

Children and Young People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty

June 2022

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Children and Young People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Carol Clark (Chair)
Councillor Barbara Inman (Vice Chair)
Councillor Dan Fagan
Councillor Clare Gamble
Councillor Ray Godwin
Councillor Lauriane Povey
Councillor Stephen Richardson
Councillor Andrew Sherris
Councillor Sally Ann Watson

Acknowledgments

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Vanessa Housley- Service Lead, Education and Wellbeing
Amanda Bailey- North East Child Poverty Commission
Ian Bartlett and Janine Browne- Stockton and District Advice and Information Service
Karen Grundy and Neta Kaurbrown- Catalyst
James Graham- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Sarah Massiter – Service Manager, Lisa Robinson – Locality Manager, Ellen Canning – Locality Manager, Michael Proud – Service Lead for Growing Well, Growing Healthy - 0-19 Service – Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust
Leanne Best – Family Action Service Manager
Kellie Wigley – Family Hubs Service Lead – Family Support
Tracey Herrington- Thrive
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Foreword

TBA



Councillor Carol Clark
Chair



Councillor Barbara Inman
Vice Chair

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Original Brief

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

Child poverty rates are rising across the region. All 12 LAs, including Stockton, are included in the 20 LAs which saw the biggest increases between 2014/5 and 2018/9.

Child poverty rates as measured by the percentage of children living in households with below 60% median income, are rising:

- The North East has the second highest rate of child poverty in the UK at 35%
- The North East saw the UK's biggest increase in child poverty rising from 26% to 35%
- All 12 North East councils are included in the 20 UK local authority areas which saw the highest increases in child poverty
- Due to COVID there has been a 4.5% fall in median household income between May 2019 to May 2020 – this is the largest yearly fall since the 1970's
- It is estimated that another 300K children will have been pushed into poverty through the pandemic

35% of children living in poverty in the North East, of the 35% living in poverty 55% are aged 0 – 5 years.

Living in poverty has an impact on child development, attainment, and future life chances:

- In 2015, 33 per cent of children receiving free school meals obtained five or more good GCSEs, compared with 61 per cent of other children
- Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. 72 per cent of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works
- In the most deprived areas, boys can expect to live 19 fewer years of their lives in 'good' health, and girls 20 fewer years, than children in the least deprived areas
- The poorest groups in society are dying almost a decade earlier than the richest – this has been exacerbated by welfare cuts and the rising cost of living (Imperial College London)

A review would:

- Collate and analyse data
- Identify potential solutions
- Focus on a range of linked issues including digital divide, FSM eligibility
- Review the approaches in other areas
- Result in the basis of a child / family poverty strategy for adoption by the Council

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What are the issues around Child Poverty?
- What can we do locally to tackle Child Poverty issues?
- What is the extent of child poverty in Stockton and related levels of need and impact?
- How well current policies, services and interventions address the extent of child poverty in Stockton including any potential gaps?

- What changes should be made to policies, services and interventions based on best practice, national recommendations, evidence base and data?
- How does Child Poverty differ across the borough and what are the reasons for this?
- Is there a different impact on child poverty between private and rented households?
- What are the issues for households with a disabled child and is there enough support in place?
- What more can be done to provide support in early years, in particular to new mothers/families?
- What strategic approaches are in place to tackle Child Poverty at present?
- What local approaches are in place to reduce Child Poverty e.g., Foodbanks?
- How can the Council, together with its partners, collectively respond tackle Child Poverty?
- To gain an insight and understand the specific issues relating to Child Poverty

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

Cabinet, schools, key partners.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

Ten months:

- Scope and Project Plan agreed – 23 June 2021
- Evidence gathering – July 2021 – February 2022
- Draft Recommendations – 2 March 2022
- Final Report – 8 June 2022
- Submission to Cabinet – June 2022

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Information from the North East Child Poverty Commission
- Current central government guidance / research
- Local intelligence i.e. JSNA data, MOSIAC etc.
- Current provision in place to tackle Child Poverty i.e., HAF programme

New information:

- Information from schools on ‘Child Poverty’ related issues
- Good practice review via the Local Government Association (LGA)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Stockton Borough Council (SBC)
Children’s Services

North East Child Poverty Commission

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Contextual Presentation
Perspective from Children’s Social Care

Research and evidence pertaining to region and Stockton-on-Tees

Schools/ Headteachers Forum	Perspective from schools on their role, approaches, and support, with specific reference to schools who have commissioned the Poverty Proofing audit from Children North East
Children North East BMBF	Pupil voice
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS	Impact on emotional and mental health and support available
Public Health	Physical Health, Early Help, support, and involvement
Other LAs / LGA	Best practice
Citizens Advice Infinity Partnership Food Power Network	Support / financial inclusion Food Bank Fuel Poverty

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Executive Summary

This report presents the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of the Child Poverty.

The overall aim of the review was to gain an insight and understand the specific issues relating to child poverty.

The Committee examined the following key lines of enquiry across a number of themed meetings:

- What are the issues around Child Poverty?
- What can we do locally to tackle Child Poverty issues?
- What is the extent of child poverty in Stockton and related levels of need and impact?
- How well current policies, services and interventions address the extent of child poverty in Stockton including any potential gaps?
- What changes should be made to policies, services and interventions based on best practice, national recommendations, evidence base and data?
- How does Child Poverty differ across the borough and what are the reasons for this?
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- What more can be done to provide support in early years, in particular to new mothers/families?
- What strategic approaches are in place to tackle Child Poverty at present?
- What local approaches are in place to reduce Child Poverty e.g., Foodbanks?
- How can the Council, together with its partners, collectively respond tackle Child Poverty?
- To gain an insight and understand the specific issues relating to Child Poverty

The Committee has taken evidence from North East Child Poverty Commission, Council Officers, SDAIS, Catalyst, TEWV, 0-19 Service Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, Thrive, Barriers to learning, Poverty Proofing the School Day, Children North East, The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health/ Child Poverty Action Group and Joseph Rountree Foundation.

Key Findings

National Picture (2019/20)

- In 2019/20 there were 4.3million children living in poverty in the UK; 31% of all children
- Poverty affects:
 - 47% of children living in households with three or more children
 - 46% of children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic families
 - 49% of lone parent families.
 - 34% of children in families with youngest child aged under 5
 - 37% of children in families where someone has a disability
- 75% of children in poverty are from working households

Local Picture (2019/20)

- In the North East 37% of children were living in poverty, the second highest rate in the UK, behind London at 38% and the North East experienced the biggest increase in child poverty of anywhere in the UK in the five years leading to the pandemic
- The steep North East increase is likely to be influenced by the large proportion of low-paid workers pushed below the poverty line by a reduction in the value of working age 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
- Trussell Trust emergency food parcels to children in the North East rose by 26% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (to 46,084)
- 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 free school meals is low; extending this to all families in receipt of universal credit would benefit a further 2,900 Stockton children and help families to access other forms of support
- In 2019/20 there were 13,922 children living in poverty in Stockton which was an increase of almost 4,300 since 2014/15
- Child poverty is not an unsolvable problem; it is highly policy responsive. The North East saw the biggest fall in child poverty of any UK region or nation between 1999 and 2013

Impact of Poverty

- Child poverty is associated with a wide range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, and adverse long-term social and psychological outcomes (all of which impacts life chances across the life course)
- Poor health which is associated with child poverty limits children's potential and development, leading to poor health and life chances in adulthood
- Children living in deprivation and poverty experience avoidable differences in health outcomes compared to their more affluent peers

Financial Inclusion

- In 2020/21, 29% of enquiries into SDAIS were from clients with dependent children. The main reason for households with dependent children seeking advice was welfare benefits; the main reason for lone parent families seeking advice was debt
- Demand on food banks has increased steadily over the past three years
- Future pressures were anticipated relating to benefit changes, welfare problems and mental health, increasing energy prices, employment, and housing security
- The Infinity Partnership were co-ordinating activities promoting access to advice, targeting work through the Community Partnerships, maximising family income and maintaining face to face advice services

A Fairer Stockton on Tees - A Framework for Tackling Inequalities

- The Council are leading the development of a new approach to tackling inequality in the Borough to ensure that targeted support and help is delivered to those living in poverty and improve their outcomes. This Framework has five key areas of focus:
 - I. Tackling fundamental issues across the Borough as a whole
 - II. A focus on reducing the inequalities faced by identified disadvantaged communities
 - III. A focus on deprived neighbourhoods
 - IV. A focus on the most marginalised
 - V. An emphasis on the Council as a major employer, commissioner, and purchaser

