

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education and Children's Services      **DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2011  
Scrutiny Panel

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I**

#### **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

#### **REDUCING FAMILY POVERTY IN SLOUGH**

**1. Purpose of Report**

To inform Members of the current situation on family poverty in Slough and to demonstrate the work that is taking place to reduce family poverty in the borough.

**2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel is requested to:

- a) Note the national and local information relating to family poverty and the long term effects upon families living in poverty.
- b) Note the recommended support strategies that support families to move out of family poverty.
- c) Note the National targets for Local Authorities to support families to move out of poverty
- d) Note the local strategies and programmes that are currently supporting families living in poverty.

**3. Community Strategy Priorities**

**Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion**

- By identifying and prioritising services for all communities and vulnerable groups in the Slough Population. By targeting a full range of support services and programmes to meet the needs of children, young people and families who are living in poverty. To provide the means through which children, young people and families can move out of poverty by accessing and taking full advantage of benefits to which they are entitled, and to provide good housing. To provide information and core support in order to access and take advantage of the opportunities in education, training and employment that are available locally.

**Adding years to Life and Life to years**

- Through focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people and their parents and carers in Slough, and providing targeted services through partnership working primarily with the NHS to secure measurable health improvements

## **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**

- By offering effective support to families to help them do their best for their children so that children and young people are safe in their families and communities
- By working effectively with partner agencies so that they also contribute to safeguarding children and young people and demonstrate improved outcomes for those children and young people and their families

## **Prosperity for All**

- By offering high quality childcare, early education and family support to parents of young children so that they can focus on meeting their family needs and overcome the difficulties that affect their ability to move out of poverty.
- By promoting educational achievement, including early intervention strategies to ensure the development of children under 5, which gives children and young people enjoyment in learning and increased opportunities for success in adult life
- By maintaining high levels of Education, Employment and Training (EET) for all young people.
- By supporting local early years providers and Children's Centres to secure high quality provision and services so that parents and carers are able to secure economic prosperity/independence for themselves and their family.

## **4. Other Implications**

### **a) Financial**

The growth in the local population, and the increasingly challenging financial situation means that services need to work in firm partnership with all agencies in order to make best use of the resources on offer to all families living in the borough, especially those living in poverty. The Children's Centres support local agencies to provide easily accessible services in every neighbourhood.

Early intervention services, especially in the Children's Centres are well co-ordinated so as to avoid duplication of services and to ensure that the appropriate services are targeted towards each neighbourhood according to local need.

### **b) Risk Management**

The LA has a duty to work in partnership with all local agencies in order to reduce family poverty. Budget cuts could impact upon local services. The risks to the family poverty strategy can be mitigated by:-

- Using the Early Intervention Grant in a co-ordinated and targeted way to address the issues facing families living in poverty.
- Continuing to build upon the fact that the 10 Children's Centres are centrally managed, thus providing the opportunity to have well co-ordinated, targeted services that are tailored for each neighbourhood, thereby avoiding unnecessary duplication of services and unnecessary costs.

### **c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report.

### **d) Equalities Impact Assessment**

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this information report.

### **e) Workforce**

This report has no impact upon the work force.

## 5. Supporting Information

### 5.1 Background

National focus and targets

Relative low income target :-Less than 10% of children in households with income less than 60% of median income.

Combined low income and material deprivation target :-Less than 5% of children in households with income less than 70% of median income, and experiencing material deprivation.

Absolute low income target :-Less than 5% of children in households with income less than 60% of median income

Persistent poverty target :-Less than ?% of children in target group to have lived in relevant households for more than 3 years- (target tbc before 2015)

### 5.2 Key facts about family poverty

- 3.8 million children are living in poverty in the UK.
- The majority of poor children (57%) live in a household where at least one adult works.
- The majority of poor children (58%) live in a household headed by a couple.
- Over two-thirds of those below the poverty threshold at any one time have been in poverty for at least three of the past four years .

Key concepts for addressing poverty:

- **Learned optimism** – self confidence and a belief that one can be successful.
- **Capability** – the support network within families and communities.
- **Resilience** –comes about through ‘learned optimism’ and ‘capability’, it is the ability to withstand knocks and disappointments.

### 5.3 Indicators of disadvantage:

- No parent in the family is in work, family lives in poor quality or overcrowded housing.
- No parent has any qualifications.
- Mother has mental health problems, at least one parent has a long-standing limiting illness or disability.
- Family has low income (below 60% of the median) -family cannot afford a number of food and clothing items.
- 9.5 million cannot afford to keep their homes adequately heated, free from damp and decently decorated.

### 5.4 Effects of poverty

- Children from the 5% most disadvantaged households are more than 50 times likely to have multiple problems at age 30 than those from the top 50% of households.
- 63% of boys whose fathers go to prison are eventually convicted themselves.
- 60% of children of children in the lowest reading attainment group at age 10 had parents with low literacy scores.

