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| <b>Report to:</b>        | <b>SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>                                 |
| <b>Item number</b>       | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Relevant Officer:</b> | Venessa Beckett, Corporate Development and Policy Officer |
| <b>Date of Meeting</b>   | 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2014                                |

## CHILD POVERTY FRAMEWORK

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 The Committee to consider a report which updates on progress on the child poverty framework and related issues and activity.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To scrutinise the report, asking questions and making any recommendations that are considered necessary.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the report.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

### 4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement

## 5.0 Progress update

### 5.1 Better Start

5.1.1 The Big Lottery Fund is due to decide in early June whether the Better Start Blackpool bid being led by the NSPCC in partnership with the Council has been successful. This would greatly accelerate the delivery of a range of interventions around the social and emotional development, communication and language, and health and nutrition of 0-3 year olds in seven of Blackpool's most deprived wards.

5.1.2 Better Start aims to deliver a whole new approach to the way we deliver services pre-birth to three years. By using upstream approaches such as preventative work in pregnancy and the first three years of life, it will improve the life chances of disadvantaged babies and young children. This will ultimately impact positively on all Blackpool residents through improved educational outcomes, job prospects, community resilience and so on.

5.1.3 The NSPCC is leading the partnership bid, which is for £42m, to pump-prime the approach. However, the Council is committed to delivering a new approach in this way with or without additional funds to commission things differently. Commissioning will be delivered through the alignment and/or pooling of funding where partners can agree that projects will deliver the shared better start outcomes.

5.1.4 The projects selected which will be ones with a rigorous evidence base, or will be new approaches which we have good scientific evidence to support.

5.1.5 Any funding awarded would be provided for 7 wards – Claremont, Talbot, Brunswick, Bloomfield, Park, Victoria and Clifton – although we will adopt the same approach with our services throughout the borough.

5.1.6 The key project areas for Blackpool Better Start are:

| Outcome area                     | Long-term outcomes   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Social and emotional development | Improved emotional intelligence, mental health and empathy<br>Improved social and learning skills<br>Reduced levels of anger, aggression and crime |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Communication and language development | Improved literacy and language skills<br>Improved educational attainment<br>Improved job prospects   |
| Diet and nutrition                     | Improved health and well-being from pregnancy, childhood and into adulthood<br>Reduced costs of dealing with health problems in later life |

## 5.2 National Child Poverty Consultation Response

5.2.1 We have submitted a response to the recent government consultation on the national child poverty strategy.

5.2.2 The consultation suggests that the priorities of the national child poverty strategy should be:

- Helping families escape poverty through work
- Supporting living standards
- Preventing poor children from becoming poor adults

5.2.3 To deliver these they recognise the need to work with businesses and local areas.

Our response noted:

- The actions in the strategy will not directly impact on the indicators they are linked to;
- The strategy does not adequately capture the complexity and variety of issues suffered by families deepest in poverty;
- In the light of government cuts, the priority to improve living standards needs to be supported by extensive measures and seed corn funding for Local Authorities to help communities develop their own support networks and resilience, something which is more complex in Blackpool given the transient nature of parts of the population;
- The draft Strategy is simply a compilation of existing activity rather than a serious attempt to address the root causes of child poverty;
- Universal Credit pushes the burden of subsidising a flexible workforce onto the taxpayer rather than the businesses which arguably benefit most from it;
- We are taking some general and progressive steps to address and mitigate child poverty in Blackpool, including delivering the Connexions Service aimed at those not in employment, education or training, the Positive Steps into Work service, our Adult and Community Learning Service, the Youthability Hub, the free breakfasts initiative and the £10 junior savings account initiative starting in July amongst others. However our efforts are inevitably limited by finance and prevent us from delivering the comprehensive local approach to addressing child poverty which we believe we need.

5.2.4 The response to the consultation submitted by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission includes research to show that the gap between the objective of making child poverty history and the reality is becoming wider. It commends extending childcare support to low-income families but criticises the lack of clear measures to assess progress and the absence of a detailed plan covering what needs to happen to jobs, wages and benefits to ensure poverty reduces. The issues raised by the Commission chime with our own response to the consultation.

### 5.3 **Young People’s Consultation Exercise**

5.3.1 UR Potential were asked to conduct workshops with young people from across the town to identify from a young person’s perspective what the issues are in Blackpool for young people. They conducted 4 workshops with a total of 40 young people aged 12 to 25 years of age. Young people varied in age, gender, learning ability, and sexuality. The workshop used the “five why’s” methodology, which involved asking the groups to discuss why something was a problem repeatedly until they have identified the root cause or causes.

5.3.2 The findings from the workshops are as summarised below; 8 key themes were identified by the 4 separate groups.

#### **Theme 1: Employment/ Unemployment**

- More work/volunteer experience and career advice in schools
- Greater range of apprenticeships needed
- Need more year round jobs not just seasonal
- Job centre hostile and not very good for support, doesn’t seem to be very supportive

#### **Theme 2: Volunteering**

- Something to do - need to gain more skills and experience
- Learn new life skills
- Build confidence and self esteem
- Breaks social isolation

#### **Theme 3: Activities**

- Need more activities – nowhere to go to, places that are appropriate for ages
- Young People have nothing to do need more outdoor activities
- Not all have access to internet better communication and publicity

#### **Theme 4: Mental Health**

- Transition between children and adult CAMHS services – need something in between
- Bullying linked with mental health – no one to talk to – schools can’t help staff not

trained in Mental Health or LGBT issues

- Young people don't have resilience or have opportunity to build up resilience
- Staff in schools not have experience in bullying procedure – don't have specific's i.e. homophobic or mental health

#### **Theme 5: Teenage pregnancy**

- Drugs and alcohol influence young people's choices
- Lack of sex education in schools
- Media issues which normalise teenage pregnancy
- Lack of life choices for young women no aspirations or opportunities to aspire
- Focus on education gives drive and ambition – encourage and offer incentive for young people

#### **Theme 6: Parenting**

- No control over their children need help but no support
- Poverty due to lack of skills and jobs

#### **Theme 7: Crime**

- Peer pressure – gang culture/attention/abuse
- Survival – due to poverty
- Alcohol and substance misuse and addiction – limited support
- Attention – steal to get caught to be heard

#### **Theme 8: Education**

- Transition from primary to secondary school is difficult, can be daunting – more people in high school – get lost – different teachers – too many teachers
- Too many exams at one time too much pressure for all children and young people
- Keeping young people in school is a good idea as it reduces the amount of young people who are unemployed
- Year 8 and 9 too early to choose career path education not matched up to jobs that are out there

5.3.3 These findings will be used to inform the forthcoming Children and Young People's Plan: A strategic approach and the refresh of the Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Child Poverty Framework due to take place after the next election.

#### **5.4 Witnesses/representatives**

5.4.1 The following officer has been invited to attend the meeting to report on this item:

- Venessa Beckett, Corporate Development and Policy Officer

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

**List of Appendices:**

None.

**6.0 Legal considerations:**

6.1 None.

**7.0 Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Equalities considerations:**

8.1 None.

**9.0 Financial considerations:**

9.1 None.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

**11.0 Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None.

**12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 Consultation on the draft Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/child-poverty-a-draft-strategy>

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission response to the consultation on the draft Child Poverty Strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-the-consultation-on-the-child-poverty-strategy>

**13.0 Background papers:**

13.1 None.