

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	13 February 2014
Subject:	Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Update

Summary:

This report provides a background to the duties of the Child Poverty Act 2010 on local authorities, and provides an overview of the latest HMRC 2011 data release, identifying how Lincolnshire compares to statistical neighbours, regional authorities and nationally against the 'Children in Low-Income Families Local Measure'.

The report focuses on the progress, content and governance arrangements of the Child Poverty Action Plan and outlines the development of a Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Child Poverty sub-group, chaired by Tony Hill, Director of Public Health. The sub-group will monitor and review the Action Plan and present updates to the CYPSP which will provide a strategic steer and expedite any issues.

The Action Plan identifies a number of strategic objectives which support the Child Poverty Strategy themes of:

- Poverty of Access
- Economic Poverty
- Poverty of Aspiration

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to endorse the Child Poverty Action Plan and the governance arrangements to monitor and review progress against it.

1. Background

The Child Poverty Act 2010 commits the government to reduce child poverty and places specific duties on local authorities to work towards ending child poverty. Specifically, it places a duty on each local authority to:

- Produce an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in its area (a child poverty needs assessment);

- Prepare a joint Child Poverty Strategy with relevant partners; and
- Cooperate with Partners and other bodies to reduce child poverty, and work to mitigate its effects;

Lincolnshire County Council has already developed and consulted on a Child Poverty Strategy (Appendix A) with partners and other stakeholders. The Strategy has also been agreed by the Council's Executive. The strategy was underpinned by a Child Poverty Needs Assessment.

The Council's Executive agreed that the monitoring of the Child Poverty Strategy should be governed through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). This is in line with requirement for Partner cooperation in mitigating the effects of Child Poverty.

Data:

The 'Children in Low-Income Families Local Measure' is the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income which is less than 60 per cent of national median income.

This measure provides a broad proxy for relative low-income child poverty as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010, and enables analysis at a local level.

The data tables below is based on the HMRC 2011 release and shows both the numbers of children and the statistical percentage of Children living in Poverty in those given areas, comparing Lincolnshire against Statistical Neighbours (Table 1A) and East Midlands authorities (Table 1B):

Table 1A

Statistical Neighbour Authorities	Total Numbers of children in low income households	% of children in low income households
England	2,319,450	20.10%
East Midlands	179,245	18.40%
Norfolk	28,980	17.30%
Nottinghamshire	27,700	17.00%
Lincolnshire	24,260	16.50%
Derbyshire	26,045	16.40%
Suffolk	22,280	15.10%
Worcestershire	17,735	15.00%
Dorset	9,865	12.70%
Northamptonshire	25,510	15.80%
Staffordshire	25,495	14.80%
Cumbria	14,485	14.90%

Table 1B

East Midland Authorities	Total Numbers of children in low income households	% of children in low income households
England	2,319,450	20.10%
East Midlands	179,245	18.40%
Nottingham City	21,600	34.40%
Leicester City	24,250	30.00%
Derby City	13,660	23.70%
Nottinghamshire	27,700	17.00%
Lincolnshire	24,260	16.50%
Derbyshire	26,045	16.40%
Northamptonshire	25,510	15.80%
Leicestershire	15,655	11.60%
Rutland	565	8.00%

The discrepancies between actual number and the statistical percentage can be more clearly seen between the Shire authorities and City authorities. Lincolnshire is placed in the top half of the table in terms of numbers and in the middle in terms of statistical percentages.

Data of Lincolnshire districts – Table 1C below demonstrates high levels of local variation across the districts which can be seen in the last 2 columns which show the area of highest Child Poverty in any given district and that with the lowest figure.

Table 1C

District	Total Numbers of children in low income households for District	Highest Number of children in low income households for District (sum of LSOA 2011 data) Ward and Number	Lowest Number of children in low income households for District (sum of LSOA 2011 data) Ward and Number
Boston	2,440	Fenside 445	West Ward 10
East Lindsey	5,395	Scarbrough Ward 350	Legbourne Ward 20
Lincoln	4,480	Birchward Ward 735	Carholme Ward 190
North Kesteven	2,465	Ruskington Ward 165	North Hykeham Forum 20
South Holland	2,645	Spalding St Pauls Ward 285	Spalding Castle Ward 35
South Kesteven	3,895	Earlesfield Ward 805	Witham Valley Ward 15
West Lindsey	2,965	Gainsborough East Ward 725	Sudbrooke Ward 20
Grand Total	24,285		

The figures in the Table 1D below were commissioned by the Child Poverty Action Group from Loughborough University who produce the national estimate for the cost of child poverty. This data estimates the annual cost of Child poverty to the local and national economy.

Table 1D

District	Number of Children in Poverty	Estimated Annual Cost £m to Local and National economy
Boston	2,195	£24m
East Lindsey	4,876	£53m
Lincoln	4,033	£44m
North Kesteven	1,823	£20m
South Holland	2,306	£25m
South Kesteven	3,130	£34m
West Lindsey	2,466	£27m
Total	20,829	£227m

(Please read "Local Authorities and Child Poverty: balancing threats and opportunities – Rys Farthing July 2012" for further information on these estimates)

2. Conclusion

A number of reports have been presented to the CYPSP since the original Child Poverty Strategy was agreed in order to review progress and to inform the development of on-going monitoring arrangements.

As part of the Executive approval for the Strategy, and as a request of the CYPSP, work has since been initiated to develop a Child Poverty Action Plan with an associated performance scorecard from which the CYPSP will monitor and review progress against the Action Plan.

The Action Plan can be found in Appendix B, and as a partnership plan, includes the following key resource activity areas which will be the focus for review by the CYPSP over the next 12 months:

Strategy Theme	Activity/Resource Area	Accountable Service
Poverty of Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing digital exclusion – with the roll out of universal credit being digital increasing access to the internet is essential – this needs to be tackled through increased technology, access to IT equipment and basic training 	Performance & Governance; IMT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Exclusion – the role of transport in shaping the experience of poverty for families is crucial and can affect parental and young people employment opportunities 	Communities; Highways and Transportation
Economic Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating welfare changes to affected groups to maximise uptake of benefits and to enable affected groups to prepare for the changes with the help of guidance, advice and financial planning 	District Councils

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the uptake of free school meals for those that are eligible 	Public Health; Children's Health
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising family income through financial inclusion and literacy 	Public Health; Adults & Vulnerable People
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackling fuel poverty 	Home Energy Lincs Partnership (HELP) - NKDC
Poverty of Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills development so young people are ready for work with skills that can be best utilised within Lincolnshire economy 	Children's Services; 14-19 Service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills development to reduce worklessness in the adult population 	Communities; Economy & Culture

Due to the extensive scope of Action Plan, it has been agreed with CYPSP that a dedicated Child Poverty Sub-Group (Appendix C) is to be established and chaired by Tony Hill, Director of Public Health. Membership of this group is to include key partners involved in the delivery of the Action Plan, and an initial workshop is planned for early 2014 to assist sub-group members in understanding the wider implications of child poverty and the impact their own project has in tackling this.

A further meeting to review progress will be held within 3 months followed by 6-monthly update and review sessions. It is important to note that projects within the Action Plan have their own governance and monitoring arrangements in place to provide assurance for successful delivery. These monitoring arrangements remain in place. An update will be made by the sub-group to the main CYPSP meeting on progress of the delivery of the Action Plan - see governance map at Appendix C for an overview of this structure.

A Scorecard mechanism has been developed and forms a standard template by which each project will report into the Child Poverty sub-group. The Scorecard can be found at Appendix 4, it includes details of how the project will help to tackle Child Poverty, its progress to date, milestones and issues.

3. Consultation

The Action Plan has been approved by Children's Services DMT, Corporate Management Board and was presented to CYPSP on 7 October 2013 and subsequently agreed.

During 2014/15 it is intended to carry out a review of the Child Poverty Strategy to ensure that it reflects a cohesive response to the government's commitment to eradicate child poverty in Britain and remains up to date as a result of the new measures proposed by Government on Child Poverty and implications of the benefit reforms, free school meals to all primary school children and changes to the value of the pupil premium grant to name a few.

Children's Services is actively engaging with District Councils and partners across the County. A few specific example of this includes:

On 14 November 2013, Officers were invited to attend the Lincoln District Scrutiny Committee and participate in discussions relating specifically to Child Poverty. A number of County Council Officers will also be attending the Child Poverty Workshop to be held by Lincoln City Council on 26 February 2014. This engagement has already highlighted the potential for joint working, reducing duplication and more importantly, improved service delivery for families. This work is based around increasing the update of Free School Meals eligibility which is coupled to the Pupil Premium funding receivable by schools. Upon successful completion of the trial with Lincoln and North Kesteven, the aim is to extend this out to other District Councils with Housing Stock.

On 30 January 2014, Officers attended the Boston Scrutiny Committee for Child Poverty to look at specific issues that are applicable within the district.

West Lindsey District Council is a pathfinder for the benefits reform and has implemented a range of initiatives to support local people to understand these changes and the practical issues around on-line applications, rent payments and monthly budgeting. Many of these initiatives are aligned to the themes within the Action Plan, by direct engagement and sharing of information, particularly with Family's Working Together teams, this work can be targeted to those most vulnerable and in need.

There are also a number of operational actions centred around information sharing, better signposting and single point of contact were possible. This work is on-going.

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Child Poverty Strategy
Appendix B	Child Poverty Action Plan
Appendix C	CYPSP Child Poverty Governance Map
Appendix D	CYPSP Child Poverty Scorecard

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Child Poverty in Low Income Households data:	Lincolnshire Research Observatory - Child Poverty Data
Child Poverty Strategy Needs Assessment:	Lincolnshire Research Observatory - Needs Assessment
Child Poverty Action Group:	www.cpag.org.uk/
Local Authorities and Child Poverty: balancing threats and opportunities – Rys Farthing July 2012:	CPAG - Rys Farthing Report
Child Poverty Act 2010:	Child Poverty Legislation

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