

Working together to reach your goals



Buckinghamshire **Children**
and **Young People's** Trust

Buckinghamshire Child Poverty Strategy 2011 - 2014

**BREAK THE CYCLETO CLOSE THE
GAP**

*Approved by the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust
April 2011*

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BREAK THE CYCLETO CLOSE THE GAP

Our Vision is to work together to contribute to breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty so that the gap in educational, physical and emotional achievement is narrowed between better and less well off families. We recognise that this will be complex to achieve. However it is a key part of achieving the priority 'Closing the Gap' in the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 and Tackling Child Poverty is one of two Core Beliefs which run throughout the Plan.



Case Study One: The Breakfast Club at Wye Valley School started in April 2009 and is attended by a majority of pupils at the school that are entitled to free school meals. "The Club has helped me lots - I never used to have breakfast at home but now I have it at school, it boosts my energy and concentration all day in lessons to achieve better work and exams to achieve better grades. It also has built my social skills because I have got new friends and met lots of new people."

Case Study Two: Street Coach Combined launched in February 2009 and is an intensive self development programme for young people following the increasing number of fixed term exclusions being issued to pupils, especially of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) background, in schools in Buckinghamshire.



The project helps pupils to reflect on their home and school circumstances and plan for a positive future, helping them think of strategies to eliminate problems they face. Schools saw improved self discipline and incentive to work, increased enthusiasm about life in general and improved attention during lessons among those attending the programme. It is well known that these factors help children get the most out of their education and so help them avoid future poverty.



Case Study Three: Literacy courses were offered to parents of pupils in Year 7 at Wye Valley School where their children had been identified as in danger of falling behind across the curriculum due to their poor literacy skills.

The course was aimed at giving parents confidence to support their children at home by explaining the methods and resources used at school and by giving them ideas for activities to use at home to support their child's learning.

All participants said they had benefitted from the support. One participant made use of the help by devising a programme of home activities. Another reported that she was using new strategies to support her son's reading and all considered joining an evening class to continue working on their literacy skills. Supporting parents in this way is proven to help very young children have the best possible start and so reduces the risk of poverty in the future.

Case Study Four: In February 2011 Mrs X went to High Wycombe Citizens Advice Bureau for help with her debt. The debts were linked to her condition of bipolar disorder, depression and general mental ill health. In addition she has three dependent children, two of whom are disabled. With the stress of coping with her children and constant threats from creditors Mrs X's mental health deteriorated. She could not afford the fee to declare herself bankrupt so a request for a write off from creditors was made taking into consideration her medical condition.

So far one major bank has agreed and it is likely other creditors will follow suit. Mrs X can in the meantime concentrate on caring for her children and improving her mental health. This example illustrates how financial assistance in whatever form helps lift parents from poverty, releasing them to make progress in other aspects of life which in turn benefits children.



2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 places a statutory duty on local authorities and their partners (e.g. Health Authorities, Police Forces, Youth Offending Service, Probation, Transport authorities, District Councils and Job Centre Plus) to conduct and publish a Child Poverty Needs Assessment and to produce a Strategy to tackle Child Poverty in their area.
- 2.2 Everyone working with children and families recognises that poverty affects people in different ways and that there is no one single cause of poverty. Often many factors come together to keep families in poverty. For example, the availability of jobs, transport and affordable childcare, the health of the population and opportunities for a good education combine with the availability of training to improve life and work skills and the attitudes and expectations of their family and community to determine people's experience of life and poverty.
- 2.3 These links or interdependencies are referred to as the 'drivers' of poverty and cover neighbourhoods, housing, family support, health, education and child care, adult skills, parental employment and financial support.
- 2.4 It is critical that organisations work together across all of these areas to find ways of tackling the causes of child poverty at a local level. The Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) has a key role to play in promoting self determination, ambition and self reliance and to help families develop resilience.
- 2.5 This is particularly important for families of very young children as the links between children's early years development and experiences and the risk of poverty later in life are well established.
- 2.6 Under the direction of the Buckinghamshire Strategic Partnership and on behalf of the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT), the primary organisations working with children and young people have come together to produce this Strategy and to develop ways of implementing it.
- 2.7 The Strategy does not include everything we will be doing, but concentrates on the priorities and activities which we believe will make the biggest difference to children and young people in Buckinghamshire.
- 2.8 Tackling child poverty is a core belief in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2011/14 and this Strategy supports the objectives of that Plan which are to make sure that every child and young person can: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; Achieve Economic wellbeing.



