

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD
9th February 2016



TITLE OF REPORT:

CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY – UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Andrew Christie

Open Report

Classification – For Information

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: All

Accountable Executive Director: Andrew Christie

Report Author:

Contact Details:

Ian Elliott, Children's Policy Team E-mail: ian.elliott@rbkc.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update to the Board on the emerging Child Poverty strategy for Hammersmith and Fulham. The following report outlines the background and structure of the strategy and notes key actions proposed in a draft strategy that has been passed to other departments including Public Health, Housing, Skills and Economic Development for comment. It is proposed to return to the Board with a final version of the completed strategy in the summer, following wider consultation in the spring of 2016.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The borough committed to produce its first child poverty strategy, following the JSNA in 2013 on child poverty and the development of a strategy on Early Help in 2015. The Health and Wellbeing Board is the governance body for child poverty and it was agreed for the Lead member for children to be the lead on behalf of the Board and for a strategy to be developed across council departments, led by Children's Services.

2.2 The Board previously asked for the strategy to reflect headline priorities of all departments where relevant, especially Housing and Health given the correlations / causes / consequences to poverty. Much of the work of the local authority is to mitigate against the effects of poverty in a national taxation and benefits system dictated by central government policy.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY

3.1 Approach

3.2 Child poverty is, in effect, family poverty and reflective of deprivation. Whilst areas of deprivation in the borough are well known, the high cost of housing and childcare in London are a major contributor / cause of families finding themselves in poverty, even if in full time work. The implementation of welfare reforms, benefit caps and suppression of wages (particularly since the recession) has also contributed.

3.3 The consequences to a child growing up in poverty are proven and profound. As such, the child poverty strategy is "everybody's business" and should reflect the activity of other partners in reducing and alleviating poverty in the borough.

3.4 Structure

3.5 The structure of the draft strategy is based on good practice examples from other local areas and to reflect four themes that emerged from the JSNA and discussions with young people and families during that process. There are four major themes against which the strategy is currently structured, as outlined in the draft table below.

Theme	Policy area	Immediate issues	Wider opportunities
1.Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare reform / Housing Benefit caps • Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy • Improve private rented sector • Protect social rented housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to families affected by Housing Benefit cap. • Alleviate impact of overcrowding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Renewal Strategy: Master planning • Strategic stock options • Strategy on social inclusion • Private sector landlords charter • Revised statutory Homelessness Strategy
2.Work and money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability • Work and skills development • Work Matters strategy • 'a better place to do business' • Business Impact Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting families into work • Parental skills development • Apprenticeships • Foodbank donations taken in libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and skills development plan • Local Economic Partnership • Community Budgets
3.Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Help • Early years / Childcare • Family friendly policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for families affected by welfare reform • Review of childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable 'Early Help' offer • Building community resilience • Affordable childcare
4.Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider determinants of health • Partnerships with NHS providers and commissioners • Whole systems approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring policy and services are appropriately targeted at those most at risk of health and wellbeing issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Council engagement with Public Health agenda • Food Poverty Action Statement and Delivery Plan.

4. Strategy contents - draft

The draft Child Poverty strategy contains the following contents, to be agreed by each council department prior to consultation with the public in spring 2016.

Section 1: Foreword by the Leader / Lead member for children

We will state our duty and priority to combat causes and consequences of child poverty, recognising difficulties for families, especially since the recession and in an era of austerity. We will refer to activity underway in all Departments (especially Housing and Health) and that this is a joint endeavour.

Section 2: Executive summary, to summarise the strategy and actions within.

Section 3: Context of child poverty, introducing four themes relating to child poverty and the key policy areas.

Section 4: Child poverty locally: need, indicators and JSNA findings

This section summarises existing local indicators and also give commentary on the national measure of child poverty. We have not conducted further analysis of needs specifically for

the strategy because existing local data, indices of deprivation and the comprehensive JSNA on child poverty are sufficient.

The strategy will find that child poverty in the borough mirrors the established measures of deprivation although there is a cohort of low paid and often lone parents who work and are classified as living in poverty. This is consistent across London. Childcare and housing costs are significant at a time when wages have been suppressed. Unlike previous generations we now have a situation where there are more working families 'in poverty' than workless.

At this stage we do not anticipate any new 'need' arising from the indicators / measures that are not already familiar to us. The JSNA suggested some priority areas and these are summarised in the strategy.

Section 5: Responding to poverty: actions and activity to alleviate child poverty

The draft strategy is arranged in four themes: housing; work; children's services and health. Each theme is covered in detail in the strategy, with proposed actions and activity to alleviate child poverty locally.

Theme one: Housing

The child poverty strategy links to the emerging Housing strategy and in particular the work ongoing to increase affordable housing in the borough. Prevention of homelessness will also be included in strategy, particularly young people who are homeless.

Theme two: work and pay

The local authority will recognise that it has limited influence in a national system of tax and benefits, other than (e.g.) implementation of welfare reforms and benefit caps. Much of our work is to mitigate against poverty. However we are ambitious to support families in this context. We will recognise that unemployment is comparatively low locally but acknowledge that there are cohorts in our local population for whom sustainable work is some distance away, due to other difficulties. Links will be made to Troubled Families and support for long-term unemployed. This section will also cover debt and money advice services.

Theme three: Children's Services

This notes how we have safeguarded the most vulnerable children during implementation of welfare reforms and how our Early Help strategy targets those most in need (and likely to be in poverty) via early intervention, including the Best Start in Life programme. Support for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) will also feature, to prevent young people becoming NEET and assisting those who already are.

The childcare taskforce findings are incorporated, with potential areas for the council to prioritise:

- The importance of accurate information for local families and improvement to the Family Information Service;

- Improving support for childminders and the effectiveness of the offer of childminding services for local families;
- The role of Children's Centres in delivering effective, high quality childcare;
- Building on the findings of the 8-6 out of core hours pilot for support in schools; and
- Innovative solutions for growing a skilled workforce.

Theme four: Health

Child poverty is a priority in the Public Health strategy. The child poverty strategy will link with the Food Poverty Action Statement and subsequent delivery plan and there are a number of council commitments on health which will alleviate the consequences of poverty for families and children, e.g. obesity.

Section 6: Next steps, actions and monitoring progress

The actions in the child poverty strategy will reflect existing commitments, strategies, plans and findings from relevant task groups across the council and its partners.

We will measure the success of the strategy via established deprivation measures, as well as measuring family income. For example the level of attainment and skills is an important measure, to enable a family to therefore maximise its income. A narrow measure of income alone does not fully explain the causes and consequences of a child living in poverty.

The draft strategy will be subject to public consultation, including specifically young people and parents. It is anticipated that consultation will take place during the spring of 2016 and final strategy published in the summer of 2016, following approval at a future Health and Wellbeing Board meeting.

Contact officer:

Ian Elliott, Children's Policy Team.