

**TO: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
15 JANUARY 2014**

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**CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY – PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS  
Director of Children, Young People and Learning**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of the Bracknell Forest Child Poverty Strategy – Creating Opportunities – Breaking the Cycle 2011 – 2014, and to consider the next steps for further work to address the issues and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in Bracknell Forest.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes the progress made in achieving the key priorities attached as Annex 1. This progress links closely to the Children and Young People’s Plan review which the Executive has already considered.**
- 2.2 **That the Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes and comments on the next steps to progress further key areas of work in support of the Child Poverty Strategy identified in paragraphs 5.2 – 5.5 below and the wider approach to the brief to maximise income opportunities.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Bracknell Forest Child Poverty Strategy was developed in 2011 and was one of a number of strategies supporting the delivery of the priorities in the Children and Young People’s Plan. Underpinning priority 7 was to “Close the attainment gap between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers”.
- 3.2 It was clear that the strategy could not be delivered by any single agency, and would be reliant on a range of partners supporting the objectives. The actions were therefore spread across partner agencies to deliver. This partnership working is even more important in the future to ensure that the best use is made of resources, and those families most in need can be supported in the most effective and efficient way.
- 3.3 The Strategy is now at a key stage and the time is right to move it to the next level. Wider focus groups need to be developed in order to target current issues such as the welfare changes. There will be some existing groups that can be involved in shaping future actions.
- 3.4 Whilst there has been considerable progress, the economic climate continues to have an impact on families and it is prudent that the priorities and actions moving forward focus on the right areas of need and action. The challenge remains in respect of identifying and targeting those most in need in a borough that is considered to be affluent, and in identifying the pockets of deprivation that do exist.
- 3.5 A number of new initiatives will also be significant in the success of the way in which we support and work with those children, young people and families in the Borough who are affected by poverty. Some examples of this include the Family Focus

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Initiative (known nationally as Troubled Families), making optimum use of the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils, which is paid directly to schools, and funding for disadvantaged two-year olds. Work to develop a Credit Union in Bracknell Forest and recent changes in the Welfare Benefits system are also important factors affecting the local authority's work in this area.

- 3.6 The housing and benefit service has been redesigned to maximise customer income and independence. Thus the service can contribute to the development of the strategy in terms of welfare advice but also with supporting households so they can enter employment or improve their employment opportunities. The service is in the process of being redesigned based on a set of operating principles that support the service purpose to maximise income and independence. Full implementation of the new service will take place over the next six months. The development of the service and Child Poverty Strategy will complement each other.
- 3.7 These changes will enable families to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the economic development in the borough including the regeneration of the town centre whilst seeking to maximise income opportunities for these families.

## **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 No alternative options considered.

## **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The progress made against the priorities in the Child Poverty Strategy (Annex 1) clearly identifies that a significant amount of work has taken place across a range of partners. All partners see this as a priority.
- 5.2 Work is currently underway to develop a new Children and Young People's Plan for 2014, and addressing the impact of child poverty will remain a key priority. Rather than producing a separate child poverty strategy, it is proposed that there will be a Children and Young People's Plan with overarching priorities and a set of delivery plans sitting underneath the plan, with child poverty being one of the key delivery plans.
- 5.3 The impact of changes in the economic climate will need to be assessed including changes in welfare benefits. It will also be important to establish clear measures in order to determine the impact of the work that is carried out over the duration of the next three years.
- 5.4 Work to produce a new Children and Young People's Plan for 2014 – 2017 has already begun, and it is proposed that in addition to consultation with children and young people there will be a number of multi-agency focus groups to consider the key priorities and agree how these can be addressed jointly. One of these focus groups will look specifically at Child Poverty, and partners will be asked to contribute both ideas and actions to go into the Children and Young People's Plan, and the delivery plan for tackling Child Poverty. It is intended to ensure the delivery plan reflects the work that is going on across the Council and with partners to address the various aspects of poverty and its impact on outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 5.5 The proposed new Children and Young People's Plan for 2014 and associated delivery plans (including the plan to address child poverty) will be presented to the Executive in the New Year as part of the consultation and approval process.

- 5.6 The Child Poverty delivery plan will take into account the outcomes from the recent government consultation on child poverty.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal implications are addressed within the main body of the report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from the update provided in this report. Any future initiatives will need to be contained within the overall level of resources.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Children and Young People's Plan and Child Poverty Strategy were subject to EIA screening when they were developed.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 N/A

### Other Officers

#### Head of Community Engagement and Equalities

- 6.5 The comments are agreed within the body of the report.

#### Chief Officer Housing

- 6.6 Comments are included in the body of the report.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The development of the Children and Young People's Plan and Child Poverty Delivery Plan will include wide ranging consultation with children, young people and families and with partners and stakeholders replicating the extensive consultation that took place when both these important documents were launched.

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Methods of consultation will include meetings, focus groups and questionnaires. Both Facebook and the public website will be used.

### Background Papers

Local authorities and child poverty: balancing threats and opportunities – Child Poverty Action Group July 2013

The cost of a child in 2013 – Child Poverty Action Group 2013

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Contact for further information

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## Annex 1

## Review of the Child Poverty Strategy Actions

Action	Progress	Rag Rating
<b>1. To raise the family income of those families living in poverty by:</b>		
1a. Addressing parental worklessness.	<p>Work and skills courses and a range of activities have been undertaken jointly with referring agencies such as Job Centre Plus (JCP), Work Programme Providers (A4E and Maximus). This includes agencies supporting people with issues around drugs and alcohol, mental ill health, along with young parents, single parents and troubled families.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest Homes (BFH) and the Adult and Community Learning team have developed an employment project delivered by New Meaning, focusing on removing physiological barriers to accessing work.</p> <p>Family learning takes place at the Open Learning Centre and increasingly out in the community in Children's Centres and schools. Whilst they are learning to support their children, they are encouraged to undertake qualifications in Literacy, Numeracy and IT. A visit from the Work and Skills Programme Co-ordinator is included in the lesson planning and learners are encouraged to visit the Job Club.</p> <p>During the 2011-12 academic year 582 individuals undertook a family learning course. The courses are of various lengths. Many will have benefitted from the programme helping support their child's learning, improve parenting skills, develop their confidence and job ready skills. Around 100 are estimated to have gone on to employment.</p> <p>In the 2012-13 academic year 223 individuals undertook a family learning course. These are more focussed on basic literacy and numeracy skills and getting people back into work. Greater tracking of how many progressed to employment is required and the progress of the cohort will be monitored.</p>	Green

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	<p>One of the key focus in Children's Centres is to provide schemes to improve employability which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to JCP Centre.</li> <li>• Weekly Job Club</li> <li>• Volunteer Training Programme - 12 parents completed programme.</li> <li>• JCP Vacancy Folder in all centres and sessions, emailed out to all registered families. Partnership working with BFH's with a high conversion rate into employment.</li> </ul> <p>* A brief case study is given at the end of this review of actions.</p>	
<p>1b. Reducing the number of 16, 17 and 18 year olds not in education, training and employment (NEET).</p>	<p>A project at Coopers Hill for NEET young people has included home visits, to enable a broader range of services to be on offer.</p> <p>Support is offered individually and in groups to all young parents who are registered with the Children's Centres. Connexions are represented on Advisory Boards and engage in regular meetings. There is active encouragement to access a range of adult learning programmes. Numbers of NEETs have declined.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>1c. In-work Poverty.</p>	<p>A range of staff have been trained to provide support and guidance with regard to debt management and budgeting. Support is provided to access further training to increase earning potential.</p> <p>Workshops are provided by Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and one-to-one support for debt management is available through Christians Against Poverty (CAP). Sessions are accessible to working parents in the evenings and at weekends. Foodbank vouchers and other charitable organisations are available to provide support as appropriate.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>1d. Linking Child Poverty Strategy to the Employment and Skills Strategy.</p>	<p>This is closely linked to 1a above as worklessness is a key strand of the Employment and Skills Strategy.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>1e. Childcare - links to the Childcare Sufficiency Audit</p>	<p>Childcare sufficiency is assessed on an on-going basis. There is currently sufficient childcare to meet parental needs, though not always scope of choice or in the place that parents/carers would want it. Additional places have been developed for 2 year olds to access provision.</p> <p>There has been an 11% increase in child-minders trained to provide inclusive services for children with additional needs. This is an inspected service.</p>	<p>Green</p>

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<p>1f. Advice and support on financial entitlements in Partnership with Job Centre Plus and CAB.</p>	<p>The Family Information Service (FIS) have staff trained to offer advice on benefit entitlements and help with managing money and debt. This service has been completely redesigned with specific training for staff to offer one-to-one benefit appointments to the general public.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>1g. Financial Inclusion e.g. through Credit Union</p>	<p>A Credit Union is being developed, in partnership with Bracknell Forest Homes that will service Bracknell Forest on an outreach basis. Service points will cover Times Square, Bracknell Forest Homes and Children's Centres.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p><b>2. To mitigate the impact of living in poverty:</b></p>		
<p>2a. Encourage greater use of local facilities by children and young people for example green spaces, open spaces, play facilities, cultural activities, leisure and libraries and support those who would not normally use them.</p>	<p>1. The number of people taking advantage of the Leisure Saver Scheme has grown steadily in recent times. At the end of 2008/09 there were 390 members including 84 young people under 16. By the end of 2012/13 this had risen to 569 including 99 under 16s. During 2012/13 there were 6,794 visits to leisure facilities by members of the scheme of which approximately 660 were by under 16s. The Leisure Saver Scheme Members are nearly all new users who would not normally use the facilities available. Although there is no empirical data on the benefits gained from membership of the Leisure Saver Scheme, there is anecdotal evidence that participants are enjoying a better quality of life both in terms of their physical condition and their self-esteem.</p> <p>2. The Leisure &amp; Culture Division offers a wide range of free access provision for children and young people including play areas, open spaces, multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and kick about areas.</p> <p>3. The Young People in Sport Scheme made over 50,000 contacts with children during 2012/13 by offering sports coaching opportunities to local schools.</p> <p>4. There are nine libraries in the Borough, including Harmans Water and Great Hollands which are free to use by all, including free internet access. Children's story times, activities, nursery and school class visits regularly take place in all libraries. This maximises the use of these resources.</p> <p>5. The development of 12 new innovative and exciting play spaces across Bracknell Forest via the Playbuilder initiative has resulted in a marked increase in use of facilities by children and young people. The Play Ranger service also had a</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p> <p>Green</p>

