

Building Aspiration: Working Together to Tackle Child and Family Poverty in Nottinghamshire

September 2011



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The full needs assessment and further information is available at:
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childpoverty

1. Introduction

Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners have created a vision to support the Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Strategy. All partners have signed up to the following vision.

Nottinghamshire’s vision: Our ambition is for Nottinghamshire to be a place where children grow up free from deprivation and disadvantage, and birth and social background do not hold people back from achieving their potential.

Nottinghamshire’s strategic objective: We will work together to reduce levels of child poverty and to mitigate the effects of child poverty on children, young people and families, as well as on future generations. We will establish a downward trend in levels of child poverty and our progress will compare well to our statistical neighbours

What is Child Poverty?

A child is said to be living in poverty when they live in a family/environment that lacks the resources to enable the child to participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities that are ‘ordinary’.

Nationally, Government aims to reduce child poverty to 10% or less by 2020. Government uses the definition of ‘relative poverty’ to measure progress in reducing the number of children living in poverty. The proportion of children in relative poverty is calculated as follows:

Number of children in families in receipt of either out of work benefits or tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% median income

Total number of children in the area

This forms the nationally defined target for child poverty, which measures the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in receipt of tax credits, where their reported income is less than 60% of median equivalised¹ household income². Nationally (excluding London) in 2009/10 a couple with two children would be identified as living in child poverty if their income before housing costs is less than £379 per week; and a single parent with two children would be identified if their income is less than £297 per week.

The child poverty target measures whether the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. Low income is the most commonly used measure of poverty, as it provides a broad indication of the living standards of families and includes families experiencing poverty whilst also in employment.

Why tackling child poverty is important to Nottinghamshire

Poverty can have a profound impact on the child, their family, and the rest of society. It often sets in motion a deepening spiral of social exclusion, creating problems in education, employment, mental and physical health and social interaction. We understand that tackling child poverty will improve the life chances of children and their parents now and in years to come. Tackling child poverty is not just about children and is a deep rooted issue affecting many of our communities.

It is important to note that whilst children in out of work families are more likely to be in relative poverty than those where at least one parent is in work, nationally about half of children in relative poverty are in families where a parent works. Tackling child poverty is therefore not just about families reliant on the benefits system. In Nottinghamshire however, more than two thirds of all children living in poverty are reliant on welfare benefits.

Levels of child poverty in Nottinghamshire are slightly below the national (20.9%) and regional (18.4%) estimates. There are currently 16.8% of children (under the age of 20) living in poverty in the county. This equates to 27,080 children, of which 23,990 (17.4%) are under the age of 16³ Since 2007, there has been a 0.1% reduction in the number of children living in poverty.

Across districts there is some variation in the percentage of children living in poverty. In 2008, there were 21.7% of children in poverty in Ashfield, 18.3% in Bassetlaw, 14.2% in Broxtowe, 15.0% in Gedling, 22.7% in Mansfield, 16.8% in Newark and Sherwood and 7.9% in Rushcliffe. All Districts have a greater proportion of under 16’s who live in poverty⁴. All districts including Rushcliffe have wards with over 10% of children living in poverty⁵.

