

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**24 February 2015**

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## **Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014 – 2020**

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### **Executive Summary**

1. The purpose of this item is to present an update on the Wiltshire Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014-20.
2. Reducing child poverty has been a government target for many years. The [Child Poverty Act](#), which commits this and future governments to eradicating child poverty by 2020, received Royal Assent in March 2010 tasking local areas to produce a child poverty needs assessment and strategy. This strategy document fulfils that requirement.
3. This strategy has been developed by the multi-disciplinary Child Poverty Group which reports to the Wiltshire Children & Young People's Trust Executive. The strategy was made available for wide consultation with the public including children and young people, the public and private sector, businesses and voluntary sector organisations. All responses were considered and inform the final strategy.
4. A child poverty needs assessment sits alongside this strategy and a summary of its main findings is included in the strategy. A copy of the full needs assessment is available as an appendix to this report.
5. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the number of children in Wiltshire living in poverty in addition to mitigating the impacts of poverty on children's health and wellbeing.

### **Proposal**

The Strategy has undergone an official period of consultation, and was approved by Cabinet in November 2014. Full council is asked to formally approve the updated strategy in line with the Council's statutory duty to have a strategy to reduce child poverty.

### **Reason for Proposal**

1. Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act 2010 places duties on local authorities and named partners to 'cooperate with a view to reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their areas'. They are also required to prepare and publish local child poverty needs assessments and to develop joint child poverty strategies.
2. Child poverty features as a priority in key top-level Wiltshire documents. It is in the Wiltshire Assembly's "People, Places and Promises: Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026" which was adopted in April 2011. It is included in Wiltshire Council's 2013-2017 Business Plan through priorities to protect those who are most vulnerable, boost the local economy and bring communities together to enable and support them to do more for themselves. In addition, the Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust (comprised of representatives from key children's services in Wiltshire) specifically states in its vision a commitment to "reduce, prevent and mitigate the effects of child poverty" – and this is reflected in its Children & Young People's Plan 2012-2015 and in the various commissioning strategies which sit underneath it.

**Maggie Rae**  
**Corporate Director**

## **Wiltshire Council**

**Date of meeting** 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

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**Subject:** Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014 – 2020

**Cabinet member:** Cllr Keith Humphries and Cllr Laura Mayes  
Cllr Laura Mayes – Children’s Services  
Cllr Keith Humphries – Public Health

**Key Decision:** No

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. This Council report briefs members on the development of the Wiltshire Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014 – 2020. The strategy provides the strategic direction for Wiltshire Council and partner organisations in reducing the level of children living in poverty in Wiltshire, and mitigating the effects of child poverty across Wiltshire.

In 1999 the Government pledged to eradicate child poverty in the UK, but was unable to meet the first milestone of the pledge which was to halve the number of children living in poverty by 2010. The number of children living in relative income poverty in 2010/11 was reduced to 2.3 million; however this was 600,000 less than the number required to meet the 2010 target. The next target of the pledge is to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

Under part 2 of the 2010 Child Poverty Act, Local Authorities and named partner authorities have a duty to cooperate to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas. A local child poverty needs assessment must be produced in order to understand the characteristics of low income and disadvantaged families in the area. It should also include identification of the key drivers to address these needs, which will inform the development of a local child poverty reduction strategy.

In late February 2014 a Child Poverty Strategy consultation was launched by the government setting out the actions to be taken between 2014-17. Although the final strategy will not be available for some months there are key principles which are echoed within Wiltshire’s draft strategy for 2014-20. The government’s consultation document focuses on tackling child poverty through:

- Supporting families into work and increasing their earnings
- Improving living standards
- Preventing poor children becoming poor adults through raising their educational attainment.

This paper presents an update on the development of both the Wiltshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment and related Strategy 2014-2020.

## **Background**

2. Today in the UK 17% of children, 2.3 million, live in poverty. This is one of the highest rates in the industrialised world. Growing up in poverty is known to have a profound impact on children's physical and mental health, on educational attainment, aspirations, well-being, and long term economic productivity.

An analysis by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) demonstrated that in 2011 Wiltshire had 11,610 children living in poverty, which represents 11.4% of all children in Wiltshire.

Children are said to be living in relative income poverty if their household's income is less than 60 per cent of the median national income.

The development of the draft needs assessment and strategy have been led by Public Health and Children's Services, and the reports have been produced by the multi-disciplinary child poverty group, which reports to the Children and Young People's Trust Executive. They aim to provide an overview of current need in Wiltshire and the strategic objectives to address this.

## **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

3. The Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy aims to reduce the number of children living in poverty and mitigate the effects of child poverty. It seeks to provide a view of the causes, barriers and challenges of child poverty, set a shared vision and encourage a coordinated approach to address child poverty and its impact.

Child Poverty features as a priority in key top-level Wiltshire documents. It is in the Wiltshire Assembly's "People, Places and Promises: Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026" which was adopted in April 2011. It is included in Wiltshire Council's 2013-2017 Business Plan through its priorities to protect those who are most vulnerable, boost the local economy and bring communities together to enable and support them to do more for themselves.

In addition, the Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust (comprised of representatives from key children's services in Wiltshire) specifically states in its vision a commitment to "reduce, prevent and mitigate the effects of child poverty" – and this is reflected in its Children & Young People's Plan 2012-2015 and in the various commissioning strategies which sit underneath it.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

4. The Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy 2014 – 20 sets the strategic direction for Wiltshire Council, together with other partner organisations, under the direction of the Wiltshire Children & Young People's Trust Executive.

The goal of the Child Poverty Act is to end child poverty by 2020. The Child Poverty Act sets targets for the government to meet by 2020 on four different measures of poverty – including relative income poverty. These targets are based on the proportion of children living in:

- relative low income (whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole)
- combined low income and material deprivation (a wider measure of people's living standards)
- absolute low income (whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms)
- persistent poverty (length of time in poverty)

The Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust partnership has signed up to this strategy and are tasked with driving change at a local level to improve outcomes for children and young people.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

5. Safeguarding is a key priority for Wiltshire Council, both in terms of the services that they deliver and commission and this applies equally to the Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy and its implementation.

This strategy does not raise any new or additional safeguarding issues to be considered by the cabinet. Wiltshire Council and the organisations that they commission have in place safeguarding policies, procedures and workforce development plans to ensure safeguarding is and continues to be a key priority.

### **Public Health Implications**

6. Reducing child poverty is vital to reducing health and lifestyle inequalities and to improving the quality of people's lives across the whole lifecycle.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

7. There are no environmental or climate implications in relation to this council paper.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

8. The strategy aims to ensure services will be delivered with due regard to equality legislation and that all children will have equitable access to services.

The whole aim of this strategy is to improve equalities. Any adverse or positive impacts from an equalities perspective have been incorporated

within the identified issues in the strategy and delivery plan. For example, it is recognised in the section “Children at greatest risk of poverty” that some groups of people are more likely to be impacted by poverty and therefore there needs to be awareness of the potential risks for these groups.

## **Risk Assessment**

8. The main risks associated with the Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy is that the numbers of people living in poverty in Wiltshire may increase as a result of the economic downturn and the potential impacts of the reforms to the welfare system. The strategy addresses this through thematic assessments which focus on jobs and the economy which in turn will shape the interventions to be delivered through the implementation plan.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

10. The significant risk associated with not implementing this strategy would include:
  - Placing the wellbeing of children who live in poverty in Wiltshire at significant risk through a lack of suitable interventions to mitigate the effects of poverty on health and wellbeing.
  - Allowing the number of children living in poverty in Wiltshire to increase through a lack of interventions to reduce this number.
  - The council will not be able to fulfil its duty under part 2 of the 2010 Child Poverty Act if a Child Poverty Strategy, based upon a local needs assessment, is not approved and published.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

11. The Child Poverty Strategy has already undergone formal public consultation and was written by the multi-disciplinary Child Poverty Group therefore there are no foreseen risks of this strategy being implemented.

## **Financial Implications**

12. There are no immediate financial implications linked to this updated strategy. The strategy outlines ways of improved practice and working together more effectively to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. Longer term, this strategy should contribute to reduced costs with less burden on social housing, health and Childrens Services.

## **Legal Implications**

13. The Child Poverty Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Part 2 of the act sets out the duties of local authorities and others. The Act requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the

authority and its partners with a view to reducing, and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their area. This includes arrangements to publish an assessment of children living in poverty in its area and to prepare a joint child poverty strategy for its area. This report covers those aspects. There are no other specific legal issues or implications arising from this report.

### **\*Proposal**

14. Council is asked to approve the Child Poverty Strategy for implementation.

### **\*Reason for Proposal**

15. Once the Child Poverty Strategy has been approved by Council the implementation plan can be signed off and work can begin to mitigate and reduce the effects of child poverty in Wiltshire in line with our responsibilities as laid out in the Child Poverty Act.

**Frances Chinemana**  
**Assistant Director, Public Health**

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26<sup>th</sup> January 2015

### **Footnote**

Since the Child Poverty Strategy and Needs Assessment for Wiltshire were written updated figures have been released by HMRC which detail the percentage of children living in low income families in 2012 from a snapshot taken on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012.

These figures show a small reduction in the number of children living in low income families in Wiltshire from 11.4% to 10.6%. The release of these new figures will be used in the production of local area briefings on child poverty to reflect the most up to date information on children living in low income families available.

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy 2014-20  
Appendix 2 Wiltshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment

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