



## **Special Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date**        **Wednesday 3 February 2016**  
**Time**        **9.30 am**  
**Venue**       **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend. Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement.**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interest, if any
4. Update on the Impact of Smoking on Children and Young People (Pages 1 - 4)
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Service
  - b) Presentation by Dianne Woodall, Public Health Portfolio Lead
5. Update on Wellbeing for Life - Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services (Pages 5 - 14)
6. Scoping Report - Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger - Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Pages 15 - 24)
7. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
26 January 2016

To: **The Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)  
Councillor M Nicholls (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J Armstrong, D Bell, K Corrigan, K Dearden, O Gunn, D Hall, C Hampson, J Hart, D Hicks, K Hopper, P Lawton, J Measor, S Morrison, L Pounder, M Simmons, H Smith, M Stanton, P Stradling and W Stelling

**Faith Communities Representatives:**

Mrs G Harrison

**Parent Governor Representatives:**

Mr R Patel

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr K Gilfillan and Mr D Kinch

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**Contact: Jackie Graham**

**Tel: 03000 269704**

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**Children & Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016**



**Impact of Smoking on Children and  
Young People - Update**

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**Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive,  
and Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director of Children & Adult  
Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an introduction to an overview presentation on the impact of smoking on children and young people. The presentation is given by Dianne Woodall, Public Health Portfolio lead for smoking.

**Background**

2. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an overview presentation at its meeting on 3 November 2014 and asked that a further update come back to a future meeting. In accordance with this decision Impact of smoking on Children and Young people was added to the committee's work programme for 2015/2016.

**Detail**

3. Performance information indicates that for the period July to Sept 2015 the number of mothers smoking at the time of delivery has reduced. This would suggest that the regional babyClear initiative is having an impact regionally and locally. However we need to wait for the full evaluation of the regional babyClear initiative in early 2016. In County Durham this reduction is slower in Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG in comparison to North Durham CCG.
4. The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) annual survey – 'Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2015' indicate the prevalence of smoking among young people is declining. The survey also indicates that the number of pupils who smoked at least once, is the lowest since the survey began in 1982. The numbers of pupils that had tried an e-cigarette is still lowest amongst pupils who had never smoked.

5. The County Durham student voice survey (2015) reported that 88% of students have never tried smoking, with 5% of students reported using e-cigarettes either sometimes (once a month or more) or often (once a week or more).
6. In County Durham around 1,257 children need GP or hospital treatment every year due to breathing secondhand smoke. The student survey voice survey reported 53% of students identified that they often find themselves near other people who are smoking. In relation to where this happens, 35% identifying 'in their home'. Exposure to second hand smoke in cars was identified by 17% of students.

### **Recommendation**

7. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to receive the presentation and comment accordingly.

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**Contact:** Dianne Woodall, Public Health Portfolio Lead, Tel: 03000 261523

**Author:** Ann Whitton, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 03000 268143

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance – N/A**

**Staffing – N/A**

**Risk – N/A**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – N/A**

**Accommodation – N/A**

**Crime and Disorder – N/A**

**Human Rights – N/A**

**Consultation – N/A**

**Procurement – N/A**

**Disability Issues – N/A**

**Legal Implications – N/A**

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**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016**



**Wellbeing for Life Update**

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**Report of Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on Wellbeing for Life and a brief update on childhood obesity.

**Background**

2. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on Wellbeing for Life at their committee meeting on 12 January 2015 and requested that a further update to a future committee.
3. Members also requested that as part of the update on wellbeing for life that they received information on current initiatives relating to programmes to address childhood obesity.
4. The committee received information on the four strands of 'Wellbeing for Life':
  - **Community Parenting Programme** – to support identified families from pre-birth until their child's fifth birthday. Mothers and families are supported by trained volunteers
  - **Resilience Building Parenting Programmes** – using the 'Strengthening Families' accredited programme delivered by resilience workers employed within DCC one point service. Strengthening Families focuses on good mental health being central to all other health related choices.
  - **Whole school approach to resilience** - a role for schools to contribute to building resilience in children and young people. There is evidence to strongly associate resilient children and young people with improved educational attainment.
  - **Family Initiative Supporting Child Health (FISCH) childhood obesity programme** - Childhood obesity will continue to be prioritised through the established Family Initiative Supporting Child Health (FISCH).

