
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 19 October 2010
Subject: Child Poverty Strategy
Report of: Cllr Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Summary: The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services will show a video about Child Poverty and give a presentation to members about the development of a strategy to reduce child poverty and alleviate its effects in Central Bedfordshire. Members will also have the opportunity to discuss the issues with a Headteacher.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: ALL
Function of: Council and Children's Trust statutory partners

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The report relates to four of the Council's key priorities:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
- Managing growth effectively
- Creating safer communities
- Promoting healthier lifestyles.

Financial:

A proportion of existing budgets could be earmarked for tackling child poverty enabling work to focus in areas of greatest needs.

Legal:

The Council is required under the Child Poverty Act 2010 to prepare, publish and keep under review a local child poverty needs assessment and a joint strategy with partner agencies setting out how it will address these needs. In preparing a Child Poverty Strategy, the Council will be meeting its legislative duties as set out in the statutory guidance published by the government in October 2010.

Risk Management:

None

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

An Equality Impact Assessment of the Strategy is being developed in conjunction with the strategy which will highlight areas of good practice within Central Bedfordshire in addressing the needs of those living in poverty, taking into account the diverse needs of the community.

Community Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

The strategy will sit alongside the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan and will address the longer term needs of the community.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are asked to consider the presentation given by the Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's services and take advice from the practitioner Headteacher and make early comments on the developing strategy.

Reason for recommendation:

This is so that members of the committee have a chance to discuss child poverty and express their overall views in advance of the draft strategy

Background

1. In 2008/9 across the UK, 2.8 million children were living in relative poverty (a reduction of 100,000 over the previous 10 years) of which 1.6 million were living in absolute poverty and 2.2 million were living in families which suffered low income and material deprivation.
2. In June 2010, the Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent. This enshrines in legislation a long held government ambition to eradicate Child Poverty by 2020 and places a number of statutory duties on both Central and Local Government in the statutory guidance received in October 2010.
3. Local Authorities are required to co-operate with partners (Health Authorities, Job Centre Plus, Police, Youth Offending and Probation Services) to produce a local Child Poverty Strategy and Child Poverty Assessment.

Child Poverty Strategy

4. Central Bedfordshire together with its partner agencies is developing a Draft Child Poverty Strategy which will take into consideration the building blocks set out by the national Child Poverty Unit (Financial Support, Parental Employment and Skills, Life Chances, Place).
5. Four key objectives will set the framework for the strategy with underpinning priorities:
 - Objective 1:** Maximise opportunities for families in poverty to access employment which will have the outcome of more families working and thus reducing levels of family and child poverty
 - Objective 2:** Ensure families in poverty are accessing all available financial assistance with the outcome that non-working families move from worklessness into low paid and then higher paid work in the meantime accessing appropriate benefits
 - Objective 3:** To improve life chances of children and families by intervening early to prevent poor outcomes and raising educational achievements and aspirations with the outcome that children from poor households gain better qualifications to ensure their access to the labour market so that the cycle of intergenerational poverty is broken
 - Objective 4:** Work with colleagues from all sectors and agencies to improve the environmental factors which exacerbate the effects of poverty, harnessing the resources of the third sector and services across the council in order to achieve priorities, with the outcome that poor families develop healthier lifestyles to prolong life expectancy and live in an improved environment.
6. Each objective will be underpinned by a number of immediate and longer term priorities and will link to the key plans and strategies of Central Bedfordshire.

Conclusion and Next Steps

7. Members are asked to consider the objectives and the presentation given by the Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's services and early comments on the strategy are requested.
8. The draft strategy will be presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 23 November and subsequently submitted to Executive, Council, the LSP and the Children's Trust for sign-off in April 2011.