


From Poverty to Prosperity

A Strategy to Reduce Child Poverty and alleviate its effects in
Central Bedfordshire

April 2011

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Contents

Contents	2
Foreword	3
The Background	4
Child Poverty: The National Context	4
Defining Child Poverty.....	8
The Effects of Child Poverty.....	10
Child Poverty: The Local Picture	12
The Strategy	14
Strategies to tackle Child Poverty	15
Everybody's Business – Working in Partnership.....	22
Appendices.....	25
Appendices	
A. Tables of relevant data	
B. List of basket for Material Deprivation	
C. Early Intervention and Prevention Plan	
D. Parenting Strategy	
F. Financial Information	

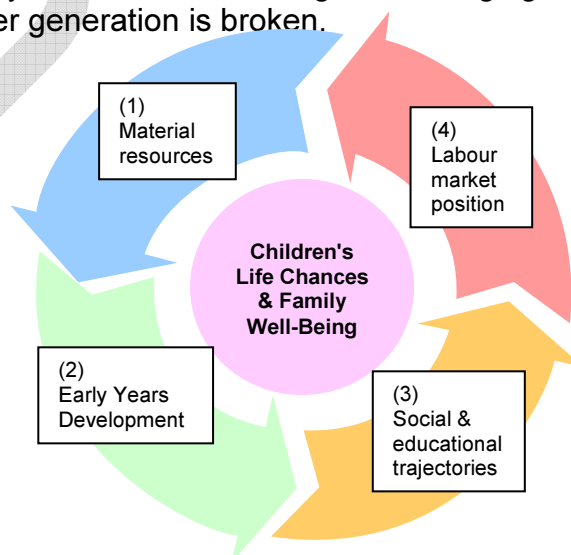
Foreword

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The Background

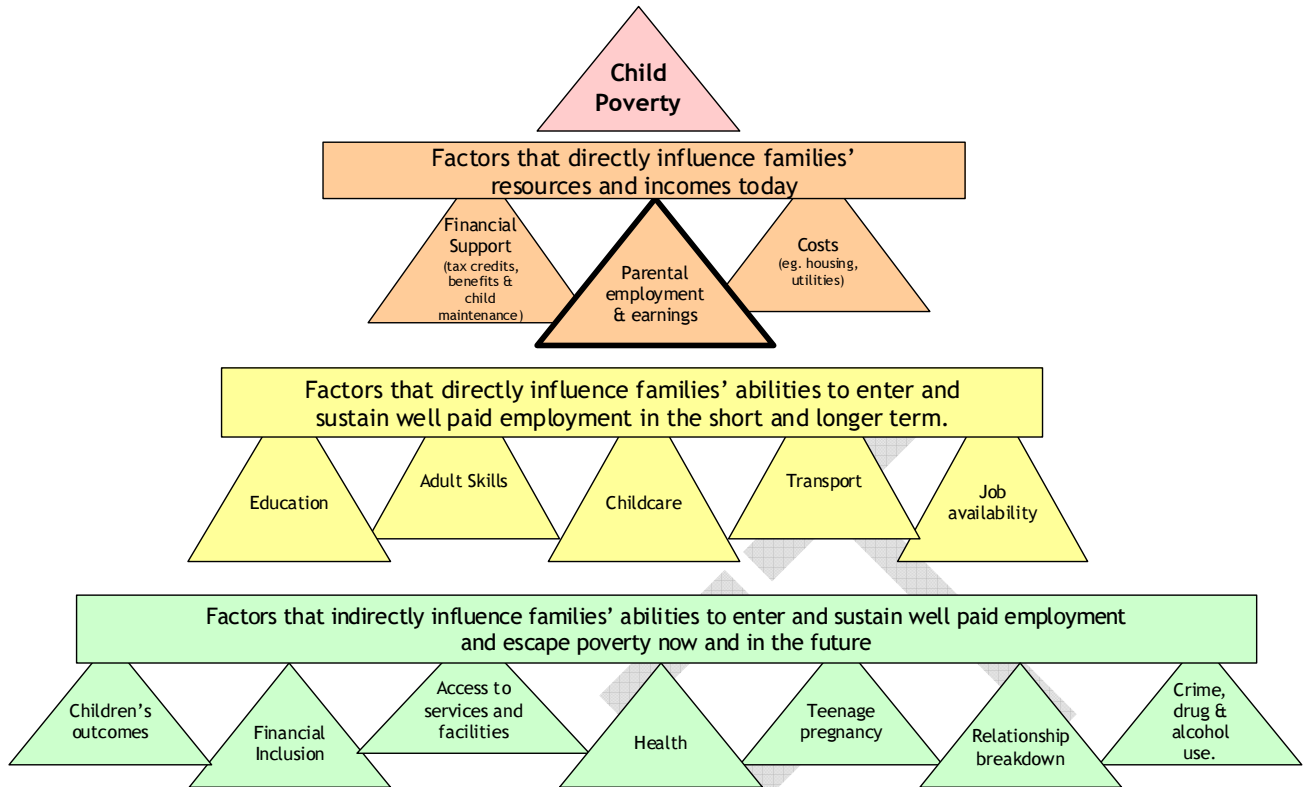
Child Poverty: The National Context

1. In 2008/9 2.8 million children lived in relative poverty in the U.K. (a reduction of 100,000 over previous 10 years) of which 1.6 million in absolute poverty and 2.2 million live in families which suffer low income and material deprivation.
2. In June 2010, the Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent. This enshrines in legislation, the ambition to eradicate Child Poverty by 2020. It places a number of statutory duties both on Central and Local Government.
3. Central Government is required to publish a UK Child Poverty Strategy, to then publish annual progress reports and to establish a Child Poverty Commission.
4. Councils are required to co-operate with partners (Health Authorities – Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities, Job Centre Plus, Police, Youth Offending and Probation Services) to produce a local Child Poverty Strategy and a Child Poverty Assessment.
5. There are wildly varying estimates of the cost to society and the public purse of these levels of Child Poverty across the UK. (These estimates range from £12 billion pa. to a staggering £25 billion) The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has carried out substantial research into Child Poverty on a long-term basis and one recent estimate suggested that Child Poverty is estimated to cost the economy £13 billion. £2 billion in benefits paid out, £3 billion in lost tax and National Insurance paid to the exchequer and £8 billion in net earnings lost.
6. Poverty and Life Chances form an intergenerational cycle:
A lack of income and material resources in the early years adversely affect early development which impacts on cognitive, emotional and behavioural capacities, and their ability to achieve through their education. This in turn puts them in a precarious position on the labour market. They are more likely to be unemployed, and therefore bring their own children up in poverty, beginning the cycle over again. It is essential as a society that this inter-generational cycle of families living and bringing up children in poverty, generation after generation is broken.



7. Nationally, certain groups have a greater risk of living in relative poverty. These include:
 - 59% of families in Workless Households (this figure is 12% in Central Bedfordshire)
 - 58% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin Households
 - 34% of Lone Parent Households (this figure is 7.65% in Central Bedfordshire)
 - 40% of families with 4 or more children have
 - 31% of households with one or more disabled adult
 - (figs from the Households Below Average Income 2008/9)
8. There are a number of factors that directly influence families' resources and incomes. At a fundamental, high level the key factors are:
 - ◆ Parental Employment and earnings
 - ◆ Financial Support – tax credits, other benefits, maintenance payments
 - ◆ Costs – e.g. housing, utilities
9. Underlying these factors are a number of others which will directly influence a families ability to enter and sustain well paid employment in the short and longer term and these include:
 - ◆ Education
 - ◆ Adult Skills
 - ◆ Childcare
 - ◆ Transport - affordable and available public transport
 - ◆ Job Availability
10. Further factors indirectly influence the ability of a family to enter and sustain well paid employment and escape poverty now and in the future:
 - ◆ Children's educational outcomes
 - ◆ Financial Inclusion
 - ◆ Access to services and facilities
 - ◆ Health, including mental health
 - ◆ Teenage pregnancy
 - ◆ Relationship breakdown
 - ◆ Crime, drug and alcohol use

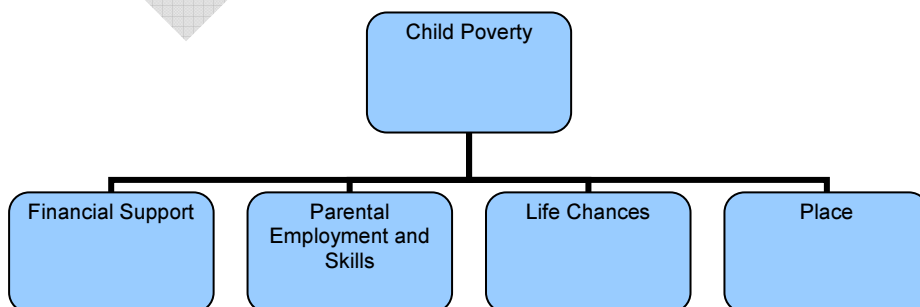
CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY



11. The new government is committed to ending Child Poverty by 2020. Ministers of State for Children and Families, for Disabled People, and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, have stated in a letter to local authorities:

“This remains a bold ambition but one which is at the heart of our drive to tackle the root causes and consequences of social injustice, poverty and deprivation, and to protect the most vulnerable groups in our society.”

