**Children and families in poverty**

This section looks at the issues families face when experiencing poverty; including housing, employment, emotional and mental well being, physical health and child development.

Cheshire East is a relatively affluent area and we know that most children and families do not live in poverty. However there are pockets where child poverty and associated deprivation is endemic and intergenerational, in some cases living in rural areas can makes living in poverty worse. This is often because of a lack of access to services, being isolated and a lack of community can compound situations and challenges that can contribute towards poverty.

Whilst we know that there are over 8,000 children living in poverty, we can not estimate how many families live on the edge of poverty. This reinforces the importance of an Early Help offer and targeting resources and activity at children between the ages 0-5 to provide them and their parents support to achieve the best possible foundations to build upon.

We need to reduce the number of children and families living in poverty. This work also needs to concentrate upon families who have lived in poverty for several generations and take a targeted approach to geographical areas where child poverty appears to be endemic.

As we know the manifestations of Child Poverty included, but are not limited to:

- Poor health
- Neglect
- Low educational attainment
- Lack of life skills
- Emotional health and wellbeing problems
- Homelessness
- Childhood spent as a victim of violence and / or abuse
- Involvement with income generation activities at the expense of a child’s well-being and development (legal or illegal)
- Conflict with the law

Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) bring together a wide range of people from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. By working together, the LAPs focus collective effort on what really matters, delivering improved outcomes for local people and places. Their role is to improve services, ensure people influence decision-making and to actively engage and empower communities.

There are 7 LAPs in Cheshire East.
Compared nationally Cheshire East have quite a small number of low income families however there are particular areas where we know there are ‘hot spots’.

**Congleton** - Congleton Local Area Partnership (LAP) has low rates of child poverty, except for parts of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach

**Crewe** - Dense areas of child poverty in Crewe centre and surrounding residential estates. The highest concentration of children living in poverty in the Cheshire East area. This reflects the overall deprivation of this area

**Knutsford** - The town centre has several LSOAs with child poverty rates over 10%

**Macclesfield** - High child poverty in several estates in the town and in Bollington. Surrounding rural areas have low rates of childhood poverty

**Nantwich** - Generally affluent area but several parts of the town and surrounding rural areas have child poverty rates over 10%

**Poynton** - There are low rates of childhood poverty associated with the Poynton LAP

**Wilmslow** - Several communities with high rates of childhood poverty north of the town centre
A child is defined as being in relative income poverty if they are living in a household with an income below 60% of the UK median household income before housing costs have been deducted.

For a lone parent with 2 children under 14 this is around £202 per week.

For a couple with 2 children under 14 this is around £208 per week.

There are 2 distinct groups of childhood poverty:
1) Children in income poverty in workless households
2) Children in income poverty in working households

Early Help Locality Hubs have been developed to help communities and organisations work together to identify and tackle some of the challenges within that locality.

The outcomes we hope to see from this work include:
- An increase in those accessing Early Help services
- Decrease in the numbers of families experiencing poverty and children eligible for Free School Meals
- Wider access to Information, Advice & guidance; including debt management, adult education, housing, childcare and benefits.
- Reduction in crime and anti social behaviour
- Improvement in health and wellbeing
- Increased economic regeneration and improved local transport

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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Target families and parents</td>
<td>• Identify the poorest families in Cheshire East</td>
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<td>• Target the needs of children and their parents</td>
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<td>Increasing Employability and Employment</td>
<td>• Work with employers to match parents to jobs becoming available</td>
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<td>• Support and Incentivise parents to find work</td>
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<td>• Develop employment opportunities in deprived areas</td>
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<td>Alleviating impacts of poverty and address other factors</td>
<td>• Consider how transport might improve opportunities for families</td>
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<td>• Ensure that 2 and 3 year olds are set up for early education</td>
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<td>• Encourage teenagers into higher education or apprenticeship</td>
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<td>• Educate children about good lifestyles and health practices</td>
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Educational Attainment: Cheshire East’s Children’s Trust Early Help Strategy sets out how services will operate, independently or in partnership, to ensure families can, wherever possible, equip themselves with the skills and knowledge required to maintain a safe, thriving and happy family.

Overall children and young people who live in Cheshire East have outcomes that are at or above the national averages across the range of indicators. However in some areas outcomes for children, young people and families are less good than others.

Family income is known to be linked to children’s educational attainment, with children from less well-off backgrounds, on average, less likely to achieve well at school than those from families with higher incomes.

Research found that by age 3, children from poorer backgrounds lag behind their peers by as much as 9 months, this gap can grow up to 2 years by the time a child reaches age 14.

Our needs analysis demonstrate the impact of this by looking at Free School Meal (FSM). The average percentage of FSM in Cheshire East Primary Schools is 11% yet there are 5 primary schools in Crewe and 3 in Macclesfield where this figure is over 35%, 4 of which are over 40%.

In one school where over 50% of pupils are entitled to FSM there is the lowest proportion (33%) of pupils achieving level 4 in English and Maths KS2.

Factors that increase the risk of poverty

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<th>Measures of children’s experience of poverty</th>
<th>Measures of the outcomes for children in poverty</th>
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<td>• Worklessness</td>
<td>• Access to quality education</td>
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<td>• Low parental skill level</td>
<td>• A well-paid and secure job in adulthood</td>
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<td>• Unmanageable debt</td>
<td>• Health</td>
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<td>• Poor parental health</td>
<td>• Educational outcomes at various ages of a child’s life</td>
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<td>• Costs and availability of essential services (e.g. childcare)</td>
<td>• Child health</td>
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<td>• Child emotional and behavioural outcomes.</td>
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In Cheshire East 42% of children living in poverty live in households with 3 or more children, with a higher proportion in the Knutsford and Crewe LAPs.

The proportion of families living in poverty with 2 children is 35.4% with a higher proportion in Poynton, Congleton and Wilmslow LAPs.

70% of children living in poverty are in lone parent households.

Poverty affects both children’s current experiences and their future outcomes.

Measuring poverty involves assessing how far children lack resources sufficient for their needs today.
Children in Need: Children who are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services, or the child is disabled.

Child Protection: Children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

The numbers of Children in Need and use of Child Protection Plans (CPP) is higher in deprived areas. 41% of Children in Need and 54% of children on a CPP are from deprived areas. The majority of children are provided with a service because of neglect or abuse. Other common reasons are family dysfunction or the family being in acute stress, or because of illness or disability in either parent or child.

Teenage Parents: Teenage pregnancy often perpetuates an intergenerational cycle because children born into poverty are at increased risk of teenage pregnancy themselves; especially those living in workless households when aged 11-15.

Teenagers who become pregnant are:

- More likely to drop out of school without qualifications, leading to low educational attainment, low-paying unsecure jobs or worklessness
- More likely to not be in employment, education or training (NEET)
- 63% times more at risk of living in poverty than children born to parents in their 20s
- 3 times more likely to have post-natal depression

Approximately 15% of all NEETs (Not in education, employment or training) are pregnant teenagers or teenage parents

Local Teenage Conception Hotspots:
Grosvenor, Delamere, Maw Green, Coppenhall, St Barnabas and Valley wards in Crewe, and Macclesfield Central ward in Macclesfield all have teenage conception rates over three times the Borough average.

Most of these areas also have a high percentage of teenagers living within the top 30% most deprived areas.

Not in education, employment or training (NEET): NEET is a strong indicator of poor outcomes. Overall young people who live in Cheshire East have outcomes that are at or above the national averages across the range of indicators. However when we look in more detail we can see areas within the borough where outcomes are less good than others.

The NEET cohort is an example of this, the vast majority of whom live in Cheshire East have outcomes that are at or above the national averages across the range of indicators. However when we look in more detail we can see areas within the borough where outcomes are less good than others.

The NEET cohort is an example of this, the vast majority of whom live in relatively few wards. Unsurprisingly there is a strong correlation between NEET and areas where educational outcomes are less good. We can also then make the link to school readiness, and see clearly the correlation between a poor start in life and the impact this can have throughout life.
There are a number of recommendations in ‘A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families’ Lives’ that Cheshire East have embedded:

- Intervene early to support children and strengthen families – Cheshire East’s Early Help Locality Hubs are enabling agencies to identify local priorities that they address by working together

- Family Nurse Partnerships (FNP) to support the most vulnerable new parents – Cheshire East’s FNP have successfully worked with over 274 new parents

- Support services for separating and separated parents – Cheshire East’s Children’s Centres provide a range of family support services including parenting support, debt management, adult learning, healthy eating and living on a budget. Services are planned around local need.

- Investment into housing needs – The Local Investment Plan (LIP) 2011-2015 Cheshire and Warrington sets out the objectives and framework for housing intervention and proposals to increase public and private investment in housing.

- Investment in free early education for disadvantaged 2 year olds – Cheshire East are targeting families with the highest need to take up the free early education offer.

- Youth contract, to give teenagers opportunities to train, work and get their lives on track – Cheshire East’s Youth Service and Early Help commissioned services provide activities to support this including one to one’s, work experience, life skills

- Make work pay: providing help for those who cannot work, training and targeted support for those looking to work and sanctions for those who turn down reasonable offers of work or training – The Troubled Families programme is an intensive support programme to families where worklessness, pupil absence and youth crime/anti-social behaviour are issues.

Growing up in poverty can damage physical, cognitive, social and emotional development which are determinants of outcomes in adult life. While some children who grow up in low income households will go on to achieve their full potential, many others may not.