

15 October 2015		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Child Poverty – Opportunity for Every Child		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Michele Lucas: Interim Strategic Lead Learning & Skills		
Accountable Manager: Michele Lucas, Interim Strategic Lead Learning & Skills		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Child Poverty Strategy builds upon the work of our previous strategy developed in 2011 (see Child Poverty Strategy 2014-20 see Appendix One). The strategy and action plan we are presenting builds on the work undertaken and looks to provide opportunities for all children recognising and looking to embed the concept of 'Child Poverty Every Body's responsibility'

We are working towards a place where every child has the same chance to achieve his or her potential; where no child lacks food or the basic necessities of family life, or lives in poor housing, or in families where parents are unable to work; where every child attends a good school; and where every child has ready access to a range of leisure, cultural and sporting opportunities.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Child Poverty Strategy 2015-2020 and endorses the strategy and action plan**
- 1.2 That the progress made since the 2011-2014 strategy is recommended**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This strategy and action plan updates and builds upon the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2014, which set the following strategic priorities:
 - To increase parental employment and skills by providing access to adult training and skills development through the Wishes adult skills Programme and progression to adult learning opportunities.

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- To increase benefit take-up by improving high quality advice and guidance targeted to areas where there is a high prevalence of poverty and workless households.
- To reduce attainment gaps between children living in poverty and those who don't by targeting school improvement to those areas and supporting parents to be able to support their children through, for example, adult learning opportunities.
- To reduce the health inequalities faced by some families by developing a targeted, integrated approach to local delivery of services.
- To support the need to prevent homelessness from occurring by addressing the underlying causes of homelessness through effective partnerships, collaboration and the coordination of services.

2.2 Since 2011, real progress has been achieved through partnership between professionals working with the whole community; however we recognise the importance of continuing with this work and building on our community approach in tackling child poverty.

2.3 Outlined below is an example of how we have been working to address Child Poverty across the Local Authority:

Wishes an adult learning approach to reducing Child Poverty

Wishes is an innovative project aimed at Parents and Carers in Thurrock who have a lack of qualifications, it is specifically aimed at Parents and Carers who have Level 1 or below qualifications. The Wishes Project works with Parents and Carers to remove barriers to learning and can provide support with things such as childcare and transport costs in order for them to take those daunting first steps back into a learning environment.

The Project provides an opportunity for its learners to increase their confidence, recognise the skills that they have, enhance their soft skills and be supported to gain both accredited and non-accredited qualifications. Learners are also supported and encouraged to actively participate in voluntary opportunities to put their learning into practice and gain valuable experience in order to become job ready.

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Courses completed by Wishes learners 2014/15

Course Title	Participant numbers
ESOL(English for Speakers of Other languages)	2
Entry Level 2/3 Numeracy	3
Level 1 Numeracy	9
Level 2 Numeracy	2
Entry Level 2 / 3 Literacy	2
Level 1 Literacy	2
Level 1 Childcare	1
Level 2	
Counselling	1
Childcare	1
Health & Social Care	3
Introduction to Learning Support Assistant	2
Keeping up with Children's Literacy & Numeracy L1	2
Supporting Courses	
Business Admin	1
Drug / Alcohol & Mental Illness	1
Soft Outcomes – Cookery	1
Cutting for Beginners	1
Cutting for Improvers	1
Volunteering	3

2.4 Our Strategic principles within the current plan are outlined below:-

- Child poverty is the responsibility of the whole community and we invite employers, faith groups, community and voluntary organisations and local residents to work with us to achieve our vision.
- Deeply embedded inequalities exist in our communities and this plan complements and builds on the work of Thurrock Fairness Review, aiming to reduce inequality and create social mobility.
- Children live in families and we will listen to families about what they need.
- Employment is a main route out of poverty but in order to address the growing issue of in-work poverty we need to ensure that parents receive at least a living wage and have the support to increase their skills.
- Every Council service should have ending child poverty as a key priority and all services should understand their role and contribution to the aims of the plan. Excellence in delivery will be achieved and maintained.

2.5 National Context

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The government's approach is set out in the Child Poverty 2014-2017 strategy. It seeks to reduce and end child poverty by:

- supporting families into work and increasing their earnings;
- improving living standards; and
- preventing poor children becoming poor adults through raising their educational attainment.

2.6 Child Poverty Targets

The Child Poverty Act 2010 sets three income-related targets to be met by 2020. These are:

1. Relative low income target of less than 10 per cent Before Housing Costs (BHC), by 2020/21
2. Absolute low income target of less than 5 per cent BHC by 2020/21
3. Combined low income and material deprivation target of less than 5 percent by 2020/21.
4. Persistent poverty target of less than 7 per cent of children living in households in relative low income for at least three out of the last four years by 2020/21.¹

The Households Below Average Income (HBAI) publication provides the definitive national measure of relative child poverty as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010. HBAI is based on data from the Family Resources Survey meaning that the sample sizes are insufficient for analysis at the local level. The proxy measure for local areas is the Children in low-income families' local measure - the proportion of children living in families that are either in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income which is less than 60 per cent of national median income.

The government has a number of proposals to support parents to access employment opportunities one of the most recent announcements relates to offer working parents 30 hours of childcare, to ensure we are prepared for this opportunity we have submitted an expression of interest to the Department of Education to pilot this approach thus ensuring that we are well placed to support our parents to benefit from the regeneration opportunities that are available locally. Further examples of how we are working to support the national context can be found in the Strategy with details of how this will be achieved in the action plan which sits alongside the Strategy document.

2.7 Child Poverty in Thurrock – needs assessment

A full needs assessment has been undertaken in Thurrock and can be seen at <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/strategies/key-strategies-and-policies/child-poverty/needs-analysis>.

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In summary, the key findings² are:

- A fifth of children in Thurrock live in relative poverty. 7955 children live in families with an income less than 60% of national median income. In broad terms, child poverty has remained at much the same level since 2008.
- The majority, 7210, were aged 0-16, 5435 were aged 0-10; 2760 were aged 0-4.
- Child poverty is slightly above the national average (18.6%) and significantly above the level for Eastern region (15.1%).

To meet the 2020 target of less than 10 per cent of children living in relative poverty we would have to reduce this category in Thurrock, by at least 4,000 children - more to take account of population growth.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

None

4. Reasons for Recommendation

Members of the committee are invited to review the progress made since 2011 when the previous Child Poverty strategy was drawn up, and consider the national global and national economic context which is impacting on family and child poverty. The strategy sets out to avoid or mitigate the impact of child poverty and to offer pathways out of poverty.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

A range of workshops have taken place in Children Centres to discuss with Parents how they feel we can ensure Opportunity for all Children. We have Arranged meetings with a range of directorates across the LA recognising the need for a whole council approach to tackling child poverty.

6. Impact on Corporate Polices, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

- create a great place for learning and opportunity
 - encourage and promote job promotion and economic prosperity
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7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

We are currently ensuring that we meet the requirements around 2 year old funding to meet local targets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's
Safeguarding.

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development &
Equalities Manager

Equality of opportunity is a key principle of all early years providers, they ensure they meet statutory duties around offering places to all early years children – part of the Ofsted requirement is to evidence how they have ensured equality of opportunity.

By working with other council directorates we are ensuring that this work supports how we create a fairer society, and supports the ambitions of Thurrock's Fairness Commission wherever possible.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

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Appendices to this report:

- Appendix 1 - Child Poverty Strategy
- Appendix 2 - Child Poverty Action Plan
- Appendix 3 - Child Poverty Needs Assessment

Report Author

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