## **Current Position**

### **1. Community Parenting Programme**

Over the last twelve months close partnership working between health (Midwives and Health Visitors), DCC Public Health, DCC One Point and DCC adult learning has strengthened.

**Training for volunteers:** Two accredited courses for the volunteers have been developed by adult learning. The first course 'The Volunteer Passport' is a five week (15 hrs) programme designed as a foundation programme for any volunteer in County Durham to access. This course ensures volunteers understand their role as a volunteer: confidentiality, safeguarding, information governance, personal safety and much more. This is a building block prior to the volunteers progressing to the bespoke accredited programme, the 'Community Parenting' module (24 hrs). The eight week Community Parenting course is focused on the volunteers developing their skills in more detailed aspects of family and child health. Volunteers receive training from midwives and health visitors on topics such as infant feeding, good mental health, learning through play, safety in the home and avoiding minor illnesses. A significant part of the volunteers' role is about encouraging families to engage in community life and to reduce social isolation. Throughout the training the facilitators are assessing the volunteers for their eligibility to work with families, looking for key attributes such as excellent listening skills, communication skills, empathy and being able to support a family to progress.

**Recruitment:** Two members of staff have been appointed to the roles of Community Parenting Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator and the multi-agency steering group has enabled the programme to progress throughout the year until the staff were in post.

#### **Volunteer recruitment and activity to date:**

The specification for community parenting requires 50 active community parenting volunteers working with families. The programme is on target to achieve this. So far there has been significant interest from the local community and from professionals working with families who are pregnant or who have children under the age of five.

Wave one volunteer recruitment commenced in June 2015 in the Newton Aycliffe area. Nine volunteers were nominated by One Point staff and Health Visitors as being ideal candidates for Community Parenting. Eight out of the nine completed the Volunteer Passport five week programme and subsequently went on to the Community parenting eight week module in September 2015. At present the eight trained volunteers are undertaking shadowing experience with Health Visitors and Family Support Workers. Following shadowing they will have a nominated family to start work with.

Wave two has commenced in the Stanley locality. There are 14 volunteers confirmed in this area, two of whom are fathers. The volunteers started their 'Volunteer Passport' training in January 2016.



Wave three of volunteer recruitment is planned to start in the east of the County mid-February commencing with an engagement carousel.

### **Next steps for community parenting**

There is further work to do to consolidate the pathways for professionals to nominate families to receive support from a volunteer or for a family to self-refer. Marketing materials will be produced once the volunteers are in post and trained.

## **2. Strengthening Families / Resilience Team**

**Staff recruitment and training:** This programme is provided through one point. The staff infrastructure includes one coordinator and ten resilience workers based across the County. Recruitment into the posts was completed by April 2015. The Strengthening Families programme is a well evidenced based parenting programme. Staff are required to attend training prior to be able to deliver the course. In addition to the Strengthening Families programme staff were also expected to become trained Health Trainers. The Health Trainer accreditation enables staff to support families with lifestyle behaviour changes and provides motivational interviewing skills to encourage such change.

Due to one point restructures, some staff trained in the Strengthening Families programme have been successful at interview for other posts. This has left the resilience team with reduced capacity to deliver courses. Further recruitment to resilience worker posts is ongoing.

### **Delivery to date:**

Since staff have been trained 14 Strengthening Families courses have been delivered across the County with 58 families participating. When families do engage with the Strengthening Families programme the attrition rate is only 5% which indicates that the right families are being invited onto the programme. However numbers are still low and plans are in place to encourage families to participate and attend the programme. A case study is attached in appendix two to demonstrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved from participation in the course.

### **Next steps**

A steering group has been established to review the Strengthening Families programme and better links are being forged with the Stronger Families programme. The key performance outcomes are being reviewed to ensure outcomes for the families participating are being monitored tightly. At present only families who have children aged 10 – 13 years are eligible for the programme. Working in partnership with Oxford Brookes University, who designed the programme, the Stronger Families manager within DCC is liaising with public health to design a programme for 5 – 9 year olds. This will be evaluated to assess its impact.