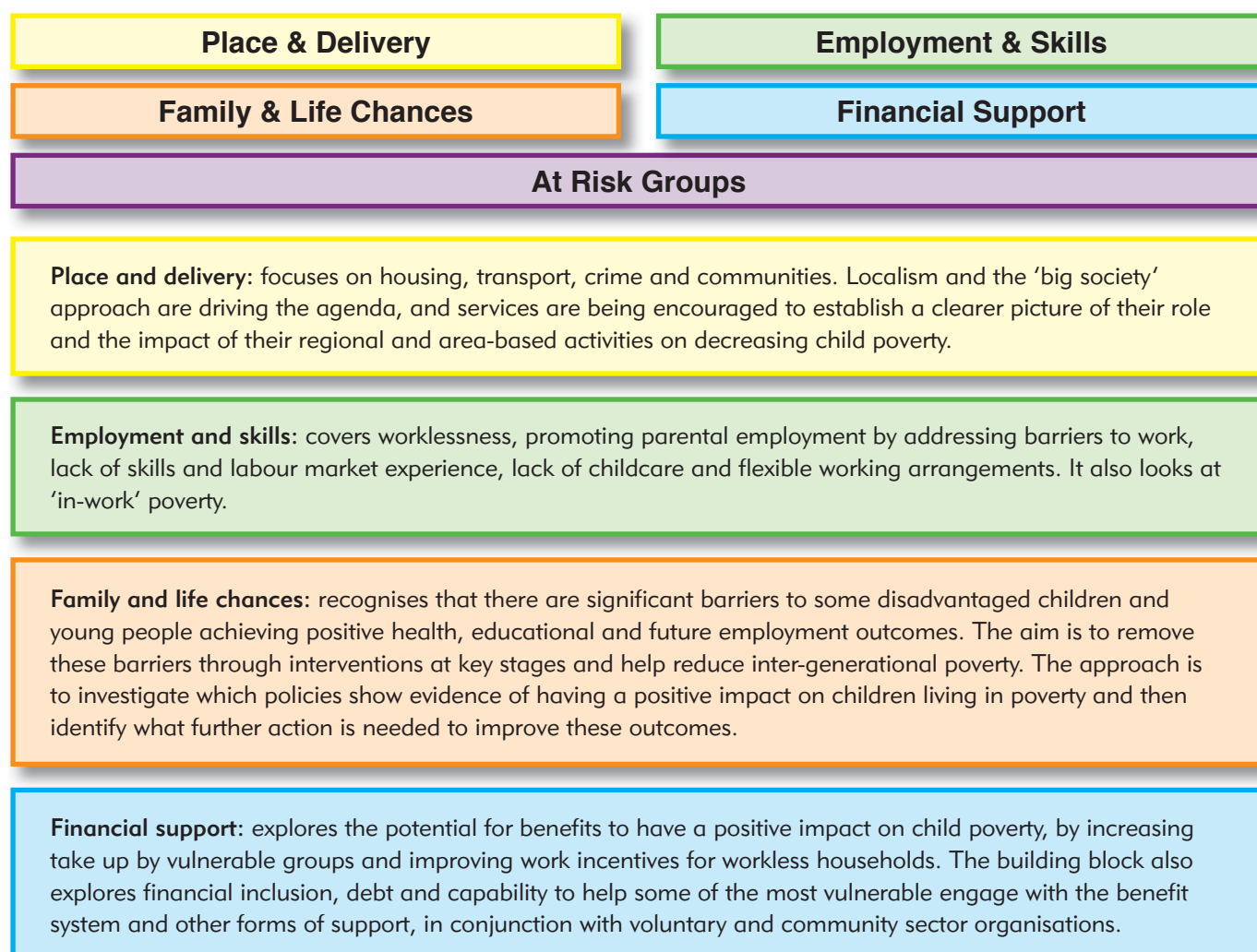
2. How the strategy was developed

The strategy has been developed in partnership and aims to ensure that work to tackle poverty is embedded into the core business of Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners. We asked Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners to adapt and align their existing priorities to tackle child poverty and provide evidence of its impact.

The Child and Family Poverty Strategy has dependencies on other key strategies and plans across Nottinghamshire including the Nottinghamshire County Council Strategic Plan, the Youth Crime Action Plan, the Children, Young People and Families Plan to name but a few.

The Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Strategy was developed by the Child Poverty Reference Group using findings from a comprehensive needs assessment⁶, which included a service mapping exercise and literature review containing evidence of what works to reduce child poverty and what mitigates against the effects associated with it. A key recommendation of the needs assessment included the need to use evidence based practice to ensure the interventions we prioritise will have greatest impact.

Figure 1: Building Blocks of the Child Poverty Strategy



However there remain gaps in our knowledge because data is not available, for example the numbers of families affected by debt, or homelessness. We will be developing a separate action plan to address some of the gaps identified in the needs assessment.

