

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty



March 2014



Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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Contents

<u>SELECT COMMITTEE - MEMBERSHIP</u>	3
Foreword	5
Original Brief	6
1.0 Executive Summary	8
2.0 Introduction	13
3.0 Background	13
4.0 Evidence	15
5.0 Conclusion	31
Glossary of Terms	32

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Foreword

At the outset of our scrutiny review, the Committee was reminded of the work of George McGonigle and the findings of his Stockton studies. His findings are succinctly distilled in the words of Professor Clare Bamba (2012):

“In 1936 George McGonigle’s study *“Poverty and Public Health* was a groundbreaking empirical study which challenged the Conservative–Liberal political orthodoxy of the time that considered the link between poverty, nutrition and mortality to be the fecklessness of poor mothers who either squandered their money or were too ignorant to provide healthy meals.

His Stockton studies showed clearly that the vast majority of poorer families, whether employed or unemployed, did not have an income that was sufficient to sustain a diet that was adequate to ward off disease and death: poverty, not ignorance, was the cause of morbidity and mortality amongst the poor and this poverty was not the fault of the individual families but of a society that provided inadequate wages and welfare benefits.”

75 years later and we seem no further forward. The latest Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on the 2012/13 poverty statistics paints a bleak picture both for those not working and for those who are poor but in work (for the first time on record, the majority of people in poverty are in working families). Their commentary concludes:

“If poverty is really to be tackled (as the euphemism goes), it is the shortcomings of powerful institutions and ideas that must be the object of relentless attention, not the poor themselves.”

The Committee was tasked with gaining a greater understanding of child poverty in Stockton and what steps could be taken locally to help address it and mitigate the effects. Our focus has been on the impacts of poverty on children, especially education and health and wellbeing.

We would like to pay tribute to the efforts of our officers and the various organisations and local voluntary and community groups operating in the Borough who seek to prevent and lessen the impact of poverty on family life. We particularly commend the teachers and staff at Stockton schools who work on the front line and are faced with providing support on a daily basis.

We commend our report to you for your serious consideration and hope that the recommendations may go some way in addressing the profound impact of poverty on the children of our Borough.

Cllr Jean O’Donnell - Chair



Councillor Jean O’Donnell
Chair



Councillor Eileen Johnson
Vice-Chair

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Sustainable Communities Strategy

- Wellbeing and achievement for adults, children and young people
This includes the Council Plan objective to reduce the impact of poverty on family life and the Tees Valley Unlimited Business Plan objective of improved economic inclusion.
- The work links in the general to the vision for Economic Renaissance in Stockton.
- Core improvement themes, particularly economic regeneration and transport; children and young people; and healthier communities and adults.

A framework for tackling Family Poverty

- Ensure that every child receives the best start in life
- Maximising Family income

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2018

The Strategy identified 'giving every child the best start in life' as a key priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board. The work is also relevant to the Strategy vision, particularly in relation to the following key themes: give every child the best start in life; enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives; create fair employment and good work for all; ensure a healthy standard of living for all; create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities; and strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

Though the prevalence of child poverty in Stockton Borough as a whole matches the England average (21.8%), there is great inequality between wards and many wards have a greater prevalence of child poverty than the England average. For example 47.6% of children in Stockton Town Centre live in poverty. Child poverty and income inequality in particular, have significant impacts on the health and life chances of the most disadvantaged in the population.

Under the Child Poverty Act (2010), local authorities are required to co-operate with statutory partners to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas. The Local Strategic Partnership is currently updating the framework for tackling family poverty in line with the refresh of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing board. Child poverty is linked to several key factors which Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council aims to address through its policies and partnership working, including:

- Raising aspirations
- Tackling worklessness
- Re-focussing on early intervention
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Maximising household income
- Creating 'family-friendly' neighbourhoods

The review aims to gain a greater understanding of child poverty in Stockton and what steps can be taken locally to help address it and / or mitigate the effects. Its particular focus will be the impacts of poverty on children (whether they live in a family context or not), especially education and health and wellbeing. The findings of the review will inform the

delivery of 'A Brighter Borough for All – Tackling Family Poverty across Stockton-on-Tees'.

The work should be carried out in the context of relevant current national policy drivers e.g. the welfare reforms and the current economic downturn, recommending any policies, services and interventions that may mitigate the impact of these factors.

This review has close links with the separate review of Welfare Reform and Financial Inclusion, and links to the Further Education/Employability review. However this review will have a particular emphasis on health and educational issues.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

The review will focus on health and education issues, and following recent work by the North East Child Poverty Commission, seeks to understand:

- The extent of child poverty in Stockton and related levels of need and impact
- The policies, services and interventions in place to address child poverty in Stockton in the context of national policy and evidence of best practice
- How well current policies, services and interventions address the extent of child poverty in Stockton and the related need, including any potential gaps
- The changes that may be made to policies, services and interventions based on best practice, national recommendations, evidence base and data

In addition to the steps listed above to assess the extent of the issue and provide recommendations in addressing it locally, the following steps may also be explored:

- Use and add to the evidence base
- Examine institutional behaviour e.g. co-production; localised elements of welfare reform
- Give people living in poverty a voice

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS, Clinical Commissioning Group, Registered providers of housing, key local partners including children's services providers, relevant VCS agencies and schools.

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty undertaken by the Committee during the Municipal Year 2013/14. The topic was identified for review at Scrutiny Liaison Forum and included in the 2013/14 Work Programme by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

1.2 The review sought to understand the impact of child poverty on a child's health and education and make recommendations on local action to help prevent and mitigate against this.

1.3 Government defines a household as being in poverty if its equivalised net income for the financial year is less than 60% of median equivalised net household income for the financial year.

1.4 There are four dimensions of child poverty captured under the Child Poverty Act 2010, each with a target to be met by 2020. They are:

- **Relative low income poverty** (below 60% median household income)
- **Absolute low income poverty** (below 60% of median household income held constant at 2010/11 level)
- **Persistent low income poverty** (below 60% of median household income for three years or longer)
- **Material deprivation** combined with relative low income (below 70% median household income and suffering from inability to afford essential spending needs)

1.5 The most recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) "Monitoring Poverty and Social Inclusion 2013" provides the following key statistics:

- 13 million people were in poverty in 2011/12
- Average incomes fell by 8% between 2008 and 2012. Incomes at the bottom have fallen further still and for longer
- The fall in medium incomes lowered the estimate of the number of people in relative poverty
- **The deterioration in average incomes means that fewer children are in relative poverty but more are in absolute poverty**
- 2 million families are no longer exempt from paying Council Tax
- Almost 5 million people were paid less than the living wage in 2012
- 1.4 million people were in part time work but cannot find a full time job
- Prices of food have risen faster than the rate of inflation over the last decade but utility bills have risen more quickly. Food banks, proving free food to people on low incomes get almost half of their referrals due to changes of faults in the benefit system
- **For the first time on record, the majority of people in poverty are in working families.** Two thirds of adults in these families are families in work

- While scattered across the country, **child poverty is clearly concentrated in urban areas** (of all sizes)
- **Children are much less likely to go without everyday items for reasons of cost. Essentially, parents prioritise their children's needs above their own**

1.6 There are approximately 130,000 children in the North East living in poverty which is around 23.9% of the total number of children. In Stockton, there are approximately 9400 children living in poverty which is about 21.9% of the total number of children, though this hides substantial inequality between wards.