## **3. Resilience in schools programme**

Working in partnership with DCC Education Development Service (EDS) and DCC Education Psychology service, an agreement was put in place with the nationally recognised Young Minds charity. Rather than progress with an 'off the shelf' package designed by Young Minds called 'academic resilience', DCC education

team and public health worked with Young Minds to bring together their skills and expertise and that of local professionals to develop a *Durham Resilience in Schools Programme*. The purpose of the Durham Resilience in schools programme is to have a whole school approach to emotional wellbeing and resilience. By working with County Durham experts and professionals there is a sustainable model of support for schools across the County once Young Minds exit the programme. Brighton University has been commissioned to evaluate this programme as they have international expertise in this field.

**Pilot schools:** Twenty schools (primary and secondary) were included in a pilot to develop and adapt the Young Minds academic resilience programme and embed Durham specialist expertise and experience into this. During the pilot phase (academic year 14/15) seventy percent of schools (n 14) continued with the pilot undertaking a whole school resilience audit, developing a resilience action plan and putting the plan into place. Many of these schools undertook work on staff resilience. Some schools focused on parents, thus developing a greater support network for parental resilience and other schools emphasised a resilient classroom with specific tools for children and young people. Schools have reported a much greater sense of wellbeing within the school environment and a broader understanding of how resilience can enhance achievement.

**Wave one roll out:** The multi-disciplinary steering group have reviewed the lessons learnt from the pilot and have amended the programme delivery style.

In December 2015 a capacity building 'train the trainer' two day session was held with Young Minds, DCC education teams, school nurses and public health. This session was followed by 15 further schools (primary and secondary) being invited to an engagement session about the Durham Resilience Programme. As of January 2016, all 15 schools have signed up to participate in the resilience audit. These 15 schools which will participate in the formal evaluation.

#### **4. Expansion of FISCH programme**

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust is the current provider of the school nursing service who deliver the FISCH intervention.

CDDFT is responsible for recruiting the five family health trainers to expand this programme. Recruitment was slow and the full complement of staff did not come into post until September 2015. Staff are still undergoing training to be qualified as Health Trainers. Whilst still being trained the Health Trainer staff have been supporting school healthy eating events across the county. Further details regarding this programme will be provided at a later date.

#### **Next steps**

The school nursing contract for 2016 – 2018 has been awarded to Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust.

As part of the new contract with Harrogate there will be a review of the FISCH programme in 2016/17.

The outcomes for children participating in the FISCH programme are good, as demonstrated in a recent evaluation. However the uptake of the FISCH service is below that expected with many overweight and obese children/families declining the opportunity to participate in the programme. Public Health is establishing a review task and finish group to make sure families and all stakeholders voices are included to explore this further.

**Other work on childhood obesity:** At a universal level midwives and health visitors have a priority role to promote a healthy lifestyle to families and educate and inform parents about how healthy eating and physical activity can be built into everyday lives. Within the new 0 – 19 specification there is an expectation that health visitors will work closely with children centre staff to identify weight issues early and work with families to prevent weight issues escalating.

Early work has started in partnership with Newcastle university to scope out how health visitors can be better trained and supported with tools to identify early weight issues and to support families to prevent their toddlers become overweight by the time they reach reception age.

Out of scope of this report, but worth mentioning is the work to tackle obesity being delivered by our VCS partners, the AAPs and other council service areas such as culture & sport, planning, active travel, 20 mph programme etc.

The issue of obesity remains complex and multi factorial. The Director of Public Health's annual report will focus on obesity this year. The report, once published, will be a call to action across the whole system and will be presented to OSC at a later meeting.

A national children's obesity strategy is due to be published imminently by Public Health England. Current strategies and action plans will be updated as appropriate.

**Obesity system leadership:** DCC Public Health have recently been agreed as one of four local authorities across England to work with Leeds Beckett University for the next three years on approaches to tackle obesity. The purpose of the project is to understand how County Durham can work with all partners to reduce obesity and to turn around the current upward trend in our figures.

## **Recommendations**

5. The CYP Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
  - Note the content of the report.
  - Receive further reports as the programme progresses.

## **Background Papers**

Previous OSC report

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**Tel: 03000 267696      Email: gill.o'neill@durham.gov.uk**

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## **APPENDIX 1 - Implications**

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**Finance** – ongoing contracts

**Staffing** – within existing contracts

**Risk** none

**Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty** - None

**Accommodation** - None

**Crime and Disorder** - None

**Human Rights** - None

**Consultation** – Consultation will be undertaken as reviews of services progress

**Procurement** - None

**Disability Issues** - None

**Legal Implications** - None

## **Appendix two: case study examples**

### Strengthening Families

Family A was referred onto the strengthening families (SF) course by their Youth Worker. Work had been done to improve the two girls' behaviours and attitudes which they had engaged with very positively. However it was felt that mother needed some support with parenting strategies and that the family as a whole could benefit from improved communication methods.

