

**“BREAKING THE CYCLE 2” – CAMBRIDGESHIRE’S SECOND CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY**

*To:* **Children and Young People’s Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **10 March 2015**

*From:* **Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **N/a**

*Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **This paper accompanies Cambridgeshire’s second Child Poverty Strategy – “Breaking the Cycle 2”. Children and Young People’s Committee is asked to formally endorse the strategy and support its implementation through our partnership arrangements.**

*Recommendation:* **For Children and Young People’s Committee to approve and adopt the strategy.**

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2012 there were over 15,000 children living in poverty in Cambridgeshire and their outcomes, in particular in terms of their educational attainment, are amongst the worst in the country. Poverty has an impact upon every aspect of a child's life chances – their physical and mental health, education, employment – and this comes with a significant cost to the public purse.
- 1.2 The Council has been working with partners since 2010 to try to address child poverty – by preventing people from falling into poverty in the first place, and by mitigating the impact of poverty on the lives of children and their families. We have already developed sound partnership working through our first Child Poverty Strategy, and our work has seen some reduction in the percentage of children living in poverty. The latest national child poverty data (published December 2014) indicated that the percentage of children living in poverty had fallen by 0.7%, and this decrease was most marked in Cambridge City. However, an increasing percentage of children in poverty were living in our more affluent areas. Whilst there are over 800 fewer children living in poverty in our more deprived areas, there are 125 more children living in poverty in the less deprived areas of Cambridgeshire.
- 1.3 In addition, from 2011 – 2014 the number of parents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) decreased from 1480 to 850, and the numbers of young people aged 18-24 claiming JSA decreased from 2530 to 720. This is likely to be due to a combination of national and local efforts to combat poverty and move people into work.
- 1.4 In July 2014, Full Council endorsed the motion that *“Cambridgeshire continues to be a county of contrasts with pockets of highly affluent areas and areas with pockets of concentrated, multiple deprivation. This tells us that we can do more work to improve outcomes for the people of Cambridgeshire and reduce the deprivation gap in order to build a strong, cohesive and successful County.”*

Full Council agreed to *“continue to support the Council's commitment to tackling deprivation and narrowing the deprivation gap by adopting a more focused and targeted approach to improving performance and outcomes in this area of work...”*

The work to develop and implement our Child Poverty Strategy is central to this commitment.

- 1.4 The Child Poverty Act 2010 places statutory duties on the Government and on local authorities. Local authorities (upper tier) have statutory duties as follows:
- To cooperate with their statutory partners to tackle child poverty; and
  - To produce a Child Poverty Needs Assessment and a joint Child Poverty Strategy.

Statutory partners under the Act include:

- District authorities

- Police, youth offending and probation services
- Health
- Job Centre Plus
- As well as any other relevant partners as the local authority sees fit.

Together, partners are directed to work together to combat child poverty and to mitigate its effects.

## **2.0 CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S RESPONSE TO CHILD POVERTY**

2.1 It is clear that addressing child poverty requires a multi-agency response, and therefore the development of strategy and activity is led in Cambridgeshire by the Child Poverty Champions Group. This group is chaired by Cambridgeshire's lead member for Child Poverty. Membership is drawn from several service directorates within the County Council, and from all district authorities, Job Centre Plus, the Police, social housing providers, and voluntary sector representatives.

2.2 The Child Poverty Champions Group has been reporting to Cambridgeshire's Children's Trust, where we have input from early years providers, schools, further education providers, and Health commissioners.

2.3 Cambridgeshire's first Child Poverty Strategy – entitled "Breaking the Cycle" – was produced in 2011. It was a three-year strategy (2011-2014), so the process of producing our second strategy begun early in 2014. Successful work arising from our first strategy, both within the Council and with partners, resulted in for example:

- Increased registrations for free school meals – which brought over £1m additional funding into our schools through the Pupil Premium in the first 18 months of the strategy;
- Poverty identified earlier through an improved Common Assessment Framework;
- Improved connections between businesses and schools so that young people are better prepared for the employment market – over 150 businesses begun working directly with schools and school partnerships in the first two years of the strategy;
- Better targeting of adult learning in areas of deprivation; and
- Improved access to financial literacy help and support for those who need it – for example, several loan sharks were arrested, access to credit unions improved, and better access to workforce development provided for our frontline practitioners.

2.4 The development of this second three-year strategy (2014-2017) has involved all partners within the Child Poverty Champions Group, as well as wider stakeholders via workshops and discussions. This strategy sets out four cross-partner objectives to take forward over the next three years, building upon our work from the first strategy. These objectives draw on our understanding of the nature of child poverty in Cambridgeshire as detailed in the first sections of the strategy document. Partners were asked to consider:

- a. What pledges or activity they commit to taking forward within their own organisation;

b. What activity we should take forward as a partnership.

2.5 The strategy includes pledges to act from many different organisations, and it is likely that there will be more to come once the strategy is published and further awareness raised. Pledges have been included from across the County Council where they will add value to the work we already undertake in tackling poverty and deprivation.

2.6 Partnership activity to take forward this year will include:

- Work with Job Centre Plus to establish better communications between agencies where vulnerable parents or young people may be faced with benefit sanctions.
- Work between partners to establish an “early warning system” to identify families who may be at risk of homelessness, and agreed activity to prevent homelessness.

2.7 An annual monitoring report will continue to be produced each April; this will cover a range of indicators pertaining to the child poverty. Task groups will report on progress at each Champions Group meeting, and success measures will be included in the annual monitoring report.

#### 4.0 **ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

##### 4.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

This strategy continues the commitment of all partners to work together to develop the local economy for the benefit of all, in particular to ensure that young people and parents from disadvantaged backgrounds are well equipped to enter the workplace and to contribute to the local economy.

##### 4.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

Growing up in poverty is directly correlated with poor health outcomes. The successful delivery of the Child Poverty Strategy should see long-term reductions in poor health outcomes.

##### 4.3 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

The poorest families are often the most vulnerable. Tackling child poverty will support those vulnerable families.

#### 5.0 **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### 5.1 **Resource Implications**

There are no significant additional costs in implementing this strategy. Indeed, the impacts of poverty have been estimated to bring significant costs to the local authority, so tackling child poverty aims to both reduce costs and improve economic wellbeing. This strategy is aligned to the wider financial strategies of demand management and early help which aim to reduce the demand for costly public services

##### 5.2 **Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

The production of this Child Poverty Strategy, and the Needs Assessment that it is built upon, enable us to meet our statutory obligations in the short term. Meeting specific targets in terms of the reduction in child poverty is not currently part of individual local authority statutory obligations. However,

there are national targets to be met by 2010 and as such our child poverty work needs to be seen as a long term obligation.

**5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Child Poverty work is at the heart of delivering equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes for children and families in Cambridgeshire, enabling us to identify where and how disadvantage arises, and to target our services accordingly.

**5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

This strategy is the product of significant engagement and consultation – with families and young people who are living in poverty, with frontline practitioners from a range of agencies, and with statutory and voluntary sector partners across the county. Our actions are in response to the issues we have learnt, and we will feed back to stakeholders on the actions we propose to take, seeking views on impact as we progress.

**5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

Once the strategy is agreed, local Members will be invited to discuss the implications for their divisions..

**5.6 Public Health Implications**

Growing up in poverty is directly correlated with poor health outcomes. The successful delivery of the Child Poverty Strategy should see long-term reductions in poor health outcomes.

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS GUIDANCE**

Source Documents	Location
<b><i>“Breaking the Cycle 2”</i></b> – a strategy for tackling child and family poverty and economic disadvantage in Cambridgeshire 2014 - 2017	Box OCT 1210