The findings from the needs assessment generated a series of recommendations which have been disseminated widely to inform the actions included in this strategy. All partner organisations were asked to consider the recommendations which included evidence of what works, to inform a series of organisational pledges. These pledges are the basis of our child poverty strategy.

The building blocks of a child poverty needs assessment

The national Child Poverty Strategy focuses on four ‘Building Blocks of Child Poverty’, underpinned by attention to at risk groups and what interventions are available. These provide a powerful framework for the engagement of all key partners in progressing the development of a local strategy and needs assessment.

3. What we will do to tackle child poverty in Nottinghamshire

The Nottinghamshire Child Poverty strategy has been developed during a time of national and local financial challenge; in the light of the growing cost of living, it is likely that levels of child poverty will increase over the next few years before we start to see a downward trend. "The Institute for Fiscal Studies has predicted that by 2013 both relative and low income poverty and absolute low income poverty will have started rising again. In part this will be due to social security and welfare benefit cuts"⁷. It is critical therefore to ensure that our poorest children and families are targeted so that we can, in partnership, mitigate against the effects of poverty, intervene earlier to prevent outcomes from worsening and build resilience across families and communities. Families and children experiencing severe or persistent poverty will ultimately be our key target groups.

What we are aiming to achieve

We understand that responsibility for children lies with parents and carers, and throughout this strategy we want to ensure that wherever possible parents and carers take the lead role in improving the life chances of their children. However we have positive aspirations for our communities and aim to ensure that Nottinghamshire has high levels of economic prosperity, with increasing employment opportunities and a viable economy. We are also striving for improved skills and education for children and their parents to enable them to access employment opportunities that pay. We aim to reduce the number of families reliant on welfare benefits and help them to have the confidence and skills to access opportunities that will break intergenerational cycles of poverty and deprivation. Even though we face challenging financial times we have opportunities to promote and deliver a better future for Nottinghamshire.

Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners will focus on the following priority areas in the implementation of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy. We will:

- Target localities of Nottinghamshire with greater levels of poverty to ensure outcomes in these areas are improved and children and families thrive in safe, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods.
- Increase educational attainment, employment and skills amongst children, young people and parents in Nottinghamshire; reduce dependency on welfare benefits and ensure work pays.
- Raise aspirations and improve the life chances for children and families so that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor experiences and outcomes.
- Support families to acquire the skills and knowledge to access responsive financial support services, money management, and debt crisis support.
- Support families with complex problems compounded by poverty and disadvantage.

Our overall approach

Our child poverty needs assessment highlighted ten top recommended priorities which will underpin our strategy, and which will be evidenced in the pledges which form the basis of the Strategy.

Nottinghamshire's top 10 Recommendations to tackle Child Poverty:

1. **Embed child poverty activity** into core delivery of services across Nottinghamshire.
2. Services should work with families using a **whole family approach**, dealing with families in a holistic way to assess needs and ensure children and their parents/ carers receive appropriate services and interventions to lift themselves out of poverty.
3. Services and interventions should use a **targeted approach** to work with children, families and communities in greatest need. There are steps that can be taken to carry out further outreach to engage the most disadvantaged children and families.
4. **Use early intervention approaches** to break the cycle of disadvantage; early years settings also have a substantial role to play in improving outcomes for children and families.
5. **Integrate service provision** to enable easier access and enable holistic support packages for those who need them most.
6. **Increase educational attainment**, skills and employment amongst young people and parents across Nottinghamshire. In particular ensure that young people and unemployed parents are equipped for employment.
7. Engage the **private sector and Local Enterprise Partnership** in plans to tackle child poverty.
8. Commissioners and managers should ensure they utilise **evidence based practice** when developing interventions which impact on child poverty; and **performance management and evaluation** systems must be strengthened in order to measure impact and share learning.

9. Improve the awareness and skills of professionals and volunteers working in universal and targeted services. It is advisable that child poverty is fully considered by **workforce development** leads across agencies to ensure training, support and information needs are further identified and addressed.
10. **Further assess need** by addressing the data challenges highlighted in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment, this will help shape local interventions to ensure the needs of those most at risk are identified and met.

