

Creating Opportunities

Breaking the Cycle - a strategy for reducing
child poverty in Bracknell Forest

2011 – 2014

Foreword

The Bracknell Forest Partnership has established a long-term vision for the borough set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Partnership brings together agencies that deliver public services (local councils, police, fire and rescue service and local health services) with businesses and people that reflect voluntary organisations and the community. The Bracknell Forest Partnership has a single purpose: to improve the quality of life for local people. The Partnership's vision is set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The vision is ambitious for all. The strategy sets out a picture of Bracknell Forest that is positive. By any measure, the borough is a prosperous place to live but it is important to recognise that that prosperity is not currently enjoyed by all.

Around 2,500 children in Bracknell Forest are growing up in poverty – around one in ten of all of our children. Poverty will affect every aspect of their lives – social, educational and personal. Children from poorer backgrounds do not perform as well as school as their peers in all stages of their development and the gap widens, as they get older. This influences their future prospects; increasing the likelihood that they will experience poorer health, poorer housing, unemployment and poverty into adulthood. The cycle of poverty is perpetuated in this way.

This strategy is about doing what we can to break this cycle. The Government remains committed to ending child poverty by 2020 and legislation requires local partners to collaborate to alleviate the impact of poverty in their areas and address the issues that mean that some young people struggle to build better lives for themselves in adulthood. The strategy sits beneath the Children and Young People's Plan, which identifies how we will work together to continue to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and families in the Borough.

A number of the priorities expressed in the Sustainable Community Strategy have particular relevance, none more so than *Nurturing the next generation*, in tackling the issues set out in this child poverty strategy.

I look forward to working with all of our partners in unlocking the issues that perpetuate the cycle of child poverty

Dr Gareth Barnard
Chairman Children and Young People's Partnership
Executive Member Children and Young People

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1 Introduction and legislative background

Under the requirements of the Child Poverty Act 2010¹, Bracknell Forest Local Authority and its partner agencies are required to cooperate and mitigate the effects of child poverty in the local area. This is to be done within the context of a national strategy to meet targets set out in the Act by 2020.

The Coalition Agreement reaffirmed the Government's commitment to ending child poverty by 2020. The strategy to be adopted by the Government is currently being consulted upon with a view to publication by the end of March 2011.

The Act sets out some key responsibilities for local authorities. These are as follows:

- **Cooperate** – put in place arrangements to work with partner authorities named in the Act.
- **Understand needs** – prepare and publish a child poverty needs assessment. This will enable an understanding of the characteristics of low income and disadvantaged families in their area and key drivers of poverty that must be addressed.
- **Develop and deliver a strategy** – prepare a joint child poverty strategy which sets out the contribution that each partner will make to address issues raised in the needs assessment.

The local authority has a lead role in setting up and maintaining the **cooperation** and partnership arrangements which will ensure that needs assessment and strategy are produced. It is important to ensure that all partners² are engaged in the development of an effective and sustainable strategy to reduce child poverty in the area.

In Bracknell Forest, there is a tight framework of partnerships beneath the Local Strategic Partnership [Bracknell Forest Partnership] and each partnership plays a role in reducing poverty and its impact on children, young people and families in the borough.

The Children and Young People's Partnership has taken a lead role in the development of the Child Poverty strategy work, and will report to the Bracknell Forest Partnership as the lead body.

As a first step, partners need to have an understanding of the local picture. A **needs assessment** is seen as a key activity to enable a real focus on those issues which impact on child poverty, and is important to consider how this can be aligned with other key strategies and needs assessments.

¹ Received Royal Assent on 25 March 2010 available at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/ukpga_2010009_en_1

² Statutory partners are: Local Authority, Primary Care Trust, Strategic Health Authority, Job Centre Plus, Police, Probation and Youth Offending Service, Transport. Other partners include: Voluntary and Community Sector, Citizens Advice Bureau, HM Revenue and Customs, Housing Sector, Schools and Colleges, Employers and Business Organisations, Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

The Child Poverty Needs Assessment provides an overview drawn from existing data, consultation and case studies complements and supports the Children and Young People's Needs Analysis³ and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment⁴. Together they inform the development of a local strategy owned by the Local Strategic Partnership.

The first version of the Needs Analysis will be published in March 2011. Over time and with further development and implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy, it will be strengthened as more areas of focus emerge and more current data becomes available.

The key aim of the **strategy** is to ensure there is a coordinated approach to addressing child poverty and to minimise the effects of child poverty across the borough, using the network of partner organisations.

The child poverty strategy will sit under the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan. The strategy outlined in the latter is designed to improve the well-being of all children, young people and families in Bracknell Forest including those experiencing poverty. This child poverty strategy gives a particular emphasis to that group of children and young people.

³ The Children and Young People's Needs Analysis enables us to consider a wide range of data and information on children and young people at borough, ward and at local super output level. This provides a picture of where there may be difficulties, and to consider how we might target support or resources in those areas. The needs analysis is carried out to support the development of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities, and to provide information to partners to inform their plans. The Children and Young People's Needs Analysis can be accessed on-line at via <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/living/liv-children-and-families/liv-change-for-children/liv-changes-in-the-council/liv-children-and-young-peoples-needs-analysis.htm>

⁴ The JSNA provides a much broader analysis of need, covering the total population of Bracknell Forest and has a particular focus on health and well-being. The JSNA is a joint activity between the local authority and health partners, and is intended to inform strategic commissioning of services to meet local need. The executive Summary of the JSNA can be found at <http://www.berkshireobservatory.org/Health/JSNA/>

2 Child Poverty – definition and targets

Defining 'poverty' is complex and contested. A range of definitions and characteristics are used to inform policy and service development. An easily understandable definition to start with is the following:

Children and young people “can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong”.⁵

This definition used by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) emphasises that poverty is relative (to time and place) and is more complex than being purely about 'survival'. The Child Poverty Act defines child poverty as follows:

“A child is taken to be living in poverty if the child experiences socio-economic disadvantage.”

