

# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention & Wellbeing
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Children's Services and Education Director of Public Health
<b>DATE:</b>	Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Children's Services and Education Public Health Prevention and Wellbeing
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	Y

**SUBJECT: Blackburn with Darwen: Our Strategy to Reduce the Impact of Child Poverty 2024-2028**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackburn with Darwen's Strategy to Reduce the Impact of Child Poverty will aim to reduce and mitigate the impact of child poverty and reduce inequalities for children and families. It has been co-produced with children, young people and families across the borough to ensure that the solutions resonate with the challenges they face daily. This empowers young people by valuing their insights, but also enriches the approach with an understanding of the diverse issues that are uniquely experienced by them. Ultimately, involving our children and young people in this strategy's development makes certain that it is well-informed and reflective of the needs and aspirations of the younger generation.

This strategy is designed to make a tangible and timely difference in the lives of those experiencing poverty whilst acknowledging the larger societal issues that require systematic and societal change.

### Where we are now

In 2021/22 there were 4.2 million children in the UK living in poverty ([Poverty: facts and figures | CPAG](#)). These figures are projected to increase to 5.2 million children by 2023/24 ([Fact checking claims about child poverty | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)). In 2021/22, Blackburn with Darwen had a child poverty rate for relative low-income of 36.5%, compared to the England average of 19.9% ([Public Health Outcomes Framework - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)).

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the number & proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. The England average is 17.1%, in Blackburn with Darwen the average across all wards is 22.8% ([IMD - Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index \(IDACI\) - score in Blackburn with Darwen | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](#)).

## Our Strategy

Blackburn with Darwen's Child Poverty Strategy is focused on providing targeted support and combining local resources and partnerships to address key factors contributing to child poverty. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders, implementing interventions based on our six priorities, and ensuring wrap around support for families, this strategy seeks to provide the foundations where every child can thrive, irrespective of financial circumstances.

After consultation with young people and families in our borough, six key themes were identified to focus this strategy and help to protect those in poverty and prevent more children, young people and families falling into poverty.

The strategy will focus on the six key themes:

1. The School Day
2. Food
3. Transport
4. Stigma and Wellbeing
5. Early Years
6. Housing

An action plan will be developed with key stakeholders to sit underneath this strategy. The action plan will incorporate actions that have initially been identified in consultation with our children, young people and families. This plan will be an adaptable and flexible resource to address the key themes set out in this strategy and new themes and objectives that emerge as the work develops. An initial set of key performance indicators have been developed against each theme to gauge achievement and identify areas for improvement.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board:

- Commits to the child poverty key themes and objectives contained within this strategy
- Approve Blackburn with Darwen's Strategy to Reduce the Impact of Child Poverty

## **3. BACKGROUND**

This new strategy communicates how we will mitigate the impacts of poverty for our children, young people and families and how we work in partnership to ensure that every child in Blackburn with Darwen can thrive.

### Child Poverty

Children and young people (up to the age of 18) are considered to be living in poverty when their circumstances mean they lack the resources to meet their needs and are unable to take part in the activities that are considered "ordinary" or "normal" ([What is poverty? | CPAG](#)).

Children from lone parent households are at greatest risk of being in poverty and those in the 10% most deprived areas are more likely to have low birth weight and die in infancy than the children living in the 10% least deprived areas ([Child poverty – RCPCH – State of Child Health](#))

Children living in poverty are more likely to be obese, develop long-term illnesses, experience tooth decay and develop mental health disorders. During the school day, children in poverty are more likely to experience social exclusion due to the inability to afford school trips, uniform or social events.

## Blackburn with Darwen Data

- Blackburn with Darwen's child poverty rate for relative low-income in 2021/22 at 36.5%, equivalent to 12,858 children ( [Public Health Outcomes Framework - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#))
- In 2022/23, 7,012 children were eligible for free schools meals, compared to 4,114 in 2015/16 ([Create your own tables, Table Tool – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#))
- In 2021/22, 70% of children in poverty in Blackburn with Darwen were from working families ([Children in low income families: local area statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
- There are 190 households with dependent children in Blackburn with Darwen with no central heating ([Custom dataset - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#))
- In our most deprived wards, 24.4% of children are obese compared to 17.6% in our least deprived wards ([Obesity Profile - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#))

Our vision for child poverty, which has been co-produced our children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen, is that;

*We will break down barriers and make everyday life accessible to children and young people regardless of their financial background. We will work together to ensure that every child & young person who experiences poverty can thrive.*

Our vision will be achieved through the six key themes:

1. **The School Day-** Removing barriers that impact children and young people attending and achieving at school such as food and uniform
2. **Food-** The ability to cook a healthy, nutritious meal and access affordable food
3. **Transport-** Having safe and affordable transport across BwD and promoting active travel
4. **Stigma and Wellbeing-** The ability to access services and not feel judged, being able to talk about poverty and improve mental and physical wellbeing
5. **Early Years-** Supporting families and ensuring children are healthy and reaching developmental milestones
6. **Housing-** Ensuring all housing is safe and warm for our families and young people

## **4.KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

This four-year strategy is a forward-thinking approach, it is one that aims for all children to thrive, regardless of their financial background. Clear roles, responsibilities and communication channels will enable stakeholders to work collaboratively, fostering a coordinated effort towards achieving our aims and objectives. We will build on the work already taking place on each of our six key themes by ensuring effective cooperation between our linking strategies, groups and boards.

### **Co-production**

This strategy has been co-produced with the Strategic Youth Alliance Forum (now Young BwD Foundation) to ensure we capture youth voice and are addressing issues concerning poverty that are important to them. This will ensure that the strategy is appropriate and effective in mitigating the impacts of poverty that they face.

### **Governance**

The Child Poverty Strategy Group will provide the operational function to ensure that our objectives are addressed appropriately. This group will directly report to the Children's Partnership Board with quarterly updates on the action plan. This board will feedback to the Health and Wellbeing Board as part of the Start Well agenda.

Throughout the term of this strategy, regular updates will be given to our children and young people through the Young BwD Foundation (formerly Strategic Youth Alliance Forum).

### **Risks**

- Child poverty rates continuing to increase due to the aftereffects of the COVID pandemic and current cost of living crisis
- Gaps in provision due to the end of the Household Support Fund from both a council and VCFS perspective

This strategy strives to uplift our children and young people facing economic challenges and create a more resilient and support environment locally by utilising local resources effectively and provide targeted support.

## **5.POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The local authority must aim to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty on their residents. This strategy links into other plans, strategies and reports that have been agreed by the council and will help to create 'a golden thread' and strengthen the work we do across the borough.

### **Local**

- Blackburn with Darwen Corporate Plan
- Public Health Annual Report
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Eat Well, Move More Strategy
- Oral Health Improvement Strategy
- Mental Wellbeing, Mental Health, Self-harm and Suicide Prevention Strategy (in development)
- Best Start in Life Strategy (in development)
- Healthy Weight Declaration

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no new financial implications relating directly from the decision to approve this strategy.

As indicated in the Strategy, an action plan is being developed with key stakeholders. At this stage, it is not possible to say whether the actions necessary to implement this strategy will result in additional financial implications, whether for the Council or any other Partner engaged in the delivery of the action. Suffice to say that in the event any additional resources are required to support delivery of the actions by the Council, these will be considered in line with the approval processes set out in the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications with regards to the strategy.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The Child Poverty strategy group will take the operational function for this strategy and link effectively with all stakeholders to meet our objectives for each of the key themes.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

- Initial workshop with the Strategic Youth Alliance Forum (now Young BwD Foundation) to help form the key themes of the strategy and create our vision (30<sup>th</sup> May 2023)
- Healthwatch who gathered responses from 780 pupils through questionnaires and focus groups (June 2023)
- The Family Hubs Parent Panel who shared their ideas through a survey (June 2023)
- A stakeholder engagement session with attendees from across the local authority, VCFS and education. This session was used to discuss the key themes and set out our priorities and objectives for each (25<sup>th</sup> September 2023)
- Additional workshop with the Strategic Youth Alliance Forum to make sure the themes have been captured correctly and the objectives set out by stakeholders are appropriate ( 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023)
- Ongoing engagement with our Child Poverty Strategy Group and other key stakeholder to receive feedback on the strategy.

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

**VERSION:** 1

<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Hannah Dean, Liz Johnston, Hayley Kilpatrick</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	February 2024
<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	