

Cabinet – 26 April 2017

Child Poverty Working Group

Report of the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio: Councillor Nawaz

Report Detail

A working Group was established by the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2016 to consider child poverty.

On 4 April 2017, the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the final report, attached as appendix 1 to this report. The Committee approved the recommendation as detailed on page 22 of the report, and reproduced below, for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet:
 - a) Review the Council's existing plans and strategies to tackle child poverty to ensure that the approach is both clear, measurable;
 - b) Review the performance indicators and reporting mechanisms that are in place to monitor child poverty and how these are used to shape the Council's response to child poverty;
 - c) Review the staff resources available within the council to ensure that child poverty can be tackled effectively at a local level;
 - d) Review how Partners, charities and other third sector providers are working cohesively to tackle child poverty and whether this approach would benefit from a review of existing partnership arrangements.

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Child Poverty Working Group



To be presented to Education and Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 April, 2017



Walsall Council

Foreword

It's important to acknowledge that child poverty continues to generate significant discussion and debate locally, nationally and globally. Over many years, this issue has led to thousands of reviews, papers, policies and strategies produced by government, local authorities, charities, academics and others. Each paper has a common goal of developing our understanding of child poverty and, importantly, ways in which to reduce it.

Whilst there was a dramatic dip between 1998/9 – 2011/12 child poverty continues to exist and is on the increase. In Walsall, it is estimated that there are some 16,000 children who currently live in poverty and this too is expected to rise.

The working group are concerned at this worrying trend but acknowledge that it would be foolish to suggest that there are quick or easy fixes. This is a complex and multi-faceted issue with people under increasing pressure due to continuing welfare reforms. Despite the challenges, every effort needs to be made to help people overcome the barriers poverty brings to achieve better outcomes although - without a specific and focussed approach by all to tackle child poverty - the situation is unlikely to change.

This report does not and cannot offer a panacea for child poverty. What it does present is an insight into child poverty nationally and locally to identify what could be done to reduce poverty and the negative impact it has on our children and young people.



Councillor Liz Hazell

Lead Member, Child Poverty Working Group

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Terms of Reference

The full version of the Working Groups terms of reference can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.

The Working Group was supported predominantly by two Officers:

Neil Picken	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Susan Blick	Commissioning and Contract Management Officer

Membership

The working group was made up of the following Councillors:

	<i>Councillor L. Hazell</i> <i>Lead Member</i>		<i>Councillor T. Jukes</i>
	<i>Councillor D. Barker</i>		<i>Councillor M. Ward</i>
	<i>Councillor N. Gultasib</i>		

What is Poverty?

Poverty is defined in different ways and there is no single, universally accepted definition. As with all statistics, the trends can look quite different depending on the measure used. Income can also be measured before or after housing costs are deducted (Before Housing Costs or After Housing Costs). Poverty levels tend to be higher based on income measured after housing costs, because poorer households tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on housing.

Within this report we use the following two measures which are based on disposable household income.

People in **relative** low income

This refers to those living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year. This compares households against the rest of population that year. In 2014/15 this figure was £284.00 per week BHC and £248.00 AHC¹.

People in **absolute** low income

This refers to those living in households with income below 60% of (inflation-adjusted) median income in a base year, usually 2010/11.

This 'absolute low income' measure looks at whether living standards at the bottom of the distribution are improving over time.

What causes poverty?

Root causes of poverty include unemployment, low earnings and poor educational attainment.

How does it affect children and young people?

Poverty impacts on a child's development, from as early as conception – smoking during pregnancy and poor housing conditions can for example, have an impact on the health of an unborn child. There is significant national evidence about the impact of poor housing on the health of children (of all ages). This is recognised in the Housing and Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which highlights the following hazards where the vulnerable group are specifically children:

- Damp and Mould
- Lead
- Falls between levels
- Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
- Flames and hot surfaces
- Collision and entrapment

¹ Department for Work and Pensions – Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the UK income distribution: 1994/95 – 2014/15

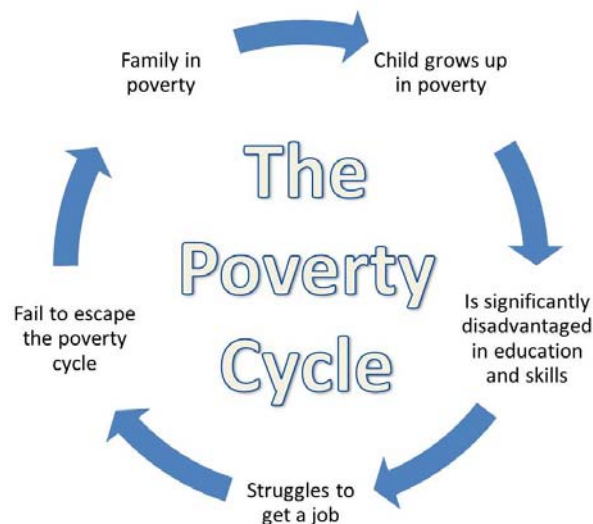
Poverty goes on to affect individuals throughout their childhood and impacts on their long-term outcomes as an adult. Living in a poor household can lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation.

