

Leeds Children's Trust Board

Date of meeting:	February 1 st 2013
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Report title:	Child poverty- update on progress and national consultation

Summary:

The report updates CTB on progress against the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy, and considers the issues raised in the national consultation.

Recommendations:

1. CTB to agree a response to the national consultation as follows:

1.1 Income is a root cause of many kinds of child poverty and a factor in all child poverty. It should be the main element of the definition and measurement of child poverty.

1.2 The current income measures, particularly below 60% of median income provide a clear and easily understood objective measure of local and national progress.

1.3 Worklessness is a key issue but many children and families affected by child poverty are in work or working households. Access to stable and adequately paid job opportunities is therefore central to any anti poverty strategy.

1.4 Poverty is multi-dimensional. There are issues other than income. National and local action planning should recognise different kinds of child poverty, experienced, lived and tackled in different ways, but income and sustainable employment are key factors.

1.5 It is important for national policy to recognise the significant impact on levels of child poverty of current policy changes in respect of welfare reforms and local government spending. Mitigating policy initiatives are an urgent priority.

1.6 Parental capacity as well as parental health and skill is an important dimension. Children's services partners in Leeds and nationally have considerable experience of delivering and monitoring parenting programmes.

2. CTB to note progress against the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy and to identify any activity that would help further progress.

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The report updates CTB on progress against the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy, and considers the issues raised in the national consultation.

2. Background information

National consultation

2.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 became law in March 2010 and enshrines in law the previous Government's 2008 commitment to eradicate child poverty in the UK by the year 2020

2.2 In June 2012 the Government reported that the 2010 target to halve child poverty was missed. The report reiterates the Government's commitment to ending child poverty. The report highlights the perceived weakness of using the relative income poverty measure in isolation and announced a consultation on how child poverty is measured. Household income less than 60% of current median is the main relative income measure

2.3 The consultation explains that recently released statistics regarding the levels of relative child poverty in the UK show that last year 300,000 fewer children were 'living below the relative poverty threshold' than the year before. However this fall in poverty is 'due to a fall in the median income nationally which pushed the poverty line down'. Absolute poverty remained unchanged. The children who were effectively moved out of poverty were in fact no better off than before. In Leeds the rate has remained relatively stable at just over 35,000 children or 22-23%.

2.4 The closing date for responses to the consultation is February 15. The consultation reasserts the Coalition Government's commitment to ending child poverty, making a clear argument for doing so. It cites the cost of child poverty to society, its financial cost to the tax payer through the welfare bill, and the importance of ensuring that all children can achieve their potential so that the UK has a skilled workforce that can compete in a global market.

2.5 The Government argues that a new multi-dimensional measure will take account of the different drivers that cause a child to live in poverty. This is seen as crucial in developing a strong understanding of the reality of a life in poverty and how it can be tackled. Eight dimensions are identified:

- Income and material deprivation
- Worklessness
- Unmanageable debt
- Poor Housing
- Parental skill level

- Access to quality education
- Family stability
- Parental Health

2.6 The consultation poses specific questions about possible dimensions, the possible relationships between dimensions, and the details of the usefulness and measurement of particular dimensions, but also invites general comments on the proposals. (See [consultation documents.](#))

Leeds child poverty strategy

2.7 There are four blocks in the current Leeds child poverty strategy.

- Financial support
- Best start in life
- Employment & Adult Skills
- Housing & Neighbourhoods

2.8 The strategy is managed by the Child Poverty Outcomes Group chaired by Councillor Blake. Work is underway to review the current strategy based on an analysis of the strengths of the current approach and the opportunities for building on these strengths.

3. Main issues

Response to National consultation

3.1 The central importance of income is emerging as a key element of commentary on the consultation both nationally and at the Leeds Child Poverty Outcomes Group in Leeds. Income is seen as a root cause of many kinds of child poverty and a factor in all child poverty. It should therefore be the main element of the definition and measurement of child poverty.

3.2 The use of below 60% of median household as a measure of relative poverty provides a clear, widely recognised measure of well being and progress towards child poverty targets

3.3 The importance of in work poverty is also central to national and local comment on the consultation. Worklessness is undeniably an important dimension of poverty. However, recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found that 6.1 million people in poverty are ***in working households***; excluding pensioners, in-work poverty now outstrips workless poverty at 5.1 million households; 6.4 million people now lack the paid work they want; with 1.4 million part-time workers wanting full-time work – the highest figure in 20 years. JRF also found that the churn of people in poverty

or out of work is substantial, 33% experience at least one period of low income in a four-year period.