All statutory partners have been asked to provide pledges and wider partners have also been encouraged to submit information. It is important to note however that work in Nottinghamshire which aims to reduce child poverty or mitigate against its effects is much broader than the pledges listed below. We have a wide range of interventions and organisations working in Nottinghamshire that all contribute to the shared aim to tackle child poverty and improve outcomes for the poorest in our communities.

Organisational Pledges

* indicates statutory partner

Nottinghamshire County Council*

- We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver business growth and inward investment.
- We will better equip young people to enter the workplace.
- We will close the achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2, 4 and 5.
- We will deliver effective family and parenting support services to ensure that the needs of families are met appropriately and at the earliest opportunity.
- We will adopt and ensure a whole family approach to service delivery.
- We will deliver an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy for Nottinghamshire to ensure that the needs of children, young people & families are met appropriately and at the earliest opportunity.
- We will improve outcomes for young carers across Nottinghamshire.
- We will continue to target family learning, adult education and parenting courses to parents and carers from target groups.
- We will maintain a quality library and information service for children and young people, and will develop and run activities which encourage a love of

reading and learning in children and young people through under fives programme of events and offer to schools.

- We will build the aspirations of children and families.
- We will work to protect and support the most vulnerable children and young people in Nottinghamshire, who are also more likely to be affected by poverty.
- We will contribute to increasing the skills of disabled people and parents.
- We will increase the take up of free school meals.
- We will assess poverty factors in relation to all young people who have offended or who are at risk of offending and facilitate appropriate interventions.

Ashfield District Council*

- We will reduce crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in hotspot areas identified in our Strategic Assessment.
- We will improve the aspirations of young people in Ashfield.
- We will work with partners to ensure that local people have access to employment opportunities.
- We will provide financial support to Ashfield Citizens Advice Bureau in 2011/12.
- We will support physical activity and wellbeing within Ashfield.

Bassetlaw District Council*

- We will work collaboratively with the voluntary and community sector to provide advice, information and training on financial inclusion focusing on basic current accounts, income maximisation, saving and responsible borrowing and financial literacy.
- We will maintain a programme of economic development activity to encourage new employment opportunities and retain existing jobs within the district.
- We will promote access to housing and council tax benefits, paying entitlement under a 48 hour guarantee.
- We will support vulnerable households (including those with young children) to achieve affordable warmth.
- We will prevent homelessness by providing a range of housing advice and support.
- We will increase the amount of affordable housing in the district.
- We will maintain a network of access points to assist residents in rural areas to access Council and other service providers and sources of information and support.
- We will work in partnership with clubs and other organisations to provide sport and physical activity opportunities in safe and welcoming environments.

Broxtowe Borough Council*

- We will provide opportunities for children, young people and parents to increase skills and employability.
- We will improve access to services and provide support for children, young people, parents and carers.
- We will develop and deliver community health promotion activities to improve health and increase community cohesion.
- We will support the increased take up of free and reduced cost home insulation including the WarmZone project using benefits data to target efforts.
- We will reduce crime and anti social behaviour in Broxtowe.
- We will increase use of Nottingham Credit Union to promote financial inclusion.
- We will maximise benefit take up of families in poverty and support them to claim relevant Council Tax discounts.

Gedling Borough Council *

- We will continue to process homeless applications efficiently and timely
- We will prevent homelessness by providing a range of housing advice and support
- We will ensure the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation for homeless families
- We will continue to support Citizens' Advice Bureau at existing level
- We will lead the development of a multi-agency intervention initiative.

Mansfield District Council *

- We will provide more opportunities for employment and apprenticeships for local residents.
- We will coordinate inter-agency activity to raise family incomes by reducing worklessness and raising skill levels.
- We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership and Sherwood Growth Zone to deliver business growth and inward investment.
- We will provide access to affordable and safe leisure activities for children and families.
- Work with schools to encourage children to respect their local environment.
- We will provide information, advice and support to families experiencing financial and housing difficulties with efficient appropriate responses.
- We will improve the energy efficiency and quality of homes in Mansfield.

