

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

13 January 2020

## Child Poverty in County Durham



---

**Report of: John Pearce Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service.**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The report accompanies a presentation to Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny members on the progress of the Child Poverty Working Group (CPWG) in addressing child poverty in County Durham. The CPWG aims to develop and implement a single coherent and coordinated approach to addressing and mitigating child poverty across County Durham.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 Poverty can affect every area of a child's development- social, educational, health and personal. Living in a poor household can reduce children's expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. As adults, they are more likely to suffer ill health, be unemployed or homeless, and become involved in offending, drug and alcohol abuse, and abusive relationships.
- 3 Child poverty in County Durham continues to be on the rise with 21.4% of children under 16 live-in low-income families. The distribution of child poverty is inequitably distributed across our neighbourhoods in County Durham from a low of 0.8% to a high of 59%. A child born today in the most deprived areas of County Durham could expect to live between 7-8 years less than one born in the least deprived areas.
- 4 The CPWG aims to develop and implement a single coherent and coordinated approach to addressing and mitigating child poverty across County Durham. The group has developed a plan on a page outlining a number of key priorities (see appendix 2). A number of projects and

initiatives have been developed and implemented including the development of a Poverty Charter for County Durham, 'Cutting the cost of the schools day' programme, holiday activities with healthy food programme, workforce development to support the skills and confidence of frontline staff to identify and address child poverty and development of a Family Centre poverty offer.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- 5 Children and Young People' Overview and Scrutiny Members are recommended to:
  - (a) note the contents of the report.

## **Background**

- 6 Poverty can affect every area of a child' development- social, educational, health and personal. Living in a poor household can reduce children's expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. As adults, they are more likely to suffer ill health, be unemployed or homeless, and become involved in offending, drug and alcohol abuse, and abusive relationships.
- 7 The introduction of Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 placed a duty on government to report on child poverty. The Act, however, repealed parts of the Child Poverty Act 2010, including the duty placed on local authorities to prepare and publish an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in their area. The new Act also introduces new measures of child poverty with an emphasis taken away from income. The current measures of child poverty are:
  - (a) The proportion of children living in workless households as well as long-term worklessness households;
  - (b) The educational attainment of children (and disadvantaged children) in England at end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE).
- 8 The latest government (2018) report shows 1 million children are living in long-term workless households in the UK. This represents 8.2% of all children. This is a decrease of 0.2 percentage points between 2017 and 2018 and has decreased each year since its peak of 14.0% in 2010.'
- 9 There are however other measures of poverty which can be used to understand the level of poverty faced by children and families in UK. Two commonly used measures are:

- (a) people in relative low income – living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year;
- (b) people in absolute low income – living in households with income below 60% of (inflation-adjusted) median income in some base year, usually 2010/11;

10 Latest government statistics (2019) relating to low income show:

- (a) 21.4% of children live-in low-income families, across areas in County Durham this varies from a low of 0.8% to a high of 59%. 44% of areas have higher levels of child poverty than the county average.
- (b) absolute poverty has risen by 200,000 to 3.7 million children;
- (c) relative Child Poverty remains at 4.1 million, same as 2018;
- (d) 70% of these children now come from working families – up from 67% in 2018;
- (e) 53% of children in poverty are aged under five.

### **Child Poverty in County Durham**

11 The Index of Deprivation 2019 (ID2019) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has recently been released and can help understand the level of poverty faced by children and families across County Durham. The ID2019 shows: (All of the following relates to children aged under 16);

- (a) County Durham is ranked 48 out of 151 upper tier local authorities in England with rank 1 being the most deprived (2019) (up from the ID2015 ranking of 59th).
- (b) Almost half (49%) of County Durham LSOAs (n=158) are ranked in the most deprived 30% most deprived areas in England. 47% of our population live in these areas.
- (c) Woodhouse Close Central remains the most deprived LSOA in the county, ranked 150th most deprived (from 190th) followed by Easington Colliery North ranked 221 (510) and Horden Central ranked 291 (396).
- (d) Free School Meal data shows approximately 13,100 children are eligible for Free School Meals across County Durham.

### **Progress of Child Poverty Working Group**

12 The Child Poverty Working Group recognises the need to coordinate a multi-agency strategic approach to address the causes of and impact of

poverty on children, young people and families living in County Durham. The working group have agreed the Joseph Rowntree Foundation definition of poverty.

