

21<sup>st</sup> June 2021

Agenda Item: 14

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****CHILD POVERTY UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report invites Committee to consider the latest data relating to children in low income families in Nottinghamshire.
2. The report also invites Committee to consider the progress so far of the 2020-2022 Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Action Plan and to confirm if annual reports to Committee are required.

**Information**

3. Growing up in poverty can affect every area of a child's development and future life chances. It is known that the most disadvantaged children are less likely to achieve their academic potential, secure employment and gain a sense of future financial security. They are more likely to suffer from poor health, live in poor quality housing and unsafe environments. It is not surprising that children in poverty alongside other vulnerable groups continue to be prioritised in Nottinghamshire.
4. This report stems from a request at Children and Young People's Committee to provide an update in relation to child poverty. A further report will be presented in the autumn focusing specifically on how Covid-19 has impacted on child poverty levels and outcomes for children and families previously identified as experiencing poverty.

**Measuring Child Poverty**

5. There are various ways of defining poverty and no single definition is universally accepted. In the UK, local authorities use the Government definition and the data they publish through Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs which does include some in-work poverty.
6. Child Poverty is measured by Government as<sup>1</sup>:
  - being in **relative low income** (or relative poverty) if children are living in a household with income below 60% of median household income in that year. (The median

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07096/>

household's income for 2018/19 was £29,400 according to the Office for National Statistics, this means children living in a household with an income less than £17,640 are identified as living in relative poverty).

- being in **absolute low income** (or absolute poverty) if children are living in households with income below 60% of the 2010/11 median, uprated for inflation (this measure looks at how living standards of low income households are changing over time).

7. The measure for relative low income is widely used to compare data with other councils and across localities, so this report refers to this measure.

#### Children in Low Income Families Data

8. The latest published data is based on 2018/19. In 2018/19, 15% of children were identified as living in low income families in Nottinghamshire, compared with 18.4% across England, and 15.3% in the East Midlands. The trends in Nottinghamshire show that low income levels remain fairly static within a range of 15% -18% of children living in low income families.

<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
Relative Low Income (Poverty): % of children aged 0-15 in low income families	15%	17%	18%	17%	15%

9. Ashfield and Mansfield districts continue to have the highest levels of children under the age of 16 years living in low income families as detailed in the table below.

<b>Local Authority Name</b>	<b>% of Children in low income families 2018/19</b>
	<b>Under 16 years</b>
<b>England</b>	16.8
Nottinghamshire	15
Ashfield	19
Bassetlaw	18
Broxtowe	12
Gedling	13
Mansfield	19
Newark and Sherwood	14
Rushcliffe	7

Source: HMRC and DWP 2020

10. A map of Nottinghamshire showing data for children living in low income families by district and census ward is included in **Appendix 1**. Detailed district level maps are available to download from [Child poverty | Nottinghamshire County Council](#).
11. There are areas of Nottinghamshire that do have greater numbers of children in low income households. Data by ward level has been used to confirm the top 10 priority areas which are targeted by services and organisations. Partners of the Life Chances Partnership Group

are prioritising these wards when commissioning, developing, and delivering services and interventions. For example, work will be undertaken with partners to establish pilot Family Hubs in one or two priority areas to enable families to access a range of early help services provided through improved integrated work. The top 10 priority wards are included in **Appendix 1**.

