



A Child Poverty Strategy For Kent

May 2013

DRAFT

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“No child or young person should be living in extreme poverty in Kent, and we will work in partnership across the county to reduce child poverty and mitigate the impact of child poverty.”

The Kent Child Poverty Strategy Commitment

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Introduction: Reducing Child Poverty in Kent

56,000 children and young people in Kent (18%) are currently living in poverty¹. Kent County Council has a statutory duty under the Child Poverty Act 2010 to set out Kent's strategic priorities for tackling child poverty and to provide a means of tracking and evidencing progress in line with the national target to end child poverty by 2020, and this Strategy is the vehicle by which that is delivered. It sets out a framework to address the causes and effects of child poverty, identifying those areas where the county council and its partners can have greatest impact.

Child poverty is a multi-faceted and complex issue which is not only about low income, but also low aspirations and limited opportunities that reduce wellbeing and prevent children from achieving their full potential. This Strategy seeks to deal holistically with child poverty, recognising that children are part of a family, which in turn is part of a community, and the circumstances of both will directly affect outcomes for children. It also acknowledges the wider economic factors affecting family circumstance and examines the County Council's role in mitigating the effects of child poverty and tackling its root causes, where this is possible to do. The best outcomes for children are achieved by seeking to ensure that they experience a nurturing and stimulating environment in their family, school and community, as well as having their basic needs met.

The key aims of the Strategy are:

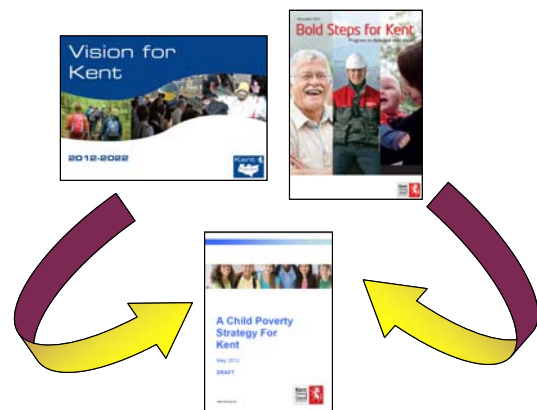
1. **Immediate alleviation of extreme poverty** – whenever services come across families where children do not have enough to eat, appropriate clothing, or are in unhealthy accommodation then support must be given.
2. **Increase family income** (for low income families) through supporting workless parents into employment, seeking to support the upskilling of parents in low paid employment to increase their earnings, and through ensuring families access benefits to which they are entitled.
3. **Reduce family costs/increase disposable income** by, for example, promoting projects that reduce the costs of fuel, food, travel and childcare for low income families
4. **Reduce health and educational inequalities** by focusing action to improve educational achievement and health on low income families to bring them closer to the average.
5. **Increase family and community resilience** - i.e. enabling families to cope with periods of low income, and promoting those factors that protect children against the long-term disadvantages of poverty, which includes actions to improve the quality of life for families on low income.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies is now predicting that child poverty will increase over the next few years as a result of the tax and benefit changes being introduced². The total resources available to the county council will continue to reduce over the medium term and it will not have the resources to compensate for such a macro-economic trend, should it indeed come to pass. This provides an interesting challenge for this Strategy as child poverty could still increase in spite of many successful actions being taken by KCC.

Nonetheless, we aim to tackle child poverty by working together with families, communities and other organisations to be ever more innovative in making more effective and efficient use of diminishing resources. This will require service transformation, reconfiguring how support and advice is provided in order to better target those families in extreme poverty who need immediate support, those families who are vulnerable to tipping into poverty in the future, and to mitigate the effects of poverty on those children who are likely to suffer the greatest disadvantages.

This Strategy...

... sits beneath the Vision for Kent (Kent's Sustainable Communities Strategy) and Bold Steps for Kent (KCC's Medium-Term Plan) which are both built upon the three ambitions of 'growing the Kent economy', 'tacking disadvantage' and 'putting the citizen in control'. It is linked to all three ambitions.



... seeks to set out an approach to tackling poverty that will help us to focus on those issues where there is a need for collective and concerted action over and above (or instead of) what is already happening.

... does not set out the detailed rationale for tackling poverty. There is weighty evidence elsewhere that does this³. This Strategy starts from the basis that poverty has insidious and potentially long-term effects on families and children as well as direct and immediate impact. Poverty in childhood is toxic because it can have persistent ill effects on nervous and stress hormone systems, leading to lifelong problems with learning, behaviour and physical and mental health. Children in poverty are less likely to do well educationally, thus less likely to develop the skills and aptitudes needed to secure well paid employment in the future. In these and other ways poverty can bring about a multiplicity of disadvantages which reduce a child's life chances and opportunities in the future. There is also clear evidence that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life, so it is particularly important to focus on families with very young children.

Measuring Child Poverty



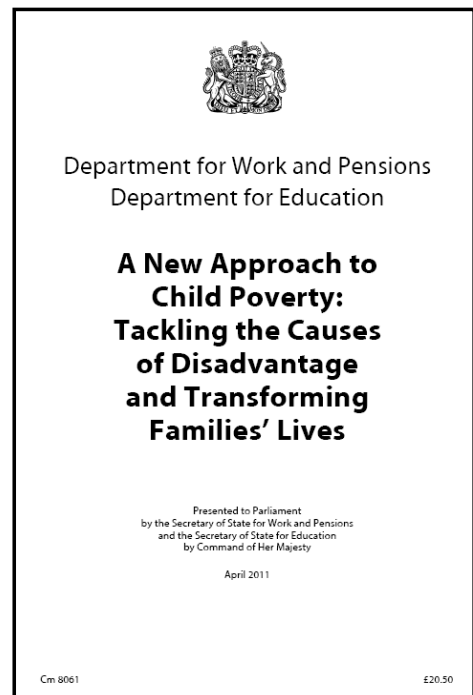
The Government recently consulted on how to measure child poverty. In our response we welcomed the breadth of issues under consideration in the Government's consultation report, and have built this Strategy around those issues and others, because poverty is not just about low income but also about reduced

choices, opportunities and experiences. Nonetheless, low income is the unifying theme underpinning poverty, and the most straightforward indicator.

In this Strategy, the terms 'poverty' and 'severe poverty' come from standard definitions in the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the Coalition Government's 2011 Child Poverty Strategy (see table overleaf for definitions).

We use the term 'extreme poverty' to mean that basic needs (food, warmth, shelter) are not being met. Whilst this level of poverty is not tolerated, and will result in statutory interventions when agencies become aware of it, there can be families who experience episodes of extreme poverty from time to time because of crises or cash flow problems.

There are also families on the edge of extreme poverty who need support to move into a more sustainable position. We do not have information about the incidence of extreme poverty, as the only robust local data available relates to those below 60% of median income, but it is reasonable to assume that its distribution will correlate with poverty generally.



Levels of Poverty		
Level	Defined by	Definition
Poverty	Child Poverty Act 2010	Households whose income after tax is less than 60% of the median household income. The income level varies according to the number of adults and children in the household (see table below).
Severe Poverty	Coalition Government's Child Poverty Strategy 2011	Proportion of children who experience material deprivation and live in households whose income after tax is less than 50% of the median household income.
Extreme Poverty	Locally determined in Kent - no common definition	Basic needs (food, warmth, shelter, appropriate clothing) are not being met.