- The Community Safety team will ensure that child poverty data informs The Community safety planning and the implementation of local actions in respect of Alcohol and Drugs, Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and Domestic Abuse in the priority geographic area.

Mansfield Strategic Partnership (MASP)

- To incorporate child poverty priorities within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Mansfield.
- To focus inter-agency collaboration around the Work Programme on areas of highest Child Poverty need.

Newark and Sherwood District Council*

Newark & Sherwood District Council is committed to the child poverty strategy and will submit child poverty pledges following local council meetings which will seek elected member approval.

Rushcliffe Borough Council *

- We will prevent homelessness by effective multi agency intervention to reduce the number of homeless 16/17 year olds.
- We will educate young people about the reality of becoming homeless.
- The Cultural Services Department will prioritise officer support and external funding opportunities to areas that have been identified as suffering from child poverty and a deficiency of equipped play provision as identified by the Childs play Strategy "Playing for Life in Rushcliffe" 2007-2012.
- Rushcliffe Borough Council revenues and benefits service is committed to working with Nottinghamshire County Council on highlighting issues related around benefit take up and would be keen to explore data sharing opportunities.

Rushcliffe Strategic Partnership

- The Rushcliffe Community Partnership - Health Issues Group will ensure that child poverty data informs the health planning and the implementation of local actions in respect of obesity, alcohol & smoking.
- The Rushcliffe Community Safety team will ensure that child poverty data informs the community safety planning and the implementation of local actions in respect of alcohol and drugs, anti social behaviour (ASB) and Domestic Abuse in the priority geographic area. (This is a shared priority for Rushcliffe District Council).
- The Rushcliffe Children and Young People's partnership will ensure that child poverty data informs the group and services are targeted to these areas. The Group will adopt Child Poverty as a priority and develop actions to tackle this in areas that are over the 10 % target.

Jobcentre Plus*

- We will deliver a welfare system which recognises work as the primary route out of poverty and reduces the number of children in workless households.

- We will continue partnership arrangements with Children’s Trust partners to tackle child poverty by improving access to Jobcentre Plus support for parents who are furthest removed from the labour market.
- We will participate in child poverty pilot activity and other activities designed to better engage parents in improving their employment prospects.
- We will gather and share information about those parents looking for work and the extent to which accessing appropriate childcare is a barrier to entering work and training leading to work.

Nottinghamshire Police*

- We will reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in target wards across Nottinghamshire.
- We will identify higher risk young offenders at reprimand stage and refer to multi-agency teams through the Youth Offending Service for assessment and intervention.
- We will support truancy and persistent absence initiatives and raise awareness of the importance of truancy reduction as being vital to the reduction of crime and victimisation.
- We will ensure onward referral to appropriate interventions where young people are at risk due to alcohol or substance misuse, missing from home or vulnerable to radicalisation.
- We will support the delivery of diversionary activities for young people to reduce local crime and antisocial behaviour and to signpost children and young people to them, e.g. Princes Trust, ‘Kickz’ 999 challenge.
- We will ensure robust and effective partnership arrangements are in place for targeted offender management.

Nottinghamshire Probation Trust*

- As the organisation which coordinates the Reducing Reoffending Delivery Group, we will work with partner organisations to strengthen families, to help reduce the risk of reoffending; maintain Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences to protect and support victims of domestic abuse; and better support young adults who offend in their transition from childhood to adulthood. Additionally, to support positive family links to help drug misusing offenders abandon drugs misuse.

NHS Bassetlaw*

- We will commission services which protect and support children and young people affected by domestic violence.
- We will commission services which provide support to adults suffering from anxiety and depression.

NHS Nottinghamshire County*/Public Health

- We will reduce health inequalities between families across Nottinghamshire by reducing the gap in life

expectancy, infant mortality, low birth weight and teenage conception rates between the most deprived and least deprived localities.

