

REPORT TO CABINET

12 MARCH 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member - Councillor Clare Besford

Child Poverty (2025 update report)

Summary

Appendix A outlines the progress made by the Council and its partners during 2025 to alleviate child poverty across the borough. Following the recent publication of the Government's national child poverty strategy, '[Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty](#)' (December 2025) this report also highlights examples of actions taken by the Council which support this national agenda.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Powering our Futures has a strong commitment outlined within the programme's design principles of reducing inequality and prioritising prevention whilst working with communities to put them at the heart of what we do, enabling them to thrive and support each other. The driver behind this work is to ensure our most vulnerable residents (our children) are supported to have 'The best start in life'.

Addressing and tackling child poverty is central to the Council's commitment to reducing poverty and inequality as set out in the A [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Strategic Framework](#) and the [Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2027](#). Reducing child poverty levels also aligns with key priorities in the [Stockton-on Tees Plan](#), namely 'The best start in life to achieve big ambitions' and 'Healthy and resilient communities'. Working alongside communities and partner this remains a firm commitment to continue to prioritise the work needed to continue achieving improved for all of our young people.

Recommendations

1. This report is for information only. Cabinet is asked to note the report and actions taken to addressing and alleviating child poverty during 2025.

Detail

Background:

1. The Stockton-on-Tees Child Poverty Network continues to meet quarterly, bringing together external partners, including Family Action, SDAIS and Moneywise, with Council

service leads to discuss the key issues children and families living in poverty are experiencing across our borough. This is a collaborative group which works to find solutions to these issues and improve the lives of our children and young people.

Key actions/achievements during 2025:

2. **Appendix A** provides details of key achievements; however notable examples include:
 - Delivery of the Free School Meals Auto-enrolment project, resulting in almost 400 children being registered and an increase of almost £500,000 in pupil premium.
 - Implementation of a year-round offer for residents to obtain free pre-loved uniform from any of the borough's Family Hubs.
 - 10,286 children/young people attended the borough's Holidays Are Fun Activity Programme (which provides healthy meals, enrichment activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families).
 - Targeted work undertaken in North Thornaby as part of the wider Early Intervention and Prevention project.
 - Direct support to families at key points in the year – for example, through the Back to School Campaign & the Second Dance Prom Project, helping to ease family financial pressures associated with children returning to school and the costs of prom season.

Consultation and engagement

3. As previously noted, (para 1) the Council engages with partners to inform its anti-poverty work.

Next Steps

4. Further detail on our ongoing approach for 2026 is detailed within **Appendix A** (sections 3 & 4). In summary key actions will include:
 - Using the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to deliver rapid, preventative, and targeted support to households, particularly families with children, at risk of financial crisis.
 - Targeting eligible families with children to help them access the Warm Homes Discount scheme and signposting them to help maximise their incomes.
 - Supporting primary schools with the rollout of free breakfast clubs.
 - Promoting the changes to free school meal eligibility to schools, parents/carers and undertake the Council's third auto-enrolment project.
 - Continuing to support young people and families to access free uniform and prom outfits.
 - Providing targeted intervention and events to support families most in need.

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