12. The Child Poverty Unit, a cross cutting unit made up from representatives of the Treasury, the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions, has identified 4 areas, or Building Blocks as they have called them which need to be addressed in order to achieve the ultimate goal of lifting children out of Poverty. These have been identified as:



13. These building blocks have been taken into consideration when devising the strategic objectives of the Strategy of Central Bedfordshire.
14. The Government set up a Review on Poverty and Life Chances, chaired by Frank Field which reported on child poverty. This review set the aims to; generate a broader debate about the nature and extent of poverty in the UK, examine the case for reforms to poverty measures, in particular for the inclusion of non-financial elements, explore how a child's home environment affects their chances of being ready to take full advantage of their schooling and recommend potential action by government and other institutions to reduce poverty and enhance life chances for the least advantaged, consistent with the Government's fiscal strategy.
15. The Allen Review looking at aspects of Early Intervention reported in February 2011. This highlights how early intervention projects can improve the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children.

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Defining Child Poverty

16. Defining and then Measuring Child Poverty is a very complicated process. The Child Poverty Act incorporates four types of poverty, with differing targets. In the case of some of these data is not yet available at all to assess baseline levels and what progress is made.

17. The four key targets involve:

Relative Poverty

To reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income to less than 10%

18. This is the main indicator used when discussing poverty in the UK. It is defined as families with income below 60 per cent of contemporary median equivalised household income. The current median is £600 and therefore this means a family living on £360 per week to cover all their costs, including housing, gas, electric, insurance, clothes, food and telephone. This measures whether the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. It compares the incomes of the less well off in a society to that of the 'typical household' so threshold changes as wealth of society changes ('moving poverty line');

Combined Low income and material deprivation

To reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and have a low income to less than 5%

19. This is defined as children living in households with incomes below 70% of the current national median and who are experiencing material deprivation, namely that there are goods and services which they are less likely to be able to afford for their children. Material Deprivation is currently measured by asking families whether they have a set of 21 items such as having friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight, going on a school trip at least once a term, home contents insurance, keeping house warm, one weeks family holiday a year, two pairs of all-weather shoes for each adult.

20.

Persistent Poverty

To reduce the proportion of children that experience long periods of relative poverty, with the specific target to be set at a later date

21. The definition of Persistent Poverty is a household which is living in relative poverty for at least three consecutive years.

Absolute Poverty

To reduce the proportion of children who live in absolute low income to less than 5%.

22. This indicator measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms. The level is fixed as equal to the relative low-income threshold for the baseline year of 1998-99 expressed in today's prices.
23. An overall definition could be:

“Individuals, families and group in the population 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 are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.”

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The Effects of Child Poverty

24. Children who grow up in poverty will generally be adversely affected by it for the rest of their lives. Not only will they suffer in childhood by not being able to take part in the experiences and opportunities which many of their peers enjoy, but their future lives in terms of educational outcomes, work opportunities, health and even life expectancy will be blighted. These low outcomes are then reflected across society as a whole. There is increased deprivation across communities, higher government spending costs on benefits and health – all of society will pay eventually. Eradicating Child Poverty is therefore in the interest of society as a whole.
- Babies born into a family in poverty are:
 - More likely to be born premature
 - More likely to have low birth weight
 - More likely to die in first year of life¹
 - Children from poor families more likely to have a low birth weight and children with a low birth weight tend to have lower IQ²
 - The Infant Feeding Survey shows that in workless families babies are using bottles for much longer than their peers in working families which in turn leads to more tooth decay³.
 - Children born to teenage parents are 63% more likely to live in poverty and are twice as likely to become teenage parents themselves, thus creating further intergenerational cycles of deprivation⁴. Teenage mothers are 20% more likely to have no qualifications than older mothers (aged 24 plus). Infant mortality is 60% higher for babies born of teenage mothers, there are higher rates of post-natal depression and poor mental health for 3 years after a teenage birth, and teenage mothers are three times more likely to smoke throughout their pregnancy and 50% less likely to breastfeed. (JSNA)
 - By the age of 11 (yr 6) levels of obesity are 10% higher in deprived areas with more child poverty than in the least deprived areas⁵.
 - Children who live in families where the parents have never worked are more likely to suffer from mental health disorders. The figures are 21% against 5.2% of the general population⁶.
 - Lower income households are more likely to smoke and have problems with alcohol abuse⁷
 - Many poor families live in poor quality or overcrowded housing. Due to an unmet demand of social housing many poor families live in temporary accommodation⁸ – further disrupting children’s wellbeing.

CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

- Poor housing leads to health risks such as respiratory illnesses, poor nutrition, accidents, depression and anxiety⁹
- Children living in poverty are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury and 27 times more likely to die from exposure to smoke, fire or flames¹⁰
- Poor families living in deprived areas are likely to suffer from crime and the effects of crime. In 2006-7 the likelihood of experiencing crime was 29% in the most deprived areas of the UK against 20% in the least deprived area¹¹.
- By the age of six, a less able child from a rich family is likely to have overtaken a more able child from a poor family¹².
- 35.5% children eligible for Free School Meals receive 5 good GCSEs' (defined as Grade A – C) compared to 62.8% of all children¹³
- School Exclusions are more than double the rate amongst children in receipt of Free School Meals than amongst other pupils, and school attendance is about 5% lower amongst children in receipt of Free School Meals¹⁴.
- Families living in poverty have less than £13 per day per person to buy everything they need such as food, heating, toys, clothes, electricity and transport¹⁵.
- The total weekly expenditure for an average couple with children in 2008 was £673 per week for all households, that's equivalent to £176 per person. However, a family with an income in the lowest 20 per cent spent just £360 each week, equivalent to £90 per person. That's almost half what the average family spends¹⁶
- Many poor families are financially excluded – parents will not have bank accounts, and therefore access to regulated forms of credit¹⁷. Many utility costs are higher because of the need to use pay as you go payment schemes rather than direct debits¹⁸. 57% of low income families (and 72% of lone parent families) have no savings and in order to deal with unplanned emergencies will often turn to unregulated credit, paying massive amounts of interest¹⁹.
- Children who grow up in a low income household are more likely than others to themselves become unemployed and to do low paid jobs – there is evidence of an intergenerational cycle of poverty²⁰.

Child Poverty: The Local Picture

25. Central Bedfordshire has 12.1% of its children living in Poverty. This statistic is based on the most up to date figures available from Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue (HMRC) and relate to the year 2008-2009. This figure masks some high levels of poverty within particular areas. The five areas (equating to former wards) with the highest levels of Poverty are;
- Tithe Farm 31.4%
 - Parkside 27.1%
 - Manshead 25.6%
 - Northfields 24.8%
 - Houghton Hall 22.9%
26. The full table of figures from HMRC is available at Appendix A.
27. The local super output areas (LSOA) with the highest IDACI score (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) are in the wards of Manshead, Tithe Farm, Houghton Hall, and Parkside and these are in the highest 10% of LSOAs in the East England and within the worst 20% in England.
28. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a basket of indicators including employment levels, health and disability, education skills and training, housing issues, crime and disorder and the living environment. The most recent IMD shows that the highest levels of deprivation based on these indicators are in Parkside, Manshead, Tithe Farm, and Northfields.
29. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) gives a further indication on aspects of the health of those living in areas of deprivation in Central Bedfordshire: the highest levels of babies born into a smoking household are in Dunstable, Parkside in Houghton Regis, Flitwick and parts of Sandy, with the lowest levels of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks in Manshead, Tithe Farm, Houghton Hall, Parkside and other parts of Dunstable.
30. Higher rates of Teenage Pregnancy in parts of Central Bedfordshire are concentrated in Houghton Regis and parts of Dunstable in the main. Figures in the JSNA indicate that the conception rate in the east of England is presently 31.6 per 1000 (under 18 conception rates per 100 females aged 15-17). In Houghton Hall ward this figure stands at 79.9 per 1000, Manshead 78.2, with 74 per 1000 in Tithe Farm and 66.7 in Parkside.
31. At the 2001 census an average of 6.9% of households with dependent children in Central Bedfordshire were considered to be overcrowded. (Defined as having at least one less room that deemed to be required for the household size and composition). However this figure increases considerably in areas of deprivation. In Tithe Farm 17.5% of children are in overcrowded households, with Manshead at 12.8%, Parkside at 12.5% and Houghton Hall at 11.2%.
32. Whilst there is clearly a concentration of poverty and deprivation across the areas within Dunstable and Houghton Regis there is however no ward in Central Bedfordshire which does not have some child poverty and levels of

deprivation. The isolating effect of being a child in poverty in an area of relative affluence should also be stated. Areas within Flitwick, Sandy and Leighton Buzzard Wards also have high levels of deprivation and poverty.

33. Many other sources of data which directly relate to poverty correlate with the figures above:

- Manshead, Parkside and Northfield Wards have the highest rate of unemployment in Central Bedfordshire
- Tithe Farm, Parkside, Plantation and Sandy Pinnacle have the lowest level of educational and skills attainment
- Parkside and Dunstable Central, Northfields and Tithe Farm have LSOAs in the top ten areas with the highest levels of crime, although parts of Biggleswade and Toddington also feature in this table.
- Manshead, Parkside, Northfields, part of Flitwick, Tithe Farm, All Saints in Leighton Buzzard and parts of Sandy have LSOAs which have the highest levels of health deprivation and disability.
- The 2010 health profile for Central Bedfordshire states that there is a six year difference in life expectancy for a man living in the most deprived area compared to the least deprived.
- Children in Central Bedfordshire who have free school meals have attendance rates which are on average between 4-6% lower than children who do not, increasing across the age range.

