

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
<b>Review:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment</b>
<b>Recommendation Lead:</b>	<b>Haleem Ghafoor</b>

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.

<b>Recommendation 17:</b>	Review cost of living responses to diminish impact
Responsibility	Haleem Ghafoor
Date:	September 2025
Agreed Action:	<p><b>Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform</li> <li>Work with Child Poverty Network</li> <li>Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions</li> <li>Encourage all schools to ‘Poverty Proof the School Day’</li> </ul>
Agreed Success Measure:	<p><b>Strategy:</b></p> <p>Strategy A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan were approved by Cabinet in July 2024 and are a key component of the Council’s Powering Our Futures Communities Mission, which supports the Cost of Living responses.</li> <li>A two-page ‘easy read’ version of the strategy has also been developed</li> <li>A list of measurements outlining what will be achieved can be seen in the action plan.</li> <li>A cost of living <a href="#">booklet</a> has also been updated and over 15k copies distributed. The online <a href="#">hub</a> is also regularly updated.</li> </ul> <p>Strategy B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Food &amp; Hygiene Winter Fund 2024/25 is a Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council grant that offers financial help to projects that provide food, household and personal hygiene products to Stockton-on-Tees residents</li> <li>The Bread-and-Butter Thing offers high-quality, low-cost food to residents in Stockton-on-Tees. For £8.50, you can pick up 3 bags of food worth roughly £35 including fresh fruit and veg, chilled food for the</li> </ul>

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	<p>fridge, and cupboard staples like cereal. You can also pay just £5 for an individual bag or £17 for a six bag 'family' deal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All SFPN <a href="#">leaflets</a> have also been shared with the Education &amp; Inclusion Team to share with schools to help support them with food and hygiene products and the COL booklet.</li> <li>• A new cost of living of living <a href="#">booklet</a> has been developed and circulated. This year a further 10k copies have been distributed. The online cost of living <a href="#">hub</a> also continues to be updated and developed.</li> <li>• As a result we have seen a reduction in foodbank usage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy C</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fairer Stockton-on-Tees &amp; Community Engagement (FSOT &amp; CE) team continue to attend a range of events, webinars and training relating to poverty and the cost of living.</li> <li>• The FSOT Team coordinate the Stockton Child Poverty Network, which brings together key Council Officer and external partners to address the main issues affecting the borough's children and families.</li> <li>• A member of the FSOT Team is also the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council representative on the North East Child Poverty Commission and sits on the Executive Group. This has provided an opportunity to feed into regional and national discussions on child poverty issues, including the development of a national child poverty strategy.</li> <li>• The FSOT &amp; CE Team continue to work with other Local Authorities and relevant external partners on projects, e.g. Free School Meals Auto-enrolment project. (Over 300 new children will be benefiting from FSM as a result and schools across the borough will benefit from an annual increase in pupil premium of over £400,000). This also means that more children can access the Holidays are Fun (HAF) programme.</li> <li>• As part of the Christmas Gift nearly 700 parcels were given to families in need.</li> <li>• We are also supporting the work of the <a href="#">Multibank</a> which allows professionals to access free goods for families who they may need to support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added value – Regular Cost of Living quarterly newsletters are shared with the Education &amp; Inclusion team to be shared with schools</li> </ul> <p><b>Events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will continue to review / evaluate and put on new events according to need. The next Summer event will be held in the High Street on the 19 July 2025, targeting children and young people through arrange of stalls, arts and creative activities etc.</li> <li>• Ongoing work to help bring communities together through activity such the Community Spaces and Warm Welcomes (as below) where services support our communities, as well as addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness.</li> </ul>
<p>Evidence of Progress: (March 2026)</p>	<p>The Council's <a href="#">Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2027</a> confirms the Council's commitment to reducing inequality and poverty, including child poverty, as previously set out in the <a href="#">Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Strategic Framework</a>.</p>

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The FSOT framework is also integral to the aims of the [Stockton-on Tees Plan](#), and specifically, the priority to create 'Healthy and resilient communities.'

To support co-ordination of the strategy, the Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group continues to meet regularly to discuss and provide updates on the progress of the strategy's action plan. In addition, the Positive Living Forum continues to feed their views via regular meetings. The Forum is the Council's Anti-Poverty Lived Experience Group, which was first set up to gather residents' voice on poverty related issues and co-produced the strategy and action plan in 2024.

The Stockton-on-Tees Child Poverty Network continues to meet quarterly, bringing together Council staff and external partners to discuss the key issues children and families living in poverty are experiencing across our Borough. A member of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees team also represents SBC at the North East Child Poverty Commission and sits on the Commission's Executive Group.

**The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT):** Established in 2024, supports residents at five hubs across the Borough. During 2025, residents bought 13,590 sets of shopping at TBBT, saving over £339,738. The scheme has contributed to a significant reduction in the number of emergency food parcels in the Borough with numbers having fallen by around 50% since 2023. The service is available to all, helping reduce stigma and positively impacting levels of unnecessary food waste.

**Staff Information on Food Support:** The FSOT and Community Engagement teams created an information video explaining the different levels of food provision available in the Borough. From foodbanks to pantries, The Bread-and-Butter Thing to hot community food, this video helps support staff better understand the services available to help residents. (Can send video if needed)

**Here to Help Summer Family Fun Day Event:** In July 2025, around 750 residents attended the second Summer Family Fun Day. Over 200 new and around 750 preloved uniform items were collected and distributed. 200 new and 300 preloved books, 100 filled back to school backpacks and around 1000 hygiene products and accessories were also distributed.

One resident praised the council for offering free transport to bring families in from the Clarences and for the items they all received to help reduce the cost of preparing children for the new academic year.

Organisations attending praised this event saying, 'It was ... perfect for promoting valuable services in the community.' Salvation Army added, 'About 40 people spoken to on Saturday attended our Messy Church on Sunday.'

**School Uniform Support:** Pre-loved school uniform is now available to collect from any of the 4 Family Hubs. This provides a year-round offer that families and professionals can access when needed. In response to the Government's introduction of a limit of three branded school uniform items (through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill), guidance will be regularly communicated to Stockton governors, trustees and senior leaders of maintained, academy and free schools across primary and secondary phases via Governor Pupil Premium Training, Education Matters, Governor Briefings. Pre-loved uniform will continue

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to be available in all Family Hubs all- year round and at the Summer 2026 Here to Help event.

**Back to School Campaign:** During Summer 2025, the Council worked in partnership with the Junction Multibank to provide 600 backpacks to children and families across the Borough. The backpacks ranged in design so that they could not be identified as ‘free backpacks’ and to avoid stigma.

#### **Kit Out Campaign**

In partnership with the Multibank, sports equipment and clothing was provided to 40 families from schools in central Stockton with the aim of getting families to be more active together. The families invited were identified by our School Support team as being the most in need of this support. The event was also used to provide broader support and information to the families attending and

**Free School Meals Auto-Enrolment Project:** This cross-directorate project, resulted in almost 400 pupils being auto-enrolled for free school meals in 2025, with an increase in almost £500,000 in pupil premium for schools across the Borough.

**A Second Dance Prom Project:** A member of our Positive Living Forum raised the issue of the impact of school proms on family budgets with young people often being excluded due to poverty. This led to the ‘[A Second Dance Project](#)’. This is a partnership between SBC and Wellington Square and provides an alternative way to prepare for prom. All items are donated by residents and local businesses and to date we have provided 72 young people with their dream prom outfit. Residents have spoken to us about how welcoming and inclusive our A Second Dance events have been. People praised the quality of the outfits, the choice available and how helpful the Prom Project team were in helping people find their perfect outfit. One parent said, ‘Amazing event! A lovely idea for families on low incomes especially.’ Another said, ‘Absolutely brilliant idea – recycle/reuse and making prom affordable and accessible for all.’

**Family Action Supporting Families Fund:** In April, through support provided by the FSOT team, Stockton Family Action and Outreach Service received £2000 from the Banks Group to provide to children and families who are engaging with their services which has made a made a meaningful difference to children and families providing essential items, reduce financial pressure on households, and create opportunities for positive family activities.

As part of the Early Intervention and Prevention work in North Thornaby, community engagement activity continues with residents and Mandale Mill Primary School with activities such as cooking sessions and craft sessions. Funding secured from Northern Powergrid for a ‘Growing Together in Thornaby’ project will link the work being undertaken by Community Engagement Officers in North Thornaby with local schools and the Thornaby Warm Welcomes.

**Community Gift 2025 –** Over 600 festive hampers were created to give to families and individuals across Stockton-on-Tees.

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	<b>Christmas Toy Appeal</b> - 337 toys were received from the Junction Multibank via the Community Gift and in partnership with VCSE organisations working with vulnerable families.
Assessment of Progress: (include explanation if required) (March 2026)	<b>2 On Track</b>
Evidence of Impact: (March 2026)	See above

<b>Assessment of Progress Gradings:</b>	<b>1</b> Fully Achieved	<b>2</b> On-Track	<b>3</b> Slipped	<b>4</b> Not Achieved
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