3.4 The consultation rightly draws attention to a range of factors which impact on poverty. Poverty is multi-dimensional. There are issues other than income, and there are different types of poverty requiring different strategies. National and local action planning should recognise different kinds of child poverty, experienced, lived and tackled in different ways. Having said that there needs to be a clear recognition that income will usually be a defining characteristic and nearly always a dominant and causal characteristic, and a key to effective strategy.

3.5 In the light of this it is useful to have a checklist of factors and a basket of indicators, and the consultation makes a convincing case for income and material deprivation, worklessness, unmanageable debt, poor housing, parental skill level, access to quality education, family stability, parental health. Parental capacity is equally important. Health and skill level are part of a wider set of issues around the development of effective parenting. Children's services partners in Leeds and nationally have considerable experience of delivering and monitoring the effectiveness of parenting programmes.

Progress in Leeds

Welfare reform

3.6 In Leeds 14,200 households with children will lose an average of £2.61 per week as a result of the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with localised Council Tax support schemes. (Overall a total of 27,000 people will pay more and an additional 7,000 will have to pay for the first time as the result of the changes). Reductions in housing benefit for ALMO and Housing Association tenants assessed as having too many bedrooms affect just over 6,700 and 1,500 people respectively. Of these 1,633 and 552 respectively are households with children.

3.7 This without any consideration of the introduction of Universal Credit which may not now start in Leeds until early 2014, or the impact of the capping of benefit increases over the next 3 years. (Nationally it is estimated that the decision to cap benefits will draw an additional 200,000 children into poverty (source: parliamentary answer); and that overall relative child poverty will increase between 2010–11 and 2015–16 by around 400,000, (source: Institute of Fiscal Studies)

Progress against the four blocks

3.8 Financial support

What we have done

- Established a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) in Leeds, in order to expand the availability of affordable financial services to low income households.
- Credit union increased membership for quarter ended September 2012 and total number of members was 25,708 (of which 177 are new and 4,306 are junior). 1,294 loans were granted to financially excluded groups in this quarter valued at £522,483. *(Latest update- Credit union increased membership for quarter ended December 2012 and total number of members was 25,826 (of which 118 are new and 4,295 are junior). 2,359 loans were granted to financially excluded groups in this quarter valued at £946,179)*
- Funded the setup costs for a telephone advice gateway with one common phone number for use across all advice agencies. Volunteers now operating three days a week (Mon, Tue, Fri) for 6 hours each day.
- Proposals have been developed for a co-ordinated campaign to help increase the take-up of Free school meals. The plan was launched at an event at Harehills Primary School on Friday 16 November. This was to celebrate that a Harehills pupil designed a logo to be used by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on School Food.

New actions

- The CDFI have now secured funding - Key Fund (£150,000 loan) and an RBS charitable foundation (£100,000 loan). The CDFI are now lending.
- Yorkshire Bank have agreed to give their declined loan applicants an application form for a CU loan.
- Contributed to the Welfare Reform Strategy Group to ensure that factors affecting child poverty are taken account of in the Council's preparations for Universal Credit. Participating on DWP working Group looking at aspects of implementation of UC. Currently working on a local Social Fund scheme to replace the one previously run by DWP.
- Review of Advice Provision across the city - The commissioning scope of the new model is still being finalised, but will definitely include the current Environment and Neighbourhoods grant and advice via Children's Centres. Likely to also include outreach support via GP surgeries and for clients with mental health problems but this will not be included until April 2014. Progressing with market sounding

exercise which will stay on the Council's tendering system until late January 2013.

- Further 'Hotspots' training sessions to be delivered to front line staff.
- Working with the city region to develop a Green Deal/ECO framework which will assist vulnerable people across the city, particularly those in older hard to treat properties as well as involving local community groups and employers.
- Currently running a small scale project to install polybead wall insulation in properties with non standard cavity walls. Around 2,000 potential householders contacted so far for this scheme.
- FSM action plan now fully populated and the Implementation sub group will next meet in January to take forward.

