provision available with regard to employment support. Through the mapping a number of issues have been identified including: a lack of job opportunities for those who have accessed employability services; the constantly changing nature of funding and payment by results has led to a number of providers not being paid for providing services, and a lack of referrals onto some of the provision, specifically for young people under the age of 24.

Action 2:

14. A Childcare Sufficiency Audit (CSA) was completed between April 2010 and October 2010 with a report published in March 2011. Overall 823 local parents were surveyed via telephone and face-to-face interviews, providing information about future childcare needs. A total of 905 children and young people also participated in the audit. The main findings of the audit were:
 - (a) Unmet demand existed in Darlington for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare/activities for all age groups and older children (over eight years) in particular, and
 - (b) Unmet demand existed for affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare for children and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 17 years).
 15. Focused work has been undertaken with prospective childminders and training is only funded for those who will offer the services we need to meet unmet demand – serving a particular geographical area, offering services to disabled children and offering services to children over the age of eight. Funding, for example, for insurance and membership of the National Childminding Association has been withdrawn from those settings who are not helping to ‘plug’ the childcare gaps.
 16. The 2012-13 focus for the Early Years Team is to continue to support existing settings to increase quality and sustainability by offering advice in relation to their identified needs. Also, as in 2011-12 the priority will be creating quality childminding places in areas of need, using the same criteria of geographical need, together with those willing to offer services to disabled children and older children.
 17. Given the continuing uncertain economic outlook and the CSA findings, the priorities for the Local Authority particularly with regard to children who are aged five to 14 years or 17 years for young disabled people, continue to be to:
 - (a) Assist childcare providers/ activities to be sustainable;
 - (b) Work with settings and other interested stakeholders to continually improve the quality of care and make settings/ activities more inclusive; and to
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- (c) Provide parents with up-to-date information about financial assistance towards childcare costs, including tax credits.

Action 3:

- 18. Darlington Foundation for Jobs was launched at an event in January 2012. The event was arranged in partnership with the Northern Echo and was attended by over 40 businesses from across Darlington. The programme was launched by the Bishop of Durham, Justin Welby.
- 19. The aim of the programme is to ensure:
 - (a) 100 businesses providing three month internships or work placements;
 - (b) 100 additional apprenticeship places;
 - (c) 1,000 school children in formal links with employers including 'cadet' schemes, and,
 - (d) 50 young people developing self-employment and entrepreneurial skills.
- 20. Thus far the programme has seen 100 internships or work placements; 89 additional apprenticeship starts; 949 school pupils engaging with employers, and 66 young people completing self employment training. Additionally, the programme has facilitated linkages between employers and schools to ensure that schools and young people understand the skills and abilities that businesses value.
- 21. As a result of these successes Foundation for Jobs has been shortlisted for a national Local Government Chronicle award.

Priority 2: Financial Inclusion:

Action 1:

- 22. A Welfare Reform Officer Group has been established to prepare the Council for the impacts of welfare reform, and to ensure that there is interconnectivity between services. A welfare reform impact assessment has been undertaken and stress tests of business critical Council services to assess preparedness and resilience to impending changes has also been completed. The group has developed an action plan incorporating three key work-streams:
 - (a) Training and awareness raising among staff, this will include those directly involved in providing welfare services, staff who might have contact with this client group, staff who might be impacted by the changes themselves, and wider generic training for all staff. The intention is to ensure that every contact is a welfare reform contact;
 - (b) Planning for the impacts on customer services, including relevant correspondences to existing clients, changes to the contact service and preparing the customer services staff and website, and
 - (c) Considering the wider partnership issues including the Assembly, preparing the third sector, the Strategic Health and Well Being Board and consideration of Member training and preparation. A One Darlington Assembly has been organised for January 2013 to look at wider awareness raising across services

and organisations and the Darlington Partnership and to seek consensus to a co-ordinated programme of action.

23. Additionally, a new work stream of the Darlington Partnership has been established, led by the Executive Director of eVOLution, to develop and take forward initiatives and programmes under the banner of One Darlington including a wider Partnership response to Welfare Reform.

Priority 3: Early Years and Health

Action 1

24. Since the publication of the Child Poverty Strategy the Local Authority has begun to implement a 'Healthy Star Settings' model, allowing settings across the Borough to apply for 'star status' based upon their ability to meet set criteria:
 - (a) 1 Star: Staff must speak to children and families to find out views about health and well being. In partnership with children and families, staff must develop a number of key steps and actions which will help them to become a healthy setting;
 - (b) 2 Star: The setting must carry out what they have agreed on the 1 Star section, involving staff, children and families in the whole process, and
 - (c) 3 Star: The setting must provide evidence of changes that have taken place over the duration of the project/s, providing evidence of outcomes.
25. So far ten settings in Darlington are engaging in the Healthy Star Settings model from across the public, private and voluntary sectors including C: The Box. The model has been developed in partnership with County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust and is now being delivered in Durham as well as in Darlington.

