



## **Invited Speakers**

Nick Dunster, Barnardo's  
Graham Hollowell, Connexions – Coventry and  
Warwickshire  
Jane Malbasa, Job Centre Plus

## **1. General**

The Chair welcomed the visitors to the meeting. He outlined the membership of the meeting and the programme for this one item meeting to look at Child Poverty, and in particular the Executive in identifying what the position was in terms of child poverty in Warwickshire.

Members were reminded that there would be a seminar on Corporate Parenting on Thursday, 13 December at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber and were encouraged to attend.

### **(1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Lynda LeLong and Councillor Kam Singh.

### **(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Councillor Richard Grant declared a personal interest as he is a member of the Board and the Executive of Connexions.

Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest as a member of the Rugby Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Councillor John Ross declared a personal interest as a member of the Management Board of the Children's Centre in Bulkington.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe declared a personal interest as she is a member of the Board and the Executive of Connexions.

Councillor John Wells declared a personal interest as his daughter works on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

## **2. Child Poverty**

### **Childhood Poverty**

#### **Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families**

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder responsible for addressing child poverty, began the presentations by setting the scene for child poverty in Warwickshire. She made the following points:

1. Government targets to halve child poverty numbers by 2010 and to eradicate child poverty by 2020. The targets set were extremely ambitious and to date targets had not been reached.
2. It was right that the eradication of child poverty remain a big driver for Warwickshire, as it impacted on all aspects of life within communities and in the work of all the Directorates of the County Council. There were a number of groups and committees working towards this goal, such as the Sure Start Policy Panel, but it was agreed that each Directorate needed to use their expertise and to take ownership and understand what they needed to be doing to achieve this goal.
3. If child poverty was not eradicated directly it affected life chances, health, family security and lifestyle, increasing the chance of issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, security, obesity and debt. There was also a huge knock-on affect in terms of the investment required for services such as police and community protection, youth services and health.
4. The agenda to eradicate child poverty was an investment to save, and while it was a long-term issue that would require ongoing funding, the Council hoped to see the results of changes made in the next 5 – 10 years, with young people having better life chances and education, which could lift the bar in critical areas.
5. The only way child poverty could be eradicated was through working with partners and families by providing better opportunities for skills and employment, easy access to benefits and opportunities and improved support services. An example of this was the pilot carried out in Rugby where approximately 100 cases had already been reviewed, with partners using the CAF and a number of cases closed. This programme had received a positive response from families and partners and was intended to be rolled out in both urban and rural areas across Warwickshire in a way that was flexible enough to deal with the particular needs of communities. Another partnership venture that needed to be accessed to their full potential were the One Stop Shops.
6. There was a need to look at families as a whole, as the life chances of children and young people were dependent on families and it was agreed that statistics showed that it was best for children to remain within a family unit.

Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Family and Community Division, Children, Young People and Families Directorate

Elizabeth Featherstone set the scene for child poverty in Warwickshire and reminded Members that they should focus on issues faced today rather than the Dickens perception of child poverty, and emphasised the importance of listening to the voice of children and young people when considering this issue. She read a Joseph Rountree Foundation case study of a real life experience of a single mother in Northern

Ireland, setting out the problems faced with furthering her education, employment, childcare, problems with debt through miscalculation of Tax Credits and having time with her son. She added the following points:

- a. Warwickshire County Council had had a Child Poverty Strategy in place for over a year, but it was clear that child poverty could only be eradicated through working in partnership and tackling issues such as low pay, discrimination, out of work benefit levels and the education attainment gap.
- b. There were a number of threads that ran through people's lives resulting in children and families living in poverty, and while statistics showed there had been significant improvements since Government set their targets in 1999, child poverty was an extremely complex area covering a diverse group of people from those not working and receiving benefits to those who had several jobs.
- c. There was a lot of information available on deprivation in Warwickshire, but one of the biggest challenges was ensuring access by all families to all services, including those in rural areas.
- d. Issues that impacted on poverty included:
  - lack of self confidence and self esteem
  - need for more flexible benefits such as transition to work benefits
  - level of income
  - better trained advisors leading to better opportunities
  - education and hidden costs such as uniforms and computers
  - the need for equal access and opportunities within a high quality local education system
  - health and wellbeing and the difference in terms of where a person lived
  - access to local leisure facilities
  - flexibility for parents in work, particularly where there were disabled parents or children
  - listening to the needs of those in poverty
  - spaces to play
  - housing
  - money management.
- e. Education inequality, particularly the experiences of children under the age of three impacted on poverty. Elizabeth Featherstone referred to the document "Chicken and Egg" by Donald Hirsh ([www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns/education/EducationBriefing120907](http://www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns/education/EducationBriefing120907)), which highlighted the threads linking childhood poverty.
- f. There were a number of things being done across the Council and with partners looking to make a difference to lift children out of poverty, for example one of the four themes selected with partners for the Children, Young People and Families Plan was poverty. There were also a number of threads across Council

policies and strategies to ensure the life experience of children, young people and families in Warwickshire continued to improve.

