



London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Child Poverty Strategy 2011-14



Introduction

In the United Kingdom today, there are 3.8 million children living in poverty.¹ This equates to almost a third of all children. Child poverty, its causes and its consequences, reduces life chances and is at the heart of inequality. Tackling child poverty is therefore important to everyone concerned with improving outcomes for children. The Child Poverty Act 2010 placed a legal obligation on all Local Authorities and their delivery partners to cooperate in the bid to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty; to conduct a local needs assessment and produce a child poverty strategy. The coalition Government remains “committed to ending child poverty by 2020” and the duties of the Child Poverty Act 2010 remain.

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is a prosperous borough, with many families enjoying a very high standard of living. It has outstanding local amenities including many parks, commons and village greens, renowned sporting venues, national historical and world heritage sites and is a vibrant locality for arts and culture. It is also rated as one of the safest boroughs in London.

However, behind this picture of success there are real challenges. There are pockets of relative deprivation and within these pockets, there are children living in poverty. The Council and key partners are committed to tackling this and maintain the single, clear ambition of the Children and Young People’s Plan: “to ensure that all children and young people in Richmond upon Thames, whatever their background, lead safe, happy and healthy lives with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential”. This is reflected in the commitment in the Children and Young People’s Plan to “support all children, young people and their families to prosper, and reduce the impact of poverty”.

In keeping with its legal obligations and to better understand and then address child poverty in the borough, the Council has undertaken a child poverty needs assessment which includes findings from a consultation exercise that was carried out with children, young people and their families to gather their views and experiences of child poverty in Richmond Borough.

This strategy details the key findings from the needs assessment and consultation exercise and sets out what actions Richmond Council will be taking to aim to alleviate child poverty in the borough.

¹ Barnados Website, 2011

What is child poverty?

There is no single, universally accepted standard definition of poverty. Modern definitions of poverty have moved away from conceptions based on a lack of physical necessities towards broader measures that affect the standard of living. As such, the European Union's working definition of poverty is:

"People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care, barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted."²

This definition recognises that poverty is not just about income but about the effective exclusion of people living in poverty from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.

What is the impact of child poverty?

The experience of poverty in childhood can be highly damaging and the effects of poverty are both pervasive and disruptive. Poverty permeates every part of a child's life from economic and material disadvantages, to impacting negatively on their health and their education, through to the personal and more hidden aspects of poverty associated with shame, sadness and the fear of difference and stigma.

There are also significant long term effects of children being brought up in poverty. As adults, they are more likely to suffer ill-health, be unemployed or homeless. They are more likely to become involved in offending, drug or alcohol abuse and more likely to be involved in abusive relationships. Once in poverty, children often stay in poverty well into adult life.

Furthermore, child poverty costs us all, both financially and socially. Children who grow up poor are more likely to leave school without qualifications, have lower employment chances, thus restricting their ability to get a good job and financially contribute to society.

² European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2009

Key findings of child poverty in Richmond Borough

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment has found that child poverty in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is the lowest of all the London Boroughs and one of the lowest nationally- the proportion of children in poverty in the borough is between 9.2% and 11.5% depending on which measure is used³. This compares to a London average of 20.9% and a national average of 30.8%. The statistics below, which are often used to demonstrate child poverty, illustrate this:

- It is the least deprived borough in London and one of the least deprived boroughs nationally;
- It is one of the least ethnically diverse boroughs in London;
- It is the second safest borough in London;
- It has the 10th lowest homeless acceptances out of the 33 London Boroughs- nationally however London has higher levels of homelessness than the rest of the country;
- Babies born in the borough are likely to have a relatively good start in life;
- There is high quality childcare provision;
- There is good achievement in schools when compared to London averages and nationally;
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility in the borough is lower than the national average;
- It is one of the healthiest boroughs in the country;
- It has one of the lowest levels of childhood obesity in the country;
- It has one of the lowest levels of teenage pregnancy nationally;
- It has high numbers of economically active residents when compared to the national average;
- The unemployment rate is low when compared to both the London and national average;
- It has one of the lowest levels of youth unemployment nationally; and
- It has a lower level of benefit claimants than both the London and national average.

However, despite overall child poverty levels in the borough being low, there are still pockets where child poverty levels are high. In fact, depending on which measure of child poverty is used⁴, there are between 3,500 and 4,435 children who are considered to be living in poverty in Richmond Borough.

The needs assessment has identified nine Lower Super Output Areas⁵ (LSOAs) within the borough that have high levels of child poverty and that demonstrate many of the key characteristics associated with child poverty. These areas are set out in the top half of the table below. As a comparison, an example of one of the least deprived areas is included at the bottom of the table:

³ Detailed descriptions of the poverty measures can be found in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment

⁴ Detailed descriptions of the poverty measures can be found in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment

⁵ A detailed description of a LSOA can be found in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2011-12

Quindrat	Percentage of children in poverty	Level of deprivation (percentile rank of IDACI ⁶ - lower = more deprived)	No. of children	No. of families	No. of Lone parents claiming Income Support- Nov 2010	No. of Lone parents claiming Job Seekers Allowance- April 2011	No. of children eligible for FSM
Areas with high levels of child poverty and many of the key characteristics associated with child poverty							
Ham and Richmond (1 LSOA)	40%	13.8%	400	230	40	63	31.5%
Hampton and Hampton Hill (4 LSOAs)	26.1%	28.1%	410	225	20	30	16.7%
	27.3%	22.2%	420	245	30	20	23.4%
	42.1%	9.3%	325	190	35	39	29.2%
	25.5%	26.6%	380	220	25	33	23.4%
Heathfield, Whitton and West Twickenham (2 LSOAs)	34.6%	23.8%	415	235	20	32	23.9%
	43.7%	9.6%	520	300	50	50	32.1%
Kew, Mortlake, Barnes and East Sheen (2 LSOAs)	33.8%	20.7%	325	190	15	38	32.4%
	33.1%	21.9%	380	215	25	36	26.8%
One of the least deprived areas in the borough							
Kew, Mortlake, Barnes and East Sheen	0%	99.6%	465	235	0	7	0.6%

As shown above, all of the LSOAs with high levels of child poverty demonstrate similar characteristics that are associated with child poverty such as:

- Falling within the 30% most deprived areas nationally;
- High numbers of lone parents;
- High numbers of benefit claimants;
- High numbers of borough pupils eligible for FSM;
- A high concentration of social housing;
- Increasing number of enquiries to the Citizens Advice Bureau about topics such as benefits, debt and housing; and
- Two of the areas also have a higher than borough average of non-white ethnic groups.

⁶ A detailed description of the IDACI can be found in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2011-12

Child Poverty Consultation

As part of the needs assessment, a consultation exercise was carried out with families who live in Richmond Borough. The purpose of this consultation was to gain a greater understanding of the experience of poverty in the borough and to gain some insight into potential actions that could help to mitigate the impact of poverty. Focus groups were held with a total of 41 individuals who were drawn mainly from the most deprived areas of Richmond Borough⁷.

The parents and carers amongst the participants were asked to identify the specific issues that exist within Richmond Borough that are having a negative impact on the life chances of their children, and to come up with any actions that could be undertaken to alleviate those issues. The responses are set out in the table below:

Specific issues in Richmond Borough	Action to address
Education, employment and training for parents and carers- including childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer more courses for parents and carers • Support with cost / accessibility of childcare for parents and carers training or in education • Increase awareness of how working impacts on benefits • Support to make decisions about the family • Ensure that childcare is flexible enough for parents to be able to return to work
Housing for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable rent • Fairer points system- those living in borough should be provided housing • Larger supply of housing • More appropriate housing e.g. for larger/ families with children • Support with housing/ benefit entitlements • Prioritisation for those who are most vulnerable such as experiencing domestic violence or with depression
Safe environments for families and crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement more police monitoring and police cameras • Increase the number of activities available, particularly for teenagers • Improve the environment e.g. clean up broken glass, fine people whose dogs foul, more maintenance, more bins and collections to reduce litter
Good health for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that every child is registered with a General Practitioner (GP) • Reduction of hazardous litter • Support for affordable and nutritious food • Provide easily accessible information about health services • Ensure that there are enough Health Visitors and GPs available who are good quality and with low turnover
Financial support for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier access to and more information about benefits/ entitlements • More financial support for those who are not entitled to benefits/ entitlements but need support • Offer more advice on budgeting, debt and benefits/ entitlements where appointments can be arranged easily. This may be through a single case worker or an advisor based at the Children's Centre • More activities for children and big families
Good education for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More nursery places • More activities for children and young people • More information about nursery places
Transport for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More spacious buses for buggies • More affordable public transport • Free/ cheaper parking • More frequent bus service

⁷ Details can be found in the Richmond Child Poverty Consultation Report

Strategic approach to tackling child poverty in Richmond Borough

The child poverty needs assessment has demonstrated that child poverty in the borough, when compared to both London and national averages, is low. Given this, the decision has been made to tackle child poverty through a targeted, rather than universal, approach, focusing on those areas in the borough where child poverty is at its highest. To this end, Richmond Council and its partners currently offer a range of services aimed at helping those families who are most likely to be in poverty. This includes:

- **Children's Centres-** children centre provision in each of the five Quindrats delivered through a partnership between the Council, schools, the Primary Care Trust, Richmond Housing Partnership, the Metropolitan Police, the voluntary and community sector, Jobcentre Plus, the private sector and local families. The Children's Centres offer a range of services for families who may be in poverty including:
 - Adult education and family learning;
 - Child and family health services;
 - Citizens Advice Bureau drop-in sessions;
 - Early years provision;
 - Family support and parental outreach;
 - Jobcentre Plus drop-in sessions;
 - Job skills sessions;
 - Literacy classes for parents;
 - Midwifery and health visiting services;
 - Parents returning to work sessions;
 - Specialist services such as speech and language therapy and child and adolescent mental health support;
 - Targeted support and outreach services to parents and carers and children who have been identified as most in need; and
 - Young Parents Group.
- **Family Information Service-** provide impartial advice and guidance to parents and carers to help with childcare costs, childcare brokerage service, disability support, signposting to charitable organisations who may offer assistance, financial information, parenting support, and signposting to information for new parents or lone parents.
- **Family Support Service-** work with the most high risk and vulnerable families in Richmond Borough. Family Support Workers support families with children 0 to 18 years old who have multiple and complex issues including domestic violence, and parental drug and alcohol and mental health problems. This involves developing a team around the family to make sure the needs of the family are addressed.
- **Financial Inclusion Task Group-** made up of Citizens Advice Bureau, the Money Advice Service, Thamesbank Credit Union and the four largest housing associations in the borough- Richmond Housing Partnership, Richmond Churches, Thames Valley and London and the Quadrant, who work together to tackle financial exclusion.
- **Pupil and Student Finance Service-** offer advice and guidance including travel awards for 16-19 year olds in schools and colleges; home to school travel grants; and entitlements to free school meals.
- **Registered Housing Providers in Richmond Borough-** actively seeking to address worklessness by providing welfare and benefit advice and volunteering opportunities and by undertaking a range of financial inclusion activities.

- **Richmond Citizens Advice Bureau**- offering free and impartial advice on a range of issues including benefits, debt, education, employment, housing and tax.
- **Richmond Homestart**- support vulnerable children in the borough by offering outreach services through volunteers giving regular support, friendship and practical help to families under stress in their own homes, helping to prevent family crisis and breakdown.
- **Richmond Jobcentre Plus**- offer advice, information and help to prepare for, find and stay in work. Information about benefits and other financial matters is also provided.
- **Single Point of Access (SPA)**- acts as a single gateway for all incoming contacts into Richmond Borough's children's services, providing telephone and web-based support to professionals, children, young people and parents. The SPA acts as a central information hub which coordinates information from a range of sources on children with additional needs, as well as offering signposting to universal provision.
- **Thamesbank Credit Union**- helps to address financial exclusion by offering saving accounts without the risk of savings being lost and providing affordable credit to people living and working in the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond.

Action plan

Moving forward therefore, the strategic focus of the strategy is to maintain the current level of targeted service provision aimed at those families most in need. However, the consultation exercise has shown that there is a need to better publicise the support available to families.

At an operational level, in response to the findings of the needs assessment and the consultation exercise, a number of actions have been identified which build on the ongoing work of the Council and its partners. These actions align with the commitments set out in the Richmond upon Thames Child and Young People's Plan 2009-13.

Benefit	Action
Ensuring services are commissioned to meet those most in need, focused on those areas that demonstrate many of the key characteristics of child poverty	
Enabling access to a range of high quality and joined protective and preventative services in their local area (4.2.1)	Establish borough wide commissioning in place of quindrat commissioning to deliver preventative services
	Establish multi-agency coordinated early years services to support families with children with additional needs- and locating other services as possible in quindrat areas
	Increase multi-agency working through the Common Assessment Process
Ensuring all children with additional needs are identified early, referred to appropriate services, and monitored through effective information sharing between agencies and professionals through the establishment of a Single Point of Access	Further develop the Single Point of Access to include a broader range of children's services and partner agencies including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, health providers and the Police
Ensuring there are sufficient education, employment and training opportunities available for parents and carers, and that opportunities that are available are effectively publicised	
Parents can access high quality childcare to allow them to work or undertake training or education (3.1.1)	Ensure there are sufficient childcare places of a type to meet parental demand
	Ensure information on childcare and early education is easily accessible to parents
Ensuring information about free or affordable activities for children and young people is readily available and effectively publicised	
1.3.2 Parents and carers provide high quality support to their children to support their wellbeing (1.3.2)	Provide a range of early support and intervention for parents and carers
2.1.1 All parents and carers are supported to help their children develop and learn through the early years (2.1.1)	Ensure that all families can access high quality early years provision for children aged 0-5 years
	Ensure sufficient childcare places are available of a type to meet parental demand
	Provide integrated, accessible services for family support through children's centres
	Integrate provision for disabled children into mainstream provision, as far as is reasonably practicable
NEW BENEFIT: The needs of households where the child or parent has a disability are being met	Ensure commissioning intentions reflect the specific needs of households where the child or parent has a disability
Ensuring that financial information about benefits and entitlements is readily available and those organisations that can offer financial support are effectively publicised	
All young people are provided with high quality information, advice and guidance and supported to find learning pathways which successfully engage them in post-16 education and training (3.3.2)	Continue to promote apprenticeships and diplomas as alternative routes to qualifications
	Ensure high quality information, advice and guidance in schools
	Ensure high quality information, advice and guidance for vulnerable groups
Reduced inequality in achievement post-16 between	Continue the development of high quality post 16

Benefit	Action
Ensuring services are commissioned to meet those most in need, focused on those areas that demonstrate many of the key characteristics of child poverty	
higher and lower income groups (3.2.2)	provision accessible to all young people
Harder to reach young people receive advice and support to succeed in education and training post-16 (3.2.4)	Advice and support is in place to support harder to reach young people succeed in education and training post-16
NEW BENEFIT: Ensuring advice and guidance that is available to those in poverty is sufficiently promoted and publicised (from Housing Services)	Promoting the Thamesbank Credit Union to those using children's centres in the borough
	Work with Registered Providers to further publicise the work and training events and money advice and management sessions that they hold
Reducing the gap between FSM and non- FSM pupils	
The gap in attainment between those eligible for free schools meals and those not eligible is reduced (2.2.5)	Narrow the FSM gap further, particularly for more able FSM pupils at Key Stage 2
	Focus on narrowing the gap at all Key Stages

Monitoring progress and performance

The Richmond upon Thames Children and Young People's Trust Board will take the responsibility to lead on the delivery, monitoring and review of the strategy and needs assessment.

Delegated responsibility for progressing the actions in the strategy will be given to the Families, Health and Wellbeing Delivery Board and the Learning and Attainment Delivery Board as the actions primarily fall within the remit of these boards. The action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it is still fit for purpose. Actions may be added, removed or amended as required. In addition, a dashboard of child poverty indicators will be developed and will be reported annually.

The strategy and needs assessment will both be refreshed in three years. However, both will remain 'live' documents and may be subject to revision as context and needs change.

Equality implications

The needs assessment has shown that there are specific groups of individuals that are more likely to be affected by poverty and therefore are considered 'at risk'. These groups include children in care, teenage mothers, single parents, specific ethnic minority groups and parents or children with disabilities.

As such, the strategy will seek to have a positive impact on these groups by delivering targeted services in areas identified as demonstrating the key characteristics of child poverty.

An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been completed for the strategy.

Links to other Richmond Borough policies and strategies

This strategy links to a number of other policies, strategies and projects within Richmond Borough that seek to have a positive impact on those families who may be experiencing poverty:

Richmond Borough Investment Plan (2011)- sets out the latest position on the borough's affordable housing priorities. The Council is committed to ensuring that the more vulnerable people of Richmond upon Thames are protected. Tackling homelessness, overcrowding and supporting vulnerable people to live independently are important priorities although the supply of affordable homes is constrained by many factors such as the lack of available land within the borough.

Family Intervention Project- work to turn around the behaviour of families in the borough who have been identified as most 'at risk' to reduce their impact on the community. This brings stability to the families' lives, prevent homeless and improve opportunities for children. It involves a combination of multi- agency intensive support with focused challenge and includes whole family assessment, ongoing planning and review, and follow up and post-intervention support.

Housing and Homelessness Strategies- the borough will be developing a new Housing Strategy during 2012/13. A new Homelessness Strategy will also be published during March 2012 which will address the following key priorities:

- Homelessness prevention and advising on the range of housing opportunities;
- Homelessness and the housing market;
- Homelessness and vulnerable groups;
- Preventing rough sleeping and addressing the needs of rough sleepers; and
- Providing appropriate accommodation for homeless households.

Richmond Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)- provide assessment and treatment to referred children and adolescents up to the age of 18. Those children who are referred to CAMHS often come from families that demonstrate the key characteristics of child poverty.

Risky Behaviour Strategy- focuses on reducing risky behaviour by children and young people such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, having sex early or with many partners, or gambling. These are often caused by the lack of protective factors such as positive role models, good parenting and high self-esteem. Those children who display risky behaviour often come from families that demonstrate the key characteristics of child poverty.

Uplift Strategy- the purpose of the Uplift Strategy is to encourage, coordinate, seize and maximise opportunities to rejuvenate five of the most deprived areas in the borough in Barnes, Ham, Hampton North, Mortlake and Whitton. Funding is being provided to improve the local areas for residents, thereby improving the environment in which they live.