3.9 Best start in life

What we have done

- **Early Start Service:** The expansion of the HV workforce continues in line with the trajectory. Early Start pathways detailing the service offer to Looked After Children and describing Pre birth assessment support, have been completed. A comprehensive Early Start workforce development plan has been written. The roll out of Preparation for Birth and Beyond community based antenatal programme on track.
- **Family Nurse Partnership:** NHS commitment to sustain and expand FNP confirmed and the programme continues to successfully recruit and work with eligible teen parents. Group FNP continues to be a success in terms of numbers attending. Leeds has not taken up an opportunity to be part of a national project to evaluate performance, partly because of local capacity and also because the local model differs slightly to the national research model.
- **Infant Mortality:** 5 year data on the IM rate in deprived Leeds continues to show a decline, and is now at 5.5 deaths per 1000 live births. Pathways detailing the targeted support available to Gypsy, Roma and Travellers new parents have been completed and are being implemented. Materials to promote the importance of not co sleeping when under the influence of alcohol and drugs have been developed and are being distributed, including beer mats for use in pubs over the festive period. The Breastfeeding peer support project expansion is progressing well.
- In Leeds in 2012 around 5560 (63%) children reached a good level of development in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. The percentage of children reaching this threshold increased steadily between 2008 and 2010. In 2011, the improvement accelerated to five percentage points, and in 2012 this annual improvement has been maintained. The Leeds rate of improvement was the same as the

national rate, but above the statistical neighbour improvement, so performance in Leeds is now in line with these authorities. Leeds is also now in the second quartile of local authorities nationally for this indicator.

- The 'low achievers gap' indicator has narrowed slightly in 2012 from 35.0% to 33.6% but is still wider than the national gap of 30.1%. In 2012 as in 2011, there are only 10 local authorities with a larger gap indicator than Leeds. A keen focus around narrowing the attainment gap is required over the next few years.

New Actions

- **Early Start Service:** Quality assurance visits will take place with Early Start Teams in January. The Infant Mental Health Service will deliver Babies, Brains and Bonding training city wide, to support all ESTs in their work with parents to ensure good parent child attachment. 3 further teams will be engaged to rollout Preparation for Birth and Beyond, which will result in the programme being available from 9 community bases across the city by March 31st 2013.
- **Family Nurse Partnership:** From April 2013, the commissioning of FNP will move to the NHS Commissioning Board, with the intention that it will transfer to Public Health within the Local Authority from April 2015. However, there is currently no clarity about how the NHSCB will undertake this role in April.
- **Infant Mortality:** Leeds will be assessed for Baby friendly Initiative level 3 accreditation in the first quarter of 2013. A breast feeding peer coordinator role will be recruited. Brief intervention training with Children Centre staff, new teen friendly materials and the expansion of Leeds smoke free homes programme will contribute to reducing smoking prevalence in pregnancy. Insight work will be completed and material produced including leaflet, web pages and audio resource to increase understanding of the risks associated with consanguinity.
- **Breaking cycles of low aspiration and disenfranchisement with education** is an important step for narrowing the attainment gap that can begin at the EYFS and continue beyond it. This works best when parents and carers are actively engaged to support their child's learning. Training is being commissioned to deliver the Level 3 Award in Work with Parents to relevant parts of the children's workforce (including cluster-based and third sector staff). This will enable staff to be confident and skilled in working with parents to meet their child's needs and this will impact on their children's behaviour, learning and development.
- **Finalise Early Years Improvement Strategy** that sets out how settings and schools will be supported to implement the revised EYFS

framework, including supporting them with the requirements of the progress check at age 2.

3.10 Employment and Adult Skills

What have we done

- Launched the Apprenticeship Training Agency which will improve the availability and accessibility of Apprenticeships. Fully operational from end January 2013.
- Worked with Jobcentre Plus to establish Workclubs in areas of the city where other jobsearch support is minimal/unavailable.
- Established The Point as a learning facility for young people and adults, complemented by 1:1 guidance and jobsearch support facilities.
- Developed a programme of engagement activities for young people at The Hub.
- Established the Community Learning Trust Board to increase the range of stakeholders influencing provision in localities.
- Linked in with the roll out of welfare reform awareness activities to promote jobsearch support services.
- Developing local 'recruitment hub and satellite' model in support of projected growth in retail sector.

