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**CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP –  
FINAL REPORT**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the outcome and findings of the Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee to examine child poverty and vulnerable children.

**Summary**

2. At a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 7 January 2013 it was agreed to establish a Child Poverty Review Group. Terms of Reference were developed and approved by Scrutiny Committee and all Members of that Committee were invited to participate in the Review.
3. The Review Group has met on six occasions and a wide number of issues have been discussed and considered at those meetings.
4. The final report of the Review Group is attached (**Appendix 1**).

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that Members approve the recommendations in the final report.

**Catherine Whitehead**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

**Background Papers**

‘The Scope of Poverty in Darlington’, Partnership report November 2013.  
North East Child Poverty Commission report ‘Local Authorities, Local Duties, Local Action’.  
Secretary of State for Works and Pensions Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17.  
The Governments Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17

Allison Hill : Extension 2291

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the five themes.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.

**MAIN REPORT**  
**CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**  
**FINAL REPORT**

**Introduction**

1. This is the final report of the Child Poverty Review Group, established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to examine child poverty and vulnerable children and how future plans and strategies of this authority take into account child poverty.

**Background Information**

2. At a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 7 January, 2013 it was agreed to establish a Review Group and the first meeting of the Review Group was held on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013,
3. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and these are referred to in the notes attached (**Appendix 1**). This report describes the outcome of the Review Group, it summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations.
4. A draft Terms of Reference (**Appendix 2**) in relation to this piece of work was developed and approved by Children and Young People Scrutiny and all Members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in the Review.

**Membership of the Review Group**

5. All Members of Place Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in the Review and the following Members attended meetings :-

Councillor Crudass  
Councillor L. Hughes  
Councillor Kelley  
Councillor Lister  
Councillor EA Richmond  
Councillor C Taylor  
Councillor J. Taylor  
Councillor Wright  
Emma Coltman (former Community Representative)

The Group was led by Councillor Lister.

## **Acknowledgements**

6. The Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigations and would like to place on record its thanks to the following :-

Jenni Cooke, Service Director, Children, Families and Learning;  
Josh Slack, Performance Officer;  
Julian Kenshole, Head of Strategy and Improvement (now left the authority);  
Debbie Spence, Business Manager;  
Seth Pearson, Partnership Director;  
Sharon Raine, Head of Organisational Planning;  
Allison Hill, Democratic Officer; and  
Stephen Crossley, the Regional Child Poverty Action Plan Co-ordinator, Institute for Local Governance.

## **Methods of Investigation**

7. The Review Group met on six occasions between April 2013 and April 2015 and the notes containing the discussions held at those meetings are attached **(Appendix 1)**.
8. Members also received a presentation from Stephen Crossley, the Regional Child Poverty Action Plan Co-ordinator on the North East Child Poverty Commission Report: Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action.

## **Findings**

9. The initial findings of the Review Group indicates that :
- (a) The Children Act (2004) introduced powers for the Secretary of State to require all local authorities to produce a plan to show how partner agencies with a duty to co-operate under the Act were discharging their duties with respect to children's services.
  - (b) Although there is no longer a requirement to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, it is considered good practice to still produce a strategic document across partners and the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-2017 'The Best Start in Life for Every Child and Young Person' was approved by Council at its meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2014. The Plan identifies how to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) priority of 'the best start in life for every child'.
  - (c) The Child Poverty Act introduced duties for all local authorities to work with their partner authorities to produce Child Poverty Needs Assessments and

Child Poverty Strategies to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas.

