

Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

Date: 19th October 2022

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive 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 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 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.

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

This report is an updated report that was presented to Executive Board in April 2022.

A full and comprehensive [report](#) on the cost-of-living crisis was presented by the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment to Executive Board in July 2022 and an update paper is being presented to Executive Board in October 2022.

In Leeds it is estimated that 24% (36, 496) of children are currently living in poverty.

The impact of poverty on children and families is reflected in more children and families needing services. Consequently, Childrens Services have seen a stark increase in contacts to the Front Door for Social Work and Early Help services. There is a clear increase in complexities of need with poverty impacting on adult and child mental health, substance misuse and increase in domestic violence and abuse.

In August 2019 pre pandemic the Front Door for Childrens Services received 1234 contacts for children. However, in Aug 2022, 1432 contacts for children were received. The level of need impacted by poverty means that more children are needing statutory social work involvement as families struggle to cope and the stresses in families can impact on children's care.

In August 2019 there were 545 children who were at risk of harm and made subject to child protection plans. However, in August 2022 this was increased to 669 children made subject to child protection plans. There is also an increase in children for whom it is not safe to remain in the care of their families, in August 2019 we had 1306 children Looked After however this has increased in August 2022 to 1435 children.

The increase in demand means pressure on services and concerns over long term outcomes for children linked to the effects of poverty in childhood.

This report provides information on poverty, which is a key city, regional and national challenge. This priority is reflected in all city strategies contributing to the *strong economy, compassionate city* including the Best City Ambition, the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Joint Health and Well Being Plan

Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this work. Disadvantaged pupils are not a single group; characteristics such as Special Education Need 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 Executive Board endorses the 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 Executive Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Thriving strategy across the city and in particular in each respective Member's portfolio in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.
- c) Note the responsible officer is the Deputy Director Children and Families.

What is this report about?

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds', and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has occurred during the 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 Executive 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 Ambition](#); specifically:

Our mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home. We will achieve our mission by focusing on improving outcomes across the 3 Pillars of the Best City Ambition

- **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. Specifically, the focus on
 - investing to ensure better and more equal access to essential services in health and learning, developed with and accessible for every community across Leeds

- ensuring children in all areas of the city have the best start in life and enjoy a healthy, happy and friendly childhood
- delivering a safe and welcoming city for people of all ages and from all communities in which residents feel more secure and have good friends
- enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages
- working with housing providers, landlords, tenants and communities to improve poor quality housing, so everyone can have a home which supports good health, wellbeing and educational outcome

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. Specifically, the focus on

- ensuring young people and those changing career in later life have the skills and job opportunities which enable them to realise their potential and thrive

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. Specifically, the focus on

- promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- addressing the challenges of housing quality and affordability, tackling fuel poverty and creating vibrant places where residents have close access to services and amenities

This strategy also directly supports / relates to the [Children and Young People plan](#) which has **challenging child poverty** at its heart “we will work with communities and families to mitigate the impact of poverty on children’s outcomes and support children’s journeys into secure adulthood in a prosperous city”

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.

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

5 None

What are the legal implications?

6 There are no legal implications; however, this report is subject to call in.

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 Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds
- Appendix 2 – EDCI Thriving Equalities Screening

Background papers

- None