

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY MANAGING DIRECTOR

TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board		
DATE:	30 th January 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	Tackling Poverty In Reading Strategy and Needs Analysis		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	Cllr Lovelock	PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SERVICE:	Corporate Support Services - Policy	WARDS:	Borough-wide
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents the draft Tackling Poverty in Reading strategy, action plan and needs analysis.

1.2 The strategy and action plan were developed with partners through the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership.

1.3 The strategy has 4 aims:

1. Improving Life Chances - breaking the cycle.
2. Supporting those who can't work / on low incomes - income maximisation.
3. Increasing Employability / Addressing Low Income - up-skilling and employment support.
4. Creating Sustainable Communities - improving quality of life in our more deprived communities.

1.4 These aims are pursued through six themes identified at the Tackling Poverty in Reading event held in November 2013:

1. Advice on Tax credits and Entitlements
2. Affordable Credit
3. Support into Work
4. Best start in life
5. In work poverty
6. Affording Basic Needs

A further 4 cross-cutting themes run throughout the strategy these are: Disabled People, Older People, Tackling Poverty in a Multicultural Community, Health and Wellbeing.

1.5 The Tackling Poverty in Reading strategy and action plan are provided at Appendix 1.

1.6 The Tackling Poverty in Reading Needs Analysis is provided at Appendix 2.

1.7 Appendix 1 - Tackling Poverty in Reading strategy and action plan

1.8 Appendix 2 - Tackling Poverty in Reading Needs Analysis

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Board note the report.
- 2.2 That the health aspects of the Poverty Needs Analysis and action plan be included in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 In November 2013 the Council held a 'Tackling Poverty in Reading' community engagement event to initiate the development of a strategy to tackle poverty in Reading in a context where welfare reforms, reducing public sector expenditure and the slow economic recovery are creating increasing hardship for many residents, including some of the most vulnerable; and where there is an increasing negative public perception about people in poverty.
- 3.2 The Council's Policy Committee (January 2014) agreed that a strategy and action plan based on the priorities and pledges made at the event would be prepared.
- 3.3 Health and Wellbeing Board received a report on 21st March 2014 and agreed that the Board would be the lead on the Health and Well-being theme in the Tackling Poverty strategy.
- 3.4 The Board was also invited to recommend health service representatives to join the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership.
- 3.5 The Council's Policy Committee on 1st December agreed the Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan which had been prepared through the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership.

4. THE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 The strategy has 4 aims:
 - 1. Improving Life Chances - breaking the cycle.
 - 2. Supporting those who can't work / on low incomes - income maximisation.
 - 3. Increasing Employability / Addressing Low Income - up-skilling and employment support.
 - 4. Creating Sustainable Communities - improving quality of life in our more deprived communities.
- 4.2 These aims are pursued through six themes identified at the Tackling Poverty in Reading event held in November 2013:

1. Advice on Tax credits and Entitlements
 2. Affordable Credit
 3. Support into Work
 4. Best start in life
 5. In work poverty
 6. Affording Basic Needs
- 4.3 A further 4 cross-cutting themes run throughout the strategy these are: Disabled People, Older People, Tackling Poverty in a Multicultural Community, Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.4 The strategy does not seek to catalogue and pull together all existing activity that contributes towards alleviating poverty and which is already carried out as part of the core business of the Council and its partners. Rather, it sets out the priorities for action that the Council and its partners have identified are things we can pool our resources on locally to make a difference.

5. POVERTY NEEDS ANALYSIS

- 5.1 A Poverty Needs Analysis was prepared to support the development of the strategy. It provides an analysis of the key data informing each key theme. The Needs Analysis is provided at Appendix 2. This and a set of themed Fact Sheets are provided on Reading Borough Council's website at www.reading.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty

The data shows that:

- Reading's economy is buoyant but there is a growing differential in wealth and across geographies
- Low unemployment levels mask high costs of living and low wages for many. National research shows that out-of-work benefits fall far short of what is needed for a minimum acceptable standard of living but also that families working full time on the minimum wage also fall significantly short of meeting their needs.
- JSA claimant rate for over 50 is higher than both the South East and UK
- Reading has a significant number of NEETs, at 6.3%
- Child poverty is above average in Reading.
- 30% of Reading Pupils eligible for pupil premium. That is the highest in Berkshire where the average is 20%. The gap in attainment at GCSE level for those pupils eligible for pupil premium is 28.5 % points.
- The cost of child poverty in Reading is calculated to be £85m pa in cost of services (e.g. NHS and schools), lost tax receipts, cost of benefits and loss of earnings (CPAG 2013)
- The highest numbers of children in relative poverty are in areas of South Reading and the Amersham Road area, with a number also around the Oxford Road area.
- Almost three quarters of children in poverty live in lone parent families, higher than both the national and regional figures.
- A higher proportion of Mixed race and Black children are eligible for free school meals
- Homelessness figures have risen sharply in the last year

