

Subject: *Brighton & Hove Child Poverty Needs Assessment*

Date of Meeting: 21 March 2011

Report of: *Strategic Director, People*

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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Child Poverty Act places duties on the local authority to work together with partners to produce a local Child Poverty Needs Assessment and from this a local strategy to reduce child poverty. This fits with developments in Brighton & Hove to deliver improved outcomes for residents through evidence based Intelligent Commissioning.
- 1.2 Child poverty does not only concern material quality of life for families, but also the impact of poverty on the long term life chances for their children. The commitment to reduce child poverty should therefore be adopted at the strategic level by partners within the city in order to impact across the broad range of associated service provision.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Board discuss and agree the findings of the Brighton & Hove Child Poverty Needs Assessment, subject to their comments being reflected in the report.
- 2.2 That the Board refer the needs assessment onto the Public Service Board and Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership to agree the needs assessment in accordance with the duty to cooperate in the Child Poverty Act.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

What is child poverty?

- 3.1. Approximately 2.8 million children and young people in England live in poverty. A family is considered to live in poverty if their income is below 60% of the national

average family income. For a family of 2 adults with 2 children this means a weekly income of £344 or less before housing costs and for a lone parent with 2 children £263 or less.

- 3.2. Outcomes for children raised in poverty are significantly worse than for those who are not. Educational achievement and health and wellbeing are likely to suffer. Lifetime earnings for children raised in poverty are significantly lower, as are their prospects for employment. Therefore children brought up in poverty are more likely to raise their own children in poverty.

Why is it important to Brighton & Hove?

- 3.3. Almost a quarter of all children and young people in Brighton & Hove live in poverty. The majority of these live in families where one or more parents are out of work. A high proportion live in lone parent families, most of which are headed by women. The rate of child poverty varies significantly between different neighbourhoods across the city, meaning that life chances for children raised in more deprived areas are significantly worse.

The local duties

- 3.4. The Child Poverty Act, 2010 commits Government to eradicate child poverty in the UK by 2020. In order to help bring this about, the Act places duties on local authorities to work with partners to produce both a local Child Poverty Needs Assessment and from this a local strategy which proposes how they collectively will work to reduce, and mitigate the effects of child poverty.
- 3.5. Prior to the introduction of Child Poverty Act there was already a commitment to reduce child poverty in Brighton & Hove. One of the strategic priorities of the Children & Young People's Plan 2009-2012 is to reduce both child poverty and health inequality, recognising the link between family income and life chances.

Intelligent Commissioning

- 3.6. The Public Service Board with the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership have been reviewing partnership working arrangements in the city to ensure a collective focus on delivering improved outcomes for residents, according to the priority themes of the refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.7. The evidence reviewed and presented in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment demonstrates that, in order to reduce child poverty, partners should work together to improve not only children's outcomes but outcomes for the family as a whole.

What is a Needs Assessment?

- 3.8. A needs assessment is a review of data and evidence for a given subject, in this case child poverty. It judges the level of existing need within the city in relation to the desired outcome. It measures the relationship between need and service

provision and, based on approaches that are proven to work, offers recommendations. These are then used to develop a strategy for commissioning appropriate and effective services.

- 3.9. The structure and headings of the needs assessment are taken from a draft template for needs assessments that will be used across the city in future. The Child Poverty Needs Assessment has been undertaken as a trial of this template and learning from the process will be reported to the Public Service Board.

How was the assessment conducted?

- 3.10. The Government's Child Poverty Unit developed a three tiered model to express the relationship between family circumstances and services in order to reduce child poverty. This was adapted and used locally to gather evidence and also to present the findings of the needs assessment. It is anticipated that this will be used as an approach to develop the local Child Poverty Strategy also.

- 3.11. The three tiers are summarised as follows:

- Short-term support that provides immediate solutions to day to day issues around financial matters in relation to earnings and costs of living.
- Medium-term support that meets the needs of parents and carers around skills and training, job availability and childcare.
- Long-term support that gives children and young people the best chance to prosper as adults, such as education, health, targeted family support and support to communities.

- 3.12. Child poverty is a story of people and place. In order to reduce child poverty it is necessary to understand the complex relationship between individual family needs, the risks they face and the services that are offered to support them. This must also be considered within the context of the immediate community, and the wider economy and dynamics of the city.

What is new?

- 3.13. There is no known work which brings together the range of family circumstances and services that illuminate the picture of child poverty in the city. The development of the local Child Poverty Strategy from the evidence within this needs assessment presents an opportunity to use the principles of Intelligent Commissioning to the full, with the potential to help bring commissioning activity together across service or organisational boundaries.

What are the findings?

- 3.14. Key findings in relation to child poverty and associated outcomes for families are:
- Severe financial pressures for families attempting to secure adequate family housing, relevant benefits and balance low incomes against the high cost of living in the city.

- A significant minority of parents have low skills and qualifications. These are compounded by unemployment and low wage employment in comparison to high childcare costs in the city.
- Overall educational attainment is below average, with particularly low attainment for specific pupils, most notably from disadvantaged communities.
- Higher than average numbers of young people not in education employment or training (NEET), and lower than average numbers of young people from disadvantaged communities going on to higher education.
- Higher than average numbers of looked after children, with associated increased risks to life chances and costs to services.
- Higher than average numbers of families with a range of risk factors for child poverty, including disabilities, mental health problems, alcohol and drug misuse, and domestic violence.
- Particularly disadvantaged communities where families are living in intergenerational poverty with associated low aspirations.

