Child Poverty in Milton Keynes

Analysis, experience, and action

Commissioned by the Children and Families Partnership
Why look at child poverty in MK?

- Poverty is bad for children

- MK child poverty rates rising, and likely to rise more in the future if nothing is done

- MK economic outlook is relatively good, so asserted action now, could make a difference

- New localism frees up local partners to develop locality strategies
Who and where are poor children in MK?

- 12,340 poor children (2009), 20.6% of local population
- Virtually the same as national percentage, but much higher than southeast, 15.4%
- ¾ live in a lone parent household
- Just over half live in families with at least one child under five
- Just under half live in a family with 3 or more children
Where do poor children live

Highest levels of child poverty
• Eaton Manor (40.9%)
• Woughton
• Campbell Park
• Wolverton
Together account for 40% of all poor children in MK

Lowest levels of child poverty
• Sherington (6.2%)
• Olney
• Hanslope
• Danesborough
• Newport Pagnell South
• Emerson Valley
Together account for 5% of poor children in MK
Proportion and number of children in poverty in each ward (2009)
What kinds of households are poor?

31 August 2009

- **Working household**
  - Couple: 645 (5.2%)
  - Lone parent: 150 (1.2%)

- **Work status not available**
  - Couple: 570 (4.6%)
  - Lone parent: 1330 (10.8%)

- **Workless household**
  - Couple: 2025 (16.4%)
  - Lone parent: 7620 (61.8%)

Number of children (thousands)
Number of IS/JSA claimants with children

Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance: number of claimants in Milton Keynes who have children

Number of claimants

All IS claimants

Claimants of JSA only
Unemployment rate: 2001-2011

Date

%
What would it take to halve child poverty?

Reduce workless claimants by 3256

How:

• Concentrate efforts on families with young children in poorest wards

• Improve parents’ skills

• Consider childcare subsidies for larger families
The local economy and employment market

• Employment sectors relatively well spread
• Outlook for MK economy positive
• But, worklessness concentrated on particular estates
• Long term unemployment worse than southeast, and concentrated on poor estates
• Youth unemployment low, but likely to rise
• Skills employers want not always available locally
What poverty feels like

• *I spend on essentials for the children*

• *When mum has no money, our family does without food*

• *It makes me feel sad when we have no sweets, but I know she is doing it for the best of my family*

• *If you are not working, your children are likely to grow up not working as that’s their role model.*
The MK offer: how to make better use of what we have?

• Overall, strong infrastructure of local services but
  – Need better collaboration and joint planning to improve quality and reduce duplication
  – Current climate puts many services under threat: need to assess through lens of child poverty impact assessment
  – Better communication between employers, schools and training providers to ensure what is being offered is what is really needed.
  – More flexible employment to fit in with parents’ responsibilities
## Quality and take up of free early years entitlement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children Centre locality area</th>
<th>% of children living in poverty</th>
<th>Quality: proportion of childcare judged good or better</th>
<th>Sessional occupancy</th>
<th>Take up of free early years entitlement (NEG)</th>
<th>Workless households (including lone parent households)</th>
<th>Lone parent out of work households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-19 years</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>MK average</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherfield</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Eaton</td>
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<td>Con niburrow</td>
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<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Bletchley</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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Recommendations

Reduce the numbers in poverty now

- Clear focus on all adult contact to improve chances of employment
  - Skills training
  - Flexible employment
  - More affordable childcare
  - Better advice on benefits and in work calculations

Reduce the likelihood of poverty in the next generation

- Clear focus on improving educational outcomes for all children and young people
  - Improve the quality of the early years offer
  - Improve the uptake of the early years offer, esp in poor areas
  - Do more in schools to develop work aspirations
  - Do more in schools to develop the skill set needed by employers
Questions