Action 2:

26. In terms of tackling health inequalities the Council together with the Shadow Health and Well Being Board has recently produced a Health and Well Being Strategy which provides a policy framework for future planning and that outlines the long-term vision for improving the well being of local people and reducing inequalities in outcomes. Focuses on things that can be done in partnership.
27. The Health and Well Being Strategy is supported by a Health and Social Care Delivery Plan which sets out the priorities for health and social care as follows:
 - (a) Priority Action 1: To focus resources in areas of highest need;
 - (b) Priority Action 2: To create a sustainable health and social care economy, and
 - (c) Priority Action 3: To improve the management of long-term conditions.
28. As well as the Health and Social Care Delivery Plan, the Council and partners are also implementing current and existing strategies such as:
 - (a) Emotional Well Being and Mental Health Strategy;
 - (b) Teenage Pregnancy Delivery Plan;
 - (c) Preventing Obesity and Improving Physical Activity Strategy;

- (d) Addressing Young People's Alcohol, Drug and Volatile Substance Misuse, and
- (e) Smoke Free Darlington Tobacco Alliance Action Plan.

Priority 4: Early Intervention and Prevention

Action 1:

- 29. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is being embedded to ensure that all partners are full conversant with referral processes for early help and intervention and to ensure families receive the appropriate level of support in either step up or step down services. Recent changes to the Children's Social Care Duty Team arrangements will ensure that cases referred to them have already received the appropriate consideration for a CAF. To increase the robustness of early intervention and prevention the co-location of social work teams within localities has begun, with a pilot at McNay Street and will roll out across the other area of the Borough in due course. An evaluation of this pilot has been undertaken and lessons have been learned, and this will drive forward the next stage of implementation of integrating the Children's Social Work Teams with the early intervention and prevention service.
- 30. A Rapid Process Improvement Workshop (RPIW) event was held in January 2012 to improve the use of CAF across the borough, this included re engineering the forms and processes. To date, 682 professionals across the borough from 49 agencies including DBC staff have been trained in the new processes.
- 31. The RPIW target for increasing the use of CAF to target resources based on family need was a 50% increase in CAFs from 190 to 280 by March 2013. To date, as October 2012, 263 CAFs have been completed and actioned. The targeting of resources at those most in need assists in the early identification of issues and ensures effective, timely intervention preventing the need for more costly specialist input.

Action 2:

- 32. Following the publication of the Child Poverty Strategy the Government introduced the Troubled Families agenda, with the aim of 'turning around' the lives of 120,000 troubled families, characterised by there being no adult in work, children not being in school, and participation in anti-social behaviour or criminality. Modelling by the Department for Communities and Local Government has estimated that there are 275 such families in Darlington. Within Darlington we have tasked ourselves with identifying 45 families each term (over six terms). Most of the families have been identified by using data from partner agencies' electronic systems. This data was then forwarded to the Department of Works and Pensions to identify any adults in the family who were in receipt of out of work benefits. The scheme operates on a payment by results basis.
- 33. The Workforce Development Team are working closely with the Family Intervention Team to put together a training programme to skill up the staff team and identify and consider appropriate interventions which may benefit/meet the complex needs

of the families. Collaboration with other local authorities is being discussed to share expertise, knowledge and skills and determine if joint workforce strategies will be beneficial.

34. A database has been set up to illustrate how the families meet the criteria, what needs to be achieved to meet the success criteria and claim the payments and to provide regular progress reports.

35. Thus far:

- (a) 43 families have been identified that meet the criteria;
- (b) 28 families are being worked with;
- (c) 12 families have been referred to other provision, and
- (d) Three families are yet to be allocated.

36. It is envisaged that the first payments will be claimed in January 2013.

Action 3:

37. Darlington's Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has recently reviewed and consolidated the thresholds of need that will help practitioners decide whether or not a child or young person and their family needs to access early intervention or specialist services. These threshold levels have been developed through joint working with Health, Early Intervention and Prevention, Social Care and Commissioning managers.

Priority 5: Housing and Sustainable Communities

Action 1:

38. Work has been ongoing within the Council's Programmes and Projects Team to mitigate and prevent fuel poverty across the Borough. The importance of addressing fuel poverty has been highlighted in the Council's Housing Strategy (2012-2017) with a number of actions to be taken forward, including:

- (a) Work in partnership to deliver energy efficiency measures as part of the Green Deal from 2013
- (b) Ensure new housing meets sustainable building standards as set out in the Local Plan to be resilient to climate change;
- (c) Reduce the number of non-decent homes, and
- (d) Offer support to all households adversely affected by welfare reforms.

39. Additionally, the Council will be required to publish a report detailing the measures it proposes to take to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation within its area by March 2013.

40. The Council is a member of the Warm Up North consortium which will run from 2013 with the aim of improving the energy efficiency of homes across the North East. The consortium will:

- (a) Help to keep households warm;

- (b) Help to reduce energy bills and those in fuel poverty, and
 - (c) Reduce the impact of energy inefficient homes on the environment.
41. Warm Up North has been looking to procure a preferred Green Deal provider. Green Deal is a Government initiative through which you can:
- (a) Have your home assessed for energy efficiency
 - (b) Obtain advice on changes you can make to improve this
 - (c) Have energy improvements installed at no up front cost to you, and
 - (d) With your normal energy bills lowered, pay back the cost through a regular charge on your electricity bill which will also give you greater protection through future energy price rises.
42. Warm Up North hope to have a Green Deal provider soon and plan to launch Green Deal and make information more widely available in January/February 2013 when information will go out through our Housing (including to our tenants) and other communication channels.
43. The Council have also recently become a member of National Energy Action, whose aim is to eradicate fuel poverty.

