

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	Friday 10 December 2010
3.	Title:	Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Strategy
4.	Programme Area:	Chief Executive's Directorate

5. Summary

The Child Poverty Act 2010 places a duty on local authorities to undertake a local assessment of need and develop a partnership strategy to reduce child poverty locally.

Following the previous report which was presented to Scrutiny in October 2009, a large amount of work has been undertaken across RMBC, in partnership with other stakeholders, to ensure this duty is delivered on. A local needs assessment has now been produced, which has informed the development of the draft strategy included with this report.

Scrutiny Members are being asked to consider and comment on the draft strategy prior to wider consultation takes place with stakeholders and members of the public.

6. Recommendations

That Scrutiny:

- **Receive this report and note the local needs assessment which has been undertaken**
- **Discuss and consider the priorities and actions set out in the draft Child Poverty Strategy**

7. Proposals and Details

The Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent in March 2010 and places a duty on local authorities to undertake a local needs assessment and develop a partnership strategy to reduce child poverty locally.

Since the previous report to Scrutiny, work has been ongoing to ensure these duties are met.

A Child Poverty Partnership Steering group was established and on 1 March 2010 a local child poverty conference took place, which started the discussions and process of developing a local strategy.

7.1 Local Needs Assessment

A local needs assessment has been undertaken which pulls together all the issues which impact on and cause child poverty as well as factors which are as a result of living in poverty.

National Indicator 116 is the main measure for the proportion of children living in poverty in the area, and is based on income below 60 percent of the median national income. Data is collected by the Department for Work and Pensions and is likely to continue to be collected as it feeds directly into the Government target of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

Although income is the main factor directly affecting child poverty, there are many other indirect factors which contribute towards the complexity of poverty and prevent families from moving themselves out of poverty and achieving a decent standard of living. These contributing factors are set out in the needs assessment table – attached as appendix A.

7.4 Local Child Poverty Strategy

The development of a local strategy will be key to driving forward the appropriate and priority actions needed to reduce child poverty in the borough. Although the needs assessment identifies a number of direct and indirect factors associated with child poverty and the impact it has on families' lives, interventions which tackle specific outcomes of poverty, will not work in isolation to significantly reduce child poverty.

The Child Poverty Unit developed a child poverty pyramid (shown in appendix A), showing all the direct and indirect influences on child poverty; the pyramid places barriers to employment, housing related costs, financial support and skills as the factors which have most influence on a family's ability to move themselves out of poverty. It is these top level factors which will form the basis of a local strategy for Rotherham.

The strategy has been developed around the 4 Building Blocks identified as part of the Government strategy:

1. Financial Support: improving financial and material support for families
2. Parental Employment and Skills: increasing employment and raising incomes for parents

3. Life Chances: improving poor children's life chances so that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes; and
4. Place: tackling deprivation in communities

The Steering Group have identified a number of priorities under each block, and considered appropriate actions for delivering on each one (see appendix B).

Members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel are being asked to consider and comment on these priorities and actions, prior to the wider consultation with appropriate stakeholders and members of the public takes place.

8. Finance

It is intended that the strategy will be delivered within existing resources; redirecting resources where necessary in line with the identified priorities.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is a statutory duty to produce a local needs assessment and strategy.

Although the new Government removed the statutory guidance for how to do produce these pieces of work and by when, Rotherham has continued to work towards the original timescale to have the strategy published by April 2011 and is on target.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The child poverty strategy will be the main delivery mechanism for reducing the overall proportion of children living in poverty. However this strategy links to a number of other key documents which are also key to reducing child poverty and ensuring children are supported to develop and achieve, these include; the Local Economic Plan, Prevention and Early Intervention strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

It is also part of the duty to consider child poverty when revising local Community Strategies, it is therefore important that the child poverty strategy and actions required to tackle issues are owned by the wider LSP.

The needs assessment and strategy include a basket of indicators which were identified by the Child Poverty Unit as key for measuring outcomes, along with NI 116. However, it is not yet known whether these indicators will continue to be collected, although it is considered that if a number of the indicators are an important way of measuring the success of the strategy, it may be that these are developed and kept as local indicators.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- *Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business* –Child Poverty Unit (2008), outlines the causes and consequences of child poverty, the impact of government action so far and the policy direction for the future.
- *Child Poverty Act 2010*
- *Rotherham Child Poverty Needs Assessment* (appendix A)
- *Rotherham Draft Child Poverty Strategy* (appendix B)

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