

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**18 JULY 2024**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET DECISION**

**Lead Cabinet Member - Leader - Councillor Robert Cook**

**ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

**EQUALITY AND POVERTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

**SUMMARY**

This report is intended to provide a progress update on both the **Anti-Poverty Strategy** (and supporting Action Plan) and revised **Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA)**. Both areas of work support the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees strategic framework and the Powering Our Future programme.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Approve the attached Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and the wide range of planned activity to be undertaken with our local communities, VSCE and broader partners.
2. Note the current work being undertaken to develop a new Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment approach.

**DETAIL**

**Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan**

1. Tackling poverty is key to supporting the Council's commitment to addressing inequality as detailed in both the Council Plan 2023-26 and the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Strategic Framework.
2. The draft 3 year Strategy and 18 month Action Plan have been developed with those affected by poverty, and in collaboration with wider VCSE partners. Co-production has been informed by a 'bottom up' approach, ensuring that residents with lived experience have been directly involved in formulating this work. This has resulted in the creation of a lived experience group, the 'Positive Living Forum', a name which was chosen by group members.
3. Strategy development has been supported by a stakeholder group (Anti-Poverty Delivery Group) which met monthly and included representatives from both external partners and internal service teams (CAB, Thrive, Welfare Support, Family Action, Employment & Training

Hub, Thirteen, Catalyst, Family Hubs & Public Health). The Anti-Poverty Delivery Group also agreed to gather views from their service users.

4. In addition, other 'conversations' which have informed this work have included working alongside Thrive (an anti-poverty organisation), focus groups with those with lived experience, feedback from surveys undertaken and feedback from a range of partnerships i.e. Infinity and the network of Community Partnerships.
5. The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan includes a range of previously agreed and proposed actions to be delivered to support those affected by the current Cost of Living situation. The Action Plan brings together these ongoing activities with new priority actions to ensure synergy and avoid duplication.
6. The work undertaken by the Council in response to the Cost of Living challenges has been subject to a recent scrutiny review (undertaken by the People Select Committee). Recommendations from this scrutiny review also supported the development of the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.
7. The action plan will be co-ordinated by the FSOT Team and will be delivered by a range of partners across the Borough, with oversight to be undertaken by the Anti-Poverty Delivery group and Positive Living Forum.

### **Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments**

8. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has a long-standing commitment to promote equality, celebrate diversity and advance inclusion. It is intended that the new EPIA's are introduced to further embed this approach into the Council's decision making and business planning processes.
9. The major change to previous EPIA is the inclusion of *(a) Poverty / (b) Care Experienced and (c) Substance misuse* in addition to the wider protected characteristics. This is intended to ensure that our decision-making processes include a 'poverty lens'. For example, the EPIA template will ensure a high-level assessment of poverty impact, and where it is identified that there is a disproportionate impact related to the proposals, a more in-depth analysis and stakeholder engagement can be expected to be undertaken.
10. Progress to date includes:
  - A data warehouse to support Officers in completing EPIA's (core data accessibility held in one place) has been developed.
  - Work is ongoing to produce online EPIA forms/templates.
  - Further supporting advice and guidance have also been developed to assist those completing EPIA's.
  - Work is ongoing to produce an EPIA roll out plan (including training and communication) with the aim of embedding across all service teams. This will be delivered through a Quality Assurance Project Group (made up of service leads across all directorates) who will be responsible for ensuring that the EPIA process is applied where required.
  - We are also currently exploring a 'train the trainer' programme.
  - It is proposed that the Quality Assurance group will (post implementation) meet quarterly and be responsible for ongoing monitoring & evaluation of the EPIA work.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

11. The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan have been designed to address fundamental inequalities and poverty in the Borough, and with a focus on poverty through the introduction of the EPIA's.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. Council Officers will work with key partners and services to deliver the Anti-Poverty Action Plan. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The basis for taking action is to some extent found in the Equality Act 2010.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

14. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

15. The strategy and action plan delivers a key priority in the Council Plan:

**Fighting inequality:** Inequality is a challenge in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. We have affluent areas alongside areas of deprivation. Nine of our wards are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country and there is a gap of 21 years in average life expectancy amongst men between the most and least deprived wards. We're committed to fighting this discrepancy and making sure more people enjoy a healthy and happy life here.

**We will:** Develop a new approach to tackling inequality in the Borough and to ensure that we deliver targeted support and help to those currently living in poverty to improve their outcomes, including around health inequalities and emotional health and wellbeing.

## CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

16. The strategy sets out a broad based approach to tackling poverty, and specifically child poverty. The specific needs of those who have been in the care system are identified as one of the key communities which will be considered as part of the EPIA developments.

## CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

17. Extensive engagement and conversations were undertaken between September 2023 and April 24.

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