The children were happy to attend SF but mother needed some persuasion. Sessions were completed with mother prior to the course starting to improve her confidence, thus enabling her to attend.

Both girls attended with mother, and attendance was 100%

The girls engaged well from the start but mother was nervous, and did not participate much in activities initially. As the weeks progressed mother started to join in more and during the family session's significant change was noticed. Mother started off having very little to do with the girls but by the end she was helping the girls with their tasks and enjoying the different activities together.

A team around the family (TAF) meeting was held the week before the final SF session was completed and mother informed the team that she was feeling much more positive. She felt far more able to cope with the girls and they were getting on better together as a family. Mother was sad that the course was coming to an end and said that she had enjoyed being part of a group.

This was a big achievement and very positive from a mother who was reluctant to attend the course in the first place.

### Resilience in schools

#### St Stephen's

- St Stephen's have completed their staff audit and action plan, and have a clear timeline set out for this academic year.
- EDS is delivering relax kids through the school's allocated support visits. This links with one of their main priorities: helping pupils to cope- teaching self-soothing, management of feelings. They hope for relax kids to be a regular, universal entitlement for their pupils, as well as a more targeted approach for their most vulnerable children.
- They are still keen to find out more about the Young Minds resilient classroom materials and what training they could access in relation to this.
- One of their priorities was to develop their preparedness and capacity to help with the basics. They plan to act as a 'hub' for parents i.e. their first point of contact for accessing help from services within the school and local community. They are developing a notice board and information sheets for parents with this information, and are planning to find out more information about helping out with uniform costs.

- Another of their main focuses was to help map out a sense of future and developing life skills. For this they are planning a careers event in the summer, to link with pre-existing events e.g. young enterprises. They are also planning to make further use of community links e.g. local businesses, and to develop family learning days to help increase parent's involvement with and aspirations for their children.

#### Willington

- School has completed their staff audits which resulted in them identifying quite a few areas within the resilience framework which needed development. Of these, three were selected as main focuses for this academic year, based on their priority within the school and how they linked with other areas for development. The school has identified further areas which they will postpone until the current work is well under-way.
- Their first priority was to increase staff awareness of the need of pupils, and to improve staff-pupil relationships so that pupils feel they have at least one 'trusted-adult' in school who holds them in mind. With this in mind school has developed a pupil identification tool and review process, which ensures that the most vulnerable children all have a key person who is responsible for monitoring their progress.
- Another of their priorities was to develop their pupil's aspirations and sense of future. For this they have events scheduled in the summer term around careers, alcohol and energy drinks, as well as incorporating a careers package (linking what you learn in school to specific jobs) into PSHE throughout the year.
- Their third focus is a composite of areas relating to children's coping and the core self. Proposed work here includes work around identifying and developing 'safe spaces' within school, the 'relax kids' programme, and reintroducing buddies. School are planning on accessing the service's Buddy training for a group of children and staff; the idea being that they can continue to train children themselves in years to come. They are also linking to an ongoing project in school focusing on children's self-esteem which includes several initiatives e.g. establishing a base-line of pupil's self-esteem, worry boxes in each class, and reading mentors.

#### Peases West

- Completed audit and action plan, and have clear timeline set out. This links in with a number of initiatives that are also currently taking place e.g. Inspiring Young Minds, British Values
- Are interested in what training/support they can access from DCC re young minds material/ other areas.
- The three main focuses for their project are: developing a sense of future, safe spaces, understanding resilience and learning problem-solving skills.
- Looking to measure impact in part via 20 target children (academic progress and EWEL questionnaire scores), but also other measures (see action plan from school).

