

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY MANAGING DIRECTOR

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 APRIL 2015	AGENDA ITEM: 14	
TITLE:	TACKLING POVERTY IN READING - PROGRESS REPORT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR LOVELOCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES - POLICY	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents progress made on delivering the Tackling Poverty in Reading action plan. The action plan was developed with partners through the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 provides a table setting out the action plan along with a progress update on each action.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members note the progress made on the Tackling Poverty in Reading action plan.
- 2.2 That progress is reported to Policy Committee on a six-monthly basis.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 In December 2014 Policy Committee approved a 'Tackling Poverty in Reading' strategy, action plan and needs analysis.
- 3.2 The strategy is a partnership strategy developed and delivered through the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council.
- 3.3 Lead partners on the strategy are:
- Reading Advice Network (Theme lead - Advice and Support)
 - Berkshire Community Savings and Loans (Theme lead - Affordable Credit)
 - Elevate Reading partnership
 - Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Breaking the Cycle of Poverty group (Theme lead - Best Start in Life)
 - Reading UK CIC (Theme lead - Support in to Work and In Work Poverty)
 - Acre (Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality)
 - Health and Wellbeing Board (Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Reading CCGs)

3.4 The Partnership meets on a quarterly basis to review economic and poverty data and monitors the progress of the action plan.

4. THE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

4.1 The strategy has four aims, delivered through six themes as follows:

Aim	Theme
Improving Life Chances - breaking the cycle	Best start in life
Supporting those who can't work / on low incomes - income maximisation	Advice on Tax credits and Entitlements
Increasing Employability / Addressing Low Income - up-skilling and employment support	Support into Work In work poverty
Creating Sustainable Communities - improving quality of life in our more deprived communities	Affordable Credit Affording Basic Needs

4.2 The strategy does not seek to catalogue and pull together all existing activity that contributes towards alleviating poverty and which is already carried out as part of the core business of the Council and its partners. Rather, it addresses priorities for action that the Council and its partners have identified are things we can pool our resources on locally to make a difference.

5. PROGRESS ON THE ACTION PLAN

5.1 This progress report provides the updates from partners made to the meeting of the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership on 15th January 2015. Appendix 1 provides a table setting out the action plan along with a progress update on each action.

5.2 Progress Highlights:

5.2.1 Best start in life

The focus of the partnership is to broaden the skills and resources of a wide range of partners to better support families to encourage younger children to develop their communication skills and to increase attendance at 2 year Health Reviews to ensure that more families can access the support they need.

Work to promote health awareness is ongoing with Parent and Toddler Groups. A Healthy Eating Workshop was delivered in November 2014. A Speech and Language Workshop will be delivered in March 2015. A number of groups have already identified that they would like additional information and support with these topics.

Uptake of 2 year old health checks has already increased to 60%. The LSP held an interactive workshop in November, attended by 57 practitioners from across the sectors to encourage awareness of the wide range of different agencies and services which interact with families and encourage a greater degree of collaboration between them. Further consideration will also be given to how the group interacts with any future development of Troubled Families Phase 2. This is still very much an ongoing piece of work.

5.2.2 Advice on Tax credits and Entitlements

To develop capacity for support and training for people on claiming, six training sessions have been provided, more are planned. A specialist housing caseworker is in place based at Reading Community Welfare Rights (RCWRU). 2 additional posts are in place based at RCAB. A new website was launched in December 2014.

A Benefit Take up campaign run as a RBC/CAB/Age UK Reading partnership in July and August 2014 indicated that a total of 30 residents were provided with advice, with a total potential benefits gain of £36 597pa. An analysis of Council Tax Support take up figures does not currently show an increase which could be attributed to the campaign. Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance take up figures are not likely to be available from DWP for some time. A further campaign for older people has been launched in the wider Tilehurst area to run February to March, in conjunction with the Winter Watch scheme. Benefit surgeries with CAB advisors provide elderly people with information and advice to help them access the benefits they are entitled to, as well as advice on bills, insulation & draught exclusion, and home energy checks. Surgeries will be held at Tilehurst Library, the Firtree Social club and the Maples Resource Centre. We are also exploring a potential campaign targeting working people, through a partnership with hoteliers to aim the campaign at their staff.

A digital volunteers scheme, led by RVA and based initially at Central Library will be launched in April. This follows a successful bid to the LGA Digital Experts fund for a paid co-ordinator.

