



Bedfordshire

Child Poverty Action Group

Campaigning against family and child poverty

ANNUAL REPORT – 2010

Report on work in 2010

Bedfordshire CPAG is a local branch of Child Poverty Action Group, the renowned national campaigning charity on child poverty issues.

Our main role as Bedfordshire CPAG is to make sure that child poverty issues, and a commitment to tackle child poverty, are put, and kept, on the local agenda. If we measure the Group's success against that aim we would have to say that 2010 was again a very successful year. However, it should be acknowledged that this "success" was mainly due to external factors rather than the direct work of our local Group!

Last year was a landmark year as it saw the introduction of the Child Poverty Act 2010 which, for the first time, made tackling child poverty a legal requirement for the Government and for local authorities and their partners. The Act requires the Government to produce an annual Child Poverty Report which will monitor its success in moving towards the target of eradicating child poverty in the UK by 2020. In addition local authorities and their partners will have to produce, and regularly update, a local Child Poverty Needs Assessment and develop a Child Poverty Strategy for their local area.

In Bedfordshire considerable steps forward had been made in previous years in beginning to address local child poverty. However, unfortunately the Local Government Reorganisation in 2009 delayed further progress to some extent because of the time it took to change countywide arrangements and build up new structures in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. Nevertheless things are now moving forward more quickly with the development, in late 2010, of a draft Child Poverty Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and a draft Child Poverty Needs Assessment for Bedford Borough. The big question is whether this strategic planning will actually have any real impact in tackling local child poverty – especially during the continuing poor economic situation. So the work of Beds CPAG may have to increase in future years especially in terms of monitoring progress in reducing child poverty,

Although Bedfordshire CPAG cannot obviously take direct credit for all of the recent developments, it is worth noting the input that the Group has had over the last year.

- **Child poverty in Bedford Borough**

A new Poverty Task Force was formed in Bedford Borough in 2010 following the dissolution of the countywide Child Poverty Task Group in 2009. The Beds CPAG Chair is a member of the Task Force in his role as Secretary of Bedfordshire Advice Forum. The Task Force has recently produced a draft Child Poverty Needs Assessment and again the Beds CPAG Chair (through his consultancy work) has had an input into that. Also the documentary film on child poverty, produced in 2009, was launched in a DVD format in 2010 with additional training features included. Both the Beds CPAG Chair and Secretary had an input into material used on the DVD. The Child Poverty Task Force reports back to the Borough's Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership, which is responsible for monitoring NI 116, which is used as a local indicator for child poverty. The Beds CPAG Chair is a member of this Thematic Partnership.

- **Child poverty in Central Bedfordshire**

In Central Bedfordshire responsibility for NI 116 has transferred from the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership to the Children's Trust. A new Child Poverty Task Group has been formed to take forward child poverty issues. The Beds CPAG Chair sits on this group, representing the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership. The Task Group has recently completed a draft Child Poverty Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

- **Publicity on child poverty issues**

Regular publicity is produced locally on child poverty issues including:

- A special, regular page on child poverty in **Poverty News** – although funding for this countywide newsletter ended in March 2010, some further funding has recently been awarded to produce a Bedford version of the newsletter, and the first edition was published in December 2010.



Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Strategy

Update - Bedford Borough

The Child Poverty Act, which became law in March 2010, brought with it a duty for every local authority area to prepare and publish a Child Poverty Needs Assessment (CPNA) and a Child Poverty Strategy.

The Bedford Borough Poverty Task Force, which was formed earlier this year, is preparing a draft Needs Assessment to send out for consultation early in the New Year. The CPNA will then be used to develop the Child Poverty Strategy later in 2011.

The latest NI 116 statistics for Bedford Borough show that the total number of children under 16 living in poverty was 6,095. This equates to 20.1% of all children under 16 and is the 5th highest area in the Eastern Region.

Child Poverty in the Borough is close to the average rate for England at 21.9% but higher than the regional average which is 16.8% in the East of England.

The latest NI 116 statistics that are available are for August 2008. These were published in October 2009 and can be seen on the HMRC website: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/lets/annual-statements/2009/116.htm>

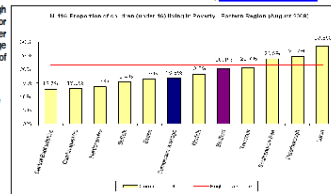
Consultation workshop for the voluntary sector

Thursday 13th January, 9.30 - 12.30
CVS, Bromham Road, MK40 2AA

This workshop is being organised by the Voluntary Organisations for Children, young people & families to give voluntary sector organisations an opportunity to comment on the local Child Poverty Needs Assessment and shape the Child Poverty Strategy.

If your work is related to lacking child/family poverty you may wish to attend this workshop.

To book your place go to: <http://www.vocv.org.uk/>
For more information contact: Linda Buleed, VOCV Officer - 01234 354366, email: linda@vocv.org



Majority of poor children are from working households

A report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, published earlier this month, has found that the number of children living in poverty in the UK has risen to 2.1 million; however the number who live in workless households has fallen to 1.5 million.

A co-author of the report, Tom MacInnes has said "With more than half of all children in poverty belonging to working families, it is simply not possible to base anti-poverty policies on the idea that work alone is a route out of poverty."

The number of impoverished children has dropped overall to 3.7 million - this fall is believed to be related to the rise in child benefit and child tax credit in 2008. Save the Children's Head of UK Policy, Sally Copley, has said that this report shows "work doesn't pay enough to keep [families] and their children above the headline. The danger is that cuts to working tax credit and childcare support will further penalise working families already struggling to make ends meet."

Narrow the Gap Conference

The 18th November saw Bedford Borough Learning Exchange's first annual conference on the subject of narrowing the gap in attainment between pupils on free school meals and their peers.

The main speakers were Estelle Morris, previously Secretary of State for Education, and Brian Glover, Chief Education Officer at the Borough Council who spoke about the gap in attainment and how many children the Borough needs to work with to close the gap.

At KS1 there is a 12% gap in those attaining level 2 in reading. At KS2, a 24% gap in children achieving level 4+ in English and maths. And at KS4 the gap is even wider at 35% between poorer pupils and their peers (those achieving 5A* to C including English and maths).

Emphasis was placed on both the Local Authority and the schools' part in raising awareness and improvement of under achievement in pupils on free school meals.

- Updates on the **Bedfordshire CPAG website** - which is now regularly updated following funding, awarded in 2009, by the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation. The website is also being re-designed and will be ready to launch soon.

www.bedscpag.org.uk

Group officers in 2010

Bedfordshire CPAG officers were elected at the group's last AGM in January 2010.

Chair: Len Simkins **Vice Chair:** Pat Horn **Secretary:** Joe Greene **Treasurer:** Joe Greene

Membership and contact details

Branch membership now stands at 17 people. Details of Beds CPAG activities, and general information on child poverty issues, are distributed by email to these members.

The future of Bedfordshire CPAG

For the last five years Bedfordshire CPAG has not held regular branch meetings. Instead members have kept in touch by email, through occasional branch newsletters, and at the AGM.

Although we remain a relatively small group, and we do not have regular meetings, we are still managing to get directly involved in various important local activities - as can be seen from the report above.

I would propose that we continue with this strategy in 2011 and try to increase out branch membership.

Len Simkins (Chair) – February 2011