The Act specifies what is meant by socio-economic disadvantage⁶ (of which there are several different categories). Translating this in to terms that can be measured this can be summarised as a child living in a household that has less than 60% of the national median income.

From this definition, the Child Poverty Act outlined the intention to develop a framework to monitor progress at a national and local level and established a number of targets. By 2020:

- Reduce to less than 10% the proportion of children living in relative low income households (currently 23%). Low income households have less than 60% median household income.
- Reduce to less than 5% the proportion of families living in combined low income and material deprivation.
- Reduce the proportion of children that experience long periods of poverty. This target will be set in secondary legislation when the required data is available. Households in persistent poverty have less than 60% median household income for at least three years.
- Reduce to less than 5% the proportion of children who live in absolute low income. This target measures the income of families against a level held constant over time. Households in absolute poverty will have an average household income of 60% of an agreed base line amount.

⁵ Townsend, P (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: a survey of household resources and standards of living*, London, Penguin

⁶ The Coalition Government has provisionally taken 'socio-economic disadvantage' to mean that children lack parental resources and/or opportunities to participate in meaningful activities, services and relationships. Such experiences during childhood negatively affect children's well-being, development and future life chances.

Understanding the terminology

Relative Poverty – refers to the number of children living in households below 60% of the contemporary median equivalised household income and captures the extent to which the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with rising incomes of the population. This is usually referred to as the ‘poverty line’ and has been accepted as the measure used across the EU to measure the extent of poverty across member states.

Median Income – is calculated by dividing households into two equal segments with the first half of households earning less than the median household income and the other half earning more. Median income is considered a better indicator than average household income as it is not affected by unusually high or low incomes. In money terms this is a household income of £16,000 per annum. (2010 figures).

In Bracknell Forest 60% of the median income equates to an income of just over £18,000.

Absolute poverty – refers to the numbers of children living below a particular threshold. This measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms.

Material deprivation – refers to the inability of individuals or households to afford consumption goods and activities that are typical in a society at a given point in time, irrespective of people’s preferences with respect to these items.

Deprivation – refers to a deprivation of goods, services and activities which the majority of the population defines as being the necessities of modern life.

Life Chances - refers to opportunities open to individuals to better the quality of life for themselves and their families and to fulfil their potential

Annex 1 and Annex 2 give further background information on child poverty.

3 Child Poverty – why does it matter?

Frank Field's Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances, which reported in December 2010, described the impact on children in the following way:

“Children from low income families in the UK often grow up to be poor adults. However poverty is measured, whether by family income, socio-economic status, or educational attainment, poverty blights the life chances of children. Compared to other children, those from households with low income or lower socio-economic status are: more likely to suffer infant mortality; more likely to have pre-school conduct problems; more likely to experience bullying and take part in risky behaviours as teenagers; less likely to do well at school; less likely to stay on at school after 16; and more likely to grow up to be poor themselves.”⁷

Children are now more likely to be in poverty than older people in the UK: the balance has gradually changed. The persistence of child and family poverty is damaging for society as a whole. Tangible costs include those of remedial services and the foregone taxes and benefits resulting from the reduced future earnings prospects of those who grow up poor.

Child and family poverty is the principal determinant of life chances and allowing children to grow up in poverty results in long term problems that can ultimately undermine social cohesion. The intergenerational impact of children growing up poor and becoming poor parents themselves is a significant issue.

The impact of growing up in poverty goes much deeper than just income deprivation. Children growing up in poverty are:

- more likely to experience unsafe environments
- more likely to suffer from social isolation
- less likely to achieve their academic potential and more likely to have limited aspirations
- more likely to experience a wide range of health inequalities
- less likely to gain access to services that meet their needs
- less likely to secure employment in adulthood.

The first principle for inclusion in the development of the national strategy enshrined in the Act is ‘to promote work as the best route out of poverty’ thus raising family income.

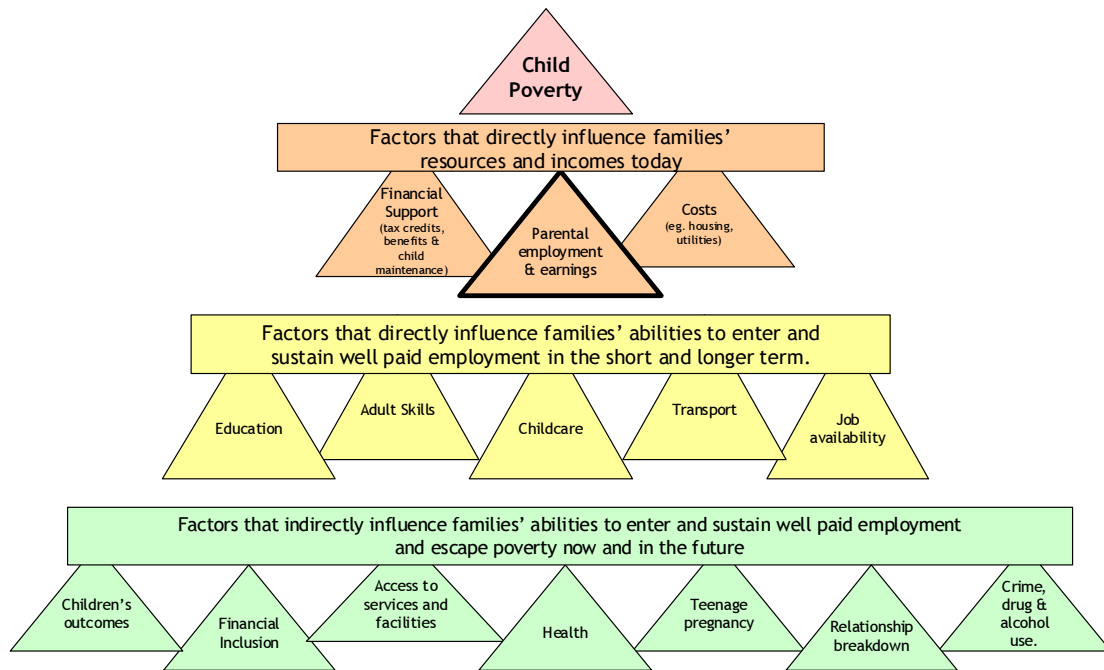
Annex 1 sets out some further background information.

