

Sheffield Tackling Poverty Strategy Annual Review – summary

This summary sets out three things. Firstly, our understanding of the increasing hardship faced by Sheffield people struggling in poverty and where we need to do more. Secondly, what we have achieved as a partnership over the past year. And finally, what we will focus on together over the next year to help people who are struggling to get by. This includes activity concentrated on pregnancy and the early years of a child's life, families and especially single parents, working people who are in poverty, and people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Our activities will, deliberately, have more impact in some areas than others. We aspire to be the fairest city in the country and we are determined to keep fairness and tackling poverty as a priority for partners across the city.

We've looked at the facts and figures and we've set out **some of the most important issues below.**

Poverty is getting worse. Around 1 in 5 Sheffield people are living on incomes that mean they struggle to make ends meet. This includes more than 28,000 or 1 in 4 of our children. In some wards it is closer to 1 in every 2 children. Nationally, half a million more people were in poverty in 2016 than in the previous year. Ongoing cuts in public spending make it likely that this will continue. Forecasts suggest child poverty could rise to over 30% nationally by 2020/21 and that this increase can be explained directly by the impact of tax and benefit reforms over this parliament.

People are increasingly struggling to meet their basic needs. The number of food banks has increased to meet community needs, and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that much of the increase in demand is down to benefit delays and sanctions and problematic debt. Problematic debt is growing, and many of Sheffield's residents— both those who are in work and not in work— are in poverty and financial insecurity. 69% of the poorest fifth of people nationally have no savings, an increase from 58% in 2005/06. Alongside other Core Cities such as Leeds, Bristol and Newcastle, we have seen a significant increase in fuel poverty.

The structures and conditions that would help people in poverty are under pressure and being cut. Once all the national welfare reforms and benefit cuts have been implemented, households in the city will have lost a total of £252million per year. The new lower benefit cap took effect in January 2017. This reduces money further for people already affected by the previous cap and is also expected to affect another 566 households, which include 1,780 children.

With poverty, comes pressure on services. Public sector spending has fallen significantly and the impacts of these reductions have been unequal.

Many more people are working long hours for low pay and without security. Over two-thirds of children and over half of all people in poverty nationally are living in households where someone is working. The cost of living is going up. In Sheffield, almost half of the government's benefit cuts will be on working families. Lack of access to affordable childcare can be a barrier to people working. The complexity of the system means that many people don't know what they are entitled to.

Poor and vulnerable groups are disproportionately negatively affected. Households with children are among those hardest hit by the benefit cuts along with lone parents, those under 21,

those from BME backgrounds and households including someone with a disability or long-term health condition.

People in the poorest households will lose most from the planned tax and benefit changes. In every income group women lose more than men and BME women will lose the greatest proportion of their income.

Once account is taken of the higher costs faced by those who are disabled, half of people living in poverty are either themselves disabled or are living with a disabled person in their household. The introduction of Personal Independence Payment is already resulting in a large number of requests for help from advice services and we know that not everyone is receiving the advocacy they need to go through the process.

Poverty is leading to further negative impacts. Men in the most deprived wards in Sheffield can expect to die ten years earlier than men in the least deprived wards, and women seven years earlier. Not only that, but people in poverty will, on average, spend more years of their lives in ill-health. The most deprived women and men will have just over 50 years of healthy life compared with around 76 years for the least deprived women and over 72 years for the least deprived men.

The constant struggle to put food on the table, pay the bills and juggle complex benefits systems, insecure housing and work takes its toll on people's wellbeing. New research suggests that thinking about financial problems has an impact similar to losing a night's sleep. This is particularly important in the vital first two years of a child's life. Although many parents are doing a brilliant job against all odds, we need to reduce the burden and make it easier for new families to concentrate on developing loving bonds and playful and safe home environments leading to secure attachment and setting children up with a great start in life.

Poverty is the reason for an estimated half of the difference between GCSE results for children in poverty and other children. We need to do more to help children in poverty to do as well as other children all the way through school and in their lives outside of school. We also need to think about how poverty is often worse for vulnerable young people, such as young carers or those suffering from mental ill-health.

Entrenched poverty and inequalities can drive people apart and make people and communities think about how they are different, rather than what connects them.

These problems are combining to create a substantial and increasing gap between income and the cost of meeting needs in many households.

We have achieved some significant progress against the targets over the past year. Some examples and highlights are shown below, but you will need to read the full report for the full range of impressive work that partners continue to do.

