

Bury Health and Wellbeing Board

Report Title	Anti-poverty work update		
Meeting Date	18.11.2020		
Contact Officer	Jon Hobday / Lisa Kitto		
HWB Lead			
1. Executive Summary			
Is this report for?	Information x	Discussion x	Decision <input type="checkbox"/>
Purpose of report:	To make the Board aware of the work going on to address poverty.		
Key Actions:	To note the report. To endorse and support the ongoing work in this area. To support and endorse the identified next steps.		
What requirement is there for internal or external communication?	Internal communications with partners will be required to share the information on the current work in this area. External communication will be required to share progress with key partners.		
Assurance and tracking process:	No		

2. Introduction / Background

Poverty in the UK is about a lack of resource to meet basic needs and participate in society; poverty can be addressed through state, market and individual-level solutions; and there are actions that can and should be taken to ensure sufficient social and economic support, and to prevent future poverty. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016).

The reality is, almost anyone can experience poverty. Unexpected events such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, ill health or a drop in earnings through job loss or benefit changes or a global pandemic such as COVID is all it takes to move a family into poverty. However, poverty isn't inevitable. With the right support everyone can have the opportunity to do well in life and share the benefits of a stronger economy and a healthier, fairer society.

Evidence suggests children growing up in poverty do not have the same range of experiences as other children, which can result in poor life chances in adult life. Children living in poverty are also more likely to have behavioural problems, low education attainment, ill health and disability in later life.

Poverty is also related to more complicated health issues over the course of a lifetime, which affect earnings as well as quality and length of life. Life expectancy is 12.6 years lower for men and 8.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Bury than in the least deprived areas (Public Health England, 2019).

Consequently, early help and intervention is crucial. We must create pathways out of poverty that support individuals in the Borough and help them to help themselves and their children break the cycle.

Impact of COVID on poverty

Since March 2020 COVID has had a significant impact on local towns and communities within Bury. We have had increased numbers in Bury who have been furloughed and lost jobs, and as such have seen significant rises in the numbers of people trying to access support and benefits. Data from our recent local business surveys in October 2020 suggest that in Bury 70.5% of businesses had furloughed staff. Through our community groups we have also seen

- An increased number accessing food banks / food pantries and other support
- A new and different demographic of people requiring support i.e. the previously comfortable middle class who are suddenly out of work with mortgages and bills
- Increased debt and mental health related problems
- An increase in the numbers asking for help to understand and access what benefits they are entitled to

Work to date to address local issues

A range of support mechanisms have been set up or increased since March including

- Increased welfare and hardship support made available
- Further investment to improve Citizen Advice offer
- Financial support to support food banks
- Development of the Bury Community Support network
- A Free school meal offer during school holidays
- A mechanism to effectively identify and distribute external funding and donation opportunities in a systematic way across the borough
- Increased partnership working between VCSE organisations and the community hubs to support those with financial difficulties

Next Steps

The plan going forward is to

- Work with the community to further develop the Bury Community Support Network (BCSN) to be an effective forum to drive anti-poverty related work
- In collaboration with BCSN refresh and update the existing anti-poverty strategy for Bury, which will have a robust action plan of delivery behind it
- Continue to use intelligence and feedback to shape delivered and commissioned services which impact the anti-poverty agenda e.g. support around revenues and benefits, employment, fuel poverty, housing and economic development and regeneration
- Firm up the longer term local delivery plan for supporting children with free school meals during school holidays – given central government’s recent decision to fund free school meals during holidays

3. key issues for the Board to Consider

Anti-poverty work is impacted and influenced by a range of wider strategies and plans. As such it is important anti-poverty measures are included and advocated for in all plans and strategy developments such as the 2030 strategy and the housing strategy.

Reducing poverty and its impact on families is fundamental if we want to address inequalities locally and improve the health and well-being of Bury residents.

4. Recommendations for action

1. To note the progress of the anti-poverty work
2. To endorse and support the ongoing work in this area
3. To support and endorse the next steps

5. Financial and legal implications.

If necessary please seek advice from the Council Monitoring Officer Janet Witkowski and Section 151 Officer Lisa Kitto.

Any additional internal and external investment related to supporting those experiencing hardship has been agreed through appropriate governance decision making processes.

6. Equality/Diversity Implications. Please attach the completed Equality and Analysis Form if required.

All work directed by Bury Council to address poverty locally adheres to council equality and diversity standards, and seeks to reduce inequality and inequity through a targeted approach aimed at supporting those most in need.

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