Paul Seamer, Research Officer, Warwickshire Observatory,  
Environment and Economy Directorate

Paul Seamer outlined the work carried out by the Warwickshire Observatory providing information and intelligence in support of policy making within the County Council. He noted the following points:

- i. The Government target to eradicate childhood poverty by 2020, led by Local Authorities, was ambitious, particularly given the limited sources of information and guidance.
- ii. The latest Government Spending Review set 198 performance targets for Local Government, which would be assessed as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). No guidance on poverty (Target 116) was released with the guidance given by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as there was no up-to-date information available at Local Authority Level. It was believed that this was largely due to the issue of making the data available in a consistent manner.
- iii. There would be an interim measure of "Households out of work and in receipt of benefits", this equated to 15,000 households in Warwickshire.
- iv. The Index of Multiple Deprivation was the most comprehensive and detailed set of data at the moment. One indice within the index was IDACI which looked at income deprivation affecting children under 16. Current indications showed 12.8% of all children in Warwickshire lived in poverty, with 63% of those children living with a lone parent. It was noted that this was 2004 data, some of which had last been measured in 2001 and that indices for 2007 were expected from the DCLG in the next two months.
- v. Super Output Areas (SOAs) were a new geography introduced in 2004. replacing electoral wards as the primary means of the dissemination of small area statistics, covering approximately 1,500 people, with 4 or 5 SOAs to a ward. This detail made it possible to look at the most deprived areas and where they were in the County, and also the difference between areas that were close geographically. It was noted that four of the top ten percent ranked SOAs in the country were in Warwickshire, three in Nuneaton and one in Brownsover, Rugby. Warwickshire also has 14 SOA's in the top 20% and 41 in the top 30%.

Nick Dunster, Assistant Director of Midlands Barnardo's

Nick Dunster thanked the Committee for the invitation to participate in the event and outlined the work carried out by Barnardo's in providing local social care services for children and lobbying for children's rights

to ensure that the lives of all children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. During his presentation he made the following points:

- I. The key factors impacting the achievement gap were childcare and training.
- II. Nationally, statistics showed that 50% of all children living in poverty lived with lone parents.
- III. There was a lack of specialist childcare.
- IV. There were 3.8m children nationally who lived in poverty, with an average weekly income of £204 against a family average of £642. Asylum Seekers lived on an average weekly income of £154, which was £124 below the Government poverty level.
- V. There was an issue around the national minimum wage, which differed to the minimum wage paid to young people.
- VI. Targets for halving poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020 were expected to be missed by some distance and Barnardo's were lobbying Government for a further investment of £3.8 billion, which would be sufficient to lift a further 320,000 children out of poverty.
- VII. There were a number of issues being taken forward on a local level including:
  - Local Employment Partnerships to help long-term benefit claimants back into work
  - City Strategies, which had a particular role in terms of Local Adult Learning Programmes
  - Tax Credits, particularly in light of the recent Joseph Rountree Foundation publication looking at the level of complexity of forms and the problems around miscalculations and arrears.
  - Early Years and Childcare with strategies needing to give due regard to child poverty.
  - Mainstreaming of Children's Centres and the implications to Local Authorities on budgets.
- VIII. There were other areas of local debate where Barnardo's had a role, such as the issue of school meals, and the absence of these in school holidays and fuel poverty.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their contributions and opened the meeting for questions (see table marked Appendix A).

Members of the meeting took a short break, during which at 11.00 a.m. Members of the Committee, invited guests and officers stood for a minute silence as a sign of respect to the four Warwickshire Firemen who lost their lives in the recent warehouse fire.