- We will improve outcomes for vulnerable young families by developing the health visitor implementation plan and commissioning the Family Nurse Partnership.
- We will provide services and support for children and young people and their families where substance misuse is an issue and provide specialist training to the wider workforce on identifying hidden harm issues.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures (Connexions)

- We will work with schools, colleges and training providers to achieve an increase annually in the proportion of year 11 and 13 leavers entering Learning or work. We will support 3,000 adults from Nottinghamshire who are unemployed to progress in learning or work.
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Citizens Advice Bureau

- We will provide the advice families need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect families lives.
- We will provide data and outcome measurements focused on improving the financial stability of families.
- We will seek funding to increase the financial capability of people building on expertise gained in delivering a successful project in Nottinghamshire.

Home-Start

- We will offer specific support to families in Nottinghamshire to maximise their income and manage their money effectively to avoid debt.

Detailed pledges are included in Appendix One of the strategy which is published separately at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childpoverty

How we will know when we have made a difference?

Nottinghamshire County Council as the lead organisation for the co-ordination of the Strategy, will be responsible for implementing an annual review and liaising with organisational leads to assess progress against the local pledges as well as the national child poverty target.

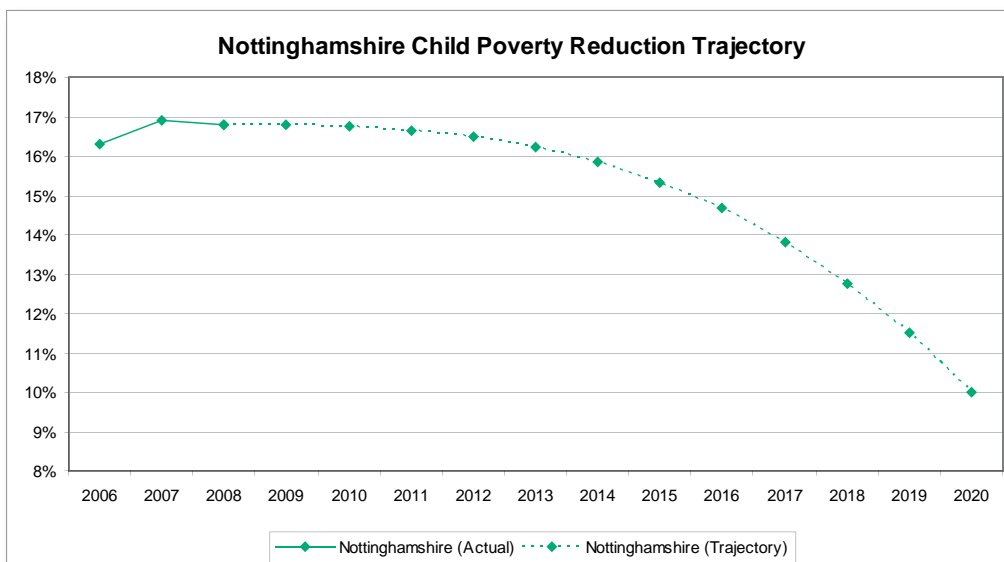
The annual review of the Child Poverty Strategy will be shared with the Child Poverty Reference Group who will measure progress against the national child poverty target and assess progress alongside statistical neighbours. The group will also be responsible for refreshing the Strategy and pledges to ensure activity is effective and continues to meet identified and emerging needs.

There is an expectation that the pledges included in the Strategy will be performance managed through existing

organisational performance reports and therefore embedded into the core business of all statutory partners. There is an expectation that all partners contributing to the strategy will endeavour to progress their performance management to improve information about the impact of interventions as recommended in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment.

Nottinghamshire is keen to set a trajectory to help demonstrate progress. We will use this trajectory as an indicator of child poverty levels for Nottinghamshire and the seven districts. It is important to acknowledge that child poverty levels are influenced by a great number of determinants not within the control of local organisations e.g. changes to the welfare system.