- Children who experience parental conflict /domestic violence - more likely to be delinquent/ commit violence /property offences.

### **5.5 Local Perspectives and Key Facts**

- Total Population 131,200 - 51% males, 49% females (mid-2010 ONS estimates)
- 67% of people are of working age (16 to 64 years) – 74.6% are economically active compared to 79.3% in the SE and 76.2% nationally
- 25.7% have NVQ4 and above compared to 33.9% in SE and 31.3% nationally
- 12.1% have no qualifications compared to 8.5% in SE and 11.3% nationally
- Gross weekly pay £500 compared to £548 in SE and £502 nationally. Average Tax credit claim £3,500 – only 11% claim
- Total number of JSA claimants at August 2011 was 3,350 – 3.6% of those of working age (compared to 2.6% in South East).
- Total dependent children 30,000 – Lone parents with dependent children 2,130

#### Features of child poverty in Slough

- 22.4% of dependent children living in workless households, compared to 15% in the SE and 20% in England.
- 22% of dependent children living in low income families, compared to 17% in SE and 22% in England.
- 20.3 children per 10,000 have CP plan compared to 27.8 for statistical neighbours and 26.5 nationally
- 50% of housing in some areas does not meet the ‘Decent homes’ standard -includes parts of Chalvey, Haymill, Farnham wards

### **5.6 Significant factors contributing towards family poverty in Slough**

- Low skills and qualifications amongst working age population.
- Few part time jobs – which significantly affects the work prospects of women, especially women from BME groups.
- House price to income ratio is 4.68 compared to 4.21 average in England.
- 67% of people are owner-occupiers compared to 74% in SE England.
- Life expectancy in 20% most disadvantaged areas is 75 years, 4.5 years less than in the 20% most affluent areas of the town.

### **5.7 Impact of poverty on children and families in Slough**

- Families can't afford healthy food resulting in poor nutrition, poor health and obesity.
- Most vulnerable families not accessing support services.
- Families needing complex support requiring collaborative working across agencies.
- Children and young people with no space or materials for homework/ projects.
- Families living in multi-occupancy/sub standard homes, no private bathroom/kitchen.
- Families living in fuel poverty (more than 10% of income on energy bills).
- Lack of exercise and access to physical / leisure activities.
- Children and young people affected by family mental health issues/stress/worries.
- Children and young people with no access to wider social/educational experiences.
- Lack of self confidence/self esteem/personal identity in families and communities.
- Reduced educational performance for most vulnerable children and young people.
- Anger and resentment leading to anti-social behaviour and petty crime.
- Increased strain on family relationships – marriage/relationship breakdown.
- Increased incidents of alcohol and drug misuse.

- The majority of house fires occur in disadvantaged areas with poverty a key feature.
- Lower employment prospects and reduced life chances.

### 5.8 Positive local factors to assist in the reduction of family poverty

- 10 Children's Centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, providing childcare and family support services, including pathways to training and employment. Two recent successful Ofsted inspections. At the most recent inspection, the Centre was able to show that the average points score in EYFS of children who had attended the Children's Centre was 3 points higher than the average of their peers in the catchment area.
- The Children's Centre profile, used at each individual governance meeting, provides up to date neighbourhood statistics to inform performance monitoring, and services.
- The services provided at the Children's Centres play a pivotal role in 'preventing poor children becoming poor adults'(Frank Field MP). They also provide services to support families with the key factors in helping reduce family poverty: – **learned optimism, capability and resilience.**
- Slough 'I Talk Programme' supporting speech and language development in 0-4 year olds. Slough had significant numbers of children at risk of developmental delay :- July 2009 – 50% and this reduced to 22% by July 2011.
- 2011 Early Years Foundation Stage results show vast improvement, gap narrowed.
- Consistently high achievement at GCSE, ranked within top 10% of local authority areas for several years.
- Proportion in learning -16 yr olds 90.7%, 16-18yr olds 86.8%, highest in the country.
- Multi-pronged approach to increase uptake of childcare amongst BME families
- Slough Advancement Network Prototype (SANP) 'no wrong door' to access IAG about skills for life and getting work
- DWP/ESF project to support families with multiple problems. A national initiative starting soon to support education and provide pre-employment skills. Early intervention to help families into work.

### 5.9 Strategy for reducing child and family poverty in Slough

- Co-ordinate efforts locally – Children's Partnership to play key role
- Create strong communities and tackle child poverty from the bottom
- Improve qualifications and skills base in order to increase routes into work
- Increase uptake of family Tax credits - over half of children living in poverty in households with at least one adult in paid work
- Focus on providing places for vulnerable 2 year-olds to give children the best possible start
- Improve the availability and affordability of Childcare
- Consult with Children and Families. Carry out needs analysis and keep information up to date.