Children living in poverty are more likely to:

- Experience poor educational attainment;
- Be at higher risk of becoming a teenage parent;
- Experience poor health as a child and as an adult, such as obesity and reduced life expectancy;
- Have lower skills levels as an adult;
- Go on to live in poverty as an adult;
- Experience low rates of social mobility.

The Poverty Cycle

Children that grow up in poverty often go on to live in poverty as adults. It is crucial to break the poverty cycle shown in the diagram below.



The cycle is shown in a different format below. This diagram illustrates that the majority of children that live in poverty do not do as well as they could in school, do not then achieve qualifications and end up with low incomes.



Child Poverty - Nationally

In 2014/15 there were 3.9 million children living in relative low income (after housing costs). This equates to 29% of children in the UK and represents an increase of 200,000. (DWP, *Households below average income, 2014/15*)

National statistics (2014/15)

Table 1 - Poverty levels in the UK, 2014/15: children

		Number of children	Change on year	% of all children
Relative Low Income	BHC	2.5 million	up 200,000	19%
	AHC	3.9 million	up 200,000	29%
Absolute Low Income	BHC	2.3 million	unchanged	17%
	AHC	3.7 million	down 100,000	27%
Low income and material deprivation		1.7 million	unchanged	13% Source:

Source: DWP, *Households below average income, 2014/15*

Recent history of Government approaches to child poverty is detailed below. It is clear that the approach to child poverty has changed significantly since 1999. Where there was once a clear commitment to eradicate child poverty - enshrined in law and supported by a national Child Poverty Strategy. There is now a Private Members' Bill to establish a target for the reduction of child poverty in the United Kingdom and a suggestion that there will be a Social Justice Green Paper in 2017 which will set out how poverty is to be tackled in future years.

Recent history

Year	Activity
1999	The then Prime Minister made a commitment to halve child poverty by 2010, and eliminate child poverty by 2020.
2010	Child Poverty Act (2010) passed committing both current and future governments to take action to eliminate child poverty.
2012	<p>2012 Welfare Reform Act enacted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the introduction of Universal Credit (which replaced JSA and Income Support) stronger penalties for fraud and error new "claimant commitment" phasing out of Disability Living Allowance and replacement with Personal Independence Payment reform of Housing Benefit, including introduction of under-occupancy penalty, referred to by its opponents as a "bedroom tax". changes to the Social Fund, including greater power to local authorities reform of Employment and Support Allowance changes to child support

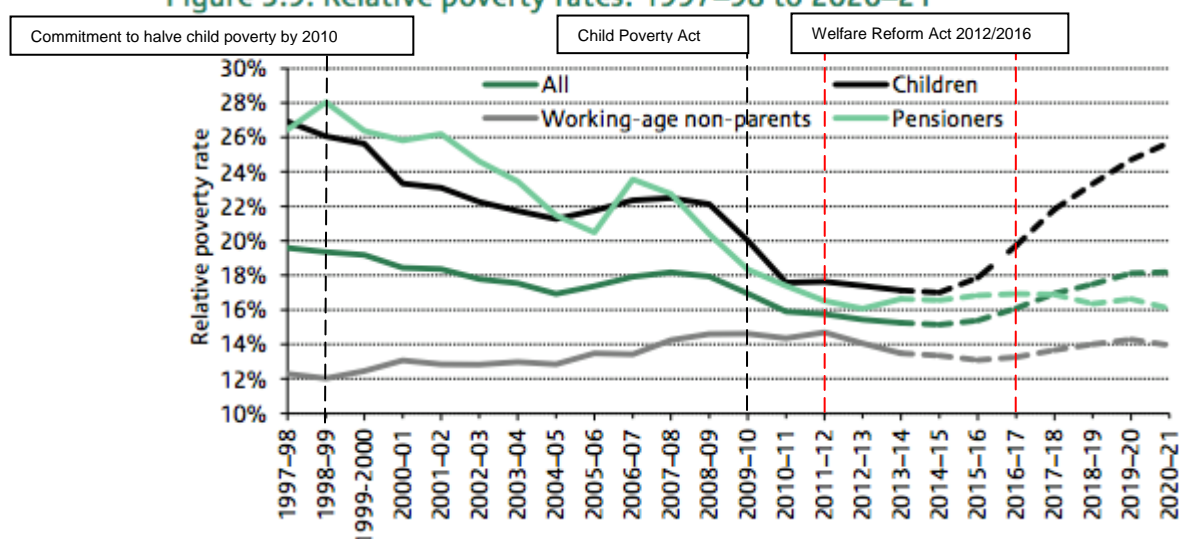
2014	Child Poverty Strategy 2014 – 17 adopted.
2016	<p>The 2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act repealed much of the Child Poverty Act, 2010 including the targets to reduce poverty and the measure of poverty based on family income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 established a duty to produce an annual report on progress towards full employment. • Section 2 establishes a duty to report on progress towards three million apprenticeships during this Parliament. • Section 5 amends the Child Poverty Act 2010 so that the Secretary of State must produce an annual report on 'life chances'. • Section 7 repeals much of the Child Poverty Act 2010. • Section 8 amends the Welfare Reform Act 2012 so that the annual limit for benefits is "£23,000 or £15,410, for persons resident in Greater London [and] £20,000 or £13,400, for other persons." • Section 11 freezes a number of social security benefits for four years. • Section 18 replaces Support for Mortgage Interest with Loans for Mortgage Interest. • Section 23 requires social housing providers to reduce rent levels by 1% each year for four years beginning from 2016/17. <p>Note: After a prolonged campaign, the Government agreed to commit in law to regularly publishing data on the number of children in poverty. The Government's agenda then focused on life chances, rather than poverty.</p> <p>The Life Chances Strategy, which aimed to transform the life chances of the poorest in the country, was not progressed or published.</p> <p>The Child Poverty Unit was absorbed into the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>A Private Members' Bill (Ballot Bill) was introduced to establish a target for the reduction of child poverty in the United Kingdom; to make provision about reporting against such a target; and for connected purposes (second reading stage on 3 February, 2017 was adjourned as debate over ran)</p>
2017	A Social Justice Green Paper is expected to be published in 2017 which will include the work to tackle poverty in years to come. The social justice strategy will identify and address the root causes of poverty, and, according to reports, will not only focus on the disadvantaged, but also 'just about managing' households.

