

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 14th December 2017



Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry- The Impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Summary of main issues

There are disparities in the measure, definition and effects of child poverty. It is not possible to claim that childhood poverty has a causal link with poorer outcomes. We do know, however, that poverty is a statistically significant factor when analysing gaps in educational attainment, physical and mental health, longevity, wellbeing, economic and employment outcomes. Poorer outcomes and experiences are not guaranteed, and a child who could be defined as experiencing poverty could have a happy and supported childhood, with good educational attainment and progress and a bright future. Equally, a child who does not fall into one of the definitions of poverty could experience a difficult home life, inadequate housing and personal space, poor educational outcomes and health problems.

It is, therefore, fundamentally important that the focus of Leeds is on supporting all children and young people, but especially those who are vulnerable. Children and Families has established a holistic, whole directorate, approach; working in partnership with a wide variety of educational settings and partners to develop expertise and share knowledge and best practice. This joint approach is crucial in advantaging the disadvantaged. Supporting vulnerable and less advantaged learners is something that is held closely at the core of all the work of Children and Families directorate, but there is always more that can be done.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Members are recommended to:

- Consider and comment on the information provided.
- Identify the information they may require at future meetings.

3. Purpose of this report

- 3.1. This report supports Children's and Families scrutiny inquiry into the impact of poverty on children's learning, with a focus on the national and local context, and the approaches taken by admissions, cluster and commissioning services.

4. Background information

4.1. This report:

- Examines the strategic approach to reducing the effects of child poverty, with reference to the statutory requirements of local authorities
- Provides an overview of the approaches taken by admissions, cluster and commissioning services with reference to childhood poverty

5. Main issues

5.1. National and local context approach to child poverty

5.2. The Child Poverty Act 2010 introduced a requirement for government and every local authority to produce a child poverty strategy. Eradicating child poverty by 2020 was the original aim. The percentage of children in families earning below 60% of median income was the most commonly used measure arising from the 2010 act.

5.3. The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 passed into law on 16th March 2016. An earlier version of the Bill proposed to remove the requirement to publish four income-based measures of child poverty (relative poverty, material deprivation, absolute poverty and persistent poverty). However this was overturned following strong opposition from organisations including campaign groups, charities and academics. The Government will now continue to publish data on children living in low-income households, but these figures will not be presented to Parliament and no longer form part of any statutory targets to reduce child poverty.

5.4. The Act repealed key sections of the Child Poverty Act, effectively abolishing all legal targets to reduce child poverty. The Act removes the requirement for the Government to produce a child poverty strategy. It also removes all Local Duties for local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and needs assessments.

5.5. The legislative changes to child poverty have removed the need for a child poverty strategy. That is not to say, however, that Leeds City Council do not focus on child poverty, in terms of its impact on health, housing, employment, education, fuel poverty, and wellbeing. Local and national initiatives, such as troubled families, pupil premium, Education Endowment Foundation research, learning alliances and seconded headteachers have shifted the focus so that the commitment to child poverty has been seen as implicit in all work.

5.6. Within Children & Families directorate, strategies and performance updates focus on improving the lives and outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including

children and young people who experience poverty. The Best City for Learning Strategy, 2016-2020, is a strategy to improve education across Leeds. It was developed with intelligence gathered from a series of debates, entitled Leeds: The Big Education Debate. These events were held in 2015, and attended by a wide variety of educationalists and professionals across Leeds. Within the debates a key area of focus was expressed as improving the experiences and outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners

- 5.7. Seven priorities, borne of the knowledge from the debates, were identified and together they create the Best City for Learning Strategy. One of these priorities is 'High expectations for all', in which the emphasis is placed on identifying 'Creative and innovative approaches needed to be used to address the gaps which prevent children from achieving their potential'. This priority addresses the gap between the less and more advantaged, and discusses the importance of providing equity of education.
- 5.8. The Annual Standards Report's, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 & 2015-2016 have all focussed on child poverty and its impact on educational attainment in terms of pupil premium and free school meal measures. The Annual Standards Report of 2015-2016 provides an update on the priorities highlighted in the Best City for Learning Strategy. Children and Families is also looking at creating partnerships across the city that will use impact boards to create interventions that aim to improve specific effects of child poverty, which are then researched to evaluate the impact of these interventions.
- 5.9. Childhood poverty is multi-faceted, and therefore cannot sit in isolation in any one area, but it needs to be embraced as a priority for all organisations and services that work with children and families in Leeds. A city region approach is being utilised to take forwards the complex task of improving the outcomes and experiences, and reducing the number, of children experiencing poverty in Leeds. To support this work, it could be advantageous to have an overview of all of the specific and general work that is conducted across the council and city. The most appropriate option for this work is for an overview to be provided by each individual directorate within the scope of a specific inquiry on mapping child poverty provision and strategies.