Sue Imbriano
Director of Children and Young People's Services

3 OUR PRIORITIES

3.1 **Priority A:** Increase parental employment among families in poverty, particularly lone parents, those with health issues and those from minority ethnic groups and maximize their incomes.

Outcomes

- A reduction in the number of lone, BME and parents with health issues who are out of work
- An increase in the number of families with a household income above 60% median income

Activities that contribute to this Priority:

1. Provide work experience opportunities for long term unemployed adults, increasing their motivation and confidence to find permanent work and provide support for them to stay in work.
2. Provide information and assistance to families in poverty to become more energy efficient through improving energy efficiency ratings of houses and the use of energy monitors to reduce costs.
3. Improve the take-up of free school meals.
4. Improve the awareness of and take up of welfare benefits for those in and out of work.

3.2 **Priority B:** Reduce the health and housing inequalities of families in poverty.

Outcome

- A reduced difference in health and housing inequalities between the most and least disadvantaged wards

Activities that contribute to this Priority:



1. Improve education and parenting skills including access to early years education, to improve support around health and lifestyle issues for children in poverty.
2. Provide more targeted support for low income mothers with breastfeeding in the first 10 days.
3. Target integrated early years (antenatal and postnatal) community services to more disadvantaged communities in Aylesbury and Wycombe areas.
4. Help families maintain strong relationships when experiencing life changes to reduce the risk of poverty.
5. New housing developments should have sufficient resources to meet the needs of the local population.
6. Improve collaboration and information sharing between district councils, housing associations and social care organisations to identify and support vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers to prevent future poverty.
7. Ensure that District Councils adopt consistent evaluation processes for allocating affordable housing.

“I get sick often, I get a lot of flu... I get sick so much, then I miss my school work, but I don't stay at home that much...Maybe I catch it from other people or maybe I get it from this home...[The Landlord] never repairs anything...Everything breaks.”
(Jasara, ten years old)

3.3 **Priority C:** Build community resilience.

Outcomes

- Communities develop solutions to meet their own needs
- Change has a positive impact

Activities that contribute to this Priority:

1. Family Information Service (FIS) to match outreach to areas of poverty to increase awareness and take up of services which can help families out of poverty.
2. The Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust to map and understand the impact of cuts to support communities to develop ways of mitigating the impact.
3. Work with local communities to develop and deliver services to meet local needs.

3.4 **Priority D:** Improve career advice and opportunities for children and young people in poverty.

Outcome

- More young people entering the job / career of their choice.

Activities that contribute to this Priority:

1. Support parents to access Early Years support, i.e. funded 2, 3 and 4 year early education for children in poverty to help reduce the attainment gap at aged 5 years, and promote the importance of Early Years development.
2. Work with local businesses to understand the benefits of flexible working arrangements.
3. Collaborate with local businesses to provide support and advice to help young people make better education and career choices.
4. Promote practical and technical skills training that match the needs of local businesses.
5. Improve education around managing money so that young people can achieve economic well being and prevent debt.

4 WHAT'S IT LIKE IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE?

4.1 There are many sets of national and local data about families in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty across the county and some key facts and figures are set out here.

4.2 Latest data from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP August 2008) for National Indicator 116: The Proportion of children in poverty shows

- **10.5%** children aged 0 – 19 living in poverty in Buckinghamshire at that time which equates to some 12,000 children across the county

4.3 If the county wide picture is broken down it is clear that there is a very considerable variation across Buckinghamshire.

4.4 Figure 1 shows the areas across the county where those who are most 'hard pressed' live (black areas on the map). Please note however that the data used for this map is ACORN Lower Level Super Output Area and does not show very small pockets of poverty, for example in smaller towns and villages. This can be viewed through examining ACORN data at postcode level but is not possible to reproduce the map in a document and retain its integrity.