The impact of Government approaches

The table below illustrates that the commitment to halve child poverty in 1999 together with the introduction of the 2010 Child Poverty Act had a demonstrable impact on reducing child poverty nationally. During this period child poverty reduced from 28% in 1998/9 to 18% in 2010 when the Child Poverty Act was passed. Levels continued to fall to the lowest point of 16% in 2012/13.

What is then clear is that when the 2012/2016 Welfare Reform Act have had a devastating effect with child poverty levels predicted to rise to levels not seen in the UK since the late 1990's. It is clear that the Government's commitment to welfare reform is in contradiction to any work to reduce child poverty.

Figure 3.9. Relative poverty rates: 1997-98 to 2020-21



The Institute of Fiscal Studies - Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality

Members of the working group suggest that action to address poverty in the UK has slowly been eroded to a position where, currently, it is not at all clear how Government plan to reduce or indeed eradicate child poverty now or in future years. This is of great concern and the Council should do all it can to lobby the Government into making child poverty a key priority as it once was.

Child Poverty in Walsall

Walsall Council does have measures in place to address child poverty. However, it must be acknowledged that the impact of the Council to mitigate against the impact of the welfare reforms is limited.

Statistically, Walsall is the 27th most deprived local authority out of a total of 326 (where 1 is most deprived). When deprivation is judged by average rank, Walsall is ranked the 28th most deprived².

	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)			Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI)		
	Rank of average rank	Rank of average score	Rank of proportion of LSOA ³ s in most deprived 10% nationally	Rank of average rank	Rank of average score	Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally
Birmingham	18	15	21	20	14	12
Coventry	58	48	57	46	41	31
Dudley	93	89	91	85	78	72
Sandwell	11	18	27	12	12	20
Solihull	197	171	75	203	184	133
Walsall	28	27	23	34	34	21
Wolverhampton	12	12	16	22	24	19

As with the national context, the working group undertook a desktop review of documents which seek to address child poverty in Walsall since 2009. The following information was identified as having a direct relationship with the drive to reduce child poverty in Walsall:-

Year	Document
2009	Walsall Children's Trust Children and Young Peoples Plan 2009-12 approved and included a priority to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote social inclusion and reduce child poverty
2010	Walsall Child Poverty Strategy 2010 to June, 2013 (Approved by Walsall Children's Partnership Board).
2011	'Creating Economic and Prosperity for Families, Children and Young People in Walsall' - A detailed document entitled produced by the Regeneration Directorate with a focus on Child Poverty.

² Department for Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation 2015.

³ Lower Layer Super Output Area

2013	<p>Children and Young People Plan 2013 – 2016 (revised July, 2014) approved and includes the following as a priority:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the impact of child poverty
2015	<p>Walsall Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report – 2014/2015.</p> <p>Extract:-</p> <p><i>Looking forward brief overview of work anticipated for 2015/16</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improving child poverty to a better position (currently showing a worsening picture)</i>
2017	<p>Corporate Plan 2017 – 20</p> <p>Each of the following overarching priorities have an impact on child poverty:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursue inclusive economic growth: <i>Walsall people will have appropriate skills and access to jobs so economic benefits are felt in each of our communities;</i> 2. People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people: <i>Increasing independence and improving healthy lifestyles so all can positively contribute to their communities.</i> - Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self belief, aspiration and support to be their best - <i>Walsall children are provided with the best start in life so they can fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to their communities.</i> 3. Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe, resilient and prospering communities: <i>Walsall is a clean, safe and healthy place, with the right housing to meet need, accessible to all and with a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.</i>

In addition to the above policies, plans and strategies, the Council previously had a dedicated Child Poverty Officer. However, this post is no longer a part of the establishment.

The working group acknowledge and accept the financial challenges facing local authorities but suggest that, in order to ensure that the plans, policies and strategies are put into practice, there has to be an officer, at an appropriate level to continually strive to make to reduce, in real terms, child poverty in Walsall. Cabinet are requested to consider whether adequate resources are available to ensure that child poverty can be tackled effectively at a local level.

