

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Child Poverty

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty
Link Officer/s:	Haleem Ghafoor
Action Plan Agreed:	July 2022

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 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.
Responsibility:	Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) – lead for the family poverty profile Public Health (PH) Strategy Systems and Improvement (SSI) Children Services (CS) Little Sprouts
Date:	March 2023
Agreed Action:	<p>Defining who we are talking about and analysing on annual basis (i.e. lone parents, disabled sibling or parent, BAME, having a young child in household, Having young parents under 25, Armed Forces etc.)</p> <p>Develop a theme as part of the FSOT work around Child Poverty</p> <p>Link in with targeted work through the FSOT framework and roll out across other areas as the work develops.</p> <p>Family poverty profile - Compile a profile from available data to monitor measure every year</p> <p>Develop and agree a process for ongoing input from those with lived experience around Child Poverty through dialogue with schools, Thrive, Community Partnerships, Members</p>

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	<p>Annual focus on priorities Targeted action – doing one thing well Initial focus on: FSM – take up for those eligible and Those in need but not on FSM</p> <p>Go through annual process to define one key area to make progress on take up of FSM</p> <p>Map breakfast provisions across our schools in the borough to identify any gaps</p>
<p>Agreed Measure: Success</p>	<p>Key strand included as part of the FSOT work</p> <p>Annual family profile completion</p> <p>An increase in those eligible for FSM take up</p> <p>Overall increased take up of HAF provision and FSM on the FSOT areas.</p>
<p>Evidence of Progress (February 2023):</p>	<p>As part of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees work (FSOT) (the Councils strategic framework for tackling inequality across the borough) a series of key measures will be tracked to enable the Council (and its partners) identify progress against its ambition to tackle child poverty. Examples of these key measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of children in absolute low-income families (broken down by age of child, gender of child, family type and work status) - Number of children in Relative low-income families (broken down by age of child, gender of child, family type and work status) - Net household income threshold before housing costs - Net household income threshold after housing costs - FSM eligibility of children - Income Deprivation effecting children index (IDACI) - Number of households claiming Universal Credit - Average weekly earnings - Children in Income Support households (2001, Source: DWP) - Children in Income Based job Seekers Allowance households - Children in Working Families Tax Credit households - Children in Disabled Person’s Tax Credit households whose equivalised income (excluding housing benefits) is below 60% of median before housing costs - National Asylum Support Service (NASS) supported asylum seekers in England in receipt of subsistence only and accommodation support <p><i>In addition, the following actions have been undertaken/are ongoing:</i></p>

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	<p>Holidays activities Fund (HAF) Programme – eligible children are those with benefit-related Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility or those suffering financial hardship. This is assessed on an individual basis, but can award 15% of the programme's places on this basis. Currently we are unable to record all bookings on a single system, but this will be resolved when EYES is live. In addition as due to scheme criteria we are working with schools and the SBC Communication Team to encourage parents to check if families are eligible for free school meals through a quick to use checker.</p> <p>Supporting Families criteria has changed from 6 outcomes to 10 enabling practitioners to look at areas in more detail, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Stability - Secure Housing <p>Education Improvement Service (EIS) led pilot on increasing FSM take up Northfield/ Billingham South schools, in collaboration with SBC Information and Intelligence and SBC Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) has commenced. Pilot evaluated positively. New SLA offer to schools via SBC Information and Intelligence as a result.</p> <p>Effective practice take-up case study to be shared at EIS Closing the Gap event 20.10.22 via Fairfield Primary School Headteacher (almost doubled FSM take up and increased Pupil Premium budget by over £40K).</p> <p>Ongoing administrative support in ordering and delivering food vouchers to schools (over 9,000).</p> <p>Breakfast initiatives trialled across Family Hubs throughout the summer (Not HAF Funded). Introduction of breakfast and play sessions, which seen a footfall of 275 parents and children attend to have breakfast and part-take in activities. One session was held in the local park. Children of all ages attended.</p> <p>Thrive has held an event which SBC Officers attended and presented our approach around the Cost of Living Crisis and Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. Workshops were held with those with 'Lived Experience' around poverty and further discussion are planned with Thrive to discuss how we take forward the issues presented.</p>
<p>Assessment of Progress (February 2023): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>2. On track</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (February 2023):</p>	<p>Details of impact currently being collated.</p>

