

Tackling Poverty in Sheffield

Poverty and inequality are scars on our city. Around 1 in 5 Sheffield people live in poverty at any one time. Over 25,000 children and almost a third of all children under ten in Sheffield currently live in poverty.

Many people are working long hours for low pay and without certainty, the cost of living is going up and there have been cuts to support services. It is intolerable that so many people are struggling to feed themselves and their families, and that children are growing up in households where there isn't always enough money to pay for essentials such as a healthy diet, a decent, warm home, a winter coat or the opportunity to take part in school trips and activities. In Sheffield, almost two-thirds of the financial impact of the government's welfare reforms will be felt by families with children. Factors outside of local control mean that child and all-age poverty is set to rise nationally over the next three to five years.

Poverty is about not being able to make ends meet. But it is not just about money. It is also about health and education, community, confidence and resilience. Poverty can blight lives and prevent both children and adults from fulfilling their potential.

We cannot tackle poverty for children without supporting the households and communities within which they live, and we know that no single organisation can do this alone. As organisations and city leaders from across Sheffield we have therefore committed to acting together as a partnership to tackle poverty.

We are not starting from scratch; we achieved some important progress against the targets in our last strategy and we are continuing to work towards the recommendations of the Fairness Commission. For example, we have the third highest proportion of teenagers in apprenticeships of any local authority in the country and we are launching Sheffield Money, which will provide an affordable and ethical alternative to high-cost credit.

However, we know that we have much more to do and that we won't achieve everything we need to in the lifetime of this strategy, or probably even the next. We know it will take a long time to shift the poverty and inequalities in our city but we know that there are things we can do to help people get by and improve their lives.

We've looked at the facts and figures (you can find these in our Needs Assessment). We've listened to what people in Sheffield have told us about their experiences and what is important to them. We've also looked at what has worked elsewhere in this country and across the world and worked with our universities and with national charities and research organisations to make sure we learn from the experience and learning that others have gathered.

Evidence suggests that we need to use a combined approach to have the best chance of success. This is common 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.

Our vision is for children and adults in Sheffield to be able to afford to meet their fundamental needs. At the heart of our strategy is a commitment to those in Sheffield who are struggling to meet minimum needs – children, families, people and communities.

To achieve this, together, we will:

1. **Make tackling poverty a big priority for all public bodies in the city.** We will tackle the stigma often felt by people in poverty through our Fair City Campaign, and will introduce new formal processes to consider the impacts upon poverty when major public bodies make decisions
2. **Take action to make things better for children and adults who are struggling and in poverty right now.** We will provide more financial advice, give people better access to affordable credit through credit unions and the new Sheffield Money initiative and tackle inequalities across the city in crime and the environment.
3. **Tackle some of the root causes of poverty and give our children the best chance of a poverty-free future.** We will provide more help for people to improve their skills and help finding jobs, generate more good quality jobs and more good quality, affordable childcare where and when people need it. We will give children a great start in life and a good education, improve health and tackling health inequalities and provide more affordable, decent homes including over 1000 new council homes by 2020.

Will also work hard to start to influence some of the big issues that are not under our direct control and will make the case to Government about how and where devolving powers and funds at the local level could reduce poverty. For example, we're working on a pilot scheme with GPs and JobcentrePlus on a programme to support young people and adults facing significant barriers to work, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities or health conditions. We want to scale this up if we can demonstrate it is successful. We would like to do a deal with Government on a devolved and integrated employment service for those furthest from the labour market and co-commissioning of a more responsive Work Programme.

The combined impact of the specific actions within this strategy is hard to quantify and poverty in Sheffield is also influenced by national and international circumstances. We will review our progress regularly as a partnership to ensure we are on-track and manage any risks as early as possible in order that we maintain our position as the core city outside of London with the second lowest rate of relative child poverty.

Our strategy's development has been overseen by the Tackling Poverty Partnership Reference Group, chaired by Dean Peter Bradley, with representatives from various organisations, including Sheffield Executive Board, SY Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Jobcentre Plus, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority, and the Voluntary, Community & Faith sector. It sets out how we will work towards meeting this challenge over the next three years and the ambitious approaches that will be needed to make significant reductions in the longer-term.

The Action Plan, attached to the strategy is a 'living document'. It will be developed, added to and strengthened over the course of its lifetime. We will develop bolder and more ambitious actions, create opportunities and respond to changing needs and emerging evidence relating to adults and children in poverty.

It's not going to be easy and it's going to take a long time. We're going to need to persevere and keep chipping away at this and at the same time try to make the bigger structural changes that are required. But we know that Sheffielders are determined people and that all our partners want to make our city fairer. This gives us the best chance of success.

When the period covered by this strategy ends, we want to be on our way to achieving our vision. Stay involved as we try to make Sheffield an even better place for everyone.