5.3 Support into Work

Work is moving ahead on the Elevate Reading hub in Central Library (refurbishment started in Jan, with a view to co-location by late March and opening of new community learning library in April). Partners include RVA and Mustard Tree, who will provide mentoring and volunteering support

Reading Voluntary Action has successfully bid for funding to deliver Young People volunteering services (to start in April).

A range of support services are being provided between DWP, Adviza and CIC, focussing on 16-24s.

A supported working project is underway delivered by MENCAP.

A lone parent pilot is also making progress (joint Reading/Slough initiative, working with employers through DWP). New Directions have won funding for an Over50s project, to be supported by Employment Skills Group (ESG) partners. Employment Skills Plans are being used to deliver apprenticeship opportunities, pre-employment training and schools outreach for (mostly) construction industry.

5.4 In work poverty

The Employment and Skills Group have agreed to lobby for living wage. A delivery programme to be discussed at next meeting.

RBC's pay statement for 14/15 includes commitment to pay Apprentices as a minimum either scp 11 or the Living Wage rate (whichever is the higher). Adoption of the living wage policy will come into force from the start of 15/16. RBC is working with the Living Wage Foundation to review all its contracts as part of the drive towards living wage employer accreditation.

5.5 Affordable Credit

The National Illegal Money lending team, which acts on RBC's behalf to investigate Loan Shark activity within the Reading Borough ran a November month of action to raise awareness.

5.6 Affording Basic Needs

Installation of solar panels on an estimated 500-600 Council housing properties across the borough began in January 2015; starting in the Whitley area. All selected Council houses were chosen on their technical suitability. Installation is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2015.

Winter Watch underway, running from November 2014 to March 2015. Current uptake indicates a 30% increase on last year. For the first time we are able to continue working on this agenda throughout the entire year 2015-2016, supported by public health funding. We are currently planning the details for the summer months.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 This decision contributes to the Council's strategic aims to develop a sustainable economy at the heart of the Thames Valley; and to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all because the strategy and plan addresses support into work, low pay and in work poverty, health inequality and specifically addresses poverty faced by disabled people, children, older people and ethnic minority communities.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

10.1 The Tackling Poverty in Reading event in November 2013 was an open event. Invitations went out to public service providers, businesses, employers, schools, providers of employment, training, voluntary and community organisations, trades unions, faith organisations and residents involvement databases, through both the Council's and partners' routes. The event was promoted through the website, twitter and press release. Around 200 people attended on the night.

10.2 Participants were invited, when registering, to say what their main concern was about poverty in Reading. This survey gave a good indication of the key Poverty issues for Reading. Their responses were used to theme the workshops and subsequently the themes of the strategy.

10.3 Experiences of poverty of local people were recorded on at the event through video, written word, case studies and participation in the workshops.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

11.2 The Equality duty is relevant to the decision to develop a strategy and action plan on tackling poverty in Reading. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The assessment is that poverty has a differential impact on different equality groups and a poverty strategy and action plan will positively impact on these groups. The assessment report was presented to Policy committee in January 2014.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Under the Child Poverty Act 2010, local authorities and named partner authorities have a statutory duty to co-operate to reduce and mitigate the impacts of child poverty in their area (these named partner authorities to whom the duty applies include health, the police, youth offending teams, probation and Jobcentre Plus); to prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment and prepare a joint child poverty strategy for the local area.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The development of a Tackling Poverty strategy and action plan is met within existing budgets.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Minutes of Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership

14.2 Highlight reports from partners.

Tackling Poverty Action Plan - Progress Report January 2015

Aim	Theme	Actions	Key Measures
Improving Life Chances - breaking the cycle			
	Child Poverty in Reading: Best Start in Life	<p>Early Language and Communication (LSP)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broaden the skills and resources of a wide range of partners to better support families to encourage younger children to develop their communication skills. 2. Increase attendance at 2 year Health Reviews in Reading to ensure that more families can access the support they need. <p>Healthy Start in Life (LSP)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Raise awareness of a range of services for families amongst all sectors, and understanding how they can work more effectively together. <p>Education (RBC)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Support schools to further improve their standards when they need help 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance at 2 year Health Reviews in Reading from 45-50% to 60%. 2. Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes data 3. Reading's FSM, Pupil Premium, looked after children and BME pupils exceed national average measures for Early Years, Key stage 2 and Key stage 4.
<p>Progress: Work to promote health awareness is ongoing with Parent and Toddler Groups. Healthy Eating Workshop delivered in November 2014. Speech and Language Workshop will be delivered in March 2015. A number of groups have already identified that they would like additional information and support with these topics. Uptake of 2 year old health checks has already increased to 60%, following a number of initiatives in different areas. We are continuing to promote these as an important part of early identification and prevention work in Reading. LSP held an interactive workshop in November, for a wide range of practitioners (57 attended) from across the sectors to encourage awareness of the wide range of different agencies and services which interact with families and encourage a greater degree of collaboration between them. Solutions highlighted to improve joint working and collaboration were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Service Directories and Databases * <input type="checkbox"/> Working better together <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Agency Training <input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships across Sectors <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Schools * 			