Food Poverty

- The Stockton-On-Tees Food Power Network was established in Partnership with Catalyst in January 2020. The programme aims to strengthen the ability of local communities to reduce food poverty, through solutions developed in partnership and with the support of peers from across the UK. Membership of the Food Power Network provides access to funding opportunities and practical support and resources. The SFPN has established a wide and active membership, developed the 2021 Food Poverty Reduction Strategy, and secured £20,000 from UNICEF/Soccer Aid and £2,500 from Sustain. Stockton Council have also provided funding of £60,000 to provide practical support
- Public Health invested £200,000 in Summer Holiday Enrichment Programmes (HEP). Each year this has reached approximately 1,500 children in low-income families
- The Government announced in their October spending review that there would be a further three years of Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) funding and work was underway to ensure that the very best programme was offered to many more children and their families. Over 6,500 thousand FSM children had not accessed the programmes but there had been spare places. Closer working with schools was also planned to encourage take up. Although HEP was for low-income families, HAF was solely for FSM children and there was only a 15% leeway in applying this
- The programmes were very prescriptive and more flexibility to offer remote provision would be welcomed. £909,850 had been allocated locally, split as £91,500 (20/21) and £818,350 (21/22)

Children's Mental Health

- There had been a significant increase in demand for services and waiting times which was having a detrimental impact on young people and also on their families
- Staffing and funding pressures were driving alternative approaches to delivery including a move away from the usual diagnostic led approach to a whole system approach with a greater emphasis on multi-agency co-ordination and collaboration between agencies and partners
- Co-ordinated work was taking place in schools with positive early feedback. A focus on early help and intervention would help to free up specialist services
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) were a new government initiative to help increase access to mental health support for children and young people. MHSTs were currently being rolled out in Billingham Schools and there was a target that by the end of 2024, 40-50% of children would be attending a school with a MHST
- Better co-ordination of care with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) was also taking place with CAMHS practitioners being based in GP practices. A PCN had been selected in Ingleby Barwick as a pilot and if successful further business cases would follow

Health and Wellbeing

- The 0-19 Service were becoming increasingly aware of the impacts of poverty on families. The Service were seeking to address the inequalities through the following actions and approaches:
 - Holistic health needs assessment
 - Robust Vulnerability Questionnaires
 - Communication with Midwives
 - Promote Healthy Start Vouchers
 - Awareness of Community Assets
 - Working in an integrated One Team with Family Action and Family Hubs so families tell story once
 - Undertake New-born behavioural observation to promote bonding and attachment
 - Perinatal and Postnatal mental health screening and support
 - STEPS Pathways (Enhanced offer over and above mandated contacts)
 - Promote uptake of nursery placements

- Integrated 2- and 3-year development reviews
- Parenting Therapist roles and Incredible Years Programme
- Universal offer at key school transition points and targeted one to one work with those who need it
- Emotional resilience nurses and Psychological Well Being Practitioner roles
- Transport costs were becoming a huge issue and preventing families from, for example, keeping health appointments which reinforced the need for basing services and support in accessible locations
- It was important to explore the reasons for the problems being experienced by families rather than making assumptions or judging and recognising and taking account of lived experience
- Having a universal offer played a vital role in prevention

Barriers to Learning

- Challenges/ barriers identified in Pupil Premium Strategy Statements were as follows:
 - Poor home conditions
 - Eviction
 - Poor diet/ hunger
 - Inadequate clothing
 - Lack of equipment
 - Homes with few/ no books to stimulate an interesting in reading
 - Access to IT
 - Computer/ tablet
 - Data
 - Parent/ carer IT skills to support
- The Education Improvement Service was seeking to address the inequalities through the following actions and approaches:
 - Strengthened partnership with Catalyst and the Infinity Partnership
 - Health Schools Programme
 - DWP Vouchers
 - Promotion of affordable uniform
 - Empowering staff to promote FSM take up to vulnerable families
 - Sharing research and evidenced based action via training
- DfE computers / tablets were distributed in collaboration with ONE IT and senior leaders were empowered to challenge allocations if needed; additional resource was also secured from the Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation. Around 800 devices were initially distributed to schools with additional devices distributed for siblings
- Schools and other settings had been able to apply for DfE Internet Access Support Grant in January 2022 to cover costs incurred between 1 September to 31 December 2021
- Poverty Proofing the School Day is an audit which gathers the voice of every child in school in order to understand their experience of school and explore solutions unique to the setting. It is an inclusive, supportive, non-judgemental process that results in a written report and action plan. Training for governors and teachers is provided on poverty and its impact on education and also a follow-up review and potential accreditation
- Through the Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator, Catalyst was running an initiative converting donated laptops; a Tees wide scheme would be worthy of investigation
- The UK Government has set out a framework of what is considered the essential digital skills needed to living and working in today's world. This has become even more important post Covid 19. A number of video tutorials are also available on the Catalyst website that address the various components of essential digital skills; these video tutorials would benefit from wider publicity and use for example through family hubs

Fuel Poverty

- The impacts of fuel poverty on children included:
 - Weight Gain
 - Increased risk of asthma and respiratory diseases
 - Increased hospital admissions
 - Poor grades at school
 - Mental ill health though environmental effects (such as sleeping badly because of a cold home or having to share a bed with siblings)
- JRF is warning that without additional support, people already in poverty are likely to find a sharp increase in energy bills very difficult to cope with. With the impact of rising energy bills expected to be much harsher for families on low incomes, they argue that there is a clear case for targeted protections to prevent serious hardship once the energy price cap is lifted

Conclusion

In the North East, 37% of children are living in poverty, the second highest rate in the UK. This is likely to be influenced by higher unemployment rates, the large proportion of low paid workers in the region and a reduction in the value of working age benefits. Sadly, this position is likely to worsen with future pressures arising from welfare changes, increases in the cost of living, including rising energy prices and lack of employment security.

The impact of poverty on children is profound. Children living in deprivation experience a wide range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, long term social and psychological outcomes, and poor life chances in adulthood compared to their more affluent peers. These differences are avoidable.

Our recommendations seek to better understand the issues by working with those families who are experiencing poverty to enhance the support and interventions that are in place and each year to focus on a key priority for targeted action.

Recommendations

1. That a family poverty profile is compiled and updated annually from available data and input from those with lived experience and is used to identify a key priority for targeted action each year; an initial focus being take up of Free School Meals for those eligible and in need.
2. That support offered to families in poverty is enhanced through:
 - a. A more integrated and visible offer for families experiencing poverty focusing on information, advice, financial and other support
 - b. Roll out of Poverty Proofing the School Day across all Stockton Schools
 - c. Establishing a mutual aid/ giving scheme, in partnership with Catalyst, to facilitate community giving
 - d. Ensuring an enhanced support offer is available for communities and areas targeted through the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework
3. That specific interventions are put in place focusing on:
 - a. Healthy Food through the delivery of cooking and budgeting skills in schools, linked to Healthy Schools
 - b. Help with energy costs through warm energy schemes/ credits etc.
 - c. Digital inclusion for all children including schemes to re-use redundant laptops and roll out of skills training and family learning
4. That, subject to funding, a direct payments scheme is developed for those identified as in need, building on the examples of vouchers during the pandemic.
5. That all subsidy policies are reviewed and revised as appropriate to provide streamlined and enhanced support for families.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report presents the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of the Child Poverty.

1.2 The overall aim of the review was to gain an insight and understand the specific issues relating to child poverty.

1.3 The Committee examined the following key lines of enquiry across a number of themed meetings:

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1.4 The Committee has taken evidence from North East Child Poverty Commission, Council Officers, SDAIS, Catalyst, TEWV, 0-19 Service Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, Thrive, Barriers to learning, Poverty Proofing the School Day, Children North East, The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health/ Child Poverty Action Group and Joseph Rountree Foundation.

2.0 Evidence

Background

Evidence from the North East Child Poverty Commission

2.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 established four child poverty targets to be met by 2020/21 and required the UK Government to publish a regular child poverty strategy. The Welfare Reform Act 2016 effectively repealed the Child Poverty Act 2010 and as a result England is the only part of UK not to have a national child poverty strategy and there is no statutory duty for Local Authorities to have a local strategy.

2.2 The overarching aim of the North East Child Poverty Commission is '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' and their vision is to be 'ambitious for every child and young person in the North East, with a vision of all children and young people in our region growing up not just healthy and secure, but having the best start in life: able to fully participate and thrive in education and extra-curricular enrichment; to pursue the things they love at home and with their friends; and with exciting futures ahead of them'

Defining Child Poverty

2.3 The North East Child Poverty Commission defines child poverty as ‘Primarily a structural problem, not the fault of individuals or people’s characteristics’ with the defining feature of poverty being ‘families not having enough resources to meet their needs, restricting choices, opportunities and the ability to participate fully in society’

2.4 Peter Townsend (founding member of CPAG), 1979 defined poverty as:

‘Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.’