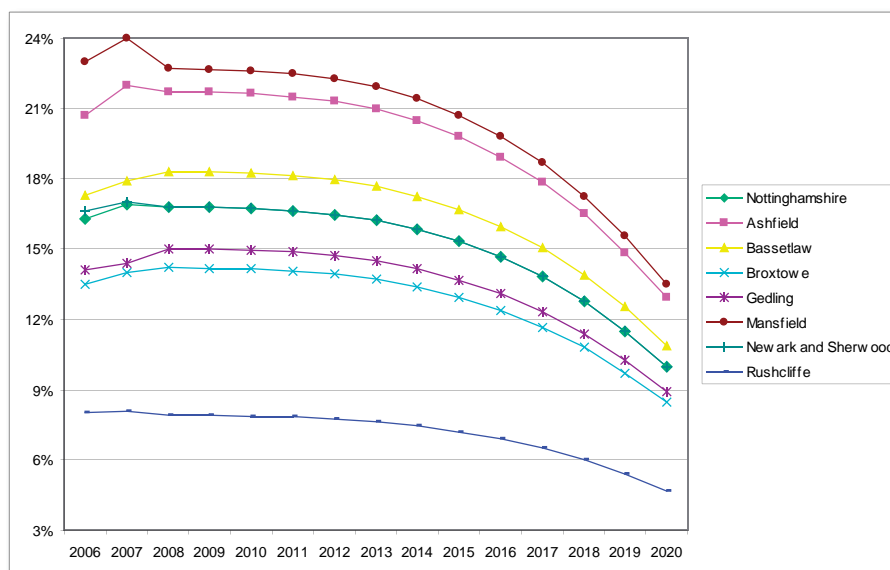
Figure 1: Nottinghamshire Child Poverty trajectory to achieve 10% reduction by 2020



The following graph has set trajectories for each of the seven district Local Authority areas within Nottinghamshire. All districts with the exception of Rushcliffe have over 10% of children living in poverty, and for some districts reducing poverty levels to below 10% will be unachievable within the current economic climate. The graph therefore uses a weighted average

to apportion the reduction required for each district to ensure that the aggregate of these equals the Nottinghamshire target of 10%. Consequently each district has a variable target, however when aggregated, it would equate to 10% of children being in poverty in Nottinghamshire in 2020.

Figure 2: Child Poverty trajectories for Nottinghamshire's Seven Districts



NB: The trajectory for Newark and Sherwood mirrors the trajectory set for Nottinghamshire.

Information updates and progress reports will be published on the Nottinghamshire County Council website: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childpoverty

4. Next Steps

The Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Child Poverty Reference Group which is led by Nottinghamshire County Council with representation from all statutory partners.

The Child Poverty Needs Assessment will be refreshed alongside the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment with input from the Child Poverty Reference Group.

Child Poverty will also be included in Nottinghamshire and District Sustainable Community Strategies to further embed the work into plans to ensure economic prosperity for Nottinghamshire.

We will engage children and families experiencing poverty in order to evaluate progress and ensure that the Strategy is effective in meeting the needs of the poorest families in Nottinghamshire.

We will work with workforce development leads across the partnership to ensure the training and development needs of Nottinghamshire's workforce are identified and addressed in order to enable practitioners to take an active approach to identification and support for children and families in poverty.

We will implement the child poverty communications plan to raise awareness and increase engagement in the delivery of the strategy.

References

- ¹ Equivalisation - income data is adjusted to take into account variations in both the size and composition of the household. This process reflects the notion that a family of several people needs a higher income than a single person in order for both households to enjoy a comparable standard of living. Equivalisation is needed in order to make sensible income comparisons between households.
- ² Measuring Child Poverty, Department for Work and Pensions, December 2003
- ³ HMSO NI 116 data http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm
- ⁴ HMSO NI 116 data http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm
- ⁵ HMSO NI 116 data http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm
- ⁶ Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2011 can be accessed at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childpoverty
- ⁷ End Child Poverty (March 2011) 'Child Poverty Map of the UK' Child Poverty Action Group



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published **September 2011**

The full Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment can be accessed at:
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childpoverty