6. Clusters and child poverty

6.1. Families First

One of the key protective factors within the Families First programme is supporting families on the journey to work. For some families this can be a route out of poverty but equally as important is the impact on positive outcomes for children and communities. To progress this key outcome, Families First works closely with Department of Work and Pensions, having two Department of Work & Pensions co-ordinators on the team with several Community Work Coaches at their disposal. As well as delivering intensive and targeted support for Families First employment flagged individuals the Department of Work & Pensions team members:

- Build and maintain relationships with all relevant partners including Children's Centres
- Work with employers to identify suitable employment opportunities
- Improve employability and encourage steps towards employment, taking account of skills

- 6.2. On the expanded programme we have worked with a broad range of families who may be affected by poverty.

To date 3275 families have been attached to the programme with an identified employment issue and of those, 550 achieved employment outcomes (a relevant individual has achieved 6+ months employment for JSA or 3+ months for ESA/IS) and 850 achieved sustained outcomes (relevant individual's progress to work and other criteria have shown significant improvement)

6.3. Individual Clusters and schools

6.4. When the top slice arrangement was in place, schools forum agreed that money would be re-distributed to clusters through a needs based formula – thus helping to ensure that the cluster with the greatest need had the greatest level of resource. This was inherently anti-poverty. The end of the top slice arrangement means this is no longer the case, although it is worth noting that the cluster update report to October scrutiny identified that there was still at least £4.5m of the previous £5.2m being put aside by schools to support clusters undertaking targeted early intervention work with children and families.

6.5. Although each individual cluster and school have the autonomy to make individual provision based on the need within their locality, it is possible to identify many activities that do take place across the city. Some of the cluster activities which are aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty can be seen below.

Clusters support education and learning through working in partnership with schools:

- Promotion of Free School Meals
- Grants provided for a range of extra support, such as breakfast clubs in schools, uniform funds, equipment, attendance support and support for the most disadvantaged children
- Employing/ funding extra staff to improve the support for vulnerable children, including behaviour support workers and Educational Psychologists
- Access to specialist provisions/ support, such as Social, Emotional and Mental Health provision and free access to training and learning with crèche provision
- Travel fund for children to access alternative provisions where parents cannot afford to transport them
- A range of subsidised/ free out of school trips, outings, resources and activities, including subsidised access to swimming for 0-5 year olds, free access to holiday activities for families of 0-7 year olds, subsidised access to summer camps for 7-14 year olds, Positive Futures Fit and Fed school holiday camps with food from Fareshare & free access to out of school and school holiday activities

Clusters support families through:

- Christmas toy appeal Cash for Kids
- Funds to support and assist families, including for interpretation services, electricity/ gas, emergency funding and support with essential household items
- Family Support Workers and Parent Support Workers to help families around budget/ finance
- Family Fund for disabled children
- Clusters provide access to Leeds advice and guidance around debt/finance/benefits, including referrals to services to claiming benefits
- Cluster services work alongside Housing to provide support around rent arrears, and support to access appropriate housing based on needs of the family
- Referrals to services to support adult learning opportunities to support families back to work, including cluster community volunteering programme to support families back to work
- Enabling access for families to Legal Aid

Clusters also work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide food/ provisions, advice, support and assistance such as:

- St Vincents- specific debt advice
- Trussell Trust which provides vouchers for families
- One Stop Centre/ St Vincents/ St George's Crypt- Food parcels

- Haven – a church based charity
- Frank Buttle Trust
- CAP: Christians Against Poverty
- Moortown furniture store
- Sydney Bridge furniture
- Seagull paint
- Domestic Violence Charities- Furniture Stores and initiative
- Fairshare breakfast cereals and sanitary products for girls
- Access to charities for white goods/carpets and furnishings
- CAP - Citizens Against Poverty

