



Health and Wellbeing Board

3 September 2014

Report title	Wolverhampton Child Poverty Strategy Update	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Gibson	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Tim Johnson	
Originating service	Economic Partnerships and Investment	
Accountable employee(s)	Heather Clark Tel Email	Heather Clark 01902 555614 heather.clark@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the role they can play in delivering the Child Poverty Strategy and input into the new governance arrangements for tackling child poverty through the Social and Economic Inclusion Board.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress in delivering Wolverhampton's Child Poverty Strategy and future governance arrangements.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Wolverhampton's revised Child Poverty Strategy was signed off by Cabinet in June 2013. The strategy outlined actions under four building blocks: financial inclusion; employment and skills; early intervention, health and educational attainment; and housing and neighbourhoods. In addition, it aimed to shift our approach from managing the consequences of child poverty by moving away from crisis interventions (high cost) to preventative (prevent families falling into crisis and support families out of poverty) and to break the cycle of child poverty for future generations. The actions stated in the strategy itself were always meant to be rolling given the changes in this area, in particular around welfare reform.
- 2.2 At the time of the development of the strategy, nearly one third of children (17,925) in Wolverhampton live in poverty. Wolverhampton continues to have higher levels of child poverty than our Black Country neighbours and nationally. The latest figures show a decline in child poverty (defined as income below 60% of median income before housing costs) from 31.1% in 2010 to 30.6%, however it is likely that this is due to falling income in general against which child poverty is measured.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Dudley	21.2%	22.1%	22.0%	23.1%	22.5%	22.1%
Sandwell	30.4%	31.6%	30.8%	31.6%	30.4%	29.6%
Walsall	27.8%	29.6%	28.4%	29.7%	28.8%	28.5%
Wolverhampton	29.6%	30.7%	30.8%	31.5%	31.1%	30.6%
England	20.80%	21.60%	20.90%	21.30%	20.60%	20.10%

- 2.3 We are aware that certain equalities groups are more prone to Child Poverty in particular lone parents, ethnicity and disability, as highlighted in Wolverhampton's Child Poverty Needs Assessment. Child poverty figures are not available locally broken down by these groups apart from lone parents, however the principals of Wolverhampton's Child Poverty strategy to target those most in need in terms of the areas with the highest levels of child poverty and most vulnerable groups.
- 2.4 The Government has recently released a consultation on the national Child Poverty Strategy which focuses on supporting families into work and improving their earnings, improving living standards and raising educational attainment, in line with the building blocks of Wolverhampton's Child Poverty Strategy. The strategy also focuses on tackling the root causes of child poverty which align with our approach of focusing on prevention and breaking the cycle.

3.0 Status of Child Poverty Strategy

- 3.1 Reducing Child Poverty is a key priority under Wolverhampton's City Strategy 2011-26. A key result of which is that by 2026, no more than 10% of our families live in poverty. Under the new structure for Wolverhampton Partnership, the new City Board will replace the Wolverhampton Partnership Executive Board. A Social and Economic Inclusion Board will be responsible for developing and delivering plans to get more people into work, tackle worklessness and some of the wider determinants of poverty including child poverty. Membership will consist of at least 50% from voluntary and community networks, alongside key public agencies that are able to directly contribute to the delivery of a Social and Economic Inclusion Plan which will incorporate the Child Poverty Strategy.
- 3.2 Currently the Children's Trust and Health and Wellbeing Board oversee the delivery of the strategy receiving regular updates on progress, however in future this will be the role of the Early Help Board. The Children and Young People's Plan have identified a particular priority on reducing the harm of child poverty and is currently developing key outcomes going forward. These will particularly focus on dealing with the symptoms i.e. crisis, whereas the Economic and Social Inclusion Board focus will be primarily on prevention and breaking the cycle.
- 3.3 Outlined below are a summary of progress against key priority actions:

Priority Actions	Responsibility	Progress
Financial Inclusion Reducing Indebtedness	Economic Partnerships with Welfare Benefits team, Citizen Advice Bureau	Overview: Wolverhampton Tackling Indebtedness Plan has been produced outlining a series of actions to address indebtedness. The Plan recognises the challenge – with Wolverhampton having the 9 th highest indebtedness in England and Wales – and the need for additional resources to address the issue. Examples of action: Local Advice Wolverhampton (LAW) aims to build capacity of other agencies freeing up specialist advice workers to deal with more complex cases given funding for advice is limited. Key challenges: of particular concern is the impact of cuts, for example the end of funding for Local Discretionary Grant Scheme has resulted in the Benefits Helpline ending end March 2013. Funding for debt advice is limited with the majority of funding focusing on preventative activities.
Families better able to manage their money	Citizen Advice Bureau and Wolverhampton	Overview: Wolverhampton's Tackling Indebtedness Plan also outlines a series of preventative actions to improve money management skills, seek resources to