- (d) All 12 Local Authorities in the North East provided documentary data for inclusion in the North East Child Poverty Commission Report: Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action.
- (e) One of the recommendations from the Institute for Local Governance's Regional Child Poverty Action Plan is for local authorities to ensure they child poverty proof their plans and strategies.
- (f) It is essential to raise the aspirations and ambitions of children growing up in poverty and their families if tackling child poverty is to be successful.
- (g) Parents who have had bad experiences of schooling can have a negative effect on their child's education and this attitude can perpetuate low aspiration in their children.
- (h) There is a need to dispel the myth that in deprived areas no one has a desire to work and findings from the Child Poverty Needs Assessment showed that 60 per cent of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one adult works and that there is a desire to work.
- (i) The North East has the highest proportion of employees earning under £7 per hour in England and there are high levels of job density (the number of applicants per vacancy).
- (j) Poor wages and worklessness are the root cause of families being in poverty.
- (k) We need to ensure that children who are living in poverty are safe and be in a position to offer advice and guidance to help families maximise their household income.
- (l) There is a need to support parents/carers of children living in poverty to help them to develop the skills and qualifications they need to enter and progress in employment.
- (m) The living wage is classed as a minimum wage level needed to meet basic needs and for the UK is set at £7.45 per hour.
- (n) In 2011 the average weekly household expenditure for the North East was £384.20 which is lower than the figure for the UK of £470.70 (18 per cent less than the UK). If 18 per cent reduction in household expenditure is applied to the living wage for the UK, it would leave a wage of £6.11 per hour, which is £0.08 per house below the current minimum wage and £1.34 below the current UK living wage.

- (o) In response to a letter from Tim Grant, the former Principal of Darlington College, Darlington Partnership established an enquiry group to look at the issue of poverty within Darlington. This has now been taken forward with the development of the Strategic Financial Inclusion Group for the Borough.
- (p) The Darlington Partnership published their report entitled 'The Scope of Poverty in Darlington' in November 2014 which addressed two clear objectives which was to assess the current scale of the problem in the town; and to review the interventions currently available across the Borough.
- (q) Darlington Partnership and the Council have developed workstreams to take into account the Welfare Reform Agenda and the impact on children and young people and families.
- (r) The Department for Works and Pensions impact assessment indicates that those most affected by the welfare reforms include children and young people.
- (s) There remains a concern that not all pupils eligible for free school meals are registered (hence the schools are not in receipt of this element of the pupil premium). Work is on going to simplify as far as possible the eligibility checking process in an attempt to increase uptake.
- (t) There is evidence to show that in Darlington there are high incidents of child poverty in a number 'hot spot' areas of the town and we examined comparisons between data for 2009 and 2013 by Ward, Pupil Group, Boys and Girls, Pupils on Free School Meals, travellers and non travellers and the point of entry.
- (u) We concluded after examining a number of graphs that there was no significant change from 2009 to 2013 and the Ward information was comparable. We also noted that there were no significant changes to suggest trends are moving in any different direction.
- (v) We felt that there is a need to have data to show a correlation within wards to other data i.e. obesity and children ready for school and move away from solely looking at income and therefore have a more multi-dimensional measurement of poverty.
- (w) We need to know if interventions are working and any improvements needs to be able to be evidence based. IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) data on schools in the deprived wards could 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.
- (x) Child Poverty needs addressing as part of the wider Sustainable Community Strategy 'One Darlington - Perfectly Placed' and not in isolation and we therefore acknowledge that the Darlington Partnership Board plays a key role

in bringing schools, businesses and health organisations together to work towards tackling child poverty

## **Conclusion**

10. Members considered data showing consistent gaps of poverty between the most and least affluent communities within the Borough.
11. To reduce child poverty there is a clear need to narrow the gap and give young people wider ambition to have the best start in life however this is an ongoing issue and there is a need to look at the major services to address.
12. Results have shown that the Pupil Premium Funding within schools has not maintained a narrowing of the gap and it continues to widen. Therefore it is the view of this Review Group that resources need to be focused on family support and parenting programmes.
13. Pupil Premium funding seeks to address underlying inequalities and improve life chances of specific groups where evidence shows those life chances to be limited. It seeks to support 'narrowing the gap' initiatives and contribute to improving social mobility rates.
14. Recent data from Darlington overall, reveals a very mixed picture in 'closing the gap' in achievement levels. KS2 has shown a 'gap' between pupils in receipt of pupil premium compared to those not receiving it, which is not apparent at other Key Stages, where data is mixed. Ofsted monitors this closely via the inspection process and for academies DfE also responds to areas of poor performance. DBC retains a strategic overview of school improvement and acts as a 'broker' in sourcing additional support for schools as needed.