34. Headteachers in Central Bedfordshire tell us that:

- “There is a clear impact on the emotional development of children who are living in a stressful environment e.g. a household with debt problems”
- “Education is often a low priority at home for households in poverty”
- “It can be very isolating to be poor in an area of relative affluence.”
- “Some children will not be accessing the full curriculum e.g, school trips, cost of transport to swimming pools, because parents cannot afford this and do not wish to draw attention to this, so children are kept off school”
- “Poor children will often have lower self-esteem”
- “Some children will be unable to participate in after school activities”
- “Some poor children will have poor attendance due to health problems “

The Strategy

35. Lives of Children who are growing up in poverty can be changed – their own educational achievements and an improved economic situation of their families, for example moving into work from worklessness, means that the intergenerational cycle of poverty can be broken.
36. Positive parenting can reduce the impact that living in a poor neighbourhood or in a low income family will have, as will parental interest in a child's education.
37. High quality early education can have an enormous impact on a child's development, with a greater impact evidenced for low income families – which can in turn reduce the differentials between children growing up in poverty and those not.
38. This strategy focuses on four strategic objectives, related to the building blocks, which will focus priorities and budgets across these areas of work and which will in turn have the greatest impact on children and families living in poverty, concentrated as they are in the geographic areas of highest deprivation. Within each of these objectives there are some immediate priorities and those which will be worked on in the longer term.
39. Certain factors have been highlighted in government reports as important in Child Poverty Strategies. These include the promotion of work as the best route out of poverty and a number of the actions in the strategy are linked to the development of employment opportunities within Central Bedfordshire and an improvement in the skills base of those who are presently suffering worklessness. Supporting family relationships and facilitating early intervention, working with partners to ensure that ending child poverty is seen as everybody's business, and making sure that the actions within a strategy are affordable.
40. To fulfil the legislation for children's services and other budgets across the council, as well as amongst partners, to identify money to be specifically ring fenced to the task of reducing Child Poverty. Nationally it is suggested that 4% of budgets should be allocated to tackling poverty – enabling work can be concentrated in the areas of greatest need, with a view to reducing Poverty and making a real difference to the lives of children and families. Work will be on going to raise this discussion at all suitable forums.
41. The strategy is for all families who live in poverty, however there is a particular focus on families with particular needs, such as teen parents, and reaching out to those who often do not engage with services such as travellers and black and monitory ethnic groups, in line with the Single Equality and Diversity Scheme.
42. The national long term target is to reduce Child Poverty to less than 10% by 2020. Central Bedfordshire has the same goal with interim targets of 11.5% by 2013, 11% by 2015, 10.5% by 2017 and less than 10% by 2020

Strategies to tackle Child Poverty

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

In order to achieve this our immediate priorities are:

- ♦ ***Continued development of the ‘economic powerhouse’ – a vision and strategy to attract investment and deliver strong local employment growth:***
The Sustainable Community Strategy has two key themes one of which is ‘create the conditions for economic success and community prosperity. The economic powerhouse vision aspires that Central Bedfordshire will be a place that is a highly attractive, well connected prime location for businesses to thrive in a global economy – generating numerous, wide ranging and sustainable job opportunities. Job opportunities are a key plank in any strategy which encourages parents to move from a position of worklessness into a working environment, and a specific target with the Sustainable Communities plan is to generate approximately 1,800 new jobs every year for the next 15 years.
- ♦ ***Develop employability and job readiness skills, based on both academic work and work based training:***
This action is part of Central Bedfordshire’s Skills Strategy (July 2010) – developing employability and job readiness skills will assist with reducing the number of families without a working adult. A lack of education and skills is one of the key drivers of worklessness, making it difficult to find work, and sustain employment. Enterprise capabilities will also be promoted. Even if low skilled jobs are available, job stability and progression are severely limited. It is therefore essential that overall, throughout all age ranges, educational outcomes are improved, the level of people with no qualifications is reduced and that training is delivered which is appropriate to the area of jobs growth. Work with employers, colleges and schools to increase the range and quality of local training, volunteering and job opportunities will help improve the employment prospects for those not in employment.
- ♦ ***Ensure adequate Childcare, and the appropriate Childcare Tax Credit, is available to enable parents to take up working and training opportunities:***
For many parents, especially those in previously workless households, there is no experience of using childcare. It is therefore essential that high quality childcare is available to enable parents, with different age children, to begin to access training courses and working opportunities, both part and full-time. The Childcare needs to be available at a suitable place for ease of collection and delivery of children, and to offer seamless transitions with other services which the parent may be using on behalf of their child (such as a school, or pre-school provision). Parents may need assistance in finding the appropriate care, and building their confidence in it. Parents need to be encouraged to take up the appropriate payment assistance and tax credits to assist with payment for childcare, making it worthwhile for parents to train and work. Outreach and brokerage work will target families in or at greater risk of poverty e.g. travellers, black and ethnic minority groups.