- Developing a sense of future: School are linking the resilience project with their Inspire project, and are planning to recruit local 'real people' to come in to speak to the children as community role models.
- Safe spaces: School is planning to ask the children to map their school and local community in terms of where they do and don't feel safe in order to develop these. Also looking to develop a specific 'safe space' in school for vulnerable children to access via a needs-based approach.
- Understanding resilience and learning problem-solving skills: School are working to embed the language and behaviour of resilience in school via modelling. This will be supported by both formal and informal opportunities for staff and parents to learn about resilience. They also plan to make targeted use of the Young Minds materials in weekly 'family' (house) time.

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**Children & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**3 February 2016**



**Scoping Report: Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger in County Durham**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose**

1. To provide Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a scoping report in advance of a scrutiny review looking at the take up of free school meals and holiday hunger in County Durham. The take up of free school meals provision not only ensures that the child receives a healthy two course midday meal but also provides the school with additional funding by way of pupil premium.

**Background**

2. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee have indicated their intention to carry out a focused piece of work on the impact of child poverty on children and young people in County Durham at their meeting held on 25 June.
3. Performance information indicates that the number of children in poverty in County Durham is 22.7 percent of under 16 year olds. (annual national measure). This is an average of the whole county which indicates there are higher and lower levels within certain localities.
4. Durham County Council was selected as part of a pilot exercise to offer Free School Meals (FSM) in all primary schools over a two year period between the beginning of Autumn Term 2009 and the end of Summer Term 2011. Two other local authority areas were also selected as part of the national pilot Newham and Wolverhampton. The pilot included substantial investment in catering facilities and activities to encourage take up of school meals by schools and local authorities, supported by the School Food Trust. An evaluation of the pilot concluded that it had a positive impact on children's diet and educational attainment and there had been an increased take up of free school meals among children who were already eligible.
5. Take up of free school meals in primary schools remains consistently high and there is universal free school meals in key stage one (reception, year one and year two). Evidence indicates that the take up of free school meals in secondary schools is also consistent as shown in the table below. However in secondary schools there has been a decreasing roll number over the three years shown and academies are not required to report their meal figures to

the local authority. The information in the table below indicates the percentage of take up of free school meals against those that are eligible on the school roll and the daily average of meals. The information suggests that there is a lower take up of free school meals by secondary school pupils.

Academic year	FSM Take up against FSM eligible on roll		Meals daily average	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
2012 - 2013	82.11%	72.17%	7379	3328
2013 - 2014	81.76%	72.15%	7164	3072
2014 - 2015	81.44%	72.80%	7087	2935

## What is Poverty?

6. Before work commences on a review it is important that poverty is defined. The definitions below are from European Union and Professor Peter Townsend as quoted by Child Poverty Action.

“People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation.”<sup>1</sup>

“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”<sup>2</sup>

## What is Holiday Hunger?

7. The issue of holiday hunger was highlighted by an All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom. The report makes 77 recommendations one of which is to ‘pilot and implement schemes to maximise the take up of free school meals and tackle school holiday hunger.’<sup>3</sup>
8. Surveys by the Trussell Trust and Kellogs indicate that families who are eligible for their children to receive free school meals struggle during school holiday periods especially during the long summer break. The Trussell Trust states in their research that ‘one in eight pupils is not getting enough to eat in the school holidays.’<sup>4</sup>
9. Kellogs Isolation and Hunger report indicates in its key findings that a third of parents have skipped a meal so their kids can eat during the school holidays.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joint Report by the Commission and the Council on Social Inclusion, European Union 2004

<sup>2</sup> Professor Peter Townsend, Poverty in the United Kingdom, 1979

<sup>3</sup> Feeding Britain, All Party Parliamentary Group, pg 47, June 2014

<sup>4</sup> School Holidays Leave Kids Hungry for Three Meals a Day, Trussell Trust, August 2015

<sup>5</sup> Isolation and Hunger, Kellogs, 2015

The research for the report was carried out by Yougov and provides information on the impact of the school holidays on struggling families.

10. East Durham Area Action Partnership (AAP) has been involved in a Holiday Hunger Project following information being received from children and young people's holiday activity programmes that children and young people were presenting as hungry and asked to spend part of the funding on snacks for the children and young people. Therefore a project has been developed to focus on providing food during activities.
11. Several holiday hunger projects are in operation in County Durham run through community projects. The review will raise awareness of these projects and give examples of the activities they run during school holiday periods.