## **Recommendations**

- (a) To continue to publicise existing services and raise awareness through Schools@one Darlington and Councillors Ward Newsletters.
- (b) Members to continue to work with the Darlington Partnership on the wider Inclusion Strategy to reduce child poverty.
- (c) To seek ways that this authority can 'poverty proof' strategies and policies and encourage all agencies and services to identify poverty issues at an early stage and direct to the appropriate support services.
- (d) That plans and strategies focus on those wards with the highest level of child poverty and that resources and joint working be targeted at the clear 'hot spot' areas.
- (e) To ensure that all organisations working for families in the local authority area are involved in the development of the Inclusion Strategy.

- (f) To encourage support for parents and carers of children living in poverty to develop skills and qualifications; to encourage participation in parenting programmes; and to encourage the take up of free school meals by continued communication within schools
  
- (g) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor child poverty and the work being undertaken by the Partnership in relation to child poverty.
  
- (h) To investigate ways of collating relevant data and to use this data to show correlations within wards to other data collected to show if interventions are working and improvements are being made.



**CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013**

**PRESENT** – Councillors Lister, L. Hughes and Richmond.

**OFFICERS** – Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director Children, Families and Learning; Josh Slack, Performance Officer and Julian Kenshole, Head of Strategy and Improvement.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – This was the first meeting of the Review Group and the purpose of the meeting was to receive a presentation on the North East Child Poverty Commission Report: Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Members received a presentation from Stephen Crossley, the Regional Child Poverty Action Plan Coordinator, Institute for Local Governance, Durham University who reported on the main findings and recommendations in the report.
- Members also discussed in more detail the recommendation on child poverty proofing plans and strategies and how other local authorities have approached this.
- The presentation gave some background to Child Poverty Act which received Royal Assent on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2010 and the requirements contained therein on local authorities and their partner authorities to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas.
- Julian Kenshole reminded Members that this Scrutiny Committee received a report on the authority's Child Poverty Strategy at the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2013
- Part 1 of the presentation outlined what was in the report and examines some of the priorities identified by the 12 Local Authorities in the North East that provided information for the report and also looked at what authorities were currently doing. The presentation also included a number of various quotes from the authorities Child Poverty Strategies.
- The presentation highlighted the importance of raising aspirations and not just education priorities. "Transforming the aspirations and ambitions of children growing up in poverty and their families is essential if we are to tackle child poverty".

- The presentation also highlighted the importance of reducing worklessness and to dispel the myth that in deprived areas of the country no one has the desire to work. In fact 61 per cent of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one adult works and one of the strongest single findings of the study is that interviewees trapped in low pay, no pay cycle over the years expressed great personal commitment to employment. Poor wages can also be one of the biggest causes of poverty.
- It was also recognised that there is an overall shortage of good jobs and employers were content to keep jobs low skill and found difficulty in filling vacancies.
- The presentation examined early intervention and ways of ensuring that children that live in poverty are safe and also maximising household income and helping families by the provision of high quality, accessible information advice and guidance.
- Part 2 of the presentation outlined what was not in the report and examines some of the issues which could have been included in local authority documents and which offer opportunities for alternative forms of action.
- Suggested areas for 'poverty proofing' a Child Poverty Strategy were also discussed which included living wage; commissioning and procurement; family friendly employment opportunities; Welfare reform; targeting or universal services; institutional 'language'; and participation or consultation.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That a further meeting be arranged for the Review Group to consider, taking into account the recommendations contained in the North East child Poverty Commission Report and to examine what this authority should be doing further. Areas for further discussion to include the 'living wage' and in-work poverty; social attitudes towards poverty and misconceptions; how to target young people and help maximise their potential; and welfare reforms.

## CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP

15<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**PRESENT** – Councillor Lister (Chair), Councillors Crudass, L. Hughes, Kelley, C. Taylor; and Emma Coltman (Community Representative).

**OFFICERS** – Josh Slack, Performance Officer and Debbie Spence,

**APOLOGIES** – Councillor L. Vasey and Mr. T. Fisher.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – Following on from the first meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013, Members requested to examine further the 'living wage' and in-work poverty; and Welfare Reform.

**1. Living Wage Discussion Paper** – Josh Slack circulated to Members a discussion paper to outline what the living wage is and the wage levels nationally compared to locally.