In the longer term we shall also concentrate on:

- ◆ Providing increased training and work experiences for 14-16 year olds
- ◆ Developing apprenticeship opportunities
- ◆ Improving transport enabling easier access to work opportunities
- ◆ Engaging with the Community in addressing the basic skills agenda
- ◆ Encouraging Social Enterprise support for Families in Poverty
- ◆ Supporting local business resilience, growth and enterprise
- ◆ Working with parents of children with disabilities to enhance confidence in childcare enabling additional take-up and possibility of working

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Objective 2

Ensure families in poverty are accessing all available financial assistance with the outcome that non-working families move from worklessness into work in the meantime accessing appropriate benefits

In order to achieve this our immediate priorities are:

◆ ***Promote the take-up of free school meals:***

Whilst increasing the take-up of free school meals will not directly move families out of poverty, it will offer assistance to the family budget, and ensure that children who are eligible can access a nutritious, healthy meal in the middle of the school day. Accessing free school meals opens up other opportunities for funding which may also help alleviate pressure on family budgets. It can also offer additional financial assistance to the school which is then able to work further with families living in poverty.

◆ ***Provide easily accessible high quality welfare advice and information services:***

It is widely acknowledged that the plethora of benefits and tax credits is a very difficult path to negotiate, and for many families in poverty the complexity of the system exacerbates their very low income levels. Many families will be dealing with Job Centre Plus, the Dept for Work and Pensions, the local authority and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in order to obtain all the benefits to which they are entitled. Some of these agencies will not always signpost appropriate families to other agencies to enable them to access additional benefits. Sources of expert advice are therefore important and the Sustainable Community Strategy aspires to lessen inequality by reducing the number of people living in poverty, providing easily accessible, high quality welfare advice and information services.

In the longer term we shall also concentrate on:

- ◆ Promoting the progression from benefit to paid employment
- ◆ Financial money management training to different age ranges within the community

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

In order to achieve this, our immediate priorities are:

♦ ***Ensure high quality early years intervention and prevention services are in place:***

Research has shown that the impact of high quality early years care and education is far greater on children in deprived areas, especially from families where there are low skills and qualifications, and a higher level of worklessness. These are also areas where health outcomes are lowest and there is a larger gap in achievement between the lowest achieving children (at all levels starting with the Foundation Stage) and the rest. It is essential that all early years services in these areas are further developed. Children's Centres are ideally placed to work with the parents of the very young. Working with parents on healthy diets, encouraging longer breastfeeding and initiating stop smoking and sexual health, drug and alcohol work will all impact on the life chances of these children. Children's Centres are also working with parents and Job Centre Plus to facilitate a timely return to work. Continued limited provision of free places in care and education for two year olds with high levels of need will ensure that some of our most deprived children are accessing levels of care that they will not have seen before. Ensuring an even higher take up of free places in high quality provision for three and four years, prior to starting school is essential in narrowing the outcome gap at the end of the Foundation Stage and laying the basis for future educational achievement.

♦ ***Support Parents and Families through the Parenting and Family Support Strategy:***

The parenting work which is already being undertaken has developed a clear focus on developing preventative and early intervention services, which supports families at the earliest possible stage to minimise the risk of situations escalating. Strong national evidence has demonstrated the positive impact of parenting and family support which helps to protect children against the risks of growing up poor and/or living in a deprived area. Parents who are confident in their relationships interact better with their children at all levels, and this has a further beneficial effect on educational attainment as parental interest in education is shown to be four times more important than socio-economic factors in outcomes at the age of 16. As parents themselves grow in confidence they are more likely to undertake further education to improve their own levels of attainment as well as ensuring that their children demonstrate better levels of attendance and behaviour.

♦ ***Develop a culture for learning based on high aspirations for all:***

Educational qualifications and achievements along with work-readiness are all essential in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. A culture of achievement and learning with high aspirations will contribute to this outcome. The promotion of high quality learning environments, with supportive climates for learning will improve the enjoyment of learning for all ages; will reduce unacceptable behaviour and persistent absence. Parents wanting their children to

achieve the best possible outcomes and in turn improve their own situations will help to raise achievement.

In the longer term we shall also concentrate on:

- ◆ Improving attendance rates at school and reducing exclusions rates
- ◆ Reducing the number of those not in education, employment or training (NEET), by increasing employability and career potential of young people at greatest risk of not progressing into work.
- ◆ Reducing the achieve gap between children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers
- ◆ Endorsing the importance of healthy lifestyles

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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

In order to achieve this, our immediate priorities are:

♦ ***Reduce the number and rate of teenage pregnancies:***

The high levels of teenage pregnancies in the particular hotspots of Houghton Hall, Manshead, Tithe Farm and Parkside wards are in the worst 20% hotspots for teenage pregnancy in England. This necessitates that all partners work together both to reduce these levels and to ensure that the children born to teenage parents do not suffer many of the health inequalities which are traditionally associated with being in a family of a teen parent. This will include work on breastfeeding, stopping smoking and healthier diet and lifestyles and increasing access to services to improve outcomes for them and their children.

