

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 28th July 2021.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice Chair), Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Steve Matthews (sub for Cllr Dan Fagan), Cllr Maurice Perry (sub for Cllr Andrew Sherris), Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (sub for Cllr Ray Godwin), Cllr Sally Ann Watson.

Officers: Martin Grey (DCS), Haleem Ghafoor (Comms), Ruby Poppleton (PH), John Devine, Judy Trainer (DS)

Also in attendance: Amanda Bailey (North East Child Poverty Commission)

Apologies: Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Andrew Sherris

1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Clare Gamble declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 3 owing to Billingham Town Council running holiday activities and food.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty

Amanda Bailey (North East Child Poverty Commission) gave a background presentation on child poverty. The Commission were a stakeholder network of representatives from different sectors in the region; its overarching aim was to provide a strong regional voice to raise awareness of the issue of child poverty in the North East and to work collaboratively to tackle the problem. The presentation covered the following:

- Child Poverty Act 2010
- NECPC aim and vision
- Defining child poverty
- Measuring child poverty
- National picture 2019/20
- Regional picture 2019/20
- Reasons for steep North East increase
- Local picture
- Inequalities within Stockton
- Everyday impact of child poverty
- Covid 19 impact
- Tackling child poverty through policy
- A new child poverty strategy
 - Investing in a strong social security system that prevents and reduces poverty
 - Growing the availability of good work and removing employment barriers

- Action to tackle major fixed outgoing for families e.g., housing and childcare
- Beyond family incomes
- Role of Local Authorities

The key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Child Poverty is a structural problem not the fault of individuals or people's characteristics; there are only small numbers of families living in poverty where alcohol and drug abuse is a contributory factor
- 4.3 million children in the UK live in poverty; 75% are from working households
- Between 2014/15 and 2019/20, child poverty in the region has risen just below the UK average to the second highest of any region or nation; this is likely to be significantly worse due to Covid
- 13,922 children were living in poverty in Stockton in 2019/20 – an increase of almost 4,300 since 2014/15
- The steep North East increase is likely to be influenced by the large proportion of low-paid workers pushed below the poverty line by the reduction of in-work benefits
- JRF contend that it may be harder to progress out of poverty in the North East due to higher unemployment rates and lower average earnings
- In Stockton there has been a 71% increase in households in receipt of Universal Credit and a 24.4% increase in Stockton for pupils eligible for Free School Meals
- The threshold for FSM is low; extending this to all families in receipt of universal credit would benefit a further 2,900 Stockton children and FSM are a passport to other forms of support
- Child poverty is highly policy responsive however, the majority of policy levers are held by the UK Government
- It is difficult to measure the success of anti-poverty strategies due to external factors however, it could be argued that if no action had been taken, poverty would have increased

Ruby Poppleton (Stockton Borough Council Public Health) gave a presentation covering the following:

- Child poverty – measurement and inequality
- Demographics in Stockton
- Child Poverty rates
- Causes of child poverty:
 - Benefit system
 - Income from employment
 - Costs of living
- Impact on health and wellbeing – wider determinants on health
- Health impact
- Stockton child health profile
- Policies/ intervention to reduce child poverty
- Public health initiatives

The key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Poverty is partially or wholly outside of the parents' control and completely outside of children's control
- Poverty is a cause and effect of inequality
- "Its expensive to be poor"
- Children living in poverty experience avoidable differences in health outcomes compared to their more affluent peers; investment and early intervention improves social and emotional development, school achievement and lifelong health
- 71% of children living in poverty come from families with little or no savings
- Tees Credit Union offer a range of services

AGREED that the information be noted.

4 Select Committee Work Programme and Chair's Update

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.