- 13 *'When a person's resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society'*. The group agreed this definition describes not only monetary and resource poverty but also poverty of opportunity.
- 14 The CPWG has three key strands:
  - (a) **Language and values associated with child poverty:** this will focus on addressing our attitudes and beliefs towards poverty;
  - (b) **Poverty Management in communities linked to early help:** this will focus on understanding County Durham's child poverty cohort, developing and implementing targeted, accessible support to families. This strand will also focus on the learning and development needs of frontline staff across the partnership to ensure they are confident to provide access to support to address poverty;
  - (c) **Economic- inclusive growth approach:** this will focus on the Children and Families Partnership (CFP) influence on the economic partnership and secondary school sector to ensure major economic developments in County Durham are seen as key opportunities to provide local young people and adults with routes into jobs and apprenticeships, to reduce poverty.
- 15 To date, a range of projects and approaches have been implemented to address child poverty in County Durham and these include:

### **Poverty Charter**

- 16 In order to address negative attitudes and beliefs towards children and families living in poverty the CPWG has developed a Poverty Pledge. Consultation with children, young people and families has been received and has shaped the pledge and self-assessment. The Poverty Pledge will be launched at the County Durham Poverty Conference in early 2020. See Appendix 3.

### **'Cutting in the cost of the School Day': raising awareness of child poverty'**

- 17 Evidence suggests the cost of the school day to be significant on low-income families and has the potential to negatively impact on educational outcomes.

Throughout 2017/18, research was completed to identify the most appropriate and effective method of training to engage as many as schools as possible. DCC worked collaboratively with Edinburgh City Council to develop a training package to support schools to consider poverty from an education perspective. The training package developed aims to raise awareness of child poverty across County Durham, supporting schools to:

- (a) Gain a deeper insight into the scale and impact of child poverty;
- (b) Challenge the stigma associated with living in poverty;
- (c) Support schools to develop practical steps in which to cut the cost of the school day.

|                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Primary              | 89 (including 3 academies) |
| Secondary            | 9 (including 3 academies)  |
| Special Schools      | 3 (including 1 academy)    |
| Early Years Settings | 5                          |

**Table 1: Education setting undertaken the training**

18 To date 106 schools/nurseries have undertaken the training programme. Two further training programmes are planned for 2019/20 academic year. 97% of participants reported that the training offered them the opportunity to learn something new with qualitative feedback highlighting the importance of spending time reflecting on poverty from an educational perspective. 92% of participants plan to use the training materials to deliver staff awareness sessions within their own setting and implement the action plan developed during the training. Whole school assemblies and pupil workshops have also been delivered across a range of schools.

19 Participants reported the following as being the key issues relating to child poverty in their setting:

- (a) Cost of uniform and PE kit potentially being a barrier to attendance and engagement;
- (b) Difficulty in identifying those pupils living just above the FSM threshold;
- (c) Financial pressures placed on parents/carers at various times throughout the school year;
- (d) High proportion of FSM pupils and low-income families.

20 Participants reported the following top tips as most likely to be implemented as a priority in their setting:

- (a) the development of a yearly planner of trips to minimise financial pressures;
- (b) preloved uniform/swap shop sales;
- (c) delivering training to raise awareness of poverty across staff and improve communication of costs to parents/carers;
- (d) reducing the number of charity events/dress up days;
- (e) rethinking trips and events to reduce cost;

- (f) explore how breakfast provision can be free of charge and fundraise for equipment for extracurricular activities to ensure engagement; and
- (g) further develop knowledge of wider support networks within the community.

### **Holiday Activities with Healthy Food**

21 The CPWG recognise that school holidays can be very challenging for many families due to increased food and childcare costs alongside reduced incomes. We also recognise that many children on FSM are more likely to experience unhealthy holidays in terms of food, physical and social isolation. County Durham currently has approximately 13,100 pupils eligible for FSM. A Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Working Group was established in 2018. During the summer holidays, 2018, we worked with Culture, Sport and Tourism Service and local schools to provide free sessional passes for leisure centres and libraries and provided healthy snacks. In total we delivered: 76,800 snacks; 423 packed meals; and 1,000 free swimming passes. During 2019, we began the process of mapping and advertising existing provision across the county. County Durham's 15 Family Centres offered 59 activities with either hot or cold healthy food to both children and parents/carers. In total 365 adults and 646 children/young people attended the sessions. The activities included: family cooking sessions; fun days; emotional wellbeing activities; and themed arts and craft sessions. A range of complimentary support was also offered including access to: community food pantries; free recycled clothing; school uniforms; personal hygiene products; and information, advice and guidance from a range of partner agencies

