

**CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**

**24<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**

**PRESENT** – Councillor Lister (Chair), Councillors Crudass, C. Taylor, E.A. Richmond and Wright.

**OFFICERS** – Sharon Raine, Head of Organisational Planning; Debbie Spence, and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Crumbie, L. Hughes, Kelley, L. Vasey; T. Fisher.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – following the actions from the last meeting, Members met to receive an update on the results of the Government Consultation and any changes to the national measures of child poverty; the application of other data to the 'hot spot' areas to see any correlations; and what other policies are in place targeting specifically these 'hot spot' areas.

**ISSUES RAISED AND DISCUSSED –**

**National Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17**

- Debbie Spence presented to Members a summary of the National Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17. It was stated that the Government remain firmly committed to ending child poverty in the UK by 2020.
- Whilst some children thrive despite the poverty they grow up in, for many children growing up in poverty can mean a childhood insecurity, underachievement at school and isolation from their peers. Children who grow up in poverty all too often become the parents of the next generation of children living in poverty.
- The Strategy sets out the action that the government intend to take from 2014-17 to tackle poverty through:
  - (a) Supporting families into work and increasing their earnings.
  - (b) Improving living standards.
  - (c) Preventing poor children becoming poor adults through raising their educational attainment.
- The key theme in the Strategy to end poverty is to tackle the 'root causes of child poverty' now and across generations to transform lives.
- Evidence shows that the root causes of families being in poverty are worklessness or low earnings and the 2014-17 strategy sets out how families

will be supported into work and increase earnings by creating jobs; supporting families to work; tackling low pay; helping people move on to better jobs that pay more.

- The Strategy aims to tackle the barriers some families face to work and five key factors are long-term worklessness, having low qualifications, raising children on your own, having 3 or more children to care for and experiencing ill health.
- For families who can work, increasing their income through work is the best way to protect their living standards. For those families that cannot work a welfare safety net will still be provided however the Strategy sets out ways in which the government aim to reduce the spend on payments to workless households with children by promoting competition across all areas to allow businesses to grow; reducing fuel costs and giving some low- income families money off their bills; reducing water costs by capping bills for low-income families; reducing food costs for low- income families through Healthy Start Vouchers for young children, free schools meals for all infant school pupils, breakfast clubs in deprived areas and free fruit and vegetables at primary schools; reducing transport costs for low-income families through free home to school transport; tackling rising housing costs by increasing the supply of affordable houses; and increasing access to affordable credit through expanding credit unions, protecting consumers by cracking down on pay day lending and tackling problem debt by providing budgeting advice through Universal Credit and the Money Advice Service for those in difficulty.
- The Strategy sets out how the government intends to continue to raise educational attainment through increasing the number of poor children getting quality pre-school education with 155 hours free for all 3 to 4 year olds and for 2 year olds from low-income families, getting better qualified staff in pre-school settings and having a simpler early years curriculum; ensuring poor children to better at school by giving disadvantaged pupils an additional £14,000 throughout their school career through the pupil premium; and supporting poor children to stage in education post 16.
- The Strategy also aims to tackle the barriers poor children face to doing well at school and the six key factors have been identified as a poor home environment, under-developed "character " skills, a parent being ill, a child experiencing ill health themselves and having parents with low qualifications and the family's income.
- It has been recognised in the Strategy that Central government action alone can not end child poverty and employers have a key role to play by paying decent wages and supporting flexible working and offering.
- Where people live matters and each local area faces a different challenge in tackling child poverty and local agencies now have the flexibility to tailor their services to meet local needs, for example supporting employment and skills and tailoring education, health and neighbourhood services.

- The devolved administrations have their own responsibilities on child poverty and are taking action in the areas devolved to them, for example education.

### **'Hot Spot' Areas**

- Members examined a number of graphs to show broad outcomes against specific measures for children with best start in life – percentage achieving a good level of development. Comparison between 2009 and 2013 by Ward, Pupil Group, Boys and Girls, Pupils on Free School Meals, travellers and non travellers and the point of entry.
- Members also examined data for percentage achieving 5+ A\*-C (inc. english and mathematics) by Ward and Pupil Group comparing 2009 data with 2013 data.
- Members concluded that the graphs did not show a significant change from 2009 to 2013 and the Ward information was comparable and there were no huge changes to suggest trends are moving in any different direction.
- Members discussed motivation and a culture of not wanting to work having an effect on child poverty; the research on the impact from pre-birth to 7 years as being key to reducing child poverty; creation of an employment hub in the deprived wards to employ these young people; improving attainment of parents to address worklessness; and the use of parenting programmes.
- Child Poverty is being looked at as part of One Darlington Perfectly Placed and not in isolation. It was also acknowledged that the Partnership can play an important part in bringing organisations like schools, businesses and health together to work towards tackling child poverty and it was agreed that the Review Group feeds into the work of the partnership.
- It was highlighted that it is key that where interventions are working and have shown improvement that this can be evidence based.
- Members discussed further a way of testing interventions and measuring a group and it was suggested that IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) data on schools in the deprived wards be collected and broken down to educational attainment/ those pupils with statements and pupil premiums as a way of identifying a cohort of children to potentially follow.