⁷ Frank Field Dec (2010), *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, London, HM Government

4 What factors have an impact on Child Poverty?

Understanding the links between factors which impact on child poverty and their relevance to Bracknell Forest is an important step to deciding upon the actions that should be locally driven.

The diagram below sets out a representation of the factors that influence child poverty.



5 Child Poverty in Bracknell Forest

The Children and Young People's Strategic Plan sets out a 'story of place': it paints a positive picture but includes the following cautionary note:

"When describing Bracknell Forest, it is very easy to look at the bigger picture and to paint a positive view of life in the Borough. To most this is a pretty accurate reflection, however it is important to remember that individual lives and experiences are what matter most. It is important that a high quality of life in the Borough is available to everyone, and so those who deliver public services must remain responsive to changing needs and continually strive to improve."⁸

Overall Bracknell Forest is one of the least deprived local authority areas in the country: analysis of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 (see note about data below⁹) data shows that no LSOA¹⁰ areas are in the 20% most deprived areas in England. Over half of the areas (38 out of 74) are in the 20% least deprived areas of the country. This is 'big picture': the quotation above refers to 'individual lives and experiences' and as the information that follows shows there are children who are living in poverty. In some sense, it may be easier to bear being poor when everyone around you is also poor, and much harder in an affluent area such as Bracknell Forest where additional support networks may not be as well established.

Using National Indicator 116¹¹ as the best available measure: the most recent picture is as follows:

	Children in Poverty		
	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %
Bracknell Forest	10.3	10.8	11.1
South East	14.4	14.9	15.2
England	20.8	21.6	21.6

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

⁸ *Creating Opportunities: A strategic plan for children and young people in Bracknell Forest 2011-2014* Bracknell Forest Council, April 2011

⁹ A note about data: Throughout some data is fairly old, some is based on realistic assumptions, some is aggregated and rounded in ways that make it impossible to be precise. It is however possible to add local intelligence and draw workable, realistic conclusions from what is available. What is important is that the data used is 'good enough'. It is reasonable to assume that the impact of the recession means that there have not been significant improvements to the overall picture that is painted.

¹⁰ Small area geography known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs have between 1000 and 3000 people living in them with an average population of 1500 people. In most cases, these are smaller than wards, thus allowing the identification of small pockets of deprivation.

¹¹ Definition of NI116: The proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in families in receipt of tax credits whose reported income is less than 60% of median income

For Bracknell Forest the percentage equates to 2385 children under 16. In addition, there were approximately 215 young people over the age of 16 still classed as dependent on their parents who would be described as 'in poverty'.

There are likely to be more children in poverty than these figures suggest as they do not reflect the impact of the economic downturn and the recession.

Department for Work and Pensions tables allow for further analysis. Using the information on family size, it is possible to make estimate of the number of families that are 'in poverty' according to this measure.

Approximately 1400 families are affected. Most (80%) of these children are in small families of one or two children. There are no more than 100 families with four or more children and these tend to occur more frequently in the more deprived LSOAs.

Just over three quarters (76%) of these children are in families that are in receipt of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, in other words families where 'out-of-work' benefits are being claimed. Of this group, 85% of the children live in a family headed by a lone parent.

The remaining children (24%) are in families receiving Working Tax Credit (WTC) or Child Tax Credits (CTC). Sixty-six percent of these children are in lone parent families.

It is possible to analyse the data by the age of the children and young people. Data provided shows the following:

Age range	Percentage of children and young people in poverty
0-4	32%
5-10	34%
11-15	25%
16-19	8%

6 Where are the children in poverty in Bracknell Forest living?

There is not an even spread of disadvantage across Bracknell Forest. Using the 2007 data and focussing on the 92% of children under the age of 16 in poverty there is a marked difference between the ward with the highest percentage of children in poverty and the lowest.

The average percentage for Bracknell Forest is 11.1%. The ward with the highest percentage is Great Hollands North with just over 23% of 0-16 year olds in poverty. The ward with the lowest percentage is Warfield Harvest Ride with 3%.

Ward	Children in families in receipt of CTC (<60% median income) or IS/JSA	% of Children in "Poverty"
	Under 16	
Great Hollands North	240	23.3%
Priestwood and Garth	280	19.2%
Wildridings and Central	130	17.7%
Great Hollands South	190	17.5%
Harmans Water	240	17.5%
Old Bracknell	165	15.4%
Bullbrook	160	14.8%
Crown Wood	210	14.2%
Hanworth	180	12.2%
Central Sandhurst	85	9.2%
Owlsmoor	85	7.8%
Crowthorne	60	6.5%
College Town	75	5.9%
Binfield with Warfield	90	5.8%
Ascot	50	4.8%
Little Sandhurst and Wellington	40	4.0%
Winkfield and Cranbourne	30	3.6%
Warfield Harvest Ride	65	3.0%
Bracknell Forest Average		11.1%

The table illustrates the range but also a problem, whilst the greatest proportion of children in poverty is to be found in Great Hollands North, for the 65 children (in 45 families) in poverty in Warfield Harvest Ride the impact of living in poverty is as significant as for any child in Great Hollands North.