22 We are in the early stages of tackling this issue and supporting children to access provision during school holidays. Whilst we have a number of providers delivering holiday clubs across the county there is no countywide coordinated approach to this offer and to the recruitment of targeted children and families, and many clubs are providing no food or food which does not meet school food standards. A stakeholder event was held in November 2019 which brought together a number of holiday activity providers along with support services such as School Food Standards Team, Fareshare, Culture, Sport and Tourism, Adult Learning and Skills along with members of the CPWG. This event aimed to begin discussions with providers to understand the barriers and challenges of providing such activities in order to develop a plan to deliver enriching activities with healthy food for children eligible for FSM across County Durham.

23 The aim of the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Working Group is to ensure all future clubs available to children during the school holidays are of good quality and enrich their experiences, as well as ensuring they receive healthy meals. We understand the provision needs to be coordinated to target children, families and communities in greatest need in order to reduce

duplication and maximise the use of our collective resources. To ensure these experiences are sustainable for such children we understand a range of educational opportunities must also be made available for parents and carers.

24 £150,000 of New Burdens Funding has been awarded to pilot a programme to provide holiday activities with healthy food across County Durham in 2020. The funding will support work with partners across the county to add value to a co-ordinated, sustainable, countywide holiday food and activity offer that supports children, young people and families to help reduce the 'holiday experience gap' and has impact in communities longer term. There will be two elements to the proposed programme with funding allocated as detailed:

- (a) Locality element - County Durham's 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) will be allocated £140,000. The AAPs allocate funding prioritising localities with high levels of FSM children. A detailed process of how this funding will be allocated effectively and equitably is currently being developed by the AAPs.
- (b) Countywide element - £10,000 will be retained to be accessed by DCC VCS Alliance, One Point and Think Family Services, Culture Sport and Tourism and Education & Skills, NHS Harrogate & District Foundation Trust Health Visiting and School Nurse teams.

25 A DfE grant funding bid has been submitted on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The bid supports the development of a coordinated approach to the delivery of free holiday provision (including healthy food and enriching activities) for disadvantaged children during the 2020 summer holidays. If successful DCC will partner with Family Action to lead on the coordination element of the programme. The grant funding requested is £1m. An overall £9m grant fund is available in 2020-21 for this programme.

### **VCS Alliance Programme**

26 The aim of the VCS Alliance is to ensure all frontline practitioners working with children, young people and adults who are parents/carers have a better knowledge and understating of local VCS organisations. This approach also aims to support family and community resilience, facilitating children and families to access support near to where they live. The County Durham VCS Alliance programme was presented as good practice within the third annual Troubled Families Report: Building Resilient Families (2019). The VCS Coordinator has also developed a training programme to enable staff to use the Advice in County Durham Portal. To date all One Point Family Centre staff have been trained. Health Visitors will be targeted once data sharing agreements have been agreed between DCC and HDFT. A pilot of training Neighbourhood Police Officers in the east of the county is currently underway. A programme to train all Children Social Workers is currently being developed.

## Young Parent Programme

- 27 A revised Young Parent Support Programme provides intensive support for young parents which focuses on developing effective parenting skills and a dedicated focus on parents own learning needs to increase their employability. The programme provides support to address financial exclusion, including access to a Credit Union Account through an 'Incentive to Save' Scheme funded through Proceeds of Crime Funding. Between January and July 2019, 84 young or expectant mothers and fathers enrolled in the programme, 62 of which have also signed up with the Credit Union. The Credit Union report shows £4,122 savings have been deposited by young parents involved in the programme. The young parent programme has also supported 77.8% of cohort into education, employment and or training since completing the programme.

