

## **Appendix 3**

### **1. Brighton and Hove Child Poverty Consultation 2011**

Following the completion of the Brighton and Hove Child Poverty Needs Assessment in June 2011 a consultation was undertaken on the findings of the assessment and on draft strategic recommendations for reducing child poverty. Between June and November a range of professionals, organisations, parents and carers and young people replied to the consultation using a variety of methods. The formal consultation is over but information, responses and intelligence from children, young people and families will continue to inform the delivery of the strategic outcomes through the development of a consultative group alongside the proposed Child Poverty Task Group. (Please see the Accountability Diagram at the end of the Brighton and Hove Child Poverty Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015)

#### **1.2 Consultation methods**

- Consultation Portal open September/October 2011  
50 responses
- Survey Monkey by SPIN the Single Parents Information Network  
17 responses
- Community and Voluntary Sector Forum Consultation workshop  
24 attendees from 21 CVS organisations
- Mosaic AGM presentation and question and answer session – approximately  
25 participants
- Child poverty workshop delivered by Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project (BUFCP) advice team
- Two discussion groups facilitated by the Trust for Developing Communities with young people from Queen's Park ward and Bevendean community respectively.

#### **1.3 Key messages from the consultation**

The biggest general drivers of poverty in families in Brighton and Hove are seen as -

- Low wages and high cost of living
- The cost of housing

### **2. Looking in More Detail at the Short, Medium and Long Term Needs of Families**

#### **2.1 Day to day pressures**

- The cost of living was rated first as a driver of poverty in the electronic consultation followed by debt problems.
- In all the types of consultation responses housing costs was a strong theme. Single parent respondents identified in particular the costs of essential maintenance of the home.
- Everyone taking part in the BUFCP workshop had been made homeless or suffered the threat of homelessness.
- Housing insecurity combined with the financial pressures associated with caring for children with disabilities can produce extreme hardship and stress for families.

*'The difference to the standard of living my family enjoyed before and after having a second, disabled child has been immense. The high number of hospital appointments I have to attend has cost me my career due to employers not being flexible. I continue to work on contract but I have lost my home as I was not able to secure a mortgage. My family has had to move several times due the fact that landlords in this city operate in a thoroughly unscrupulous manner, for example putting houses up for sale within a couple of months of us moving in - I have spent thousands of pounds on moving costs, and lived in 7 homes in 7 years.'*

- Single parents identified rental costs in relation to benefits/low wages as very difficult and fuel inflation as a specific pressure. Food inflation was picked out by both single parent respondents and participants at the Mosaic AGM as of real concern and causing hardship.
- Cost of school uniforms, trips and activities was a common theme for both young people and parents and carers.

*'The cost of uniform, trips, sports activities were so prohibitive that she and her 5 siblings learnt just to lose notes or invent reasons why they couldn't participate'*

## **2.2 Medium term challenges to families**

- Low paid work and unemployment are rated highest as drivers of poverty in the electronic consultation closely followed by the cost and affordability of childcare and skills and training.
- Childcare was identified in the BUCFP discussion as a critical plank for reducing poverty along with secure housing.
- The cost of working was identified as a significant barrier for parents and carers, in particular the cost of travelling to work.

*'Often going to work cost so much that work was not worthwhile as a result of expensive private rents and travel; bus fares have just gone up and many cleaning jobs mean travelling in early hours, at the most expensive time of the day'*

*'Communities in Woodingdean and Moulsecoomb were especially disadvantaged. One pregnant woman, working for an agency as a cleaner, described how she had to walk to Woodingdean and back to keep in touch with her family.'*

## **2.3 Long term prevention**

- Parents with low aspirations and intergenerational poverty were the top two long term challenges from the electronic consultation followed by poor educational achievement and poor family health and wellbeing.

- Respondents were generally less willing to rank the areas of change that would reduce child poverty over the long term but rather felt that it was the interconnectedness of issues that was important.

#### Support for parents

Supporting parents to develop high aspirations for their children and supporting those families with complex problems rated the highest as positive drivers of change. Access to full disability benefits, being free of domestic violence, managing health conditions and managing addiction were also identified as important.