Aim	Theme	Actions	Key Measures
<input type="checkbox"/> Key Workers * <input type="checkbox"/> Other Solutions The BTCOP Group have agreed to take forward work on the asterisked (*) topics. Further consideration will also be given to how the group interacts with any future development of Troubled Families Phase 2. This is still very much an ongoing piece of work.			
Supporting those who can't work or are on low incomes - income maximisation			
	Advice on Tax Credits & Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop capacity for support and training for people on claiming. (RAN) 2. Benefits Take up Campaign to encourage residents to claim benefits they may be missing out on. This will focus on Older People, In Work Poor and Disabled (RBC) 3. Establish a Digital Inclusion Action Plan to ensure that residents are not left behind in the move to digital service delivery (RBC) 4. Recruitment of volunteer peer mentors 5. Common Referral Process (March/May 2015) 6. Establish a local advice forum 7. Shared advice surgeries in deprived areas 8. Virtual information points in community areas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increase in the skills training delivered to staff handling claims advice 2. Impact figures from CAB 3. 100% of Reading Services account for the digitally excluded in their service delivery. 4. Number of peer mentors in deprived areas 5. Number of advice surgeries in deprived areas 6. Usage of virtual information points in selected community locations
Progress: 1. Six training sessions completed, further in planning stage. Specialist housing caseworker in place based at RCWRU. 2 additional posts in place September 2014 based at RCAB. New website launched December 2014. 2. Benefit Take Up Campaign: Outcomes from the benefit surgeries run by CAB in July and August indicate that a total of 30 residents were provided with advice, with a total potential benefits gain of £36 597. An analysis of Council Tax Support take up figures does not currently show an increase which could be attributed to the campaign. Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance take up figures are not likely to be available from DWP for some time. Currently planning a further benefit take up campaign for older people in the wider Tilehurst area, in conjunction with Winter Watch sessions run by CAB. Also exploring a potential campaign targeting working people, through a partnership with hoteliers to aim the campaign at their staff. 3. Digital Inclusion: A digital volunteers scheme, based initially at Central Library, is currently being developed with partners and led by RVA. A bid to the Earley Charity, Berkshire Community Foundation and the LGA Digital Experts fund for funding for the scheme, which will require a paid co-ordinator, is being put together. 4. Volunteer peer mentors: Work commencing February 2015 6. Local advice forum: established 7. Virtual information points: Work commencing February 2015			

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Increasing Employability / Addressing low income - up-skilling and employment support SUE BRACKLEY																																							
	1. Support Into Work SUE BRACKLEY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide opportunities & support for volunteers (Elevate Reading Partnership) 2. Provide holistic linked up support mechanisms to get young people into employment (Reading UK CIC, Elevate Reading) 3. Training to build skills & help for applying for jobs (UK CIC will report on activities delivered at The Elevate Reading hub, delivery partners include Adviza, Job Centre Plus, New Directions and RVA) 4. Build on successful schemes already being offered by partners such as New Directions and SITE which provide targeted interventions for specific groups with lone parents who face particular barriers to employment. (UK CIC, Elevate Reading) 5. Empower volunteers from ethnic minorities (UK CIC, Adviza) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RVA Registered volunteers 2. JSA Claimant Count 3. JSA 16-24 claimant count 4. Elevate Partnership to achieve the following: +Targets 16-24age <table border="1" data-bbox="1570 608 1921 1018" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #4f81bd; color: white;"> <th></th> <th>TVB</th> <th>Reading</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Engage young people</td> <td>4500</td> <td>750</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young people into jobs > 6 months</td> <td>1300*</td> <td>216*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>don't reclaim within 9m</td> <td>800</td> <td>133</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>900</td> <td>150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apprenticeships</td> <td>300*</td> <td>50*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Work experience Traineeships</td> <td>1500*</td> <td>250*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Increased Earnings</td> <td>450</td> <td>75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Youth Contract wage incentives</td> <td>800</td> <td>133</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reducing Job churn</td> <td>150</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loan Parents '</td> <td>200</td> <td>33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Employers Supported</td> <td>3100*</td> <td>516*</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		TVB	Reading	Engage young people	4500	750	Young people into jobs > 6 months	1300*	216*	don't reclaim within 9m	800	133		900	150	Apprenticeships	300*	50*	Work experience Traineeships	1500*	250*	Increased Earnings	450	75	Youth Contract wage incentives	800	133	Reducing Job churn	150	25	Loan Parents '	200	33	Employers Supported	3100*	516*
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	2. Addressing in work poverty SUE BRACKLEY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote and encourage employers in Reading to sign up to the living wage campaign (Reading UK CIC) 2. Continue to work towards "Living Wage Accreditation - investigate options available in relation to pursuing 'Living Wage Accreditation' (RBC) 3. Work with the Living Wage Foundation to review all our contracts as part of the drive towards accreditation (RBC) 4. Educating residents on the alternatives and benefits of contract hour employment. (Reading UK CIC) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of employers signed up to the Living Wage Campaign 2. RBC employees paid the living wage 																																				

