

**10 November 2014****Agenda Item: 09**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**

### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY REFRESH**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To note the refreshed Nottinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy and seek Committee approval for the supporting annual action plan.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The Child Poverty Act 2010 placed statutory duties upon top tier local authorities and their named partners to prepare a joint child poverty strategy which set out the measures that the local authority and each partner proposed to take to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their area.
3. Nottinghamshire's first Child Poverty Strategy "*Building Aspiration: Working Together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty*" was approved at County Council on 22 September 2011.
4. The Nottinghamshire Strategy was refreshed in Spring 2014 to reflect:
  - updated data on child poverty levels in Nottinghamshire
  - a revised action plan
  - revised governance and performance management arrangements
  - changes in the way that public services are funded and delivered.
5. The refreshed Strategy reflects all partners' recognition of the far reaching, multi-faceted effects of poverty on Nottinghamshire families and a commitment to continue tackling the causes and mitigating the effects of poverty. It is also a response to evidence that demonstrates a link between the negative consequences of poverty and an increased demand for services. In an environment where local authorities and partners are seeking to make significant savings, this correlation cannot be ignored.

#### **Definitions of Child Poverty**

6. Child poverty is now measured using the Children in Low-Income Families Local Measure<sup>1</sup>, which was established in 2011. It defines the proportion of children living in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/fpersonal-tax-credits-children-in-low-income-families-local-measure>

families either in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income which is less than 60% of national median income.

## **Levels of child poverty in Nottinghamshire**

7. The latest data for 2012 was published in October 2014 by HMRC using the revised measure, reflecting that 16% of children in Nottinghamshire were defined as living in poverty. Levels of child poverty in Nottinghamshire as a whole are slightly below the England average of 18.6%. In Nottinghamshire, 52 out of 172 wards have levels of child poverty over the England average of 18.6% and 10 out of 172 wards have levels of child poverty which exceed 30%.
8. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has predicted that relative child poverty nationally will stand at 24% by the financial year 2020/21 – which is higher than the target of 10% set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010.
9. Both the national and local picture, therefore, present significant challenges for Nottinghamshire in tackling child poverty and the refreshed Strategy attempts to do this by focusing partner actions where poverty has been identified to be highest.

## **National and local context**

10. The Government published a new Child Poverty Strategy in June 2014. In it, the Government re-affirms its commitment to ending child poverty in the UK by 2020 and sees this as being important for economic growth. The Strategy aims to tackle child poverty through creating jobs, supporting families into work, making work pay, tackling low pay and helping people move into better paid jobs.
11. It identifies Local Enterprise Partnerships as having a key role in tackling child poverty. It also identifies education as being a key mechanism for preventing poor children becoming poor adults and, in particular, emphasises the importance of access to high quality early education, which it intends to support through the introduction of the Early Years Pupil Premium.
12. There is now a significant amount of evidence to support the view that welfare reform, stagnant wages and fuel price increases are having an impact on low income families. There has also been a growth in “payday lenders”, who offer short-term loans with high interest rates and who have developed high profile marketing strategies. In response to this, a number of local authorities have established Fairness Commissions to gather evidence around the impact of child poverty and to highlight issues in this area.
13. The refresh of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy (attached as **Appendix 1**) builds on key plans and strategies in Nottinghamshire, including the Early Years Strategy, the Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is also informed by evidence from national sources including the Sutton Trust, the Early Intervention Foundation, the Child Poverty Action Group and the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer.
14. Since the original Strategy was written, the landscape of children’s services has also changed significantly with developments for the Pupil Premium and renewed

commitment from Government to support the Troubled Families programme until 2020. The emergence of the Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2) has seen economic growth being planned on a cross-authority basis.

15. On an East Midlands level, the national Child Poverty Unit originally developed regional activity around child poverty and the current Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Reference Group is re-establishing a regional group, which will provide a forum for cross-authority learning and co-operation.

### **Governance and monitoring arrangements**

16. The governance and monitoring arrangements reflect the changed landscape outlined above, with increased emphasis on local accountability.
17. Nottinghamshire's Early Help offer is monitored on a locality level by the Early Help Implementation Groups (EHIGs) and on a district level by the Locality Management Groups (LMGs). These groups are multi-agency partnerships, chaired by NCC officers, and focus on district priorities and performance to meet a number of key targets, including those relating to child and family poverty.
18. The Strategy refresh is also driven by the recognition that a key way of mitigating the effects of child poverty is through the actions of partners on a local level and, in particular, targeting work in child poverty hotspots.
19. To support this work in 2014/15, the role of monitoring performance to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty will be carried out through EHIGs and LMGs, and reported to the Child Poverty Reference Group. The Child Poverty Reference Group is made up from a wide range of partners from across health, education, police, district councils, churches and the voluntary sector. In turn the Child Poverty Reference Group will report on County-wide performance to the Children's Trust and Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **Action Plan**

20. The revised annual action plan (attached as **Appendix 2**) recognises that a significant amount of activity is already taking place across the County to address child poverty, and that this is reflected in key plans including the Early Help Development Plan, the Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Community Safety Strategy and district council strategic plans. Therefore, the action plan seeks to add value by:
  - focusing on areas where a partnership approach will increase impact
  - focusing on areas where further action is needed and where influence and impact is greatest.
21. Implicit in this is the recognition that tackling child poverty is everybody's business, not just that of children's services.
22. The action plan is a "live" document which will be further developed and refined as work continues and new partners emerge. Partners will be kept informed about progress on the action plan via a quarterly newsletter; this will serve to inspire people as well as

inform them. A refreshed action plan will also be brought to Committee annually for approval. This will ensure that actions remain relevant and do not duplicate other plans.

23. The plan format and content has been developed drawing on models from across the region and seeks to build on and streamline existing pledges. It focuses on three key areas:
- short term – mitigating the effects of poverty
  - medium term – moving people out of poverty
  - long term – preventing poor children from becoming poor adults.

### **Other Options Considered**

24. None

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

25. To achieve Committee approval for partnership actions to tackle Child Poverty in Nottinghamshire.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

27. Activity set out in the Strategy and action plan will be delivered within the resource base available to individual services.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the refreshed Child and Family Poverty Strategy be noted
- 2) the supporting annual action plan be approved.

**Derek Higton**  
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**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SLB 24/10/14)**

28. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report

### **Financial Comments (KLA 23/10/14)**

29. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 27 above.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Building Aspiration: Working Together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty (Sept 2011)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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