#### Support for children

This section of the consultation was much more evenly ranked across all areas of support with the emphasis on children and young people achieving in training/work, being free from violence, achieving in their early years and through their education and developing excellent aspirations.

#### Single Parent Survey

The SPIN survey asked slightly more detailed set of questions of single parents registered with the Network. Given single parent families are such a high proportion of all family types living in poverty in the City, this survey, although small warrants a specific mention.

The survey showed a high percentage of parents responding feel stressed as a result of ill health with consequent impacts on their children.

Specifically -

- 35% Reported having experiencing violence previously
- 23.5% Reported experiencing violence from a parent who no longer lives with them.

When asked what makes it difficult for children and young people to do well at school -

- 35% Reported no place to do homework and quiet study
- 82% Struggle to provide the money for school trips and activities
- 53% Reported a need for money to help with study aids
- 47% Reported a need for money to help with computers and internet access
- 47% Reported a need for extra help with homework clubs in different locations or youth centres.

### **3. Young People's Discussion**

Two discussion groups facilitated by the Trust for Developing Communities discussed in particular the pressures impacting upon educational achievement.

When asked what makes it harder to do well in school the young people reported:

#### **3.1 Emotional Issues**

- Bullying in school effects education and confidence. School need stricter bullying strategies.

- Media and Teachers put too much emphasis on doing well. i.e. using the current difficulty of getting a job/job prospects as a reason, which worries young people

### **3.2 Costs of education**

- Bus fares too expensive. Some children have to walk along way and leave very early to get there/ Already tired after walking to school early/
- Poor families/children miss out on educational opportunities because the school trips are too expensive – can lead to bullying as poorer children are 'singled out' by what they can afford.
- School uniforms too expensive especially if more than one child needing constant uniform.
- Celebrities/media portraying bad/mixed signals to young people i.e. girls think they can grow up and be a 'celebrity' and that is a job!

### **3.3 Teaching**

- Mixed signals from teachers 'swearing' in front of pupils – better role models.
- When there are too many people in your classroom it's hard to ask for/get help
- When your teachers don't give you any feedback/boring teaching styles

### **3.4 When asked their top five things which would help children living in poverty in Brighton & Hove one group listed:**

1. Cheap or free clubs and activities
2. More decently paid jobs for parents and young people
3. Cheaper transport to get about the City and get more involved in leisure and culture
4. Better housing and better outdoor spaces in your neighbourhood
5. Safer families and communities

### **3.5 When asked what would help pupils do better at school one group identified:**

- Zero tolerance on bullying with more mediation and support for victims
- More access to affordable educational trips

## **4. Child Poverty Consultation Community and Voluntary Sector Forum Workshop**

- 4.1 Much of the workshop response follows the priorities identified above with the exception that workers from the community and voluntary sector were more likely to identify drug and alcohol misuse as a driver of poverty than those responding in the electronic survey.

4.2 The third sector professionals however spent some time thinking about how services can better support children and families living in poverty.

They identified a number of actions to improve service outcomes the key ones of which are listed here –

- The importance of services for young people
- We need a better way to measure long term impacts and a funding structure that recognises and values long term outcomes
- We need better sharing of best practice and learning from existing services to counter the emphasis on always chasing the latest innovative project – locally regionally and nationally
- Lack of recognition of the importance of getting grass roots support for work with families in the community
- The importance of not losing services for young people
- The benefits system doesn't always give claimants the whole picture for what they may be eligible
- Lack of coordination between adult services to parents (and their needs as parents) and their children's needs
- Lack of data sharing and joint planning of services between the Department for Work and Pensions and partners
- Need to connect health services more firmly to Council/benefits services/community and voluntary sector services around families
- Better connections between schools and teachers and the broader approach around the family – specific issues around families with disabilities and schools.
- More support between the time when children and young people are identified as children in need and the point at which they (often) return to social/health services as adults and parents.
- Schools finding alternative education options for young people who are disengaged following the pupil.
- Better use of community and voluntary sector organisations to ensure the best outcome in the preventative stages before statutory services need to get involved
- Children and young people's voice in the delivery of services around families
- Adult education settings and schools could make entering education a more attractive prospect for parents with better connections to things like family learning in schools