Using smaller area analysis, 50% of the children in poverty in Bracknell Forest live in 17 of the LSOAs across the Borough. There are 74 LSOAs in total.

LSOA		Children in families in receipt of CTC (<60% median income) or IS/JSA	% of Children in "Poverty"
		Under 16	
009B	Great Hollands North	100	32.0%
006D	Harmans Water	100	31.2%
011A	Great Hollands South	80	25.9%
009F	Great Hollands South	85	25.2%
004C	Priestwood and Garth	75	22.7%
007D	Wildridings and Central	35	22.2%
008D	Crown Wood	55	21.3%
007C	Wildridings and Central	65	20.5%
009C	Great Hollands North	90	20.4%
007B	Old Bracknell	85	20.2%
004B	Priestwood and Garth	65	19.8%
004D	Priestwood and Garth	75	19.8%
006A	Bullbrook	90	19.7%
004A	Priestwood and Garth	50	18.5%
009A	Great Hollands North	50	18.2%
010A	Crown Wood	45	17.1%
013D	Owlsmoor	55	16.9%
Bracknell Forest Average			11.1%

At this level, the range across the borough is from just over 30% of children in the LSOA 'in poverty' to one LSOA with no recorded children in this position. Areas with the highest levels of child poverty tend to be surrounded by, or are located near to other areas with above average levels.

Great Hollands North comprises three LSOAs. It has the 'worst' (32%), the 9th ranked (20.4%) and the 15th (18.2%). Showing more variation is Harmans Water with five LSOAs including the 'second worst' (31.2%) and the LSOA ranked at number 58 (3.9%)

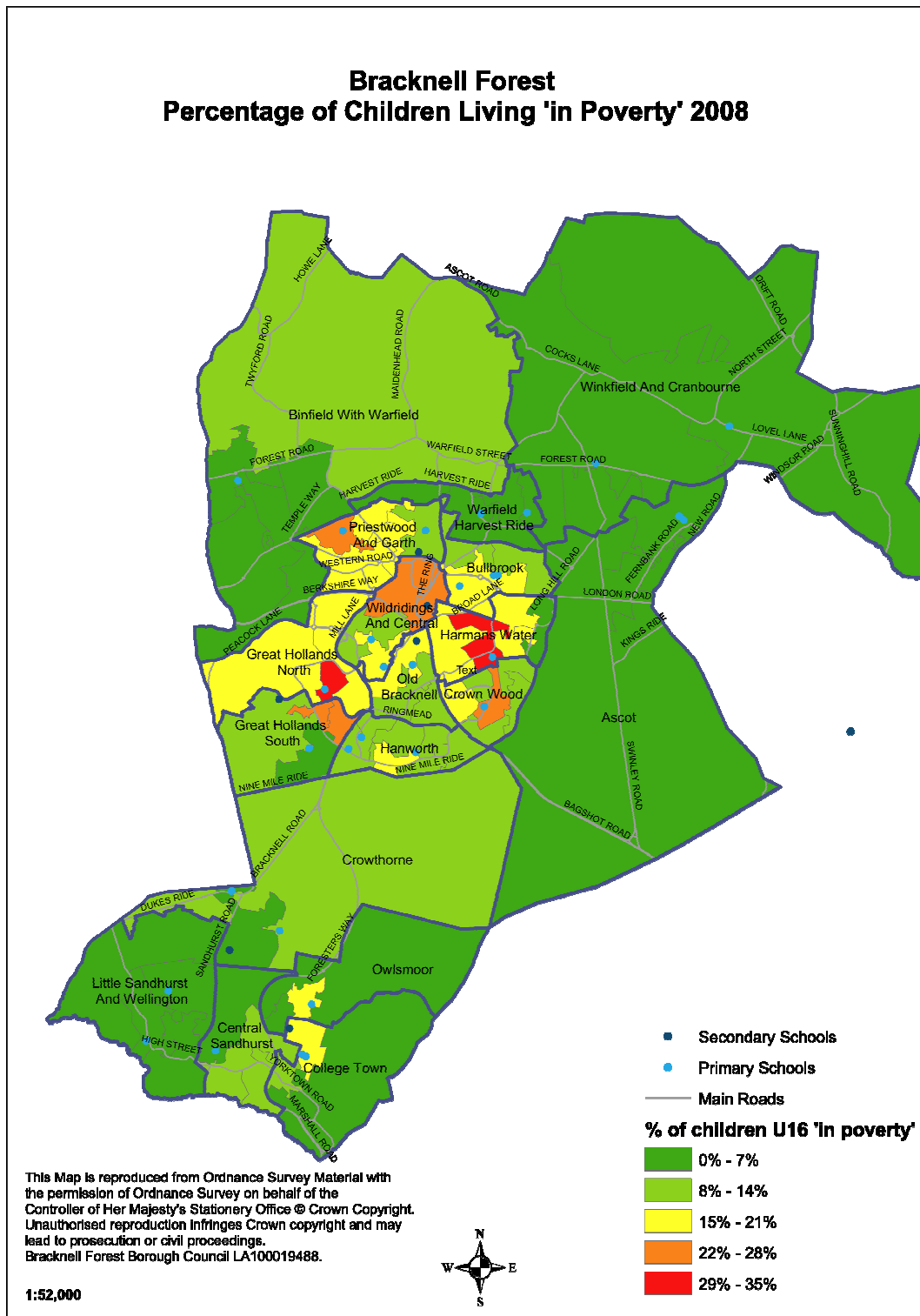
The 17 worst affected areas are almost all clustered in Bracknell town (an LSOA in Owlsmoor is the exception) and do not spread into the other town and parish areas.

