

# CHILD POVERTY

Children & Young People's Trust, September 2012



## I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The city currently has a target to reduce child poverty to 10% by the year 2020. The latest figures show that 22.1%<sup>1</sup> of children in Plymouth are living in poverty. The most recently available national data shows that families earning less than £214 per week are classed as living in poverty. In Plymouth this equates to 11,700 children living in poverty, of which 10,380 are aged under-16. There are also five Local Super Output Areas which have over 50% of children in poverty including Devonport, Stonehouse, City Centre & North Prospect / Weston Mill. The highest level of child poverty is in North Prospect.

1.2 Since 2010, the Children and Young People's Trust has led the child poverty agenda on behalf of the Plymouth 2020 Partnership as part of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14. While fully acknowledging the excellent work of the Children and Young People's Trust over the past eighteen months, agreement has now been reached that Plymouth City Council will become the lead on tackling child poverty for the city, working closely with key partners and partnerships, including the Children and Young People's Trust.

1.3 Plymouth City Council has made a commitment to tackling child poverty in the city and this is reflected in the Corporate Plan 2012-15. Reducing child poverty is a shared priority with partners in Plymouth and a level 1 measure under 'Reducing Inequalities' in the Plymouth 2020 Partnership's performance framework.

1.4 An informal child poverty cross party working group has been meeting monthly since April 2012. The purpose of this group is to oversee the development of an evidence based child poverty strategy and action plan for the city for three years 2013 – 2016.

## 2. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING A CITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

2.1 A report to the 11 September 2012 Cabinet outlined the process to develop a three year local child poverty strategy and action plan by April 2013 including key milestones. The proposals identify four work streams:

1. **GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP** - To generate leadership and ownership of the child poverty agenda at a senior level to enable the development and effective delivery of the strategy and action plan at all organisational levels.

2. **NEEDS ASSESSMENT & EVIDENCE BANK** - to provide the evidence to develop the strategy and action plan for Plymouth. This will form part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and be reflected in the Plymouth Report.

3. **COMMUNICATIONS, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT** - To ensure that the child poverty strategy and action plan is supported as a result of full and inclusive involvement from key stakeholders and the community in its development and that the city's approach to tackling child poverty is effectively communicated across the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, N1116 The proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% median income, 2009

4. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - To engage in an inclusive process to develop the strategy and action plan

### 3. CURRENT STATUS

**3.1 Child Poverty Needs Assessment:** A comprehensive needs assessment of child poverty in the city will be published at the end of September 2012. The assessment looks at both the causes and effects of child poverty, and aims to identify gaps and opportunities for service delivery and resource allocation at neighbourhood level. This work will also include a review of national guidance and best practice on evidence based interventions to tackle child poverty. The assessment will make recommendations that will inform the development of the city strategy and action plan.

3.2 Key findings from the child poverty needs assessment include:

- Levels of poverty are highest in the west of the city, in neighbourhood such as Devonport, Morice Town, North Prospect and Barne Barton. This is most evidenced with high levels of benefit claimants.
- Development levels at early year's foundation stage are lower in the group of most deprived neighbourhood compared to the least deprived (50.5% and 60.4% respectively).
- There are significant attainment gaps between those children eligible for free school meals and those not eligible. The gap at key stage 2 is 17 percentage points, the gap widens to 32 percentage points at key stage 4 with just 29% of eligible children achieving 5 A\*-C GCSE grades.
- Areas of the city identified as having lower educational attainment and higher unemployment reappear as being among the worst performing against health indicators such as life expectancy, childhood obesity, low birth weight and breast feeding prevalence.
- As at December 2011, Plymouth had 22,300 families with 39,100 children receiving child or working tax credits. A further 10,301 children aged 0-15 live within workless households according to latest DWP statistics.
- In 2010/11 Citizen's Advice Bureau data shows that 7,525 people received debt advice.
- Use of the food bank in Plymouth has recently increased by 40% up to 4,300 people; the proportion of whom have children has also increased (May 2011-April 2012).

**3.3 Child Poverty Strategy and action plan:** Effective delivery of the child poverty strategy and action plan is highly dependent on having a comprehensive understanding of how resources are currently being commissioned against child poverty outcomes. In addition the strategy will identify areas and opportunities where further pooling and alignment of resources may be required around common outcomes, for example within the early intervention and prevention strategy commissioning processes.

3.4 For existing plans and strategies, is it expected that commissioning of services to support child poverty outcomes will take place based on agreed priorities within approved budgets and resources.

3.5 A local child poverty strategy will seek to recognise and provide greater visibility and accountability that tackling child poverty is everyone's business. Actions to address both the causes of and to reduce the effects of child poverty are already integral to a number of key local plans and strategies such as the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 and Housing Plan. This

strategy will seek to reinforce this work, and highlight key gaps in service provision and/or areas of underperformance as well as ensure that other more specific strategies incorporate an active commitment to reducing child poverty and mitigating its effects.

**3.6 Communications, Consultation and Engagement:** A series of workshops will be held with Members and practitioners across the city as part of the strategy development process in early October. A draft version of the strategy and action plan will then be consulted on throughout December and January. The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will also provide pre-decision scrutiny.

**3.7 Project governance arrangements:** It is proposed that the cross party working group will oversee the strategy development process. Additional members will be identified by the Chair with support from Pam Marsden, Assistant Director for Joint Commissioning and Adult Social Care and SMT Lead for Child Poverty. Project updates will also be provided to the People Directorate Programme Board.

## 4. PROJECT MILESTONES

Child Poverty Needs Assessment published	End September 2012
Stakeholder workshop	Early October 2012
Draft Strategy to Overview & Scrutiny Management Board	31 October 2012
Draft strategy to Cabinet to initiate consultation	27 November 2012
Draft Strategy - Consultation and engagement period	December 2012 – January 2013
Final Strategy and Action Plan to Overview & Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB)	27 February 2013
Final Strategy and Action Plan to Cabinet	02 April 2013
Final Strategy and Action Plan to Full Council	22 April 2013

## 5. ACTIVITY – NEXT STEPS

5.1 The cross party working group would like to capitalise on the knowledge, resources and networks of the Trust Board and want to identify the following:

- a) How the Trust would best wish to engage with the city-wide strategy development process
- b) Discuss and agree how the Trust will work with other agencies to deliver collectively against child poverty outcomes in relation to children and young people
- c) Identify where further relationships need to be developed with other partnerships and agree their approach to engagement e.g. the Growth Board in relation to the skills agenda.