## **Poverty of Ambition**

### **Graham Hollowell, Deputy Executive Director – Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire**

Graham Hollowell tabled a pack of information outlining the role of Connexions in helping to alleviate childhood poverty, which arose from a number of issues. He highlighted the following points:

1. Evidence proved that if young people in the 16-19 age group and 16-24 for young people with special needs were kept engaged in learning, there was a far greater chance that they would continue in some form of learning throughout their lives and therefore be involved in useful employment and contribute positively to society.
2. Four-year trend data for 2003-07 showed a steady increase of young people staying in education and training and for this year, 86% of the current Year 11 students in Warwickshire were continuing in education, which was the highest percentage so far.
3. Partnership working with colleagues had resulted in a decrease in teenage pregnancies, young offending instances and drug and alcohol abuse and an increase in the number of young people staying in school.
4. Graham Hollowell gave an outline of four of the projects Connexions managed, all of which had positive benefits and enabled young people to stay in local communities, to continue learning and become as socially inclusive as possible:
  - “Wheels to Work” – For people within the 16-65 year age band having difficulty accessing employment or training. All successful applicants receive compulsory basic training, safety equipment, tax and insurance cover and regular maintenance and servicing of the mopeds. Initially the moped was lent for 12 months, but this has since been reduced to 6 months. While there was an ongoing challenge to attract funding, since 2000, 900 young people had been helped to access employment interviews, training and/or jobs. The target group initially for this project were 16-25 unemployed young people but this has now been extended to age 65. Currently there are 57 mopeds in Warwickshire. It was noted that in the last 12 months the project had provided mopeds to a number of young people with Aspergers Syndrome, which was a form of autism that made the use of public transport threatening and challenging for these young people. Those applicants who were not successful were provided with travel plans setting out relevant public and community transport links.
  - “On Your Bike” – This programme was run together with the Youth Offending Team involving the servicing and repairing of unclaimed bicycles passed to the project by the Police. The bikes were made available to young people for a donation of £25, where possible, to be used for journeys less than 4 miles. The bicycles were also provided with safety kit and training.

- “Workwise” – Running from February 2007 – March 2009 the project aims to assist anyone 16-65 with access to interviews and employment in the form of part payment of travel costs for interview or for the first two months after starting employment. Use of a moped for a period of up to 6 months may also be available.
- “Flare Project” – A project run with the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service offering young people who were disengaged or not at school due to long term illness an opportunity to take part in a learning experience outside the school environment. Young people were encouraged to develop a sense of pride and diligence in their approach to work and to acquire greater self-esteem and to develop vital life skills e.g. communications, teamwork and self-confidence. The aim of the project was to re-engage young people and to prevent them falling into the NEET category.

Colin Ball, Project Director, Pride In Camphill

Colin Ball gave a presentation on Pride in Camp Hill ([www.prideincamphill.co.uk](http://www.prideincamphill.co.uk)), a partnership project between Warwickshire County Council, a number of partners agencies, residents and businesses of Camp Hill, the aim of which was to transform Camp Hill, through a series of physical and social/economic regeneration initiatives, along with service delivery improvements. He noted the following points:

- a. Children and young people were at the heart of the Pride in Camp Hill project.
- b. There were many issues of social exclusion in Camp Hill (poor quality housing and environment, low school/academic attainment, high unemployment and general multi-deprivation), combining to present real challenges for the community to overcome.
- c. To combat this, there was a major programme of activity in place, with three clear strands, known as the three-legged stool:
  - Social and Economic Regeneration
  - Physical and Environmental Improvements
  - Service Delivery Improvements
 to join up different policy streams, ensure effective economic development within the Camp Hill area and create a sustainable community into the future.
- d. There were currently a number of initiatives in place to remove barriers to employment and improve basic skills levels, such as the work carried out with the Learning and Skills Council and the North Warwickshire and Hinckley College to develop construction industry and other training programmes, so that the local construction and other job opportunities will be available for local people.
- e. Other initiatives in Camp Hill that help address poverty included a new community building offering a wide variety of activities to

engage young people, a Sunday bus service and support for new businesses.