Source: Households below average income, DWP, 2010/11

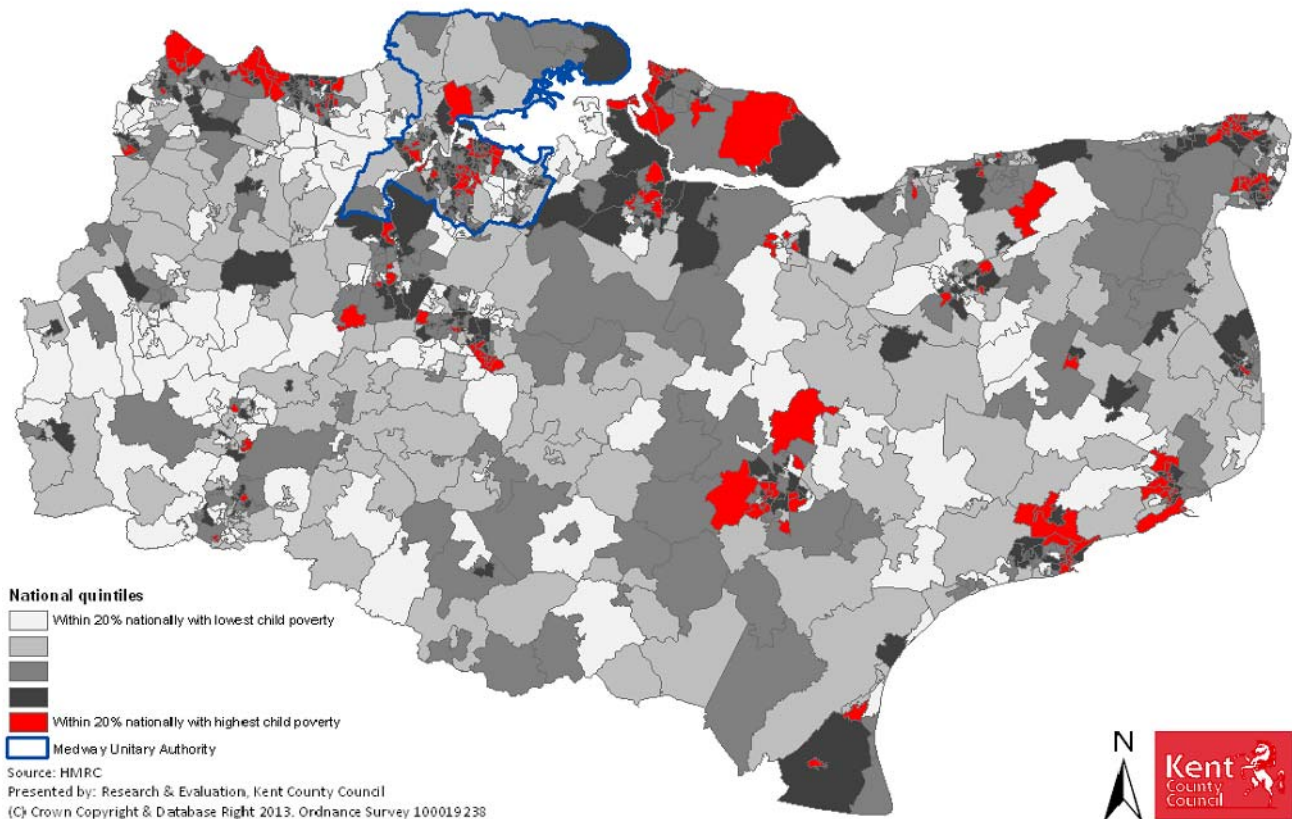
Poverty Thresholds ('60% below median income')		
Family composition	Low income thresholds before housing costs £ per week	Low income thresholds after housing costs £ per week
Single with no children	168	125
Couple with no children	251	215
Lone parent with two children under 14	269	211
Couple with two children under 14	351	301

Source: Households below average income, DWP, 2010/11

Context: Child Poverty in Kent in 2013

There are 56,350 children in poverty in Kent⁴ (17.7% of the child population). This is below the national figure of 20.6% but higher than the equivalent regional figure of 15%. The greatest child poverty is in Swale, Shepway, Thanet, Dover and Gravesham with rates of over 20% contrasted with rates of only 11% in Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells, but of course there is considerable variation within Districts (see poverty map below).

Kent LSOAs within the top 20% in England based on KCC's measure of local child poverty



The county is geographically diverse and has many contrasts including wide socio-economic disparities and pockets of ethnic and linguistic diversity. 72% of residents live in urban areas and towns, and 28% live in rural areas. Although parts of the county are affluent with incomes levels and property values which are significantly higher than national averages, this disguises the fact that there are pockets of high deprivation. The most deprived areas of the county are the coastal fringes of Thanet, Dover, Deal, Shepway and Swale in the East, but also Dartford and Gravesend in the West.

National research tells us that areas where there are high concentrations of child poverty are often also those where local services are placed under pressure, where there are generally poorer facilities such as safe outdoor play areas, and fewer shops or leisure activities. This combination can generate generally lowered aspirations for the future lives of children and young people ("poverty of aspiration") and lead to

difficulties in relation to community cohesion. On the other hand, children affected by poverty in much more affluent areas can be hard to reach by the services available to support them, and may find the emotional impact of being perceived to be poor by peers to be greater than in areas where there is more general poverty.

Over half of Kent families in poverty have at least one parent in work – a growth in in-work poverty (whether due to low pay or low numbers of hours, or both) has been a significant change over the last ten years⁵. The number of people in workless low-income households has remained at around five million but the number of people in low-income working households has grown almost every year since 2004/5 (before which it was more or less constant). Growth of in-work poverty has happened as costs have increased faster than wages, particularly for low earners. Whether the government addresses this national structural economic issue through the state (tax credits and benefits) or via employers (a “living wage”) is a live issue, but either way it is important for services to recognise that poverty affects as many working families as workless ones when targeting support.

Although the proportion of children in poverty in Kent who live in a lone parent household (68.8%) is only just above the national average (68.4%), the proportion of workless people in Kent who are lone parents (13%) is above the national average⁷.

Whilst Kent has always had relatively high levels of private rented housing in areas of deprivation, including the coastal towns, **the proportion of families in poverty living in the private rented sector is rising nationally**⁶. This is a trend requiring further examination in Kent as a relatively high proportion of the private rented sector (around 9% in East Kent) is deemed unfit, despite robust actions being taken to improve the sector.



Kent is below the regional average for skills. According to the 2001 Census, 22.5% of people aged 16 and over in Kent have no qualifications compared to 19.1% in the South East region and 22.7% overall in England and Wales. The average household income in Kent is lower than in the rest of the South East.



In Kent, as is the case nationally, families in 2013 have been operating in an environment where wages are rising more slowly than costs, so many families are experiencing real terms reductions in spending power.

The **welfare reform changes** then bring an additional dimension which at the time of writing this report is hard to predict. Over time, the changes are designed to make work pay and reduce welfare dependency. In the short term, it is not possible to know how many low income families will move into Kent from London, or within Kent from high value property areas to lower value areas, in response to the housing benefit changes and benefit cap. How many workless parents will succeed in securing employment, thus avoiding the benefit cap? How many low income families will be unable to cope with the accumulation of relatively small changes such as loss of Council Tax benefit combined with rising prices and the introduction of single monthly payments via Universal Credit?



In the short-term, the Institute of Fiscal Studies has calculated that families with children will lose proportionately more from the tax and benefit changes than single adults and couples without children. **We are putting in place mechanisms to track the impact of the welfare reform changes to enable our services, and those of our partners, to target support most effectively.**

A substantial minority of Kent children will experience poverty at some point. Whilst there are some families who remain in poverty for a sustained period, many more have episodes of poverty, moving in and out of poverty. Nationally, a third of people had experienced at least one period of poverty between 2005 and 2008 . The subsequent economic climate and the tax and benefit changes since then are likely to have increased the proportion of people experiencing poverty.

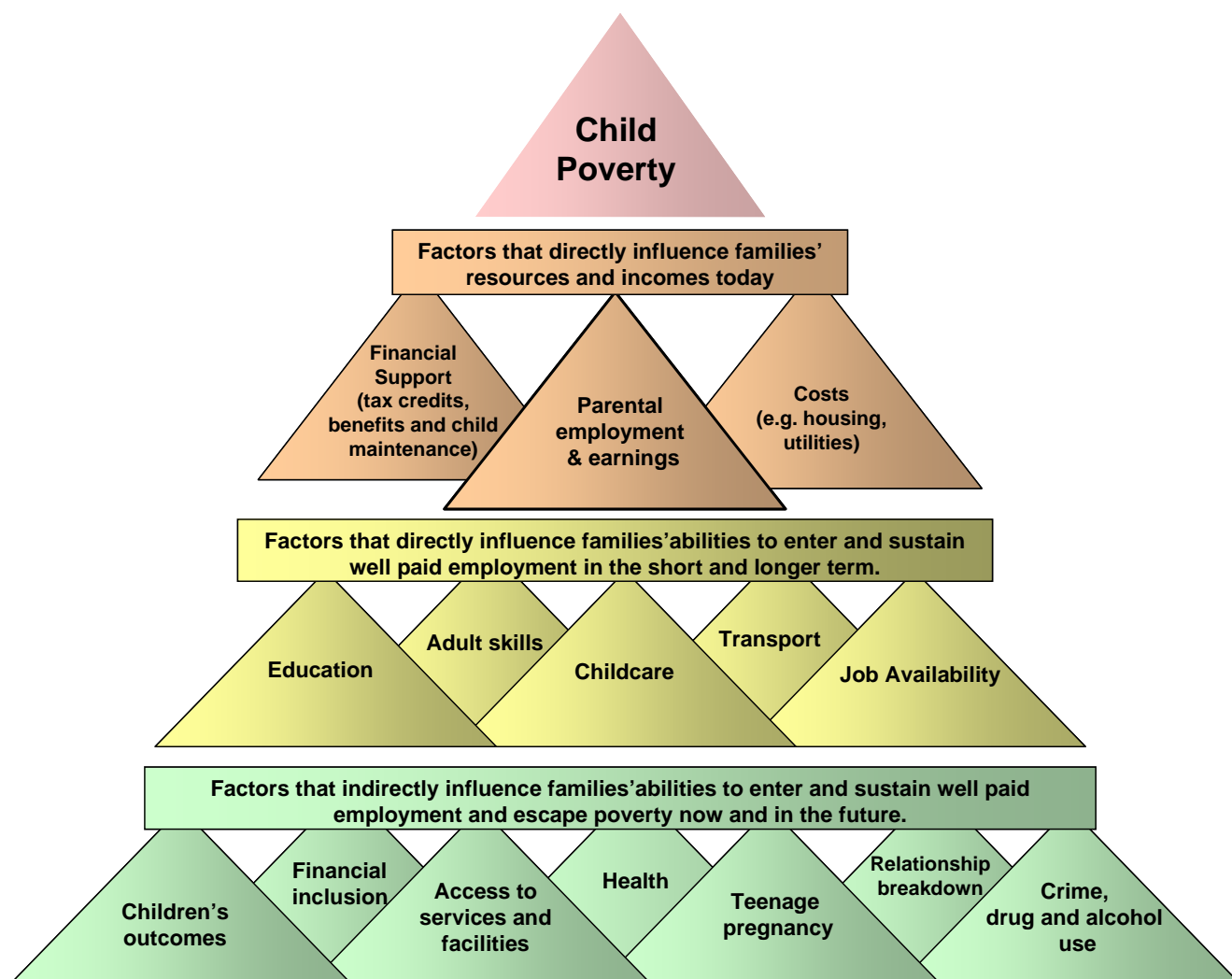
It is easy to forget what poverty looks and feels like for a child when reading bald statistics. Annex 1 sets out some case studies that aim to paint a picture of child poverty in Kent in 2013.

Meeting the challenge

Local government and its partners in Kent have limited influence on much of what determines poverty. Government sets the level of welfare payments, myriad factors affect the jobs market, and the resilience of individual families is also dependent on a host of factors beyond our control.

Nonetheless, there are a range of actions that we can take which will have a positive impact. Taking a holistic approach requires that we explore those factors that:

- ▶ directly influence family income, such as parents' ability to enter the labour market and sustain well paid employment,
- ▶ indirectly influence families' ability to escape poverty now and in the future, and
- ▶ enable families to be resilient to the potentially negative long-term effects of poverty, coping with periods of low income without permanent damage to health and future prospects



Source: Adapted from Child Poverty Unit, DoE

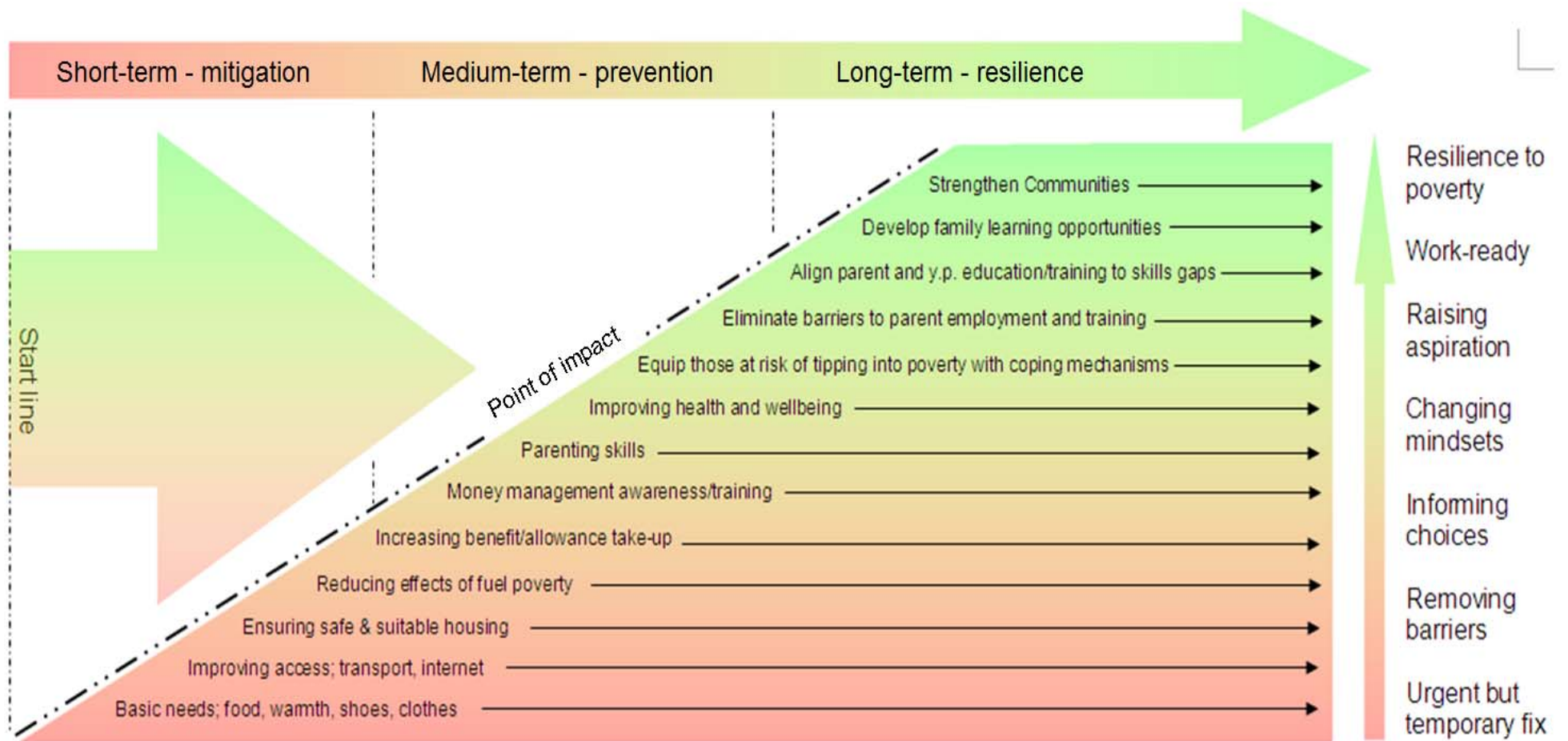
The diagram on page 12⁸ seeks to illustrate the range of factors affecting children and their families, most of which KCC can and does take action to influence. The diagram overleaf illustrates the range of issues and activities that this Strategy encompasses, emphasising that whilst some of the action needed will have immediate impact, we must also take action that will reap benefits in years to come. There is a clear rationale for preventing today's poor children from becoming tomorrow's poor adults, even though the financial savings to the public sector will take some years to feed through. Some of the most difficult and intangible work around this involves changing attitudes and behaviours in order to raise aspirations and provide a family and community environment in which children and young people can thrive, learn and reach their full potential.

There are some sets of circumstances that can increase the likelihood of a child living in poverty. If a parent has a disability or mental health problem, that can reduce their ability to work. Similarly, if a disabled child has significant care needs, that can impact on the parents' capacity for paid employment. Certain groups of young people are more likely to become poor adults, such as Children in Care and gypsies and travellers. It is vital that KCC services are responsive to the particular needs of vulnerable groups such as these.

Much activity is already underway in Kent which will impact on child poverty now and in the future. We already have robust strategies in place to deliver economic growth, reduce fuel poverty, reduce health inequalities and cut the educational achievement gap between children from low income families and the average. Programmes such as the Troubled Families programme, our work to expand availability of apprenticeships opportunities, and the establishment of the Kent Integrated Adolescent Support Service all contribute to preventing and mitigating child poverty. Services which are provided from Children's Centres are important in supporting families with young children, and provide a universal offer and targeted support to families who are vulnerable, whether because of low income, disability, or health issues.

Libraries and Gateways also provide a wealth of community activity and opportunities. Kent has the biggest library volunteering programme in the country, and many of those volunteers work with families in poverty. We have activity aimed at keeping children safe on the roads and pavements, particularly targeted in areas of deprivation, and transport initiatives to help low income families access work, school and leisure activities, including the [Freedom Pass](#).





A family's values and choices are affected by their experiences, history, and the values around them. Messages that KCC and its partners try to deliver (eg around financial planning and management, priorities for spending money, healthy diet, exercise, importance of employment, education and training) will be in competition with messages from the wider media, peer pressure and the community around them. Understanding where individual families come from is crucial in supporting them to help themselves, and we are increasingly improving staff's ability to work with families to change behaviour (such as using motivational interviewing techniques and other tools).

The Joint Kent Chief Executives have set up a cross-agency Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group to raise awareness of the implications of the reforms, help people understand the extent to which they personally could be affected, and support people in preparing for and adapting to the changes. KCC is fully engaged with that group, which provides a vehicle for driving forward some of the actions that require multi-agency working, and is connected to the work of professional groups such as the Revenue & Benefits Managers, the Kent Housing Group and the Kent Customer Service Group. The [Kent Support and Advisory Service](#), which has been established following the localisation of the Social Fund, is working across Kent with front-line services (particularly Children's Centres, Libraries and Gateways), other public services and the voluntary sector to ensure a more co-ordinated response to people facing financial crisis.

Priorities for Action

A high level action plan is attached at Annex 2. This brings together those areas of KCC activity that will significantly impact on preventing or reducing child poverty or on mitigating its effects. The action plan has been drawn up against the key aims set out at the beginning of this document, which can be explained and expanded as follows:

Our top priority is the immediate alleviation of extreme poverty.

We believe that it is unacceptable in 2013 for some children to be regularly hungry, or in such poor accommodation that it affects their health and their safety, or unable to go to school because of a lack of shoes or suitable clothing. Where families are facing this level of poverty, they should be supported to ensure the basic needs of their children are being met. Children cannot thrive and learn if they are cold and hungry. We have anecdotal evidence⁹ that such poverty is currently increasing as a result of the economic climate. Whilst authorities do intervene when they encounter extreme poverty, there are families on the edge who can be tipped over by a set of unlucky circumstances [see case studies in Annex 1]. With the further welfare reform changes being implemented there will be further volatility during the transition to Universal Credit. It is therefore possible that the number of families facing periods of extreme poverty will increase over the next year or two.

There are a range of actions that KCC and its partners can take to improve the co-ordination of support to families in severe poverty (as those are the families most vulnerable to episodes of extreme poverty) including making better use of existing resources to target those families most in need, raising awareness amongst those front-line staff dealing directly with families of the different sources of available support, and ensuring public services don't inadvertently contribute to the costs borne by families through poor customer care.

Monitoring the effectiveness of such actions will not be straightforward as we will be largely reliant on proxy indicators and output measures. As part of KCC's response to the Welfare Reforms, a methodology to monitor and track the impact of the reforms is being developed. An aspect of that will seek to monitor "extreme poverty", although it should be recognised that this will be through triangulated evidence, including feedback from staff, as there is no robust income data available to us in Kent. It is interesting to note that only 12 out of 14,304 child in need referrals in 2012/13 cited low income as the main reason for the referral.

Increasing family disposable income

Employment is the most important source of income for families, so getting workless parents into work, or increasing hours, or increasing pay are key ways to raise income. Short-term impact can also be achieved by promoting greater take-up of benefit entitlement and other available support, and by providing financial and debt management advice and access to low-cost finance.

More medium-term impact is delivered by increasing workless parents' skills and experiences to make them "work ready", and **upskilling parents on low incomes to enable them to take up higher paid employment**. Access to training and development is thus a key plank of this strategy, along with aiming to increase the availability of good quality jobs.

Advice on managing household finances (particularly once single monthly payments, including rent, paid to one householder come into effect) will be needed by some families, along with access to cheap finance and encouragement to save. **Kent Savers** and other credit unions have a key role to play here.

KCC and its partners can and do also undertake lobbying and advocacy and seek to influence work on, for example, the evolution of welfare reform and its relationship with economic development and regeneration.

Reducing family costs

Ways in which costs for low income families can be reduced include:

- ▶ *Reducing fuel poverty through the cross-Kent Retrofit Programme*
- ▶ *Stimulating more community transport schemes, and finding other ways to reduce transport costs and enable families to access work, childcare, school and community activities*
- ▶ *Increasing take-up of the free or subsidised childcare already provided, and seeking to promote more affordable childcare – this is particularly important for lone parents*
- ▶ *Provision of free internet access*
- ▶ *Expansion of rural broadband*
- ▶ *Promotion and development of community schemes that reduce cost of food, such as bulk buying, "grow your own", or classes on preparing and cooking nutritious and cheap meals.*
- ▶ *Sensitive and responsive customer care (by KCC and partners).*

Reducing health inequalities and the educational achievement gap

There is a strong correlation between low income, poor educational achievement, and poor health outcomes. There is also clear evidence that intervention in the early years is needed in order to prevent poor children from becoming poor adults¹⁰. We



must focus on low income families with very young children to support those parents to ensure that their children are getting all that they need to become happy, healthy and successful adults, able to support and nurture their own children.

This is not just about meeting basic needs of food, shelter and clothing, but ensuring children are getting the stimulation and experiences they need to thrive. Having parents or carers with good parenting skills and a good home learning environment is key to children's future success¹¹.

Reducing health and educational inequalities are critical to reducing poverty in the longer term.

We are progressing a number of actions that show the steps we are taking now which is helping to address these twin challenges. In brief, from the Mind the Gap Health Inequalities Action Plan they include:

- ▶ 'Targeted intervention through family nurse partnerships and commissioned support around High Need Families;
- ▶ Identify and improve access to services for substance misusing parents;
- ▶ Provide clear and quick access through a redesign of child and mental health services (CAMHS);
- ▶ Strengthen midwifery and stop smoking resources to reduce smoking in pregnancy'
- ▶ Support infant feeding by achieving UNICEF's Baby Friendly accreditation and putting the infant feeding action plan in place;
- ▶ Develop a needs assessment for breastfeeding to support targeted and commissioning of services'.

We are responding through the Education Learning and Skills Vision with a range of actions which will assist in making improvement to the educational achievement gap. Specifically, these include:

- ▶ Children's Centres working closely with early years settings and their local Primary Schools for disadvantaged children and their families to receive targeted early support.
- ▶ Deliver a good 14-16 vocational programme, and the work of schools, colleges and the Vocational Skills Centres to undertake vocational courses, helping many young people to move into an apprenticeship.
- ▶ Re-design vocational qualifications, so that young people continue to have an improving vocational offer with good pathways to meaningful learning and qualifications post 16;
- ▶ Build improvement and increase capacity in the Kent education system by ensuring the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are strengths and perform above average, with year on year reductions in achievement gaps
- ▶ Support all schools to achieve well in the basics of literacy and mathematics, especially in reading and writing by age 6
- ▶ Focus on improvement and innovation in teaching and learning so that satisfactory teaching improves to good very quickly
- ▶ Promote peer based learning and school to school collaboration which is designed to bring about rapid learning, professional development and improvement
- ▶ Support system wide innovation and experimentation, especially in the design of the curriculum, the development of new provision and better models of support for vulnerable learners
- ▶ Develop and support system leaders to lead and support change beyond their own schools including the development of the Teaching School model, the school partnership model, the federation model and the multi-academy trust model.

Increasing family and community resilience

Earlier sections of this report have outlined the very significant negative impact that child poverty can have on the rest of the child's life. But some children who live in poverty do well. There are protective factors (such as strong social networks and support from the local community, school or extended family; and a set of values that accords high priority to education, learning and skills) that enable some families to avoid the long-term and pernicious effects of poverty for their children, and we must seek to support low income parents in nurturing their children's wellbeing. Universal KCC services are really important for providing free or cheap activities that can enrich family life, such as country parks, libraries, and the youth service.

A series of actions are being pursued which **strengthen family resilience** through these times of austerity, preventing the children in such families from remaining in poverty when they reach adulthood.

Examples of activities that have direct impact on increasing family and community resilience include:

- ▶ The Troubled Families Programme
- ▶ Family Intervention Projects (FIP), which provide more intensive support for a family. A designated FIP worker engages with the family at a critical period of early intervention before the family's needs become more complex, preventing escalation of need;
- ▶ Using a Team Around the Family to put together an effective Family Action Plan which blends both support and intervention approaches that ultimately move the family towards independence and sustainability.
- ▶ Increasing participation in education and reduced involvement in both anti social and offending behaviour by young people within the targeted families
- ▶ Commissioning a wide range of early intervention services -intensive family support workers;, Family advice workers, emotional health and wellbeing services (part of the Community Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service jointly commissioned with NHS Kent & Medway), family mediation service; services to build protective factors with young people who have witnessed domestic abuse
- ▶ Advice about employment options, using the expertise of Jobcentre plus and agencies working with families where worklessness is a major issue;
- ▶ Establishing the Kent Integrated Adolescent Support Service in some districts and will be extended to all each districts in Kent;
- ▶ Establishing a rapid response service for adolescents and their families who are in crisis situations (commissioned during the summer of 2012);
- ▶ Working with housing partners to develop a housing and accommodation strategy that ensures suitable provision is available to meet the needs of vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds (including those who are homeless and care leavers).

Low income families can be vulnerable to being drawn into criminality as a solution to their financial problems. Whilst domestic violence occurs across all socio-economic groups, the pressure of poverty can exacerbate family tensions. Also, many ex-offenders will be in poverty when they leave prison, so we need to work closely with the prison service, probation and police to target vulnerable families with the support they need. The [Kent & Medway Community Safety Framework](#) contains actions to address these issues.

There is enormous diversity between communities within Kent, and different solutions are needed for different localities. But tackling problems on a community basis can be incredibly effective, strengthening social cohesion, developing transferable skills, as well as providing support to individual families.

This theme is difficult to judge and monitor. How do we know whether people are "coping" better with squeezed income or are better able to deal with their

circumstances? How do we judge whether a community has become more resilient? The action plan contains some activity which could contribute, but in practice this will need to be monitored in terms of outputs, and qualitative indicators.

Underpinning themes within the action plan

Better use of existing resources

It is striking how many different initiatives are currently underway aimed at tackling poverty in the broadest sense, including supporting vulnerable families and supporting young people into employment. Over time, those wards in Kent that have the highest levels of deprivation have had considerable investment of resources and some of those communities are experiencing “initiative fatigue”. This is not to say that less money should be spent in those communities, but that there should be more joining-up of initiatives to increase effectiveness.

Building Intelligence

Whilst this Strategy has been informed by considerable data, national and local, the picture is one of rapid change, particularly given the implementation of the welfare reform changes. National reports on child poverty or welfare reform seem to appear on a weekly basis. Good intelligence is required to enable services to work together seamlessly to support those most in need. Clarity and agreement on the key measures of poverty is also essential to monitor the impact of this strategy. Generating that baseline information, and researching and monitoring changes in patterns of poverty, is therefore a key action.

Way Forward

Child poverty is such an all-encompassing theme that there is a danger of trying to cover too much ground, and losing focus as a result.

For this reason, the action plan concentrates on those actions which the county council needs to take in order to:

- ▶ respond to the welfare reform agenda,
- ▶ address the top priority of alleviating extreme poverty, and
- ▶ utilise its resources most effectively in delivering its statutory responsibilities relating to children's wellbeing

An annual monitoring report will be prepared for KCC's Statutory Lead Member on Children's Services and Director of Children's Services, informing them of progress against the priorities set out in this document. The key indicators will be the national Child Poverty targets, including whatever the Government decides to measure following its recent consultation on measuring child poverty. But we will also seek evidence, qualitative and quantitative, of the impact of KCC's services on the outcomes for children from low income households. The methodology being developed to track the impact of the welfare reforms will be useful in this regard. The table overleaf sets out examples of the evidence that will be sought to track improvement. This will be further sharpened and refined for monitoring purposes.

The Strategy should be reviewed and revised in 2016.

These are challenging times in which to aim to reduce child poverty, as funding for public services is reduced, there are not yet firm signs of economic growth in the county, and the welfare reform system is in transition. But by focussing on the priorities set out within this strategy, KCC and its partners can help people to have access to the right resources in the right way at the right time in order to manage their lives and give their children the opportunity to achieve their full potential. In the long-term, the success of this strategy will be measured by improvements in outcomes for children.

**Alleviation of extreme poverty/
increase income/ reduce costs**

- Evidence of reduced costs for the poorest families (fuel, food, transport, childcare)
- Evidence of support for families in crisis which gets them back on track
- The poorest children have reduced school absence
- Improved housing conditions in the private rented sector
- Evidence of support to improve the quality of family life (eg money management, healthy meals, engagement with community projects).

Narrower health and achievement gaps

- The qualifications gap between children on free school meals and the general child population decreases
- Life expectancy rates increase faster for the 20% most disadvantaged in the population
- Child health indicators improve faster for families in poverty.
- Children on free school meals access out of school clubs and activities
- Reduce birth rates to teenage parents.

**FEWER FAMILIES
IN POVERTY**

(whatever national targets are agreed)

Greater Family and Community Resilience

- Evidence that early intervention and prevention services are increasing the resilience of the families they support (e.g. improved parenting skills).
- Evidence that community projects are reaching more of those people who most need them.
- Less domestic abuse and involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.

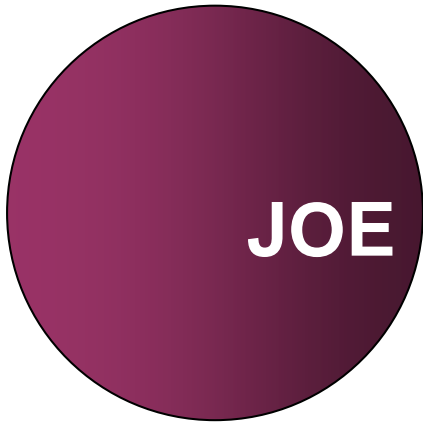
Better Use of Resources

- Evidence of improved joint working to provide seamless services (effective use of data and information; more joint assessments; reduced repeat assessments; appropriate signposting)
- Staff understand the causes and effects of poverty and have access to information that enables them to signpost effectively.

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8. Department of Education - Child Poverty Unit
9. Child Poverty Workshop 30 Jan 2013 identified increases in: requests to front-line staff for help with basic needs; underweight children; food banks; homelessness; pound stores and pay day loan companies.
10. Frank Field's report of the Independent Review of Poverty and Life Chances, Dec 2010
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Annex 1: Child Poverty in Kent Case Studies



Joe is twelve. He lives with his Mum, Step-Dad and two brothers in rented accommodation. His Mum has recently lost her job and his step-dad has been unemployed for many years. His natural father lives in another town, is disabled and suffers from chronic long term health problems. He rarely sees Joe and his brothers as he does not have access to a car and cannot afford public transport. Joe's Nan (maternal grandmother) lives close by. She is a pensioner who has a part-time job and provides the family with practical, emotional and financial support.

The family subsist on a very low income. It is hard to buy food and heat the family home in winter. The landlord is making improvements to the family home by adding double glazing and central heating, which will make the house warmer in the longer term. But the improvements are taking a long time to complete and currently the family is using temporary heaters that are very expensive to run and are only used for limited periods in the evening. There is no heat in the house during the day and the family wear coats whilst indoors during the winter months.

Hot water is heated by an emersion heater. This is very costly. The family do not have a shower, only a bath. As it is too expensive to heat enough water for a bath every day the children bath, on average, every third day. On a none-bath day the children wash in water boiled in a kettle. The bathroom is very cold so this is an uncomfortable and very quick wash. The family have a washing machine and clothes are laundered regularly but drying is problematic in the winter months. Clothes smell musty.

The family are looking forward to the completion of the improvements to their house but are concerned that even when the heating is installed it will be too expensive to use.

Joe has problems at school. He is often in trouble about his uniform as he doesn't always have the correct clothes or PE kit. This is mainly because it is hard to dry clothes for the next day if things get dirty and when his shoes need replacing his mother cannot afford both trainers and schools shoes so he is often missing the correct footwear. Jo gets angry about the school complaining about this as he sees it as a criticism of his Mum. He gets teased because his clothes smell and sometimes he goes to school without a bath or hair wash. He gets angry about this too.

Joe's Mum shops at the local shops. The supermarket is a bus ride away. There is a market in the next town which she likes to visit to buy food but it difficult to get to and she can only afford the bus fare on occasions.

It is Joe's birthday soon and he is very excited. He wants a new pair of trainers for PE and to go to McDonalds with his "whole family" for tea. Joe's Mum is very worried about this as she can not afford both the trainers and the family tea. She thinks she will get the trainers and Joe can go to McDonalds with his Nan for tea but she knows Joe will be very upset about this.

Tia is 10 and she lives with her Mum Kelly. Tia's Mum and Dad split up two years ago and her Dad moved away. Tia talks to her Dad a lot on the phone but she doesn't see him very often. This makes Tia sad.

When her Mum and Dad were together they lived in a house with a garden but when they split up she moved to into a flat with her Mum. Tia misses the garden; she used to have a swing. Now she lives in the flat she doesn't go out to play much. There is a playground but there are a lot of teenagers who use it and Kelly doesn't like her going there on her own.



Kelly isn't working and she and Tia live on benefits. The GP is treating Kelly for depression. The flat is warm but money for food is sparse. Kelly shops at the local store as she doesn't have the money for the bus into town. The shop doesn't have much selection and it doesn't regularly stock fresh fruit and vegetables. Sometimes Tia does the shopping; she likes this as she gets to choose what she wants to eat.

Tia has put on a lot of weight in the last couple of years and is bullied at school and by the local children about her weight. She has recently seen the Dentist who removed five of her first teeth because they were decayed. Her Mum worries about Tia's weight and her teeth but doesn't know what to do about it.

Tia doesn't like going to school or out to play because of the other girls making fun of her. She likes staying in with her Mum.



Fire crews attended a small house fire that had been caused by a tea light being placed on a sofa. When they entered the property, the crews found that there were six people living in a two bed property including a two year old and a new born baby . The property was of poor standard including dangerous wiring, poorly equipped kitchen and little furniture. The crews referred the family to Kent Fire & Rescue Services' vulnerable persons team for a visit the following day. During the visit the officer discovered that the household comprised two families who, due to a

relationship breakdown, had moved in together. They were using candles as the electric lights in the property kept fading on and off and when they plugged anything into the sockets they "sparked". The property was rented from a private landlord. The officer asked if they had complained about the condition of the flat but was told they hadn't because they were given a cheap rental deal and didn't want to upset the landlord and get evicted because they couldn't afford better quality housing . We had no choice but to refer the case to the private rental officers of the district council because the fire risk was so great.

Annex 2: Kent Child Poverty Action Plan

Priority/Aim 1: Immediate Alleviation of Extreme Poverty		
Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
Information and advice on managing money, benefit entitlement and support is easily available to families	It is easier for families in deep poverty to access information about available support and advice, maximising gross disposable household income and minimising outgoings.	Welfare Reform Task & Finish Group
Support the Voluntary & Community Sector, and in particular the Citizen's Advice Bureaux, to deliver better co-ordination and targeting of (a) hardship funds and (b) access to cheap finance.	A more coherent and targeted use of hardship funds in Kent. Families with children in deep poverty, or who are facing a financial crisis, are able to access one-off grants for e.g. purchase of school shoes or uniform.	Voluntary and Community Sector Review Programme Board Voluntary & Community Sector Engagement Forum
Staff training programme designed and implemented, covering the causes and effects of poverty, and the implications of legislative reforms. Taking account of the drive to integrate service delivery this programme is embedded in the Workforce Development Priorities of the County Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All front-line staff have, and are able to use, a multi-agency training and information resource. Staff know what they should do when they encounter families or children in extreme poverty Families in poverty feel able to discuss issues with staff and receive consistent accurate information. 	Workforce Development Strategy
Information on the myriad of multi-agency projects and services dealing with poverty is consolidated in one place, so that staff can signpost knowledgeably and effectively.	A compendium of projects, products and services is assembled and available in all public-facing service points as well as remotely. Contact Centre Customer service teams & front line reception staff will be briefed	Welfare Reform Task & Finish Group Customer Services Board
Parents are supported to provide better family care through social care interventions, or appropriate referrals into Tier 1 or 2 service provision	Children and young people receive the correct levels of support to reduce the impact of neglect, and to grow up in a safe environment.	Kent Safeguarding and Children In Care Improvement Plan

Priority/Aim 2: Increasing Family Income

Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
<p>Promote regeneration in Kent, to provide employment opportunities for workless parents, and continue to require contractors to employ local people where possible.</p>	<p>Economic development activity continued that promotes growth in Kent and creates good quality jobs for local people, delivered via Continuing to Unlock Kent's Potential.</p>	<p>Continuing to Unlock Kent's Potential</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The array of existing courses and qualifications available to enable parents to find or improve their job prospects are publicised • Local training and employment forums include basic literacy and numeracy skills and advice on setting up a business/ working for yourself • Family Learning programmes are targeted on primary schools in deprived areas • 'Response' provision in Kent's poorest communities, addressing families via infrastructure agencies including Children's Centres, schools, health centres, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations. • Focussing on Bold Steps for Education: Shape education and skills around the needs of the Kent Economy by 2015 • Documented learning from programmes that create employment opportunities for 18-24 year olds who are currently in receipt of Job Seeker Allowance is shared and developed in line with the 14 – 24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy Objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents (and especially single parents) are equipped with tangible experience and confidence to help improve chances of employment • Existing resources to improve employment outcomes, confidence and aspiration are used to best effect • There will be full participation in education and work based training for all 16-18 year olds following year on year reductions in the NEET Figures • The employability skills of 19 year olds in the County will have improved, especially in English and Maths. • The outcomes for 19 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds will be above the national average and the achievement gap between this group and other students will have reduced by 10% • There will be a significant impact on unemployment among 18-24 year olds so that current levels reduce by 4000 to below 2008 levels. • Development of Youth Employment and Learning Zones in hotspots where youth unemployment among 18-24 year olds exceeds 20% 	<p>Community Learning and Skills (working with Job Centre Plus)</p> <p>Libraries Business Plan</p> <p>14 -24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy</p>

Adopted parents are made aware of their entitlements, as stipulated in the new Adoption Passports	Increased knowledge about entitlements, such as priority access to council housing, improves family situations and encourages people to consider becoming adoptive parents	Kent Safeguarding and Children in Care Improvement Plan
A Task and Finish Group is established to explore how KCC and partners could better enable parents of younger children to access learning.	Local activity and projects are put in place around the county to address barriers to learning such as childcare and transport.	Policy & Strategic Relationships
Ensure universal services such as Nurseries, Schools and Children's Centres provide better support for disabled children.	Parents of disabled children have access to child care and other support needed to enable them to take paid employment, should they wish.	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy

Priority/Aim 3: Reducing Family Costs and Increasing Access

Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
Revised Children's Centre Service Offer is integrated with other aspects of Children's Services Delivery, and local staff work well with GP Surgeries and integrate their approach to supporting families with Health and Social Care	Services are targeted at the most vulnerable children and parents, and the Universal Offer supports Children and their siblings up to the age of 11 with key transition points and school readiness	Kent Children's Centres Strategic Plan 2014-2016
The availability of free and affordable childcare, particularly in areas of deprivation, is promoted (target actions taken from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report)	Parents and carers can access the right information to make appropriate childcare choices	Childcare Sufficiency Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information, advice and guidance on fuel poverty, including Green Deal, is made available Funding available through the Green Deal is used to improve energy inefficient housing in areas of deprivation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service users and providers are aware of the implications of fuel poverty, and ways to combat it. Targeted neighbourhoods/homes have reduced energy bills and improved living conditions. 	Kent Environment Strategy
Innovative solutions developed to the problem of transport (to work, school, and other activities) developed.	Transportation problems addressed	Growth without Gridlock

<p>Promotion and development of community schemes that promote the availability of healthy and affordable food. Explore whether fruit and vegetable suppliers could make available surplus and outshaped products to families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families have the opportunity to provide their families with a more balanced diet, and cheaper food bills Suppliers could benefit from reduced disposal costs 	<p>Kent Support and Advice Service Policy & Strategic Relationships Health Inequalities Action Plan 'Mind the Gap' District Level Action Plans</p>
<p>Comprehensive training on ways to save money and mitigate poverty (delivered via free sessions run at adult education centres, schools, Children's Centres, libraries and Gateways) is available to families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are better informed about financial planning and debt advice. Families in debt receive appropriate impartial advice and guidance to minimise their difficulties. 	<p>Welfare Reform Task & Finish Group</p>
<p>Work with Broadband Delivery UK to upgrade Kent's broadband infrastructure to enhance access to better broadband services and eradicate 'not spots' (i.e. areas with no broadband coverage) across the County.</p>	<p>Improved access to broadband/online services across the County</p>	<p>Digitising Kent Action Plan</p>
<p>Develop a digital action plan to maximise take up of new services and foster greater digital literacy</p>	<p>Greater uptake and utilisation of online services</p>	<p>Digitising Kent Action Plan Libraries Business Plan</p>
<p>As part of the ongoing implementation of the Customer Services Strategy, KCC services are assessed to ensure they are flexible, responsive and designed around the needs of families in poverty</p>	<p>Unnecessary costs are not unwittingly imposed on families through poor customer service.</p>	<p>Customer Services Strategy</p>
<p>KCC works with partner agencies and developers to: (a) help ensure new affordable housing is provided in Kent at a time when grant funding to the Homes & Communities Agency and resources for other housing providers are falling in real terms. (b) ensure vulnerable young people have accommodation and housing-related support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved availability of affordable housing to meet the needs of Kent's population Housing that supports strong communications, a good quality of life and reduces household costs (including tackling fuel poverty) 	<p>Kent & Medway Housing Strategy</p>

Priority/Aim 4: Reducing Health Inequalities and the Educational Achievement Gap

Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
To ensure all pupils meet their full potential by 2015	<p>Foundation stage outcomes for 5 year olds will continue to improve so that the percentage of children achieving the expected level 6+ in all aspects of learning will improve by 5%.</p> <p>The achievement gaps at key stages 2 & 4 will be less than the national gap figures and pupils from low incomes backgrounds (and other vulnerable groups) will be achieving better progress and outcomes than similar groups nationally.</p> <p>Following a review programme for PRU's and the further development of alternative provision for pupils aged 14 and above there will be fewer than 50 pupils permanently excluded from school.</p>	Bold Steps for Education
Reduce health inequalities in Kent.	The health status of the poorest families and communities in Kent is improved, bringing it closer to the health status of the average resident.	Mind the Gap: Kent's Health Inequalities Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attendance and educational attainment of Children in Care is improved. • The percentage of Children in Care having regular health care assessments and dental checks is improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No children who are looked after will be excluded from school, fewer than 10% will be persistently absent and their attainment will be in line with the targets in the Kent Pledge for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. • Health inequalities between Children in Care and the general population are reduced. 	Kent Safeguarding and Children in Care Improvement Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kent Apprenticeship Programme effectively supports employers to recruit 350 apprentices over the next four years • Children in Care given opportunities for participation in employment through the participation worker scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who might otherwise drop out of education, employment and training are provided with opportunities to enter the workplace 	14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy

Priority/Aim 5: Increasing Family and Community Resilience		
Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
Future options proposals for Children's Centres position their services at the heart of KCC's response to child poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service provision alleviates poverty for families in crisis. Factors which prevent poverty from having long-term negative implications for children are developed and encouraged. 	Kent Children's Centres Strategic Plan 2014-16
Implement the Kent Community Safety Framework, which seeks to reduce domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, road traffic accidents and youth offending amongst Kent communities as part of its overall aim to reduce crime and disorder and the impact of crime and disorder on people's lives.	Crime and disorder is reduced, particularly in the more deprived Kent communities, both through preventative activity and responsive activity.	Kent Community Safety Partnership
KCC works through the voluntary sector and partner agencies to promote the foundation of community crèches, community shops, community cafés and food banks through resources in kind, use of assets and publicly-owned buildings, sharing lessons learned about good practice, and working with local media to publicise good news community stories.	<p>Communities are provided with the right infrastructure to become stronger, more resilient and empowered to play a full part in community life.</p> <p>Media stories encourage aspiration and promote successful community initiatives in which people can participate.</p>	<p>KSAS linking with Children's Centres to provide food, clothes and fuel.</p> <p>Development of signposting website and online resource</p> <p>Gateways developing Volunteering Pathway to Work</p>
Services with a physical community presence such as libraries, Gateways and Children's Centres should continue to find ways of ensuring that the most vulnerable families engage in social and community activities.	Expansion and roll out of outreach work schemes and pilot projects that increase vulnerable families' participation in social and community activities. (E.g. volunteers bringing parents with young children to Children's Centres/Library/Gateway activities.)	Libraries Business Plan
Implement "Involving the whole community: The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading". Good literacy underpins poverty prevention as it is becoming almost impossible to secure good employment without functional literacy, and it is harder for parents with poor literacy skills to support their children's learning.	By 2021 there will be 100% literacy in Kent. To achieve this, there will be a particular focus on Children in Care, NEETs, and children and young people excluded from school. Free adult literacy classes are available to support parents who cannot read.	<p>The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading</p> <p>Libraries Business Plan</p>

Priority/Aim 6: Better Use of Resources (underpinning theme)		
Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
Families in deep poverty are supported wherever they first present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC's integrated offer by Children & Families provides "No Wrong Door" 	All front-facing KCC and jointly delivered services.
Implementation of the KCC Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing consistent and targeted early help and intervention that appropriately meets the needs of children, young people and their families Access to Early help supports vulnerable families across Kent, enabling parents to better access joined up services 	Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board (multi-agency panel)
Commissioning and decommissioning is managed to take account of the cumulative impact in order to avoid duplication, whether that is geographically or client based.	Joint Commissioning Plans are agreed with the Children & Young People's Joint Commissioning Board and shared with key stakeholder groups both Locally and County Wide.	Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board (multi-agency panel)

Priority/Aim 7: Building Intelligence (underpinning theme)		
Objective	Outcome	Delivered through
Ensuring that a robust evidence and intelligence base is built and maintained in real-time, integrated with existing performance and data mechanisms.	All agencies in Kent are fully briefed on the evolving picture of poverty in Kent	Welfare Reform Task & Finish Group
Research mapping of children in poverty is plotted against housing type and tenure	A shared understanding of the drivers of child poverty and where and how best to target interventions to assist those households is obtained	Welfare Reform Task & Finish Group
Staff work alongside families and communities to better understand how we can target resources and co-design services to promote resilience. Also ensure service user feedback (including the child's voice) is collated and recorded in casework and used to inform the development of strategies and services which provide services to the most vulnerable families	Service provision is informed by, and more responsive to, service user need, leading to more resilient families.	Customer Services Strategy
Families in deep poverty are known to KCC and we are able to understand and support their needs through comprehensive assessment and analysis of how they currently use our services.	Greater understanding of the need levels of children in poverty and clarity regarding how many of the 56,000 children facing poverty are known to KCC and its partners.	Longitudinal research to be commissioned.



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