

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **5th December 2007**

Report Title **Child Poverty**

Summary This paper is a context setting report for the Committee's single issue meeting dedicated to Child Poverty.

The Government set targets in 1999 to eliminate child poverty by 2020. There are pockets of deprivation in Warwickshire that need to be eradicated to allow all children to achieve economic well-being. A partnership strategy is necessary to achieve this.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]

No

Background papers

- Child Poverty Audit
- Local Partnership for Action Groups' paper
- Government documents referenced in the report

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:

Details to be specified

Other Committees

- Sure Start Policy Panel 30.4.07
Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership Board 19.9.07
Local Partnerships For Action Group, April 2007
CYP&F Directorate Leadership Team 22.2.07

- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members For information:
Cllr Heather Timms
Cllr Richard Grant
Cllr John Whitehouse
- Cabinet Member For information:
Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Other Cabinet Members consulted For information:
Cllr John Burton
- Chief Executive
- Legal Victoria Gould – *“fine”*
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals All stakeholders
Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer

FINAL DECISION **YES**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee –5th December 2007

Child Poverty

Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Recommendation:

That the Committee uses the content of this report and the report taken to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (attached as **Appendix 1**), in conjunction with presentations being made to the Committee at this meeting, to:

- (1) scrutinise current efforts to address Child Poverty, and
- (2) make recommendations as to how Warwickshire County Council and our partners can further raise the profile of child poverty and contribute to its elimination.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Government unveiled plans on 29th October this year for a dedicated Child Poverty unit aimed at meeting the Government's target of halving child poverty by 2010. The new unit will be located in the Department for Children, Schools and Families and involve officials from the Department for Work and Pensions. It will work closely with Local Government and other Government agencies providing a single point of contact on child poverty issues. The new unit will also draw on the expertise of Barnardo's Policy Advisor, Neera Sharma, who will join the unit for a year.
- 1.2 In 1999 the first Opportunity For All Report was issued outlining the Government's commitment to eliminate child poverty by 2020. The Government set targets to reduce child poverty by a quarter by 2004/05 and to halve it by 2010 (*DWP (2005) Opportunity For All, A Summary of the Seventh Report*).
- 1.3 From 1998/99 to 2005/06 the number of children living in relative poverty (defined as living in a household with below 60% median income before housing costs) fell from 3.4 million to 2.8 million.

- 1.4 The Department for Work and Pensions has played a key role in reducing child poverty, primarily through supporting individuals into employment, via a range of Welfare to Work programmes. Jobcentre Plus brings together benefits and employment agencies into one system, with a strong focus on providing personal advisors. There has been an emphasis on helping lone parents back to work, as this is the family group where children are at most risk of poverty.
- 1.5 The number of children in poverty has fallen by 700,000 since 1998/99, with a 15 year low in the UK child poverty rate. Although good progress has been made, the Government missed its target to reduce child poverty by a quarter between 1998/99 and 2004/05, and looks unlikely to meet the target to halve child poverty by 2010 (*Harker, L (2006) Delivering on Child Poverty: What Would it Take*).

2. The position In Warwickshire

- 2.1 Regarding the distribution of poverty across Warwickshire, 34 of the 83 most deprived areas in the county for income deprivation affecting children can be found in Nuneaton & Bedworth, and 14% of dependent children in that district live in a household with no-one in employment. This rises to 32.5% in the Camp Hill ward – the highest in the county. However there are pockets of deprivation within the more affluent areas of Warwickshire, notably Warwick West and Brunswick Wards in Warwick.
- 2.2 The strategy in Warwickshire County Council is to raise the profile of why child poverty is so serious for the well-being of the whole of Warwickshire with a view to achieving whole-hearted partnership support to eradicate its causes. Within Warwickshire there are several initiatives taking place to support parents, children and families living in deprived areas of Warwickshire. These include Children's Centres, Extended Services, Pride in Camp Hill, Opportunities Centres and the Adult & Community Learning Service. Many of these services are provided through partnership working. The programme of presentations for the Committee is reflective of the above.
- 2.3 A child poverty audit was undertaken within Warwickshire in November 2006 to provide background information and establish the position within Warwickshire in terms of child poverty. The audit highlighted areas of deprivation in the county, and began the process of partnership working and raising the awareness of the issues surrounding the incidence of child poverty in Warwickshire.
- 2.4 Consultation has taken place through meeting groups and discussions with various teams in the county. The following meeting groups and agencies have been involved:
 - Local and County Partnership for Action Groups
 - Children, Young People and Families Directorate Leadership Team
 - Sure Start Policy Panel
 - Voluntary and Community Sector Forum
 - Rugby Youth Forum

- Pride in Camp Hill
- Job Centre Plus
- Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service
- The Adult Health and Community Directorate
- Adult and Community Learning
- Health and Well-being
- Adult Commissioning
- Environment and Economy Directorate
- Warwickshire Observatory and Skills
- Tourism and Economy.

2.5 The consultation process has provided many useful suggestions for taking forward a child poverty strategy. Listed below are some of the main points raised:

- The culture and aspirations of young people need to be changed
- More work is needed with young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
- Attainment at GCSE, particularly of boys
- More family friendly employers
- Housing issues
- Access to services
- Services could look more holistically at the family
- A multi-faceted approach is required to address issues that impact on poverty.

2.6 The teams and agencies consulted stressed that partnership working is key to achieving the initiatives suggested above, especially in relation to securing funding.

3. Local Area Agreement

The main theme of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement for 2007/10 is 'Narrowing the Gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the county'. The agreement identifies that "...whilst many parts of Warwickshire can properly be seen as being relatively prosperous, there are many residents living in both urban and rural areas who experience significant levels of deprivation" (*Warwickshire Local Area Agreement, WCC, 2006*). Poverty plays a role in this and is featured in many of the outcomes of the agreement.

4. Children and Young People's Plan

4.1 The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for 2007/10 includes four cross-cutting themes or strands. The Joint Area Review drives the Looked after Children, Safeguarding, and Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities themes. Poverty is a Children, Young People and Families Directorate priority theme. The CYPP is a partnership plan, involving

many agencies in the county. It has the advantage of involving a wide range of agencies and organisations in achieving this objective.

- 4.2 Consequently in the production of programme plans, they can be identified as contributing directly to these themes. A search for poverty will provide a list of all programmes, actions and tasks, which are relevant.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Local Authorities have a major role to play to assist the Government with its targets to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty by 2020, in conjunction with partners.
- 5.2 There is no one route that will assist all children out of poverty, each circumstance is different and the support required varies. Localised delivery, with a range of options, provides the best opportunity to support those children who live in poverty in Warwickshire. Through partnership working, different packages and services can be made available to allow the best opportunities for children, and for parents to support their children through the route most appropriate to their circumstances.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee uses the content of this report and the report taken to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (attached as Appendix 1), in conjunction with presentations being made to the Committee at this meeting, to:

- (1) scrutinise current efforts to address Child Poverty, and
- (2) make recommendations as to how Warwickshire County Council and our partners can further raise the profile of child poverty and contribute to its elimination.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
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22nd November 2007

Report for Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board – 19th September 2007

Child Poverty

Introduction

Over the past few months staff in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate have been collating information and collecting feedback from directorates and multi-agency teams across the county. This report will collect together the findings so far and consider how the child poverty agenda can be taken forward in Warwickshire through partnership. The strategy will raise the profile of why child poverty is so serious for the well being of the whole of Warwickshire with a view to achieving whole-hearted partnership support to eradicate its causes.

The Government Pledge

The first Opportunity for All report issued in 1999, outlined the government's commitment to eliminating child poverty year on year, with milestones of reducing child poverty by a quarter by 2004/05, halving it by 2010, and eradicating child poverty by 2020.¹ The government has improved the tax credits system and provided further opportunities to assist parents into employment, as part of the strategy to eliminate child poverty.

Government Strategies to Reduce Child Poverty

The government is tackling the causes and not just the symptoms of child poverty and social exclusion. The key elements of the government's strategy are to:

1. Enable families with poorer incomes to increase their incomes and to join the rising national prosperity through participation in education, training and the labour market.
2. Provide support to low-income families, whether they are working or not and to promote their financial security and well-being.
3. Break the cycle of deprivation, ensuring that children from poor families are equipped with the skills to enable them to benefit from later learning and prosper as adults, through early years services.
4. Ensure that public services deliver high quality outcomes for all families, regardless of circumstances.
5. Assist parents to help their children, by maximising parental support and opportunity.²

Strategies that the government has implemented have provided support to children in poverty.

The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) provides assistance into work. At 2004, 541,100 lone parents had joined the programme, of which more than 247,000 have been assisted into employment. 50% of participants in the programme entered work compared to 26% of non-participants. To assist lone parents with the transition to Jobseeker's Allowance, from

¹ Department for Work and Pensions (2005) Opportunity for All, A Summary of the Seventh Annual Report

² Harker, L (2006) Delivering on Child Poverty: What Would it Take?

October 2005, lone parents who's youngest child is 14 or over, will be expected to attend a work-focused interview once every three months, in preparation for their child reaching 16.³

Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit were introduced in April 2003 to provide support in addition to the guaranteed earnings of the National Minimum Wage, which was introduced in April 1999. The tax credits and minimum wage aimed to tackle poor work incentives and poverty in working people. 2.3 million low and moderate-income working families were benefiting from the new tax credit systems by April 2004. Between 1997 and 2004, the government increased financial support for children through tax credits and other benefits by £10.4 billion.⁴

In the 2007 budget, Gordon Brown increased both child benefit and tax credits. These are the government's main methods for reducing child poverty. The budget, taken as a whole, is expected to assist 200,000 children out of poverty. In addition, the government will also be running back to work schemes, with many aimed at lone parents. There is also increasing support from ministers to put pressure on families receiving benefits to find work, primarily when free childcare becomes available.⁵

Working tax credit supplements low wage earners to make work pay, but further work is necessary to provide training and skills to workers, so that they no longer have to rely on working tax credit. It is also important to consider future parents and the skills that they are provided with at school. Improving education in Warwickshire will also potentially have an impact on future child poverty levels.

Those with higher level skills dominate the labour force in Warwickshire, with on average, each additional year of education resulting in an approximate 9% increase in wages. "The growth in child poverty within the UK over the past 30 years or so is closely linked to the growth in the number of children living in families with no-one in work."⁶ In terms of this measure, getting parents into work is the main mechanism for reducing child poverty, however the quality of work and wage levels are also paramount in reducing child poverty.

A study reported in the Guardian in February 2007, conducted by University College London and King's College London discovered that the social background of a child is the crucial factor in academic performance. "In affluent areas, the study found that, on average, 67% of 11 year olds achieve level 5 in national English tests and 94% of 15 year olds achieve 5 or more passes at GCSEs at grade C or above. Conversely, of the children growing up in deprived areas, only 13% could expect to get the top level 5 in national English tests and 24% will achieve the benchmark of 5 GCSEs at grade C or above."⁷

The Millennium Cohort Study: Second Survey, Centre for Longitudinal Studies, June 2007, tracked 15,500 children born between 2000 and 2002 and established that in vocabulary tests, three year old children with graduate parents were 10 months ahead of those who's parents had less educational achievements.⁸

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) released a press release in August 2007, informing that the government has announced £4 billion for Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare, to improve life for disadvantaged children in England. Beverley Hughes, Children, Young People and Families Minister said, "The early years are crucial to a child's development and their future prospects. We need to put services in place that can give every

³ HM Treasury (2004) Child Poverty Review

⁴ HM Treasury (2004) Child Poverty Review

⁵ Children Now (2007) 18-24 April Edition

⁶ Warwickshire County Council (2007) Employment, Skills, Child Poverty and Life Chances

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

child the very best possible start in life. Local Authorities now have the money to make that happen.”⁹

Warwickshire will be provided with £8,856,513 for 2008-09, for 2009-10 the county will receive £10,111,679 and in 2010-11 the allocation will be £11,692,322. Specific allocations of this money will be provided for services, such as Children’s Centres, a Graduate Leader fund and extended schools in the first year.¹⁰

The breakdown of the funding for Warwickshire, along with further information can be found at Appendix A.

The Government are investing £3bn per year to offer all three and four year olds 12.5 hours per week of free early years provision, regardless of the parents’ employment status. However, with reports of increasing childcare costs, parents are less likely to return to work. For a full time nursery place in England for a child under two, parents can be expected to pay on average, £151 per week.¹¹ Childcare has improved enormously but there are still gaps for parents who are not able to find affordable and accessible childcare. Amount and reach of tax credits is still not enough to make a difference.

The government has stated its aim to build three million new properties in the housing Green Paper, ‘Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable.’ If housing is not fit for purpose, this can result in many associated problems, many of which can result in child poverty, including, low educational attainment, ill health and children with behavioural problems. More affordable and sustainable homes should assist more people to buy their own home and to live in better quality housing.¹²

Work is the most sustainable way of lifting families from poverty, but the government also believes that a parent’s capacity to earn should not be the determining factor in children’s life chances. Families also need to be supported by a welfare system, alongside encouraging parents to work. The aim of the system is to be clear, non-stigmatising and responsive, with help for all families but additional support for those who need it most, when they need it most.¹³

While the government has achieved a great deal to date it is the view of commentators that more radical and imaginative solutions are found to child poverty.

Current Progress

The number of children in poverty has fallen by 700,000 since 1998/99, with a 15 year low in the UK child poverty rate. Although good progress has been made, the government missed its target to reduce child poverty by a quarter between 1998/99 and 2004/05, and looks unlikely to meet the target to halve child poverty by 2010.¹⁴ (See graph below).

⁹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) Press Notice 2007/0144

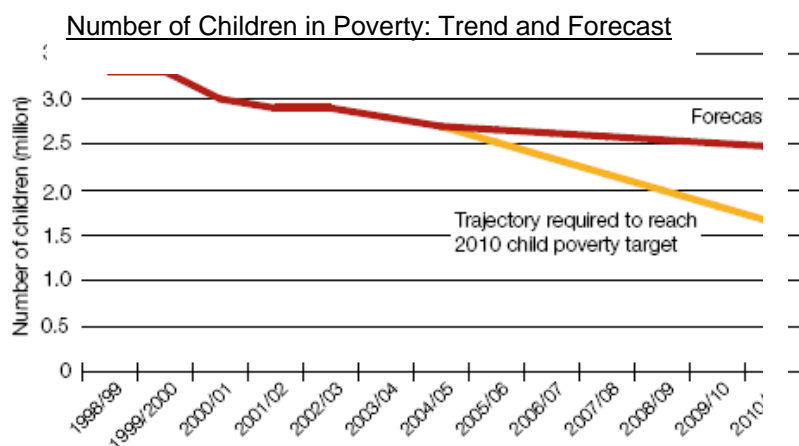
¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ BBC (2007) Parents’ childcare costs ‘soar’ <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

¹² Children Now (2007) 18-24 April Edition

¹³ HM Treasury (2004) Child Poverty Review

¹⁴ Harker, L (2006) Delivering on Child Poverty: What Would it Take?



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A further 1.1 million children need to be lifted out of poverty between 2004/05 and 2010/11 in order for child poverty to be halved by 2010. With no further action, sustaining the achievements so far would be difficult and child poverty rates would not fall significantly. In addition, child poverty is measured in terms of median income. This is variable over time and could result in a higher number of children than first estimated who need to be lifted out of poverty by 2010.¹⁶

It was reported by the government that there were 100,000 additional children living in poverty during 2005/06 than in 2004/05. In total 2.8 million children were in poverty in 2005/06 before housing costs, rising to 3.8 million after housing costs were considered.¹⁷

How Local Authorities and Partners can Contribute to the National Commitment

Local authorities have a major role to play to assist the government with its targets to reduce and eradicate child poverty by 2020. To achieve this the Local Government Association believe that local authorities should regularly consider their services and activities to ensure that they are contributing to tackling child poverty and Children's Services should ensure that the issues are mainstreamed in the authority and through multi-agency partnership working.¹⁸ The Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper proposes changes which should assist local government to champion the interests of those who are disadvantaged, empowering communities to have their say in the services which they receive.¹⁹

Local Government can make a major contribution, particularly in housing and the skills agenda. Through the local government white paper and the Local Area Agreement, we have new opportunities to engage over a major government policy issue.

The role of Local authorities in tackling child poverty, is summarised in one of the seven shared priorities for public services agreed by central government and the Local Government Association in 2002, "...improving the quality of life of children, young people and families at risk, by tackling child poverty, maximising the life chances of children in care or in need and strengthening protection for children at risk of abuse."²⁰

¹⁵ Chung, R et al (2006) Family Resources Survey 2004/05

¹⁶ Harker, L (2006) Delivering on Child Poverty: What Would it Take?

¹⁷ Children Now (2007) 4-10 April Edition

¹⁸ Local Government Association (2006) Local Government and Child Poverty: Making a Shared Commitment a Shared Reality

¹⁹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) Strong and Prosperous Communities, The Local Government White Paper

²⁰ HM Treasury (2004) Child Poverty Review

Work that local authorities have done to date includes:

1. Maximising the take-up of tax credits and benefits,
2. Promoting employment through links with Job Centre Plus to make the public sector an employer of choice,
3. Promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities, through partnerships with local organisations,
4. Delivering key services, such as education, housing, regeneration, transport, leisure facilities and social services, and
5. Establishing a new model for delivering services to children in a joined up way.²¹

Local authorities have worked with partner agencies to make these achievements. The voluntary, community and faith sectors provide input and advice on policy development, help to shape services locally, and deliver statutory and voluntary services.

The government has established a Child Poverty Accord, to support local authorities with their contribution to the child poverty agenda. Partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Local Government Association will work together with local authorities to tackle child poverty.

The Position Nationally and in Warwickshire

The Department for Work and Pensions provides regional data on child poverty, which measures the percentage of children living in low-income households with below 60% median net of living costs. Nationally there were 27% of children in this bracket in 2004/05. In the West Midlands this figure increases to 30%*, having fallen by 8%* between 1998/99 and 2004/05. The child poverty rate in London is the highest in UK, with 39%* of children living in low-income households on this measure. Due to the high levels of deprivation in the area, a separate commission has been established, called the London Child Poverty Commission.

In the Multiple Index of Deprivation 2004 (IMD), districts in the 10% most deprived are concentrated in the North West and the North East, with 32.6% and 30.4% of districts respectively. The South East does not have any districts in the 10% most deprived.

In the most deprived 100 Super Output Areas (SOA) in the country, the top 16 are in the North West. There are 4 SOAs from the West Midlands in the top 100, with two in Coventry and two in Birmingham.

Within the West Midlands region, in 2005 there were 14 local wards where the percentage of children on benefits is at least twice the national average. These wards are mostly within Birmingham, Coventry and Telford and Wrekin. None reside in Warwickshire.

Out of 3,482 SOAs, the West Midlands has 474 SOAs or nearly 14% featured in the 10% most deprived nationally. These areas are concentrated in parts of Birmingham, Coventry and Stoke on Trent.

Stratford Upon Avon District is in the 10% least deprived in England in terms of local concentration and is the only West Midlands district in the 20% least deprived nationally. The most deprived area in Warwickshire on this measure is Nuneaton and Bedworth, which is in the top 30%.

²¹ Ibid

* The regional data actually shows "rolling averages" for the three years leading up to the year in question, in order to reduce sample error. Thus the "2004/05" figure uses an average of financial years 2002/03 to 2004/05. This is the preferred method used by National Statistics, and differs from an earlier version which used single-year data.

The IMD 2004 includes a measure of income deprivation affecting children. In Warwickshire there are quite varied levels of deprivation on this measure with the highest levels of deprivation in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough. Further details are contained in the Child Poverty Audit Executive Summary attached at Appendix B.

The take up of tax credits in Warwickshire has increased between 2003/04 and 2004/05.²² This is likely to be due to the new tax credits system, which has been implemented and by more awards being available.

Data shows that for 2003/04 and 2004/05 the Nuneaton and Bedworth area had much higher levels of take up, by percentage of families claiming, compared to other areas of Warwickshire. This could indicate that more residents of this area require additional support, but also that more people are claiming in 2004/05. This could be due to increased deprivation, but is also likely to be due to the new tax credits system allowing more people to claim, and also due to the promotion and support for using the system, leading to more people knowing that they are eligible, and how to claim.

Information collected on tax credit claimants with children by HM Revenue and Customs provides a localised overview of the number of people in the county who claim differing types of tax credits. A map at Appendix C details the distribution of child tax credit claimants for families out of work in Warwickshire in 2005. However, this data has limitations as it only includes those who have actually claimed the credits and does not include the number of people who are eligible to claim.

In comparison with local and regional figures, Warwickshire fairs well in terms of deprivation levels, however there are many pockets of deprivation throughout the county.

The audit paper attached at Appendix B provides more in depth information about the position in Warwickshire.

Examples of Good Practice

Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service is an organisation funded primarily by Warwickshire County Council to provide support for residents in the county. The organisation represents Warwickshire residents at Social Security Appeals, provides training, support and advice to Advisors and publishes leaflets and self-help packs. The service feel that they can contribute to the reduction of poverty in Warwickshire by running localised projects focused on specific groups of people. Previous projects include providing benefit checks and assistance with claims to the Portuguese community in Leamington Spa, benefit checks and data collection on lone parents in Stratford district and all parents in the Leamington Spa Sure Start area were offered a free benefit check in 2005/06. These projects are provided on an ad hoc basis when funding is provided. The service can provide advice on how new policies will affect benefits and tax credits.

Pride in Camp Hill is a community regeneration initiative that has been set up in a deprived area of the county in Nuneaton. The project has provided varying types of support to the local residents. Activities and support have been tailored to the need of the local community and what they have asked for to assist them. Initiatives include:

²² Warwickshire County Council Early Years Team (2006) Tax Credit Statistics

- Home tutoring to children in the final year of primary schools, who lack basic skills, required for secondary school.
- Camp Hill Employment and Enterprise ResourceS (CHEERS). This project has provided training programmes, assistance with CV writing, job searches, assisting people to get qualifications and training and supporting 20 people to set up new businesses, such as flower shops, gardening and catering companies. Some of these businesses have been successfully trading for 4 years.
- Improving 660 existing homes and building up to 1,200 new homes, 25% of which will be shared ownership or housing association properties, to assist residents to get onto the property ladder.

Pride in Camp Hill has also assisted with the opening of the new Early Years Centre, additional youth club sessions and facilities and the Nuneaton Opportunities Centre, which provides information technology and building and construction training. The work of the Pride in Camp Hill initiative has made a difference to the area and is making positive steps to improve the standard of living and to bring the area out of deprivation.

There are many other agencies that provide services across the county whose work contributes to reducing poverty and supporting those in poverty. Details of some of these services can be found in the Child Poverty Audit Executive Summary, at Appendix B.

What we can do

We need to build on the good services already available in Warwickshire, but need to bring together in partnership and focus support where it is needed most and to ensure that it is contributing to the reduction of child poverty, and not working against it.

There are many areas which we can focus on including some of the groups studies have shown are likely to be in poverty. These groups include: Children in lone parent families, those from marginalised ethnic groups, where there is a disabled family member, those with parents in low paid jobs and looked after children. Some of the main areas could be selected to focus on each year, with focus groups taking the agenda forward through partnership, with localised delivery and targets. The work taking place can continue in future years, but with the development of new areas of work started each year. It would not be possible to consider each area at once, so prioritising particular themes each year could allow work to progress. The focus could be chosen from the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement 2007-2010, Children and Young People Block outcomes.

During the course of our discussions with key officers types of activities have been suggested which include:

- Further benefits advice and promotion, focused in areas where there is lower take up than deprivation figures would suggest.
- Adult learning, developing skills by offering more training etc.
- The use of extended services to improve access to services.
- The use of cluster school groups.
- Work focused on school leavers' destinations, specifically young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).
- Activities for children in extended schools.
- Cookery on a budget classes held at schools and Children's centres, to allow parents to use their money more effectively, and for children to have a healthier diet.

We still have more officers to meet and it is likely that these conversations will continue for some time and can contribute to the rich pool of experience we can draw on to start to bring the overall strategy together.

Child poverty could be added as an agenda item at meetings with partners, such as the Local Partnership for Action Groups. Regular partnership meetings with a focus on child poverty could take place, in each area of the county, to look at the specific requirements for each district and borough.

Local groups can work in partnership to provide support in local hotspots of deprivation. These services are in the neighbourhoods and will be able to advise on how best to support residents and can deliver elements of the support required.

One tack would be to ensure that as part of the Freud Review of Welfare Reform, completed for the Department for Work and Pensions in 2007, all policies are Child Poverty proofed and this can be carried out locally too.

The government is still working on the skills agenda with the Leitch Review published in 2005 by HM Treasury to establish the UK's long term skills need, but we need employers and the Learning and Skills Council to work together on skills in the local labour market.

There is no one route that will assist all children out of poverty, each circumstance is different and the support required varies. Localised delivery, with a range of options provides the best opportunity to support those children who live in poverty in Warwickshire. Through partnership working, different packages and services can be made available to allow the best opportunities for children, and for parents to support their children through the route most appropriate to their circumstances.

Recording / Monitoring

The Warwickshire Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for 2007 – 2010 includes four cross-cutting themes or strands. The Joint Area Review drives the Looked after Children, Safeguarding, and Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities themes. Poverty is a Children, Young People and Families priority theme.

Consequently in the production of programme plans, programmes and actions can be identified as contributing directly to these themes. A search for poverty will provide a list of all programmes, actions and tasks which are relevant.

The CYPP is a partnership plan, involving many agencies in the county. It has the advantage of involving a wide range of agencies and organisations in achieving this objective.

The CYPP will provide a method for sharing the work that is being done to reduce and eradicate child poverty between partners in Warwickshire.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council stated that it important for service objectives to show a link to how they would contribute to reducing child poverty in strategic planning.²³ The CYPP is one way in which Warwickshire are starting to introduce this.

The main theme of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement for 2007 – 2010 is 'Narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the county'. The agreement identifies that "...whilst many parts of Warwickshire can properly be seen as being relatively prosperous, there are many residents living in both urban and rural areas who experience significant levels of deprivation."²⁴ Poverty plays a role in this and is featured in many of the outcomes of the agreement.

²³ Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (2007) Tackling Child Poverty in Stockport, Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

²⁴ Warwickshire County Council (2006) Warwickshire Local Area Agreement 2007-2010

The agreement provides us with a key platform to work in partnership and eradicate child poverty in our most deprived areas. Progress on child poverty could be recorded through the progress of Local Area Agreement outcomes.

Any measure of child poverty would need to be consistent to allow comparisons over time, to allow progress to be measured. Due to the diverse nature of Warwickshire, monitoring is likely to be more successful at a local level.

Many sources of data on child poverty and deprivation figures do not breakdown below regional level. This makes it difficult to compare our figures with other authorities. Other alternatives that could be used are,

1. Children living in families claiming tax credits. These figures are available on an annual basis but are not entirely accurate as they only measure those who have claimed, and not those who are entitled to claim.
2. The Index of Multiple Deprivation. The index provides information down to super output level, however when published the data is from 2-3 years previously, thus not providing an up to date picture. The index measurements change making comparison over time more difficult, and the index could show a super output area to have the same ranking, even though improvement has been made, if other areas have also improved.
3. Free school meals take up. Again, this method poses problems, similar to tax credit take up, where not all entitled pupils use this service and only school age children are represented.

A combination of the statistical data available, alongside the CYPP and Local Area Agreement blocks achievements, would most likely be the most effective method to measure child poverty.

The Role of Members and the Strategic Partnership Board

Members and the Strategic Partnership Board can play a role in the child poverty strategy. Their function will include:

- Making links.
- Identifying resources.
- Advising on funding opportunities.
- Suggesting projects that could be completed.
- Monitoring progress.
- Communicating the strategy and work taking place.

Consultation

As part of the process, it is important to involve parents and young people, to see what their views on poverty are, and what they feel would assist people to be removed from poverty. It would also be useful, where possible to speak to parents and young people who are in poverty to see what their experiences are and what type of support they feel would be useful to them.

Parents will be consulted to establish what their perceptions are of what needs to be done to assist families, and what would assist them out of poverty. Parents will be identified through localised parents' reference groups and through Parents' Centres.

Warwickshire has got a parenting forum, which includes practitioners from services including, health, the voluntary sector, children's centres, Connexions and libraries. The forum will be approached for their opinions on what they believe will be of benefit to the parents that they work with. They can also provide links into other agencies and to parents.

Community Consultants have been introduced, with a focus on informally meeting with parents at Children and Parents' centres and other venues, to assess what their needs are and to focus on specific areas of work. The Consultants may be able to assist with some of the consultation with parents.

Young people can be identified through many services, including the Youth Service, Positive About Young People, the Youth Offending Team and Connexions. Young people could discuss their views in small groups and feed back their ideas.

Save the Children held an event with young people earlier in 2007. The purpose of the event was to obtain young people's views about poverty. 100 young people, some of who live in poverty, attended the event. MP John Hutton attended and was questioned. One young person asked, "If we don't tackle the problem now, as the average income rises, everything will go up, so the poverty problem will never be solved. I don't see how the Government will solve the problem." In response Hutton responded, "You can challenge us on whether we're making enough progress, and whether there's more for us to do. What you can't say is that we're not going to tackle the problem." The teenagers also suggest that the division between state and private education has a role in poverty.²⁵

A graffiti wall was placed in the room for young people to add their thoughts and comments. One girl, aged 14 wrote, "People get dependent on benefits so then they don't have the challenge to work." A later discussion led to a similar comment, "You don't get some benefits if you work, so maybe some people think they won't work."

The young people provided a useful insight into how they view poverty and how they want to see the government taking more action.²⁶

Summary and Conclusion

The government has done a lot of work to try to reduce child poverty, but as figures have shown, the first milestone of reducing child poverty by one quarter by 2004/05 has been missed and researchers predict that the second milestone of halving child poverty by 2010 will also be missed unless more work is done.