7. Role of Commissioning in Addressing Child Poverty

- 7.1. Children and Families commission a broad range of services which focus on achieving the outcomes set out in the Leeds Children and Young People's plan and offer an important tool for the Council to address Child Poverty. Key to achieving these outcomes are the quality of providers in Leeds and the robust commissioning and contract management processes.
- 7.2. The Council holds a broad range of contracts with providers which make a contribution to reducing child poverty. These include services commissioned directly by Children and Families which aim to prevent family breakdown, improve learning outcomes, or access to education and employment. They also include contracts managed by Adults and Health which look to address issues like substance misuse, domestic violence, and housing support. Together these areas of commissioning form part of a wider programme of 'people's commissioning' activity overseen by the Corporate Strategic Commissioning Group. Opportunities exist to consider in more detail how these services can develop a greater focus on tackling child poverty.
- 7.3. When services are re-commissioned we undertake a service review which involves looking at data to help determine how best to target resources in the future. As part of this we consider the impact of neighbourhood deprivation on outcomes for children, young people and families. So our commissioned services are designed to take account of a range of needs and do consider poverty as part of a wider set of indices. The Voice and Influence Team support commissioning engagement activity which seeks the views of young people, carers and parents when we are designing new services and evaluating bids and tenders by providers. These processes enable us to be certain that we have the right contracts with the right providers and enable us to objectively verify the benefits of services are being achieved.
- 7.4. Going forward the Council could seek to identify child poverty as one of a small set of cross-cutting priorities that could be included in a wide range of service specifications as part of the Council's Social Value Framework. We could introduce a standard performance measure for relevant contracts and identify how they are collectively impacting on child poverty. This would help offer a clear view on how our commissioned services are contributing to this priority.
- 7.5. Leeds is very well served by a diverse range of very capable and innovative Third Sector organisations whose charitable objectives align well to improving child poverty outcomes. These organisations benefit from an organised approach to supporting third sector infrastructure in the city. The development of a Child Poverty Strategy in collaboration with our third sector partners would offer a framework which could support commissioning activity but it would also help to release the potential that these organisations have to use their own initiative to access resources unavailable to the Council

8. Admissions and child poverty

- 8.1. The Leeds City Council admission policy offers the highest possibly priority to children with a sibling already in the school, after priority has been given to those who have the school named in an education health and care plan, those who are looked after, and those who have a particular medical need which can only be met at the school, as outlined in the statutory School Admissions Code (2014). This has a significant positive impact on ensuring that children are offered a school place in the same school as their siblings in the normal admissions rounds.
- 8.2. This policy applies to all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in the city, which includes 6 Secondary schools and 125 Primary schools. Almost all of the 135 own admitting authority schools who are responsible for determining their own admission arrangements also offer the highest possible priority for children with siblings already in the school.
- 8.3. As such, for admissions in the normal round (those children admitted to Reception and Year 7 in September) where a parent follows the process to request a place within the specified timeframe, all siblings are prioritised for a place at the school where their sibling attends. We are not aware of any schools who have been unable to offer a place to a sibling of a child already attending the school where the family have completed the application correctly.
- 8.4. Where parents do not request a place on time or do not highlight that their application should receive sibling priority, and places have all been allocated to those who did apply on time, there are occasions when we are required to make an offer of a school place which is not where the child's siblings attend. These children are added to the waiting lists at their preferred schools, and the admissions policy continues to prioritise their admission for whenever a place becomes available, as these waiting lists are held in order of the published admissions priorities meaning that siblings are mostly the highest applicants on waiting lists.
- 8.5. Parents also have the right to appeal against the refusal to offer a place at any school, and the independent appeal panel takes into account the parent's reasons for needing a place at the school (such as having siblings there). The admissions policy therefore supports the admission of sibling groups to schools as far as it possibly can.
- 8.6. In order to support families and reduce the chances of siblings being offered a place at a difference school, each year following the deadline for application submission, the Admissions Service proactively contacts families, nurseries, childcare settings and schools to chase up missing applications. As a result approximately 700 missing secondary and 900 missing primary applications are received in time to be considered in the first allocation round, reducing the risk of families being unable to secure a place at the same school for their children.
- 8.7. Any family who moves into the city during the school year and requests a school place is considered as an 'In-year' application. These applications are considered under the same priorities published in the admissions policy, with applications for siblings prioritised above those with no sibling. Academies, Free Schools, Foundation Schools and Voluntary Aided schools are all responsible for allocating places in-year. The Local Authority also delegated responsibility for in-year allocations to Community and Voluntary Aided schools in 2013. The guidance given to all schools by the Admissions Service is that wherever possible, sibling groups should be admitted together, with the expectation that schools will consider admitting over their published admission number in order to do this. This is in line with our

Child Friendly approach and to support families to not have to travel with children to more than one school.

- 8.8. The Admissions Service works with schools to ensure that this approach is followed wherever possible. Class size legislation applies to those classes in foundation and key stage one (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) where class size is limited to 30 children per qualified teacher. There are only limited exceptions to this class size legislation, and admitting a sibling does not qualify as a legal exemption. Therefore, where families have a sibling group which includes a child(ren) in key stage one, we advise them to apply to a school which has vacancies in the relevant KS1 class, as schools are more able to admit over their published admission number in higher year groups to accommodate older siblings.
- 8.9. Admitting Authorities are required by law to offer any available places to any applicant who requests one, therefore it is not possible to 'hold' vacancies to meet the needs of children who may move into an area during the academic year. Due to the pressure on school places, particularly in primary schools, it is often a challenge to secure offers of places in all the year groups a family requires. In these cases, the admissions service works with the families and schools, to secure the best possible offer – either a school further away where the siblings can all be accommodated together, or schools closer to the home address where the children would need to attend different schools. This is seen as a short term option with the admissions policy supporting the future admission of siblings as where a place becomes available, the child is prioritised on the waiting list as a sibling and would be most likely to be offered a place.
- 8.10. Secondary schools are generally more able to admit above their published admission number to accommodate siblings than primary schools, due to class and curriculum arrangements meaning that the impact on the teaching and other students is less in Secondary schools than primaries.
- 8.11. In Primary schools, there are currently 199 pupils on waiting lists for a school place with sibling priority, where they are currently attending another school.
- 8.12. This is most concentrated in areas of high population, high mobility and as a result, schools are all full and in many cases, already over their published admission number in many year groups, meaning that accommodating sibling groups who move into the area is a challenge (such as Burmantofts, Holbeck and Harehills) The admissions arrangements and published policy do all they possibly can to prioritise siblings, however where schools are full, there is often no alternative to different schools being offered, as it is rare to have places available in multiple year groups to meet family's needs. We are acutely aware of the impact that this has on families and their arrangements for ensuring attendance at school, and wherever possible we advise parents of support available through before and after school clubs, which in some areas are available free of charge, to support families with their multiple drop offs.

9. Corporate considerations

9.1. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1.□1. This is an information report, which mitigates the requirement of public consultation. The information in this report is available to the public through the Leeds Data Observatory, LCC report, DFE performance tables and DFE statistical releases. Some content FFT may not be directly available but equivalent information is.

9.2. Equality and diversity/cohesion and integration

- 9.2.□1. This report is focused on childhood poverty and internal and external services that work to reduce child poverty. Some young people are statistically more likely to have relatively poor outcomes, for example those with learning difficulties and disabilities; those from some ethnic minority backgrounds; those with English as an additional language (EAL); those living in deprived areas; poor school attenders; and those involved in the social care system.

9.3. Council policies and city priorities

- 9.3.□1. This report provides context on a key city regional and national challenge. Improving learning outcomes is a priority in the Children and Young People's plan, raising attainment for all while closing the gaps that exist. This priority is reflected in all city strategies contributing to the strong economy compassionate city including the Best Council Plan 2015-20, the Best City for Learning Strategy and the Joint Health and Well Being Plan. Learning is central to improving future outcome for citizens and the city.

9.4. Resources and value for money

- 9.4.□1. There are no specific resource implications from this report.

9.5. Legal implications, access to information and call in

- 9.5.□1. All performance and school population information is publicly available. This report is an information update providing Scrutiny with a summary of performance for the strategic priorities within its remit and as such is not subject to call in.

9.6. Risk management

- 9.6.□1. The report is an information report to support a scrutiny inquiry into the impact of poverty on learning outcomes. It is aimed at helping the city manage this risk.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1. This report provides a summary of the national and local context to childhood poverty, and discusses childhood poverty in relation to the admissions process, clusters and commissioning processes.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1. Members are recommended to:
- Consider and comment on the information provided.
 - Using the recommendations provided to agree school visits.
 - Identifying the information they require at future meetings.

12. Background documents

None