### **Poverty of Opportunity**

#### **Lynn Wilson, Employment Link Officer – Opportunity Centres**

Lynn Wilson gave an overview of the work carried out by the Opportunity Centres providing community based training facilities to deliver vocational courses at foundation level. She added the following:

1. Whilst colleges provide training in areas such as construction, these started at an NVQ Level 2 and the entry level qualifications for these courses (5 GCSE) excluded some people. The Opportunity Centres were able to offer support and basic level training to enable young people to access further training with the colleges.
2. The Opportunity Centres were currently based in informal settings in industrial estates in Pool Road, Nuneaton and Webb Ellis, Rugby delivering courses in Construction, ICT, Environmental Management as well as running a work experience programme helping young people in their final two years at school and a moped scheme (Two Wheels in Motion).
2. The programme started in 2002, with 22 organisations working together to deliver basic level training to hard to reach target groups in Warwickshire to ensure employment and improved prospects.
3. Students numbers had grown in Nuneaton from 80 to 270 per week and Rugby currently had 60 students per week ranging in age from 14 to 72.
4. There was a need to sustain what was being delivered and to increase the income and one way of achieving this was through schools buying in provision for disengaged 14-16 year-olds, who were required to attend school as well as the Centres.
5. The Centres worked with special schools and had a good relationship with River House.
6. In partnership with Rugby Borough Council, a motor vehicle foundation level provision facility was being opened in Rugby, targeting young people who were disengaged with school but were good at working with their hands.

#### **Norma Smeaton, Head of Early Years and Childcare**

Norma Smeaton gave an overview of how Warwickshire County Council were meeting the three main duties imposed on Local Authorities in the Childcare Act 2006 (outcomes, sufficiencies and information) to ensure children under five had better life chances, services and health through early intervention and an ensured quality of intervention. She noted the following points:

- a. “Outcomes”
  - The duty was to reduce inequalities between children under five through integrated services offered through a Sure Start

Children's Centre for every community. Phase I in Warwickshire had included 13 Children's Centre and Phase II planned for 17 Children's Centres spread across various sites with a core offer of childcare, integrating the education of young children, health services, parental support and links with Job Centre Plus.

- The current free nursery entitlement of 12½ hours would increase to 15 hours in 2009 for the most disadvantaged families (not yet qualified) and in 2010 for all children under five. This entitlement would run from 8-6, encompassing meal times. The increased flexibility of the offer of 15 hours was expected to result in a number of problems around provision in terms of sustainability, curriculum, availability of settings etc.

b. "Sufficiencies"

- Local Authorities were required to assess the local childcare provision and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents, to meet the needs of the community in general and in particular those families on lower incomes and those with disabled children.
- Problems were expected to arise in rural areas where parental choices would not always be available, and the challenge would be the creative management of choice, through the use of child minders, transport etc.
- A general assessment had been carried out and an overview published, and individual area assessments were currently being carried out. Once this was done, an assessment would need to be carried out every three years, with annual reviews.
- Childcare was not the only barrier to work, work opportunities have to be available, and childcare provision has to be sustainable until employment opportunities are found.

c. "Information"

- Local Authorities were now required to ensure that the full range of information parents and prospective parents may need or could access for their children through to their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, was available to all parents and is pro-active in reaching those parents who might otherwise have difficulty accessing or understanding the information service.
- The Family Information Service was launched on 16 October 2007 offering free, impartial information and signposting services for Warwickshire families, children and young people (0-20 yrs), schools and practitioners.
- The Council had a duty to employ outreach workers, who took the information into communities, using venues such as libraries and GP surgeries.

Dave Hill, Economic Strategy Adviser, Corporate Employment and Skills Agenda

Dave Hill gave an overview of the economic picture in Warwickshire, with unemployment underpinning many of the issues discussed in terms of child poverty. He made the following points:

- i. The Joseph Rountree Foundation highlighted the link between the growth of child poverty and unemployment and noted that over time there had been a significant shift to a position where more than half of the children living in poverty lived in households with adults who were unemployed.
- ii. Household income could influence child poverty and was also related to skill levels.
- iii. Statistics showed that having a degree could make the difference over a lifetime to a person's income of £1m.
- iv. Quality employment was the sustainable solution to child poverty, not benefits.
- v. A study carried out by University College, London found that a child's background was strongly related to educational attainment with 95% of young people from affluent backgrounds achieving 5 GCSE, compared to 15% of young people from deprived backgrounds
- vi. There were a number of Directorates and Divisions across the Council who had a key role to play in reducing child poverty and there was a need for them to understand their role in terms of working with key agencies such as Connexions and Job Centre Plus. There was also a strategic role for the Environment and Economy Directorate and the Children, Young People and Families Directorate to work together, through the LAA and other internal mechanisms to address causes and make the eradication of poverty sustainable.
- vii. As the largest employer in the County, the Council could influence issues such as improving the employment of disabled people and upskilling.
- viii. There was a growing recognition that once people moved from benefits into work there was a need to continue to support them for approximately 12 months to ensure they remained in employment.
- ix. The process of helping people development themselves and their skills and move up the employment ladder was ongoing and required education, engagement, employment support, in-work support, childcare and career progression. If these were all available, it was possible to turn the "vicious cycle" of poverty into a "virtuous cycle".