### 5.10 Role of the Children's Partnership

- Partnership and LA influence and inform the whole of economic, environmental and social policy.
- Centre around the concept of **learned optimism** and pervade all multi-disciplinary training.
- Inform the development of Children's Centres in order to focus on local neighbourhoods.
- Inform teachers' views of themselves as role models.

- Centre on family learning – positive influence of parents on children and children on parents.
- Crucial need for cognitive development and emotional stability.
- Focus on mechanisms that deal with income and physical conditions eg. Nutrition and housing.
- Define strategies to prevent progression into the criminal justice system.
- Provide and use supportive information and data for individuals, communities and services.
- Induce **capability** and **resilience** in both individuals and communities.
- Provide strategies and services that are outcome driven.
- Immediacy a key component – all agencies will do simple things well.
- Successes judged by the community who will have a voice in commissioning and decommissioning of services.

#### **5.11 Some simple things that can be done to tackle the effects of poverty**

- Breakfast clubs in schools and settings.
- Children’s services staff to have a family approach and be alert to signs of distress.
- Avoid inadvertent segregation eg. Affordability of school uniforms and school trips.
- Signposting families to support and routes to access benefits.
- Helping families to use their funds effectively.
- Debt counselling and inform families of risks of credit at high interest rates.
- Ensure PSHE include the ‘hidden rules’ to help young people escape poverty.
- Promote healthy living especially the benefits of a balanced diet.
- Provide access to adult education and encourage participation through provision of childcare.
- Provide home safety scheme, including fire detectors/smoke alarms.
- Support families experiencing fuel poverty by referral to ‘Green Doctor’ and home insulation scheme.

#### **5.12 Services in Slough that are working to reduce child and family poverty**

There are many initiatives that have been developed over the last 5 years to address the disadvantages within communities. These provide a good platform on which to further develop strategies to reduce child poverty.

- Family support services and childcare through Children’s Centres.
- Childcare places for referred 2 year olds.
- Flexible Extension to the 3 & 4 year old Entitlement.
- Increasing the uptake of childcare amongst BME families.
- Developing a good quality children’s workforce and good quality provision.
- Breakfast, After school and holiday clubs in schools and settings
- Family Information Services (FIS). Signposts people towards training opportunities.
- IAG Centres – providing good information about choices in education and training.
- High quality schools and family support services in every neighbourhood.
- Healthy schools - Healthy eating.
- Promoting the growing of vegetables on allotments.
- Parent Partnerships & Family Links providing a co-ordinated approach to supporting families.
- Aiming High programme to support families with disabled children.
- Library Services – Book Start.

- Leisure facilities – providing wider experiences for everyone.
- Youth services – providing a comprehensive service for young people.
- Youth Offending Team.
- High quality Health services provided in easily accessible neighbourhood venues e.g. Children’s Centres.
- Housing services – voluntary and statutory sectors working together to tackle issues.
- Loft insulation programme and ‘Green Doctor’ to support families living in fuel poverty.
- Links with Fire Service – willing to support LSP initiatives through community involvement.
- Voluntary services such as Home Start support families and signpost clients towards appropriate support services.
- Increasing skills of local people.
- Voluntary groups working with young people.
- Young carers support group – active group with increasing profile. More referrals, but not enough referrals from some areas.
- Slough advancement network prototype.
- All front line agencies supporting families in the uptake of WFTC.
- Liaising with Job Centre Plus to support families into education, training and employment.

### **5.13 What more do we need to do**

- Further support to claim benefits, an understanding of why people fail to claim.
- Ensure all partners are aware of family poverty and place it at the forefront of all work.
- Ensure all partners engage with initiatives to reduce family poverty.
- Continue to provide a co-ordinated approach, to make best use of resources.
- Reducing child poverty is a huge task so take an incremental ‘bite size’ approach.

## **6 Conclusion**

Rolling Update

- Working in partnership with Policy and Planning department to carry out ongoing audit of services on offer and review of audits that have taken place.
- Use results of audits to map services and create base lines for measuring progress.
- Gather in depth information of benefits changes and communicate these changes to Child/Family Poverty steering group, who in turn pass this information on to staff.
- Review priorities of Children’s Partnership and include targets into poverty plan.

## **7. Appendices**

‘A’ EYFSP Data Analysis 2011

‘B’ ESF/DWP background information for potential bidders. August 2011

## **8. Background Papers**

1. Slough Children’s Centre Profile. Neighbourhood Statistics and Performance Monitoring report 2010/2011.
2. Child Poverty Act 2010.

3. A Housing Strategy for Slough – June 2011
4. *The Foundation Years: Preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, the report of the independent review on poverty and life chances by the Rt Hon Frank Field MP; 2011
5. Early intervention: the next steps and Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings independent reports by Graham Allen MP 2011