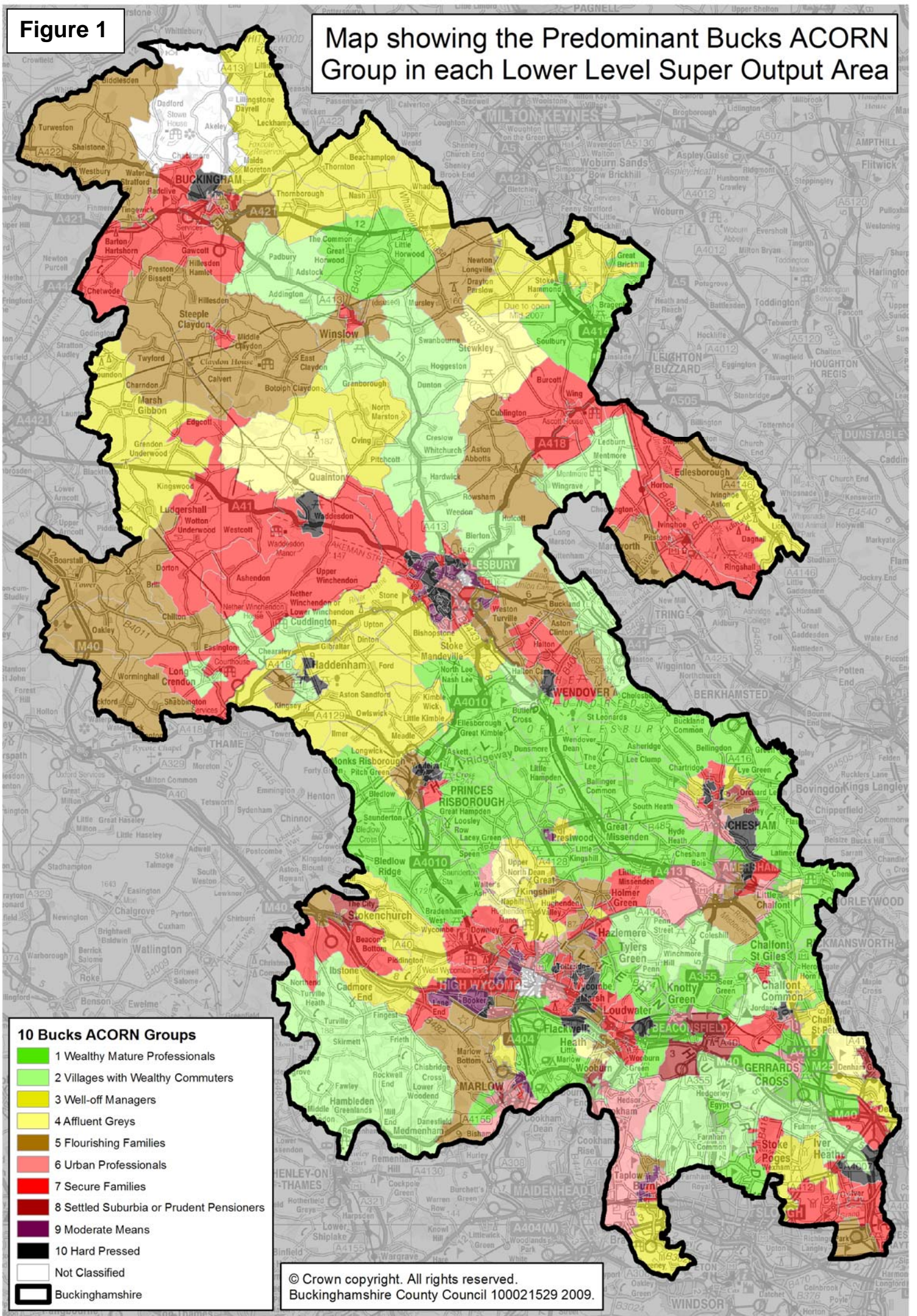
4.5 Data collected for the Buckinghamshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment in the autumn of 2010 and other local information showed us that:

- In work poverty is increasing
- Families in poverty live on less than £206 per week
- Life expectancy in the poorest ward is 13 years less than that in the most affluent ward
- The gap between those from low income backgrounds and their peers progressing to Higher Education in Buckinghamshire is 27%, which is a larger gap compared to all of our statistical neighbours
- 41% of social housing in the Wycombe District has a low energy efficiency rating - these families will spend 10% more income on energy costs than other families in high energy efficiency houses
- At January 2011 there were 6.7% pupils eligible for Free School Meals in primary and 5.5% in secondary schools across the county
- 27.3% of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Buckinghamshire are young people aged between 18 and 24 (This compares with 26.7% for the South East region and 29.1% for Great Britain suggesting that young people locally are finding it particularly difficult to get back to work or start their working life)
- Families that include a member that is disabled are at increased risk of experiencing poverty

4.6 Despite these specific issues most children and young people do well in Buckinghamshire according to key indicators: educational attainment is good overall; the under 18's conception rate and the number of young people that are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are lower than the rates for England for these measures; custodial sentences as a proportion of all other sentences is significantly lower in Buckinghamshire compared to the national average.

Figure 1

Map showing the Predominant Bucks ACORN Group in each Lower Level Super Output Area



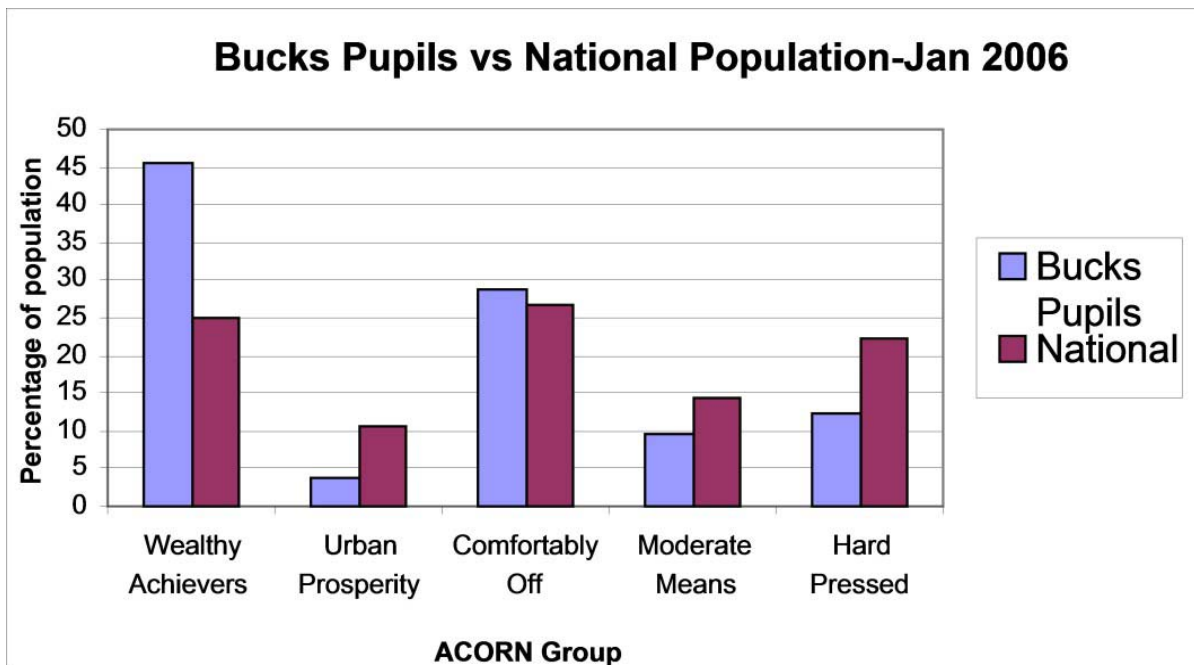
10 Bucks ACORN Groups

- 1 Wealthy Mature Professionals
- 2 Villages with Wealthy Commuters
- 3 Well-off Managers
- 4 Affluent Greys
- 5 Flourishing Families
- 6 Urban Professionals
- 7 Secure Families
- 8 Settled Suburbia or Prudent Pensioners
- 9 Moderate Means
- 10 Hard Pressed
- Not Classified
- Buckinghamshire

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Buckinghamshire County Council 100021529 2009.

4.7 ACORN (“A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods”) data which profiles the population of each postcode into 5 categories based on census information and lifestyle surveys reflects a similar picture – see Figure 2.

Fig 2: Bucks Pupils versus National Pupils in ACORN categories



Source: Bucks data School Census (January 2006). National population data CACI ACORN Guide

4.8 Understanding the local picture is complicated by the fact that statistical data available for families living on low incomes and in some cases in poverty is complex and definitions and data sets from different sources do not always match.

4.9 The most up to date Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) information and data relating to children in poverty is found on the large data sets on the HMRC website and is used to report on the National Indicator 116: The Proportion of children in poverty.

4.10 The definition of this indicator is: The proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% median income.

The proportion of children in poverty is calculated as follows:

Number of children in families in receipt of either out of work benefits, or tax credits where their reported income is less than 60% median income

Total number of children in the area

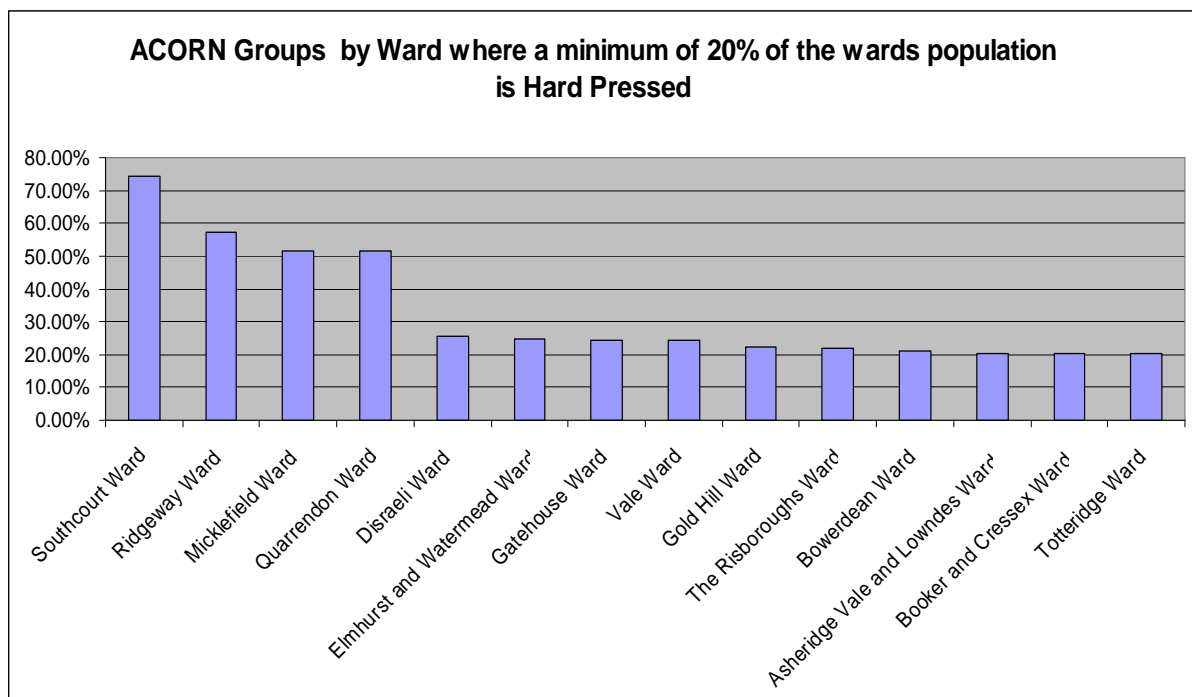
4.11 Elsewhere in the 'notes' on the HMRC website the calculation of children in poverty is described as follows:

Number of children living in families in receipt of Child Tax Credit whose reported income is less than 60 per cent of the median income or in receipt of Income Support or (Income-Based) Job Seekers Allowance, divided by the total number of children in the area (determined by Child Benefit data)

4.12 A publication by Donald Hirsch and Jacqueline Beckhelling of the Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University, for the Campaign to End Child Poverty (March 2011), has updated the DWP information for 2008 using unemployment data for the intervening period to estimate the proportions of child poverty at mid 2010. The table gives a breakdown for Buckinghamshire:

% children in poverty by local authority (District Council) area		% children in poverty by Parliamentary Constituency	
Aylesbury Vale	10%	Aylesbury	13%
South Bucks	9%	Buckingham	6%
Chiltern	8%	Beaconsfield	9%
Wycombe	13%	Wycombe	17%

4.13 Figure 3 again uses ACORN data to show the wards in Buckinghamshire where a minimum of 20% of the population is Hard Pressed.



Source: Income Deprivation Affecting Children subset of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation

4.14 From the above information it is clear that poverty is a significant issue in Buckinghamshire but in addition to understanding the complexity of the data there are some important local factors to consider. These include:

- Buckinghamshire is overall an affluent county and areas of poverty are not always obvious, even in urban areas.
- In rural areas the number of families in poverty can be very small and almost invisible, particularly in otherwise relatively affluent surroundings.
- The geographic make up of the county poses significant problems for people to travel to where jobs and skills training are available, exacerbated by limited public transport and over dependence on costly car travel.
- The national data is calculated before housing costs are taken into consideration. In Buckinghamshire where housing costs are generally higher than the national average the number of children in poverty is likely to increase once these costs are taken into account.
- The Government uses the median (midpoint) of the whole range of national incomes to assess whether families are in poverty. Families receiving above 60% national median income are not in poverty by this measure. However, if living in an otherwise affluent community these same families may well be in relative poverty in relation to others in their community.
- These factors significantly contribute to the experiences of families living on a low income in Buckinghamshire.

“It’s very hard saving on a low-income. It’s very hard to put money aside because now that the children are getting older they need something all the time; either underwear or a tee shirt or skirt. Children are always needing something.

It is very hard to put money away I don’t really put money away to be honest”

“Psychologically, for me, you get sick of telling your kids ‘no’..... I’m talking about day-to-day stuff.

Can I go to the pool? Can I go to the cinema? Can I have two pounds for MacDonalDs? And you do get a wee bit down – no, a lot down.”



5 HOW DOES POVERTY AFFECT OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

5.1 The impact of poverty on children and young people is the same whatever the numbers involved and, for reasons given above are often heightened in areas where there are fewer people experiencing poverty. The following quotes from children and young people in a number of national case studies clearly show the effects of poverty:

“They go into town and go swimming and that, and they play football and they go to other places and I can’t go...because some of them cost money and that.”

“I worry about what life will be like when I’m older...because I’m kind of scared of growing older, but if you know what is in front of you then it’s a bit better, but I don’t know.”

“It was in school and they said, one of my friends says ‘I’ve got more money than you ‘cos you’re really, really poor, your family will always be poor’, and it really upset me.”

5.2 Tackling child poverty is everyone’s business because research shows that children and young people who grow up in poverty are:



More likely to offend

Less likely to do well at school

More likely to be taken into care

Less likely to use a range of cultural and leisure activities

More likely to suffer from poor health

Less likely to secure a good job as an adult

6 WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW?

- 6.1 The commitment to eradicate child poverty has been made by successive Governments.
- 6.2 In 1999 the Labour Government set the aim of eradicating child poverty by 2020. In 2006 the Conservative Party promised to support this aim and David Cameron reinforced this in October 2007 when addressing a conference on the subject. The Liberal Democrat Party also promised their support in a policy paper and at their conference in September 2007.
- 6.3 In the 2009/10 parliamentary session, both future coalition partners voted in favour of the bill that became the Child Poverty Act 2010 which obtained Royal Assent on 25 March 2010. The Act is jointly sponsored by the Department for Education, the Department for Work and Pensions, and Her Majesty's Treasury.
- 6.4 The Act requires the Secretary of State to meet four targets to eradicate child poverty by 2020. These are:
- **Relative poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income (in families with income below 60 per cent of the median) to less than 10%;
 - **Persistent poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children that experience ongoing periods of relative poverty, with the specific target to be set at a later date;
 - **Combined low income and material deprivation** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and have a low income to less than 5%; and
 - **Absolute poverty** – to reduce the proportion of children who live in absolute low income to less than 5%.
- 6.5 There is also a requirement in the Act for a national Child Poverty Strategy every three years to meet these targets and to reduce socio-economic disadvantage and the first of these is due for release in April 2011.
- 6.6 The national Strategy is informed by the Frank Field Review on Child Poverty (December 2010), the Graham Allen Review on Early Intervention and Prevention (February 2011), both commissioned by the Coalition Government, as well as the Marmot Review of health inequalities and report *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* (February 2010) and previous work by Ian Duncan Smith on the importance of service provision for 0 – 3 year olds.
- 6.7 Related work by the Coalition Government will also help the Coalition Government achieves its aims under the Child Poverty Act 2010. For example, the Social Mobility Strategy 'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers' April 2011 focuses on deep-rooted sources of worklessness, lack of aspirations and barriers to advancement.