Supporting Data

Whilst the data above focuses on the outcome of a particular measure of child poverty, the Needs Analysis that supports this strategy confirms the conclusion that the disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of identifiable areas in Bracknell Forest. Examples of this are data showing the uptake of free school meals across the borough, the prevalence of NEET young people, health deprivations figures, educational performance and softer information such as the uptake of debt counselling by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the distribution of food parcels from the Food Bank at the Kerith Centre.

Whilst there are clear geographical areas to target, there are children right across the Borough in poverty. On the ground understanding of local issues and contact with families in need, through local service providers means that it is possible to ensure that no one family slips through the net, wherever they might live in the Borough.

% of children living in Households earning below 60% median National Income by LSOA



7 Current issues

The first principle for inclusion in the development of the national strategy enshrined in the Act is 'to promote work as the best route out of poverty' thus raising family income. For children, living in a household where there is no adult in work gives those children a 63% risk of relative poverty. With one adult in work that risk reduces to 29% and with all adults working, the risk falls to 8%¹².

Concerns about 'in work poverty' have become more widespread in recent years. Nationally half of the children in poverty live in a household where someone is in work – most in 'couple' families as shown in the table below:

Family Type	Economic Status	Distribution of Child Poverty
Lone Parent	Full time work	2%
	Part-time work	6%
	Not working	31%
Couple	Self employed	12%
	Both in full time work	1%
	One full time, one part time	4%
	One full time, one not working	14%
	One or more in part-time work	11%
	Both not working	19%

The issue for many families is that earners move in and out of insecure work. The barriers that prevent unemployed parents working – low or no skills, childcare, inflexible working patterns etc are the same ones that often prevent progress in the workplace. There are inextricable links between those employed in low paid employment and 'cycling' between in work poverty and worklessness¹³.

Changes to the benefit system, set out in the Welfare Reform Bill 2011 are designed to address some of these problems with an anticipated implementation date of 2013.

The recent report, *No City Left Behind*¹⁴ identified Bracknell as being best placed in the South East to recover from the recession because of the mix of industries, the lack of dependency on the public sector and the knowledge base of the local population. The challenge will be to ensure that increasing job opportunities locally reach those parts of the population that need them.

Whilst that may be the case the economic downturn, welfare reform, reductions in government expenditure and continuing cost of living increases will impact negatively on the number of children in poverty in the short term.

¹² *Households Below Average Income (2008)* DWP

¹³ *Building Britain's Recovery (2009)* DWP

¹⁴ *No City Left Behind*, (2010) The Work Foundation

8 Priorities for Action

The Sustainable Communities Strategy sets out a vision for improving the quality of life for all people in Bracknell Forest.

The ambition, set out in the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan is:

“For all children and young people in the Borough is to provide opportunities to maximise their potential and strive for excellence. We want our children and young people to do well in school, to be happy and healthy and to grow up to become well adjusted adults, able to play an active and confident role within the community.”

For some of our children and young people, living in poverty is a significant barrier to achieving that ambition.

This strategy, *Breaking the Cycle* has both short and long term ambitions. The short-term ambition is to impact on the lives of children who are currently living in poverty. The longer-term ambition is to break the cycle that leads poor children to become poor adults, in turn parenting poor children themselves.

Four priority areas for action are identified to address these issues. Three of them are outcome priorities and one of them is a priority that will underpin the work that is done to alleviate child poverty.

Outcome Priorities

- To raise the family income of those families living in poverty
- To mitigate the impacts of living in poverty
- To improve outcomes for children and young people, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty

Underpinning Priority

- To increase awareness and challenge perceptions of child poverty and build a framework for the future

9 Where have these Priorities come from?

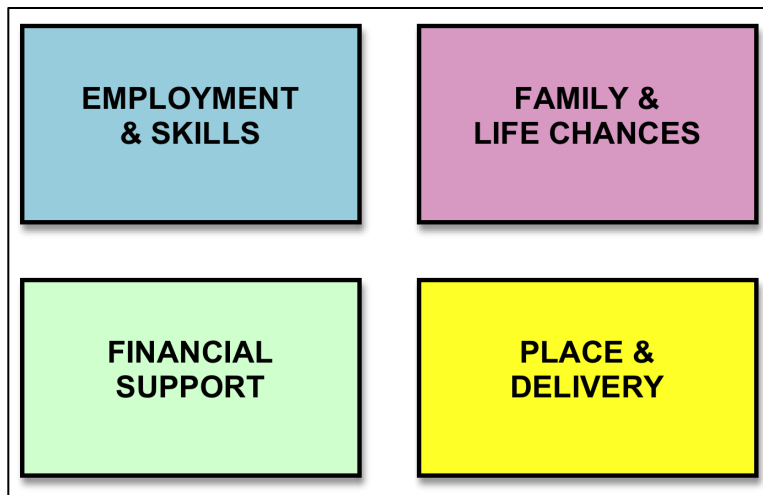
The National Strategy will be published in late March 2011. The Bracknell Forest strategy is broad enough to include any additional areas for development in our Action Plan.

The National Strategy will be based on the following principles, which aim to:

- Promote work as the best route out of poverty
- Support family relationships and family life
- Facilitate early intervention and prevention
- Promote excellence in delivery, working with partners to ensure that ending child poverty is everyone's business
- Ensure the sustainability, cost effectiveness and affordability of the strategy.