Tackling Child Poverty

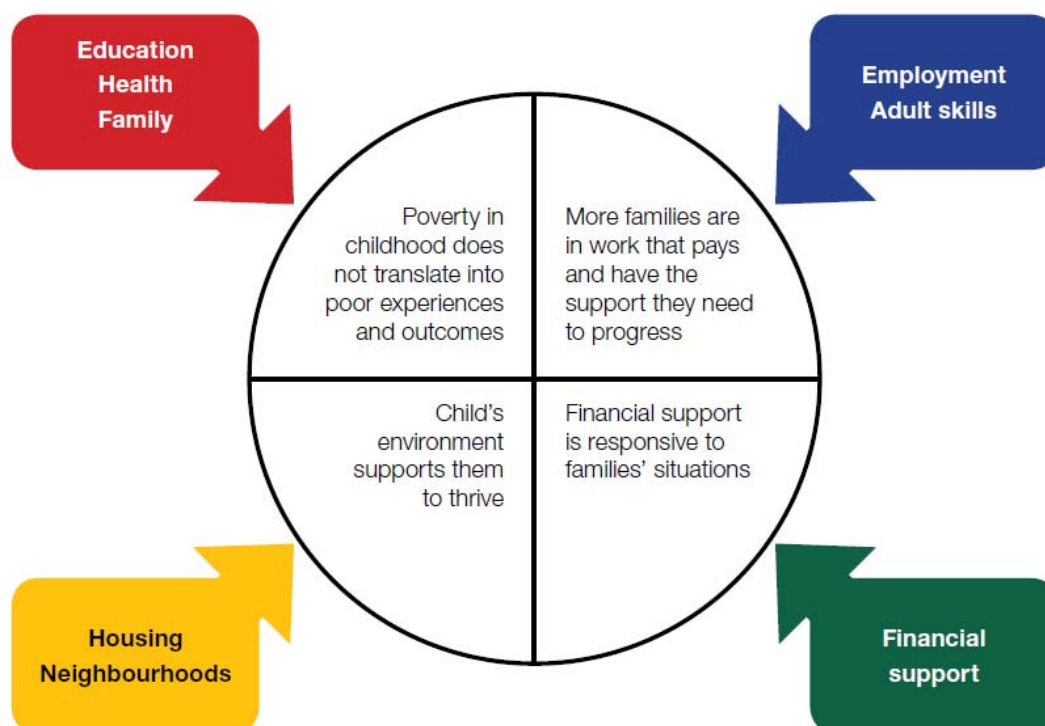
In tackling poverty it is crucial to break the cycle as detailed in the diagrams on page 6. Education is a key element of this, as are initiatives which involve people in developing their skills and finding their own solutions to the problems in their community.

Tackling and reducing the impact and rates of child poverty requires more than just getting people into work, as it cuts across a broad range of areas such as income inequalities, financial exclusion and debt, unemployment, educational and health inequalities and family and community breakdown.

Action is required across a wide range of policy areas including childcare; skills; the availability, quality and flexibility of jobs; and benefits and tax credits.

This, of course is not simply a task that local government alone can tackle. The importance of charities and the council's partners is crucial. The building blocks to tackle child poverty are shown below:-

Figure 1: Child Poverty Building Blocks



Source: Child Poverty Unit 2010

How does Walsall Council tackle Child Poverty?

It is important to note that much of the activity of the Council has an impact on child poverty in one way or another. Whilst not directly labelled as child poverty initiatives, they all contribute to reducing the burden of poverty on children and young people within Walsall.

The Council's continued commitment to mitigating the impact of child poverty is demonstrated by:

Undertaking research to identify families most at risk due to the welfare reforms

In July, 2016 the Council commissioned research to identify which Walsall families are most at risk of financial hardship due to welfare reforms. This has helped the Authority to direct resources towards people who need it most via:

- Outreach support (such as budgeting or debt advice, income maximisation, skills training and employment advice).
- Awards of Discretionary Housing Payments (to help prevent homelessness by helping them to meet their housing costs).
- Assistance via the Council Tax Hardship Grant in circumstances where households are unable to pay themselves.

In addition, the Council has:

- Shared this data with key partners such as WHG and Accord to help to reduce duplication and maximise the number of people offered help;
- Continue to offer crisis funding to help families at immediate risk to meet essential expenditure on food, utilities, clothing;
- Reduce child hunger by promoting free school meals (the Council has increased uptake from eligible families by 24% in the last 12 months);
- Helped reduce the financial inequalities suffered by Walsall care leavers by not charging them Council Tax until they reach the age of 25.

Listed below are some further areas of work which tie in with the building blocks as set out in figure 1 on page 12.

Employment/Adult Skills

Walsall Works

The Walsall Works programme uses Council funding to create and support both pre and full apprenticeships, together with a job matching service that places young people aged 18-24 directly into employment. So far Walsall Works has supported 2,292 young people into work or an apprenticeship since it began in July 2012.

Since Walsall Works began in 2012 it has supported a significant reduction in those young people claiming Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit, for over 16's reducing it from 6.3% to today's rate of 2.9%, and for 18-24 year olds from 12.8% to 4.7%, these significant reductions are better than those at other Black Country authorities.