### The Impact of Covid-19

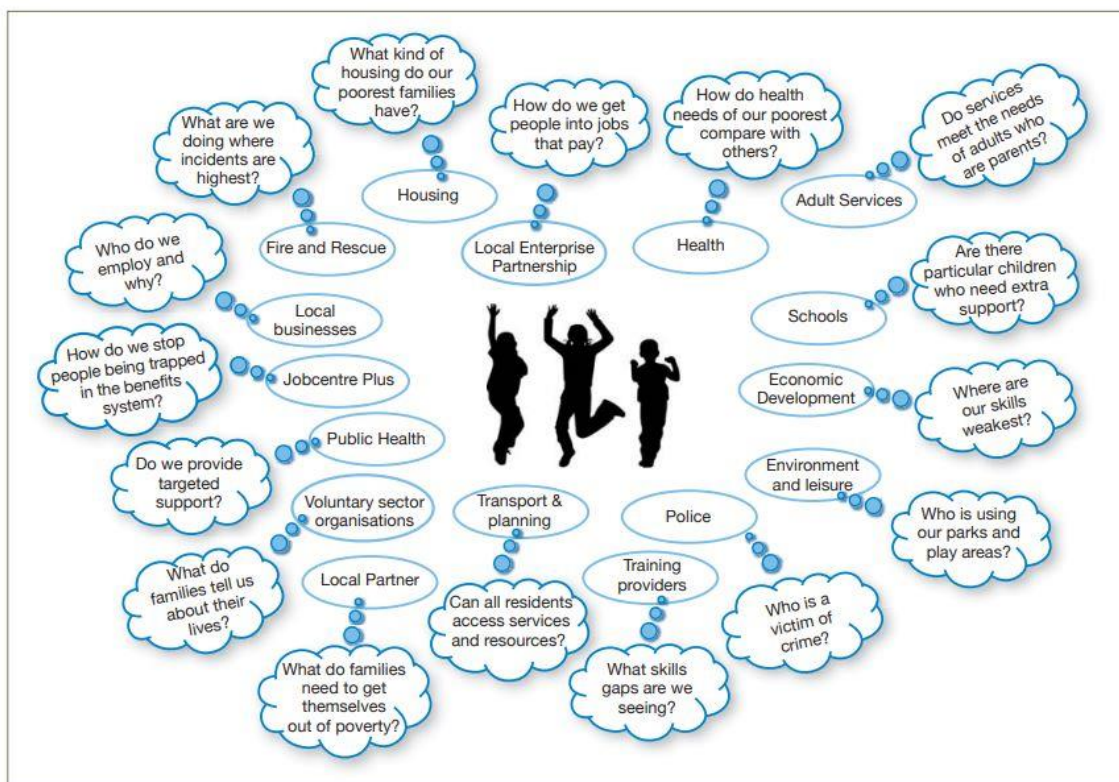
12. The 2018/19 children in low income data cannot evidence the trends in relation to the pandemic although it is understood nationally that child poverty levels have increased since the pandemic started in March 2020. There are some local measures which have been suggested as proxy indicators of child poverty such as eligibility for funded childcare and free school meal claims; this data will be presented in the report to Committee in the autumn following further discussion and work with neighbouring and statistically similar local authorities.

### **Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Action Plan 2020-2022**

13. There is a local partnership group called the 'Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Partnership' which focuses on tackling child poverty by building on the previous Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Strategy 2010. The partnership has been in existence since 2009 under different names. The group is managed by the Council and reports to the Children and Families Alliance and more recently the new Best Start Partnership Steering Group as supporting parents into employment is a priority within the Best Start Strategy<sup>2</sup>.
14. Every two years, the group develops, delivers and monitors an action plan bringing together activity from a range of services including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, District and Borough Councils, the Voluntary and Community Sector, education, economic regeneration and community health services to name but a few. A partnership approach is required as the following diagram suggests.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Giving Children the Best Start in Life | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)



15. The latest Improving Life Chances action plan for 2020-2022 includes the following ambitions:

#### **Children and Families experience fewer negative outcomes from the effects of poverty**

- Improve the life chances of children and families by working in partnership to reduce levels of child poverty and reduce the impact of poverty
- Workers recognise the importance of tackling child poverty in improving outcomes for families and sharing information about 'what works'
- Children, young people, and families in poverty have improved health and wellbeing outcomes
- To improve the quality and quantity of private sector rented housing for those in housing need, reducing the need for temporary accommodation used by families.

#### **Families and Children are able to move out of poverty**

- To increase uptake of funded childcare provision to and support parents into work
- To provide opportunities for parents to be job ready, by improving skills, confidence, and aspirations for their families
- More parents into sustained employment
- Working across agencies to consider the effectiveness of work programmes in helping those furthest away from the labour market back into work, in particular adults with mental health difficulties
- Increase families' money management skills and build financial resilience for children and families in poverty
- Support families reliant on welfare to navigate the system
- Increase families' income and improve outcomes through tackling fuel poverty
- Support families' income and improve outcomes through tackling food insecurity.

### **The Cycle of Poverty is broken as children are prevented from becoming poor adults**

- To improve educational outcomes for our poorest children and close the attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers
- Have a collaborative approach to support young people (16-18 years) to not become not in education, training, or employment (NEET) and Not Known, maximising opportunities
- Consider how to effectively support couple relationships and identify successful models for achieving this.

### **Children and Families are effectively supported during the Covid-19 Pandemic in relation to poverty**

- To understand the impact of Covid restrictions to reduce the negative impact of Covid-19 on children and families.