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Recommendation 2:	<p>That support offered to families in poverty is enhanced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
Responsibility:	<p>Family Hubs EIS Little Sprouts PH/FSOT CS Catalyst</p>
Date:	<p>March 23</p>
Agreed Action:	<p>Access to help, delivery and support:</p> <p>Review our support offer, make it accessible, work with families experiencing poverty and building better links with employment and welfare / benefits service teams to target those most needing help for example:</p> <p>Welfare advice drop ins</p> <p>Outreach employment support in neighbourhoods</p> <p>Pension Credit campaigns</p> <p>Improve families benefits take up through communications campaign, promoting awareness of the available benefits and other financial support that people can access</p> <p>Poverty proofing all schools:</p> <p>Revisit and review current stage of poverty proofing for all our schools</p> <p>Explore the development of a Benevolent Fund / recycling scheme for school related items</p> <p>Community/ Partnership giving:</p> <p>Build on COVID-19 mutual support to sustain mutual aid / giving scheme</p>

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	<p>Explore the establishment of a Child Poverty Partnership and Fund (with contributions from across all sectors i.e. Housing groups etc.) for those most in crisis to access to enable families</p> <p>Develop extended support offer as part of FSOT</p>
<p>Agreed Measure:</p> <p>Success</p>	<p>Increased provision for those families affected by Child Poverty</p> <p>Increased number of schools delivering Healthy Schools programme initiatives</p> <p>An increase with the number of our schools undertaken Poverty proofed activity</p> <p>Continued funding targeting and supporting families affected by Child Poverty</p> <p>Successfully secured funds</p> <p>Establishment of a partnership</p> <p>Establishment of specific offer / additional support</p> <p>Impact on FSOT outcomes</p>
<p>Evidence of Progress (February 2023):</p>	<p>a) A more integrated and visible offer for families experiencing poverty focusing on information, advice, financial and other support</p> <p>Engaged support from Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to deliver Cost of Living School Information event to front line workers in SBC primary and secondary schools. Very well attended and positively evaluated. Termly event to sustain this offer now in place. Attendance is strengthening.</p> <p>Areas covered included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare benefits - an overview of benefits relevant to households with school-age children • Energy - how households can reduce energy costs • Grants - what grants are available, and how to access them • Emergency support - how to access crisis support, including energy vouchers and data vouchers • Saving money - information on schemes to reduce expenditure on essentials such as water and telephone • Practical support - where are local food banks, community pantries and providers of other practical assistance <p>Who can help - what organisations are there locally who can help, and how to access them</p> <p>Family Hubs: Provide a range of services inclusive of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food bank vouchers. • Low cost cafes/affordable meals. • Citizens Advice Bureau drop in sessions.

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- Household health checks – run at hubs.

Overall check of household spend, to support with how families can reduce bills.

- Drop-in sessions – families can access to discuss any areas of need and support.
- Food Pantry - (via Stockton Food Power Network)
- Job Clubs.

SMART Team house DWP benefits advisors who can provide advice and support around benefits/applications. They also support getting parents/carers into employment.

Opportunities Team have a dedicated ESF project (Pathways) which can engage 16–29-year-old people who are currently unemployed to engage in the programme, with additional funding available to enable work readiness.

A Child Poverty task and finish group has also been established as a part of the Cost of Living work to respond to any emerging trends and issues.

Ongoing Cost of Living Hub on SBC website and development of information for staff to ensure they have up-to-date and relevant information to support families on a range of cost-of-living issues.

Whilst Warm Spaces are generally Mon-Fri (daytime), FSOT Team are exploring options to develop services for weekends/families, and ongoing throughout the Summer months, with a view to continue the Warm Spaces programme into Winter 2023/24.

b) Roll out of Poverty Proofing the School Day across all Stockton Schools

Strategies which support schools to Poverty Proof routinely flagged at termly Closing the Gap (CTG) EIS event

Routinely engage with Children North East to promote their research, resources and new initiatives at CTG events.

Cost of Living Crisis and support an ongoing agenda item at Education Matters and Governor Briefings.

EIS have liaised with Catalyst Stockton to scope out School Uniform support spreadsheet - support sourced from both schools and VCSE. The spreadsheet is included on the on SBC COL Hub website and promoted to all schools.

A National Lottery bid has been secured for £450k. The project funding will give financial support commitment over the next 3

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	<p>years to address inequalities by identifying gaps in the area, working with VCSE and statutory services to address these gaps and through volunteer support to individuals not currently accessing services in deprived communities.</p> <p>Outcomes will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people experiencing healthy living - eating healthier food, taking more exercise • Increased good mental health • Increased income and reduced poverty in the disadvantaged parts of the Borough • Increased partnership and collaboration between partner organisations • Increased commissioning from statutory bodies of VCSE services • More volunteering in Stockton-on-Tees supporting the FSOT framework. <p>Strategies which support schools to Poverty Proof routinely flagged at termly Closing the Gap (CTG) EIS events.</p> <p>Regular engagement with Children North East takes place to promote their research, resources and new initiatives at CTG events.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">c) Establishing a mutual aid/ giving scheme, in partnership with Catalyst, to facilitate community giving</p> <p>Work will take place through the Child Poverty task and finish to give this some consideration in how we take this forward.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">d) Ensuring an enhanced support offer is available for communities and areas targeted through the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework</p> <p>Grants between £50-£500 have been provided to the VCSE to support families through providing Warm Spaces.</p> <p>A FSOT Co-Ordinator has been employed through Catalyst to ensure that we extend the FSOT support through the VCSE</p>
<p>Assessment of Progress (February 2023): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>2. On Track</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (February 2023):</p>	<p>Details of impact currently being collated.</p>

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Recommendation 3:	<p>That specific interventions are put in place focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
Responsibility:	<p>0-19 service / Family hubs FSOT Env Sustainability Environment team, Infinity Partnership CS</p>
Date:	June 23
Agreed Action:	<p>Healthy food</p> <p>Food quality in schools</p> <p>Cooking and budgeting skills</p> <p>Holiday kitchen concept</p> <p>Linkages / expansion of Food Power Network services</p> <p>Help with energy costs</p> <p>Warm energy schemes / credits etc</p> <p>Promotion / outreach of support schemes available targeting FSOT areas</p> <p>Linkages with the Infinity Partnership – targeting work towards FSOT areas</p> <p>Explore possibly Energy hubs type approach</p> <p>Digital inclusion for all children – Investigate options to increase Laptop and accessibility scheme for school aged children:</p> <p>Devices – held and managed by the school, recycling devices and seeking sponsorship</p> <p>Donations / Funding options to be explored</p> <p>Accessibility – dongles / wireless potentially in our fairer Stockton areas</p>

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	<p>Family learning opportunities ideally coordinated through Family Hubs</p>
<p>Agreed Measure: Success</p>	<p>Success measures to be determined once interventions develop.</p> <p>Reduction in stress/ worries</p> <p>Improved financial wellbeing</p> <p>Increase in the number of digital devices in our schools across the brough</p> <p>Improved home learning for those affected by digital exclusion</p>
<p>Evidence of Progress (February 2023):</p>	<p>a) Healthy Food through the delivery of cooking and budgeting skills in schools, linked to Healthy Schools</p> <p>Healthy School Programme promotion, implementation and accreditation a core role for Healthy Schools Education Manager (ECMG). 38 schools currently engaged.</p> <p>Family Hubs offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free courses through learning and skills with ‘Cooking on a Budget’. • Food Pantry at Stockton Family Hub. <p>Work is also ongoing to support the Food Power Network/additional Food Pantries to meet shortage of food supplies through the Food Aid Fund. This is through the Cost of Living work a Food Aid Fund has also been developed through the Household Support Fund where over £40k has been provided to VCSE organisation to support those families who maybe struggling with food.</p> <p>Work with care leavers is starting to ensure we have access to all entitled benefits from leaving care, and partner agencies such as CAB.</p> <p>Bid Writing CPD designed and delivered to School business Managers and Headteachers to leverage funding opportunities.</p> <p>b) Help with energy costs through warm energy schemes/ credits etc.</p> <p>Family Hubs have signed up as a ‘Warm Space’.</p> <p>An online directory of Warm Spaces has been established which you can view here. The directory and offer will grow and</p>

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	<p>develop over the coming weeks and months to support those most in need across the Borough.</p> <p>The Council has also launched an online Cost of Living Support Hub network and a Cost of Living leaflet which will have lots of information on support available to families to access.</p> <p>A Winter Health conference has also taken place. Details of schemes and support available has been shared with stakeholders who will ensure that their service users are made aware and access support being provided through the Cost of Living Hub and Warm Spaces.</p> <p>EIS have promoted to school senior leaders the online Warm Spaces directory and Cost of Living Support material via Closing the Gap events and Education Matters events.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">c) Digital inclusion for all children including schemes to re-use redundant laptops and roll out of skills training and family learning</p> <p>The FSOT team is supporting several Council services and partner organisations that work with vulnerable individuals and families to provide free mobile data, calls and texts.</p> <p>Currently distributing more than 150 data vouchers and SIM cards to people and families in need across Stockton-on-Tees who may be in financial difficulty, refugees or asylum seekers, homeless or care leavers.</p>
<p>Assessment of Progress (February 2023): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>1. Fully achieved</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (February 2023):</p>	<p>Details of impact currently being collated.</p>

Recommendation 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.
Responsibility:	CS
Date:	March 23
Agreed Action:	<p>Making sure better access to existing support (e.g. benefits, FSM, access to employment)</p> <p>Cost out options for a direct payment scheme as part of wider work on benefits access and take up</p>

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Agreed Measure:	Success	<p>An increase in those eligible for FSM take up</p> <p>Increased take up of those non eligible to FSM meals</p> <p>Overall increased take up of HAF provision and FSM on the FSOT areas.</p>
Evidence of Progress (February 2023):		<p>Currently working to develop this recommendation. To inform this action work has been ongoing with schools to identify children who take up HAF places throughout the year, ensuring that families take into consideration the that thy maybe eligibility for the scheme and to undertake a simple check.</p> <p>Supporting Families Co-Ordinator has been working with all teams across Children’s Services to educate workers on the criteria of HAF including the 15% discretion for children outside of the free school meal eligibility.</p> <p>Public Health funding allows for HAF to take place in the 3 x half-terms across the school year. These places are focussed within the FSOT areas, which are in line with our targeted audience for the longer holiday periods.</p>
Assessment of Progress (February 2023): (include explanation if required)		2. On track
Evidence of Impact (February 2023):		Details of impact currently being collated.

Recommendation 5:	That all subsidy policies are reviewed and revised as appropriate to provide streamlined and enhanced support for families.
Responsibility:	<p>CS</p> <p>FSOT</p> <p>Welfare rights lead</p>
Date:	June 23
Agreed Action:	<p>Map out what current subsidies are available</p> <p>Explore whether these can be better targeted, streamlined, extended etc. as part of wider support offer</p>
Agreed Measure:	Success
	Increased take up of subsidies

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Evidence of Progress (February 2023):	Care experienced common (local) offer work is underway across the region, so we have a consistent offer across the North East.
Assessment of Progress (February 2023): <small>(include explanation if required)</small>	3 On track
Evidence of Impact (February 2023):	Details of impact currently being collated.

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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Please note that this is a 6 months update and a further full update will be provided at the 12 month point where it is anticipated that all actions will be fully achieved.