The living wage is classed as a minimum wage level needed to meet basic needs. The current living wage for the UK is set by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University and is set at £7.45 per hour. There is a separate living wage set for London to reflect the added costs of living and this is set by the Greater London Authority at £8.55 per hour.

There are clear regional differences with regard to the cost of living across the country.

The living wage is calculated by using the Joshua Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard (MIS) research, produced by the CRSP, based on detailed research with members of the public to identify which items need to be included in a minimum household budget. The report is updated each year to measure inflation and research conducted every 2 years to ensure that the basket of goods and services is up to date.

The Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) data is used to look at regional variance in expenditure to then estimate what the living wage could be for each area. The LCF includes expenditure on:

- Food and non-alcoholic drinks;
- Alcoholic drinks, tobacco and narcotics;
- Clothing and footwear;
- Housing, fuel and power;
- Household goods and services;
- Health;
- Transport;

- Communication;
- Recreation and culture;
- Education; and
- Restaurants and hotels.

In 2011 the average weekly expenditure for the North East was £384.20 which is lower than the figure for the UK of £470.70 (18% less than the UK).

If 18% reduction in household expenditure is applied to the living wage for the UK, it would leave a wage of £6.11 per hour, which is £0.08 per hour below the current minimum wage, £1.34 below the current UK living wage, and £2.44 below the living wage for London.

Although the LCF shows that weekly expenditure is 18% lower in the North East than the UK, this does not necessarily mean that the cost of living is 18% lower within the North East.

Further information was circulated at the meeting from Citizens UK, Living Wage: A Guide for Employers.

**2. Poverty Project** – Josh Slack circulated to Members a copy of the Darlington Partnership’s report ‘The Scope of Poverty in Darlington’ dated November, 2013. In response to a letter from Tim Grant, Principal of Darlington College, Darlington Partnership established an enquiry group to look at the issue of poverty within Darlington. The group had two clear objectives :

- Assess the current scale of the problem within Darlington; and
- Review the interventions currently available across the Borough.

The group was led by Tim Grant with support from the Partnership Director and included involvement from groups such as Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau; Public Health; the North East Chamber of Commerce; and Darlington Credit Union.

Members discussed the percentage and number of children living in poverty in Darlington by Ward in 2011. Analysis of research commissioned by the Guardian newspaper, and undertaken by Experian showed that in Darlington there were almost 6,000 households on the verge of poverty, roughly 13% of all households in Darlington.

Members also discussed the information in the report relating to the numbers of children in Darlington who were not claiming free school meals, despite being entitled to. In addition to missing out on free school meals, the schools themselves are also missing out on the pupil premium, which is worth £900 per pupil eligible for free school meals, to improve their attainment.

Members discussed how eligibility checks are carried out to ensure that free school meals are being accessed and agreed that further communication exercises within

schools and the Schools Forum, to promote the uptake of school meals, was required.

Discussion also ensued on what happens to excess food in schools and whether the food is donated to food banks.

Reference was also made to the Institute for Local Governance and Children North East project "Poverty Proofing the School Day".

Josh also referred to a consultation exercise with various organisations he was undertaking to gauge the problems associated with poverty and requested Members experiences. Recommendations following the consultation will then be forwarded to Darlington Partnership.

**3. Welfare Reform Update** – Josh Slack update Members on the Welfare Reform and the work streams that have been devised by Darlington Borough Council and Darlington Partnership as follows:

- Development of an observatory – central collection of data for the Citizen Advice Bureau, Credit Union and Council Services.
- Resource Pack – updated resource pack now on the Council's and Partnership Board websites.
- Directory of Support – production of a directory of support that can be located at GP Surgeries and CAB. A matrix of responses is currently being produced.
- Development of an on-line booking system for organisations i.e. CAB, Welfare Rights/ Revenue and Benefits.
- Digital volunteers to support people with computer literacy.

It was also reported that the Government are due to publish a revised Child Poverty Strategy for 2014 and the Council may look to revise their Strategy at that time.

**Action** : Allison Hill to e-mail all Members for details of any experiences they have in dealing with child poverty within their wards and forward to Josh Slack by 1<sup>st</sup> November, 201 to include in the consultation exercise referred to above.