16. The full Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Action Plan is included in **Appendix 2**.
17. Progress against the Action Plan has been broadly good and progress against some of the priority actions are included below:
18. **Supporting parents to be ready for work** is a priority within the action plan and several services and interventions are in place. Progress so far includes:
  - a) 866 families have achieved Positive Outcomes, meeting the target for 2020/21 for the Supporting Families Programme (previously known as Troubled Families). 830 of the families have achieved significant progress towards employment and 36 have achieved continuous employment, moving off benefits.
  - b) 67% of parents contacted by the Children's Centre Service<sup>3</sup> three months after undertaking an intervention linked to work readiness reported an improvement in their employment status.
  - c) There were 4,910 'hits' on the Notts Help Yourself Work and Volunteering section<sup>4</sup> with a 100% increase from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 2020/21, showing that families are becoming more aware of the resource, a fact reflected in the recent Families Information Service annual survey, which showed awareness had increased from just 18% in 2019/20 to 30% of respondents in 2020/21.
  - d) Take up of the funded 30 hours childcare<sup>5</sup> for working parents has increased to 94.4% of those eligible, enabling more parents to work without the barrier of childcare costs.
19. **Addressing food insecurity** for families has been a substantial task for the group and the following activity has taken place in the last year:

<sup>3</sup> [Children's Centre Service | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Work and Volunteering | Notts Help Yourself](#)

<sup>5</sup> [30 hours funded childcare for three- and four-year olds | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

- a) By Spring 2022, Nottinghamshire will have the largest number of FOOD Clubs, supporting families to access healthy, affordable food. Currently more than 150 families are already benefiting from a weekly parcel worth £15 - £20, costing them just £3.50. This has been made possible by Nottinghamshire being successful in achieving the Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme, one of just five local authorities in the country.
- b) Healthy Start<sup>6</sup> take-up was above the national figure (Notts 56% compared with nationally 54%).
- c) Over Easter 2021, 4,184 children and young people eligible for Free School Meals accessed food and activity packs, as part of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)<sup>7</sup> programme, funded by the Department for Education and delivered by the Young People's Service and Children's Centre Service.
- d) From December 2020 to the end of April 2021, 87,357 supermarket vouchers were provided to vulnerable families through the Covid Winter Grant scheme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. The scheme provided supermarket vouchers to families struggling financially because of Covid during the school holidays as well as during term time. Its replacement, the Covid Local Support Grant<sup>8</sup>, has provided Free School Meals to children during May half term and the scheme ends on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021. A report about both schemes is due to be presented to Committee later this year.

- 20. Committee is invited to consider if annual reports of the Improving Life Chances action plan are required.

### **Other Options Considered**

- 21. No other options have been considered.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 22. Children living in low income families are at risk of a range of poor outcomes and these outcomes can also impact on aspirations and future economic status. Children living in low income households are less likely to do well at school, which in turn reduces their opportunity to gain meaningful employment. Improving social mobility is therefore a priority for Nottinghamshire; and reducing the impact of poverty is important to achieve a wide range of positive outcomes for children, their families, and future generations.
- 23. Families living in low income households can be more likely to need support from services. Tackling the root causes of poverty is key to achieving future savings across a range of public services. According to the [Child Poverty Fact Sheet \(local.gov.uk\)](#), child poverty costs about £12 billion a year to the public sector. 6.7% of primary education and 7% of secondary education spending is as a result of child poverty. £1.653bn is spent on social housing (not including housing benefit). £0.926bn is spent on fire and rescue and estimates on crime and policing range from £1.06bn to £4.16bn.

<sup>6</sup> [Health start food and vitamins | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Nottinghamshire Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Covid Local Support Grant: Information for members of the public | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)



## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

25. There is a correlation between areas with high levels of deprivation and high levels of domestic violence and crime, suggesting that tackling poverty is key to reducing offences.

### **Financial Implications**

26. There is currently no direct funding for work to tackle child poverty and improve life chances; work relies on core funding streams from across partners with the exception of recent short term Covid related grant schemes.

### **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

27. National research indicates that there is a probable link between poverty and child abuse and neglect. The recently published report by the National Child Mortality Database identifies a 10% increase in child mortality for each increase in deprivation decile.

### **Implications for Service Users**

28. Reducing levels of child poverty and reducing the negative impact of poverty on children and families will benefit service users as they will be better off, more children will achieve and will be able to make a positive contribution; there will be less stress, debt and difficulty and there will be increased wellbeing and improved long-term outcomes.
29. Communities will also be better off, as there will be less deprivation and disadvantage, more spending in the community, increased investment in the local economy and reduced reliance on services.

### **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

30. Economic regeneration is key to improving life chances, as access to sustained, well paid employment is still recognised as a key route out of poverty.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Committee:

- 1) notes the latest children in low income families data and supports further work with other local authorities to help better understand the impact of Covid-19 on child poverty levels in the absence of published data covering the period from March 2020.

- 2) considers the progress to date of the 2020-2022 Improving Life Chances for Children and Families Action Plan and confirms if annual progress reports are required.

**Laurence Jones**  
**Service Director, Commissioning and Resources**

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

Irene Kakoullis  
Group Manager, Early Childhood Services  
T: 0115 97 74431  
E: [irene.kakoullis@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:irene.kakoullis@nottsc.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (CEH 08/06/21)**

31. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (CDS 08/06/2021)**

32. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **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.

Child Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016 [Child poverty - Nottinghamshire Insight](#)

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

All.

C1474