Telling the story of poverty and tackling stigma. The Our Fair City Campaign was strengthened this year. Many citizens have signed up as champions and are involved in developing and leading the four campaigns for this year: Fairer Food, Fairer Work, Fairer Money and Fairer Futures.

Sheffield Citizens Advice and Sheffield Young Carers Action Group have both had some success in campaigning and Sheffield Citizens Advice was instrumental in adding a new clause to personal independent payment regulations.

Our 'Disability Confident' campaign, was delivered by Sheffield City Council, private and public sector employers, the voluntary and community sector, business networks and national government. It has been picked up extensively by social media and local media. Importantly, it has resulted in over 130 Sheffield employers of all sizes and sectors signing up to offer new opportunities for disabled people and so far 28 disabled people have started work/work experience.

The Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector in Sheffield is incredibly diverse and, as such, individual organisations make contributions across most of the programmes within the Tackling Poverty Strategy. We have chosen to make particular mention of the sector's overall impact to highlight the importance of it as a whole. It is estimated that the voluntary sector in Sheffield made 7.2 million interventions with clients, users or beneficiaries in the past year.

Making things better for people struggling and living in poverty now. Households taking part in the Big Switch saved an average of £300 per household on energy bills.

The Foodbank Network continues to work hard together to ensure full postcode coverage Monday-Friday. There are many other initiatives aimed at tackling food poverty developing in the city by a range of dedicated organisations: Real Junk Food Project, University of Sheffield student activities, Park Action Community, Manor and Castle Development Trust, Salvation Army, S2 food bank, Grow Sheffield, Citizens Advice and Great Places Housing Association.

Sheffield Money has now been trading for 12 months and has been developing and expanding its range of products. Sheffield Credit Union has had a positive year with its membership growing by 30%.

As part of the Partnership, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive uses its Tendered Services Budget (a limited pot, funded from the council levy) to support services in areas and at times of day which would otherwise not be commercially viable due to low use, supporting people who would otherwise risk social isolation or economic deprivation.

Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Citizens Advice have continued to protect and sustain access to high quality advice services. At least £6.8 million was secured for people from benefits and tax credits, and at least £4.3 million debts written off.

Supporting neighbourhoods that thrive. South Yorkshire police have done some positive work on organised criminality and how this exploits people who are vulnerable, including those vulnerable due to poverty. The Youth Justice Service continued to maintain a low rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system and rates of re-offending are at their lowest in 6 years.

Skills & Employment support. There is a positive trend for reducing unemployment – both for all working age and those aged 16-24. We have made a fundamental shift in Sheffield City Council's commissioned employability services, Sheffield's Working, to support groups with low levels of employment and significant barriers to work in Sheffield, including people with learning difficulties and disabilities and people with mental health conditions. The key health organisations have put commitment to a work and health programme at the centre of their Strategic Transformation Plan.

We have seen a continued and increasing high number and proportion of young people in employment, education or training.

Good jobs with fair terms and conditions. Promotion of the Fair Employer Charter, developed and championed by business leaders in Sheffield including the Chamber of Commerce, has continued and there are now 38 organisations signed up to it. South Yorkshire Community Foundation, Sheffield Young Carers and several social landlords including Affinity Sutton and Guinness are paying the Living Wage or above for their employees. Many social landlords as well as Sheffield Council Housing service and others are focusing on offering apprenticeships and traineeships and having success in supporting people to progress into permanent jobs. These include Affinity Sutton, Guinness, Home Group and SYHA.

Focus on children. Our Best Start approach has been embedded in mainstream services and continues to be developed and reviewed in line with emerging evidence. Poorer children are doing better at Foundation Stage: both in absolute terms and compared to national averages. Childminders and primary schools in Sheffield are also improving more quickly than the national average.

A successful pilot event aimed at increasing skills and employment for families was held. It was developed in partnership between the Children's Centre, JCP, Local Work Club and the Council. It engaged families, received positive feedback and has had promising outcomes.

Tackling Health Inequalities is a key priority and new approaches are being developed. Health and other community services are being developed between the Council, CCG and VCF sector, through 16 neighbourhoods. This includes social prescribing for poverty reduction services and linked with the successful People Keeping Well programme.

