

Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

Date: 22nd February 2024

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

We know that the feeling of being in poverty, the feeling of being excluded and the feeling of being ashamed can impact a child for the rest of their life. We know of the associated stigma and feeling of shame for children and young people who live in poverty. Children who experience poverty are more likely to face a wide range of difficulties, both now and in the future. There are strong links between experiencing poverty as a child and having worse mental and physical health, a shorter life, lower grades in education, poor financial health and lower paid, insecure work.

Poverty is most often defined by income. But for most children, poverty is about more than just money. It is about growing up in a home without enough heat or nutritious food. Poverty means no new clothes, no telephone and no money for a birthday celebration. These deprivations have consequences that can last a lifetime. We don't want this in Leeds. So, we are working together, as a city, to reduce the impact of poverty on young people. This is our moral imperative.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of Leeds' Child Poverty Strategy and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has been done to address post pandemic and cost of living priorities. This report gives an update on each of these workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps. It also considers the impact that the national cost of living crisis is having on local levels of poverty and the impact this is having on children and families. Additionally, it contains the new national and local statistics on child poverty with a full analysis detailed on Appendix 2.

This report is an updated progress report that was presented to Scrutiny in April 2023 and Executive Board in June 2023.

The Child Poverty Strategy has been reviewed and updated post consultation with 20 groups of young people with a planned launch date of early 2024.

A full and comprehensive cost of living report¹ on the cost-of-living crisis and actions being undertaken by the Council and partners from a welfare and financial inclusion perspective was presented by the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment to Executive Board in November 2023 as well as a report entitled Reducing Poverty Improving Financial Inclusion presented to Scrutiny board in December 2023²

¹ [Cost of Living Update Cover Report 101123.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Reducing Poverty Improving Financial Inclusion DEC 2023 FINAL.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

This report provides information on poverty, which is a key city, regional and national challenge. This priority is reflected in all city strategies contributing the Best City Ambition, including the three pillars of:

- Health and wellbeing
- Inclusive growth
- Zero carbon

Background information

The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds has been in place since 2019. In 2016, Children & Families started to develop a plan around mitigating the impact of child poverty across Leeds. In 2017/2018, a scrutiny enquiry on child poverty recommended that Children & Families integrated more of a central focus on child poverty. The first Child Poverty Impact Board met in 2018, and 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds' was launched in 2019.

The child poverty strategy has been co-created with children, young people, families with direct experience of poverty, third, private and public sector, schools, academics and other organisations. Recent consultation with young people and colleagues has led to an updated strategy being launched in early 2024.

Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this work. Disadvantaged pupils are not a single group; characteristics such as Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), ethnicity, and English as an Additional Language (EAL) interact with disadvantage with varying impacts on progress rates, gaps with non-disadvantaged pupils and the long-term impact of disadvantage.

Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 - 2025 have been developed to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 by helping the council to identify work and activities that reduce disadvantage, discrimination, and inequalities of opportunity.

Recommendations

- a) That Scrutiny Board acknowledges the ongoing strategic framework in place to mitigate the impact of child poverty, and the work being undertaken by the council and other partners in the key areas of activity.
- b) The Scrutiny Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Child Poverty strategy across the city and across council directorates and through our wider city partnerships in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.
- c) Note the responsible officer is the Deputy Director, Social Care, Children and Families.

What is this report about?

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds, and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has occurred post pandemic. This report gives an update on each of these workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 2 This is an ongoing strategy about mitigating the impact of child poverty for children and families in Leeds. Further detail is set out in Appendix 1 of this report in terms of the outcomes and outputs of each project linked to the Strategy for the Scrutiny Board's information.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

This strategy directly relates to the Best City Ambition³ specifically:

Our mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.

Health and wellbeing -In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.

Inclusive growth -In 2030 Leeds will have an economy that works for everyone, where we work to tackle poverty and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed fairly across the city, creating opportunities for all.

Zero carbon -In 2030 Leeds will have made rapid progress towards carbon neutrality, reducing our impact on the planet and doing so in a fair way which improves standards of living in all the city's communities.

- The work supports some of the best council objectives and priorities as defined in the Best City Plan 2020 and 2025. These include: - improving educational achievement gaps; providing skills programmes and employment support; improving school attendance and reducing the percentage of young people who are not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).
- The strategy aligns with local and city-wide strategies such as the Priority Neighbourhoods work, the Children and Young People's Plan, Child Friendly Leeds, Future in Mind Strategy, and the Best City for Learning.
- This strategy relates to the council priority around the climate emergency. As the climate continues to change, extreme weather patterns across the globe will become increasingly common. The knock-on effects of these changes will be profound; however, it is hard to determine what specifically they will look like. What is certain is that there will be scarcity of various resources, such as food and energy, which could lead to price increases, which will have a disproportionate impact on people who live in poverty. We should seek to mitigate the impact of poverty and reduce insecurity and inequality around these basic needs to build strengthened communities for the future.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 3 Extensive consultation has been carried out with regards to this strategy, with private, public, third and education sectors, children, young people and parents, universities and community groups.

What are the resource implications?

- 4 There are no new proposals with resource implications presented in this paper.

³ [Best City Ambition \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk)

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

5 None

What are the legal implications?

6 There are no legal implications.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

7 This is an agreed corporate wide strategy which is ongoing.

How will success be measured?

8 This is an agreed corporate wide strategy which is ongoing.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

9 This is an ongoing strategy.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Update on The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds
- Appendix 2 – Child Poverty statistics

Background papers

- None