## **CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**

**19<sup>th</sup> March, 2014**

**PRESENT** – Councillor Lister (Chair), Councillors C. Taylor, E.A. Richmond; and Emma Coltman (Community Representative).

**ALSO** – Councillor J. Taylor, Health and Partnership Scrutiny Committee.

**OFFICERS** – Seth Pearson, Partnership Director

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Kelley and Crumbie.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – Following on from the last meeting Members felt it would be useful to speak with Seth Pearson on the findings contained within the Poverty Reduction Task and Finish Group's report 'The Scope of Poverty in Darlington' with particular attention to the areas for future consideration by the Board and the considerations to child poverty in particular. Members were also interested to discuss where Scrutiny can assist in this process.

### **ISSUES RAISED -**

- It was reported that work is on going between the Partnership, Darlington College, the Credit Union, Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau and the King's Church Foodstore to deliver the recommendations set out within the report.
- The issues of pay day lending has been recognised as an area of concern and that further project work needs to be done in this area.
- It was highlighted that 66 per cent of those families in poverty are working families.
- The Council develop the Child Poverty Strategy which is a strategic document.
- The Partnerships focus is to look at what can be done based on national research and also local information, including schools research; and recognise that there are a lot of good agencies working towards this issue.
- Evidence in Darlington shows that there are high incidents of child poverty and in 9 wards with the borough over 30 per cent of children are living in poverty.

- The Council's Contact Centre will include the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Credit Union and also the ability to refer people to the Food Bank thereby offering a 'one stop' service.
- The overall aim is to bring all agencies together at one contact point within the community and the first ward to offer this will be Cockerton West Ward. On Thursday afternoons people can visit St. Mary's Church where there will be all agencies present, including the Food Bank.
- Discussion on the definition of 'poverty' which can be defined further as absolute and relative. The majority of poverty in Darlington is relative with families struggling to balance costs and be able to eat and keep warm.
- Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is the same in all countries and which does not change over time.
- Relative poverty refers to a standard which is defined in terms of the society in which an individual lives and which therefore differs between countries and over time.
- The Child Poverty Strategy is currently under review and the three key themes when developing the Strategy are money management which is critical to support people; maximising their benefits; and getting people into work.
- The Council's focus on child poverty is through the Children and Young Peoples Plan, the Child Poverty Plan and Partnership work.
- It was highlighted that publicity is key for raising awareness of the services that are available. It was suggested that Schools@one darlington could be a useful tool within schools and also Ward Councillors can be utilised to disseminate information through their Ward Newsletters.

## **CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**

**28<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

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

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

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Crumbie, C. Hughes, L. Vasey, T. Richmond; and Emma Coltman.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – Members considered Ward level data for child poverty for 2006 and 2011. The maps showed each ward with the level of child poverty, and each ward was also broken down by super output areas within wards. The Map clearly showed the highest areas of child poverty and there were 7 clear 'hot spots'.

Definition of Child Poverty being : 'a family earning less than 60 per cent of the median average income'.

### **ISSUES RAISED AND DISCUSSED –**

- The revised Sustainable Community Strategy addresses child poverty 'the proportion of children living in poverty'.
- A need to address the gaps across the borough and seek to reduce inequalities geographically and demographically which in turn will give direction to service strategies.
- A Onedarlinton Strategy is in the process of being drafted
- New data being collated which will give an opportunity to review the current Child Poverty Strategy which was approved in 2011.
- November 2012 the Government launched a consultation on the indicators used to measure child poverty and this consultation closed in February, 2013. Any changes to these measures will require Darlington's Child Poverty Strategy to be amended to reflect this.
- A need to move away from solely looking at income and to look at a more multi-dimensional measurement of poverty.
- There is a need to have data to show a correlation within wards to other data ie. obesity/children ready for school.
- Implications on data collection of the boundary review and the new wards as from May 2015.