### **Financial Poverty**

#### **Jane Malbasa, Job Centre Plus**

Jane Malbasa outline the role of Job Centre Plus in trying to contribute to the eradication of child poverty both through the paying of benefits and financial security and helping working age people in receipt of benefits into work as a sustainable route out of poverty. She noted the following points:

1. A main focus of the work of Job Centre Plus was on lone parents. Since 1997 New Deal for lone parents had resulted in the employment of lone parents rising by 11%.. However, the UK remained one of the lowest EU15 countries in terms of percentage of lone parents in employment and there was a need to generate more opportunities for lone parents.
2. There had also been a shift of focus on other benefits such as claimants and the Department of Works and Pensions Strategy "Working with Children" published in April 2007 focussed on helping parents into work and staying there by addressing the barriers they faced. It was also noted that Families where the youngest child was 14 or over were required to have a work focussed interview.. This requirement would be extended from children aged 14 to 12 by October 2008 and to 7 by 2010.
3. Of those people on the "New Deal" programme, which aimed to give unemployed people the help and support needed to get into work, 58% were lone parents and 21% were disabled. 38% of households on the New Deal had one parent in full time employment and 26% had one or more parent in part time work, showing that poverty could also exist when people were in the workplace.
4. The New Deal provided an opportunity to standardise the service model and looked to partners to support the initiative by providing services in the community and it was agreed that partnership working was the only way to achieve the eradication of poverty.
5. There was a huge employer agenda to increase opportunities, particularly with Local Employment Partners, and work was ongoing to engage with local employers to ringfence vacancies for people needing to get into the workplace and to include a guaranteed interview scheme for lone parents out of work, and ready to start work.
6. Government had put a requirement on Job Centre Plus to increase the work they were already doing with Local Authorities on childcare.
7. A more readily accessible database of information was now in place, which included all activities and enabled the monitoring of the impact of initiatives on living standards.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their contributions and for giving up their time to present their evidence to the Committee. It was agreed that a report would be produced from the evidence provided at the meeting, which would be considered by the Chair and Group Spokespersons, before consideration by the full Committee at their next meeting in January 2008. He also thanked Michelle McHugh and Ann Mawdsley for their contributions in arranging the special meeting.

In summing up, the Chair noted that there were a lot of long-term issues that had resulted in the current situation and that partners had been working for a long time to develop programmes to reduce poverty. It was now time for

partners to work together and for Directorates to work together to maintain the momentum in reducing poverty and to continue to work on strategies and issues to achieve this.

It was agreed that the following items be included in the report in terms of addressing child poverty:

- Financial Poverty
- Ambition and Expectation
- Benefits – including targets and focus on work and returning to work
- Training and skills – including the relationship between employment and qualifications and Educational attainment
- School meals and breakfast clubs, in and out of term
- Childcare
- Lone parents
- Poverty in relation to poor achievement, low skills, social problems and “vicious circles”
- The role of school as centres of communities, activities and initiatives
- Engagement with communities suffering from child poverty
- Building on good practice and disseminating information – Opportunity Centres and Pride in Camphill
- Partnership working, both corporately and externally and how this was collaborated and co-ordinated, and the scope for improvement
- Transport
- Tax credits and the implications of the overpayment burden
- Reading

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Chair

The Committee rose at 12.45 p.m.

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2007 TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE OF CHILD POVERTY**

Questions and answers have been grouped by theme. Summaries of both are given below.

No.	Question	Response
<b>Childhood Poverty</b>		
1.	<p><u>Councillor Katherine King</u> – “It would be useful to consider looking at support and advice given within Super Output Areas (SOAs), particularly in terms of benefits, tax credits and debt in order to raise awareness of what support was available.</p> <p>The ability to drill down into the SOAs showed the differences in terms of disadvantage even within small areas.</p> <p>Warwickshire College were looking to move Rugby College into Brownsover which would provide a lot of opportunity for people locally in terms of work and vocational qualifications and would contribute to the Government proposals to increase the leaving age from education or training to 18 by 2015. This was an example of joined up thinking to make improvements locally.”</p>	<p><u>Paul Seamer, Warwickshire Observatory</u> - Once the new indices were available, there was a team of officers within the Observatory who would be analyzing the data. Reports would be produced which would be available on the website and at the request of Members, who were free to contact officers at the Observatory to discuss any issues.</p>
2.	<p><u>Councillor Mike Perry</u> – “Following comments on benefits and the high number of lone parents living in poverty, it was crucial to target and co-ordinate benefits and services to provide the right incentives for people to go out to work. There were many reasons for poverty and how it was interpreted and there was a need to get out of the tax benefit culture.”</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
3.	<p><u>Councillor John Whitehouse</u> – “In order to provide school meals in holidays there was a need for school meal services to be in operation during those times and the Working Group set up to look at school meals had reported that in Warwickshire and elsewhere, particularly in secondary schools, school meal services were under strain. How significant do you consider school meal provision as one of the ways</p>	<p><u>Nick Dunster, Bernardos</u> - The provision of schools meals was an important factor in child poverty, not only in terms of the ability of parents to afford meals for children, but also in terms of nutritional benefits for children.</p> <p><u>Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Family and</u></p>

	to help to address and support vulnerable families?"	<u>Community Division</u> - Evidence supported the importance of school meals in terms of concentration and health, and the need for the benefits of these to continue through holidays. This was not limited to midday meals, and discussions with a number of schools had highlighted the benefits of breakfast clubs, both for the food element and to provide a buffer zone for children between experiences at home and in the community and school, where they could enjoy a stable and nurturing environment of calm, improving health and wellbeing. The barriers to this provision were not only financial, but included issues such as access to transport and there was a need to look to opportunities with partners in the District and Borough Councils for a holistic approach, with possible provision of school meals at other local facilities during holidays.
4.	<u>Councillor Heather Timms</u> – “Statistics showed that 63% of children living in poverty in Warwickshire were from lone parent households. National statistics showed that BME and disabled households were at greater risk. Was the picture different in Warwickshire?”	<u>Paul Seamer, Warwickshire Observatory</u> - The statistics to hand were only a sample as it was not possible yet to break down numbers locally by ethnicity. The split for Warwickshire was however not dissimilar to that at national level, with the same issues being faced nationwide.
5.	<u>Claire Sangster</u> – “The Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) produced a survey in October based on questions put to 1,500 visitors in April in May. Findings included 80% of those questioned had been overpaid Tax Credits and 71% of those were in financial difficulties caused by having to repay the money. People questioned also largely felt that due to their experiences with Tax Credits, they were less likely or would not claim in the future. Is everyone aware of this problem, in particular Barnardo's, who could provide valuable lobbying to Government and was there any way Council staff could assist with claiming and monitoring tax credits?”	<u>Nick Dunster, Barnardo's</u> - There was increasing evidence to suggest that the progress made in reducing poverty was grinding to a halt in terms of tax credits and other benefits. There were still a number of dilemmas that had to be considered such as gender, employment, training and finances.  Nick Dunster undertook to report back on evidence he had heard, in particular the issues around the Tax Credit system for Barnardo's to lobby on.  <u>Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Family and Community Division</u> - The Tax Credit System featured in a lot of the evidence available on child and family poverty and there was currently a refocus around the need to relook at this issue and its impact on child and family poverty. There was a general feeling of anxiety about taking on or applying

		for benefits and bureaucracy, including free school meals, which was an important area in terms of measuring deprivation.
6.	<u>Councillor John Wells</u> – “Child poverty needed to be linked to families. How much emphasis was put on affordable childcare, work opportunities and health issues?”	<u>Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Family and Community Division</u> - It was a challenge for Local Authorities to ensure that nurseries and Children’s Centres were sustainable and also to ensure that the good quality childcare that was available in Warwickshire was being used by the most vulnerable families as part of the regeneration agenda.
7.	<u>Ruth Davies McCrorie, Parent Governor Representative</u> – “Statistics showed that few children who had grown up in poverty went to university and gained good qualifications. This was often linked to low expectations of children and families, and was this being addressed?”	It was agreed that this should be included as an area to be addressed in the final report And would be addressed in other areas covered on the agenda.
<b>Poverty of Ambition</b>		
8.	<u>Councillor John Wells</u> – “Was there any evidence that the recipients of the moped bikes used for the Wheels to Work Programme did not continue with their courses/work once the six-month period was up and they had to return the moped?”	<u>Graham Hollowell, Deputy Executive Director – Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire</u> – The six-month period gave the recipients a window to put plans in place for when the moped was returned and to date there was no evidence to suggest that this time limit had interfered with the education of any of the recipients and that six months was sufficient to enable young people to save money for a deposit for a moped.
9.	<u>Councillor Mike Perry</u> – “Were there any evening activities provided as part of the Pride in Camphill programme?”	<u>Colin Ball, Project Director, Pride in Camphill</u> – There were a number of initiatives in place to engage with young people. These ranged from evening activities, which were well attended, to the point where there was now a need for more youth workers, to detached youth work such as the motor sports initiative.
10.	<u>Claire Sangster, School Governor</u> – “How might other areas “clone” the success of the Camphill programme?”	<u>Colin Ball, Project Director, Pride in Camphill</u> – There were a host of agencies involved in Camphill with the County Council, including Advantage West Midlands, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and the Housing Corporation.

		<p>The programme had required set up funding in the beginning, but it would be possible to have an element of what was taking place at Camphill rolled out across Warwickshire for relatively small amounts of money. Some parts of the programme were already being rolled out such as the Basic Success programme with Positive About Young People (PAYP) home tutoring service, enabling young people and parents to achieve basic literacy skills.</p> <p><u>Councillor Richard Grant, Chair</u> – There was a lot of history behind the poverty of ambition that existed and the Pride in Camphill Project was an example of how the vision to address poverty of ambition had become a reality. He added that it had taken a lot of work to get the project to where it currently is.</p>
11.	<p><u>Councillor Dave Shilton</u> – “There was a lot of commitment to the Camphill project now but what were the prospects for future years?”</p>	<p><u>Colin Ball, Project Director, Pride in Camphill</u> – It would always be a challenge to keep improving, but there was no option in Camphill not to make things better in all areas including childcare, training, better behaviour and working with families. It was noted that ongoing commitment for 5-6 years had been received from the County and Borough Councils and through the continued support of the community, proper structures were being put in place, which would ensure survival of the programme.</p>
12.	<p><u>Councillor John Whitehouse</u> – “Were the County using the expertise developed on the Camphill project on a broader basis?”</p> <p>Was there anything more elected Members should be doing to support this and similar projects?”</p>	<p><u>Colin Ball, Project Director, Pride in Camphill</u> – The expertise gained in the Camphill project was starting to cascade to other work such as the “Economic Regeneration in the Community” work in Nuneaton and Bedworth.</p> <p>There was a need to bring all the relevant agencies together to build sustainable and prosperous communities, and Members had a role in working and networking with other agencies.</p>

Poverty of Opportunity		
13.	<p><u>Dr Rex Pogson, Church of England Representative</u> – “There was a sense at the moment, that even with lots of experts and work going on, that things were not working anymore. There was a need to convince young people that education was a way out of any problems they were in. One way of ensuring the message got through to young people was to think about the language used, as people generally responded better to anecdotal evidence of success stories than statistics and policies.”</p>	No response required.
14.	<p><u>Councillor John Ross</u> – “The Children’s Centre in Bulkington was due to open in April 2008. There was some concern that Children’s Centres were being set up and then lacked the funding to continue. Was there any truth to this?”</p> <p>In the past people had not been required to get educational qualifications to work in manual and some industrial jobs. Now employers were looking for high qualifications to do even menial tasks and this would eventually devalue degrees.</p> <p>In order to turn the vicious circle into a virtuous circle, there needed to be enough jobs available.</p>	<p><u>Norma Smeaton, Head of Early Years and Childcare</u> – The Children’s Centres in Phase II would receive less funding than those developed in Phase I as they would receive only development and not general funding. In terms of Phase I Centres, some were facing significant reductions this year and that other funding had been used to top up allocations, and it was noted that the Children’s Centres Indicative Allocations for the next year were lower than expected, which would result in serious problems for the next three years. Norma Smeaton asked that if Members had any queries in respect of specific Centres, that they should e-mail these directly to her. Elizabeth Featherstone added, that in respect of the lower than expected Indicative Allocations, the Portfolio Holder had written to the Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP Minister for Children, Young People and Families seeking clarification.</p> <p><u>Dave Hill, Economic Strategy Adviser</u> – A major contribution to the success of reducing poverty was economic and relied on ensuring that there were sufficient jobs to take up. In response to the question regarding the value of degrees, Dave Hill noted that while the value of degrees may be less, the value of the skills needed for the jobs and the standards required would increase, which was a positive shift.</p>

