

# Warwickshire Child Poverty Strategy



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# Introduction

This report sets out how the Child Poverty Strategy for Warwickshire has been developed and why it is required. The strategy can be found attached as Appendix A of this report.

## Background to the Strategy

The Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent at the end of March 2010 with the central aim of eradicating child poverty by 2020. The Act received all-party support and is contained within the Coalition's "Programme for Government" published in May.

The Act requires local authorities and their named delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty. The Act specifies a number of duties on local authorities and their partners (Police, Transport, Health, Youth Offending, Probation, Jobcentre Plus):-

- To have partnership arrangements to understand and tackle child poverty in their local area.
- To carry out and publish a local child poverty needs assessment in order to understand the drivers of child poverty in their local area and the characteristics of those living in poverty.
- To prepare a joint child poverty strategy setting out measures that the local authority and each named partner propose to take to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty.
- To take their duty to reduce child poverty into account when preparing or revising their Sustainable Communities Strategy.

In his State of the Nation Report the Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith stated, "In the UK today, millions of children, adults and pensioners are daily experiencing the crushing disadvantage that poverty brings. They are living at the margins of society, unable to achieve their aspirations and trapped in dependency. Such levels of poverty are unacceptable and today's statistics show that, despite huge expenditure, this has made little impact in helping the poorest. A new approach is needed which addresses the drivers behind poverty and actually improves the outcomes of the millions of adults and children trapped in poverty".

"It is right that we invest in addressing poverty, but we must focus our resources where they will be most effective. 'Work', for the vast majority of people, is the best route out of poverty".





## Introduction to Warwickshire's Strategy

Intrinsic to the development and implementation of this strategy is the value of co-ordinated and collaborative working across the county. The strategy is not about spending more, but making better use of resources. By working together we can remove duplication, and focus collective resources and effort to achieve results.

The overarching ambition of the Warwickshire Strategy is about enabling people into 'work' by helping to address the barriers which prevent people from entering or progressing into sustainable employment. This includes addressing the educational attainment and skill level deficits which are predominately entry-level requirements for many employers. Secondly, to support the family in preparing for work by helping to tackle debilitating issues such as debt, benefit dependency, poor housing, family breakdown and other factors which prevent families moving out of poverty.

Key to this is the need for economic revival and growth which will stimulate the employment, development and enterprise opportunities for sustainable employment in the future.

The development of the strategy and responsibility for overseeing its implementation will sit within the new Communities Group of Warwickshire County Council. However, the strategy clearly has implications and responsibilities for all public sector organisations. To ensure the development of this broader approach, the Leader of the County Council will oversee the development of the strategy.

# The Definition of Child Poverty

The most commonly used threshold of low income is a household income that is 60% or less of the average (median) British household income in that year.

It uses disposable income rather than pre-tax income, as this is the money that the household has to live on\*.

## The Warwickshire Perspective

Although Warwickshire has low overall levels of child poverty, small localised pockets with relatively high levels exist. These areas show up on a multitude of indicators linked to different aspects of child poverty.

Latest available figures show that 14,760 (13.2%) children are considered to be living in poverty in Warwickshire (2008 figures, based on 60% median income levels).

Areas with the very highest levels of child poverty in Warwickshire's urban areas tend to be surrounded by, or are located near to other areas with above average levels. This is particularly the case in Central and West Nuneaton which highlights the concentrated nature of the issue.

There are neighbourhoods in Nuneaton where over 50% of children are considered to be living in poverty.

Nearly a third of all children living in 'poverty' in Warwickshire live in only 10% of the Super Output Areas (SOAs) across the County.

More children in Warwickshire are likely to be living in poverty than the latest official statistics suggest as they do not reflect the impact of the economic downturn and recession. This is due to the lag in releasing relevant data sets.

In Warwickshire the distribution of child poverty is complicated. The largest concentrations are entrenched in the County's largest urban areas, particularly Nuneaton and to a lesser extent Rugby and Bedworth. However, these concentrations are combined with spatially dispersed pockets in the rural south and north.

Whilst the levels of poverty in rural areas are not as concentrated as those in Warwickshire's towns, when aggregated the total numbers are not insignificant. An added complication is that households experiencing child poverty issues in more rural areas may encounter further difficulty in accessing support services due to their more isolated locations.

\* Further information about what this means in real terms can be found in Appendix 2 of the Strategy attached as Appendix A of this report.

# The Context of the Strategy

The purpose of the document is to set out the vision and strategy for reducing, and ultimately eradicating child poverty Warwickshire, using the collective knowledge and experience of practitioners, but also taking into consideration the national policy reviews on how best to address child poverty.

Child poverty is a complex issue which transcends service boundaries and requires commitment from all public sector organisations, including Police, Health, District and Borough Councils, as well as the voluntary and community sector, to help mitigate its effects. Upper-tier authorities have responsibility to eradicate child poverty, alongside partners who have a duty to co-operate.

The strategy accords with other corporate strategies including the Health Inequalities Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan, the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, the Affordable Housing Strategy, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The emerging 5 year strategy and business plan from the Local Enterprise Partnership should help to create some of the employment and training opportunities needed to help people into sustainable employment and move out of poverty.

A series of summits and consultation exercises have taken place during November and December 2010, working with Area Children's Trusts and other key stakeholders to identify the key objectives, priorities and principles that should underpin the strategy.



# Guiding Principles

- Intelligence-led services, knowing 'what works'.
- Focusing resources in priority areas.
- Working collaboratively with colleagues and organisational partners to maximise impact and resources.
- Recognising the value of early intervention, particularly families with very young children.
- Recognising the value of early intervention in terms of engagement and support.
- Ensuring that we are providing quality information and access to services, in terms of what we provide, and where we provide it.
- Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment

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