1.7 Stockton is unusual in some respects as it is made up of some areas with very low levels of child poverty (e.g. Northern Parishes, Ingleby Barwick West) and some areas with very high levels of child poverty (e.g. Hardwick, Newtown, Stockton Town Centre).

1.8 Political rhetoric has tended to focus on “behavioural causes” – e.g. worklessness, poor parenting, poor financial management, bad lifestyle choices etc. Whereas academic research points to structural causes of poverty e.g. the economy, low income, unemployment etc.

1.9 The consequences of child poverty are severe:

- The poorest infants have an almost 10 times higher chance of dying suddenly in infancy than those in the highest income group.
- Acute illnesses are more likely to affect poor children and they are more likely to experience hospital admission.
- Children who live in poverty are twice as likely to live in bad housing. Overcrowding and spells living in temporary accommodation are also factors that affect children growing up in poverty.
- Poorer families often have to pay a ‘poverty premium’ of around £1,280 per year for good and services.
- The association between growing up in poverty and being poor in adulthood has become stronger since the 1970s

1.10 People living in poverty are less likely to benefit from education to the same degree as others; are less likely to be in a professional, managerial and skilled jobs; and are more likely to live in poor housing and in neighbourhoods where crime is more prevalent and where community safety is threatened. All of these conditions and circumstances can have an adverse effect on physical and mental health and well-being. (Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

1.11 Throughout the review a recurring theme has been the importance of income maximisation in lifting families out of poverty and reducing the risk of families getting into debt. The Committee were also made aware of the amount of unclaimed benefits in Teesside which could total £65 – 100 million per year.

1.12 Stockton District Advice and Information Service recommended that more home visiting services were needed offering holistic advice to families; earlier interventions including a benefit health check for all new parents; and more take up and income maximisation work, including:

- General and targeted publicity
- Specific advice and support to progress claims
- Co-ordinated campaigns

1.13 The Committee also learned about the vast array of support and advice services provided by the voluntary and community sector.

1.14 One of the projects highlighted was the A Fairer Start Project. This Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) led project targeted at the 0-3yrs age range was focusing on three outcomes: cognitive development, speech and language and nutrition. The programme identifies support according to the child's and family's level of need. A pilot is taking place in Stockton Town Centre which involves an assessment of all mothers in family context at the 12 week scan and post birth in order to ascertain need and refers to appropriate support package either through the VCS or statutory providers. The main features of the project:

- Community development based model
- Provision according to need not geographical area
- Appropriate level/ intensity of support
- Maximise contacts with universal provision

1.15 In order to raise the achievement of all disadvantaged pupils, the Government has provided pupil premium funding to schools. The funding is targeted at disadvantaged pupils from reception to Year 11 and applies to all children who have been eligible for free schools meals at any point in the last six years. The Committee received evidence from Head Teachers of Stockton Primary Schools about some of the innovative work that it being carried out utilising pupil premium fund to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

1.16 In conjunction with the range of interventions utilising pupil premium funding, the School Improvement Service were promoting the Poverty Proofing the School Day Initiative. The initiative was led by a local charity Children North East. This initiative helps schools to identify and overcome the barriers to learning that children and young people from families with less financial resource face. It enables schools to reduce the stigma and discrimination pupils' experience. Schools can choose to buy into different levels of help and support to complete an audit and develop an action plan.

1.17 The Committee were aware that there was school meals debt across the Borough but that the Council's Catering Service was introducing a new procedure from April 2014 to help prevent schools meals debt arising. The Committee welcomed this approach but felt that it was important that when these situations arose that parents were also signposted to other help and support.

1.18 The need to focus our resources more effectively and to support those most in need is set out in many of our approved strategies and is supported by the Medium Term Financial Plan.

1.19 These Strategies identify through policy statements, priorities and key actions our focus on supporting those most in need and protecting the vulnerable. Examples of these priorities are detailed below:

- Supporting economic recovery
- Provision of Affordable Housing
- Making available a range of affordable events, leisure activities and decent public open spaces for leisure and sporting activity.

- A safer borough
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children
- Prevention and Early Help
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Protecting frontline services wherever possible
- Targeting resources and services
- Promoting channel shift
- Exploring alternative models of service delivery
- Working in partnership to maximise support and resources
- Supporting the development of a sustainable voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Council Plan

- Effective prevention and early intervention
- Improve targeted early intervention services
- Narrow the attainment gap
- Improve outcomes for children and young people in care
- Ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding of our most vulnerable children and young people
- Support for families with a child or young person with a disability
- Reduce the impact of poverty on family life

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a health standard of living for all
- Create and develop health and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

1.20 Recent changes to the structures and focus of the Stockton Local Strategic Partnership are targeted specifically at tackling the poverty agenda. These changes create a real opportunity to focus specifically on poverty and target resources and activity to support those most affected.

1.21 The Stockton Local Strategic Partnership has adopted as its key focus the Brighter Borough for All - Tackling Family Poverty document, which has two key aims.

- Ensuring every child receives the best start in life
- Maximising family income

1.22 Work has commenced with the Locality Forums which sit under the strategic partnership to provide a better understanding of poverty at locality forum geographies and work with partners to make a difference in the locality for those most affected by poverty.

1.23 Mapping of support services in local areas is underway as part of the work of the newly establish Locality Forums.

1.24 The Committee recognise that there is much activity underway and that the targeted work of the new Locality Forums gave a real opportunity to make a difference and add

momentum to work already being undertaken as a result of the Council's overall strategic approach.

1.25 The Committee's recommendations seek to reduce the prevalence of child poverty through income maximisation and re-prioritisation on prevention and early intervention as well as reducing the impact of poverty on a child's health and education.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Committee supports and encourages the shift of resources from reaction to prevention and early intervention, in line with the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and as part of the Council's strategic approach and financial strategy.
- (2) That a myth busting guide is produced for use by Councillors and staff to challenge some of the myths and the stigmatisation of people experiencing poverty.
- (3) That the Committee support the contribution of the locality forums together with other forums and bodies such as Catalyst in the mapping of support and advice and that progress reports on this work be submitted to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the review recommendations.
- (4) That the Committee supports the implementation plan of the Early Help Strategy, to ensure Early Help services (including mental health and emotional health services) are aligned and co-ordinated.
- (5) That officers work with other partner agencies (e.g. the CCG as commissioner) to further explore the provision of speech and language therapy to children, particularly those most vulnerable, in order to input to future discussions on commissioning and/or development of these services.
- (6) That a communication plan is developed to deliver general and targeted publicity on income maximisation and benefit take-up.
- (7) That officers explore opportunities to raise awareness of benefit eligibility and other support through residents' contact with universal services.
- (8) That the "A Fairer Start Project" being piloted in Stockton Town Centre be supported and that a report on the outcome of the pilot and feasibility of rolling out this model across the Borough be submitted to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the review recommendations.
- (9) That the Poverty Proofing the School Day initiative be supported and Stockton Schools be encouraged to take part in the project.
- (10) That signposting to financial help and other support together with details of free activities during the school holidays is distributed via pupils at the end of each school term.
- (11) That where children are refused access to school meals due to arrears, schools are provided with information which they can use to speak to parents about financial help and support available.
- (12) That officers assess the evidence of the benefits of providing free school meals and breakfast clubs for all primary school children and investigate whether funding is available to conduct a pilot for children in Stockton Primary Schools.
- (13) That the good practice underway in schools to minimise the impact of poverty on children is systematically disseminated to all schools and that all schools and academies are encouraged to implement this good practice.
- (14) That the Committee supports the relevant recommendations of the scrutiny review on welfare reform and financial inclusion, which have synergies with the review on child poverty.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty undertaken by the Committee during the Municipal Year 2013/14. The topic was identified for review at Scrutiny Liaison Forum and included in the 2013/14 Work Programme by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The review sought to understand the impact of child poverty on a child's health and education and make recommendations on local action to help prevent and mitigate against this.

3.0 Background

Definitions of Poverty and how it is measured

3.1 Government defines a household as being in poverty if its equivalised net income for the financial year is less than 60% of median equivalised net household income for the financial year.

3.2 Peter Townsend provided an alternative definition:

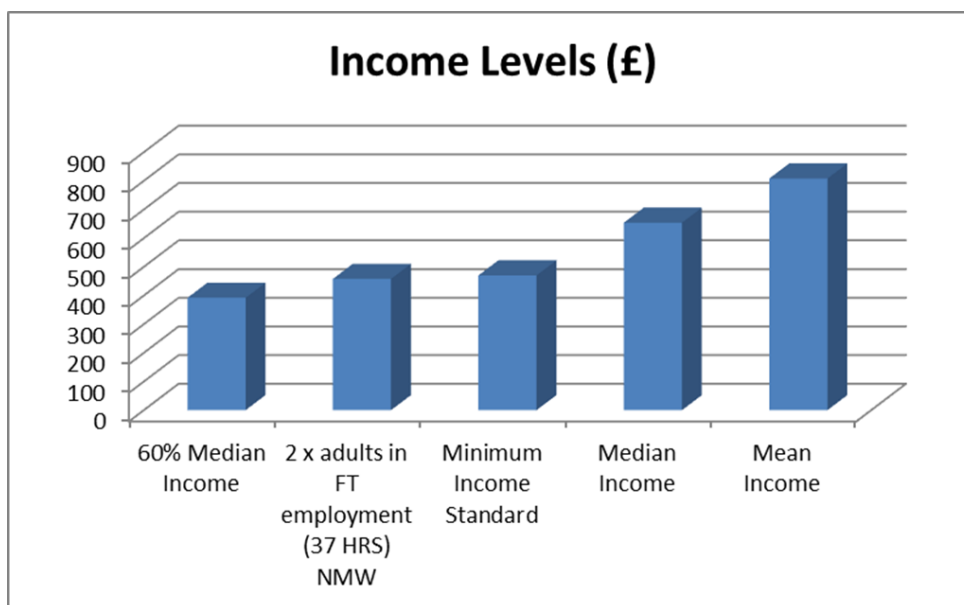
“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities” (Townsend, 1979).

3.3 There are four dimensions of child poverty captured under the Child Poverty Act 2010, each with a target to be met by 2020. They are:

- **Relative low income poverty** (below 60% median household income)
- **Absolute low income poverty** (below 60% of median household income held constant at 2010/11 level)
- **Persistent low income poverty** (below 60% of median household income for three years or longer)
- **Material deprivation** combined with relative low income (below 70% median household income and suffering from inability to afford essential spending needs)

Income Levels

3.4 By way of illustration, two adults both working full time in jobs which pay the National Minimum Wage earn £458 per week. The median income for a household of two adults and two children is £654 per week and the mean income for a household of this size is £808. The 60% median income (the 'poverty line') is £392 per week and the Minimum Income Standard, as agreed by members of the public is £470 per week.



Government Action

3.5 The Child Poverty Act 2010 set income targets for 2020. The government published its national strategy for reducing child poverty on 5 April 2011. This explains how targets will be met between 2011 and 2014 around the headings:

- Supporting Families to Achieve Financial Independence
- Supporting Family Life and Children's Life Chances
- The Role of Place and Transforming Lives

3.6 In June 2012, the government published "Child Poverty in the UK: The Report on the 2010 Target", this showed that the number of children living in poverty fell to 2.3 million which was 600,000 short of the number required to meet the target. The report also announced a consultation on better measurement of child poverty between 15 November 2012 and 15 February 2013.

3.7 In January 2014, the Government published "An evidence review of the drivers of child poverty for families in poverty now and for poor children growing up to be poor adults" in conjunction with the launch of their child poverty strategy consultation. The review cites the lack of sufficient income from parental employment as the main factor on the experience

and length of child poverty. The Strategy sets out the action the Government will take from 2014 -17 to tackle poverty though:

- Supporting families into work and increasing their earnings
- Improving living standards
- Preventing poor children becoming poor adults through raising their educational attainment.

4.0 Evidence

Poverty Rates and Trends

4.1 The most recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) “Monitoring Poverty and Social Inclusion 2013” provides the following key statistics:

- 13 million people were in poverty in 2011/12
- Average incomes fell by 8% between 2008 and 2012. Incomes at the bottom have fallen further still and for longer
- The fall in medium incomes lowered the estimate of the number of people in relative poverty
- **The deterioration in average incomes means that fewer children are in relative poverty but more are in absolute poverty**
- 2 million families are no longer exempt from paying Council Tax
- Almost 5 million people were paid less than the living wage in 2012
- 1.4 million people were in part time work but cannot find a full time job
- Prices of food have risen faster than the rate of inflation over the last decade but utility bills have risen more quickly. Food banks, proving free food to people on low incomes get almost half of their referrals due to changes of faults in the benefit system
- **For the first time on record, the majority of people in poverty are in working families.** Two thirds of adults in these families are families in work
- While scattered across the country, **child poverty is clearly concentrated in urban areas** (of all sizes)
- Children are much less likely to go without everyday items for reasons of cost. Essentially, parents prioritise their children’s needs above their own

4.2 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation warns that, although the poverty rate has reduced, there is little comfort for two reasons. Firstly, the latest poverty statistics are two years old and the squeeze on incomes in the last two years can only have increased the extent and depth of poverty. Secondly, the fall in median incomes by an unprecedented 8% affects the threshold against which poverty is measured. Essentially, a family could be in poverty in 2008, see no rise in their incomes and yet not be in poverty by 2012, simply because the median had fallen.

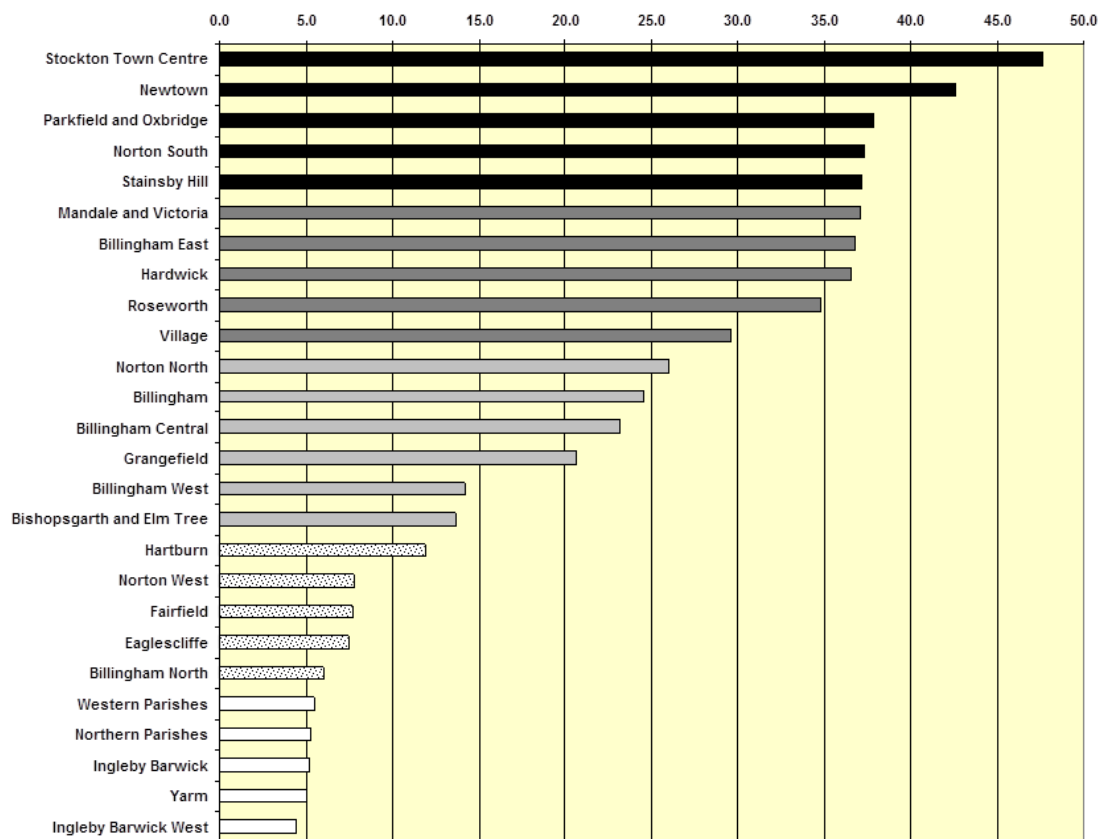
4.3 In 2011, the Foundation predicted that the proportion of children in absolute poverty (using the 2010/11 poverty line fixed in real terms) is forecast to rise to 23 per cent by 2020/21. Further, the direct impact of the current government’s announced reforms to personal tax and benefit policy will be to increase relative poverty among children by

200,000 in both 2015/16 and 2020/21, and among working-age adults by 200,000 and 400,000 in 2015/16 and 2020/21 respectively.

4.4 In their most recent report, the Foundation concludes that, although the Labour market has turned, pay is still falling relative to prices and the real value of benefits will fall further in 2014. They predict that the future is bleak for both those reliant on state support and for those who are poor but in work.

Stockton Child Poverty Statistics

4.5 There are approximately 130,000 children in the North East living in poverty which is around 23.9% of the total number of children. In Stockton, there are approximately 9400 children living in poverty which is about 21.9% of the total number of children, though this hides substantial inequality between wards. Local child poverty statistics are released each autumn and the latest ward statistics available are from a snapshot in August 2010.



4.6 Stockton is unusual in some respects as it is made up of some areas with very low levels of child poverty (e.g. Northern Parishes, Ingleby Barwick West) and some areas with very high levels of child poverty (e.g. Hardwick, Newtown, Stockton Town Centre).

Impact of Child Poverty

4.7 In his presentation to the Select Committee, Stephen Crossley (North East Child Poverty Commission highlighted the following consequences:

- The poorest infants have an almost 10 times higher chance of dying suddenly in infancy than those in the highest income group.
- Acute illnesses are more likely to affect poor children and they are more likely to experience hospital admission.
- Children who live in poverty are twice as likely to live in bad housing. Overcrowding and spells living in temporary accommodation are also factors that affect children growing up in poverty.
- Poorer families often have to pay a 'poverty premium' of around £1,280 per year for good and services.
- The association between growing up in poverty and being poor in adulthood has become stronger since the 1970s

The impact on health is explored more fully below.

Causes of Poverty and the Myths that Cause Stigma

4.8 Political rhetoric has tended to focus on "behavioural causes" – e.g. worklessness, poor parenting, poor financial management, bad lifestyle choices etc. Whereas academic research points to structural causes of poverty e.g. the economy, low income, unemployment etc.

4.9 Churches Action on Poverty has collated evidence from a range of sources which dispels some of the myths about the causes of poverty in their publication "The Blame Game Must Stop: Challenges the Stigmatisation of People Experiencing Poverty". This highlights the following issues.

4.10 In general, **the media fail to report properly on UK poverty at all**. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that fewer than one in eight news stories about UK poverty feature stories about people's actual experiences. ONS figures showing that 70% of unemployed people find work again within a year, and fewer than one in five remain unemployed for longer than 24 months.

4.11 Because of the constant emphasis on benefit fraud in public messages, people in Britain **massively overestimate the level of fraud and false claims**. A TUC poll in January 2012 found that on average, people imagine that 27% of the social security budget is claimed fraudulently – almost 40 times higher than the actual figure of 0.7%.

4.12 Politicians frequently repeat the message that "work is the best route out of poverty". But the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found in 2012 that **60% of households in poverty have a member who is in paid work**. The latest report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reveals that for the first time on record, the majority of people in poverty are in working families. Two thirds of adults in these families are families in work

4.13 Political rhetoric about 'strivers' and 'shirkers' has promoted **the inaccurate belief that benefits are mainly claimed by people who are not working**. The TUC found that on average, people believe 41% of the welfare budget goes on benefits to unemployed people, when the actual figure is 3%. Under claiming of benefits is a much bigger problem.