Black Country EU Funded IMPACT programme

Walsall Council is delivering the Black Country, EU funded, IMPACT programme, to support our young people aged between 16 and 29 who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) into positive outcomes. The programme has attracted around £6million of funding with £2.25million match funding provided by the Council.

The programme started in July 2016 and aims, through a mix of direct delivery and commissioned services matched to individuals needs, to support 3504 young people in Walsall. It is projected that 1741 young people will be assisted to complete their key interventions of which 1073 shall enter education, employment or apprenticeships.

In Walsall, as of December 2016, 380 young people had enrolled of which 150 have already been assisted with interventions which include:-

- receiving information advice and guidance;
- registering or signing up for training;
- preparation for job applications and preparation for interview;
- support with key sector based licenses such as the Security Industry Award Card and Disclosure and Barring Service clearing;
- signposting to other services to assist with matters such as childcare, debt management, transport needs and counselling services.

To date, of the 150 young people who have received intervention support, 6 are in work, 13 have entered training, and 3 have secured an Apprenticeship.

The Council continues to enrol new participants as well as working with existing participants. All of these programmes rely on positive relationships with local education providers, the voluntary sector and employers to ensure young people get the training and support they need to enter into and sustain employment.

Education, Health and Family

Food Banks

A map is attached (appendix 1) which shows the 7 food banks in the Borough along with demand requests within the Borough. It is clear from the map that demand for food banks is greater in the South West of the Borough especially Palfrey, Pleck, Birchills Leamore, Blakenall and St Matthews.

In addition to the 7 food banks shown on the map, Black Country Food bank (a charitable organisation that helps vulnerable individuals and families in crisis through the provision of 3 days emergency food supplies while a longer-term solution is developed) have stated that there are 15 different transaction points within Walsall which provide help with food vouchers.

Work is underway to: -

- Identify where the transaction points are;
- Establish the level of demand from each transaction point;
- Identify any duplication in support given to families and individuals;
- Establish the root cause as to why people need to access food banks;
- Provide advice/and or support to reduce the need for repeat demand.

The above information will allow the Council to review the help provided to individuals and families at each transaction point and ensure that the approach is joined up to reduce duplication and waste.

Food Bank Friday was launched in September, 2016 whereby colleagues from across the Council are asked to donate food items on the Friday after payday. The items being requested for donation are identified by the food banks as being in short supply.

The Council will give consideration to provide seed funding to support the establishment of a new food bank where the organiser can provide a business plan which demonstrates a sustainable approach to food provision. The organiser's food bank would therefore need to demonstrate how they would ensure that the food bank would continue once the initial "seed funding" has been spent.

Maximisation of free school meals

Following a series of initiatives, free school meal registrations have increased by around 700 awards. This has helped to maximise pupil premium equating to over £850,000 additional funding being received by local schools.

This breaks down as 550 additional awards for primary aged children (£720,000 in pupil premium) and 150 for secondary aged children (£140,000 in pupil premium). New registrations for reception age children have also increased for the academic year 2016/2017 by 24% (attracting an increase of over £200,000 in pupil premium).

Child Care

The Local Authority is charged with meeting the needs of young children through the Childcare Act 2006.⁴ This places a duty on councils to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient, high-quality early years provision and childcare for parents locally, sufficiency and the quality of provision in Walsall is supported by the School Ready Early Years Team.

Children are entitled to access free childcare and education at 2, 3 and 4 years of age depending on their parents eligibility. Walsall were selected as a pilot for the 2 year old offer giving 40% of disadvantaged children in Walsall early access to the 15 hours free entitlement. This is to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds in narrowing the attainment gap and ensuring that children are as ready as their peers when they go to school. Take up is currently at 69% of eligible children. Parents are encouraged to access the free entitlement supported by colleagues in Families Information Service, Health and Early Help.

The 15 hour universal offer for 3 and 4 year olds is accessed by 100% of children and supports children to access good quality Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Walsall were awarded funding as an early innovator for the 30 hour entitlement by the DfE with a focus on developing access and support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability, which will support the delivery model and roll out of the programme to ensure there are sufficient places available across the Borough from September 2017.

Housing/Neighbourhoods

Fuel Poverty

Walsall Council undertakes a range of direct initiatives to tackle fuel poverty especially for families. The Council has adopted a Home Energy Conservation Act Action (HECA) Plan that seeks to deliver:

- Continued promotion of the collective fuel switch scheme to help households secure lower energy bills;
- Securing £860,000 of funds from government to provide brand new gas central heating to homes with electric or other expensive heating.
- Promotion of :
 - free boiler replacement scheme (Oct 2014 to Oct 16) direct to all owner occupiers in receipt of relevant means tested benefits;
 - Foundations Independent Living Trust grants to low income households with serious illness related to cold and damp conditions;

⁴ Childcare Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

- damp and condensation awareness at Palfrey Children's Centre to new mothers.
- Provision of free carbon monoxide detectors to vulnerable households in rented accommodation.
- Promotion of information to families about tackling damp and condensation in their homes
- Promotion and provision of free Teddy Thermometers to promote safe sleeping advice for babies.

Disabled facility grant - data for completions in 2015/16:

Disabled facilities grants (DFGs) are grants provided by the Council to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person.

In 2015, the Council provided grants to 29 cases who were under the age of 18 at completion of works. The average cost was £12,613.45 (compared to £5,628 for those over 18) and the total spend was £365,790.

Housing Inspections

The Council undertakes inspections of housing in all tenures at the request of residents to seek to address concerns and tackle serious issues for example Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

The system can deal with 29 hazards relating to:

- Dampness, excess cold/heat
- Pollutants e.g. asbestos, carbon monoxide, lead
- Lack of space, security or lighting, or excessive noise
- Poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply
- Accidents - falls, electric shocks, fires, burns, scalds
- Collisions, explosions, structural collapse

Each hazard is assessed separately, and if judged to be 'serious', with a 'high score', is deemed to be a **category 1 hazard**. All other hazards are called **category 2 hazards**.

In terms of inspections priority is given to households with children and especially babies. Where necessary the Council serves relevant legal notices including but not limited to Prohibition Orders.

Financial Support

Welfare Rights Team

Walsall Council Welfare Rights Service is responsible for the delivery of its service to all residents of the borough. The team offers a home visiting service to all. In 2015/16 the welfare rights service helped Walsall people to gain, collectively, £xxxxx (this information will be provided on 4th April, 2017) in additional income.

The Welfare Rights Service in Walsall is unique in offering a whole range of services to residents and partners. These include an intensive house to house survey.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are for people who need extra help with their rent when Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance, or Universal Credit doesn't cover the full amount.

The Government has set restrictions on how much money can be paid out in any financial year to fund DHP. The payments are made from a limited fund and are made as a short term measure for those experiencing difficult circumstances.

Awards of Discretionary Housing Payments help prevent homelessness by helping them to meet their housing costs.

In 2015/16, £703,092.22 was awarded to assist 2031 households with housing costs.

Council Tax Hardship Grant

Customers apply for a grant by contacting the revenues department. Details of the individual circumstances are taken by the officer over the phone or face to face. Each case is then assessed on its own merits. If a grant is awarded it is applied as a direct discount to the council tax liability.

Assistance via the Council Tax Hardship Grant is provided in circumstances where households are unable to pay themselves. No payments have been made to date but a number of applications were being considered when the working group produced this report. When individuals seek assistance, Officers work with them to establish the root cause of the issue and engage professionals from across the council to provide support before considering a hardship grant.

Walsall Crisis Support Scheme/Community Care Awards

The council continues to offer crisis funding to help families at immediate risk to meet essential expenditure on food, utilities and clothing.

Crisis Award

Crisis Awards cover scenarios where there is a severe risk to the health and safety of the applicant or an immediate family member or dependent which cannot be met from another source.

Awards could, for example, be made to cover the following risks:

- No access to essential needs (food, heating and clothing);
- Imminent deterioration/deterioration in health domestic abuse, neglect and harm;
- breakdown of the family unit.

Awards will be made for the provision of:

- Food - clothing and nappies;
- Heating (payment of pre-payment meter);
- Access to hospital;
- Other forms of support in exceptional circumstances.

Community Care Awards

Awards for community care are intended to help vulnerable people live independent lives to remain and become integrated within their community.

The applicant can be the person requiring care, a member of their immediate family, or someone else the applicant or their family will be providing care for.

An application may be considered for one of five categories of community care:

- Help for people leaving care to establish themselves in the community
- Help for people to stay in the community rather than enter care
- Help to ease exceptional pressures
- Help in caring for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison
- Help for people to set up a home as part of a resettlement programme following a period without a settled way of life

Awards may be made for the provision of:-

- Bed
- Bedding
- Utensils (including microwave)
- Something to sit on

- Additional items as necessary (health/age/disability) including: -
 - White goods
 - Carpets/curtains
 - Access to hospital

Charities

Walsall Council supports a number of charities that assist with a wide range of matters for people in hardship. These include:-

Charity	Awards
Fishley	<p>Grants toward educational costs:-</p> <p>Books, equipment (musical instruments etc) or fees.</p> <p>Any costs related to a person's studies can be considered so long as it is supported by a member of teaching staff i.e.: book list signed by a tutor.</p> <p>Field trips and school visits either applied for wholly by schools or by individuals.</p>
C.C. Walker	<p>Provides grants toward the advancement of education or benefit of children or young persons.</p> <p>Also provides grants for school uniforms.</p>
Walsall Wood Allotment	<p>Very broad. Basically anything that reduces the need, hardship or distress of persons who are in need. Which may include:-</p> <p>Washing machines, cookers and other household items. Also school uniforms.</p>
Blanch Woollaston	<p>Clothing including school uniforms or other outfits to enable young people to enter or engage in any profession, trade or occupation or service.</p> <p>Anything which promotes education of individuals.</p> <p>Anything that reduces the need, hardship or distress of persons who are in need.</p>
WJ Croft	<p>Very broad. Basically anything that reduces the need, hardship or distress of persons who are in need.</p>

The working group acknowledges that work is being undertaken to address child poverty. However, it is not made explicitly clear how the above has had a direct impact on child poverty in Walsall. The working group recommends that work undertaken to tackle child poverty should be much clearer in our plans and strategies. In addition, there needs to be clear reporting mechanisms in place to monitor the levels of child poverty in Walsall.