- Reading has a higher degree of overcrowding than both the South East or England
- 9.8% of households in Reading are living in fuel poverty. While energy efficiency levels in Reading have improved since 2006, fuel poverty has increased, primarily related to increases in energy tariffs and the economic circumstances of households affected.
- Fuel poverty is linked with excess winter deaths in older people. The excess winter deaths ratio in Reading is currently one of the highest in the country.
- The proportion of deprived people aged 65 and over is well above the average for South East.
- The starkest statistic is that life expectancy is 9.2years lower for men and 6.3years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Reading than in the least deprived areas.
- The level of teenage pregnancy is significantly worse than the England average.
- In 2012/13, the debts of clients coming to Reading CAB and Reading Welfare Rights Unit totalled £2,245,231.

5.2 Page 36 of the Poverty Needs Analysis sets out the Health specific data on poverty. A presentation on the health related data on poverty will be provided at the meeting.

6. HEALTH SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY

- 6.1 The LSP Breaking the Cycle of Poverty group has taken the lead on the Child Poverty strand of the strategy. Its focus has been to address the evidence that children living in income-deprived families are prone to significantly worse health outcomes, both during childhood and later in life.

There are a high number of children in Reading not attending 2 year old Health Reviews, resulting in more than half of Reading's children not having health and development issues beginning to be addressed at an early stage, especially around healthy eating.

The group is identifying specific action to support the health visiting service to increase attendance at 2 year Health Reviews in Reading to ensure that more families can access the support they need.

The target is to bring attendance at 2 year Health Reviews in Reading from 45-50% to 60%.

- 6.2 The Winter Watch scheme is funded through Public Health to provide draught proofing and home insulation to support those living in fuel poverty. Target groups included pensioners, families with young children, people with serious illness and disabilities and those on a wide range of welfare benefits. This is in partnership with a number of local community groups and voluntary organisations including Reading CAB, Berkshire Community Foundation, Aster Living, Age UK Berkshire, Reading Voluntary Action and Transition Town Reading.

7. TACKLING POVERTY DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP

7.1 The Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council has overseen the development of the Tackling Poverty strategy and action plan. The Partnership includes the lead partners on the strategy:

- Reading Advice Network (Theme lead - Advice and Support)
- Berkshire Community Savings and Loans (Theme lead - Affordable Credit)
- Elevate Reading partnership
- LSP Breaking the Cycle of Poverty group ((Theme lead - Best Start in Life)
- Reading UK CIC (Theme lead - Support in to Work and In Work Poverty)
- Acre (Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality)
- Health and Wellbeing Board (Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Reading CCGs)

7.2 The Partnership meets on a quarterly basis to review economic and poverty data and monitors the progress of the action plan.

8. PROPOSAL

8.1 It is proposed that the health aspects of the Poverty Needs Analysis and action plan be included in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

9.1 This decision contributes to the Council's strategic aims to develop a sustainable economy at the heart of the Thames Valley; and to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all because the strategy and plan will address support into work, low pay and in work poverty, health inequality and will specifically address poverty faced by disabled people, children, older people and ethnic minority communities.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

10.1 The Tackling Poverty in Reading event in November 2013 was an open event. Invitations went out to public service providers, businesses, employers, schools, providers of employment, training, voluntary and community organisations, trades unions, faith organisations and residents involvement databases, through both the Council's and partners' routes. The event was promoted through the website, twitter and press release. Around 200 people attended on the night.

10.2 Participants were invited, when registering, to say what their main concern was about poverty in Reading. This survey gave a good indication of the key Poverty issues for Reading. Their responses were used to theme the workshops and subsequently the themes of the strategy.

10.3 Experiences of poverty of local people were recorded on at the event through video, written word, case studies and participation in the workshops.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 11.2 The Equality duty is relevant to the decision to develop a strategy and action plan on tackling poverty in Reading. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The assessment is that poverty has a differential impact on different equality groups and a poverty strategy and action plan will positively impact on these groups. The assessment report was presented to Policy committee in January 2014.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Under the Child Poverty Act 2010, local authorities and named partner authorities have a statutory duty to co-operate to reduce and mitigate the impacts of child poverty in their area (these named partner authorities to whom the duty applies include health, the police, youth offending teams, probation and Jobcentre Plus); to prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment and prepare a joint child poverty strategy for the local area.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The development of a Tackling Poverty strategy and action plan will be met within existing budgets.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 Minutes of Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership