

Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

Child Poverty Strategy – A Call for Action





Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1 - National Picture, Child Poverty Act

Chapter 2 – Underpinning approach and first steps of this Strategy

Chapter 3 - Gaps in local action - How we address the Drivers and Outcomes of Child Poverty.

Parental Employment and Adult Skills

Financial Support

Housing and Neighbourhoods

Early Years & Education, Health and Family Support

Page 2 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

Introduction

The story begins

Torbay requires a Child Poverty Strategy and action plan to ensure that council services, communities and local partners take responsibility and contribute to eradicating child poverty in the Bay and specifically tackle the hot spots identified in the needs assessment to ensure that we break the cycle and today's children do not become the parents of poor children tomorrow. Children born into poverty are more likely to die in the first year of life and will have a substantially shorter life span than other children. We need to create the opportunities, make the connections, and change the thinking and behaviour **Now** to change for the better the future aspirations of our families by 2020.

Currently the 2009 figures show that just under one quarter (24.3%) of children under the age of 16 live in poverty across Torbay, this is higher than the England average of 22.0%. However, across Torbay's most deprived communities the proportion of children living in poverty is much higher again. The difference in life expectancy is as much as 7 years between our most deprived and most affluent wards.

Hotspots of child poverty, multiple deprivation, high levels of crime and unemployment are well documented locally in Tormohun, Ellacombe, Roundham with Hyde and Watcombe. However, within the wards of Blatchcombe and St Mary's with Summercombe there are pockets of deprivation and high proportions of children living in poverty.

The Child Poverty Strategy will underpin the approach of the Council and its partners in the long term improvement of outcomes for children, young people and families. A pro-active response is already encapsulated within the Children's Plan and the Children's Partnership Improvement Plan and discussions are currently underway to consider the impact of the Local Plan (The Plan for Torbay to 2031) on the needs of children within their communities.

Within Children's Services we are currently working with our partners to develop a new preventative strategy that will both pro-actively improve outcomes by breaking cycles of disadvantage and reduce long term demand on the need for statutory intervention. The focus of the approach will be three fold reflecting traditional transition points.

- A good start 0 5
- A good childhood 5 11
- And good prospects 11+

The breaking of the cycle of poverty will be fundamental to creating positive outcomes and long term will provide a major contribution to the long term regeneration of Torbay.

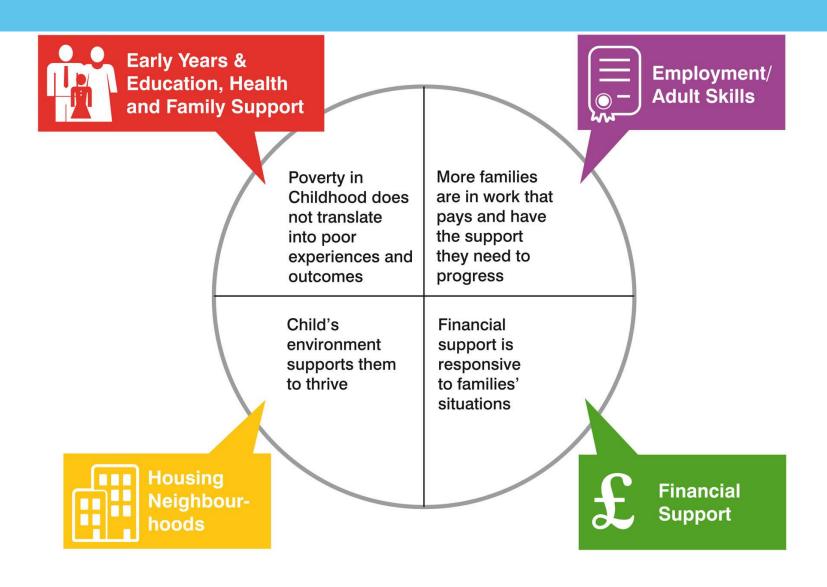
What is Child Poverty

Children are said to be living in relative income poverty if their household's income is less than 60 per cent of the median national income. Generally this is families who are in receipt of out of work benefits or in work tax credits. Essentially, this looks at whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole.

A definition of poverty which recognises its relative impact on our society- in terms of both low household income and the inequalities it creates in everyday life 'individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.'

The drivers and outcomes of poverty are complex, cyclical and self perpetuating. To help us identify further priorities and a delivery action plan, we have used national 'building blocks framework' (see diagram below). This has been developed by the Child Poverty Unit (jointly established by the DfE, DWP and HMRC) to capture the breadth of the agenda.

