

Cabinet report



15 December 2020

Child Poverty Commission

Name of Cabinet Member	Zoe Nolan Children and Families
Report sponsor	Sarah Gonsalves Director of Policy, Insight and Communications
Report author	Jeremy Beake Corporate Policy & Equality Manager Jeremy.beake@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	5.2
Wards affected	All wards

Executive summary

This is the second report of the Child Poverty Commissioners.

Hannah Markham Chair of the Commissioners writes “The aims throughout were clear; the commission wanted to draw on what we and others have learnt since the last report and to hear from those working on the ground for their views about what best could and should be done. We heard from those directly experiencing poverty and listened to a broad range of life stories from parents and children alike.” There are three recommendations, which are developed in the report.

- Establish a Child Poverty Challenge Board in Milton Keynes
- Help child poverty work to flourish
- Work to challenge child poverty through actions and influence

The Council has a major role in delivering these recommendations. In responding to the Covid Crisis, the Council made strides in setting its delivery and recovery actions to challenge child poverty. Its long-term plans through the Covid Recovery Plan, Town Bid and the Futures Strategy set goals within the areas of skills, homes, and jobs.

1. Decision/s to be made

1. That Hannah Markham QC and the Commissioners be thanked for their work in bringing together their final report.
2. That the second report of the Milton Keynes Child Poverty Commission “Our Children Deserve Better 2” be commended to all services, partners and interested parties in Milton Keynes as a shared beginning to challenging child poverty.
3. That the Council will lead in the challenge to child poverty using the recommendations of the Commission be affirmed.
4. That the Director Policy, Insight and Communications be asked to develop a Communications Plan, as well as the details of Recommendation 1, 2 and 3 and report progress to the Cabinet in six months’ time.
5. That working with a wide group of organisations details of what help is offered and what projects are doing in Milton Keynes is available for parents online by April 2021.
6. That a report is published annually starting on 21 April 2021.

2. Why is the decision needed?

The Commissioners write:

“These reports (Report 1 in March and now this second report) are about children, children who experience barriers to their aspirations, security and well-being. Children who, we were told, face stigma and judgement on a daily basis. They grow up watching their parents face difficult decisions and pressures. As teenagers, they look on as friends and neighbours lead very different lives with very different possibilities. These children and young people live in Milton Keynes.

Since October last year, we have listened to families and professionals, from decision makers and support workers. We have heard widespread praise for what professionals and volunteers do to support people’s basic needs. However, the scale of child poverty in Milton Keynes is shocking.

We have spoken to parents, children and young people. What they told us was a story of frustrations and barriers. What they hoped for was an end to the harsh treatment and a respectful rethinking of services. What they wanted were solutions that were locally focussed, more joined-up and better communicated.

Most of all parents wanted allies who would work with them to change the narrative for their children.”

From the first report, it is notably that:

- a) The definition of child poverty in the figures is insufficient. We heard of households with higher incomes, who had presented as homeless and were in temporary accommodation. The children in these families experienced poverty, because of their vulnerable situation.
- b) Child poverty is multi-faceted. Children are in poverty when they lack the “resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong” (Townsend 1979:31)
- c) Children move in and out of poverty. In the Millennium Cohort Study, a representative sample of children from the UK born in 2001, about half (47%) of children experienced relative poverty one or more times between the age of 9 months and 11 years, and 9% of children experienced persistent poverty.

3. Implications of the decision

Financial		Human rights, equalities, diversity	x
Legal		Policies or Council Plan	x
Communication	x	Procurement	
Energy Efficiency		Workforce	

a) Financial Implications

There are no direct costs to the recommendations of the report. Any costs proposed for the implementation of the recommendations in Annex A to the report will need to be funded in the revenue budget and capital programme through the usual budget-setting processes, including the preparation of Business Cases setting out the costs, benefits, affordability, value for money, and risk implications.

b) Legal Implications

At present, there are no legal implications.

c) Other Implications

The outline recommendations include changes to this implications section with the addition of child poverty.

The first report contained an Equality Impact Assessment. It is important to note that the double disadvantage posed by disability either of the child or a

parent. We should also be aware that because of historical factors people from BAME backgrounds are less likely to be Council tenants and therefore be subject to the private renting inequalities.

4. Alternatives

The topic of child poverty attracts a lot of discussion and it is challenging to address. The work of the Commission is now complete, and the resultant change will only come if the Council leads, promotes and shapes the way it delivers for children in material need. Therefore, it is not recommended to disregard these issues.

5. Timetable for Implementation

The Commission suggests that:

- a) A communications plan is developed that widely promotes these reports with the key date of 21 April 2021 to launch “21 for 2021: ways to challenge child poverty.
- b) That the Council’s response to all recommendations is prepared by April 2021.

List of annexes

Annex A Recommendations

Annex B “Our Children Deserve Better 2... : The final report of the Milton Keynes Child Poverty Commission”