- Similar ward picture emerges in 2006 and 2011 and Members predicted that this would potentially always be the same as child poverty is defined by a percentage of the average income. Income may increase but these Wards will potentially always be lower than the average income so will always show as the most deprived areas.
- There is a need to improve inequalities against the opportunities for improvement within those Wards with the highest level of child poverty.
- There is a need to put in place interventions within those 'hot spot' wards but also to have in place an effective way of collating information on whether the interventions are having a positive effect on child poverty and effective monitoring of data.
- There are clearly 'hot spots' within the borough and it was suggested that a multi-agency approach is required to target these areas only and to point resources/services at the weakest points with a purpose of making a difference.
- Changing the focus of other organisations to have a joint approach to targeting the worse affected wards.
- Aspirations/Family cohesion and society drivers required to promote children's ambitions.
- Are all Council policies/plans and strategies addressing child poverty and supporting this aim?
- Are children spread out equally across the town? Useful information to have before targeting 'hot spots' of low income Wards.

**ACTIONS** – Information to be brought to a future meeting of the Review Group :

- (1) To receive an update on the results of the Government Consultation and any changes to the national measures of child poverty.
- (2) Application of other data to the 'hot spot' areas to see correlation.
- (3) What other policies are in place targeting specifically these 'hot spot' areas.

## **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.

## **CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP**

**13<sup>th</sup> April, 2015**

**PRESENT** – 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 and Lister.

**PURPOSE OF MEETING** – to give consideration to the draft final report of the Review Group and make recommendations thereon.

### **ISSUES RAISED AND DISCUSSED –**

- It has been noted that during the course of this Review there are a number of areas that have already been captured by the Council.
- Members discussed the conclusion to the Review.
- regard to 'hot spot' areas Members were advised that the Sure Start Programme are targeting these areas.
- Following the conclusion of the Review Members wish to continue to review the position with regard to Child Poverty within their Work Programmes.
- Members discussed what can be done differently to make a change and made a suggestion for a pilot scheme to target a cohort of young people within a hot spot.
- Members discussed Pupil Premium Attainment and that in a lot of areas there had been an initial narrowing of the gap however this has not been maintained and continues to widen despite the Pupil Premium funding available within schools.
- Members discussed early intervention and the reduced budget position and level of service.
- There are some improved early interventions being the two year olds nursery programme, pre-school meals for all reception but result from these interventions have yet to be realised.

- It was felt that Family Support Resource were required and that this was a wider issue for the LSP to progress.

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- On-going monitoring is essential to see if changes are happening through the regular monitoring of performance.
- Officers could look at the possibility of carrying out a pilot on a smaller cohort of young people.
- The final report needs to include a clear definition of poverty.
- The final report to be presented to Scrutiny at their next ordinary meeting scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2015.

**Terms of Reference**

**Title:** Child Poverty and Vulnerable Children    **Start Date:** Jan 2013 **End Date:** June 2015

**Scrutiny:** Children and Young People Scrutiny

PURPOSE/AIM	RESOURCE
<p>To examine Child Poverty and Vulnerable Children.</p>	<p>Members                      Relevant Portfolio Holder                      Assistant Director – Children, Families and Learning                      Head of People Strategy and Improvement,                      Democratic Services                      Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio.</p>
PROCESS	OUTCOME
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine the Child Poverty Strategy and the impact.</li> <li>2. Give consideration to the Darlington Health Profiles 2011 Indicators relating to child poverty and vulnerable children.</li> <li>3. To take into consideration the actions contained in the Children and Young People Plan 2011-14 in tackling vulnerable young people and the impact of child poverty.</li> <li>4. To consider ways to ensure that ending child poverty is every body's business across their organisation and that all strategies and plans support this aim.</li> <li>5. To examine ways of poverty proofing corporate documents and plans and including child poverty in impact assessments.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To review the Child Poverty Strategy and its impact.</li> <li>2. To scrutinise any areas of concern and make recommendations to Cabinet if needed.</li> <li>3. Taking into account the Darlington Health Profiles 2011 Indicators to monitor Child Poverty.</li> <li>4. To make recommendations to the Children and Young People Collective as appropriate and monitor outcomes against the actions contained in the Plan.</li> <li>5. To ensure that child poverty is a key factor in corporate plans and documents.</li> </ol>

**COUNCILLOR** .....

**CHAIR** .....