

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
18 JANUARY 2012	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Operations

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TACKLING POVERTY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the work being undertaken within Neighbourhoods in partnership with Children’s Services to Tackle Poverty. Further detail will be delivered to the Committee via a presentation during the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1
- To support the current work of the Tackling Poverty Partnership
 - To be mindful of our Statutory Duty to address poverty through partnership working
 - To understand the breadth of the workforce who need to be aware of tackling poverty in their work and decision-taking
 - To acknowledge the scale of the issue and give priority attention to it
 - To consider how poverty underpins all our work and commit to make this part of our core business

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1. Tackling poverty is fundamental to the whole Sustainable Community Strategy, and forms part of the Single Delivery Plan (Programme 2 – Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In March 2011 the Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent and became effective from May 2011. This enshrines in legislation a long held government ambition to eradicate Child Poverty by 2020 and places a number of statutory duties on both Central and Local Government.
- 4.2 Statistics indicate that Peterborough has high levels of child poverty when compared to national and East of England.

The local child poverty proxy measure (formerly NI 116 proxy measure) is defined as the proportion of children living in families where at least one parent or guardian claimed one or more of the following out of work benefits: Job Seeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance, or Pension Credit at 31 May 2010. The most up to date Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) data prepared for Peterborough is based on 31st May 2010 and indicated 5210 households with children, claiming some form of benefit.

Our needs assessment (March 2011) demonstrated that currently 25.3% (12,144) of our children, under 19 years old, are recorded as living in relatively low income households.

The city also has a high percentage of people earning low wages and there are high levels of debt.

4.3 In December 2011 Neighbourhood Services, Children’s Services and local Registered Social Landlords held a conference on Tackling Poverty. The conference included presentations from a wide range of stakeholders including best practice nationally. The objectives of the conference were to –

- **Identify what support to Tackle Poverty is available in local communities and where the gaps are**
- **Help people access support from local services which assist in Tackling Poverty in their community.**
- **Build partnerships across the Financial Inclusion sector**
- **Improve access to employment opportunities**
- **Produce a Tackling Poverty strategy for Peterborough building on the work to date by Children’s Services on the draft Tackling Poverty and Social Mobility**
- **Increase knowledge on new benefit and welfare reforms**

Outcomes from the conference were circulated to all partners (see appendix 1) and a strategic follow up workshop has been arranged for early January to identify leads for actions to deliver the agreed outcomes:

SO1: Promotion of strong strategic leadership
SO2: A commissioning process with strategic intent
SO3: Development of instruments that measure poverty and social mobility to target resources more efficiently
SO4: Excellence at First Contact - Opportunities to explore family circumstance and be responsive to family need are maximised
SO5: A workforce sensitised to the impact of poverty and embed a think poverty approach in all our work
SO6: Identity risk factors and enable communities to develop resilience
SO7: Improve education and personal development of all children and young people to narrow the gap in achievement between the poorest children and the rest
SO8: Increase financial capability, employability and take-up of benefits amongst families
SO9: Improve health within the local population, including mental health
SO10: Creation of inspirational places to live and cohesive communities
SO11: A Decent Home for All

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Child poverty is relatively high in Peterborough (25.3%), compared to 16.4% in the East of England region and 21.6% nationally, and rising year on year.

Peterborough’s population has a high proportion of children and young people compared to the rest of England.

‘In work’ poverty and low income levels impact on a significant proportion of our local families at a higher rate than the national average.

Peterborough has a higher percentage of children living in families receiving out of work benefits than the national average.

The percentage of adults qualified to Level 2 is lower than the national average.

Peterborough’s average weekly rent is much higher than both the national average and when compared to one of our statistical neighbours.

The take-up of the childcare element of working tax credits among eligible parents in Peterborough has fallen and is below the national average.

Peterborough has a higher rate of children in care per 10,000 population than both the statistical neighbour and national averages.

Peterborough has a higher number of houses of multiple occupation than the two of its statistical neighbours with the closest overall population figures.

Peterborough has a lower percentage of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs with English and Maths than both the statistical neighbour and the England averages.

It is expensive to support families once poverty has taken a grip on families who go on to experience multiple and complex problems.

Welfare and Benefit reform will negatively impact on a significant number of individuals and families in Peterborough

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Following presentation at the Committee meeting, the views and wishes of Members will be considered and will help inform the development of the Tackling Poverty programme.

At this stage there are no known financial implications, although as proposals develop these, and other implications, may become relevant.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation has taken place with over 50 organisations and stakeholders across Peterborough including community centres, neighbourhood committees and VCS organisations.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 A follow up workshop with key stakeholders across the City to prepare action plan for delivery of the strategic outcomes.

Increased work with Health particularly on mental health issues and GP involvement in signposting activity.

The voluntary and community sector to work with the Council and other public sector providers to recommend where appropriate funding should be targeted to deliver outcomes to Tackle Poverty in Peterborough.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 - Feedback from the conference

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