Needs Analysis, performance data and consultation

Draft guidance that accompanies the requirements of the Child Poverty Act is based around a set of so called 'building blocks'. Along with these building blocks a set of performance indicators has been specified that have relevance in each area. These are set out in Annex 2.



To build up a local picture under each of the 'blocks' relevant information has been drawn from the following sources:

- Performance review and inspection findings
- Children and Young People's Needs Analysis, JSNA, last National Indicator set, Economic Indicators (prepared by the Economy and skills Partnership)
- Consultation managed by the Youth Council, the CYPT Visioning Day, the Young People's consultation event, targeted consultation with children/young people and parents, Consultation Day on Poverty Strategy for Professionals.
- The Tell Us Survey
- National research and reports of National Reviews.

The needs analysis that supports this Strategy considers data and performance in each of these areas. Within each of these 'blocks' there is a consideration of Vulnerable Groups.

Some of the key issues that have emerged are set out in the sections below:

Parental employment and skills

Looks at worklessness, and barriers to work such as ill-health, lack of skills and labour market experience, cost and availability of childcare and flexible working arrangements.

Aim: More families are in work that pays and have the support that they need to progress

- Proportion of the population of working age seeking employment rose from 2.7% in June 2008 to 6.6% in June 2010
- The local population is well qualified with higher than average proportions qualified to NVQ level 4 but 7.6% of the 16-64 age group have no qualifications
- Significantly higher than national and south east proportions of local jobs are service sector based (94.3%) with correspondingly lower proportions in the construction and manufacturing sectors
- Job loss is one of the biggest triggers of poverty and there is often an intergenerational cycle that results
- Barriers to returning to work such as transport, childcare, adult education opportunities are significant for some sectors of the local population
- Being employed is not always enough to move out of poverty. In work poverty is an issue.

Life Chances

Considers health, education and future prospects

Aim: Poverty in childhood does not translate to poor experience and outcomes in later life

- In Bracknell Forest the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% on the EYFS profile and the rest is 28.6%
- The achievement gap for children on FSM and their peers at KS 4 is 29.5%. This is higher than those receiving FSM nationally (27.8%).
- The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and mathematics increased to 56.9% in 2010 and A Level average point score also increased. These continue an increasing trend over recent years.

- All schools in Bracknell Forest met the deadline for delivering the full 'extended schools' offer. 81% of young people agree that there are lots of activities to do in school at lunchtime or the end of the day.
- Health inequalities exist in Bracknell Forest – life expectancy for men from the most deprived areas is over four years lower than for those from the least deprived areas
- Breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks have continued to rise but levels in the central wards in Bracknell town remain at lower levels
- The precise number of young carers living in Bracknell Forest is unknown. Extrapolating from national research suggests that it equates to 450 children and young people.
- Bracknell Forest continues to have relatively high numbers of young people who are NEET. Most affected areas are Old Bracknell (NB Rainforest Walk and Holly House), Bullbrook and Harmans Water have higher than expected levels.
- Two thirds of local young people say that they hope to go on to university/higher education. Sixty percent believe that they will be able to get the sort of job that they want.

Financial Support

Focus on the financial support available to parents and families through the benefits system, improved work incentives, improved financial inclusion, and advice and support, in conjunction with voluntary sector organisations.

Aim: Financial support and advice is responsive to the immediate needs of families

- Almost every ward has seen an increase in the number of benefit claimants since 2009.
- Free school meals – difference between eligibility and take up. Disparity appears to be greatest in areas of highest poverty.
- Three quarters of the children living 'in poverty' in Bracknell Forest are in a family in receipt of Income support or Job Seekers Allowance.
- The rate of take up of formal childcare by low income working families in Bracknell Forest has risen steadily and at 18.5% is higher than national averages.
- Relative stability of income received from benefits and the difficulties of receiving benefits again after a short period of work can be a disincentive to taking a job.
- Pattern of distribution of Food Bank parcels broadly aligns with most disadvantaged areas – main reason for need is benefit delay.
- Increasing pattern of CAB advice in 2009/10, CAB dealt with 753 clients with debt issues, an increase of 40% on the previous year.

- In 2009/10, EMA payments were made to 755 young people aged 16,17 and 18 in Bracknell Forest – impact of withdrawal needs investigation.
- A third of Bracknell Forest Young people say that cost is a barrier to them doing the activities that they would like to compared with a quarter nationally.
- Young people want more advice and support on ‘money matters’.

Place and delivery

Considers housing, transport, crime and communities

Aim: Children’s environment allows them to thrive and families can easily access the support that they need

- The number of homeless households for whom the council has a statutory duty to re-house reduced from 118 in 2008/9 to 35 in 2009/10.
- Community Cohesion: 82% of respondents believe that Bracknell Forest is a place where people get on well with each other.
- Bracknell Forest has the lowest levels of crime in Berkshire and overall levels continue to fall but surveys show, including those targeted at young people, that there is a disproportionate fear of being a victim
- Children’s Centres are based in the right places, are well established and are providing an increasing range of appropriate activities.
- Higher than national proportions of children and young people participate in positive activities. 61% rate parks and play areas as good or better.
- Young people report that access to and the cost of transport remains an issue for them

The Needs Analysis can be accessed at <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/living/liv-children-and-families/liv-change-for-children/liv-changes-in-the-council/liv-children-and-young-peoples-needs-analysis.htm>

10 Developing the Priorities

Breaking the Cycle - the Child Poverty strategy - has been developed to align closely with the overarching framework of the Bracknell Forest Partnership Sustainable Communities Strategy and “Creating Opportunities” – A Joint Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in Bracknell Forest 2011 – 2014.