	<p>The northern area of the County was an area deprived of work. How many applications per job were received in this area?</p> <p>It was important that the Job Centres' Pathways to Work programme did not turn into a witch-hunt to reduce benefit take-up to hit targets."</p>	<p><u>Jane Malbasa, Job Centre Plus</u> – Overall, the ratio of applications to jobs offered was currently 10:1 but it was noted that there was a high vacancy of jobs at the moment. It was difficult to match jobs against benefits as applications also related to aspects such as skills, terms and conditions and salaries offered. There was a need to draw these together and to lower the expectations of employers and to encourage employers to consult a more diverse group of applicants.</p> <p>The Job Seekers' Allowance did encourage people to take realistic steps, but did not encourage a witch-hunt of people on benefits.</p>
15.	<p><u>Councillor Mike Perry</u> – “Was there any data tracked on how many young people went on to full time jobs following training?</p>	<p><u>Lynn Wilson, Employment Link Officer</u> – The Opportunity Centres only worked with young people who had a referral agency behind them, for example a school or Connexions, and it was the responsibility of the referral agency to track the young people through the process. The purpose of the Opportunity Centres was to enable young people to access further training, and then employment, so the links to employment were not clear.</p> <p>Working with young people was not always about jobs, and the work carried out in the Opportunity Centres was usually a step introducing key skills into the courses to prepare for further training, and conditioning young people to become employable commodities.</p>
16.	<p><u>Councillor Helen McCarthy</u> – “The presentations had all been very informative and highlighted the work still to be done in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- getting the Tax Credits right</li> <li>- proper allocations for Local Government</li> <li>- the balance between employment and childcare</li> <li>- the need to ensure that no child left primary school without being able to read fluently.”</li> </ul>	<p>No response required.</p>

17.	<p><u>Tim Sturges, Parent Governor Representative</u> – “There was an assumption that schools would be at the centre of eradicating child poverty, particularly through programmes like extended schools. There was a risk that schools were detached from the programme, as it was being imposed on them and there was a need to make schools feel they were part of the process.”</p>	<p><u>Graham Hollowell, Deputy Executive Director – Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire</u> – Graham Hollowell made a plea to schools from a young person’s perspective to not focus on structural issues, to look at the wants and needs of their children and young people and to put forward things that young people would engage with.</p>
18.	<p><u>Chris Smart, School Governor</u> – “As the largest employer in the County, the Council should start by holding an enquiry to look internal employment practices in relation to the issues highlighted.”</p>	<p><u>Graham Hollowell, Deputy Executive Director – Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire</u> – Graham Hollowell encouraged the County Council, as a major employer in Warwickshire, to open doors to young people by making more vacancies available for young people to apply for and offering more work experience placements across the Directorates to young people. As Corporate Parents, elected Members had to go the extra mile for Looked-After Children as well and a project in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council involving both LAs, the Police, Fire Service, PCT and local college and using European Social Fund money was highlighted as being very successful in targeting looked-after children and 17 year-olds on the margins of society. A number of vacancies, over and above normal recruitment, had been set aside for these young people to apply for and successful candidates were supported by a Connexions PA to keep them engaged and working.</p>
19.	<p><u>Ruth Davies-McCrorie, Parent Governor Representative</u> – “The case study from Northern Ireland had shown there were parents who had a number of jobs to try to make ends meet. If the age when a parent was required to take steps to find work was reduced to 7, how would Government ensure a balance and that children were not always in childcare?”</p>	<p><u>Jane Malbasa, Job Centre Plus</u> – The steps parents would have to take (for seven-year olds by 2010) involved parents being expected to have an interview and to give thought to work, with no mandatory obligations beyond that. It was important that people made the right choices that suited their families, their aspirations and life choices so that employment was sustainable.</p>
20.	<p><u>Councillor Dave Shilton</u> – “The work being done by Connexions was very positive, and it was good that programmes carried out in the Opportunity Centres included construction in light of the Spatial Strategy.</p> <p>It was essential to get the mapping of deprivation right, in order to</p>	<p><u>Lynn Wilson, Employment Link Officer</u> – There was a high degree of intervention at all stages, and the programme brought in anybody who was needed to help a person progress.</p>

	<p>target the right areas.</p> <p>In terms of poverty and children, what measures were in place to ensure that money given in benefits was directed to children and not wasted by parents?"</p>	
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