### **National Policy and Research**

12. The Child Poverty Act 2010, placed a duty on the Government to work towards eradicating child poverty in the UK by 2020 and to create a framework to monitor progress at a national and local level.
13. The Act defines poverty in terms of income using a tiered approach of relative low income, combined low income and material deprivation, absolute low income and persistent poverty. These four measures are used to assess progress by the government to achieving their targets of eradicating child poverty by 2020 in the UK. It requires governments to publish a strategy every three years to meet targets and to report annually to measure progress. Duties are also placed on local authorities and other delivery partners in England to work together to tackle child poverty, conduct a local needs assessment, produce a child poverty strategy and take child poverty into account in the production and revision of their Sustainable Communities Strategies.
14. Since the publication of the Child Poverty Act 2010, the government has published two child poverty strategies. A new approach to child poverty was published in 2011 and confirms its commitment to eradicating child poverty and states that the root causes of poverty will be addressed not just the symptoms. To enable them to do this the government also said that they would measure the success through a new set of indicators. The 2014 Child poverty strategy focuses on tackling child poverty through supporting families, improving living standards and raising educational attainment.
15. The Children and Families Act placed a legal duty on all state funded schools in England including academies and free schools to offer a free school lunch to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 from September 2014.
16. Following the general election in 2015 the Conservative government prepared the welfare reform and work bill. Clauses 5 - 6 of the Bill change the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission to the Social Mobility Commission and repeal the bulk of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

17. Beyond the three years where school meals are free to all pupils, the government has strict eligibility criteria for claiming free school meals based on household income. Claimants can apply to the school or the local authority.

## **Local Policy**

18. The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2014-2030 is an overarching plan for County Durham and underpins all other plans and strategies. The SCS identifies that through partnership working it will seek to support the most vulnerable members of our community, reduce deprivation and child poverty and address inequalities.
19. The Council Plan 2015-2017 indicates that Durham is the most deprived authority in the North East Region in terms of income deprivation; quoting that nearly half of its population (42%) living in the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Data indicates that 22% of County Durham's children live in low income families compared to 17.5% nationally. The Council Plan goes on to stress that one of the most important, single contributions the local authority can make to people's lives is to work with our schools to ensure our children get the best start in life and are achieving their potential. It indicates that educational attainment in County Durham exceeds regional and national averages and the attainment gap of those pupils eligible for free school meals has reduced over the last five years.
20. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been developed to highlight key messages in relation to the health and wellbeing needs of the people of County Durham. The assessment is refreshed and updated annually to ensure that the information it contains is relevant and accurate. The JSNA provides a headline on child poverty and indicates the impact this has on child development.
21. The Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues report (Cabinet Oct 2015) indicates that the number of families claiming tax credits has reduced from one in four to one in five but the gap between the number of children living poverty nationally and in County Durham has grown by 2.7 percentage points. The report highlights the changes to the Child Tax Credit and the child element of Universal Credit.

## **Reviews by Other Authorities**

22. Many local authorities have carried out scrutiny reviews on school meals looking at its content which links into childhood obesity and reviews on universal free school meals at key stage one. York City Council has carried out a review of school meals which included investigating why parents who are eligible to claim free school meals do not do it and why significant numbers of pupils entitled to receive free school meals do not take up the offer.

## Terms of Reference

### 23. Rationale

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny committee agreed at its meeting on 25 June to undertake a review concerning child poverty. The take up of free school meals ensures that those children who are entitled receive a nutritious midday meal and by being eligible to claim for free school meals the school is also entitled to claim pupil premium for that child too.

### 24. Scope

The review would investigate the level of free school meals take up in County Durham and look to increase current take up levels by encouraging all schools to use the DCC free school meals checking system by highlighting the benefits of this system for them. Feedback on the checking system would be sought from schools using the system to highlight benefits and where improvements may be needed.

The review would investigate take up of free school meals in both primary and secondary school specifically looking to identify barriers and how these can be overcome. The school year lasts on average 39/40 weeks a year therefore what happens during the 12/13 weeks children who receive free school meals are not at school. The review will explore what is available to help families during school holiday periods.

### 25. Objectives

- What are the benefits to schools of using DCC eligibility checking service?
- How can the use of this service be increased?
- How can take up of free school meals be increased in secondary schools?
- What barriers/challenges are preventing take up in secondary schools?
- How can these barriers/challenges be overcome?
- Explore what is available to help families feed their children during school holidays?

### 26. Expected Outcomes

- Increase awareness among schools of DCC eligibility checking service and the benefits of the service to them.
- If more schools use the service there is a potential to increase their pupil premium
- More eligible claimants found through using DCC eligibility checking service enables the service to be provided.
- Awareness of the barriers preventing take up of free school meals in secondary schools and encourage schools to address how the barriers can be overcome.
- Greater awareness of help available to families to feed children eligible for free school meals during school holiday periods.

### 27. Membership

The review group will take its membership from Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a maximum of 12 members including the Chair and or Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

## **28. Reporting**

On completion of the evidence gathering a report will be drafted and sent to Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and the Children and Families Partnership.

## **29. Timescale**

The review will commence in March 2016 with the aim of a report being presented to Cabinet September 2016.

## **Recommendation**

30. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- a. Provide comment and approve the draft terms of reference for the review of the take up of free school meals and holiday hunger in County Durham.
- b. Agree the project plan attached at appendix 2.
- c. Receive periodic verbal updates on the review as it progresses.

## **Background Papers**

- Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues – Cabinet 21 October 2015

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – None

**Staffing** - None

**Risk** - None

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – Evidence suggests there is a stigma attached to receiving free school meals. A review would explore this assumption as a barrier to take up of free school meals.

**Accommodation** - None

**Crime and Disorder** – None

**Human Rights** - None

**Consultation** – None

**Procurement** - None

**Disability Issues** – None

**Legal Implications** – None

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# PROJECT PLAN: Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger

## Appendix 2

<b>WHEN</b> Times/Dates/ Locations	<b>DESIGNATED LEAD</b> Member/ Officer	<b>WHO</b> Key Witness	<b>WHAT</b> Evidence/Information	<b>HOW</b> Meeting/Visit/ Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/ Research	<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>WHY</b>
3 March 2016  11.30am  Venue to be confirmed	Cllr Christine Potts/ Ann Whitton	Alison Young & Karen Sproates	Overview of Free School Meals (FSM) take up in County Durham	Meeting	Members will receive information on the take up of free school meals in primary and secondary schools in County Durham. The legal requirements in relation to eligibility.	Members will have an awareness of the system and the eligibility requirements
7 April 2016  11.30am  Venue to be confirmed	Cllr Christine Potts/ Ann Whitton	Alison Young / Karen Sproates	DCC FSM eligibility checking service – How does it work? How many schools use the service? Can parents use this service? Is the service available for schools outside of County Durham to use?	Meeting	Members will receive information on the checking service provided and the numbers of schools using the service.	Members will have a clear understanding of the checking service.
22 April 2016  11.30am  Venue to be confirmed	Cllr Christine Potts/ Ann Whitton	Representatives from Secondary Schools and reps from catering organisations	Why is the take-up of FSM lower in secondary schools? What barriers are preventing take up of FSM? What challenges are schools facing in relation to take up of FSM? How are schools addressing these barriers/challenges?	Meeting	Information will be provided on barriers preventing take-up of fsm in secondary schools and how schools are addressing this.	Members will be aware of barriers preventing take-up of fsm in secondary schools and what is being done to address this.
13 May 2016  11.30am  Venue to be confirmed	Cllr Christine Potts/ Ann Whitton	Young People – nutrition Action Groups, School Councils and	What prevents young people from taking up FSM?	Meeting	Members will receive information on the barriers preventing young people from taking fsm	Members will have an opportunity to speak with young people of their concerns preventing them from taking fsm.

	Cllr Christine Potts		Visits to a school canteens/dining halls	Visit	Members will see school canteens/dining halls in operation.	
3 June 2016 11.30am Venue to be confirmed	Cllr Christine Potts	Reps from 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector organisations and AAPs  Shelagh Pierce	Holiday Hunger – Members will receive information on the numbers of children’s activities that provide a midday meal during school holidays. Information will also be provided in relation to the use of foodbanks during school holidays.	Meeting	Members will receive information on what provision is available in the north east for families who have difficulty feeding their children during school holidays	Members will have an awareness of what is available to help families in County Durham to feed their children during school holidays.
TBC	Cllr Christine Potts		To present draft report to members.	Meeting	Members will provide comment on the findings and conclusions of the report and formulate recommendations	Members will formulate recommendations in order to progress the report.