	Advice Agencies Consortium WAAC, Wolverhampton Homes, Education Business Partnership and Schools	<p>increase support available targeting affected by the rollout of Universal Credit and encourage more affordable forms of credit</p> <p>Examples of action: the Big Lottery funded Better Off in Wolverhampton supports young social housing tenants to improve their financial management skills. Local Advice Wolverhampton (LAW) which is building capacity of organisations to produce financial statements freeing up specialist advice for more complex cases. Financial capability will be part of the national curriculum from September and our Education Business Partnership is working with several local banks to deliver financial capability training within school children.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: building financial capability is increasingly important with Universal Credit which will pay benefits monthly in arrears. An intervention around financial inclusion has been included as an intervention under the Black Country European Investment Strategy. Personal budgeting support will be a key element of DWP's Local Support Services Framework.</p>
Employment and Skills Families with multiple needs	Families in Focus with Job Centre Plus	<p>Overview: employment is one of the outcomes of Families in Focus, Wolverhampton's troubled families programme which aims to tackle deep-seated problems including intergenerational unemployment and disengagement from school and work among families facing problems including mental health issues, alcohol and substance misuse and domestic violence.</p> <p>Examples of action: The secondment of a dedicated Jobcentre Plus adviser to the Families in Focus (troubled families) programme has proved particularly successful. One key worker has supported four members of the same family into work.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: continued focus around 'getting sorted' is required to move families with complex needs towards employment. A troubled families intervention is being developed as part of social inclusion under the Black Country European Investment Strategy.</p>
Parents moving	Schools, Skills	Overview: Digital inclusion is important not only to

closer to and into quality sustainable employment	and Learning with Economic Partnerships	<p>enable people to apply and manage their Universal Credit account online, but also in respect of the wider benefits around skills and employment, accessing services, consumer benefits and improving health & isolation. Wolverhampton's Digital Inclusion Strategy recognises the importance of digital inclusion for job search including Universal Jobmatch, online applications and life chances.</p> <p>Examples of action: £2.8 million has been secured by Accord Housing on behalf of the Black Country focused on supporting social housing tenants in estates with high concentration of worklessness to find work and increase their weekly earnings</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: Black Country European Investment Strategy is focusing its social inclusion interventions on 'getting sorted', an identified gap in moving residents towards sustainable employment. In addition, a specific intervention is being developed to provide intensive support for over 25's. In future, all claimants must have an e-mail address and have registered for Universal Job match before they can claim benefits.</p>
More Wolverhampton families getting Wolverhampton jobs	Schools, Skills and Learning with JCP, Work Programme and voluntary community sector providers	<p>Overview: Wolverhampton Employability Group brings together various providers of employment services in Wolverhampton to encourage joint working including DWP, Work Programme providers and voluntary community sector.</p> <p>Examples of action: The City Job Fair held on 14 May 2014 and attracted 2,300 attendees with 45 exhibitors including 35 employers. In addition, we are in discussion with providers to provide support for those interested in applying for jobs at Sainsbury's. The first enhanced Work Club network has met and is looking for more advanced work clubs such as Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service (NESS) centres to buddy smaller community organisations.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: Changes in rules relating to lone parents means they must undertake work related activity when their youngest child turns 3. A representative from Children's Centres is in discussion with NESS centres to work in partnership to provide support to this target group.</p>