4.14 Shock stories in the tabloids often promote the idea that welfare spending is out of control because of people having large families while receiving out-of-work benefits. In reality, **families with more than five children account for only 1% of out-of-work benefit claims.**

4.15 It is often implied that **people are only in poverty because they have drink or drug problems** yet alcohol consumption is actually lower among people on low incomes, and increases greatly as you go up the income scale. Alcohol is consumed less by the unemployed than by those in work.

4.16 Media stories about people spending their benefits on expensive TVs and cars spread the idea that **people on low incomes could manage if they just budgeted more sensibly.** However, drawing on figures from the Office of National Statistics, suggest that the poorest people spend a much larger proportion of their budget on essential fixed-price items, such as heating and energy, staple foods, and buses. They spend a much lower proportion than middle or high earners on recreation, culture, leisure, eating out and going out for a drink. The average spend on TV and internet for the least well-off tenth of families is considerably less than the cost of the most basic subscription TV package, and is barely enough to pay for a TV licence.

Recommended

That a myth busting guide is produced for use by Councillors and staff to challenge some of the myths and the stigmatisation of people experiencing poverty.

Stockton Joint Strategic Risk Assessment – Key Issues for Stockton

4.17 Stockton's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) highlights the following as being at most risk:

- Children who live in household where no parents works
- About one third of children in families where there are four or more children grow up in poverty- roughly double the rate found in families with one or two children
- Households with younger children
- Those people living in private rented accommodation

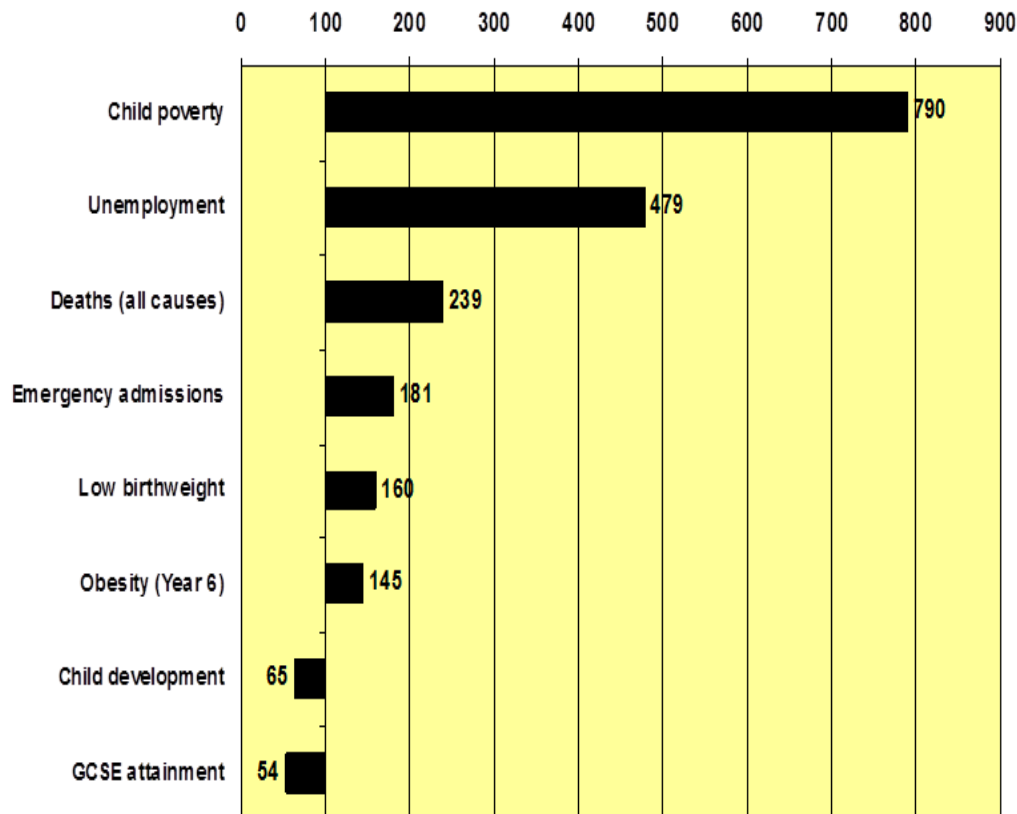
4.18 The Strategic Needs Assessment highlights the following key issues for Stockton:

- Many benefits go unclaimed - Planned changes in the benefits system may affect the number of unclaimed benefits, however, there still may be many thousands not claiming their benefit entitlement.
- Too many young people are NEET and there are insufficient jobs - in Stockton there are 7.6 people seeking work for every job centre vacancy (2012)

Health Inequalities

4.19 People living in poverty are less likely to benefit from education to the same degree as others; are less likely to be in a professional, managerial and skilled jobs; and are more likely to live in poor housing and in neighbourhoods where crime is more prevalent and where community safety is threatened. All of these conditions and circumstances can have an adverse effect on physical and mental health and well-being. (Stockton JNSA).

4.20 There are significant inequality gaps within Stockton between wards. Compared to the most affluent wards, the most deprived wards have higher rates of child poverty, unemployment, emergency admissions to hospital, low birth weight, childhood obesity and higher mortality rates (for all causes). The socio-economic gradient is linked to poorer health and wellbeing across many factors i.e. a deprivation increases, outcomes such as unemployment incrementally rise.



Research on Health Inequalities

The Marmot Review - Fair Society, Health Lives (2010)

4.21 The Marmot Review into health inequalities was published in February 2010. The report, titled 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives', proposed a new way to reduce health inequalities in England post-2010. It argued that, traditionally, government policies have focused resources only on some segments of society. To improve health for all of us

and to reduce unfair and unjust inequalities in health, action was needed across the social gradient.

4.22 The report highlighted that inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society (in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age) and that economic growth without reducing relative inequality would not reduce health inequalities.