6.8 However, it is not the Government's intention to create a hierarchical link from the national Child Poverty Strategy to local Strategies. Local authorities and their partners are expected to develop a Child Poverty Strategy that reflects local circumstances. To assist in this the Government is developing life chances indicators alongside the income driven indicators already in use.

7 HOW WILL WE DRIVE THE STRATEGY AND MEASURE IMPACT?

- 7.1 Our Priorities, anticipated Outcomes and Activities to implement this Strategy are set out above. We want to see more families in work, an increase in parental income, reduced differences between wards in family health and housing conditions, a better start in life for children and improved prospects for young people to avoid poverty.
- 7.2 Child poverty is everyone's business from elected members and strategic managers to frontline staff. The Strategy does not contain an exhaustive list of all activity taking place across the county to tackle child poverty, but provides a framework for all organisations working with children and families across the county to plan how they contribute to the strategy and how best to develop and implement their own activities to achieve the child poverty outcomes. This will include linking with the identified priorities of the Local Children and Young People's Trust Partnership Boards.
- 7.3 The Child Poverty Group will lead on how we are all held accountable for progress in reducing child poverty. It will do this by sponsoring the priorities and regularly reporting progress on achieving them. It is intended that this will stimulate and challenge communities and service providers to achieve the ambitious aims of this Strategy.
- 7.4 A key part of the role of the Sponsor will be to work with 'operational leads' for each Activity to drive the work forward and to challenge assumptions by assessing whether anything has changed.
- 7.5 For information on how the Child Poverty Group relates to the CYPT see the Trust website:

http://www.buckspartnership.co.uk/assets/content/Partnerships/CYPT/cypt/trust_struc_oct.pdf

“I'm sometimes sad, like other people get stuff and I wish I had that. Sometimes I feel like I am acting selfishly, I should be happy with what I've got.”

- 7.6 To date the Child Poverty Group has overseen and:

- produced Even in Bucks...Child Poverty Local Area Needs Assessment (September 2010), an analysis of the statistical information about the extent and nature of child poverty across the county;
- held a Child Poverty Practitioner Workshop (October 2010), attended by representatives of a wide range of statutory, community and voluntary services as well as services that promote local economic growth;
- consulted (November 2010) with targeted groups and individuals, including children and young people, on a set of four Priorities and a range of Activities to tackle child poverty locally identified at the Workshop;



- identified activities to implement the Priorities and Outcomes against which progress can be measured.

- 7.7 As the work with partners progresses the sponsors will gather information from the operational leads and wider information to monitor progress through report cards. We will develop performance indicators and targets to measure the impact on levels of child poverty across the county. These will be monitored by the CYPT Board.
- 7.8 The data collected for the Needs Assessment will not be refreshed during the duration of this three year strategy as it provides a baseline, or a picture at a point in time, from which the strategy to tackle child poverty has been developed. However, new indicators that measure life chances are also being developed by the Government and we will consider how to build them into our reporting framework.
- 7.9 The Child Poverty Group will review the performance indicators, targets and Activities at least annually to assess what impact there has been on achieving the Priorities and take appropriate action to ensure the objectives are achieved.
- 7.10 Towards the end of the 2013 a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted. This will review current partnership arrangements, update the knowledge base, revisit the Priorities, Outcomes and Activities and make appropriate amendments.
- 7.11 The Strategy will be made widely available through the CYPT website and other locations and it will be linked into other local plans and initiatives including the CYPP, Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, Local Economic Assessment, Sustainable Community Strategy, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Local Transport Plan, Local Area Plans.
- 7.12 Consultation is an ongoing feature of the child poverty work and we will continue to consult with parents, children and young people, practitioners, users of financial and employment support services and community groups to make sure the Strategy meets the needs of local people.

Restatement of intent

- Breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty so that all children and young people can reach their full potential is as important in Buckinghamshire as any other part of the country.
- Child Poverty is everyone's business and we will work in partnership to implement our Priorities and achieve the Outcomes we want for children and young people living in poverty.
- We will talk with people about what we are doing and focus on Activities that make a difference.

***This Strategy provides a framework to tackle child poverty locally;
action is now needed to bring about change and to:***

**BREAK THE CYCLETO CLOSE THE
GAP**

For further information please contact: 01296 382955 or email cyptrust@buckscc.gov.uk