Policy Considerations

Measuring Child Poverty

44. In November 2012 the Government launched a consultation on the indicators used to measure child poverty. The consultation proposes that we should move away from solely looking at income and look at a more multi-dimensional measurement of poverty taking into account the full experience of growing up in poverty.
45. The Government believes that the multi-dimensional measure should:
- (a) Give a total number of children in the UK currently growing up experiencing multiple dimensions of poverty, which can be tracked through time
 - (b) Show the severity of a child's poverty and identify the groups which need most help
 - (c) Show how poverty affects different groups of children, for example ethnic minorities or disabled children
 - (d) Be widely accepted by the public and experts as a fair representation of those children who are growing up in poverty and those who are not, and
 - (e) Be methodologically robust and draw on the best data that is available.
46. The possible dimensions for inclusion are:
- (a) Income and material deprivation
 - (b) Worklessness
 - (c) Unmanageable debt
 - (d) Poor housing
 - (e) Parental skill level
 - (f) Access to quality education
 - (g) Family stability, and

(h) Parental health.

47. The consultation is due to close in February 2013. Any changes to the measures of child poverty would require Darlington's Child Poverty Strategy to be amended to reflect this.

Child Poverty: Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action

48. The Institute for Local Governance published a report in October 2012 commissioned by the North East Child Poverty Commission exploring the approaches to tackling child poverty used by Local Authorities in the North East. The report highlights six emergent priorities from Child Poverty Needs Analyses and Child Poverty Strategies within the North East:

- (a) Raising aspirations/achievement/attainment and helping children fulfil their potential
- (b) Ensuring every child has the best start/re-focussing around early intervention and prevention
- (c) Improving access to work and reducing worklessness
- (d) Financial inclusion initiatives and maximising household income
- (e) Improving neighbourhoods, and
- (f) Improving health and well being.

49. The report questions the current focus on these priorities and instead proposes a number of policy options for Local Authorities in the North East, including:

- (a) Local authorities could consider working collaboratively, and with relevant researchers and research networks, to better understand the 'state of the region's children', including understanding the effect of the economic climate on the wellbeing of young people in the North East
- (b) Local authorities and their partners could consider the benefits of an 'Early Intervention' approach across the life cycle and not just in the early or foundation years, which was the focus of the Field and Allen Reviews
- (c) Job creation initiatives within the North East should promote the creation of quality jobs wherever possible, noting that work does not always offer a route out of poverty
- (d) Local authorities should explore ways of working with and raising awareness amongst other employers to involve them in increasing the take up of in-work benefits amongst their employees
- (e) Housing providers and regulators should continue to work together to ensure that, wherever possible, the condition and supply of housing in the North East helps to mitigate, rather than worsen, the effects of poverty, with a particular focus on fuel poverty
- (f) Local Health and Well being Boards could consider making the improvement of the health of children in their area a priority for their work, noting the position of the North East's children in health terms relative to the rest of the country, and
- (g) Local authorities should consider ways to ensure that ending child poverty is everybody's business across their organisation and that all strategies and plans support this aim. Poverty proofing corporate documents and plans and including child poverty in impact assessments are possible options here.

Welfare Reform Agenda

50. In addition to the policy considerations highlighted above, the Government is currently implementing a series of reforms to the welfare system. These reforms have the potential to disproportionately impact upon children, young people and families. The key reforms to the welfare system include:
- (a) Capping household benefit payments so that families do not receive more in welfare than the median after tax earnings for working households
 - (b) Withdrawing Child Benefit from families with a higher rate taxpayer
 - (c) Measure to control the cost of Tax Credits, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit;
 - (d) Time limiting Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for those in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG)
 - (e) The introduction of Universal Credit, to include Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit;
 - (f) Reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment
 - (g) Reforms to Housing Benefit (inclusion in the Universal Credit and the introduction of an absolute benefit cap)
 - (h) Introduction of localised Council Tax Benefit
 - (i) Devolving parts of the Social Fund to local authorities, and
 - (j) Reforming Incapacity Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance.
51. Analysis of the reforms has shown that there will be a reduction of approximately £14 million being brought into the Darlington economy per annum as a result of the welfare reforms. Further analysis of the Department for Work and Pensions' impact assessments indicates that those most affected by the welfare reforms include:
- (a) Children and young people;
 - (b) Disabled people and their carers;
 - (c) Lower income families, and
 - (d) Lone parents.
52. It is worth noting that Darlington's Child Poverty Strategy was produced before the details of the welfare reforms were known and changes in funding priorities, including those of the Big Lottery, Legal Aid and the Council through its Medium Term Financial Plan will result in a reduction of welfare advice services at a time of rising demand brought about by changes to welfare benefits.