♦ ***Embed the think family approach within all homelessness prevention activity, and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation***

This element which combines elements of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is preventative and aims to increase the services available to support families, tackling the root causes which can make a family vulnerable to social exclusion, or to a financial or housing crisis; it also aims to improve outcomes for children by supporting stable family life. This will also include improving the quality of advice to families, targeting families in housing need with early intervention through the Family Intervention Project.

♦ ***Promote a multi-agency approach to improved ante, peri & post natal care, along with improved levels of breastfeeding support and information on healthy eating:***

A healthier start to life for babies of parents living in poverty will be ensured with improved care during pregnancy and post-natally. Use will be made of community and acute healthcare services, along with Children's Centres. Parents who may otherwise not access appropriate services in a timely way to ensure the best interventions for their child will be targeted for prevention work. Healthy eating will continue to be prioritised within Children's Centres and early years settings, and work will be carried out with partners to increase knowledge and understanding of nutrition and diet and its long term impact, as well as working to reduce long term risky behaviours amongst families living in poverty, such as drug and alcohol dependency.

In the longer term we shall also concentrate on:

- ♦ Working with partners to reduce the levels of crime and their impact on families in deprived areas
- ♦ Expanding Stop Smoking services for all family members, especially pregnant women and those with very young children
- ♦ Embed the Healthier Steps to Employment Programme

- ◆ Working in Partnership

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Everybody's Business – Working in Partnership

43. Central Bedfordshire has a duty to work with a range of partners on a number of different strategies. Whether it is the Sustainable Community Strategy or the Children's Plan, the Child Poverty Strategy or the strategy for homelessness – none of the aspirations and actions in these can be achieved by one body, a council, working on its own – and certainly not just one section of a council. A wide range of partners both within and beyond the council will be asked to join together to tackle the problem of Child Poverty and the effects it is having on a group of children and on wider society as a whole.
44. The Child Poverty Act is an acknowledgement that no one single body – even central government – can achieve this goal alone. Child Poverty is a complex, multi-faceted issue which 'requires the integration of services, driven by close partnership working'. The new legislation requires the local Council to prepare this Child Poverty Strategy, setting out measures that the local authority and their named partners will need to take to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty. Partners with whom the council has a duty to co-operate in this area of work are laid down in legislation and they include the police, the youth offending and probation service, as well as health authorities, and Job Centre Plus, but includes many other Partners with whom the local authority feels it needs to engage in this area of work, for example in Central Bedfordshire this will include the voluntary and community sector. There is not an expectation that a new board or partnership is established. Action against Child Poverty is dealt with by existing partnerships such as the Local Strategic Partnership and the Children's Trust.
45. Child Poverty will be tackled most effectively by co-ordinating action across a range of local services and initiatives. The Local Strategic Partnership (which oversees the Sustainable Community Strategy) and the partners which include the local authority, town and parish councils, police, fire and health services as well as the Business community and the third sector are also expected to ensure that eradicating child poverty is part of their wider vision for the area. A medium term goal within the Sustainable Community Strategy is to reduce the number of people living in poverty.
46. Guidance issued to the council from Central Government stated that "Regional and local partners, politicians, policy makers, commissioners, service deliverers, planners and front-line practitioners play key roles in ending child poverty, as do representatives of communities themselves through voluntary and third sector organisations. They will help to ensure that priorities and policies set out in the national child poverty strategy across all the building blocks are translated into better services that deliver better outcomes for families." There is a clear expectation that local Child Poverty Strategies will extend widely into the realm of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and involve adult services, employment services, housing, regeneration, transport and leisure.
47. The role of partners is crucial in the delivery of an effective Child Poverty Strategy:

48. Many parts of the Voluntary and Community Sector will already be working with some of the more vulnerable in society, and will therefore have a key role to play in delivering services and working with groups who will often find it hard to engage with statutory organisations. They may well be able act as a catalyst for improving services and outcomes for children, young people and families and provide an alternative route of support. Often the third sector can facilitate innovation and continuous improvement by developing, pioneering and promoting new forms of service delivery. The advice agencies and debt counselling services are an integral part of this sector, as are many faith and church based organizations. It is also essential that the local knowledge of elected representatives is harnessed to help with the identification of families with real need. All these partners will be invited to cooperate.
49. The police will play a crucial role in helping to deliver this child poverty strategy. Many of our deprived areas, and those living in them suffer from higher levels of crime – nationally in some of the most deprived areas, burglary rates can be up to double those in affluent areas. Furthermore where parents engage in crime this does increase the likelihood of children within those families suffering from poverty and deprivation. The provision of safer communities for all children and families is a core police purpose, and will assist the delivery of an effective child poverty strategy.
50. The Youth Offending and Probation Services deal with many of our most vulnerable young people, many of whom come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. By breaking what in many cases is a cycle of offending behaviour these agencies can assist young people back into mainstream and specialist services which can work with them to ensure that in due course they are able to complete their education and go on to access employment.
51. An appropriate transport infrastructure is crucial in ensuring accessibility to work, and other services by families who will often not have access to a car.
52. Local Health authorities – presently the Primary Care Trusts and the Strategic Health Authorities have a range of responsibilities around improving health, and reducing health inequalities – important aspects of the child poverty strategy.
53. Job Centre Plus is a key statutory partner in delivering a Child Poverty strategy as parents moving from worklessness into employment is a key driver to increased income levels and reductions in poverty. Job Centre Plus advises on some benefits, work placements and volunteering opportunities, all of which assist with the move into paid employment, and they will also help parents to facilitate the availability and accessibility of suitable childcare. Staff are often able to put together a package of support for people moving into work to assist with transition costs.
54. Housing colleagues have a key role in the delivery of the strategy. The development of appropriate accommodation for all ages, including young parents, along with a clear understanding of the very negative impacts of using temporary accommodation for families with children will assist in mitigating some of the effects of poverty. Ensuring that housing is maintained to an appropriate level and overcrowding is dealt with are also important aspects of work that Housing colleagues will contribute to the strategy.

55. Local Employers and Business organisations of all sizes have an important role to play with the provision of jobs, working with Job Centre Plus and with aspects of regeneration and sustainability work within the authority. Offering staff assistance with in-work benefits, and advice on working benefits will also be important to the delivery of the strategy.
56. Together, partners at strategic and operational levels will drive forward this agenda to reduce Child Poverty and alleviate its effects in Central Bedfordshire.

Supporting Plans across Central Bedfordshire:

Children and Young Peoples Plan (2010 – 2014)
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Central Bedfordshire Skills Strategy
Sustainable Community Strategy
Central Bedfordshire Worklessness Assessment
Central Bedfordshire Local Economic Assessment
Central Bedfordshire Homelessness Strategy
Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy
Single equality and diversity scheme
NHS Bedfordshire: A Healthier Bedfordshire Strategy
Bedfordshire Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
NHS Bedfordshire Sexual Health Strategy
Public Health Improvement Plans

¹ Child Poverty Review, HM Treasury, July 2004

² Families with Children in Britain: Findings from 2005 Families & Children Study (FACS) Department for Work & Pensions. Research Report. 424, Hoxhallari, L., Connolly, A. and Lyon, N. 2007

³ The Infant Feeding Survey NHS 2005

⁴ Conception Statistics, Office of National Statistics 2008

⁵ National Child Measurement Programme: 2006/07 school year. The Information Centre for Health & Social Care, 2008

⁶ Children and Young People Today, Evidence to support the development of the Children's plan, Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007.

⁷ *ibid* & Ending child poverty: everybody's business, 3.14 HM Treasury, March 2008

⁸ Households Below Average Income, Great Britain figures, Department for Work and Pensions, 2006

⁹ www.barnados.org.uk/childpoverty.htm

¹⁰ Better safe than sorry, Audit Commission 2007

¹¹ Crime in England and Wales 2006-07, Home Office, 4th Edition, Ed. Nicholas, S., Kershaw, C., & Walker, A., 2007

¹² Inequality in Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 Cohort Feinstein, L. *Economica*, Vol. 70 pp.73-97 2003

¹³ National Statistics First Release (2007) National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE & Equivalent Attainment & Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2006/07. DCSF November 2007

¹⁴ Central Bedfordshire Council School Statistics

¹⁵ www.barnados.org.uk/childpoverty.htm

¹⁶ www.barnados.org.uk/childpoverty/child_poverty_what_is_poverty.htm

¹⁷ Ending child poverty: everybody's business. 2.29 HM Treasury, March 2008

¹⁸ Robbing Peter to pay Paul, Save the Children Briefing Report 2007

¹⁹ The Poverty Premium, Save the Children and the Family Welfare Association 2007

²⁰ Child Poverty Review, HM Treasury, July 2004

Appendices

Appendices

- A. Tables of relevant data
- B. List of basket for Material Deprivation
- C. Early Intervention and Prevention Plan
- D. Parenting Strategy
- E. Delivering the Strategy
- F. Financial Information

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معلومات کے لئی

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Za Informacja

by telephone: 0300 300 8000

by email: customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

