



Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 October 2012

Children and Families and Strategy, Partnerships & Improvement Joint Report

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2021

1.0 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out a ten year strategy to address child poverty in the borough. The strategy sets out the key priority areas to reduce child poverty through improved collaboration of existing service areas in order to better coordinate efforts by services to reduce child poverty and improve life chances for children and young people. The child poverty strategy has been developed by working closely with our partners in not only in developing the outcomes we want to achieve, but also ensure that the strategies they are developing also reflect on the need to address child poverty. Mitigating the effects of child poverty and reducing it are key drivers of improving Children and families' health and wellbeing. There will be strong links between this Strategy and the developing Health and wellbeing Board for the City.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Agreement by the Council and its partners of this Child Poverty Strategy will fulfil the statutory requirement as detailed in the Child Poverty Act 2010

3.0 Detail

3.1 In March 2012 the Child Poverty Act 2010 was passed, which stated that compelling action needed to be taken at local and national levels to meet the target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. The Act requires the government to publish a child poverty strategy which was published on the 1st April 2011. The Act requires local authorities and their partners to co-operate to tackle child poverty in their local areas; including the duty to publish a local child poverty needs assessment and a child poverty strategy for their area.

3.2 The government commissioned independent reviews by Frank Field and Graham Allen which focused on children's life chances and the importance of early intervention. Both reviews are referenced in the governments' national strategy 'A new approach to Child Poverty: Tackling Causes of disadvantage and Transforming Families' lives' published in April 2011

In August 2011 Brent's Child Poverty Needs Assessment was completed in. It details some of the key issues and causes of Child Poverty in the borough. The full child poverty needs assessment is available on request. It provides a detailed analysis of child poverty levels in Brent, for example it shows poverty to be worst in the most deprived wards in the borough. It also highlights factors that can perpetuate child poverty, for example parents on low incomes, financial capability and debt, families that live in poor-quality or overcrowded housing, parents without qualifications or employment, parents/carers with mental health problems, disability or infirmity or if children are looked after or in care.

3.3 Brent ranks within the top 10 per cent most deprived in England according to the CWI (Child wellbeing index) and the borough ranks 15th out of 33 London Borough's in the overall CWI. 34.4% of children under the age of 16 live in poverty in Brent. The highest rates of poverty are in Stonebridge ward (which contains the top two worst ranking Super output areas in the country, St Raphael's, Brentfield and Mitchell Brook), Harlesden, Stonebridge, South Kilburn and parts of Welsh Harp, Barnhill and Alperton. The full needs analysis is available from andrea.lagos@brent.gov.uk

3.4 The Council's vision, which is central to the Child Poverty Strategy is:

For no children or young people to be disadvantaged by poverty in 2021 by breaking the cycle of deprivation and mitigating poor children becoming poor adults. Over the next decade we will ensure that each child has the best possible start in life and not be disadvantaged by family circumstance or background

3.5 The strategy sets out 6 key priorities to reduce and mitigate the levels of poverty in Brent over the next ten years. The strategy also demonstrates at which point in a child's lifecycle certain actions should be taken. A comprehensive review of the strategy will take place every three years until 2021 to allow sufficient time for any subsequent changes to be made and also factor in any further changes such as the impact of welfare reforms which will be introduced in 2013.

3.6 Our Priorities:

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| Priority 1 | Reduce poverty levels of children living in low income households |
| Priority 2 | Supporting troubled families |
| Priority 3 | Reduction in the NEET group |
| Priority 4 | Improve financial capacity of parents |
| Priority 5 | Support Looked after Children & Children at the edge of care |
| Priority 6 | Improve the health and wellbeing of children with a focus on reducing obesity, tooth decay and poor mental health |

3.7 Mitigating the effects of child poverty and reducing it are key drivers of improving Children and families' health and wellbeing. There will be strong links between this Strategy and the developing Health and wellbeing Board for the City.

3.8 The correlation between crime and disorder and child poverty is described within the Child Poverty Needs Assessment. It includes such issues as the involvement in anti-social behaviour of children and young people, both as perpetrators and victims of crime, and also the impact on families of issues such as domestic violence or drug abuse

3.9 Sustainability implications depend on a range of factors within the borough and London as a whole such as employment opportunities, living and housing costs. The wider quality of life issues as the basis for sustainable and prosperous communities, and the impact that these have on families, is described in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment upon which the Child Poverty Strategy is built. The impact of welfare reforms will also have an impact on some of our most vulnerable families and child poverty needs to be taken into consideration.

3.7 A six week consultation process was conducted and aimed at targeted groups (including parents) and organisations that were strategically linked, delivered services. We received responses from several groups including the LAC youth group, Youth Parliament, Street League, Chalkhill Youth Forum, Help Somalia Foundation, Children centres, Health Visitors and School nurses as individual responses from residents of the borough

3.8 The Child Poverty Strategy is a long term document (2011-2021), recognising that the intergenerational factors influencing poverty are longstanding, cultural and vulnerable to the performance of the national economy.

3.9 The child poverty strategy has a robust action plan and the actions and progress towards achieving outcomes will be measured by a set of performance indicators and these will be owned and monitored by the Executive of the Partners for Brent as well as the individual service areas and partners responsible for their operational delivery. It is also proposed that Child Poverty be a standing agenda item at a number of existing strategic groups who already have responsibility for a number of the actions including those covering; Parenting, NEETS and Health & Well Being.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications directly resulting from the recommendations of this report. The action plan detailed in the strategy and any new activities suggested are within the remit of existing services and the intention is to deliver within existing resources and remodelling of services to place an emphasis on prevention will be conducted through specific projects such as the working with families and the council's employment offer. Any new investment requested should be assessed within the value for money context and a business case drawn up and approved before any financial commitments are made.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 No legal implications are required for this report

6.0 Diversity and Equality and other Implications

6.1 There are no diversity implications contained within this report.

6.2 As set above, we have considered the impact of this strategy to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. The intention of the child poverty strategy is to reduce the inequality of opportunity in the borough.

6.3 Sustainability implications depend on a range of factors within the borough and London as a whole such as employment opportunities, living and housing costs. The wider quality of life issues as the basis for sustainable and prosperous communities, and the impact that these have on families, is described in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment upon which the Child Poverty Strategy is built. The

impact of welfare reforms will also have an impact on some of our most vulnerable families and child poverty needs to be taken into consideration

6.4 The Child Poverty Strategy has implications for the public, community and voluntary and private sectors within the city as well as residents and Communities.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 There are no accommodation issues contained within this report.

Background Papers

Brent Child Poverty Strategy

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