

28 April 2011	ITEM 6
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny	
CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY & CHILD POVERTY NEEDS ANALYSIS	
Report of: Cllr Charles Curtis, Portfolio Holder, Children's Social Care	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Accountable Head of Service: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes	
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson. Director of Children, Education and Families	
This report is: Public	
Purpose of Report: To inform the Overview & Scrutiny panel members of the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy and Needs Analysis.	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A fifth of Thurrock children are growing up in poverty, according to the official definition of child poverty.¹ The vast majority of the 7,335 children affected are under the age of 11 and more than half are under the age of 5. Overall, child poverty in Thurrock is slightly below the national rate but higher than average for the East of England.
- 1.2 The child poverty measure used by government does not take into consideration families with low incomes that are above the threshold of 60% median income before housing costs, but who may be in poverty after housing costs are taken into account. When these are added to the official child poverty figures the total of children in Thurrock living in poverty may be as high as 8220.²
- 1.3 Child poverty affects families in every ward of Thurrock but is most concentrated in the more disadvantaged parts of the borough. Just 6 of 20 Thurrock wards account for more than half of all children living in poverty.

¹ HMR&C National Indicator 116 (2008)

² HMR&C Child Tax Credits. Working tax Credits and Out of Work Families

- 1.4 The Child Poverty Act 2010 places duties on Local Authorities to eradicate child poverty and the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy sets out five strategic priorities, aiming to achieve them through working in partnership with key agencies:

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Overview & Scrutiny note the key strategic priorities of the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy and the development of an action plan.**

3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 establishes targets to be met nationally by 2020/2021. The Act also places the following duties on Local Authorities, to:
- Co-operate to put in place arrangements to work to reduce, and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local area;
 - Prepare and publish a local Child Poverty Needs Assessment to understand the drivers of child poverty in their local area and the characteristics of those living in poverty; and
 - Prepare a joint Child Poverty Strategy setting out measures that the Local Authority and each named partner propose to take to reduce, and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local area.
- 3.2 This report presents the Strategy and Needs Assessment to enable Thurrock to meet its duties under the Child Poverty Act 2010.

4. ISSUES:

- 4.1 Child poverty is defined by the National Child Poverty Indicator (NI 116) as the percentage of children who live in families in receipt of out-of-work benefits *or* in working families with income less than 60% of the median national income (taking account of differences in household size and composition).
- 4.2 The threshold is calculated based on taxable incomes plus Tax Credits and Child Benefit. In 2008, the poverty threshold (60% below the Median National Income) was:

£210 a week for a couple with no children

£294 a week for a couple with two children under the age of 14

£225 a week for a lone parent with two children under the age of 14

- 4.3 Other material factors contributing to child poverty are local pay levels and the costs of housing and these are included in the assessment of child poverty in Thurrock. In addition and because income poverty is inextricably linked to other forms of deprivation, including poorer health, the risk of debt, poor skills, lack of access to service and resources and social isolation, the assessment includes these as integral to the challenges faced by poorer families in Thurrock.
- 4.4 The needs assessment provides us with a better understanding of child poverty in Thurrock and provided a solid foundation for the development of the Child Poverty Strategy.
- 4.5 The Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy has five strategic priorities and it is considered that these will have a significant impact on the reduction of child poverty in the Borough. These are:
- To increase parental employment and skills by providing access to adult training and skills development and progression to adult learning opportunities.
 - To increase benefit take up by providing high quality advice and guidance targeted to areas where there is a high prevalence of poverty and workless households.
 - To improve attainment and reduce attainment gaps between those children living in poverty and those who do not, 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 prevent homelessness from occurring by addressing the underlying causes of homelessness through effective partnerships, collaboration and the co-ordination of services
- 4.7 The focus of activity will be on those areas with the highest prevalence of child poverty but by developing a broad approach to the eradication of poverty, strategies should lead to an overall reduction that supports individuals wherever they live in the Borough.
- 4.8 These priorities are consistent with other key strategies and plans in the Borough, the Children and Young Peoples Plan, the Housing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Community Strategy. They can only be delivered by close partnership working and the strategy aims to further develop the joint working through the Children's Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 4.9 Once the strategy has received approval, a detailed implementation plan will be developed by the end of April 2011.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation with parents and employers was included in the recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and this has been used to inform the needs analysis and development of the strategy. In addition, ongoing consultation through Children's Centres and the Children's Partnership Board will ensure that the strategy meets local need and is delivered in partnership.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 This report will impact on the following corporate priorities:
- Improve the education and skills of local people.
 - Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity.
 - Provide and commission high quality and accessible services that meet, wherever possible, individual needs.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Meinir Hall**
Telephone and email: **01375 652147**
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There are no direct financial implications for the Authority, however, by improving financial inclusion and benefit take up there could be a positive impact in terms of payment of revenues such as rent and council tax.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lee Bartlett**
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This report sets out how the Local Authority will meet its statutory duties with regard to the Child Poverty Act 2010. There are no legal implications arising from this report if the statutory obligations imposed by the Child Poverty Act 2010 are discharged.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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By its very nature the Child Poverty Strategy seeks to reduce inequalities, the needs assessment demonstrates that a wide range of needs have been considered. When developed the implementation plan will need to reflect these needs. An equality impact assessment has been completed and the key equality issues are contained in the main body of the report.

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

None

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Children who grow up in poverty are often at risk of social exclusion. There are clear links between poverty and lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes, poor housing and intergenerational disadvantage. In Thurrock, there is evidence of an attainment gap between children living in areas of the Borough with higher levels of poverty and their peers elsewhere, this gap is evident in children as young as five years old and continues throughout education.
- 8.2 The Needs Assessment is designed to inform the development of the Child Poverty Strategy in Thurrock. It aims to provide an overview of the key factors that lead to poverty locally and provide an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data that is held locally and nationally. The information gathered as a part of the Needs Assessment has shaped the key priorities for the local strategy.
- 8.3 The eradication of child poverty can only be achieved if key partners work together to address the factors that determine parent/family circumstances. There is an opportunity to develop whole family partnership approaches to the delivery of services and ensure these are focused on the most need and on securing improvements to outcomes for children, young people and their families. The delivery of the strategy should be seen as a key part of the work across agencies and services by developing new approaches to working and a better understanding of the underlying difficulties families face.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

- Frank Field (2010) The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults, commissioned by the Prime minister and published by the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances

10. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

- Child Poverty Strategy
- Child Poverty Needs Assessment

11. REPORT AUTHORS CONTACT DETAILS

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