Reduced in work poverty	Schools Skills and Learning	<p>Overview: 20% of children in poverty are in families where someone is working, therefore the strategy must also address in work poverty.</p> <p>Examples of action: Wolverhampton Growth Pledge aims to encourage providers and employers to sign up to key principals including upskilling in the workplace.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunity: The comparatively low level of investment by Black Country employers in skills has been identified as a particular issue. This will be reflected in the priorities of the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan.</p>
Moving young people towards and into employment	<p>Wolverhampton VCS</p> <p>Schools, Skills & Learning</p>	<p>Overview: tackling youth unemployment remains important due to the need to break the cycle of poverty. Youth unemployment is currently 9.7% in Wolverhampton compared to 8.7% Black Country, 5.3% West Midlands and 4.1% England.</p> <p>Examples of action: together with mainstream support under the Youth Contract, Wolverhampton Voluntary Community Services (VCS) are leading on behalf of the Black Country Talent Match, a £10 million project aimed at supporting young people facing barriers into employment. The project has recruited staff and is currently commissioning. Wolverhampton Growth Pledge aims to encourage employers to offer work placement and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: in recognition of the high levels of youth unemployment, the Black Country is eligible for additional Youth Employment Initiative resources to match European Investment Fund resources as reflected in the Black Country European Investment Strategy.</p>
Early Intervention	Children's Services	<p>Overview: Eight Integrated Children and Family Support Services, co-locating services targeting under and over 5's and their families to improve outcomes, have been established. The hubs act as one-stop-shops for services bringing together social worker including family support workers, health visitors and MAST.</p> <p>Examples of action: A 'meeting the needs of families in Wolverhampton' conference was held on 5 February</p>

		<p>2014 as part of Families in Focus.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: As part of the rollout of Families in Focus, take-up of the local integrated offer will be part of the criteria.</p>
<p>Improving health outcome for children and families</p>	Public Health	<p>Overview: Public Health Children's commissioning group has been set up includes all relevant commissioners of 0-5 services.</p> <p>Examples of action: The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) Programme recruitment to posts commenced February 2014. A 3 year funded British Heart Foundation; Hearty lives project is underway to provide diet and physical activity interventions to families with children on the child protection register or identified in need.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: obesity remains an issue therefore interventions are being targeted at families with children identified as overweight or obese. Secondary prevention focused on addressing known risk factors in these young people and primary/secondary prevention for other family members</p>
<p>Improved educational attainment resulting in better life chances for children</p>	Education	<p>Overview: Wolverhampton's Growth Pledge aims to get employers to sign up to principals of offering work placements as part of the four plus campaign which recognises that children with four or more contacts with employers have better life chances.</p> <p>Examples of action: The investment in Wolverhampton's schools including the Building Schools for the Future programme is reflected in the higher than national average educational attainment figures</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: more work is required around primary schools.</p>
<p>Housing and Neighbourhoods</p> <p>Reduced number of evictions and associated homelessness</p>	Housing and Wolverhampton Homes	<p>Overview: As part of the Welfare Reform Programme Board, the Housing Issues strand has been undertaking a series of actions aimed at reducing the impact of welfare reform, in particular spare room subsidy, to avoid eviction. Rent Arrears remain below target (both Wolverhampton Homes and total of all managing agents). Housing Benefit assessors are working within</p>

		<p>Wolverhampton Homes to support speedier turnaround of claims.</p> <p>Examples of action: Wolverhampton CAB led a successful bid for Big Lottery improving financial confidence for 'Better off in Wolverhampton'. The project works with young people living in social housing to improve their financial capability thus addressing the risk of homelessness. Support includes budgeting, accessing financial services and supporting through benefit changes and is available on a one-to-one and group basis.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: possession rates remain high. Under Universal Credit, residents will have to pay their housing benefit direct to the landlord emphasising the importance of personal budgeting support.</p>
Improved quality standards in private sector housing	Private Sector Housing	<p>Overview: the quality of the private rented sector remains a challenge. Proposals are currently going through Scrutiny around a "Wolverhampton's Rent with Confidence" campaign. Therefore, the Council's Private Sector Housing team is looking at ways to achieve better education, better enforcement and better standards.</p> <p>Examples of action: A Housing Stakeholder event was held at the Molineux in November 2013. This helped to inform proposals to increase opportunities for Private Sector Leasing, strengthen enforcement against poor conditions, and look for alternative funding opportunities and partnership approaches to tackling poor property conditions and short termism of tenancy associated with the PRS.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: Private Sector Housing is looking at better education, better enforcement and better standards to address the sheer scale of the problem in the private rented sector. –An easily recognised Star Rating is being considered. Star ratings are easily understood by customers; for example food safety, restaurants, and hotels. (See Appendix 1).</p> <p>It is hoped that by introducing a star rating of landlords, we will be supporting accreditation and the professionalism of the sector, and hopefully</p>

		<p>signpost tenants towards the best landlords, allowing the Council to focus on those who chose to operate at below acceptable and legal standards. A formal consultation process will run from August to October with a view to implementing Rent with Confidence from 1 January 2015.</p> <p>The Council is also considering Additional Licensing as a means of tackling some of the poorest conditions in all multi-occupied premises.</p>
Reduced fuel poverty	Private Sector Housing	<p>Overview: fuel poverty impacts on one in four residents and is likely to remain an issue as wages stagnate whilst bills continue to rise.</p> <p>Examples of action: Home surveys are currently on offer as part of Cosy Homes providing advice on energy efficiency and fuel supply. An affordable warmth grant targeting low income and at risk of ill health including insulation and those with no, old or inadequate central heating. Improvements to private sector housing are currently underway in Low Hill through Energy Company Obligation (ECO).</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: fuel poverty remains an issue especially for those using pre-payment meters. Resources to improve energy efficiency are limited in the privately rented sector.</p>
Target those areas of the city with greatest need	Neighbourhood Services	<p>Overview: Deprivation including child poverty tends to be concentrated in certain areas of the city.</p> <p>Examples of action: work is underway to develop an asset based approach to wellbeing and resilience in Heath Town building on existing physical, social and economic assets. An action plan was presented to the Wellbeing and Resilience Board in May.</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities: further work is needed focusing on areas with concentration of needs. A targeted community approach is included as one of the social inclusion interventions in the Black Country European Investment Strategy.</p>

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications of Wolverhampton's Child Poverty Strategy, however there are gaps in delivery that require additional resources to address. Any additional resource requirements for implementation will be subject to the normal budgetary approval processes. There are also potential consequences of not dealing with preventative aspects of child poverty which could have adverse impacts on service demand in future. [ES/02062014/R]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The Council as a Responsible Authority has a duty under section 23 of the Child Poverty Act 2010 to prepare a Child Poverty Strategy in conjunction with partner agencies. [RB/21052014B]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Analysis was produced at the time of the development of the strategy and did not foresee any negative impact from the Child Poverty Strategy. The Child Poverty Needs Assessment highlighted that certain groups are most vulnerable to child poverty including lone parents, black minority ethnics (BME's) and people with disabilities, therefore the Strategy itself will actively target those groups most vulnerable to child poverty having a positive impact on equalities.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 Addressing issues in relation to housing and neighbourhoods is one of the key building blocks in the Child Poverty Strategy. This includes actions to improve quality standards in private sector housing and reduce fuel poverty.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 There are no human resource implications to this report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications to this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- Wolverhampton Child Poverty Strategy, Cabinet 19 June 2013
- Child Poverty Implementation Plan, Children's Trust Board Wellbeing and Resilience 7 November 2013

Appendix 1

PROPOSED STAR RATING SYSTEM

Landlords will be able to obtain the ranking of scores using the following suggested criteria:

0 stars = an unknown landlord (not known to the Council). The descriptor for this is that this landlord has no track record with the Council at all; has not applied for any licenses that may be applicable, is not accredited through the NLA/RLA/MLAS, and is not known to the Council through any complaints.

1 star = a licence holder (or registered with the Council in some way). One star will automatically be awarded to any landlord that has come forward for any mandatory/additional/selective licensing as applicable. If the landlord is not NLA/RLA/MLAS accredited or has had any Housing Standards intervention with the Council during the last 5 years they will remain at 1 star until Housing Standards are satisfied that they have improved (i.e. following a full and detailed property inspection).

2 stars = an accredited landlord and/or a member of the NLA or the RLA. 2 stars will go to any accredited landlord in recognition of the training element they have undertaken providing Housing Standards have not had to issue any notices – if they are accredited and have had a valid notice served since their accreditation (to remain in force for 5 years) they go back to 1 star only.

3 stars = a three star landlord recommended by the Council with a “rent with confidence” status. For this the landlord will be as a minimum accredited to the 2 Star standard and have had no Housing Standards interventions and meet further conditions to demonstrate the level of service and property standards being offered.

The Council also wants to highlight any criminal landlords – a criminal landlord is one which has been prosecuted for Housing Act Offences (or similar which means they do not meet the not fit and proper test). This will be for the duration of the prosecution if relevant, and a link to the details of the offence will be available for prospective tenants to see (but no longer than 5 years or subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders guidance).