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	<p>significant impact towards the increased use of parks and open spaces by children and young people. These have been funded by external grant applications.</p> <p>6. The Youth Service, over the past two years, has undergone significant change. Their work is now targeted to those who are the most vulnerable and provides access to provision throughout the year. Young people have participated in a wide range of activities, both in parks and skate parks, the town centre and on trips. The new xpresionz sessions enables young people to access sports centres and sports facilities across the Borough in the holiday periods in particular. 1,227 young people attended activities during the summer.</p> <p>Summer in the Parks – sessions included sports activities, general play, and arts in the Park – over the summer this was attended by 17,000 children, young people and their families.</p>	
<p>2b. Maintain a range of extended services in schools.</p>	<p>This area of work has now been completed and all schools are fully extended offering a range of extra curricula activities to meet individual school needs.</p>	Green
<p>2c. Improve access to health services and health promotion opportunities.</p>	<p>The Sexual Health Clinics in schools and within the community have increased over the previous 12-18 months and there are now five Sexual Health Clinics and in tandem with this, since January, clinics focus on a broader health remit, substance misuse, smoking and alcohol misuse.</p> <p>In addition there are now between 6 – 9 sessions delivered across our schools and Bracknell and Wokingham College Personal Social and Health Education/ Enrichment sessions. Over 800 young people have been engaged during 2012/2013 and as a result the U18's Teenage Conception rate is 17.4 compared to the England rate of 28.3 and the South East 23.7. (The rate shows the number of conceptions per 1000 15 - 17 year old females). Over 1000 young people have received advice and guidance.</p> <p>A number of health services are delivered through the children's centres in partnership with health colleagues. These include Midwifery, Well Baby Clinic, Development Checks, Breastfeeding Support, Speech and Language Therapy, Smoking Cessation, NHS Dietician and Community Dentist.</p>	Green



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<p>2d. Maximise the use of Children's Centres as sources of support, advice and community for parents and children.</p>	<p>Registrations have shown a steady increase in all centres. Rooms are available for community use. Other professionals are co-located and use the centres as a base i.e. Berkshire Women's Aid, NHS. Advisory Board members have been recruited and trained to increase their knowledge of their roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>2e. Work with transport providers to ensure that transport is accessible and affordable.</p>	<p>A scheme has been developed which offers preferential rates for season tickets on buses and trains.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p><b>3. To increase awareness and challenge perceptions of child poverty and build a framework for the future:</b></p>		
<p>3a. Develop a local understanding and an awareness of child poverty across all partners within the BFP.</p>	<p>The Strategy was initially launched through the Bracknell Forest Partnership (BFP) and a joint presentation was made with the Economic Skills Partnership to ensure links to the Economic Skills Strategy. The Strategy has also been discussed at the Children and Young People's Partnership Board on a number of occasions. In the development stages of the Strategy a wide range of stakeholders were involved in a partnership event.</p> <p>Considerable work has been undertaken with schools as key partners in addressing the impact of poverty on the educational attainment and progress of children and young people. Specifically, headteachers and governors have been provided with information related to the effective use of the Pupil Premium alongside training opportunities where strategies are discussed. The use and impact of the Pupil Premium is scrutinised by the LA and externally by Ofsted. It is also published by schools on their websites. Schools have considerable flexibility in how the Pupil Premium is used although the main focus should be in ensuring pupils at least meet expected levels in English and mathematics.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>3b. Continue to collect data for the local Needs Analysis to ensure that it is up to date, relevant and informs actions being undertaken</p>	<p>The data has been collected through the local needs analysis. This data has informed the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis which has informed the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p>	<p>Green</p>

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\* Case study relating to item 1a:

Jane visited the Grow our Own Project in 2009. She had recently come to this country from Poland with her partner and two young children, had very limited English and was keen to improve it as she wanted to find work. She had booked onto ESOL training at B&W College and attended one of the Family Learning Programmes the following term. Since that time She has undertaken several voluntary positions, passed a Preparing to Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course and has obtained paid teaching work. She has recently become a volunteer in the English Language Café.  
(Names have been changed.)