The diagram in section 3 – factors which affect child poverty gives a structure for action. There are thematic aspects such as employment and skills but also geographical areas on which to focus activity.

Outcome Priorities

1. To raise the family income of those families living in poverty

- (a) Addressing parental worklessness
- (b) Reducing the number of 16, 17 and 18 year olds not in education, training and employment (NEET)
- (c) In-work Poverty
- (d) Linking Child Poverty strategy to the employment and skills strategy
- (e) Childcare – links to the Childcare Sufficiency Audit
- (f) Advice and support on financial entitlements in Partnership with Job Centre Plus and voluntary sector such as CAB
- (g) Financial Inclusion e.g. through Credit Union

2. To mitigate the impacts of living in poverty

- (a) 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
- (b) Maintain a range of extended services in schools
- (c) Improve access to health services and health promotion opportunities
- (d) Maximise the use of Children’s Centres as sources of support, advice and community for parents and children
- (e) Work with transport providers to ensure that transport is accessible and affordable

3. To improve outcomes for children and young people with a focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty

- (a) Act on the four outcome and six underpinning priorities set out in the Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan:
 - (i) Raise levels of attainment and pupil progress across all phases of learning for all pupils
 - (ii) Improve physical and emotional health and well-being from conception to birth and throughout life
 - (iii) Safeguard and protect children and young people
 - (iv) Improve outcomes for all children and young people especially the vulnerable
 - (v) Support children and young people through the key transitions in life

- (vi) Embed prevention and early intervention into the routine delivery of all services for children and young people
- (vii) Close the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers
- (viii) Strengthen parents and families through effective support and engagement
- (ix) Support children and young people to be active citizens within their own communities
- (x) Ensure good quality service provision through effective commissioning.

Underpinning Priority

4. To increase awareness and challenge perceptions of child poverty and build a framework for the future

- (a) Develop a local understanding and an awareness of child poverty across all partners within the BFP
- (b) Continue to collect data for the local Needs Analysis to ensure that it is up to date, relevant and informs actions being undertaken
- (c) Develop Local Life chances Indicator set to measure progress over time

The action plan to support the delivery of the strategy will be completed following further consultation with the Bracknell Forest Partnership, and the Children and Young People's Partnership (formerly the Children & Young People's Trust) to ensure effective coordination of priorities and resources across the range of partners. It will also take into account further national guidance on child poverty.

Annex 1: The extent and impact of child poverty

– Some background information

Child Poverty and work

Children growing up in workless households are one of the groups most at risk of poverty and if the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty is to be broken we know that coordinated efforts to move parents off benefits and into work are essential.

Living in a household where no adult is working puts a child at a 63% risk of relative poverty. This is much higher than both the 29% risk of poverty for children in households where at least one, but not all adults are in work and the 8% risk of poverty for children in households where all adults are at work¹⁵.

Over recent years, the issue of in work poverty has become increasingly important. Half of the children in poverty live in a household where someone is in work. Efforts to reduce child poverty must address the ability of those who are in low/no skilled work to progress in the labour market.

Of the 1.5 million families in working poverty, over 25% are in couple families where one parent works and the other parent does not work at all. Another 21% are in couple families with only part time work.

The barriers that prevent parents from entering the workplace such as low and no skills, the availability of childcare and the inflexibility of working patterns are often the same barriers that prevent them from progressing in the workplace. In addition there are inextricable links between those employed in low paid employment and so called cycling between in work poverty and worklessness. The challenge in terms of service provision is to ensure that the support services (including good quality and affordable childcare) are in place to support working parents and their children.

Child poverty, education and skills

Educational attainment in the UK is more strongly linked to social background than in most other countries. Improving educational attainment is key if attempts to lifting children out of poverty are to be successful. Children growing up in poverty are less likely to stay on at school (or attend school regularly) and therefore less likely to get good qualifications. The negative impact of poverty can be seen even earlier with clear differences emerging in the Foundation Stage.

Child poverty and health

Those from disadvantaged groups are more likely to have poorer health and die at a younger age than the rest of the population. Poverty has an impact on the health of children and young people and their health in later life.

Life expectancy and infant mortality rates, obesity rates, tooth decay, teenage pregnancy rates and mental health problems (particularly depression, anxiety and phobias) are far worse for those who grow up in poverty compared with the rest of the population.

¹⁵ DWP Households below average income (2008)

Child poverty, housing and fuel poverty

Poor housing has a negative impact on children's overall wellbeing, their educational attainment and overall development. Children growing up in poverty are more at risk of living in temporary, overcrowded and/or non-decent homes. Levels of fuel poverty are also a major concern: fuel poverty means that parents spend more than 10% of their income on fuel to warm their home.

Child poverty, transport and access to services

Families living in poverty often experience problems with transport accessibility and affordability. This can be a concern given that transport can determine the accessibility to the range of services needed by families. For example, high transport costs can act as a disincentive to work and can restrict access to supermarkets resulting in poorer families needing to use more expensive local shops. Families from deprived areas may have additional costs for travel to access available childcare. This in turn can act as a disincentive to taking up employment or training.

Child poverty and financial exclusion

Low income households often experience difficulty in accessing mainstream financial products (such as basic bank accounts and affordable loans). The burden of debt repayments by one or both parents can cause severe hardship for children. As well as impacting on their physical health (poor nutrition etc) children are often excluded from the social interaction that they need for their development.

Financial exclusion can lead to acute levels of debt that can act as a disincentive to work. People in debt may also be concerned about the cost of moving into employment - such as bridging the gap between leaving the security of benefits and receiving the first pay check. Furthermore high levels of stress, anxiety and depression associated with debt can result in employees taking time off work and/or job loss.