Conclusion

The number of children living in poverty across the UK is predicted to increase. Walsall is not immune to this rise and so it is perhaps more crucial than ever before that the council ensures it has:-

- Programmes and initiatives in place to prevent families entering poverty
- Support structures and systems in place to support families that are in poverty.

The working group's review has identified that the council is making efforts to reduce poverty at a local level but this is hampered by the continued impact of the welfare reforms which makes daily life for families across the country, more challenging than ever before. When coupled with continued government austerity and increased pressure on local authority budgets the reasons for an increase in child poverty becomes more apparent.

What has been clear during this review is that Walsall Council is committed to help those in poverty to achieve in life. This starts early, ensuring that families have the support they need to care for themselves and their children. It follows through early help, with tips, tools and support provided by children's centres and health visitors. It's about making sure that parents can access nursery provision, live in a suitable environment and never go hungry. It's about ensuring that there are quality schools for children to attend in a place that's accessible. Once there its ensuring that they feel comfortable to take up the offer of a free school meal to which they are entitled and that support continues through to adulthood. When considering child poverty it was apparent that whilst there is reference to many strands which contribute to child poverty the council could be more co-ordinated ensuring that child poverty is a clear priority that shapes service delivery.

The Working Group is disappointed that the Government's target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 has been disposed with and that there continues to be a battle to keep child poverty on the agenda at national level. Without a specific and focussed approach from the Government to tackle child poverty the task of local authorities to tackle child poverty is even more challenging. The working group await the publication of the Social Justice Green Paper so that the Government's fresh approach to tackle this important issue can be examined and scrutinised.

Recommendations

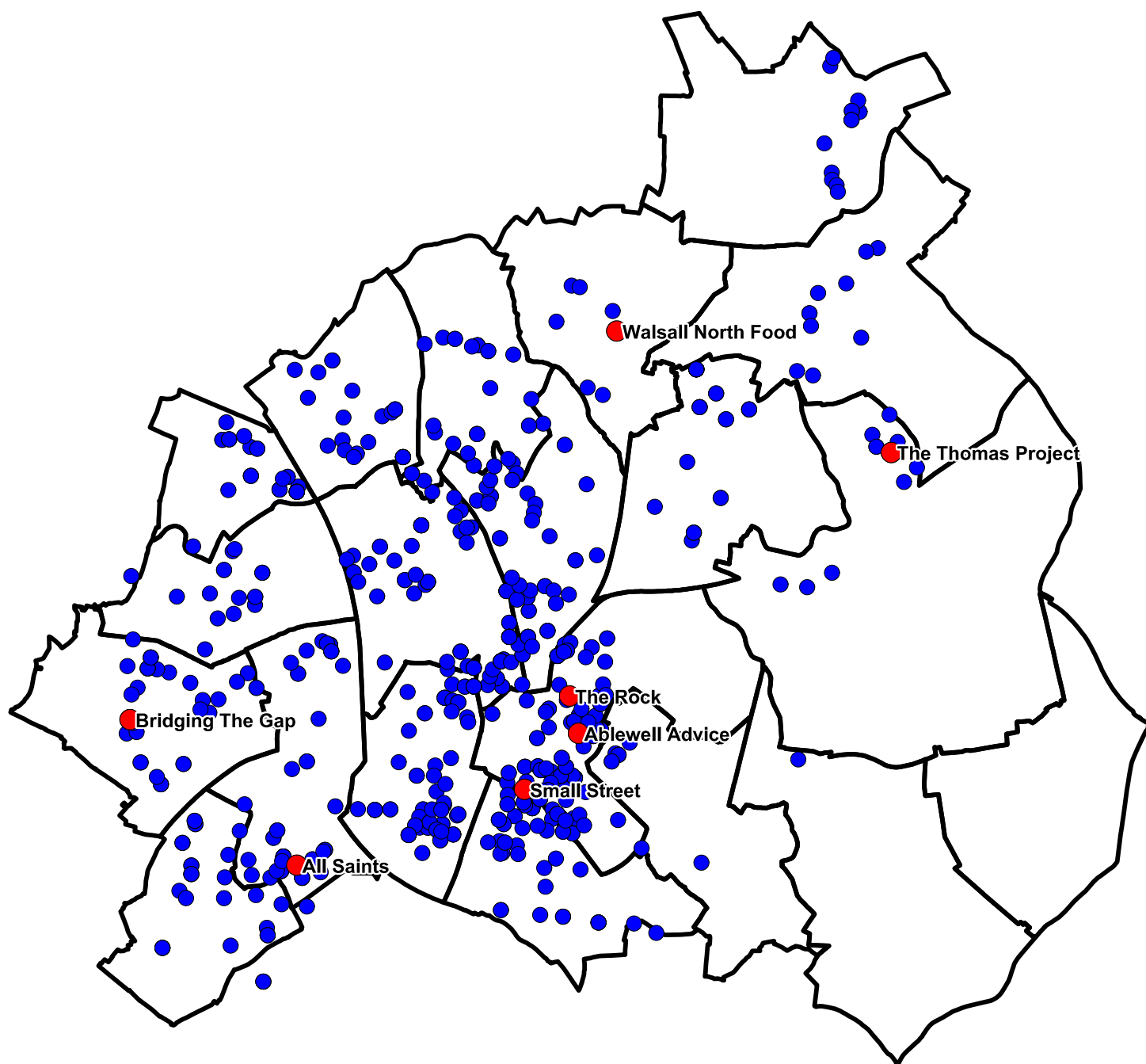
1. That Cabinet:-

- a) Review the Council's existing plans and strategies to tackle child poverty to ensure that the approach is both clear, measurable;
- b) Review the performance indicators and reporting mechanisms that are in place to monitor child poverty and how these are used to shape the Council's response to child poverty.
- c) Review the staff resources available within the council to ensure that child poverty can be tackled effectively at a local level;
- d) Review how Partners, charities and other third sector providers are working cohesively to tackle child poverty and whether this approach would benefit from a review of existing partnership arrangements;

2. That Black Country Food bank be invited to attend a future meeting of the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide feedback on the outcome of the ongoing review. The feedback should include details on the following areas:-

- where the transaction points are;
- the level of demand from each transaction point;
- any duplication in support given to families and individuals;
- the root cause why people need to access food banks;
- provide advice/and or support to reduce the need for repeat demand.

Requests for Food April 2015 to September 2015



Walsall Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group
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Work Group Name:	Child Poverty Working Group
Requested by:	Council
Panel:	Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Municipal Year:	2016/17
Lead Member:	Councillor L. Hazell
Lead Officer:	Sue Blick/Tahra Hussain
Scrutiny Officer:	Neil Picken
Membership:	Councillor T. Jukes, Councillor E. Hazell, Councillor D. Barker, Councillor M. Ward & Councillor Gultasib

1.	Context
	<p>It is important that Members of the Education and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Panel take the time to consider all matters within the remit of the Panel as this developed understanding leads to effective and improved Scrutiny.</p> <p>At a meeting of Council held on 16 November, 2015 a notice of motion was considered as follows:-</p> <p><i>Council notes that there has been a continued net rise in the numbers of children living in poverty and in extreme poverty over the past 10 years with levels in some areas such as Blakenall reaching 42% A survey of 3500 young people in 2014 found that 9% are always or often hungry because there is not enough food at home (equivalent to 2450 young people in Walsall).</i></p> <p><i>This has had indirect consequences of driving more families into debt, forcing a rise in levels of inequality, contributing to adoption of a poor diet and subsequently a rise in numbers with unhealthy weight and worsened education attainments.</i></p> <p><i>Council further notes that future cuts in funds from Central Government of around £24M in the next financial year alone will , combined with the introduction of universal credit, the continuation of the imposition of the bedroom tax and cuts to working tax credits, further increase these numbers especially in the less well off parts of Walsall.</i></p> <p><i>Council has adopted in 2013 a children and young people's plan for 2013 to 2016 that includes a priority of, 'Reducing the impact of child poverty' and notes that the Children and Young People's Partnership Board has also been tasked to produce a report on this area of concern. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy also includes a priority to: 'Reducing child poverty and the impact on families of workless parents'.</i></p>

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	<i>However we feel this area is now so serious and imminent to need an urgent updated review and to establish a task and finish group hosted by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel to formulate an action plan that could mitigate the effects of this rise in child poverty levels bringing all relevant partners round the table.</i>
2.	Objective
	To formulate an action plan that could mitigate the effects of the rise in child poverty levels.
3.	Scope
	<p>For Members to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the local and national context; • Identify the laws, strategies and policies in place to tackle child poverty; • Identify services, support and strategies in place locally to address the issue of child poverty; • Map the support offered by the Council, Partners, Charities, community and voluntary organisations; • Identify good practice elsewhere in the country and recommend any particular examples for implementation within Walsall; • Consider the councils ability to tackle the issues in light of significant budget pressures – identifying budget savings which may impact negatively on child poverty.
4.	Equalities Implications
	<p>When considering each area Members will consider whether each area adequately delivers towards the six strands of equalities, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • Gender • Race • Religion or belief • Sexual orientation
5.	Who else will you want to take part?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People's Partnership Board • Health and Wellbeing Board • Partners • Residents • Schools • Third Sector service providers
6.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule

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	Terms of reference – 6 th September, 2016 Final report to Committee – 16 th February, 2017 Final report to Cabinet – 15 March, 2017											
7.	Risk factors											
	<table><tr><th>Risk</th><th>Likelihood</th><th>Measure to Resolve</th></tr><tr><td>Difficulties engaging with teams</td><td>Medium</td><td>Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements</td></tr><tr><td>Completing all work in a timely manner</td><td>High</td><td>Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.</td></tr></table>			Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve	Difficulties engaging with teams	Medium	Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements	Completing all work in a timely manner	High	Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.
Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve										
Difficulties engaging with teams	Medium	Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements										
Completing all work in a timely manner	High	Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.										

Date Agreed:		Date Updated:	
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Timetable: TBA subject to Members availability

DATE	ACTIVITY