1.	Meeting:	Children, Young People and Families Partnership
2.	Date:	24th September 2014
3.	Title:	Poverty Needs Assessment
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5.   Summary:

The report sets out the approach and progress to date in refreshing the borough's 2011 child poverty needs assessment.

6.   Recommendations:

That partners:

- **note the approach and provide comments to inform the ongoing development of the needs assessment**
- **Provide views, in particular, on whether the scope of the needs assessment should be widened beyond child and family poverty.**

7.   Proposals and Details:

Background

As well as establishing targets to reduce child poverty, the 2010 Child Poverty Act requires local authorities to prepare and publish a child poverty needs assessment (CPNA) which should underpin the approach to tackling child poverty locally.

Rotherham's first CPNA was produced in 2011 and informed the Early Help strategy, which aims to "mitigate the effects of child poverty (including health inequalities) by supporting families to fulfil their potential".

Although there is no specific guidance indicating how regularly CPNAs should be updated, it is felt that – following the economic downturn and the introduction of a significant government reform programme, particularly welfare reform – an update is due.

Poverty needs assessment 2014

The initial approach to developing an updated needs assessment has considered whether:

- The assessment could be expanded to provide a more comprehensive analysis of poverty in the borough (i.e. to look at issues for people without dependent children)

There is a range of existing and emerging data indicating that large numbers of people without children are struggling to make ends meet. For example:

> - Two thirds of Rotherham CAB debt clients in 2013 did not have dependent children. Research suggests that a large proportion of payday loan borrowers are young men without children.
> - Data from DWP's discretionary social fund in 2011/12 shows that around 75% of crisis loans (for those in urgent need of financial assistance) went to people with no children under 16.
> - Recent analysis of local authority rent arrears shows that the vast majority (88%) of tenants owing £1,000 or more have no dependent children.
> - Information provided by local "food in crisis" organisations also suggest that large numbers of their customers don't have children, though further work is needed to quantify this

- Whilst still being underpinned by relevant statistics, the assessment should be short and succinct, centring on a small number of key areas and clearly drawing out the main issues. The suggested focus areas are:

> - Employment status (unemployed, l-t unemployed, p/t work, casual work, skills)
> - Family composition (lone parents, number of children)

➢ Household income (wage levels, benefit levels, pensions)
➢ Disability
➢ Health (including mental health and drug/alcohol dependency)
➢ Teenage pregnancy

Initial discussions have also been held with the chief executive of Age UK Rotherham to see how issues for struggling older people could be effectively captured in the needs assessment, with the emphasis probably more on qualitative information rather than statistics.

To try to provide a richer overall picture, the aim will be to include case studies or pen portraits to exemplify the key issues identified by the data and research.

The assessment will also highlight geographic and any other notable inequalities (e.g. between different ethnic groups), partly through an updated "500 babies" analysis.

Indicative timetable
- Draft needs assessment completed – December 2014
- Reports to CYP&F partnership, SLT, cabinet – January/February 15
- Final assessment completed – end March 2015

8.   Finance:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9.   Risks and Uncertainties:

Given continuing funding cuts and external economic and policy factors there is a concern that even by taking effective, coordinated action local partners can only have a marginal impact on poverty in the short term.

Updating our needs assessment will help to ensure that strategy is evidence-based and that partners target their resources effectively.

10.   Policy and Performance Agenda Implications:

To effectively address poverty, including its causes and wider determinants and immediate and longer term symptoms, action is required across a range of policy areas. The following plans include actions to tackle poverty:

- o Early help strategy - aims to understand and respond quickly to the needs of children, young people and families, mitigating the effects of child poverty by supporting families to fulfil their potential
- o RMBC corporate plan - the new plan prioritises *helping people into work, improving health and wellbeing* and *reducing inequalities*.   Specific commitments include:
    - We will focus on lifelong learning to improve the qualifications, skills and economic wellbeing of children, young people and their families

- We will respond quickly to people's needs, mitigating the effects of poverty and helping them to thrive
  - Rotherham Partnership community strategy priority: *ensuring the best start in life for children and families*
  - Health and wellbeing strategy priority/outcome: *reduce poverty in disadvantaged areas*
  - *Economic growth plan (in development) theme: social inclusion and combating poverty*

In addition to these, a new "building resilience" strategy (in development) will be critical in coordinating anti-poverty efforts around a small number of headline objectives:

- Maximising access to sustainable, decently paid employment and relevant training
- Inclusive economic growth that benefits all of Rotherham's communities
- Helping people to thrive and fulfil their potential
- Building social capital and helping neighbourhoods to flourish

11.   Background Papers and Consultation:

Rotherham child poverty needs assessment 2011

Contact Name: Michael Holmes, Policy and Partnership Officer, (01709) 254417, michael.holmes@rotherham.gov.uk