Page 4 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020



As well as the human cost to child poverty there is also a significant financial cost to the tax payer, estimated to be between £10 and £20 billion a year. As child poverty is increasing, it can be anticipated that these costs too will increase.

Across our most deprived wards there are approximately 8,200 children and young people aged 0 - 19 and 2,700 children in the early years age group of 0 - 4. These children are growing up lacking in many of the basics for their development whose absence is so costly – both to the public purse and to their life chances. That means we need to make a difference for at least 1,400 children every year to have any impact if the numbers remain static, which is not predicted. We need small steps required to make an impact on child poverty as well as big programmes.

Message from Gordon Oliver, Mayor

Child poverty has complex structural and economic foundations, many of which are beyond our control. There is no new funding to support this important work. But we must not be complacent as there is much we can all do to make a difference. The previous action plan focussed mainly on existing activity and did not give sufficient focus to different approaches and how important it is to make even small changes at a local level. There is a real danger of poverty fatigue when faced with wide reaching challenges that have continued for many years. We have tended to respond to the symptoms and not address the root causes, raise aspirations and expectations by listening and supporting our children, families and communities.

The challenge is to make best use of communities sources of support, information and signposting. Through this approach we can turn the negative impact of child poverty into positive action and a contribution to the regeneration of Torbay.

A call for action that 'grasps the nettle' of child poverty will also provide the foundation that improves the 'Child's Journey' and reduces the number of children with additional needs and families facing multiple difficulties in their lives. An action that will in turn add to our regeneration agenda.

Page 6 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

Chapter 1 - National Picture - Child Poverty Act 2010

The Child Poverty Act 2010 received Royal Assent in March 2010 and reflects the new Coalition government's commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

It places a statutory duty on all partners to develop a joint strategy that identifies measures being taken. As part of these arrangements a local needs assessment must be undertaken and published, which identifies local factors which drive and impact on child poverty.

The evolution of the Act was very much grounded in levels of family income, with four indicators established to measure progress against the government's ambitious target to eradicate child poverty by 2020:

- · Relative low income
- · Absolute low income
- · Combined low income and material deprivation
- Persistent poverty.

The coalition government has since reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating child poverty and published its own strategy in April 2011 'A new approach to child poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families Lives'.

The 2011 strategy draws on the recent Field Review on Poverty and Life Chances and the Allen Review on Early Intervention, together with a number of current policy strands, to give a focus on:

- · combating worklessness
- · combating educational failure
- preventing family and relationship breakdown.

It proposes a broader 'life chances' indicator framework which is likely to be used to measure progress.

Reactions by various interest groups have been mixed. On the one hand, there is a general welcoming of the recognition that poverty is about more than household income. On the other, there is concern that income and wealth inequality remains a key issue in our society which should not be ignored.

In May 2011, the government announced proposed amendments to the Child Poverty Act. These mainly affect the relationship between the government and the proposed Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, and the requirements on the government to report annually on its progress in reducing child poverty.

Chapter 2 – Underpinning approach and first steps for this Strategy

(? How will we listen, share ideas, build trust and reach those who want help and those who do not)

Two main sources have informed the content of this strategy, together with a range of discussions with individuals responsible for specific areas. Firstly, the needs assessment we conducted over summer and autumn 2011. Additional Consultation via a Children's Centres and Locality Services Family support Questionnaire was also completed around this time. See Appendix 1

The Strategy needs to both impact on and build on existing strategies, such as the Children and Young People's Plan, the Local Development plan, Community Plan, Children's Partnership Improvement Plan and draws together cross cutting work that is both ongoing or planned with the aim of accelerating the pace at which we can change the lives and lift Torbay's children out of poverty.

It is also important that the approach in this document underpins the Vision "Integrated Service Delivery Model" as part of the Children's Partnership Improvement Plan by Involving the Community and using their knowledge and skills.

The strategy identifies themed priorities (what we need to do) to achieve (have any chance) in a substantial reduction in child/family poverty. These build on latest government guidance and the building blocks (see page 10)

Initial Priority Actions - First Steps

Much of this activity is already happening and recognised within the CPIP Children's Partnership Improvement plan

By developing social capital – "social capital" basically describes the social networks, levels of trust and connections within communities that ultimately help to improve social, physical and economic conditions as well as life chances.

We should look to our communities as a central resource in developing our approach. There is a real desire within Torbay to explore how to develop community building and establish a 'community of learning' with collaborative working at its core. The essence of ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) is that the approach is different to existing ways - very much about getting out to meet people where they are at times that suit them, and linking with community connectors (those people who know someone who knows someone who can!). We need to

Page 8 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

avoid creating another 'structure' with meetings and minutes which would detract from our very important work on the ground, in our neighbourhoods. The key focus is to reach out into our communities and encourage individuals' involvement in a way that works for them

By promoting corporate and partnership responsibilities, raising awareness and keeping child poverty in the spotlight so that potential 'unintended consequences' which might increase child poverty can be avoided wherever possible. By raising aspirations within agencies and families, delivering and receiving services. Monitored by the Health and Well Being Board and by making links with all other boards, in particular the Economic, Employment and Skills board and the newly developed Overview and Scrutiny for Youth Unemployment.

By having a Child Poverty Commission, which will include family and community representation. They will require, Councillors, agencies, officers and partners to be accountable and to demonstrate what difference has been made in tackling child poverty and the impact within communities.

By focussing on identified hot spot areas of need. How by using our needs data and establish how we will identify the most vulnerable families e.g. Low incomes, not claiming school meals, and complex needs.

By providing a community directory - (family information service) Provision of single accessible web-based community information, including information about local and national services and activities groups and support available locally to available to anyone living in Torbay under one web-based directory.

Chapter 3 - Gaps in local action within our priority areas - How we address the Drivers and Outcomes of Child Poverty.

The drivers and outcomes of poverty are complex, cyclical and self perpetuating. To help us identify further priorities and a delivery action plan, we have used the national 'building blocks framework'. This has been developed by the Child Poverty Unit (jointly established by the DfE, DWP and HMRC) to capture the breadth of the agenda.

Parental Employment and Adult Skills

This theme is about ensuring that more families are in work that pays and have the support they need to progress.

Key messages from our needs assessment and National Child Poverty Unit guidance:

Nationally, unemployment has risen to 8% in 2011; compared to 6.5% two years ago (ONS labour market report March 2011). This figure is still rising and not predicted to peak until 2013. The risk of not being in work is higher for young people, those with low skills, from certain minority ethnic groups, and for those living in low employment areas. Barriers to work can also include caring responsibilities and discrimination against people in equalities groups. Torbay has a limited, low wage economy, and reliant on public sector jobs.

Many of our children live in workless families; the proportion of people claiming out of work benefits is higher in our deprived communities. The proportion of our workforce with NVQ level 4 or above is lower than regional and national averages

The family questionnaire tells us that for Learning and Development, training and work - respondents would like more information and or services to be available in the following ways – in order of choice:

1. One to One (face to face) 2. Group Support. 3. Access to Info Website, telephone, literature

Strategic priorities in this area are therefore to:

- Focus efforts to tackle worklessness on reducing the gap between those neighbourhoods with the highest worklessness rates. –
 focus on our hot spots
- Coordinate a Bay wide approach through the Youth Unemployment Scrutiny Board to tackling unemployment among young people
- Ensure that the increasingly targeted offer of careers advice is based on a good knowledge of the local employment market, through Careers South West.
- Identify innovative ways to support parents and particularly lone parents in accessing adult learning so that a larger proportion of training resource can be moved into direct delivery;
- Work with the employers of low-paid employees without level 2 qualifications to develop contributory ways of funding skills
- development for their workforce and thus support progression to better paid/more productive and sustainable work;

Page 10 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

- Identifying the role of the community, and how voluntary work could boost self-esteem and be a route to employment; building confidence, creating opportunities for young people to have work experience.
- Provide Work focused Services in Children's Centres opportunity for Jobcentre Plus to engage and increase take up or their services, gaining new skills, knowledge and customers

Additional Notes for consideration

How do we work with 'NEETs', to promote apprenticeships and to encourage training linked to the job market – including support for existing organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, and other community and voluntary sector groups working in this area. How do we promote local jobs and that local firms, including the council, should commit to taking on local young people. Government's reforms to the benefits system, this will be a significant barrier in boosting parental employment. There is concern that cutbacks could impact on the ability to provide advice and raise awareness of benefits and programmes to support people getting into work. Phow much money is needed in all households in order to cater for families?

Do we have detailed information and an understanding of who is in and out of work to inform our work? In addition, the Council should work with those who have found sustainable employment to share and learn from their experiences. The importance of working with communities and faith groups the quality of private, voluntary and independent sector should be considered.

? What are we doing about young people with physical and learning disabilities and the provision in place to support and prepare them for employment?

Financial Support

This theme is about ensuring that financial support is responsive to families' situations

Key messages from our needs assessment and National Child Poverty Unit guidance:

For many low-income families, responsive financial support can make the difference between being able to manage a family budget and not. Families seeking housing advice linked to rent arrears and loss of tenancy has increased families often depend on benefit related income., and undergo multiple assessments for additional financial support, even within the same organisations, and we should be concerned that some of the most vulnerable families may not be accessing their support entitlement, with strong possibility of increased numbers when changes to benefits and housing legislation come into force. Torbay has a downward trend in the median weekly wage.

Financial inclusion – access to mainstream financial systems and services at affordable cost, is a core part of that support. Without facilities such as a bank account and low-cost credit, low-income families are at high risk of paying the Poverty Premium – the additional costs of borrowing, cashing cheques and of buying goods and services that are estimated to amount to approximately £1,000 per year for an average-size family. In the current climate 'easy' access to high-interest credit thrives, In the DWP-commissioned study of lone parents , 43% of lone parents said they found it difficult to manage financially and 24% said they had trouble with debts nearly all the time; service providers say they are seeing increasing levels of debt for 16-19 year olds.

Strategic priorities in this area are therefore to:

- Maximise access to financial advice and inclusion opportunities, early recognition of the trigger points including relationship breakdown, new tenancies and starting/returning to work;
- Identify and target services for those households/groups most at risk from the introduction of welfare system reforms and universal credit, through the Strategic Welfare group
- Develop a streamlined joined up system for vulnerable families, that improves access to benefits (including housing benefit, free school meals, council tax benefits) so that vulnerable families are only assessed once;
- Ensure that front –line workforce signpost effectively to specialist advice services Ensure that services for families in need of benefits and debt advice (including specialist advice for families with disabled children).
- Improve access to financial management training and support for young people, and families to prevent longer term problems developing.

Additional Notes to consider

How we reach out with advice – a more creative approach to tackling child poverty, particularly given the current financial climate. Utilise alternative venues – for example holding citizens advice sessions in children's centres or other community venues.

The need for more information and advice sessions, How to achieve/ fund in the present climate. Focus should be given to supporting families at an early age and supporting single parent households.

Risk of benefit dependency – developing a culture that is 'not healthy or sustainable'. Could we offer Advice sessions in schools? Need to work closely with communities and utilise existing resources and communication channels Explore links to CAF and benefit take up

Page 12 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

Publishing outcomes so that people can see clearly the benefits of improved take-up.

Housing and Neighbourhoods

This theme is about ensuring that children's environments support them to thrive.

Key messages from our needs assessment and National Child Poverty Unit guidance:

We know that we have a lack of appropriate homes in Torbay that are affordable to rent or buy and suitable for low income families. This limits the family's choice in location, quality and size, and also limits their remaining disposable income. The lack of long term sustainable tenancies can be one of the most destabilising influences in a child's life and that it impacts negatively on their ability to thrive and achieve good outcomes.

Lone parent households with children represent the highest priority group accepted as homeless. Young households may find themselves incurring costs they cannot sustain in the long-run and/or living in areas and in conditions that they would not choose. There is particular concern and research tells us that many of those who are effectively homeless live in concealed households - households who neither own nor rent the property that they are living in. By far the biggest reason for becoming homeless is loss of accommodation provided by relatives or friends (two-fifths of those deemed 'in priority need'), with a further fifth being due to relationship breakdown.

The problem of affordability has resulted in many younger people delaying moving out of the parental home or in some cases sleeping on friends' sofas. We have seen a rise in the numbers of households presenting as homeless due to relationship breakdown and domestic abuse.

It is anticipated that housing and community instability will increase when changes to housing benefits are implemented as families may need to move away from their existing home and school areas to find lower rents. Fuel poverty is also a present risk for many families.

We know that poverty affects and limits the range of experiences which children, young people and their families can access. Children and young people report that their access to a range of activities is limited by cost – both of the activities themselves and of transport to get there.

A combination of worklessness, lone caring responsibilities and lack of access to affordable activities means that families in poverty often find it difficult to engage with their communities.

Strategic priorities in this area are therefore to:

Through both the Housing Strategy and Local Tenancy Strategy, work to ensure a more balanced housing market and a greater range of options so that vulnerable households can remain in their area of choice; but at the same time increase social mobility.

- Work with the most vulnerable groups to achieve the objectives of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy (e.g. targeting advice to the households most affected by housing benefit changes).
- Encourage landlords to improve property conditions for vulnerable tenants (including children and young people under 16); Empty Homes initiative
- Look at how upcoming national programmes designed to alleviate fuel poverty through domestic energy improvement and improving the use of sustainable energy can be targeted towards lower income households;
- Ensure that information and support alongside first tenancies, particularly for young families, is well coordinated and delivered to
- improve their sustainability and avoid long-term housing problems;
- Develop, locally sourced and accessible activities for children and young people and ensure that this is clearly communicated and promoted;
- Develop, through Neighbourhood Partnerships, faith and other community networks, innovative 'low cost/no cost' local
 approaches and solutions to tackling social isolation and barriers to services for vulnerable families. Share and publicise good
 practice and success.

Additional notes for consideration

The level of the private rented sector has increased from 19.5% in 2006 to 22% in 2011.

The private rented sector is disproportionately occupied by those under 25, those on a low income and those with a disability. (Changes to the single room allowance from 25 – 35 will increase those needing to share rooms)

Torbay has higher than average numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation with an estimated 1,450 properties occupied in this way. Not all these are subject to mandatory licensing though, with 79 currently licensed out of an estimated 120 licensable HMOs. These are the larger types of bedsits with some element of sharing.

The least energy efficient properties in Torbay are in the private rented sector. This compounds fuel poverty from those living in those properties. This is where the occupier spends more than 10% of their income on heating and hot water. Approximately 30% of tenants are in fuel poverty as opposed to 11% of owner occupiers.

Torbay has a low level of social housing stock (approximately 8%), this combined with high numbers of households on the housing register waiting list means there are distinct pressures on social housing in the area. At the end of 2010/2011 there were 3996 on the waiting list. The average wait for a 3 bedroom property is between 3-5 years.

We have a shortage of affordable larger 4/5 bed family homes. (The reductions in benefit levels will have the greatest impact on families requiring larger homes))

Ensure that the impact of domestic violence, substance misuse and parental mental health upon children are minimised and understood by professionals and the community'

Page 14 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

Early Years & Education, Health and Family Support

This theme is about ensuring that poverty in childhood does not translate into Poor experiences and outcomes

Key messages from our needs assessment and National Child Poverty Unit guidance:

Education and Early Years

We know that children in poverty can have different experiences both at home and at school, where they may struggle to have the right uniform, access to the internet or private space to do homework. We also know that home circumstances such as poverty, family breakdown, domestic violence and physical or mental illness can make it difficult for parents to give their children the secure, loving relationship they need.

The gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers continues to increase. In 2011 the achievement gap at the end of Key Stage 2 was 26% and at GCSE this was 32.9%.

Low educational attainment is strongly associated with higher rates of teenage pregnancy, even after accounting for deprivation. The signs of disengagement from school are often evident long before a pregnancy occurs. Prevention strategies should put measures in place to identify those young women who are losing interest at school and help them to identify a Key Stage 4 learning package that engages them. Teenage mothers are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30 than mothers giving birth aged 24 or over.

Strategic priorities in this area are therefore to:

- Ensure access to high quality early years education (including early years language acquisition), childcare and family support services to meet needs for children and families as early as possible;
- Maintain the focus on schools in meeting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of children by building positive relationships with them and their families. Support schools in the continued use of THRIVEtm and SEAL when working with children with emotional health and behavioural difficulties.
- Encourage schools to develop their roles within the local community and explore new and innovative ways of improving relationships within that community.
- Maintain the focus in schools on narrowing the attainment gap for children in receipt of free school meals, ensuring that performance is tracked and analysed, and that teaching and learning strategies are in place.

Health and Family support

Children born into poverty are more likely to have a disadvantage from the start by being born small, early or both, be bottle fed or die in the first year of life. They are also five times more likely to die from an accident in childhood and three times more likely to suffer from a mental health problem. When reviewing the lifestyle that they are living in then they are more likely to have parents who smoke and have a poor diet.

We know that children born into poverty are most affected by material deprivation and that the health effects of these inequalities are often passed from generation to generation.

In Torbay's most deprived wards 20% of mothers smoke during their pregnancy, this is significantly higher than in other areas. Smoking in pregnancy can increase the risk of babies being born prematurely, having poor lung functions and smaller organs than those babies born to non-smoking mothers and also increase the risk of a Sudden Infant Death.

