

Cabinet report



11 March 2020

Child Poverty Commission Interim Report

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Zoe Nolan Cabinet member for 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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No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

The Council invited Hannah Markham QC to form a Commission to look at the causes of child poverty in Milton Keynes. Forming the Child Poverty Commission, local people were invited to apply to be members and were joined by representatives from each political party.

The Commission was tasked to produce a set of evidence and consultative-based recommendations by autumn 2020. However, the Cabinet suggested that there would be public policy development advantages if the Commission felt able to provide an interim report by March 2020. In addition, the Commissioners broadened the Commission's scope by adding an examination of the effects or consequences of child poverty to its causes. The available timescales were further shortened by the General Election period in November and December 2019. Consequently, the interim report can only provide a summary of the evidence collected so far, offering a useful perspective into the Commission's methodology and analysis.

1. Decision/s to be made

1. That Hannah Markham QC and the Commissioners be thanked for their work and the progress so far.
2. That the interim report of the Milton Keynes Child Poverty Commission “Our Children Deserve Better” be commended to all services, partners and interested parties in Milton Keynes.
3. That the need for the Council to address the causes and consequences of child poverty using the published framework be affirmed.
4. That the outline for phase 2 of the Commissioners work, as set out in Annex A to the report, be agreed.
5. That the work of the Commission, using the outline in Annex A, to show how the evidence can be put into practice be continued, capturing both the expectations of children and parents and highlighting what is feasible.

2. Why is the decision needed?

The Commissioners write:

“This report is 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. Praise for what professionals and volunteers do to support people’s basic needs was widespread. However, the scale of child poverty in Milton Keynes is shocking.

We also spoke 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 rethink 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.”

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

At present, there are no financial 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.

4. Alternative(s)

The topic of child poverty attracts a lot of discussion and it is challenging to address. The work of the Commission is not complete and the resultant outline in the interim report will be used for phase two of the Commission that will develop concrete proposals. Therefore, it is not recommended to stop the commission.

5. Timetable for implementation

In the next phase of the Commission, the commission will examine the areas to address in light of feedback from the Cabinet and Scrutiny. It will develop this outline, understanding what works, what people would like to see achieved and whether achievement is feasible.

They will share this outline with the people and children they met from the Children Centres and feedback responses from the Council, as well as speaking to key professionals inside and outside of the Council. What they will be looking for are practical solutions that address the underline challenges outlined in this report. It is their aim to have this work completed by September and report to Cabinet in October.

List of annexes

Annex A – Areas to address

Annex B — “Our children deserve better: The interim report of the Milton Keynes Child poverty Commission”