2.5 There are different ways to measure child poverty:

- When household income is less than 60% of median household income (Relative Poverty)
- When household income is less than 60% of median household income in 2010/11 (Absolute Poverty)

2.6 Relative poverty (after housing costs) is the most commonly used measure by organisations working in this field.

National Picture (2019/20)

2.7 In 2019/20 there were 4.3million children living in poverty in the UK which was 31% of all children, equivalent to 9 in a classroom of 30. Nationally poverty affects:

- 47% of children living in households with three or more children
- 46% of children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic families
- 49% of lone parent families
- 34% of children in families with youngest child aged under 5
- 37% of children in families where someone has a disability
- 75% of children in poverty from working households

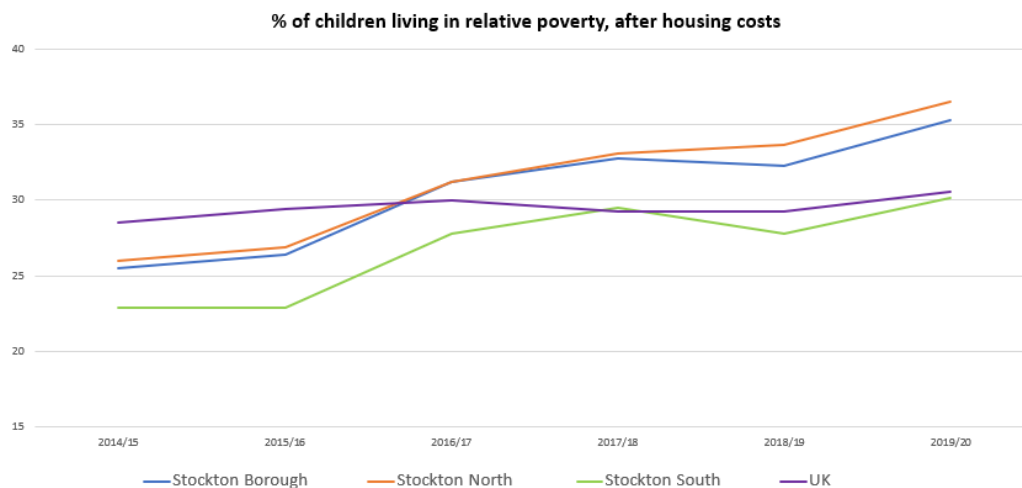
Regional Picture (2019/20)

2.8 In the North East, 37% of children live in poverty; this is the second highest rate in the UK, behind London (at 38%) a rate not seen since the late 1990s. The North East experienced the UK’s steepest increase in child poverty between 2014/15 and 2019/20, rising from 26% to 37%. Child poverty in the North East has risen from just below the UK average to the second highest of any region or nation over this period.

Reasons for the steep North East Increase

2.9 The Commission contend that this is likely to be influenced, in particular, by the large proportion of low paid workers in the region combined with freezes and sub-inflationary increases in in-work/ working age benefits.

Local Picture



2.10 There were 13,922 children living in poverty in Stockton in 2019/20 – an increase of almost 4,300 since 2014/15.

2.11 The North East has the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the highest proportion of children living in low income and material deprivation and are most likely to be in families with no or little savings to shield them from economic shocks.

2.12 Trussell Trust emergency food parcels to children in the North East rose by 26% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (to 46,084). The region experienced the joint steepest increase in pupils eligible for free school meals (FSMs), rising from 23.5% to 27.5% between 2020 and 2021 (and 24.4% in Stockton, rising from 1,308 to 7,828 pupils).

2.13 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.

2.14 Households in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) rose by 64% to 244,066 between February 2020 and February 2021 (a 71% increase in Stockton to 16,654).

2.15 Child poverty is highly policy responsive; however, the majority of policy levers are held by the UK Government.

A New Child Poverty Strategy

2.16 The Commission are urging for a new comprehensive, joined-up Government strategy to end child poverty requiring:

- Ambitious, income-related targets against which to measure progress
- Relentless focus on root cause of child poverty – inadequate family incomes

2.17 The Strategy to include measures:

- 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 outgoings for families, e.g., housing and childcare, improving the availability, affordability and quality of both to reduce pressures on household incomes, improve families' living conditions and remove barriers to parental employment

- Transformative investment in the services children, young people and families use (social care, mental health, education, youth services, early years and 'family support')
- Long-term investment in targeted and universal services (reinvigorated and expanded programme of local, user-led family/community hubs)
- Long-term commitment to funding the Holiday Activities and Food programme
- A comprehensive, joined-up digital inclusion strategy

2.18 Local Authorities can play an important role through:

- Anti-poverty strategies
- Joined-up working across the local authority and borough – making tackling child poverty 'everybody's business'
- Leadership – e.g., Living Wage accreditation and Socioeconomic Duty
- Procurement and commissioning
- Income maximisation / financial inclusion
- Better communication of support available
- Making any support provided as inclusive and non-stigmatising as possible – from HAF through to crisis support/local welfare provision

Background

Evidence from Stockton Public Health

2.19 Poverty is partially or wholly outside the parents' control and completely outside children's control. Poverty is a cause and effect of inequality.

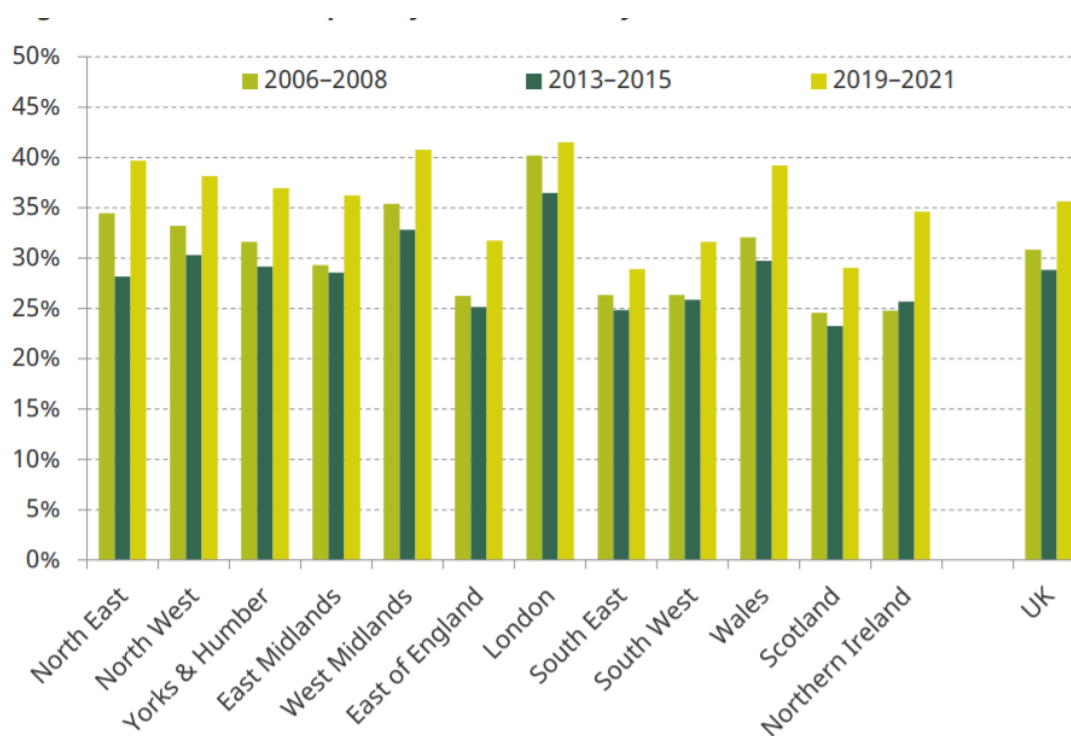
2.20 Child poverty is associated with a wide range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, and adverse long-term social and psychological outcomes (all of which impact life chances across the life course). The poor health associated with child poverty limits children's potential and development, leading to poor health and life chance in adulthood.

2.21 In Stockton on Tees:

- 7407 (23%) children are eligible for benefits related to free school meals (higher than the national average)
- 6,596 (16.8%) children under 16 years live in absolute low-income families
- 8,188 (20.9%) children under 16 years live in relative low-income families
- 12 wards are within 10-20% most deprived wards

Child Poverty Rates after Housing Cost

2.22 Across all regions, child poverty is projected to increase markedly with it being worse in the North. Child poverty in 2019-2021 is higher than pre-recession in every region.



Impact on Health and Wellbeing

2.23 Poverty reduces access to the wider positive determinants of health and limits resources leading to a healthy life. Children living in deprivation and poverty experience avoidable differences in health outcomes compared to their more affluent peers.

2.24 Children living in poverty in the UK are more likely to die in the first year of life (infant mortality), have a low birth weight, be bottle fed, breathe second-hand smoke, become overweight or obese, suffer from asthma, have tooth decay, perform poorly at school, and attend A&E. Children living in poverty are also unlikely to access to healthy food and enriching activities.

2.25 Early experiences in the first five years of life shape children's health and wellbeing for the rest of their lives. There is strong evidence that investment and early intervention during this time improves social and emotional development, school achievement and lifelong health.

Support Policies/ Intervention to Reduce Child Poverty

2.26 Strategies to maximise family income and provide support include financial advice and support, affordable housing and public transport, active labour market programmes to reduce long-term unemployment, tackling in-work poverty and supporting parents into employment.

2.27 Public Health Initiatives have included:

- 0-19 service (Growing Well Service)
- Family Weight Management service – Growing Well Growing Healthy Service
- DfE Holiday/Activity programme

- Oral Health initiatives - Fluoride Varnish Programme and Toothbrushing Programme
- Public Health Grant to Tees Credit Union – child saving programme, financial inclusion education (train the trainer)
- Warm Home Healthy People - Boiler servicing and repairs with energy debt and welfare advice

Tackling Inequalities, A Fairer Stockton-on -Tees: A Framework for Tackling Inequalities 2021 – 2031

2.28 The work focuses on three drivers:

- Income from work and other sources – an ability to afford essentials and more
- Wealth and resources – an ability to build up resources to generate further; have a stake
- Power and control – not having enough say in key life events, reliance on others, sense of powerlessness

2.29 The five key areas of focus for the Strategic Framework are:

- 1) Tackling fundamental issues across the Borough as a whole
- 2) A focus on reducing the inequalities faced by identified disadvantaged communities
- 3) A focus on deprived neighbourhoods
- 4) A focus on the most marginalised
- 5) An emphasis on the Council as a major employer, commissioner, and purchaser

2.30 The strategic approach includes:

- Undoing some of the consequences of the fundamental causes of inequality: the unequal distribution of income, wealth, and power
- Preventing some of the more harmful environmental causes and influences which combine to prevent some communities taking advantage of the support and resources available
- Mitigating the negative impact which individuals experience because of the fundamental causes and environmental conditions
- Action everywhere; more targeted action where the gaps are widest
- It will not be enough to either just focus on geography or the needs of specific ‘communities of interest’; we must do both
- A specific set of actions for the Council as a key employer, commissioner, and provider of services, building on what we already do in this area, such as around the recruitment of apprentices and on local social value, giving this a sharper focus on inequalities
- A need to be additional investment, but also much can be achieved by the alignment of existing resources, focusing efforts to deliver the framework consistently, and with purpose over the long-term

2.31 Action planned Borough wide includes:

- Income maximisation through benefit take up and opportunities for good work
- Poverty reduction through a specific focus on child poverty
- A renewed emphasis on the best start for children and a specific focus on speech, language, and communication issues
- Debt management and credit schemes, which tackle the issues faced by those most impacted by lack of credit, debt, and economic exclusion
- Local supply chain development to support local enterprise
- Local co-production, engagement and decision making

- Local control over assets, building on previous experiences through asset transfer to progressively shift the opportunities for local communities to own, control and maximise the potential of community assets

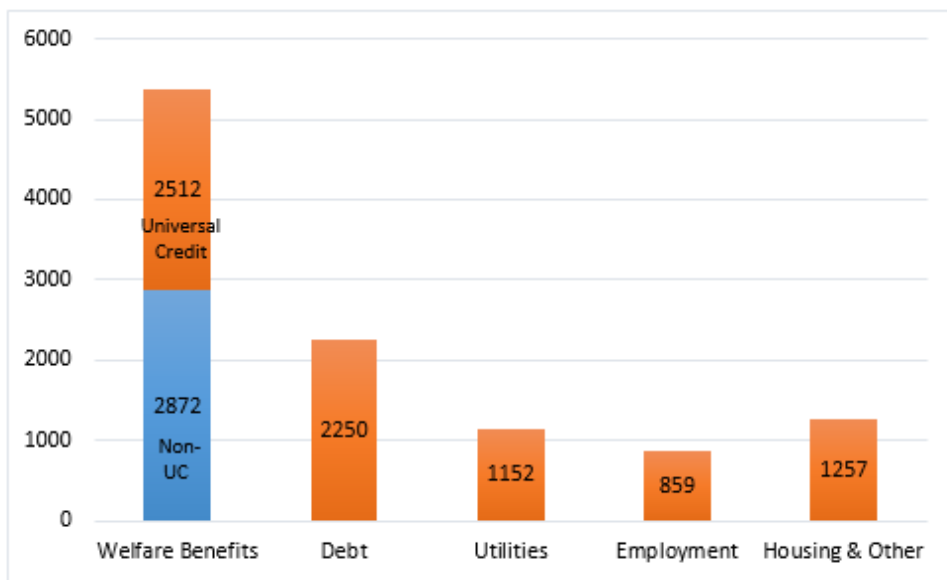
Financial Inclusion

Evidence from Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS)

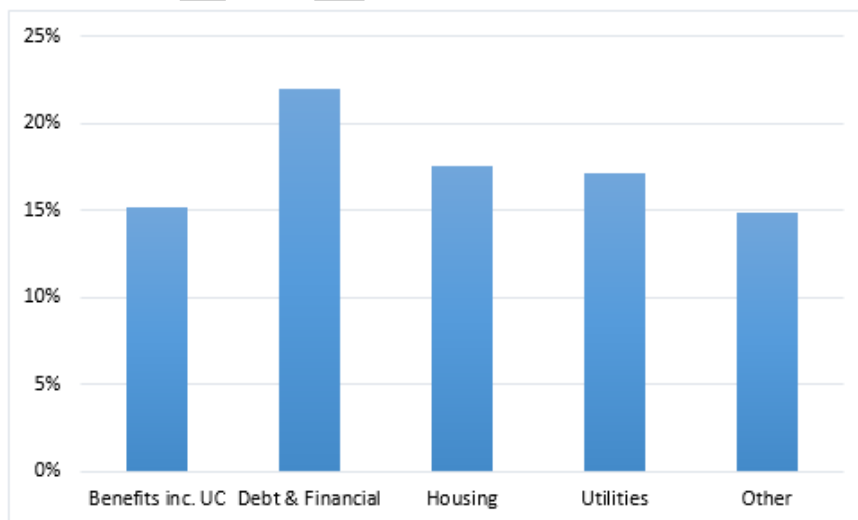
2.33 SDAIS provide free and confidential advice on welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, health, families, utilities and immigration. The service also provides social policy work including debt relief order review, council tax reduction scheme and universal credit uplift.

2.34 In 2020/21 SDAIS had 8702 clients and 38,933 enquiries. Of these 16% were single parents with dependent children (9%), 16% were couples with dependent children (20%) and 68% had no dependent children.

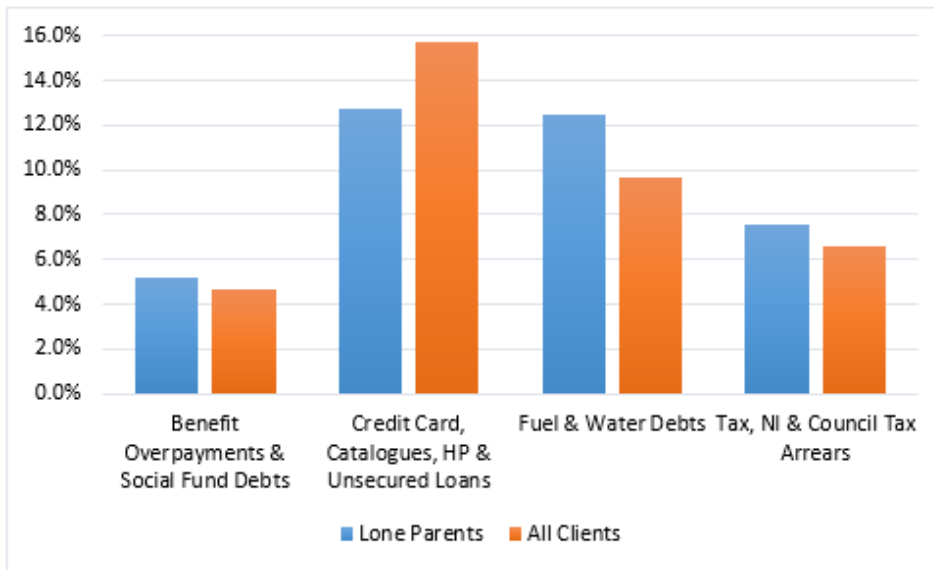
Households with Dependent Children



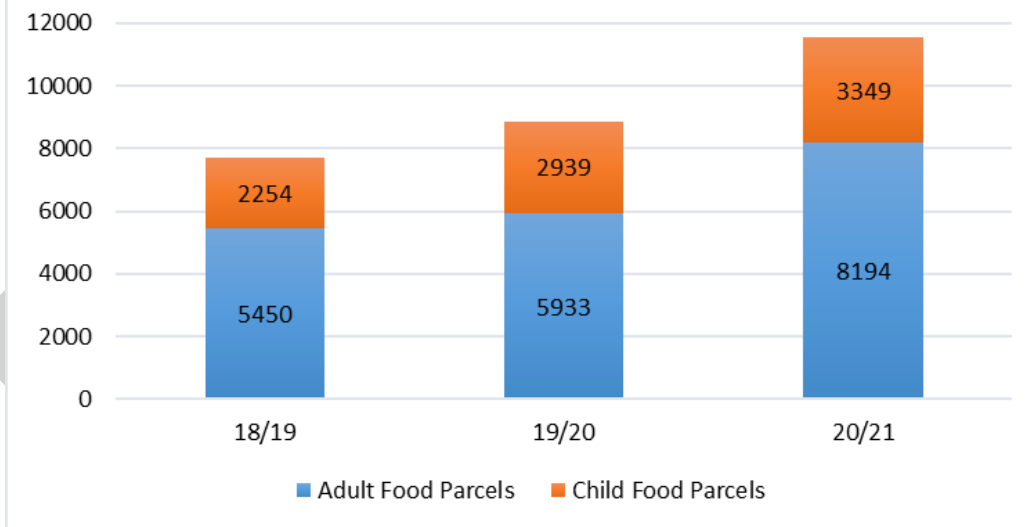
Lone Parent Families – Enquiry Type and % of all enquiries

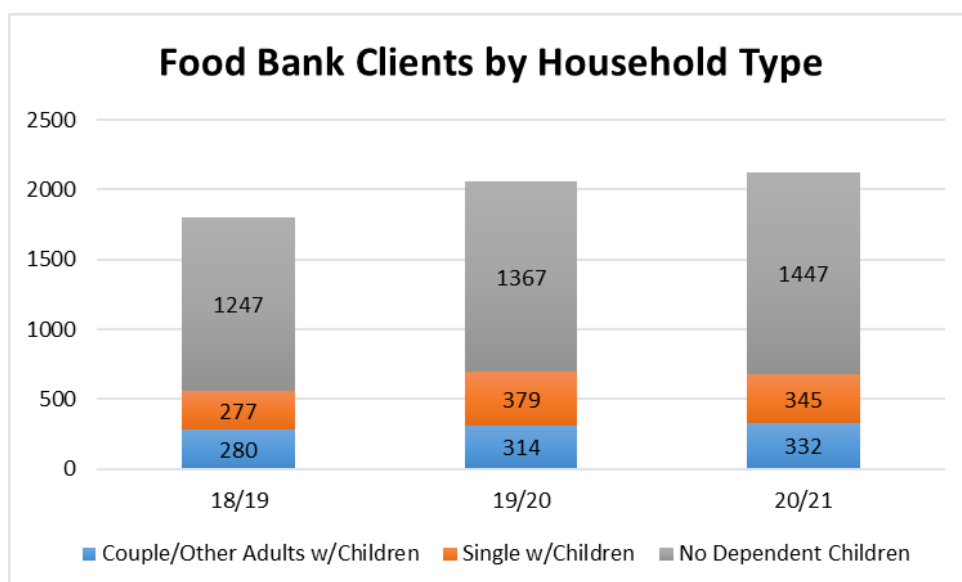


Lone Parent Families – Types of Debt



Adult- and Child Food Parcels by Year





2.35 Future risks include:

- Benefit changes - UC uplift
- Welfare problems and mental ill health
- Increasing costs including energy costs
- Employment security
- Housing security

2.36 The Infinity Partnership has received national recognition for its partnership work by the Institute of Money Advisors and is co-ordinating activities and promoting access to advice.

2.37 Targeted work is taking place through the Community Partnerships and in respect of people with mental ill-health. Other work is taking place to maximise family income long term (£409,469 in Central Partnership area) and maintain face-to-face welfare benefits and debt advice services.

2.38 The Select Committee acknowledged the valuable service provided by SDAIS and noted the increasing demand for advice and support and the impact of benefit changes which was anticipated to add significantly more demand on services. Fuel poverty was a growing problem particularly for lone parent families, although it was positive that Stockton had the highest numbers of switchers in the country.

2.39 The importance of face-to-face contact and flexibility to offer appointments outside of office hours for working families was also recognised, although it was noted that the contract for nationally funded debt advice services was being tendered and this was likely to reduce funding for face-to-face provision.

2.40 Local Authority funding made up 25 – 30% of the CABs funding; additional Local Authority funding had also facilitated the Warm Homes; Healthy People scheme.

2.41 Work to maximise family income was critical as unclaimed benefits was a huge problem

Food Poverty Evidence from Catalyst

2.43 Catalyst is an infrastructure organisation supporting over 300 VCSE organisations and increasing. They provide a range of services such as a community programme, training and market development programme, a health programme, a volunteering programme, and they provide a range of projects.

Stockton on Tees Food Power Network

2.44 The Stockton-On-Tees Food Power Network (SFPN) was established in Partnership with Catalyst in January 2020. The SFPN is a member of the Food Power programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund led by Sustain and Church Action on Poverty. Catalyst has recently taken over from SBC Community Engagement team to act as the host organisation for the SFPN.

2.45 Over the last 18 months the work of the SFPN has gained momentum, which has resulted in a better coordinator and more innovative approach to tackling food poverty across the Borough. The Council and many organisations in the VCSE sector are working hard to alleviate food poverty and ensure that work is co-ordinated and has maximum impact.

2.46 The programme provides a network which aims to strengthen the ability of local communities to reduce food poverty, through solutions developed in partnership and with the support of peers from across the UK. Membership of the Food Power Network provides access to funding opportunities and practical support and resources.

A New Poverty Reduction Strategy

2.47 The Food Power Network has established a wide and active membership where organisations and partners work collaboratively to produce and promote healthy and sustainable food, making the best use of their resources so that food waste and food poverty is eradicated within Stockton-on-Tees.

2.48 It has developed the 2021-2024 Food Poverty Reduction Strategy which sets out an ambitious vision but with a realistic framework for delivery. It has secured funding from UNICEF and Soccer Aid of £20,000 to Little Sprouts to provide fresh fruit and veg bags to families. It has also secured funding of £2,500 from Sustain to develop the Eco shop model in Stockton-on-Tees with specific focus on creating a sustainable model that provides culturally appropriate foods.

From Strategy to Delivery

2.49 Stockton Borough Council has committed funding of £60,000 to provide practical support in three key areas:

- one year's subscription to the food sharing charity Fareshare to secure sustainable and reliable food supplies
- basic food hygiene courses to those operating Community Pantries as this is a requirement to ensure that staff and volunteers are equipped to safely receive, store, prepare, serve, and redistribute food
- electric van to deliver Fareshare to VCSE organisations

2.50 The strategy also aims to have 20 Community Pantries which includes investing in existing provision of current community shops such as Eco shops to ensure long term sustainability and to reduce the geographic duplication.

2.51 Stockton District and Advice Service had been responsible for producing the Crisis Food Directory but were no longer able to do it. SFPN identified this as a priority due to economic climate and it has been rebranded as the Community Food Directory and will be updated regularly. It includes information such as where the Community Pantries are located, opening times etc, crisis food support such as foodbanks, where people can access affordable hot food, and bedding and blankets.

Holiday Enrichment Programme

2.52 According to a 2017 report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger, entitled 'Hungry Holidays', there were approximately three million children who are at risk of going hungry during the school holidays.

2.53 In 2018 funding was provided to seven organisations, following a competitive tendering process, to fund provision to support disadvantaged families during the school holidays. The £2 million investment went towards new and existing holiday clubs to explore how best to help the most disadvantaged children benefit from healthy meals and enriching activities.

2.54 Stockton Borough Council applied for the DfE money but were unsuccessful, so Public Health decided to fund a Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme (HEP), each year reaching approx. 1,500 children in low-income families.

2.55 Provision in 2020 became a bigger challenge when the country was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. 17 providers took part with a total of 1,777 children accessing provision as opposed to the previous summer where there were 22 providers, 1,380 children and 420 families accessing provision.

2.56 Some providers reported an increase in engagement due to virtual sessions, children who had not previously accessed the projects took part in online activities such as: discovering nature, bird watching and garden crafts.

Holiday Activity and Food

2.57 On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that the holiday activities and food programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. £220 million was made available to Local Authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities.

2.58 It was agreed that Easter would run in a similar way in which HEP was run. For summer and Christmas, Stockton was split into three areas with a lead organisation appointed to each area. It was also agreed that the HEP programme would enhance that provision by supporting the half term holidays which would continue to be run solely with Catalyst and Public Health.

2.59 Summer saw the engagement of 41 providers which also included private providers with 1,694 children accessing sessions, 852 primary and 842 secondary ages.

2.60 The Government announced in their October spending review that there would be a further three years of HAF funding and work was already underway to ensure that the very best programme could be offered to many more children and their families.

2.61 The Select Committee noted that wider publicity and improvements to the booking system for HAF should help reach more children in future. Over 6,500 thousand FSM children had not accessed the programmes but there had been spare places. Closer working with schools was also planned.

2.62 The programmes had been very prescriptive; with more flexibility, the programmes could have been run very differently. For example, Government funding was for face-to-face provision – more flexibility to offer remote provision would be welcomed.

2.63 It was noted that needy children not on FSM might not be eligible for help. Although HEP was for low-income families, HAF was solely for FSM children and there was only a 15% leeway in applying this.

Children's Mental Health Evidence from Tees ESK and Weir Valley Mental Health Trust (TEWV)

Impact of the Pandemic

2.64 The pandemic and lockdowns have been significant drivers for the increase in demand seen nationally including, loneliness, worries about future, digital poverty, mental health impact on parents, impact on key workers, disproportionate impact on disadvantaged groups, financial security of family, and the impact on education.

2.65 TEWV carried out demand forecasting as part of COVID-surge modelling which was 1 of 6 models accredited for use by others nationally. This modelling predicts that referrals into CAMHS will be 61% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

What is the impact on services?

- 2,702 children and young people were referred to Teesside CAMHS in Q1 21/22 with 2,084 children and young people being referred during the same period in 18/19
- 4,538 children and young people are currently open to Teesside CAMHS with 551 of those being on specialist autism assessment pathway and 55 are open to the community eating disorders service
- There are also approximately 1000-1500 CYP open to CCG-commissioned third sector providers in the Tees Valley. Providing evidenced-based interventions for mental health and emotional well-being needs; this resource was not in place in 18/19
- Local Authority provided/commissioned services for CYP are also experiencing increased demands
- In Teesside CAMHS there is an average wait of 4.04 weeks till first appointment currently. NHS Benchmarking from 2019 (latest data) showed a national average of 8 weeks on this metric
- CAMHS has a 24/7 crisis & Intensive Home Treatment team which provides immediate response to all urgent referrals and any case already open to CAMHS requiring urgent support. 90% of referrals were seen within 4 weeks in Q1 21/22
- Stockton CYP referred to CAMHS face average waits of 10 weeks till their second appointment. NHS Benchmarking from 2019 (latest data) showed a national average of 14 weeks on this metric. The service has a 'keeping in touch' process for all waiters to monitor for any changes in need, signpost to other sources of support and manage risk
- There is currently a 15 month wait for a specialist autism assessment in Stockton on Tees with an average wait for the initial screening being 10 months and a 5.2 month wait for triage to multi-agency assessment (MAAT; diagnostic process)

2.66 The Select Committee were concerned about the increase in demand for services and waiting times and noted the impact on young people and also on their families; it was equally concerning that waiting times locally compared favourably to the national picture.

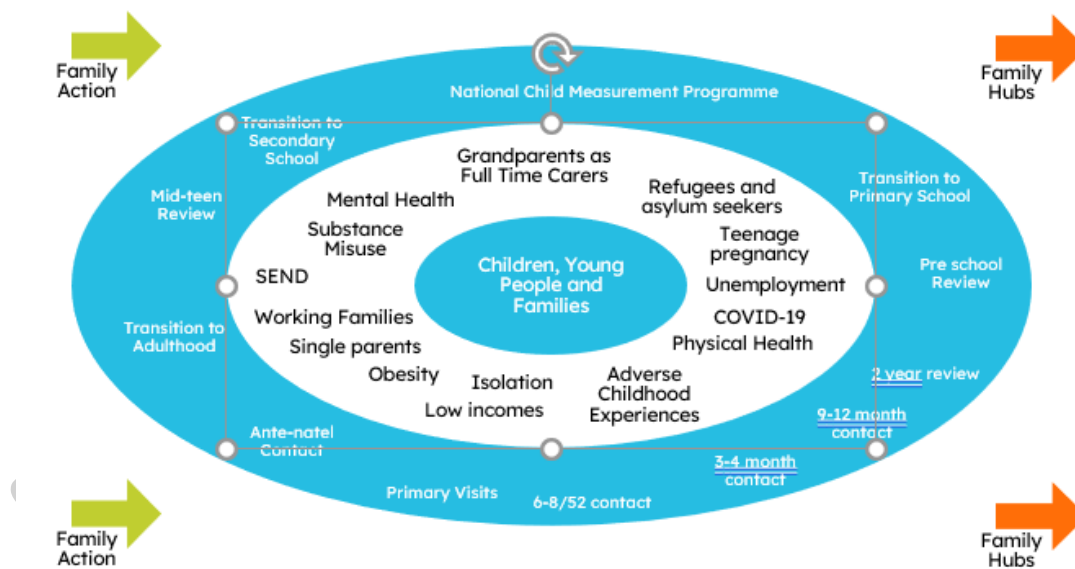
2.67 Staffing and funding pressures were driving other innovative approaches. A move away from the usual diagnostic led approach to a whole system approach was taking place with a greater emphasis on multi-agency co-ordination and collaboration between agencies and partners.

2.68 Co-ordinated work was also taking place in schools with positive early feedback. A focus on early help and intervention would help to free up specialist services for those that need it.

2.69 Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) were a new government initiative to help increase access to mental health support for children and young people. MHSTs were currently being rolled out in Billingham Schools and there was a target that by the end of 2024, 40-50% of children would be attending a school with a MHST.

2.70 Better co-ordination of care with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) was also taking place with CAMHS practitioners being based in GP practices. A PCN had been selected in Ingleby Barwick as a pilot and if successful further business cases would follow.

Family Health and Wellbeing Evidence from the 0-19 Service Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust



What do we do in the 0 – 19 service to break health inequalities related to poverty?

- Holistic health needs assessment
- Robust Vulnerability Questionnaires
- Communication with Midwives
- Promote Healthy Start Vouchers
- Awareness of Community Assets
- Working in an integrated One Team with Family Action and Family Hubs so families tell story once
- Undertake Newborn behavioural observation to promote bonding and attachment
- Perinatal and Postnatal mental health screening and support
- STEPS Pathways (Enhanced offer over and above mandated contacts)
- Promote uptake of nursery placements
- Integrated 2 and 3 year development reviews

- Parenting Therapist roles and Incredible Years Programme
- Universal offer at key school transition points and targeted one to one work with those who need it
- Emotional resilience nurses and Psychological Well Being Practitioner roles

2.71 During April – August 2021 there were:

- 458 referrals received into the service, involving 918 children
- 196 referrals from parents
- 306 parents attended a programme within Family Hubs
- 89% noted that there was an improvement in their circumstances as a result of attending a programme with a 79% retention rate

Principles of Working with People who live in Poverty and Socio-Economic Disadvantage Evidence from Thrive

2.72 Thrive is an organisation working in Teesside, advocating for the voice of lived experience to be included in decision-making processes. Their presentation highlighted the importance of recognising and taking account of lived experience and the importance of applying the following principles:

Recognising: knowledge about how best to tackle poverty and inequality is held by those in communities who have lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage.

Understanding: meaningful involvement is not about gathering many stories, but about understanding the collective experiences and impact. This includes involving people from the outset (scoping the issues, understanding the problems, prioritising the actions...) and not over-relying on surveys and one-off consultations.

Accepting: real success comes when there is a bringing together of different types of expertise, through collaboration and co-production.

Barriers to Learning

2.73 Challenges identified in pupil premium strategy statements included poor home conditions, evictions, poor diet/hunger, inadequate clothing, lack of equipment, and access to IT.

2.74 In order to provide support, the Education Improvement Service was:

- Strengthening partnership working with Catalyst
 - [Link: VCSE Directory • Catalyst Stockton](#)
- Strengthening links with Infinity Partnership
- Healthy Schools Programme
- DWP vouchers
- Promotion of School Uniform Bill
 - Headteachers and Principals
 - Pupil Premium Leads
 - Governors and trustees

Vouchers – Stockton Context

Value	Period	Pupil FSM/Vulnerable registered?	Number of vouchers distributed
£50	Christmas 2020	8037/666	8711
£25	Feb Half Term 2021	8207/720	8935
£25	Easter 2021	8303/250	9065
£20	May 2021	8462/739	9201
£70	Summer 2021	8579/ 719	9298
£80	Christmas 2021	8693/722	9415 *1.12.21 Current numbers

2.75 The Service was empowering staff to promote FSM take up vulnerable families by promoting the eligibility criteria through parent/ carer displays in the school environment, newsletters, school websites, PSA's, administrative staff, and customer services eligibility checker support. Promotion was also taking place through wider partnerships such as the VCSE, family hubs, family action, 0-19 service, food power network and public health.

2.76 Access to IT had been supported through the distribution of DfE computers/ tablets in collaboration with ONE IT. Senior leaders had been empowered to challenge allocations where appropriate and additional resources had been secured via Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation and DfE funding for data. The need for parent/ carer IT skills support had been raised with the Adult Learning and Skills Lead. So far there had been £8290 (43 devices) in SBC donations which included new laptops, refurbished laptops, and notebooks.

DfE internet Access support Grants

2.77 Schools and other settings received funding to support them with costs they have incurred to support children and young people to access the internet. All eligible settings had been able to apply in January 2022 to cover costs incurred between 1 September to 31 December 2021. Whilst there was no set limit for the amount that can be claimed, it was expected that claims would be related to connectivity support needed by disadvantaged pupils and students.

Events/ Training

2.78 Sharing research and evidence-based action is taking place via training, Termly Closing the Gap Clusters, Pupil Premium Leadership CPD, Governors' Pupil Premium Challenge and Support CPD, Pupil Premium Conditions of Grant CPD, Personal Development Network (primary/ secondary) and Parental Engagement CPD.

Solutions

2.79 Some solutions are to strengthen coherence of multi-agency response for example through the infinity partnership and catalyst, strengthen proactive targeting, support, and intervention, and strengthen signposting of support.

Poverty Proofing the School Day Children

2.80 Children North East, a local charity, provide support to schools to "poverty proof" the school day. This includes an audit which gathers the voice of every child in school in order to understand their experience of school and explore solutions unique to the setting. An inclusive, supportive, non-judgemental process results in a written report and action plan. Training for governors and teachers on poverty and its impact on education takes place together with a follow-up review and potential accreditation.

Digital Inclusion

2.81 Digital inclusion is “when a person is assisted or facilitated to do something they want to do and/or need to do that is better achieved using digital methods or can only be done using digital methods”.

2.82 The Select Committee received a presentation from the Digital inclusion Co-ordinator at Catalyst about the work the organisation was carrying out to re-purpose old laptops for community use. The Select Committee commented that it would be worthwhile to pursue a Tees Wide scheme and queried whether the Council could work in partnership with Catalyst to donate old Council laptops.

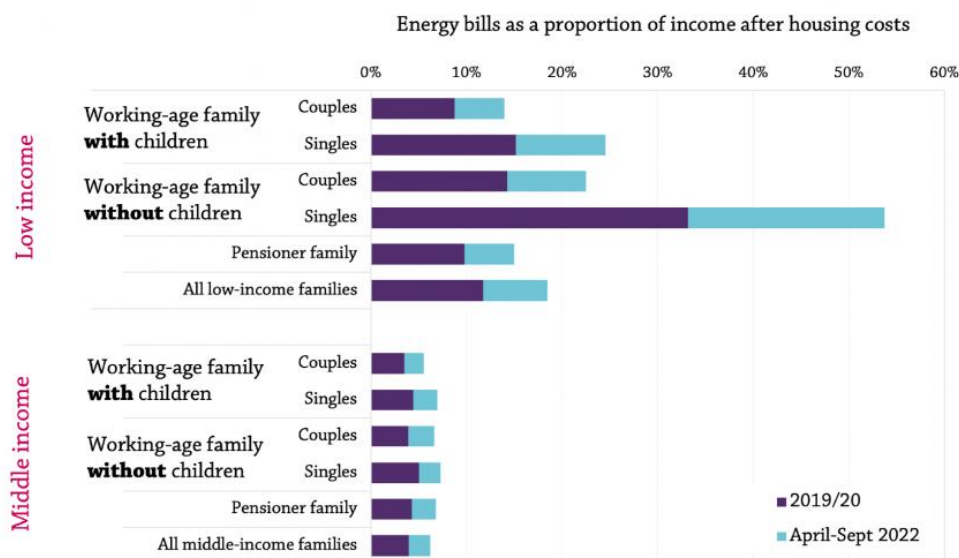
2.83 The Select Committee commended the bitesize skills videos as an excellent idea which would benefit from wider publicity and use for example through family hubs.

Fuel Poverty

2.84 The Royal College of Paediatrics have highlighted the wider evidence that poverty can contribute to mental ill health in children through environmental effects (such as sleeping badly because of a cold home or having to share a bed with siblings). Other impacts of fuel poverty on children are weight gain, increased risk of asthma and respiratory diseases, increased hospital admissions and poor grades at school.

Joseph Rountree Foundation – “Rising energy bills to 'devastate' poorest families”

2.85 New analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation finds households on low incomes will be spending on average 18% of their income after housing costs on energy bills after April. For single adult households on low incomes this rises to a shocking 54%, an increase of 21 percentage points since 2019/20. Lone parents and couples without children will spend around a quarter of their incomes on energy bills, an increase of almost 10 percentage points in the same period. The analysis compares the household spend on gas and electricity bills of several different family types on low and middle incomes between 2019-20 and after the increase in April this year.



Source:
JRF analysis of ONS' Living Costs and Food Survey, Ofgem's Energy Price Cap data and Cornwall Insight estimates of April 2022 price cap increases

2.86 The figures were released alongside JRF's flagship state-of-the-nation report which reveals a worrying increase in the number of children growing up in very deep poverty. JRF is warning that without additional support, people already in poverty are likely to find a sharp increase in energy bills very difficult to cope with. People living in deep and persistent poverty were already under constant pressure trying to afford food, bills, and other essentials. With the impact of rising energy bills expected to be much harsher for families on low incomes, they argue for a clear case for targeted protections to prevent serious hardship once the energy price cap is lifted.

Local Support

2.87 Support available locally includes:

The Warm Homes Fund - SBC is leading a Tees Valley consortium project to install first time central heating and low carbon alternatives in fuel poor off gas homes. The initiative runs until March 2022 with a target of 1200 new heating systems installed across the Tees Valley.

LAD2 (Local Authority Delivery) - An allocation from BEIS of £1.17 million for SBC to install energy efficiency measures for fuel poor homes is underway. 150 energy efficiency measures are to be completed by June 2022.

Big Community Switch - The Big Community Switch has proved very successful over the years - the auction last winter saw residents save an average of £168, and since we started promoting collective switching over 1,000 households are collectively saving in excess of £180,000 a year. Unfortunately, due to the energy market volatility this year's reverse auction was not successful as energy companies could not supply services below the Government energy cap.

Warm Homes Healthy People - Currently providing support and advice through the Stockton District Advice Centre and the Dementia Hub in Thornaby. The Council contracts both organisations to deliver advice and support as well as providing emergency heat for vulnerable people through a contract with HV&E and Cleveland Fire Brigade. As well as providing emergency heat the Council have helped our residents unlock £900k of unclaimed benefits.

3.0 Key Findings

National Picture (2019/20)

- In 2019/20 there were 4.3million children living in poverty in the UK; 31% of all children
- Poverty affects:
 - 47% of children living in households with three or more children
 - 46% of children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic families
 - 49% of lone parent families.
 - 34% of children in families with youngest child aged under 5
 - 37% of children in families where someone has a disability
- 75% of children in poverty are from working households

Local Picture (2019/20)

- In the North East, 37% of children were living in poverty, the second highest rate in the UK, behind London at 38% and the North East experienced the biggest increase in child poverty of anywhere in the UK in the five years leading to the pandemic
- The steep North East increase is likely to be influenced by the large proportion of low-paid workers pushed below the poverty line by a reduction in the value of working age 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

- Trussell Trust emergency food parcels to children in the North East rose by 26% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 (to 46,084)
- 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 free school meals is low; extending this to all families in receipt of universal credit would benefit a further 2,900 Stockton children and help families to access other forms of support
- In 2019/20 there were 13,922 children living in poverty in Stockton which was an increase of almost 4,300 since 2014/15
- Child poverty is not an unsolvable problem; it is highly policy responsive. The North East saw the biggest fall in child poverty of any UK region or nation between 1999 and 2013

Impact of Poverty

- Child poverty is associated with a wide range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, and adverse long-term social and psychological outcomes (all of which impacts life chances across the life course)
- Poor health which is associated with child poverty limits children's potential and development, leading to poor health and life chances in adulthood
- Children living in deprivation and poverty experience avoidable differences in health outcomes compared to their more affluent peers

Financial Inclusion

- In 2020/21, 29% of enquiries into SDAIS were from clients with dependent children. The main reason for households with dependent children seeking advice was welfare benefits; the main reason for lone parent families seeking advice was debt
- Demand on food banks has increased steadily over the past three years
- Future pressures were anticipated relating to benefit changes, welfare problems and mental health, increasing energy prices, employment, and housing security
- The Infinity Partnership were co-ordinating activities promoting access to advice, targeting work through the Community Partnerships, maximising family income and maintaining face to face advice services