Child poverty and social isolation

Living in poverty does not just mean missing out on the material basics of life but also leads to the inability to participate fully in society. On a very basic level parents cannot afford to pay for after school clubs, school trips, birthday parties and often cannot afford to entertain their children's friends.

Poorer families find the start of the school year period particularly challenging and struggle to find money for necessities such as school uniform and equipment¹⁶. Similarly, a report commissioned by Sport England highlighted that poverty acts as a significant barrier to participation on sport¹⁷.

Social and emotional development

The development of social and emotional skills which relate to attitudes, beliefs and levels of understanding including: self awareness, the ability to manage feelings, motivation, empathy towards others and social skills all help to shape how young people feel about themselves, others from different backgrounds and the extent to which they take control of their own lives.

¹⁶ *Back to School Survey Save the Children (2009)*

¹⁷ *Understanding Participation in Sport Sport England (2006)*

There is evidence to show that disproportionately it is young people from more deprived areas and poorer backgrounds who lack the circumstances through which to develop these skills and consequently are at risk of poorer outcomes¹⁸.

Community Cohesion

Failure to address child and family poverty will undermine our efforts to develop and maintain cohesive communities. Reducing child and family poverty will see a return in increased educational attainment, increased employment and income levels, reduced crime and disorder which will contribute to the achievement of more cohesive and sustainable communities.

Persistent and severe child and family poverty

Most children in poverty experience it as a persistent condition. Not only is this damaging to individuals but it also has implications for service provision because issues are more entrenched and take more input from services and agencies to resolve.

Children growing up in workless households, those in lone parent families, in rented accommodation and those whose parents have no qualifications are identified as those most at risk of living in severe poverty.

Economic costs and the increased demand on public services

The economic costs of allowing a new generation to grow up in poverty are vast. Public spending to address the consequences of child poverty is approximately £12bn per annum, with 60% of this funding personal social care, school education and criminal justice. The annual cost of below average employment rates and earnings levels amongst adults who grew up in poverty is estimated to be £13bn per annum, of which £5bn represents extra benefits payments and lower tax revenues and £8bn is lost earnings to individuals affecting their spending power in the economy¹⁹.

¹⁸ *Aiming High for Young People* HM Treasury (2007)

¹⁹ *Estimating the costs of poverty* Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008)

Annex 2 - The Building Blocks: Basket of Indicators

The Child Poverty Unit has defined a 'basket of indicators' from the National Indicator Set which whilst being revised gives some useful recent information. These PIs are set out in a more detail below.

Employment and skills

Looks at worklessness, and barriers to work such as ill-health, lack of skills and labour market experience, cost and availability of childcare and flexible working arrangements

NI number	Description	Value	England	Data point
NI 118	Childcare take-up (low income working families) (%)	18.5	17.8	FY 2007/08
NI 146	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	14.9	6.8	FY 2008/09
NI 150	Working adults seeing mental health services (%)	14.6	3.4	FY 2008/09
NI 151	Overall employment rate (%)	81.2	73.0	CY 2008
NI 151f	Overall employment rate- female (%)	77.6	69.1	CY 2008
NI 151m	Overall employment rate- male (%)	84.6	76.5	CY 2008
NI 161	Learners achieving L1 literacy qualification (no.)	456	320,542	AY 2008/09
NI 162	Learners achieving numeracy L3 qualification (no.)	159	116,248	AY 2008/09
NI 163	Working age population qualified to at least L2 (%)	75.0	69.4	CY 2008
NI 166	Average earnings of employees in the area (no.)	667.2	495.2	FY 2009/10

Life Chances

A focus on health, education and future prospects

NI number	Description	Value	England	Data point
NI 076	Achievement of KS2 L4 in English & Maths (no.)	2	1,472	AY 2008/09
NI 078	Achievement: 5 A*-C GCSEs (English & Math) (no.)	1	-	AY 2008/09
NI 082	Inequality gap in achievement at L2 by 19 (%)	50.8	56.8	AY 2008/09
NI 092	Achievement gap: low. 20% EYFSP & the rest (%)	28.6	33.9	AY 2008/09
NI 101	Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (%)	0.0	9.8	AY 2008/09
NI 102a	FSM/non-FSM achievement gap at KS 2 and 4 (%)	39.1	39.1	AY 2008/09
NI 102b	FSM/non-FSM achievement gap: 5A*-C GCSE (%)	29.5	27.8	AY 2008/09
NI 105	SEN/non-SEN achievement gap (%)	50.1	46.5	AY 2008/09
NI 106	Young people from low incomes entering HE (%)	24	18	AY 2007/08
NI 112	Under 18 conception rate (%)	-45.3	-13.3	CY 2008
NI 117	16-18 yr old NEETs (%)	6.9	6.7	CY 2008

Financial Support

Focus on the financial support available to parents and families through the benefits system, improved work incentives, improved financial inclusion, and advice and support, in conjunction with voluntary sector organisations.

NI number	Description	Value	England	Data point
NI 181	Time to process HB/CTB new claims (no.)	-	-	Q2 2009/10

Place and delivery

A focus on housing, transport, crime and communities -

NI number	Description	Value	England	Data point
NI 156	Households in temporary accommodation (no.)	15	53,370	Q3 2009/10
NI 158	(non) Decent council homes (%)	-	22.0	FY 2008/09
NI 172	VAT registered businesses showing growth (%)	12.7	14.2	CY 2008
NI 176	Working people with access to public transport (%)	80	-	CY 2008
NI 187a	People on IB in homes with low energy ratings (%)	3	-	FY 2008/09
NI 187b	People on IB in homes with high energy ratings (%)	36	-	FY 2008/09