

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

## AGENDA ITEM: 11

**DATE OF MEETING:** 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2010

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**SUBJECT:** TACKLING FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY

### PURPOSE:

1. To seek Board members views on the development of the Tackling Family Poverty Strategy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. **That Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider this report; comment on development to date and highlight any areas that they feel may need further attention.**
3. **That Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board add to the Boards work programme, a further presentation on this once the draft strategy and delivery plan is completed (March 2011)**

### REPORT:

4. This report provides a brief background to the Child Poverty Act 2010 and outlines local action towards the development of a Tackling Family Poverty Strategy for Luton.

### The background to the developing a strategy:

5. **The Child Poverty Act 2010** became law in March 2010 and requires the government to publish a strategy to tackle child poverty every three years, and an annual report. The Act also places a Duty on local authorities to:
  - co-operate to reduce child poverty in the local area
  - carry out a child poverty needs assessment
  - produce a joint local child poverty strategy
  - have regard to child poverty when preparing or revising the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Luton's Tackling Family Poverty Strategy will help the Council meet these duties placed upon and will enable us to strengthen our approach to co-ordinating work with partners.

6. The new Coalition Government have agreed to maintain the 2020 target of eradicating child poverty, and Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act but, have removed the prescriptive approach of publishing statutory guidelines and regulations in line with the decentralisation /localism agenda. Therefore, the Core Duties of the Act remain as above. The time table for the work is now only illustrative. At the last Tackling Family Poverty steering group meeting we agreed to maintain the impetus with the aim of **publishing the strategy in spring 2011.**
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### **Why Child Poverty matters:**

7. Lack of income and material resources in childhood has been shown to affect future life chances for a child, with poverty leading to poorer outcomes later in life;
  - Poverty shortens lives. Children in poorer neighbourhoods will die, on average, 7 years before a child in the richest areas.
  - Poor children are born too small; birth weight is on average 130 grams lower in children from social classes IV and V. Low birth weight is closely associated with infant death and chronic diseases in later life.
  - Poverty shapes children's development. Before reaching his or her second birthday, a child from a poorer family is already more likely to show a lower level of attainment than a child from a better-off family. By the age of six a less able child from a rich family is likely to have overtaken an able child born into a poor family.
  - Children aged up to 14 from unskilled families are 5 times more likely to die in an accident than children from professional families, and 15 times more likely to die in a fire at home.
  - Children growing up in poverty are more likely to leave school at 16 with fewer qualifications.
  - 12% of lone parents cannot afford celebrations with presents at special occasions.
9. The Governments 2020 vision and strategy aims to ensure that:
  - Poverty in childhood does not translate into poor experiences and outcomes (education and health)
  - More families are in work that pays *and* have the support they need to progress (quality childcare, employment and adult skills)
  - Financial support is responsive to families situations (in and out of work benefits)
  - A child's environment supports them to thrive (housing and neighborhoods)
10. The proposed Government strategy for tackling child poverty is to guarantee:
  - Work for those that can, and financial support for those who cannot

- Financial support that is responsive to families needs in terms of in and out of work benefits
- That material deprivation is tackled e.g. housing and persistent poverty
- That life chances for children are improved, so that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes
- That safe and cohesive communities are created and sustained that support children and young people to thrive

**What has happened recently to continue our work to tackle family poverty:**

11. The council has worked closely with partners to progress this work and will carry out comprehensive engagement with local residents as development of the strategy progresses
12. Work has included;
  - a. Establishing a Strategy Steering group consisting of key partners as detailed in the Act.
  - b. Holding a stakeholder event was held in July 2010 to engage all key players in this agenda and to support the development of a comprehensive Child Poverty Needs Assessment (CPNA) as required by the Act.
  - c. Mapping services that contribute to supporting families and children.
  - d. The CPNA has been consulted upon and is in final stages of completion – (it is hoped that hard copies will be available for this Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting).
  - e. High level leadership and governance for this work has been developed and the Local Public Service Board, have been designated as the strategic group ultimately responsible for this work.
  - f. The University of Bedfordshire is co-ordinating and supporting a group of young people from The Princes Trust to undertake some qualitative research with children and young people to ensure that local voices of children and families affected by poverty are heard, and inform the development of the strategy
  - g. The government have committed a one off payment of approximately £60,000 financial support to the local authority via the national Child Poverty Unit to support the development of the strategy. This fund will be used to cover the cost of the development of the CPNA, the University research and the detailed drill down and analysis of data gathered to date. It will also be used to consult on final draft of the strategy and produce final document.

- h. It is important to note that there will be no ongoing extra financial support to deliver the Tackling Family Poverty Strategy, therefore, actions to be undertaken will need to be funded from existing resources. This will be a challenge, as some of the emerging findings that will require actions could be resource intensive. Partnership work is therefore crucial to ensure that agencies collaborate to yield best outcomes for children and families

### **The next steps:**

- 13. Preparations for qualitative research is now underway, interviews with families and young people will be carried out in January/February/March 2011. Final publication of related research publication will be in April however research findings will be available to inform strategy aims and plans in early March.
- 14. Further work is to be undertaken to drill down the quantitative data identified through the CPNA and linking with the refresh of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- 15. The aim of the quantitative work is to ensure that we identify whether poverty disproportionately impacts upon any groups of people, communities or if there may be area based patterns / trends and details evident from current data. The qualitative research will give a voice to local young people and families. This detailed information will ensure that the strategy is fitting and appropriate to local needs.
- 16. A draft of the strategy, subject to Board approval, will be presented to the Boards March meeting, to provide members with an opportunity to comment on it before Executive approval.

### **Challenges:**

- 17. Policy changes at a national level with regards to benefit and tax credit changes are likely to present significant challenges to tackling family poverty. It could be some months before the full impact these changes, and current austerity measures, are likely to be felt by families in poverty, but potential negative impact could be considerable.
- 18. As is the case with health interventions, strategic work in this policy area will not necessarily yield immediate rewards and it could be some years before elements of interventions proposed through this strategy can be measured for success.
- 19. Similarly, as Luton is a town that experiences significant population churn it could well be that as people move out of poverty, they also move geographically. With constantly changing and emerging communities, even where there are successes with groups and individuals moving out of poverty this will not always be represented in local statistics as new communities and individuals settle in the town.