## Family Centre Offer

- 28 All 15 County Durham Family Centres now provide access to:
- (a) A Community Pantry with non-perishable foods;
  - (b) Signpost of Community Fridges and Food Banks;
  - (c) Pre- loved clothes including winter coats;
  - (d) Personal Hygiene packs, including period poverty packs;
  - (e) Access to Citizen Advice Bureau, Credit Unions and budgeting training programmes/cooking on a budget course;
  - (f) Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programmes.
  - (g) Free surplus food stuffs.
- 29 Next steps for the Family Centres will be to work with schools in their localities to provide pre-loved school uniforms to ensure when schools are closed during holidays the Family Centres can continue to offer to children and families. Family Centres will also develop a plan to utilise surplus foodstuffs with the Fareshare organisation making this offer more sustainable.

## Workforce Development

- 30 A range of learning and development opportunities have been made available to a wide range of organisations across the County Durham Partnership in order to develop skills knowledge and confidence of staff to identify and address poverty. These have included:
- (a) Universal Credit and Smarter Budgeting Training for Children Services Social Workers and One Point Service practitioners;
  - (b) 'Roots out of Poverty' Workshops for a wide range of County Durham Partnership practitioners.

## **Political Oversight**

- 31 Between June and December 2019, a presentation on child poverty has been delivered/shared with all County Durham Council Members.

## **Next Steps**

- 32 The Child Poverty Working Group will hold a workshop event in January 2020 to develop a revised plan on a page and set of new priorities for 2020. We recognise the need to better promote and increase the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers and financial support with child care. The next Poverty Conference will focus on children and families and will be held in early 2020.

## **Conclusion**

- 33 Child poverty continues to be a key issue for children and families living in County Durham. We understand the negative impact living in poverty has on a child's life chances. The CPWG is committed to developing and implementing a range of programmes and initiatives to help mitigate the negative impacts of poverty on the everyday experiences of children and young people in our county.

## **Recommendations**

- 34 Durham County Council Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny group is requested to:
- (a) note the progress of the Child Poverty Working Group.

**Background papers:** None

---

Karen Davison, Strategic Manager, One Point & Think Family Services and  
Chair of Child Poverty Working Group Tel: 03000 268 904

---

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 placed a duty on government to report on child poverty. The Act, however, repealed parts of the Child Poverty Act 2010, including the duty placed on local authorities to prepare and publish an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in their area.

### **Finance**

Probability of 150,000 New Burdens funding for Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme

### **Consultation**

Consultation with children and families will take place in developing Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

Equal opportunities

### **Crime and Disorder**

Research shows families living in poverty are more likely to be involved or victims of crime and anti-social behaviours

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None.

**Procurement:** None

# Child Poverty: Plan on a Page

**Vision:** Children, young people and families have the resources to meet their basic needs, including accessing opportunities to take part in society



## What are our priorities?

1. Promote positive language and values associated with child poverty

2. Poverty management in communities linked to early help

3. Economic Development – inclusive growth approach

## Outcome Measures: How we will know if we have been successful?

- a) Less negative coverage of child poverty in the media/more positive coverage [baseline to be developed];
- b) Evidence of good practice where positive language / values are shared
- c) Staff perception of child poverty in organisations across Children and Families Partnership

- a) Number of family referrals to credit unions;
- b) Number of referrals to the Advice in County Durham (ACD) portal;
- c) Number of front line practitioners registered with AiCD portal;
- d) Number of families using Food Banks/Welfare Assistance/ Section 17 Funds/ Stroger Families Fund;
- e) Number of schools implementing Poverty Proofing School Day programme;
- f) Reported financial difference made to the lives of children, young people and families following contact with agencies [service user satisfaction survey];
- g) Number of initiatives/tools taken up by landlords to improve homes in the private rented sector;

- a) Number of children accessing 30 hour nursery placements in top 30% SOA;
- b) Number of workless households;
- c) Free school meals eligibility;
- d) Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers at GCSE;
- e) Number of young people EET;
- f) Number of adults with a minimum level 2 Literacy and Numeracy qualification;
- g) Number of adults supported into employment as a result of our interventions; ( Stronger Families Measure);

## Deliverables: What are we going to do?

**Reduce negative perceptions of child poverty by the public, managers and practitioners:**

1. Develop a Child Poverty Communications Plan to include:
  - a) Challenge negative perceptions of poverty by managers and staff across Children and Families Partnership;
  - b) Develop a staff survey which captures values and beliefs held by staff related to child poverty;
  - c) Celebrate educational success in deprived areas;
  - d) We will include a position statement in all relevant strategies, policies, procedures and training programmes which promote our expectations and reflect our ambitions for the children and families living in County Durham regardless of their socio-economic circumstances;
2. Develop a Child Poverty Charter through the Children & Families Partnership

**Ensure that practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to help support families who have poverty related needs:**

- a) Develop and promote a Cutting Cost of the School Day programme;
- b) Train front line staff to open conversations with families on financial literacy to include joining credit unions to avoid debt and encourage a savings culture;
- c) Provide financial literacy and debt advice in and through Family Centres;
- d) Train staff and provide access to Advice In County Durham portal;
- e) Develop and implement the next stage of 'Roots Out Of Poverty' programme;
- f) Promote Durham Savers scheme and raise awareness of budgeting from a young age;
- g) Offer support to mitigate fuel poverty –Warmer Homes provision
- h) Promote financial assistance available to support child care costs
- i) Coordinate countwide Holiday Activities with Food Programme in 2019/20

**Empower families to maximise opportunities to support them in the workplace:**

- a) Promote access to high quality, flexible and affordable childcare to parents on low incomes;
- b) Provide targeted progression advice and guidance to vulnerable young people;
- c) Provide employability support in and through Family Hubs;
- d) Provide access to level 2 literacy and numeracy qualification in and through community venues;
- e) Workforce deliverables – education /apprenticeships skills planning
- f) Support young people from deprived area to access higher education

## Enabling Factors: What will make our outcomes possible ?

Whole system approach to ensure effective interventions  
 Workforce development based around making every contact count  
 Strong leadership and leading by example across all areas e.g. councillors, leaders, education

# Reducing the impact of poverty on children

## A pledge for County Durham

Many children, young people and families are living in poverty in County Durham. It is our moral responsibility to ensure that everyone in our county has a decent standard of living and are not 'locked in' poverty. When a family is living in poverty this can reduce a child's opportunities and life chances and can negatively affect every area of their development.

In County Durham we are committed to ensuring every child has the best start in life. We want children, young people and families to have the resources to meet their basic needs, including accessing opportunities to become active members of society.

We are asking you as one of our partners to pledge your support and provide evidence of how you are fulfilling this pledge. This will enable your organisation/school to receive accredited status.

Children tell us that poverty affects their whole family and not just them alone, that's why we take a whole family approach.

### Our pledge aims to:

- raise awareness of the effects of family poverty on children and young people.
- encourage early, coordinated and empowering support for all children and families.
- help families to become financially resilient.
- ensure support is available close to where children and families live.
- listen and respond to the experiences of children and young people living in poverty.

### We pledge to support children, young people and their families by:

1. identifying a poverty champion within our organisation/school/setting
2. challenging the stigma and discrimination associated with poverty
3. ensuring our services, policies and procedures do not negatively impact on families or reduce a child's ability to take part in positive activities
4. educating and up-skilling our workforce to recognise and identify signs of poverty
5. knowing and understanding the support on offer to children, young people and their families and sharing this with our staff and service users
6. signposting and offering practical help and support at the earliest opportunity in an empowering and compassionate way

Signed: .....

Organisation: .....

Date: .....

Contact Details: .....



County Durham Children and Families Partnership

## Reducing the impact of poverty on children

### A pledge for County Durham

| Pledge commitment  | Evidence of pledge - where are we? | Embedded | In progress | To be actioned | Required actions | Impact on child<br>What difference has this made for children in your organisation/school/setting |
|--|------------------------------------|----------|-------------|----------------|------------------|---|
| 1. identifying a poverty champion within our organisation/school/setting   |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |
| 2. challenging the stigma and discrimination associated with poverty   |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |
| 3. ensuring our services, policies and procedures do not negatively impact on families or reduce a child's ability to take part in positive activities |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |
| 4. educating and up-skilling our workforce to recognise and identify signs of poverty  |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |
| 5. knowing and understanding the support on offer to children, young people and their families and sharing this with our staff and service users       |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |
| 6. signposting and offering practical help and support at the earliest opportunity in an empowering and compassionate way                              |                                    |          |             |                |                  |   |

**Organisation/school/setting:**

**Completed by:**

**Date**