Torbay's rate of teenage conceptions is reducing but still higher than the national average – in 2010 Torbay: 46.6 per 1000 under 18 population compared with 35.4 English average. Children of teenage mothers are 63% more likely to be born into poverty compared to babies born to mothers in their twenties (Mayhew E., Bradshaw J., *Mothers, babies and the risks of poverty*, Poverty, No. 121 p13-16).

Emotional well-being in childhood and young adulthood is one of the most important factors in predicting whether an individual will be socially mobile. Experiences in early years in particular have lifelong effects on many outcomes, such as heart disease, obesity, mental health, educational achievement and economic status. This was endorsed in 2010 both in the Marmot review (Fair Society, Healthy Lives, 2010) and the later Field review (The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults).

The Field Review particularly stresses the importance loving, positive parenting and of high quality childcare for children in poorer families to ensure early attachment and enrichment of experience.

We know from the Family Intervention Projects, that outcomes are more likely to be improved when the pressures and needs of families are addressed in a holistic way, rather than families being passed around between agencies and services.

Three year olds in households with an income below £10,000 are 250% more likely to suffer chronic illness than three year olds in households with an income over £52,000.

Strategic priorities in this area are therefore to:

- Including through the Parenting Strategy and Emotional Health and Well-being Strategy, develop available parenting support to
 enable family bonding and attachment and clear boundaries, so that we build the emotional health and resilience of our children
 and young people;
- Support parents and families to give their children the best start in life, reducing infant mortality and low birth weight through early access to antenatal care, reducing maternal smoking and obesity, supporting breastfeeding initiation and continuation and increasing uptake of immunisation;

Page 16 Torbay's Story 2011 - 2020

- implementation of the Healthy Child Programme
- Promote service alignment and family-based approaches to vulnerable children and families to address need as holistically as possible;
- improve the use of all community-based public access points to signpost sources of help;
- Consider health inequalities in policy making relating to children, young people and families, including incorporating health inequalities outcomes in provider contracts.
- To ensure a partnership approach to reducing teenage conceptions in order for young people to look after their sexual health, avoid unwanted pregnancies and delay parenthood until they are in a better position - emotionally, educationally and economically - to face its challenges

Additional Notes to consider

Over the past twenty years the evidence has accumulated showing that the health of adults is influenced significantly by what they experienced during development both in the mother's womb, and in their early years. (FROM WOMB TO TOMB' – the case for investing in interventions to reduce the impact of CHILD POVERTY, CPHIG, November 2011). Fair Society, Healthier Lives (2010) states that 'the lower a person's social position, the worse his or her health'. Action to reduce health inequalities must start before birth and be followed through the life of the child. Only then can the close links between early disadvantage and poor outcomes throughout life be broken (Fair Society, Healthier Lives, 2010). We know that children born into poverty are most affected by material deprivation and that the health effects of these inequalities are often passed from generation to generation.

Due to the long term affects of poverty on health then it is vitally important to prioritise giving children the best start in life. This is one reason why the Coalition Government have committed to increasing health visiting services across England - 'Good, well resourced health visiting services can help ensure that families have a positive start, working in partnership with GPs, maternity and other health services, Sure Start Children's Centres and other early years services' (*Health Visitor Implementation Plan 2011 – 2015, 2011*). In Torbay by 2015 the health visiting capacity will have increased from 21.9WTE to 54.5WTE allowing staff to be proactive in supporting both individuals and the community in tackling toe causes and effects of poverty.

Have we sufficient provision of nursery places, extended child care, health visitors, and prompt referrals, take up of services and access to children's centres. Equal opportunities to access these services, and support for families in poverty who are expecting children? How we stop children being born into poverty. What are we doing about young people's drug and alcohol misuse?

Health and Well Being Plan - healthy living, healthy child programme, maternity services, and family intervention services as well as working with existing community organisations.

Single access point via which families could access a range of services would be useful.

Is there is a strong correlation between deprivation and outpatient attendance and emergency admissions to hospital? Life expectancy at birth varies significantly according to socio-economic status. Professional men can expect to live to 80, whilst men in unskilled manual work on average live to 72.7 years. For women the figures are 85.1 and 78.1 years – a 10% difference.

To be continued in,

Part 2 by talking and sharing to find out what's going on and be able to tell the full story

Part 3 by being able to describe the journey and understand if the right changes are happening



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