Although on a national scale Warwickshire fairs well in overall deprivation levels, there are pockets of deprivation across the county that cannot be ignored.

A child poverty strategy will allow partners to link together on an important issue, which is becoming more recognised in the country. Local authorities have a major role to play to assist the government with its targets to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty by 2020, in conjunction with partners.

²⁵ Children Now (2007) 18-24 April Edition

²⁶ Ibid

Sure, Start, Early Years and Childcare Funding for Warwickshire

The funding, to be spread over three years will be aimed at:

- Providing a Sure Start Children's Centre in every community by 2010. As of July 2007 nationally there are 1,325 Sure Start Children's Centres, with the aim to have 3,500 centres in place by 2010.
- Outreach work to reach the most disadvantaged families. Some of the funding will be targeted in the most disadvantaged areas to allow additional outreach workers to be employed to visit parents at home.
- Training and support for the early years workforce.
- Ensuring there are sufficient childcare places in each Local Authority.
- Ensuring every nursery and children's centre has a graduate to lead children's learning and development. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education 3-11 Project reports that children's development is improved where staff with higher qualifications work, with particular importance on graduate leaders.²⁷

The funding will be allocated as per the table below.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Children's Centres	£4,413,790	£5,894,165	£7,132,992
SSLPs	£1,054,967	£1,030,137	£955,999
Sufficiency and Access	£1,210,685	£1,247,006	£1,267,552
Outcomes, Quality and Inclusion	£1,251,859	£1,411,701	£1,551,984
Graduate Leader Fund	£370,765	£528,670	£783,865
Extended Schools	£554,447	Through the Standards Fund	Through the Standards Fund
TOTAL	£8,856,513	£10,111,679	£11,692,322

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²⁷ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) Press Notice 2007/0144

²⁸ Sure Start (2007) <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/>

Child Poverty Audit Executive Summary

Background to Achieve Economic Well-being Outcome

The 2004 Children Act identified five 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) outcomes for children, young people and their families. These are that all children and young people should:

1. Be Healthy
2. Stay Safe
3. Enjoy and Achieve
4. Make a Positive Contribution
5. Achieve Economic Well-being

Warwickshire, like all other local authorities, has adopted the five ECM outcomes as the basis of their service planning. The latter of these outcomes is the focus of the audit.

The Children Act legislation identifies that in order to achieve economic well-being children and young people should "...engage in further education, be ready for employment, live in decent homes with access to transport and live in households free from low income."

[\[http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk\]](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) Reducing child poverty is thus central to this ECM outcome, and is a particular focus of work both within national and local government.

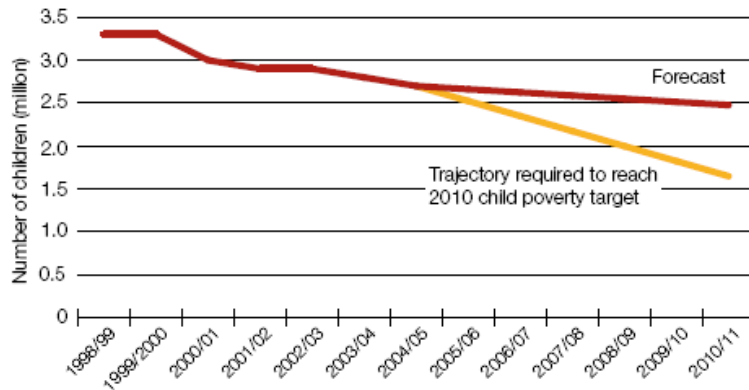
Background to Child Poverty

Poverty is defined as, "...those people whose resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities." [\[http://www.bris.ac.uk\]](http://www.bris.ac.uk)

Many factors contribute to child poverty, with the situation of the parent or carer being the main determining factor. The Child Poverty Review produced by HM Treasury in 2004, notes three main areas of child poverty:

1. Childhood experience is damaged through limited access to services, activities and opportunities, diminishing opportunities to access the support and resources that increase resilience.
2. Child Poverty resulting in social exclusion, e.g. unemployment, poor housing, bad health and family breakdown.
3. Child poverty denying equality of opportunity, with cycles of disadvantage, threatening adulthood.

In 1999 the government committed to eliminating child poverty year on year, with milestones of reducing child poverty by a quarter by 2004/05, halving it by 2010, and eradicating child poverty by 2020. The government have improved the tax credits system and provided further opportunities to assist parents into employment, as part of the strategy to eliminate child poverty, however recent reports show that the government has missed its 2004/05 target. The graph below shows the trend and forecast for the number of children in poverty in the UK.



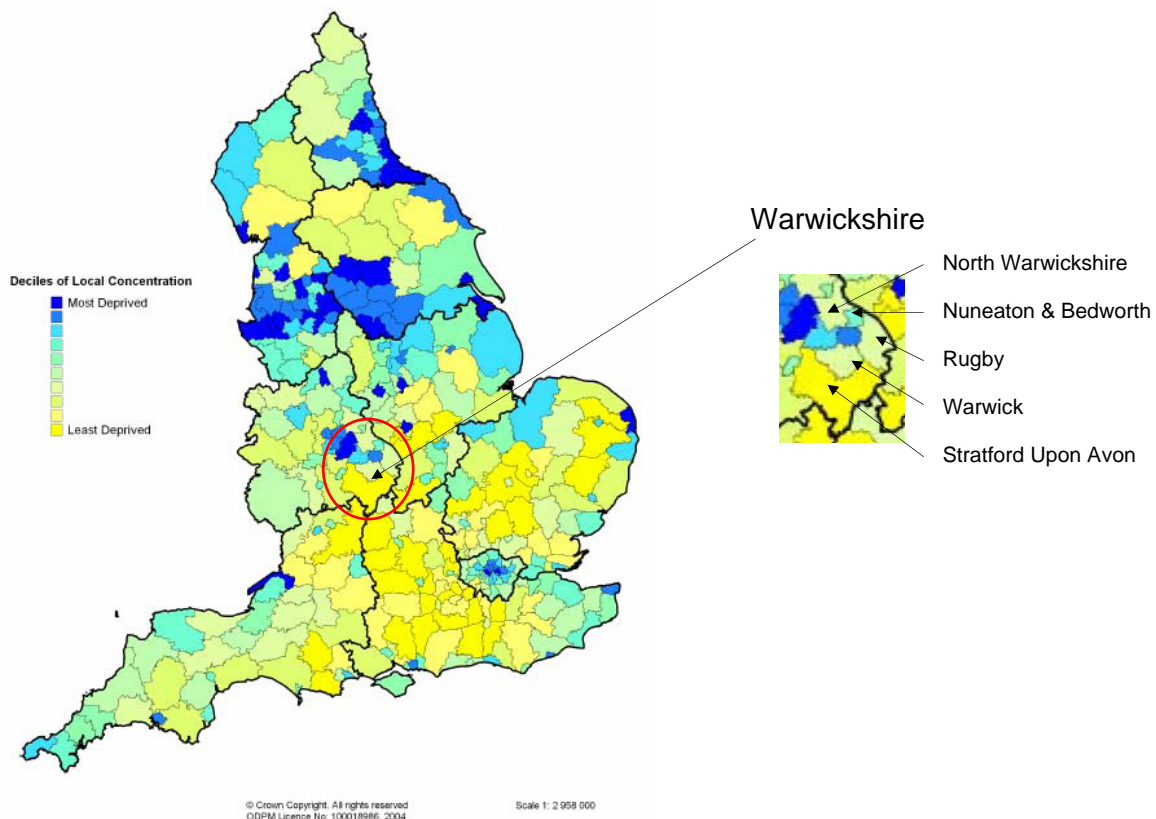
Chung, R et al (2006) Family Resources Survey 2004/05

This forecast predicts that the government is going to miss the 2010 target.

Warwickshire Data and Comparisons

In Warwickshire deprivation levels are quite varied across the county, with pockets of disadvantage alongside areas of affluence. Overall Warwickshire is not a highly deprived authority, ranking 120th least deprived out of 149 local authorities in England, in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004). Warwickshire does well in comparison with other local authorities in the West Midlands. Out of 3,482 Super Output Areas (SOAs), the West Midlands has 474 SOAs or nearly 14% featured in the 10% most deprived nationally in the IMD 2004. These areas are concentrated in parts of Birmingham, Coventry and Stoke on Trent.

The following map shows the severity of multiple deprivation in each local authority, measuring hot spots of deprivation.



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Scale 1: 2 958 000

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) The English Indices of Deprivation 2004 (Revised)

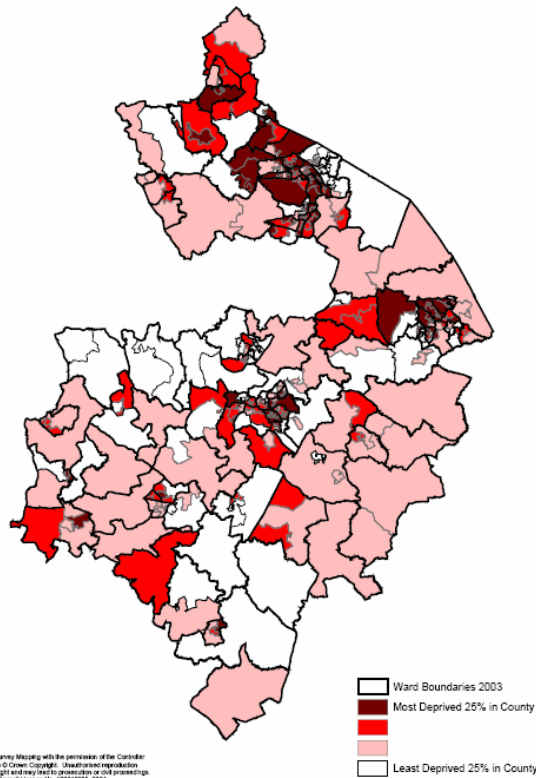
The main areas of deprivation in Warwickshire are in the Nuneaton and Bedworth borough, with the borough residing in the 30% most deprived local areas in England in the IMD 2004. Stratford upon Avon district is in the 10% least deprived areas on this measure.

The following table details the SOAs within Warwickshire amongst the 10% (shaded dark grey), 20% (shaded lighter grey) and 30% (unshaded) most deprived SOAs in England in the IMD 2004. It is clear the majority of Warwickshire SOAs in the 30% most deprived nationally are located in Nuneaton and Bedworth. (District key: NB – Nuneaton and Bedworth, NW – North Warwickshire, R – Rugby, W – Warwick)

SOA	Locality	Ward	District	IMD Score	Eng Rank	Warks Rank
E01031057	Bar Pool North & Crescents	Bar Pool	NB	53.79	1,646	1
E01031071	Camp Hill Village Centre	Camp Hill	NB	47.8	2,710	2
E01031043	Abbey Town Centre	Abbey	NB	43.48	3,634	3
E01031118	Hill Top	Wem Brook	NB	42.57	3,864	4
E01031046	Abbey Priory	Abbey	NB	42.13	3,980	5
E01031116	Middlemarch & Swimming Pool	Wem Brook	NB	41.37	4,196	6
E01031072	Camp Hill South West & Brook	Camp Hill	NB	41.25	4,229	7
E01031090	Kingswood Grove Farm & Rural	Kingswood	NB	40.41	4,468	8
E01031066	Bede East	Bede	NB	39.51	4,763	9
E01031142	Brownsover South Lake District North	Brownsover South	R	39.45	4,785	10
E01031273	Lillington East	Crown	W	38.43	5,082	11
E01031010	Atherstone Central - Centre	Atherstone Central	NW	38.16	5,173	12
E01031119	Riversley	Wem Brook	NB	37.51	5,396	13
E01031097	Poplar Coalpit Field	Poplar	NB	36.8	5,617	14
E01031075	Camp Hill West & Quarry	Camp Hill	NB	36.2	5,813	15
E01031117	Wem Brook East	Wem Brook	NB	34.31	6,464	16
E01031015	Mancetter South and Ridge Lane	Atherstone South & Mancetter	NW	34.27	6,477	17
E01031074	Camp Hill North West & Allotments	Camp Hill	NB	33.98	6,592	18
E01031065	Bede North	Bede	NB	32.48	7,154	19
E01031077	Keresley North and Newlands	Exhall	NB	31.16	7,650	20
E01031087	Heath Sports	Heath	NB	30.96	7,730	21
E01031064	Bede Bedworth Town Centre	Bede	NB	30.48	7,946	22
E01031080	Exhall East	Exhall	NB	29.66	8,266	23
E01031063	Bede Cannons	Bede	NB	29.12	8,535	24
E01031173	Town Centre	Newbold	R	29.04	8,561	25
E01031321	Packmores West & The Cape	Warwick West	W	28.65	8,746	26
E01031264	Brunswick South East	Brunswick	W	28.47	8,822	27
E01031176	Overslade North	Overslade	R	28.46	8,831	28
E01031044	Abbey North	Abbey	NB	28.22	8,947	29
E01031095	Poplar Nicholas Chamberlain	Poplar	NB	28.1	9,009	30
E01031047	Abbey South	Abbey	NB	27.63	9,220	31
E01031172	Newbold on Avon	Newbold	R	27.63	9,221	32
E01031092	Kingswood Stockingford Schools	Kingswood	NB	27.22	9,431	33
E01031265	Brunswick North West & Foundry	Brunswick	W	27.07	9,503	34
E01031094	Kingswood North East	Kingswood	NB	27.02	9,522	35
E01031261	Brunswick South West & kingsway	Brunswick	W	26.82	9,632	36
E01031088	Market End and Newdigate	Heath	NB	26.7	9,690	37

Warwickshire County Council Research Unit (2004) The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 in Warwickshire

The IMD 2004 has a sub domain for income deprivation affecting children. In Warwickshire there are four SOAs featured in the 10% most deprived experiencing child poverty nationally, 3 of which are in Nuneaton and Bedworth and the other in Rugby. The map below shows the distribution of deprivation affecting children in Warwickshire, as reported by the IMD 2004.



Warwickshire County Council Research Unit (2004) The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 in Warwickshire

Role of Local Authorities and Other Partners

Local authorities play a crucial role in tackling child poverty, which is summarised in one of the seven shared priorities for public services agreed by central government and the Local Government Association in 2002, "...improving the quality of life of children, young people and families at risk, by tackling child poverty, maximising the life chances of children in care or in need and strengthening protection for children at risk of abuse." [HM Treasury (2004) Child Poverty Review]

Work which local authorities have done to date includes:

1. Maximising the take-up of tax credits and benefits,
2. Promoting employment through links with Job Centre Plus to make the public sector an employer of choice,
3. Promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities, through partnerships with local organisations,
4. Delivering key services, such as education, housing, regeneration, transport, leisure facilities and social services, and
5. Establishing a new model for delivering services to children in a joined up way.

Local authorities have worked with partner agencies to make these achievements. The voluntary, community and faith sectors provide input and advice on policy development, help to shape services locally, and deliver statutory and voluntary services.

The government has established a Child Poverty Accord, to support local authorities with their contribution to the child poverty agenda. Partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Local Government Association will work together with local authorities to tackle child poverty.

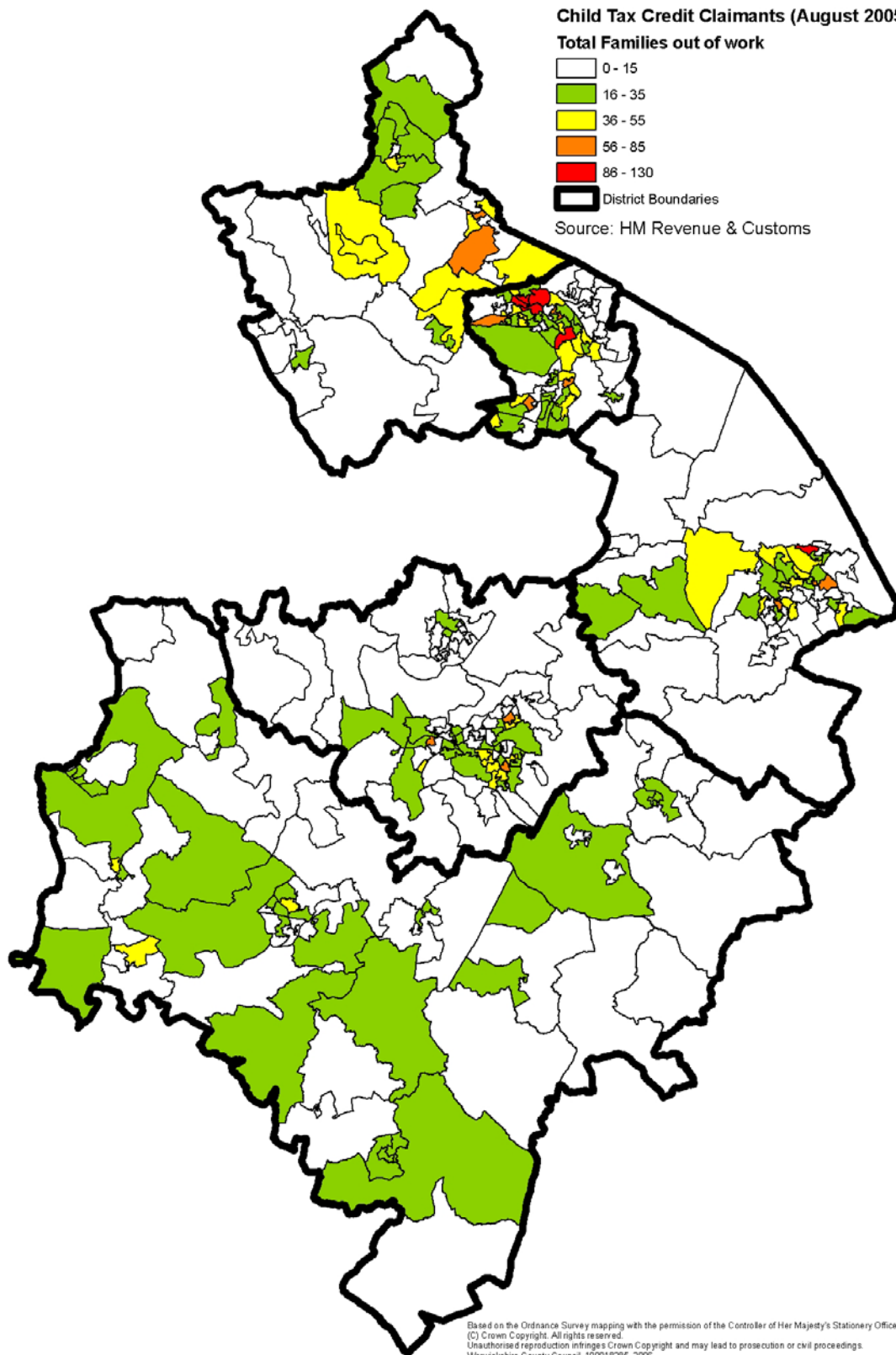
Initiatives Currently Underway in Warwickshire

Warwickshire has many schemes in place which provide support to disadvantaged children and families, including Early Years services, such as, Sure Start, the Pride in Camp Hill initiative and Opportunities Centres. Services are often localised, providing the service in the most effective way for the area, with support focused where it is needed the most. Many of these initiatives are provided through partnership working.

Conclusion

Although Warwickshire is in a fairly good position there is still work to be done to tackle poverty and there are pockets of disadvantage that need to be countered. Local authorities have a major role to play to assist the government with its targets to reduce and eradicate child poverty by 2020. To achieve this the Local Government Association believe that local authorities should regularly consider their services and activities to ensure that they are contributing to tackling child poverty. Children's Services should ensure that the issues are mainstreamed in the authority and through multi-agency partnership working. The Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper proposes changes which should assist local government to champion the interests of those who are disadvantaged, empowering communities to have their say in the services which they receive. Warwickshire County Council needs to work with partner agencies to eradicate child poverty in the county, whilst also consulting with children, young people and families.

The Distribution of Child Tax Credit Claimants for Families out of Work in Warwickshire



Child Poverty Report to the Local Partnership for Action Groups

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Child Poverty Government Commitment

“However his reign ends, whatever his legacy may be, one moment will always stand out as a monument to Tony Blair. It was that remarkable, utterly unexpected pledge back in 1999 that Labour would abolish child poverty by 2020.” [Polly Toynbee, 7 July 2006, The Guardian]

1.1.1 The Government committed to eliminating child poverty year on year, with milestones of reducing child poverty by a quarter by 2004/05, halving it by 2010, and eradicating child poverty by 2020. The government has improved the tax credits system and provided further opportunities to assist parents into employment, as part of the strategy to eliminate child poverty; however recent reports reveal that the Government has missed its 2004/05 target.

1.1.2 The Children Act 2004 is one of several contributions to the government strategy to reduce child poverty. The Government has established a Child Poverty Accord between local and central government to focus attention on this ambitious goal to:

- Improve employment rates especially for the hard to reach.
- Narrow inequalities of opportunity for poor children, especially educational opportunities.
- Improve the full range of local services for children, including childcare, cultural, leisure activities and family support.
- Promote the take up of benefits and tax credits locally.

1.2 Children and Young People’s Plan

1.2.1 It is proposed that the Warwickshire Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) for 2007 – 2010 will include four cross-cutting themes or strands. The Joint Area Review drives the Looked after Children, Safeguarding, and Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities themes. It is proposed to add Poverty as a Children, Young People and Families priority theme.

1.2.2 Consequently in the production of programme plans, programmes and actions can be identified as contributing directly to these themes. A search for poverty will provide a list of all programmes, actions and tasks which are relevant.

1.2.3 The CYPP is a partnership plan, involving many agencies in the county. It has the advantage of involving a wide range of agencies and organisations in achieving this objective.

1.2.4 The CYPP will provide a method for sharing the work which is being done to reduce and eradicate child poverty between partners in Warwickshire.

1.3 Warwickshire Local Area Agreement

- 1.3.1 The main theme of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement for 2007 – 2010 is 'Narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the county'. The agreement identifies that "...whilst many parts of Warwickshire can properly be seen as being relatively prosperous, there are many residents living in both urban and rural areas who experience significant levels of deprivation." [Warwickshire Local Area Agreement, Warwickshire County Council, 2006] Poverty plays a role in this and is featured in many of the outcomes of the agreement.
- 1.3.2 The agreement provides us with a key platform to work in partnership and eradicate child poverty in our most deprived areas.

1.4 Current Position in Warwickshire

- 1.4.1 The Department for Work and Pensions provides regional data on child poverty, which measures the percentage of children living in low-income households with below 60% median net of living costs. Nationally there were 27% of children in this bracket in 2004/05. In the West Midlands this figure increases to 30%*, having fallen by 8%* between 1998/99 and 2004/05.
- 1.4.2 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 includes a measure of income deprivation affecting children. In Warwickshire there are quite varied levels of deprivation on this measure with the highest levels of deprivation in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough. Further details are contained in the Child Poverty Audit Executive Summary attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.4.3 Information collected on tax credit claimants with children by HM Revenue and Customs provides a localised overview of the number of people in the county who claim differing types of tax credits. A map at **Appendix B** details the distribution of child tax credit claimants for families out of work in Warwickshire. However, this data has limitations as it only includes those who have actually claimed the credits and does not include the number of people who are eligible to claim.
- 1.4.4 There are many initiatives taking place in Warwickshire to support parents, children and families. Many of these initiatives are accessible to those in deprived areas. These include Children's Centres, Extended Schools, Pride in Camp Hill, and Adult and Community Learning Services.

2. Progress So Far

- 2.1 Our strategy is to raise the profile of why child poverty is so serious for the well-being of the whole of Warwickshire with a view to achieving whole-hearted partnership support to eradicate its causes. Partners are being consulted through the County and Local Partnership for Action group meetings during April and May 2007, where eradicating child poverty will be an agenda item. At these meetings partners will be involved in the development of the strategy, asked to discuss their views and to identify any relevant actions or information exchange which can be achieved on a local basis.

* The regional data actually shows "rolling averages" for the three years leading up to the year in question, in order to reduce sample error. Thus the "2004/05" figure uses an average of financial years 2002/03 to 2004/05. This is the preferred method used by National Statistics, and differs from an earlier version which used single-year data.

2.2 Local groups can work in partnership to provide support in local hot-spots of deprivation. These services are in the neighbourhoods and will be able to advise on how best to support residents and can deliver elements of the support required.

2.3 Health Improvement

2.3.1 Some of the main factors in health improvement are education and income, which are problems associated with deprivation. Carole Edkins, the Health Improvement Officer in the Adult, Health and Community Directorate hopes to make links with extended services, to provide health-related activities in extended schools and children's centres. Activities, such as cooking skills and cookery on a budget, can provide health benefits and assist people to make the best use of their income benefits. Carole also hopes to work with school cluster groups to develop activities.

2.4 Money Related Services

2.4.1 The Adult, Health and Community Directorate is tendering for a range of money-related services which will improve the chances of Warwickshire families receiving appropriate benefits. These services include training to social workers, information and leaflets, appeals casework and a benefits enquiry line. There will be consultation with the users of some of these services, which will provide useful information on how the services are perceived, and whether they are achieving their aim.

2.5 Parents' Involvement

2.5.1 Another important viewpoint to consider is that of parents. Parents will be consulted to establish what their perceptions are of what needs to be done to assist families, and what would assist them out of poverty. Parents will be identified through the Warwickshire Parenting Forum, localised parents' reference groups and through Parents' Centres.

2.6 Young People

2.6.1 There may also be some consultation with young people, focusing on young carers who look after parents that find it difficult or are unable to work. Young people can be identified through many services, including the Youth Service, Positive About Young People and the Youth Offending Team.

2.7 Discussions

2.7.1 The types of activities suggested by those consulted during the course of our discussions include adult learning, work focused on school leavers' destinations and activities for children in extended schools.

2.7.2 There is still much we can do and it is likely that this dialogue will continue for some time and can contribute to the rich pool of experience we can draw on.

3. Conclusion

3.1 While the Government has achieved a great deal to date it is the view of commentators that more radical and imaginative solutions are found to child poverty.

3.2 Recent figures have shown a rise in the number of children living in relative poverty, which demonstrates the complex nature of resolving the issues.

- 3.3 One approach would be to ensure that as part of the Freud Review of Welfare Reform, completed for the Department for Work and Pensions in 2007, all policies are child poverty proofed and this can be carried out locally too.
- 3.4 The role of employers has been largely ignored and a flexible workplace is key to enabling parents to work and maintain a work/life balance. There is still a too long working hours' culture and many families and children want more time together.
- 3.5 Parents should have choice but in order to assist them there is a need to deal with structural discrimination and the Government needs to take responsibility to remove the gender pay gap and to increase opportunities for employment for ethnic groups and those with disabilities.
- 3.6 The Government is still working on the skills agenda with the Leitch Review of Skills, published in 2005 by HM Treasury to establish the UK's long term skills need, but we need employers and the Learning and Skills Council to work together on skills in the local labour market.
- 3.7 Childcare has improved enormously but there are still gaps for parents who are not able to find affordable and accessible childcare. Amount and reach of tax credits is still not enough to make a difference.
- 3.8 There is no one route that will assist all children out of poverty, each circumstance is different and the support required varies. Localised delivery, with a range of options provides the best opportunity to support those children who live in poverty in Warwickshire. Through partnership working, different packages and services can be made available to allow the best opportunities for children, and for parents to support their children through the route most appropriate to their circumstances.
- 3.9 This strategy will allow partners to link together on an important issue which is becoming more recognised in the United Kingdom. Local authorities have a major role to play to assist the Government with its targets to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty by 2020, in conjunction with partners.

Feedback from Meetings

Partners have been consulted through the County and Local Partnership for Action group meetings during April and May 2007. At these meetings partners discussed their views, how they feel their service can contribute to a strategy and how they think that the strategy should be taken forward on a local basis. Partners were provided with a feedback form to take back to their service to comment on how their organisation can assist and what they think should be done to reduce child poverty. Other forums have also been invited to provide their opinions, including the Rugby Youth Forum and the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum.

The main themes and ideas discussed at these meetings were:

Young People and Education/Training

- More work is needed with young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).
- Attainment at GCSE, particularly of boys, but it is important not to focus all efforts on to boys and neglect girls, reversing the current situation.
- The culture and aspirations of young people need to be changed.
- Over emphasis on academic qualifications, need to promote work based learning and vocational subjects.
- There is a lack of training providers, especially in Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire.
- School exclusions.
- Support to those with barriers to education, e.g. teenage parents, young carers etc.
- Young people have low aspirations.
- Schools do not emphasise how important choices are to young people.
- Learning should be tailored to life skills.
- Tuition fees deter young people from going to university, and also lead to parents discouraging their children from attending.

Employment

- Employers need to be more understanding to the effects family breakdown could be having on staff and changes to working arrangements which may be necessary.
- More family friendly employers.
- Rural transport issues can prevent young people and also parents finding employment, if there is not work locally.
- There is a lack of industrial jobs and less willingness to do low skilled work.

Housing

- Housing issues, especially for those being placed in rented accommodation by local councils.
- There is a lack of housing for young people.

Parents

- Access to services, including childcare.
- There is support for parents with younger children, but not for those with older children.
- The benefits system does not always support the most in need.
- More debt advice to assist people out of debt in the most appropriate way for their circumstances.
- The influence of parents can make a difference to young people's lives.
- There is a lack of understanding around family breakdown and how it can lead to poverty.

General Comments

- A multi-faceted approach is required to address issues that impact on poverty.
- Partnerships should be formed, especially for funding bids.
- The needs of new and emerging communities need to be considered when developing a strategy, for example, the Portuguese community in Leamington Spa.
- Services deal with the problem and not the cause, for example, a child may be treated for disruptive behaviour but the cause, living in poverty, is not considered. Services could look more holistically at the family.
- Consider what the causes of poverty are, rather than just dealing with the consequences.