New actions

- Progress new projects identified by the new Community Learning Trust Board, some of which include targeted work within Children's Centres
- Review the Wider Family Learning provision currently commissioned within Children's Centres.
- Work with Children's Services to increase the range of activities available within the devolved Youth Contract to support 16/17 year olds.
- Work more closely with area management teams to identify means of improving communities' readiness to access local employment opportunities.
- Exploring potential future models for additional sector delivery to widen participation for key growth areas in the city.
- Developing access routes for opportunities within the ALMO's through apprenticeships and sector based delivery with Job Centre Plus.
- Establishing the framework timeline of the PFI Apprenticeship programme proposed first cohort starts planned for Summer 2013, over first 2 year period 51 starts are forecast.
- Launch the city's second recognition of apprentice success at the apprenticeship awards for March 2013.

- Planned establishment of the external company and launch of the Leeds Accredited Training Agency (LATA) in November which aims to create an additional 600 apprentice starts targeted primarily at 16-17 year olds over the next 3 years.
- Secured funding to deliver LCC Youth Inspire programme across the Council, proposed start early 2013.

3.11 Housing & Neighbourhoods

What we have done

- Implemented agreement between Housing services and Children's services to prevent evictions and subsequent entries to the social care system.
- Staff development programme for those working on domestic violence.
- Project to support families affected by domestic violence operational in 2 clusters
- Work with high impact alcohol users is progressing across the city.
- Assessed current system for identifying pregnant women and problem families when engaging with community based drug and alcohol services (ADS). Process is in place to enable women to access specialist support.
- Case conferences convened for disabled children whose families require housing options.
- Youth Offending Housing Forum established to discuss housing options for young people due to be released from custody.
- Decision made that a timely case conference should be mandatory for all ALMO possession cases involving tenants with children.
- Housing Services and Pathway Planning service working in partnership to discuss housing options for 'out of area' placements looking to be re-settled in Leeds.
- Clarification sent to all ALMOs that unborn child has a council housing bedroom requirement at the point when proof of pregnancy is given.
- Band A and Band A Plus housing awards made to prevent care placements and facilitate children being returned to live with parents.

New actions

- There are some good examples of Housing Services, Leeds ALMO and Children's Services working imaginatively to put in place housing options that keep families together and help children to thrive. However, such action is not universally embedded and the Children and Young People Housing Plan will try to roll out such good practice.

- Work beginning in Seacroft to develop services, including for drug and alcohol users based on good practice Bromley by Bow Healthy Living Centre. Holistic support for vulnerable individuals/families.
- Across Leeds 195 repeat alcohol specific hospital admissions have been recorded and targeted work to reduce the likelihood of further admissions in these individuals is progressing.
- Continuing work to develop application of a phone based project, trialled in Bolton NHS which has substantially reduced drop out from alcohol treatment programmes and could support other users e.g. those subjected to domestic violence.
- Working with NHS Leeds and West Yorkshire Police to develop joint action around alcohol awareness in Harehills, linking alcohol abuse and domestic violence work
- Project to identify and support young carers in schools, including checking Free school meal eligibility.
- Checking Family Intervention Service assessment for mechanism to identify families and help them to claim FSMs entitlement.
- Inner N East Area Committee now supporting work to support food based work in East North East locality. Around food in school holidays, food growing and potential food bank development.
- Leeds West Foodbank developing- located in Armley.
- Establish foodbank in South Leeds.
- Establish foodbank in Inner North East.

4 Implications for governance, policy, resources, CYPP outcomes

- 4.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 placed a statutory responsibility on the local authority to have a partnership group responsible for agreeing and signing off a child poverty strategy. Minimising the affects of Child poverty is a cross cutting theme in the CYPP, and poverty and inequality is a cross cutting theme in all the city priority plans.
- 4.2 Many priorities in the strategy are delivered as commissioned services. In future a number may be traded services to GPs, clusters of schools and children's centres.

5 Relationship to other partnership activity

- 5.1 There are clear overlaps between the work of the child poverty group and other partnership activity which is reflected in strong partnership representation on the group. Much of the work is shared across the health inequalities agenda and work is currently being done to explore how these links can be strengthened through the agenda for change in the health services.