The recommendations

- 3.15. The recommendations of the needs assessment suggest three strategic areas with which to frame effective work to reduce child poverty in the city, focused on partnerships, coordination of services, and shared monitoring arrangements.

Partnership commitment and capacity

- 3.16. The needs assessment finds that child poverty can only be reduced once families are doing better as a whole. Child poverty is a single, critical outcome by which success against all of the priority themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy could be monitored.
- 3.17. It is recommended, therefore, that the local Child Poverty Strategy is developed and adopted by partners of the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership in order to embed the commitment to commission services which are proven to improve family circumstances and so too reduce child poverty.

Coordination of Services

- 3.18. The network of advice services should be effectively coordinated across the city and sectors, building on foundations recently put in place by the Advice Partnership. The Child Poverty Strategy should have a communication element to enable frontline staff across agencies to refer parents and carers to relevant advice and support services.
- 3.19. The creation of jobs within the city should focus on helping local residents into sustained employment. This should be linked to efforts to train parents, and young school leavers, with the relevant skills to enter into secure and appropriately paid work. To this end education and skills partnerships in the city

should ensure a coordinated focus on preparing residents for work from childhood through to adulthood.

- 3.20. Education, along with a safe and secure family environment, should frame the personal as well as academic development of children and young people in the city. A focus on aspirations is important too to ensure that all children and young people are encouraged to make the most of the city's social and cultural offer. Efforts should be maintained to deliver more decent family housing through the Housing Strategy and the Strategic Housing Partnership. Intervention should also be coordinated across service and agencies to support families with the most complex needs.

Monitoring Improvement

- 3.21. It is recommended that coordinated and accurate monitoring underpins service delivery to improve family circumstances. Key service indicators should be monitored and shared through common systems such as the Brighton & Hove Local Information Service (BHLIS) and Interplan so that they can be used widely to deliver outcomes beyond service level.
- 3.22. Adult services, and in particular advice services should monitor where clients are parents. This will provide a more accurate picture of the associated risk to children and young people in families where adults require help, alongside the benefits to the whole family of high quality, timely advice.

Next steps

- 3.23. The needs assessment will be presented to the Children & Young People's Trust Board and the Children & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2011. It will then follow to the Public Service Board and the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership in accordance with the duty to cooperate in the Child Poverty Act.
- 3.24. The Government is also due to publish a National Child Poverty Strategy in Spring 2011. This will set the national policy agenda for child poverty following the recent independent review of Poverty and Life Chances by Frank Field MP.
- 3.25. This national strategy will frame the context for developing the local Child Poverty Strategy, along with the development of the City Annual Commissioning Plan for 2011/12. It is envisaged that the Brighton & Hove Child Poverty Strategy will be produced by June 2011.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was carried out with professionals across sectors as part of the needs assessment, as well as a review of a wide body of national and local consultation with children and young people, and families. Professional and public voice form Sections 9 and 10, respectively, of the needs assessment.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 This paper deals with the proposed strategy to identify, monitor and reduce the level of child poverty in Brighton & Hove. Although the paper does not make reference to any specific financial implications resulting from this strategy; appropriate funding will need to be secured before committing to any additional cost to the council.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis Date: 14/03/2011

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Child Poverty Act 2010 commits the Government to eradicate child poverty by 2020. The requirement in the Act to meet the child poverty targets is not subject to any qualification, but child poverty strategies must take into account 'economic and fiscal circumstances'. The Act places statutory duties on local areas to help deliver the national target. The new duties for local authorities in England under Part 2 of the Act came into force on 25 May 2010. This places duties on local authorities and named partners to 'cooperate with a view to reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their areas'. They are also required to prepare and publish local child poverty needs assessments and to develop joint child poverty strategies. In line with the decentralisation and localism agenda, the Coalition Government has decided not to issue formal statutory guidance on Part 2, giving local partners flexibility to meet the duties in a way that best fits their organisations and meets the needs of their local community.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson Date: 14/03/2011

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Life chances for children and young people who are raised in low income families are known to be considerably reduced. The risk of low income for particular groups of families, and so too of child poverty is described in Section 4 of the attached needs assessment. Detail within the needs assessment will provide the basis for an Equalities Impact Assessment to accompany any formal proposals for reducing child poverty that follow once the local Child Poverty Strategy is produced.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The sustainability of local communities is dependent on the local economy and the local environment. The relationship between employment, living costs and housing for families within the city is described within the needs assessment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The correlation between crime and disorder and child poverty is described within the 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.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The needs assessment recommends that efforts to reduce child poverty should be included and monitored within the City Performance and Risk Management Framework. There is an opportunity to examine in more detail multi-agency interventions for families with complex needs as part of the local Child Poverty Strategy. The needs assessment provides a range of validated practice that will be considered in the development of the strategy.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The needs assessment has implications for the public, community and voluntary and private sectors within the city, as well as for residents and communities. The needs assessment provides the evidence base for a local Child Poverty Strategy to be developed and adopted by the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton & Hove Child Poverty Needs Assessment, 2010-11

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