Sheffield City Region has developed a **Social & Affordable Housing Compact**. The key aims of this are increasing supply of housing (especially affordable) and protecting the needs of vulnerable. Many Social Landlords as well as Sheffield City Council have signed up to the Compact. It has resulted in the production of bid led by SYHA in partnership with others, which seeks to double housing supply by the sector through a ring-fenced fund of £23m pa for the next 5 years. The Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), local MPs and councillors have put their weight behind it.

We've also looked at new information about **what works to reduce poverty**. Evidence suggests that we need to use a combined approach to have the best chance of success. This makes sense. People's lives are complicated and they have many different priorities to juggle. This means, for example, that we need to help people to improve their skills at the same time as creating more good jobs, and that we need to make sure more childcare is available where and when people need it at the same time as thinking about how people get to and from work and drop their children off. So, we have worked with the experts at Joseph Rowntree Foundation to check what we are doing and what we could be doing more of or doing differently. **Together, partners have agreed some clear actions over the next year.**

The early years of a child's life must set the foundations for a full and happy life, free from poverty. We will continue to focus on the early years and increase our emphasis on poverty reduction. This means we will make sure that families using health, education, family support and early help services can access interventions that reduce poverty. This will sometimes be about

offering support directly or in partnership and sometimes be about making sure people can get help from somewhere else.

We will **do more to support parental employment and childcare**. This means we will explore ways to increase places available for free early learning for disadvantaged two-year-olds in parts of the city where there are not enough. We will also make sure parents and carers are aware of and can take these places up once we have enough available.

Work ought to be a route out of poverty and we will **maximise opportunities to reduce in-work poverty**. We will change the ways in which we support people to move into work and to prevent them from slipping out of work to make them more focused on fair work with decent wages. We will also develop a plan for improving skills and progress within work that is explicitly aimed at reducing poverty. In this area, we will champion a focus on households where people have disabilities and/or long-term health conditions including mental health, and on households with children, especially single parents.

To be successful, we will need **effective economic growth that reduces poverty**. We will work with colleagues in Sheffield City Partnership Board and at Sheffield City Region to achieve this.

The **important work developed in the new Financial Inclusion strategy** will contribute significantly to helping people in work and in poverty and partners are committed to this strategy.

We would like to grow the number of houses that people can afford. We need to focus in particular on privately rented homes. Some local landlords and council housing services have developed an agreement about how to work together to increase the number of affordable homes available, including an emphasis on access for vulnerable people. We will **promote increased sign-up and impact of this Social & Affordable Housing Compact**.

We will **support specialist services that reduce poverty to work better together**, such as employment, health and income hubs. We will also encourage, seek funding for and encourage links with developments that aim to tackle the poverty premium through offering ways to access lower cost food, energy, transport, credit, insurance and other household basics.

We will **continue to campaign for action to tackle the structural causes of poverty** and raise awareness of the hunger and hardship in our communities that are symptoms of lack of sufficient money. In particular, partners are keen to ensure that any voluntary support given does not lead to a lack of action to address the gap between income and the costs of essentials and this will be a focus for several partners this year.

We will work together to **nurture and support strong and resilient communities across the city**. This will mainly be through continued development of joint working and building on community assets. We know what works from research and our own experience. We know that it is better for services to be co-ordinated and to address people's needs in the round, that people prefer to access and offer help in ways that feel normal and embedded in their communities. We will support neighbourhood and locality working and we will particularly focus on embedding poverty reduction services within these approaches.

We will re-orient ourselves as a partnership so that we are looking further ahead. This means we want to think more about the future and changing context of our city so that we can **get ahead of the challenges, be more prepared and less reactive**. As a small way of beginning this process, we will devote at least two public workshops to this. We will work with people in the city and

outside of it to think about the big changes over the next 10 to 20 years and consider them from a poverty and fairness perspective. Our intention here is to consider what we can be doing now to try to 'design out' poor outcomes for the future.

We will **increase activity to tackle the stigma of poverty and campaign for fairness**. We know that people across the city are making huge contributions to this work, but don't always feel connected to the partnership or know how to keep in touch with developments or influence decisions. We will build on the positive developments from the Our Fair City campaign to work with the growing movement of people in Sheffield committed to Fairness and tackling stigma.

National decisions mean that poverty is expected to continue increasing. Partners who want to tackle poverty have less money and resources than we used to. **However hard it gets, we promise that we will work harder. Join us as we do everything we can to make our Sheffield the fairest city in the country.**