Aim	Theme	Actions	Key Measures
<p>Progress:</p> <p>1. Work moving ahead on Elevate Reading hub in Central Library (refurbishment starts Jan 12th, with a view to co-location by late March and opening of new community learning library in April). Partners include RVA and Mustard Tree, who will provide mentoring and volunteering support</p> <p>1.1. RVA has successfully bid for funding to deliver YP volunteering services (starts April). Other partners include Adviza, DWP, CBEBP, New Directions</p> <p>1.2. providing a range of support services, with CIC leading on Employer Engagement. Ahead of the April opening as combined service, ongoing joint provision has taken place between DWP, Adviza and CIC focussing on 16-24s</p> <p>1.3 Prince's Trust also lined up to joint work with DWP, Adviza and CIC with Elevate hub. Supported working project is underway - MENCAP have won contract to deliver</p> <p>1.4. Lone parent pilot under Elevate is also making progress (joint Reading/Slough initiative, working with employers through DWP). New Directions have won funding for an Over50s project, to be supported by Employment Skills Group (ESG) partners. Employment Skills Plans being used to deliver apprenticeship opportunities, pre-employment training and schools outreach for (mostly) construction industry.</p> <p>2.1. ESG has agreed to lobby for living wage. Delivery programme to be discussed at next meeting.</p> <p>2.2. Pay statement for 14/15 includes commitment to pay Apprentices as a minimum either scp 11 or the Living Wage rate (whichever is the higher). Adoption of the living wage policy will come into force from the start of 15/16.</p> <p>2.3. RBC is working with the Living Wage Foundation to review all its contracts as part of the drive towards living wage employer accreditation.</p> <p>2.4. To be discussed with ESG members at next meeting.</p>			
<p>Creating Sustainable Communities - improving quality of life in our deprived communities</p>			
	<p>1. Affordable Credit RICHARD STAINTHORPE</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with our partner, Community Savings and Loans Berkshire to provide money management education for parents and school children 2. Increase advertising for alternatives offering affordable credit. (RBC) 3. Increase visibility of credit unions through a centrally located front office. (RBC) 4. Continue to work with Stop the Loan Sharks to protect our residents from illegal lenders. (RBC) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of schools receiving training (out of possible 17). Percentage of pupils regularly Saving with BCSL 2. Continuing STLS protocol
	<p>2. Affording Basic Needs CLARE MUIR</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the communication of what agencies are doing with a new signposting directory (Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership) 2. Run training sessions for agencies to come together (RVA) 3. Supporting the Governments fuel poverty strategy by draught proofing and insulating homes and providing funding to do so as well as 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Output figures for Winter Watch. 2. Financial Crisis Support Scheme Output figures

Aim	Theme	Actions	Key Measures
		continuing to provide grants to bring homes to a decent standard.(RBC) 4. Continuation of Financial Crisis Support Scheme to March 2016 (RBC)	
<p>Progress:</p> <p>1.4. National Illegal Money lending team ran a month of action in Reading in November.</p> <p>2.3. Installation of solar panels on and estimated 500-600 Council housing properties across the borough - procurement is in progress. The whole project is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2015. Winter Watch underway.</p> <p>2.4. Q2 July to September 2014 Total number of customer approaching FCSS: 342 (439 Q2 2013/14), Total number of food parcels requested/provided: 107(167 Q2 2013/14) (approx. 6.7 parcels per week)</p>			