“To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage... Health inequalities result from social inequalities. Action on health inequalities requires action across all the social determinants of health” (Marmot Review 2010)

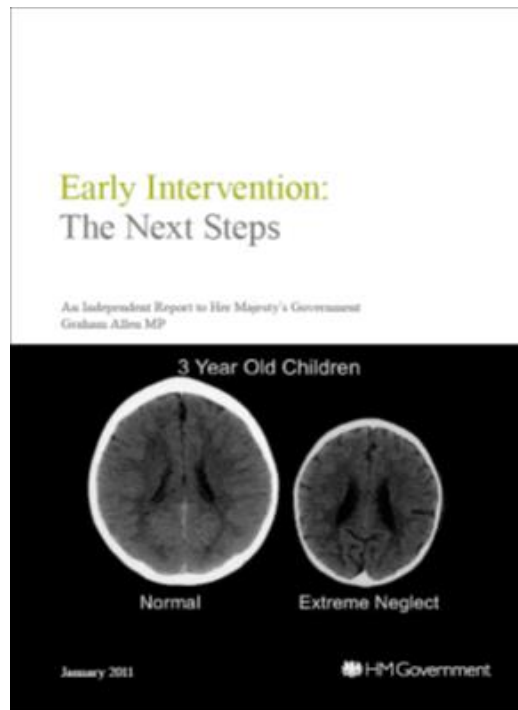
4.23 The report concluded that reducing health inequalities would require action on the following policy objectives:

1. Give every child the best start in life
2. Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
3. Create fair employment and good work for all
4. Ensure health standard of living for all
5. Create and develop health and sustainable places and communities
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

The Allen Review – Early Intervention: Next Steps (2011)

4.24 In January 2011, Graham Allen MP published his report Early Intervention: Next Steps. The report argues that early intervention is an approach which offers a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long term savings in public spending. It covered a range of tried and tested policies for the first three years of children’s lives to give them the social and emotional security that they need for the rest of their lives. It also includes a range of well-established policies for when they are older which leave children ready to face the challenges of each stage of childhood and of passage into adulthood.

“Early Intervention [should] provide a **social and emotional bedrock** for the current and future generations of babies, children and young people by helping them and their main caregivers **before problems arise**”



British Medical Association (BMA) – Growing up in the UK – May 2013

4.25 The BMA in their report published in 2013, echo the key findings of Marmot and Allen. The report has four key messages:

- Poverty lies at the root of most health disadvantages and must be reduced
- Early intervention, with family support, and education is cost effective and essential to optimise the life chances for those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.
- Interventions should be evidence based.
- Integrated and coordinated multi-professional care is essential for optimal health and social care

Joint Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy for Stockton

What's being done:

4.26 Stockton's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-18 is based on the Marmot Review policy objectives and includes a range of indicators. Underneath this overarching strategy are related strategies:

- Family Poverty Framework
- Early Help Strategy – To inform the commissioning and targeting of Early Help services to improve outcomes for target families and reduce the need for social services
(family nurse partnership, Family Intervention Programme Troubled Families)

- Early Intervention Strategy - Evidence- based interventions and targeting according to need for universal and non-universal services (e.g. school nursing, health visiting, speech and language therapy services, youth services, etc.)

What's still to do:

4.27 Work continues to:

- Finalise Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy delivery plan and performance framework – actions across partners
- Future work: define commissioning intentions for health and wellbeing
- Finalise and implement the Early Help Strategy
- Devise Early Intervention Strategy
- Develop joint commissioning intentions for Health and Wellbeing Partners

Public Health Services

4.28 Public Health Services play in key role in mitigating the effects of poverty and the Committee received details of the range of services provided. Examples included:

Seasonal Health – Warm Homes Health People, Seasonal Health and Wellbeing – Targeted at most vulnerable, information provided and partnership work delivering tailored interventions

Obesity – School Nursing, Weight Management – Parental participation is a key factor in prevention and management of childhood obesity, thus parental recognition of weight problems is essential. Ipsos Mori reported parents from lower socio-economic grades are less likely to be able to identify a health weight for a child.

Sexual Health – Risk Taking Behaviour Toolkit, Youth Direction, Psychological Services , C Card (for contraception), School Nursing Service

Substance Misuse – Young Persons Substance Service

Targeted Stockton Borough Council (SBC) Programmes

4.29 In addition, targeted Council programmes include the Family Intervention Programme and programmes delivered through the Youth Offending Service.

Health Visiting

4.30 During the review, the Committee were made aware that the commissioning of this service, (currently commissioned by NHS England) would transfer to Public Health in Local Authorities on 1 October 2015.

4.31 Health Visitors are important deliverers of the Healthy Child Programme (screening, immunisations, child development, health promotion, etc.) and understand the child and family in their social context

Health Visiting is a currently a national priority with an expansion programme of 4,200 additional Health Visitors by 2015. The new model comprised the following elements:

- Community: e.g. children's centres and self-help groups
- Universal: lead delivery of Healthy Child Programme
- Universal Plus: timely, expert advice on specific issues e.g. postnatal depression, weaning, sleepless children
- Universal Partnership Plus: on-going support, coordinating local services to help families with complex needs e.g. with a long term condition

Family Nurse Partnership

4.32 The Family Nurse Partnership is open to range of professionals (largely health visitors currently). They operate within a specific referral criteria: young 1st time mothers of 19 years and under (fathers can also participate). Support includes targeted prevention and 'hand-holding' up to 2yrs for moderate to specialist needs. Evaluation of the England programme on-going and health visiting is one (important part of the picture) although other Early Help services are important e.g. Family Support Team, First Contact Service, Family Information Service etc.

Recommended

That the Committee supports the implementation plan of the Early Help Strategy, to ensure Early Help services (including mental health and emotional health services) are aligned and co-ordinated.

That officers work with other partner agencies (e.g. the CCG as commissioner) to further explore the provision of speech and language therapy to children, particularly those most vulnerable, in order to input to future discussions on commissioning and/or development of these services.

Income Maximisation

4.33 Throughout the review a recurring theme has been the importance of income maximisation in lifting families out of poverty and reducing the risk of families getting into debt. The Committee were made aware of the amount of unclaimed benefits in Teesside which could total £65 – 100 million per year.

Estimated take up of income-related benefits, Stockton-on-Tees, 2009/10		
Benefit	Estimated take-up (Great Britain)	Estimated number of people with unclaimed benefits in Stockton
Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)	77-89%	800 - 2,000
Pension Credit	62-68%	3,800 - 5,000
Housing Benefit (including Local Housing Allowance)	78-84%	2,400 - 3,600
Council Tax Benefit	62-69%	7,400 - 10,100
Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-based)	60-67%	1,400 - 1,900

Source: DWP, 2012

Recommended

That a communication plan is developed to deliver general and targeted publicity on income maximisation and benefit take-up.

That officers explore opportunities to raise awareness of benefit eligibility and other support through residents' contact with universal services.

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

4.34 The Committee received evidence from Stockton District Advice and Information Service as part of the review. In 2012/13, the Services had 9809 clients and 39,350 new enquiries.

Services provided include:

- Debt Advice
- Welfare Benefits Advice
- Housing and Mortgage Rescue Advice
- Employment Advice
- Financial Capability Advice
- Family Advice
- Social Policy Action
- Partnership Working and Service Development

4.35 In their presentation to the Committee, they drew attention to a Benefit Cap Project – Case Study. 48 families had been involved in the project (referred for welfare advice on a range of issues). Following home visits, potential Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

entitlement was identified in 22 families including 8 households for child with disabilities. At the time of the Committee meeting, four claims had been successful. The benefits for families had increased income, increased support for children and exemption from the benefit cap. The study highlighted the extent of under claiming but that a proactive approach was needed

4.36 SDAIS recommended that more home visiting services were needed offering holistic advice to families, earlier interventions including a benefit health check for all new parents and more take up and income maximisation work, including:

- General and targeted publicity
- Specific advice and support to progress claims
- Co-ordinated campaigns

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Support

4.37 Steve Rose (Catalyst) referred to the vast array of support and advice services provided by the voluntary and community sector. One of the projects he referred to was the A Fairer Start Project.

Stockton: A Fairer Start Project

4.38 This VCS led project targeted at the 0-3yrs age range was focusing on three outcomes: cognitive development, speech and language and nutrition. The programme identifies support according to the child's and family's level of need. A pilot is taking place in Stockton Town Centre which involves an assessment of all mothers in family context at the 12 week scan and post birth in order to ascertain need and refers to appropriate support package either through the VCS or statutory providers. The main features of the project:

- Community development based model
- Provision according to need not geographical area
- Appropriate level/ intensity of support
- Maximise contacts with universal provision

Recommended

That the “A Fairer Start Project” being piloted in Stockton Town Centre be supported and that a report on the outcome of the pilot and feasibility of rolling out this model across the Borough be submitted to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the review recommendations.

Raising Achievement of Disadvantaged Pupils through the Pupil Premium

4.39 In order to raise the achievement of all disadvantaged pupils the Government has provided pupil premium funding to schools. The funding is targeted at disadvantage pupils from reception to year 11 and applies to all children who have been eligible for free schools meals at any point in the last six years. Schools are required to publish details online each year on how they are using the pupil premium and the impact it is having and are held to account for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils through Ofsted inspections and performance tables. Schools which make unsatisfactory progress are required to seek expert help by undertaking a pupil premium review. Effective practice is shared through Ofsted documentation. For example, how schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement.

4.40 In the 2014 to 2015 financial year, pupil premium funding will be £2.5 billion. The premium will rise to:

- £1,300 per pupil of primary-school age
- £935 per pupil of secondary-school age
- £1,900 per pupil for looked-after children who:
- have been looked after for 1 day or more
- are adopted
- leave care under a Special Guardianship Order or a Residence Order
- £300 per pupil for each Ever 4 Service Child in full time education aged 4 and over in Years R – Y11
- £300 for each pupil aged 4 and over in year groups R – Y11 who is on receipt of pensions under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the War Pensions Scheme

4.41 The Committee also received details about the work of the School Improvement Service who provide extensive support including:

- Training and Support
- Brokered Provision
- Advisers, specialist teachers and officers
- Guidance Tools
- Achievement for All - focus on parent engagement and pupils vulnerable to underachievement
- Promotion of Inclusion Quality Mark, Poverty Proofing the School Day – promoting inclusive practice

4.42 The Committee received evidence from Head Teachers of Stockton Primary Schools about some of the innovative work that it being carried out utilising pupil premium fund to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

4.43 The Committee commended the Head Teachers on their dedication and the support offered to families but expressed concerns about potential issues during school holidays. In addition, as part of the evidence presented to the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee's Review of Welfare Reform and Financial Inclusion, the Committee were aware of the higher demand for support from the Back on Track Scheme experienced during the school holidays and specifically the rise in awarded applications in August.

Recommended

That the good practice underway in schools to minimise the impact of poverty on children is systematically disseminated to all schools and that all schools and academies are encouraged to implement this good practice.

That signposting to financial help and other support together with details of free activities during the school holidays is distributed via pupils at the end of each school term.

Poverty Proofing the School Day

“Schools broadened horizons but the stark differences it exposed were a source of shaming: smartly dressed or not, more than one set of uniform or not, hungry or not, pocket money or not, calculator or not, the list was endless”

Walker et al (2013)

4.44 In conjunction with the range of interventions utilising pupil premium funding, the School Improvement Service were promoting the Poverty Proofing the School Day Initiative. The initiative was led by a local charity Children North East who had gained an awareness of the stigma that disadvantaged children were experiencing at school and also the barriers and discrimination that could be experienced as a result of school practices and policies.

4.45 This initiative helps schools to identify and overcome the barriers to learning that children and young people from families with less financial resource face via the use of student voice feedback to senior leaders. It enables schools to reduce the stigma and discrimination pupils' experience. Schools can choose to buy into different levels of help and support to complete an audit and develop an action plan.

Recommended

That the Poverty Proofing the School Day initiative be supported and Stockton Schools be encouraged to take part in the project.

School Meals

4.46 The Committee took evidence from one primary head teacher who felt that it was irresponsible to allow families get into debt for school meals provided and had adopted a policy of early intervention when debt arose through discontinuing the school meal and instead suggested that children go home for a meal or bring in a packed lunch until the debt was cleared. Parents would also be signposted to other help.

4.47 The Committee were aware that there was school meals debt across the Borough but that the SBC Catering Service was introducing a new procedure from April 2014 to help prevent schools meals debt arising again in the future. School meal debt is not an issue for secondary as children tend to pay in cash.

4.48 The Committee welcomed this approach but felt that it was important to ensure that when these situations arose that parents were also signposted to other help and support.

Recommended

That where children are refused access to school meals due to arrears, schools are provided with information which they can use to speak to parents about financial help and support available.

That officers assess the evidence of the benefits of providing free school meals and breakfast clubs for all primary school children and investigate whether funding is available to conduct a pilot for children in Stockton Primary Schools.

Children's Centres

4.49 As part of the review, the Committee heard from staff at the Children's centres. Families who are at risk of poverty are identified through:

- Discussions with staff
- Referral from other agencies
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Identified by staff

- Informed directly
- Local intelligence

4.50 The Committee received details about the range of support services provided by the Children's Centres and also external services locally which were signposted (some operate within the Children's Centres e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau).

Stockton Council – Strategic Framework

4.51 The need to focus our resources more effectively and to support those most in need is set out in many of our approved strategies and is supported by the Medium Term Financial Plan.

4.52 These Strategies identify through policy statements, priorities and key actions our focus on supporting those most in need and protecting the vulnerable. Examples of these priorities are detailed below:

- Supporting economic recovery
- Provision of Affordable Housing
- Making available a range of affordable events, leisure activities and decent public open spaces for leisure and sporting activity.
- A safer borough
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children
- Prevention and Early Help
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Protecting frontline services wherever possible
- Targeting resources and services
- Promoting channel shift
- Exploring alternative models of service delivery
- Working in partnership to maximise support and resources
- Supporting the development of a sustainable voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Council Plan

- Effective prevention and early intervention
- Improve targeted early intervention services
- Narrow the attainment gap
- Improve outcomes for children and young people in care
- Ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding of our most vulnerable children and young people
- Support for families with a child or young person with a disability
- Reduce the impact of poverty on family life

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a health standard of living for all
- Create and develop health and sustainable places and communities

- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

4.53 Recent changes to the structures and focus of the Stockton Local Strategic Partnership are targeted specifically at tackling the poverty agenda. These changes create a real opportunity to focus specifically on poverty and target resources and activity to support those most affected.

4.54 The Stockton Local Strategic Partnership has adopted as its key focus the Brighter Borough for All - Tackling Family Poverty document, which has two key aims.

- Ensuring every child receives the best start in life
- Maximising family income

4.55 Work has commenced with the locality forums which sit under the strategic partnership to provide a better understanding of poverty at locality forum geographies and work with partners to make a difference in the locality for those most affected by poverty.

4.56 Mapping of support services in local areas is underway as part of the work of the newly establish Locality Forums.

4.57 On a more practical note these priorities and objective translate into some practical day to day activities through services and initiatives provided or supported by the Council:

- Our Procurement Strategy supports local employment opportunities including promotion of apprenticeships
- The council and partners such as housing providers and voluntary sector organisations are providing support for those looking for employment.
- A policy of 15% Affordable Housing has been approved which will ensure that 15% of all new housing developments will provide houses at affordable prices, supporting those most in need, to afford to live within the borough in houses which are both decent and affordable.
- The Discretionary Housing Payment Policy was approved on 11 April 2011. In 2012/13 the budget allocation was £167, 269 and covered 451 payments. In 2013/14 the budget allocation increased to £395,220
- Initial and further funding has been allocated to continue to rollout the Community Energy Savings Programme Scheme, delivering improved housing and fuel reduction costs now and into the future.
- A community energy switching scheme has been approved and supported by the Authority delivering reduced energy costs. The scheme has been rolled out to a further phase and includes a variety of payment options, those on payment meters and has been extended to include VCS organisations.
- Troubled Families Initiative.
- Work with young offenders.
- Minimising drug and alcohol misuse
- Early intervention through our Children's Centre offer
- Development of our Early Help strategy.
- Health improvement initiatives such as breastfeeding, tackling obesity, smoking cessation
- Advice and support is being provided through the Housing Options Team to support those homeowners at risk of losing their homes. The service provides advice and information alongside representation/ support with court proceedings.

- “Back on track”, The Social Fund and Crisis loan scheme is being monitored closely to ensure this fund is being accessed and used appropriately. A triage approach is taken with both successful and unsuccessful applicants being signposted to other services and support as appropriate. This has included signposting to Job Centre Plus/DWP, Tees Credit Union, Stockton District and Advice Service and other advice agencies, local food banks and furniture recycling schemes.
- Welfare Rights are providing support, advice, guidance/ representation to those impacted specifically by the introduction of Personal Independent Payments they are also working with Client Financial Services, targeting service users that were receiving a social service but not claiming PIP, thus maximising income.
- The authority is working with schools and Child Poverty Action North East to reduce social inequality and “Poverty Proof” the school day. This work is linked to maximising the pupil premium linked to free school meal provision. All aspects of this programme support those children most vulnerable and in need.
- A comprehensive events programme continues to be rollout out with many events/ activities being free of charge. Many activities linked to SIRF were provided free of charge.
- Free access and taster sessions have been run throughout the summer holidays at Tees Active outlets.
- The SWAN (Stockton Welfare Advice Network) partnership was awarded external funding of £196,229 over the two year period. The project funding covers the period September 2013 to end August 2015. SBC have been asked to be part of a steering group to oversee the development of the partnership and are also asked as part of the condition of the Big Lottery funding to formally sign up to supporting the partnership.
- The authority is working as part of a wider “Change Team” to support the Tees Credit Union to enhance its sustainability, develop its capacity and modernise its systems. The Stockton VCS investment fund has contributed to a temporary development officer post and a partnership arrangement with Darlington Credit Union to deliver the new Business Plan for Tees Credit Union. Additional funding is being sought via Northern Rock Foundation.

4.58 The Committee recognised that there is much activity underway and that the targeted work of the new Locality Forums gave a real opportunity to make a difference and add momentum to work already being undertaken as a result of the Council’s overall strategic approach.

Recommended

That the Committee supports and encourages the shift of resources from reaction to prevention and early intervention, in line with the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and as part of the Council’s strategic approach and financial strategy.

That the Committee support the contribution of the locality forums together with other forums and bodies such as Catalyst in the mapping of support and advice and that progress reports on this work be submitted to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the review recommendations.

Consultation Feedback

4.59 Feedback provided from a Stockton Renaissance Partnership Event in Autumn 2011 highlighted the following issues which corroborate many of the issues highlighted by the evidence presented to the Select Committee.

Organisational

- The need for all organisations to work better together using a collective approach
- All agencies need to tackle the same issue at the same time
- To have a collective understanding of what all local organisations are doing to support the poverty agenda
- Provide practical support
- Pool resources where possible
- Share information and data
- A more “one stop shop” approach
- Improve signposting between local organisations
- Confront prejudices and perceptions
- Be more imaginative in approach
- Use existing resources and assets (for example, empty shops, vehicles, schools)
- Look at approaches to flexible working
- Lobby national government where appropriate on policy and resources
- Focus on the prevention agenda
- Provide training on life and family skills
- Recognition of hidden/ early stages of poverty

Community

- Activity needs to be community-based
- Community ownership
- Trust and relationship building with communities
- Listen to communities
- Understand community needs
- Use the experience and knowledge of the community to support each other

In 2012, a North East Regional Consultation with children on poverty issues identified the following priorities:

- Relationships – family and friends were really important
- Housing – having somewhere nice to live
- Environment – poor quality surroundings, litter, graffiti, parks, open spaces
- Local amenities, shops were mainly fast food outlets, tanning shops, off licences, betting shops, cash converters
- Transport – being able to get out and about cheaply and easily
- Entertainment – importance of TVs, computers, parks
- Crime – anti social behaviour, drug issues
- Money – lack of money to have a quality of life, buy trainers, clothing etc.
- Language associated with poverty – poor, poverty, all negative
- Stigma associated with poverty – free school meals, unable to go on school trips
- The role of brands in poverty – importance of giving the image the affluence, coping managing, impact of bullying, peer pressure

Conclusion

4.60 The Committee’s recommendations seek to reduce the prevalence of child poverty through income maximisation and re-prioritisation on prevention and early intervention as well as reducing the impact of poverty on a child’s health and education.

Glossary

JSNA	Joint Strategy Needs Assessment
SDAIS	Stockton & District Advice & Information Service
FSM	Free School Meals
JRF	The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
ANEC	Association of North East Councils
HB	Housing Benefit
LCTS	Local Council Tax Support
BMA	British Medical Association
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
CESP	Community Energy Savings Programme
ONS	Office of National Statistics
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions