



Bedfordshire

Child Poverty Action Group

Campaigning against family and child poverty

ANNUAL REPORT – 2009

Report on work in 2009

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

Although tackling child poverty has been high on the national political agenda for a number of years, child poverty is still a major issue in the UK, with about 3.9 million children living in poverty. Even though Bedfordshire is a relatively prosperous area, there are pockets of high deprivation - with 19% of children in Bedford Borough living in workless families and 12% in Central Bedfordshire. We see this situation as unacceptable and are committed to trying to eradicate child poverty in our local area.

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 2009 was by far the most successful year in the Group's 11 year history. In 2009 remarkable progress was made in terms of getting child poverty acknowledged locally. Although Bedfordshire CPAG cannot obviously take direct credit for all of these developments, it is worth noting the various important strategic developments that occurred last year:

- **Child poverty in Bedfordshire**

In our 2008 Annual Report we reported that Bedfordshire had adopted NI 116 (an indicator on child poverty) in its new Local Area Agreement - which is the contract between the local area and the Government. The initial work on this resulted in a launch event in November 2008 to create the Bedfordshire Child Poverty Network. The work continued into 2009 when a Child Poverty Task Group was formed from the wider network to manage the work on NI 116. The Task Group commissioned some research into child poverty in Bedfordshire (see overleaf for a summary), commissioned a documentary film on local child poverty, and began to draft a child poverty strategy for the local area.

- **Child poverty in Bedford Borough**

Following Local Government Reorganisation in April 2009, Bedfordshire County Council was abolished and was replaced by two new unitary authorities - Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. In Bedford Borough, NI 116 was transferred into the Borough's new LAA. Since then work has continued in the Borough to raise the profile of child poverty issues including:

- Management of NI116 by the Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture Thematic Partnership which reports to Bedford Borough Partnership Board
- Adoption of tackling child poverty as a key objective of the new Children's Trust in the Borough
- Agreement to include an aim on tackling poverty in the Borough's new Sustainable Community Strategy
- Discussion of child poverty issues, and launch of the child poverty documentary film, at the Bedford Assembly in November 2009

- **Child poverty in Central Bedfordshire**

Following LGR in April 2009, NI 116 was also transferred into Central Bedfordshire's new LAA. Since then work has continued in the area to raise the profile of child poverty issues including:

- Management of NI116 by the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership which reports to the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership
- Creation of a Child Poverty Strategy Group which has developed 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** - the newsletter of the Bedfordshire Tackling Poverty Together Group
- A dedicated child poverty page on the TPT Group's website
- Updates on the Bedfordshire CPAG **website** - which is now regularly updated following funding in 2009 from the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation

www.bedscpag.org.uk

Child Poverty in Bedfordshire

Bedford Borough

- **19% of children (over 6,500 children) live in workless families**
In the wards of Kingsbrook, Queens Park, Cauldwell and Goldington this figure rises to over 30%
- **39% of children (over 13,600) live in low income families**
In the wards of Queens Park, Cauldwell, Kingsbrook and Goldington this figure rises to over 50%



Central Bedfordshire

- **12% of children (over 6,600 children) live in workless families**
In the wards of Tithe Farm, Manshead and Parkside this figure rises to over 25%
- **27% of children (over 14,900 children) live in low income families**
In the wards of Tithe Farm, Parkside, Manshead and Northfields this figure rises to 40% or over

Group officers in 2009

Bedfordshire CPAG officers were elected at the group's last AGM in January 2009.

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

Membership and contact details

Branch membership now stands at 15 people. Details of Beds CPAG activities, and general information on child poverty issues, are regularly distributed by email to these members.

The future of Bedfordshire CPAG

For the last four years Bedfordshire CPAG has not held regular branch meetings. Instead members have kept in touch by email, through a branch newsletter, 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 2010 and try to increase our branch membership.

Len Simkins (Chair) – January 2010