A Fairer Stockton on Tees - A Framework for Tackling Inequalities

- The Council are leading the development of a new approach to tackling inequality in the Borough to ensure that targeted support and help is delivered to those living in poverty and improve their outcomes. This Framework has five key areas of focus:
 - VI. Tackling fundamental issues across the Borough as a whole
 - VII. A focus on reducing the inequalities faced by identified disadvantaged communities
 - VIII. A focus on deprived neighbourhoods
 - IX. A focus on the most marginalised
 - X. An emphasis on the Council as a major employer, commissioner, and purchaser

Food Poverty

- The Stockton-On-Tees Food Power Network was established in Partnership with Catalyst in January 2020. The programme aims to strengthen the ability of local communities to reduce food poverty, through solutions developed in partnership and with the support of peers from across the UK. Membership of the Food Power Network provides access to funding opportunities and practical support and resources. The SFPN has established a wide and

active membership, developed the 2021 Food Poverty Reduction Strategy, and secured £20,000 from UNICEF/Soccer Aid and £2,500 from Sustain. Stockton Council have also provided funding of £60,000 to provide practical support

- Public Health invested £200,000 in Summer Holiday Enrichment Programmes (HEP). Each year this has reached approximately 1,500 children in low-income families
- The Government announced in their October spending review that there would be a further three years of Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) funding and work was underway to ensure that the very best programme was offered to many more children and their families. Over 6,500 thousand FSM children had not accessed the programmes but there had been spare places. Closer working with schools was also planned to encourage take up. Although HEP was for low-income families, HAF was solely for FSM children and there was only a 15% leeway in applying this
- The programmes were very prescriptive and more flexibility to offer remote provision would be welcomed. £909,850 had been allocated locally, split as £91,500 (20/21) and £818,350 (21/22)

Children's Mental Health

- There had been a significant increase in demand for services and waiting times which was having a detrimental impact on young people and also on their families
- Staffing and funding pressures were driving alternative approaches to delivery including a move away from the usual diagnostic led approach to a whole system approach with a greater emphasis on multi-agency co-ordination and collaboration between agencies and partners
- Co-ordinated work was taking place in schools with positive early feedback. A focus on early help and intervention would help to free up specialist services
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) were a new government initiative to help increase access to mental health support for children and young people. MHSTs were currently being rolled out in Billingham Schools and there was a target that by the end of 2024, 40-50% of children would be attending a school with a MHST
- Better co-ordination of care with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) was also taking place with CAMHS practitioners being based in GP practices. A PCN had been selected in Ingleby Barwick as a pilot and if successful further business cases would follow

Health and Wellbeing

- The 0-19 Service were becoming increasingly aware of the impacts of poverty on families. The Service were seeking to address the inequalities through the following actions and approaches:
 - Holistic health needs assessment
 - Robust Vulnerability Questionnaires
 - Communication with Midwives
 - Promote Healthy Start Vouchers
 - Awareness of Community Assets
 - Working in an integrated One Team with Family Action and Family Hubs so families tell story once
 - Undertake New-born behavioural observation to promote bonding and attachment
 - Perinatal and Postnatal mental health screening and support
 - STEPS Pathways (Enhanced offer over and above mandated contacts)
 - Promote uptake of nursery placements
 - Integrated 2- and 3-year development reviews
 - Parenting Therapist roles and Incredible Years Programme
 - Universal offer at key school transition points and targeted one to one work with those who need it
 - Emotional resilience nurses and Psychological Well Being Practitioner roles
- Transport costs were becoming a huge issue and preventing families from, for example, keeping health appointments which reinforced the need for basing services and support in

accessible locations

- It was important to explore the reasons for the problems being experienced by families rather than making assumptions or judging and recognising and taking account of lived experience
- Having a universal offer played a vital role in prevention

Barriers to Learning

- Challenges/ barriers identified in Pupil Premium Strategy Statements were as follows:
 - Poor home conditions
 - Eviction
 - Poor diet/ hunger
 - Inadequate clothing
 - Lack of equipment
 - Homes with few/ no books to stimulate an interesting in reading
 - Access to IT
 - Computer/ tablet
 - Data
 - Parent/ carer IT skills to support
- The Education Improvement Service was seeking to address the inequalities through the following actions and approaches:
 - Strengthened partnership with Catalyst and the Infinity Partnership
 - Health Schools Programme
 - DWP Vouchers
 - Promotion of affordable uniform
 - Empowering staff to promote FSM take up to vulnerable families
 - Sharing research and evidenced based action via training
- DfE computers / tablets were distributed in collaboration with ONE IT and senior leaders were empowered to challenge allocations if needed; additional resource was also secured from the Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation. Around 800 devices were initially distributed to schools with additional devices distributed for siblings
- Schools and other settings had been able to apply for DfE Internet Access Support Grant in January 2022 to cover costs incurred between 1 September to 31 December 2021
- Poverty Proofing the School Day is an audit which gathers the voice of every child in school in order to understand their experience of school and explore solutions unique to the setting. It is an inclusive, supportive, non-judgemental process that results in a written report and action plan. Training for governors and teachers is provided on poverty and its impact on education and also a follow-up review and potential accreditation
- Through the Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator, Catalyst was running an initiative converting donated laptops; a Tees wide scheme would be worthy of investigation
- The UK Government has set out a framework of what is considered the essential digital skills needed to living and working in today's world. This has become even more important post Covid 19. A number of video tutorials are also available on the Catalyst website that address the various components of essential digital skills; these video tutorials would benefit from wider publicity and use for example through family hubs

Fuel Poverty

- The impacts of fuel poverty on children included:
 - Weight Gain
 - Increased risk of asthma and respiratory diseases
 - Increased hospital admissions
 - Poor grades at school

- Mental ill health though environmental effects (such as sleeping badly because of a cold home or having to share a bed with siblings)
- JRF is warning that without additional support, people already in poverty are likely to find a sharp increase in energy bills very difficult to cope with. With the impact of rising energy bills expected to be much harsher for families on low incomes, they argue that there is a clear case for targeted protections to prevent serious hardship once the energy price cap is lifted

Conclusion

In the North East, 37% of children are living in poverty, the second highest rate in the UK. This is likely to be influenced by higher unemployment rates, the large proportion of low paid workers in the region and a reduction in the value of working age benefits. Sadly, this position is likely to worsen with future pressures arising from welfare changes, increases in the cost of living, including rising energy prices and lack of employment security.

The impact of poverty on children is profound. Children living in deprivation experience a wide range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, long term social and psychological outcomes, and poor life chances in adulthood compared to their more affluent peers. These differences are avoidable.

Our recommendations seek to better understand the issues by working with those families who are experiencing poverty to enhance the support and interventions that are in place and each year to focus on a key priority for targeted action.

Recommendations

1. That a family poverty profile is compiled and updated annually from available data and input from those with lived experience and is used to identify a key priority for targeted action each year; an initial focus being take up of Free School Meals for those eligible and in need.
2. That support offered to families in poverty is enhanced through:
 - a. A more integrated and visible offer for families experiencing poverty focusing on information, advice, financial and other support
 - b. Roll out of Poverty Proofing the School Day across all Stockton Schools
 - c. Establishing a mutual aid/ giving scheme, in partnership with Catalyst, to facilitate community giving
 - d. Ensuring an enhanced support offer is available for communities and areas targeted through the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework
3. That specific interventions are put in place focusing on:
 - a. Healthy Food through the delivery of cooking and budgeting skills in schools, linked to Healthy Schools
 - b. Help with energy costs through warm energy schemes/ credits etc.
 - c. Digital inclusion for all children including schemes to re-use redundant laptops and roll out of skills training and family learning
4. That, subject to funding, a direct payments scheme is developed for those identified as in need, building on the examples of vouchers during the pandemic
5. That all subsidy policies are reviewed and revised as appropriate to provide streamlined and enhanced support for families.

Glossary

BMBF	Bright Minds Big Futures
CAB	Citizens' Advice Bureaux
CAMHS	Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
FSM	Free School Meals
HAF	Holiday Activities and Food
HEP	Holiday Enrichment Programme
HVE	Heating Ventilation Electrical
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
JSNA	Joint Strategic Need Assessment
LA	Local Authority
LGA	Local Government Association
MAAT	Multi-Agency Assessment Team
MHST	Mental Health Support Teams
PCN	Primary Care Network
SBC	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
SDAIS	Stockton and District Advice and Information Service
SFPN	Stockton Food Power Network
TEWV	Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust
UC	Universal Credit
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise