

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9th October 2020

Child Poverty in County Durham



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services

Councillor Angela Surtees, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion

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 since the last update in January 2020.

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 an estimated 22.3% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty and 18.1% of children under the age of 16 living in absolute poverty. Between 2015 and 2020 the number of pupils known to be eligible for, and claiming, free school meals increased by 28.5%, rising to over 17,500 eligible pupils. Child poverty varies across our county; data from the End Child Poverty Coalition shows the parliamentary constituency of Easington has the highest percentage of children living in poverty at 32% before housing costs and at 40% after housing costs, and the electoral ward with the highest percentage is Horden with 48% before housing costs and 45% after housing costs. 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 national Child Poverty Action Group reports that since the outbreak of COVID 19 families already struggling risk sinking deeper into poverty, due to redundancy or furlough, thus increasing the numbers and severity of poverty for children, young people and families.
- 5 The County Durham Child Poverty Working Group under the guidance of the Poverty Action Steering Group has continued to be responsive to the impact of COVID-19 through the development and implementation of a range of programmes to address child poverty including the Back to School Support Fund, Enriching Holiday Activities with Healthy Food, distribution of free DfE laptops and the promotion of the Healthy Start Programme.

Recommendation(s)

- 6 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of the report; and
 - (b) note the progress during COVID-19 restrictions.

Background

- 7 It is estimated that approximately 4.5 million children live in poverty in the UK and poverty rates are highest amongst families with children.(Social Metrics Commission 2020). The poverty rate for people living in couple families without children is 11% (1.4 million people). This compares to 26% (5.9 million people) for people in couple families with children and 48% (2.4 million people) for those in lone-parent families. Nearly two thirds (63%) of people in poverty live in a family where someone works at least part time.
- 8 In 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act abolished the Child Poverty Act, including the targets to reduce poverty and the measure of poverty based on family income. The government is now required only to report to parliament on the number of children living in workless households, and educational outcomes at GCSE level. However, after a prolonged campaign, the government agreed to commit in law to regularly publishing data on the number of children in poverty. However, the data behind these measures are not published at the local and in some cases county level, e.g. the number of children in workless families is only published at the regional level with the latest data for 2018.
- 9 In response to providing data on the number of children in poverty, a new set of experimental official statistics on the number (and proportion) of children living in low income families across Great Britain by local area were released on the 26th March 2020. These new statistics complement, and should be

viewed as a companion release to, the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) survey on children in low income households which provides national and regional estimates but not local area estimates. These local area statistics are calibrated to, and thus match, the 3-year average HBAI survey estimates at region and country level for Great Britain. Measures now available:

- (a) **Relative low income** is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) . A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.
- (b) **Absolute low income** is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year in comparison with incomes in 2010/11. A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.

Progress of Child Poverty Working Group

- 10 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: *'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.
- 11 The CPWG has developed a plan on a page (see Appendix 2) to prioritise actions to mitigate the impact of poverty on children and families across County Durham. The plan focusses on four key priorities which are:
 - (a) to understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham;
 - (b) practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to help support children and families at the earliest opportunity who are affected by poverty;
 - (c) narrow the gap in access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing for children and young people; *and*
 - (d) raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.

Progress Against Priority Actions

Priority 1: Understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham.

12 The Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data which is now readily available on [Durham Insights](#). As this data is analysed and understood it will support the CPWG to better understand child poverty across the county and target resources at those children and their families most vulnerable to the negative impact of poverty and deprivation. A demonstration of the Durham Insights data will be presented to members. Poverty data for County Durham shows the following:-

a) Relative Poverty In the financial year 2018/19 an estimated 22.3% of children under the age of 16 were living in relative poverty in County Durham. Across the North East the figure was slightly higher at 23.7% while nationally (England) the figure was 18.4%. For County Durham this is an increase from 17.4% in 2015/16, with the number of children in living in relative poverty rising from an estimated 15,500 (children under 16) to 20,300.

- (i) An estimated 26.8% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in relative poverty – an increase of 20.2% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16.
- (ii) The 5 to 10 age group increased the most during this period, rising by 39.1% to 20.3% of children aged 5 to 10.
- (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased by 36.3%, rising to 20.5% of children aged 11 to 15.
- (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 10.5%, rising to 16.8% of children aged 16 to 19 living in relative poverty.

b) Absolute Poverty In the financial year 2018/19 an estimated 18.1% of children under the age of 16 were living in absolute poverty in County Durham. Across the North East the figure was slightly higher at 19.3% while nationally (England) the figure was 15.3%. For County Durham this is an increase from 16.8% in 2015/16, with the number of children living in relative poverty rising from an estimated 14,900 (aged children under 16) to 16,500.

- (i) an estimated 22.2% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in absolute poverty – an increase of 2.9% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16.
- (ii) The 5 to 10 age group increased the most during this period, rising by 15.8% to 16.3% of children aged 5 to 10.
- (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased by 14.4%, rising to 16.6% of children aged 11 to 15.
- (iv) The 16 to 19 age group fell by 4.2%; however, this still meant a rise from 13.9% to 14.1% of 16 to 19's living in absolute poverty.

This is due to a fall in the population in this age group during this period of 5.6%.

- c) Free School Meals Proxy Measure** Between 2015 and 2020 the number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 28.5% rising to over 17,500 eligible pupils, higher than that of the national increase, while the number of pupils on roll increased by 3.4%. Across England the of number pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 21%, to 23.5% with the number of pupils on roll increasing by 5.8%. Public Health Intelligence Team has disaggregated FSM eligibility by local areas (Ward, Area Action Partnership (AAP) and Family First Areas (FFA) with the following results:
- (i) Aycliffe West ward had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 40.8%, followed by Peterlee East at 39%;
 - (ii) Of the 63 wards, 28 had higher proportions than the county average;
 - (iii) Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 30.8%, followed by the 4 Together Partnership with 30.6%;
 - (iv) Of the 14 AAPs, six had higher proportions than the county average;
 - (v) Easington Families First Area(FFA) had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 33.2%, followed by Shildon, South Church & Chilton FFA at 31.6%. Of the 14 FFAs, eight had higher proportions than the county average;
 - (vi) Children with a SEN Support Plan or Education Health and Care Plan show disproportional disadvantage, with Ferryhill Dean Bank having 75.6% of these children eligible for FSM.
- d) End Child Poverty Coalition** Published data highlights how worrying levels of child poverty vary across Britain and shows that poverty is on the rise – and rising fastest in places where it is already highest. 26% of children in County Durham were estimated to be living in poverty (30,100 children) before housing costs, (36% after housing costs), and County Durham was ranked fourth highest out of the twelve north east authorities, both before and after housing costs were taken into account. Middlesbrough was ranked highest and Northumberland lowest. The parliamentary constituency of Easington in County Durham had the highest percentage of children living in poverty at 32% before housing costs and at 40% after housing costs. Within the parliamentary constituency of Easington the electoral ward with the

highest percentage was Horden with 48% before housing costs and 45% after housing costs.

e) Deprivation Measure 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).

13 The data now available through Durham Insights is providing the CPWG with a rich source of intelligence with which to target our collective resources both in terms of knowing where the most deprived neighbourhoods are and the demographic of families most impacted by poverty.

Priority 2: Practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to help support children and families at the earliest opportunity who are affected by poverty.

‘Cutting the Cost of the School Day’: raising awareness of child poverty’

14 The multi-agency CPWG identified the need to address poverty within education settings as a priority. Evidence suggests the cost of the school day to be significant on low-income families and has the potential to negatively impact on educational opportunities and outcomes. The CPWG aims to support all schools, nurseries and colleges to undertake the training programme and develop an action plan to implement a range of cutting cost of the school day initiatives. The programme supports educational settings to gain a deeper insight into the scale and impact of child poverty, to challenge the stigma associated with living in poverty and support schools to develop practical steps in which to cut the cost of the school day.

15 To date, 106 schools/nurseries have undertaken the training programme. 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.

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

Table 1 : Education settings which have undertaken cutting the cost of the school day training.

- 16 A range of case studies are currently being collated to measure the impact of the training. The programme has also been adapted to support pre-school settings such as nurseries and childcare providers. This will be rolled out over the autumn term. The programme has also been adapted to be delivered virtually during the autumn term 2020 and will be revised to ensure it reflects current information and support available.

Supporting Families to Access Financial Support

- 17 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 their 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) All One Point Service practitioners have been trained and registered to use the Advice in County Durham Portal. This has resulted in 131 referrals via the portal for OPS Citizens Advice Advisor. (see Case Study - Appendix 3).
 - (c) The Stronger Families Grant continues to be utilised by frontline practitioners in Children Services and the wider County Durham Partnership. Since January we have processed 173 Stronger Families essential items grants, of which 68 we were able to fund through the Greggs Foundation Fund.
 - (d) Dissemination of the DCC 'Where to get financial help and support' document.

Priority 3: Narrow the gap in access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing for children and young people

Enriching Holiday Activities with Healthy Food

- 18 School holidays can be very challenging for many families due to increased food and childcare costs alongside reduced incomes. Many children on FSM are more likely to experience unhealthy holidays in terms of food, physical activity and social isolation. The national Food Strategy (part 1, 2020) highlighted evidence that providing enrichment activities and healthy food over the holidays can help pupils return to school engaged, invigorated and ready to learn. The Food Strategy report recommends government to extend the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to all areas in England so that summer holiday support is available to all children in receipt of free school meals.
- 19 Durham County Council in partnership with Family Action submitted a DfE funding bid to 'Grants to fund local coordination of free holiday activities and healthy food for disadvantaged children (2020 summer holidays)'. Despite a

strong bid we were not successful. The North East Child Poverty Commission have made a submission to government to significantly expand the current DfE programme to ensure it is targeted at local communities where the incidence of free school meals, disadvantage and child poverty is high, but in a way that is accessible to all children in receipt of FSM, and is open access to those who are not.

- 20 The CPWG was awarded £150k from the Poverty Action Group and £100k from Public Health to develop and deliver a coordinated and sustainable holiday activities with healthy food programme across County Durham and reduce the ' holiday experience gap' for vulnerable children. The funding has been allocated in the following ways:
 - (a) Locality element – via County Durham's 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs);
 - (b) Countywide element - £10,000 is 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.
- 21 The CPWG has developed a subgroup to take this work forward on its behalf. 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 and 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.
- 22 The HAWHF group have worked together with the AAPs to develop, administer and distribute funding opportunities for enriching holiday activities with healthy food over the holiday periods 2020. During the Easter holidays, 55 projects were allocated funding; due to the challenges associated with COVID-19 the final number reduced but it was possible for 30 out of the 55 to go ahead. During Whit week 22 projects were allocated funding and delivered. During the summer holidays each AAP were allocated a minimum of £7,500 to fund HAWHF during the summer holidays; 61 applications were received, and 55 projects were successful in receiving HAWHF funding. An additional 17 projects were funded through the AAPs COVID-19 funding. In total 85 projects were delivered across the county during this period.
- 23 Each One Point Family Centre also developed and delivered a range of activity packs to children and families working with One Point and Families First during the summer holiday period. These included family recipes and

ingredients, physical and emotional wellbeing activities in total 1,148 were distributed to children and families over the holiday period.

- 24 The VCS Alliance team have collated all HAWHF programmes across the county, the information is available as a live Mobile App and also a printer friendly PDF version. The Mobile App has been updated regularly and to date has been shared with all VCS Alliance networks (including all children's services practitioners, 0-19 health staff, neighbourhood police officers, housing providers etc) VCS, AAPs, all schools (via the extranet and Headteacher briefing note), Families Information Service and Locate.
- 25 Partners delivering projects have been particularly creative in light of COVID-19 restrictions and guidance and activities include a range of virtual sessions, activity packs, family walks, doorstep performances and street theatre. Most projects are offering some form of food provision.
- 26 All groups that received funding through the AAPs were provided with a document developed by Public Health '*Recommendations to support Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Groups operate during the COVID-19 pandemic*' to support them with face to face delivery during the summer holidays.
- 27 The HAWHF working group is currently working with Public Health to undertake a pilot to support our thinking and developments in relation to mapping current provision, understanding provider requirements in achieving quality standards in food and activity provision, developing effective evaluation methods and in developing an appropriate training offer. The pilot has worked with four providers over the summer period and will report back to Child Poverty Working Group.
- 28 Monitoring information will be requested from all summer projects funded through the AAPs and collated results will be fed back to the Holiday Activities with Food Working Group. This will provide an overview of the numbers of children who took part in summer activities as well as capture the range of the provision in terms of food and activities.
- 29 Work has started in preparation for the October Half Term 2020; Each of the 14 AAPs will have a minimum of £2,500 to allocate to groups in their areas.
- 30 The CPWG invited young people to take part in a competition to name the countywide holiday provision programme to ensure the name was coproduced with young people. Schools and Youth Clubs supported this project which has resulted in the programme being known in the future as 'Get together 4 fun and food' (see Appendix 4).

Provision of Free School Meals During COVID-19 Lockdown

- 31 During COVID-19 lockdown the DfE introduced the Free School Meal Voucher Scheme which provided vouchers to the sum of £15.00 per child per week where schools were not able to make food available directly to families. Schools were able to use their own discretion to continue to provide food directly to children on FSM during the lockdown or provide families with new FSM voucher. There have been approximately 1,500 new applications since 'lockdown' for Free School Meals.
- 32 Of the primary schools who have a Taylor Shaw contract (approx. 205 schools) approximately 60 schools continued to have their kitchens open to provide hot / cold meals for pupils and an additional 55 schools open to receiving delivery of packed lunches. A hub model was adopted as not every school was open or were catering for enough children to warrant keeping the kitchen open.
- (a) Average daily meals April to June was 1,600, compared to 22,800 average daily meals served in same period last year
 - (b) Numbers of food parcels delivered / supplied by Taylor Shaw. Only one school had this option and delivered 30 per week;

Free DfE Laptops

- 33 With the COVID-19 lockdown a big challenge in relation to home-schooling was digital access. In April 2020, the DfE announced that laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers were to be provided to local authorities and academy trusts for children, families and young adults most in need. The devices were provided to support the child's education, remote learning and for contact with workers and other services to support safety and wellbeing. The following cohorts were eligible for a laptop / tablet under the initiative (if they did not already have a device):
- (a) care leavers
 - (b) children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker
 - (c) disadvantaged pupils (FSM) who were in year 10 in the 2019 to 2020 academic year.
- 34 Durham was allocated 1,424 laptops for children with a social worker or care leaver. In addition, maintained schools were allocated 273 devices for disadvantaged children in year 10 (Academy Trusts applied and received their own allocations for Year 10 pupils directly from the DfE).
- 35 Following a co-ordinated effort across Social Care, Education services, ICT services and Business Support, the devices have been distributed to the children and young people who were identified as benefitting from a device

(children were identified by the relevant social worker). All devices for disadvantaged children in year 10 have been given to the maintained schools for distribution to the children.

- 36 A process has also been developed and promoted to social work staff so that laptops are provided to those new children who are allocated a social worker over the coming months.
- 37 In addition, for the 2020 to 2021 academic year, more laptops and tablets are being made available for disadvantaged children who are affected by disruption to face-to-face education at their school, local restrictions or have been advised to [shield because they are clinically extremely vulnerable](#).

The Healthy Start Programme

- 38 Healthy Start is a statutory UK-wide government programme aiming to improve the health of pregnant women and families. The Healthy Start Voucher Scheme helps low income pregnant women and young children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to purchase fruit, vegetables and infant formula. The vouchers are means-tested, acting as a basic nutritional safety net encouraging families to make healthy food choices. Eligible beneficiaries are those who qualify to apply for Healthy Start (e.g. women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four years old and the family gets: Income Support, or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or Child Tax Credit. Women also qualify for Healthy Start if they are under 18 and pregnant, even if they don't get any benefits). Pregnant women and children over one and under four years old can access one £3.10 voucher per week and children under one year old can access two £3.10 vouchers (£6.20) per week. Nationally, 54% of family's eligible for HSV currently access them and in County Durham the take up is 58%.
- 39 In April 2020 the government changed the regulations for applying for HSV through the implementation of a digital application process which can be submitted without a health professional's signature. The current physical vouchers will be replaced by a new payment card in Winter 2020 and will enable families to have instant access to their Healthy Start monthly payment. Due to the changes in allocation of monies through the 4 weeks top up process on the payment card, families will no longer lose any monies not spent as this will roll over and stay on the card. The national re-launch and change in branding of The Healthy Start Programme is an opportunity across the system in County Durham to re-promote with partners, raise awareness with families and increase the uptake of families accessing the vouchers. In support of this Public Health are currently developing bitesize training sessions for practitioners in order to help raise awareness of the programme. To date, through partnership working, focus has been on increasing engagement and marketing of the Healthy Start programme underpinned by an action plan. Over recent months there has been an uplift

in those who are eligible for the vouchers, which it is hoped will lead to a sustained increase of voucher uptake in the next quarter.

Back to School Support Fund

- 40 As a result of COVID-19 many families who were already struggling have had additional financial pressure placed upon them. Some have had a swift fall in income due to unemployment, being furloughed or waiting for first Universal Credit payments.
- 41 For many families, they are facing one of the costliest times of year with the purchase of school uniform and equipment. Durham County Council have identified a 'Back to School Support Fund' so that schools (including nurseries, primary, secondary, special and colleges) can apply for a grant to support their most vulnerable families facing financial difficulties and ensure that children and young people are able to attend school with required resources. The fund can be used to purchase essential school uniform and equipment including (but not exclusively) school uniform, underwear, PE kits, school shoes, school bag, stationery, water bottles.
- 42 The fund can support ALL vulnerable families that school have identified are facing financial difficulty (this includes those children not eligible for FSM). The fund will be open for applications from 3rd September 2020 – 6th November 2020.

Recycled/Pre-loved Uniform Distribution Points and Funding Opportunities

- 43 The VCS Alliance Team have collated a list of community partners that are offering access to a range of recycled/pre-loved uniforms and also funding sources that families may be able to apply for. A mobile App has been developed and accessed via Families Information Service. [Recycled Uniform Distribution Points and Funding Opportunities](#)

Period Poverty

- 44 In January 2020 the government provided access to school to fund free period products. This was a very welcomed development and will build on work undertaken with Red Box across County Durham to support all secondary schools to have free period products available. A recent national study however has found many schools and colleges are not aware they can order free period products through a government scheme, amid concerns COVID-19 has left more pupils struggling to access and afford tampons and pads. Nationally just under 40% of state schools and colleges have placed orders since it was launched in England in January 2020. The [Period Poverty scheme](#) has been re-promoted to County Durham Schools. A countywide survey of secondary school period poverty provision is required and will take place later in autumn term to ensure all young people in County Durham have access to free period products at their school setting.

Family Centre Offer

- 45 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
 - (h) Young Parents Programme access to credit union and incentive to save scheme
- 46 It was recognised very early in the COVID-19 lockdown period that many children and parents struggled due to being stuck at home in confined spaces and being unable to engage in education or socialise with peers, and many not having enough stimulating activities or things to do. This had a huge impact on children's and parents' emotional wellbeing and mental health. The One Point Service developed a programme to provide age appropriate activity packs for families. The activity packs aimed to promote physical and emotional wellbeing and positive family relationships as well as helping children and parents learn new skills such as growing plants, cooking new foods, outdoor treasure hunts to promote the natural world, etc. All families currently open to the service were provided access to the activity packs during lockdown. The service also developed a range of online videos to support families such as cooking on a budget, family routines and keeping children safe online.
- 47 Public Health have also made available three hundred activity packs which have been distributed by the One Point Service to help engage new referrals with families across the county. Twenty packs were provided to each of our fourteen Family Centre across the county for distribution. The equipment in the activity packs include a stress ball, skipping rope, hedgehog ball, a wallet of printed resources (including an activity poster, a weekly programme, a set of 6 Key stage cards), all in a drawstring bag. An evaluation will take place to assess the impact of providing such equipment to children and families on their health and wellbeing.

Specific Support for Care Leavers

- 48 A new Enhanced Welfare Assistance Claim can now be made for Care Leavers who have turned 18 and are claiming Universal Credit(UC). As of 1st September this enhanced offer provides Care Leavers with food

packages for the 4 weeks they are waiting for their UC payment. Care Leavers will also receive a winter fuel allowance. Care Leavers will also receive Discretionary Housing payments if they are in receipt of UC or Housing Benefit to cover any shortfall in rent caused by the Local Housing Allowance or the under-occupancy charge (known as the bedroom tax).

Priority 4: Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.

- 49 Significant progress continues to be made in relation to this priority, the DurhamWorks Programme continues to support young people who are NEET to progress into Education, Employment and Training. At the end of June 2020, over 7,000 young people had engaged with DurhamWorks since its inception, with over 3,000 making a positive progression – at a rate of 87.7%. As part of the Programme, specialist routeways to employment have been developed and delivered by DurhamWorks Delivery Partners and Subcontractors. There has also been significant employer engagement, with many SME businesses and young people supported by a DurhamWorks Grant.
- 50 There are a number of developments which will enhance the range of support provided to young people and individuals. For example, a new project - the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools – commences September 2020. It will be delivered in targeted mainstream secondary schools, as well as Special Schools and Alternative Education provision. The aim is to support 2,700 school students identified as being at risk of becoming NEET during the lifetime of the Programme (2020 to 2023). DurhamWorks is also liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a number of ‘Youth Hubs’ across County Durham. These will be spaces where unemployed young people can access a range of intensive support from Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, DurhamWorks Advisers, National Careers Service Advisers, etc. to help them to find a job. Youth Hubs in County Durham will initially be set up in Stanley, Peterlee and Bishop Auckland.
- 51 Work is also continuing to develop the DurhamEnable Service. The aim of the project is to support individuals who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to enable them to progress into / move closer to employment. A key feature of the project is to offer a personalised support service to local employers, in order to encourage and enable them to provide opportunities for DurhamEnable participants.
- 52 The number of Care Leavers progressing to Higher Education has continued to increase each year. For example, in 2019-20 there were 23 Care Leavers from Durham who attended a Higher Education institution; in 2010 this was only one. This is testament to the ongoing support that is provided to Care Leavers in Higher Education (through the Young People’s Service). In 2019, four Care Leavers successfully obtained an apprenticeship with Durham

County Council (one of the apprenticeships was specifically ring-fenced for Care Leavers). As part of our responsibility as a Corporate Parent, DCC is committed to ring-fencing six apprenticeships specifically for Care Leavers in 2020. One area of focus is to develop Post-16 Personal Education Plans for Care Leavers who are attending FE Colleges and additional resources have been committed in order to undertake this work. Looked After young people and Care Leavers continue to be supported through the DurhamWorks Programme. DCC also offer transport costs for Care Leavers to attend interviews.

- 53 As a result of coronavirus, the DurhamWorks Programme has adapted its delivery model. Advisers have continued to provide Information, Advice, Guidance and Support (IAGS) to young people via a variety of methods, including telephone, text, email, as well as online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. A number of DurhamWorks Delivery Partners moved their learning offer online. ICT equipment has also been provided to young people. Providing support with mental health and wellbeing has been a priority. DurhamWorks has also been working in conjunction with the Woodlands School, in order to provide enhanced IAGS to Year 11 school leavers to ensure they progress into sustained post-16 Education, Employment and Training. Support has also been provided to SME employers through the DurhamWorks Grant, as the economy slowly reopens, following the initial coronavirus induced period of 'lockdown'. Discussions are currently taking place with partners in relation to Government schemes such as Kickstart which provides 6 month work placements for unemployed 16-24 year olds who are in receipt of Universal Credit.

Future Developments

- 54 The CPWG will continue to be responsive to the needs of our communities, especially during the COVID-19 restrictions and any restrictions in place locally. The child poverty data and analysis will in the future provide a better understanding of our communities impacted most by poverty and therefore help us to ensure all efforts are targeted at ensuring these communities have access to additional support at the earliest opportunity. The CPWG plan on a page and associated action plan will support the following actions are taken forward over 2020/21:
- (a) Refresh and revise the County Durham Poverty Charter and launch within new COVID environment
 - (b) DCC CYPS are exploring how best to support the ongoing administration of the School Benevolent Fund which provides grants to families with children eligible for FSM for winter coats and shoes;
 - (c) Continue to explore utilisation of surplus foodstuffs and expand links to existing schemes;

- (d) Durham Approach to Wellbeing principles will be applied to the child poverty work to ensure they are designed and developed by our local communities;
- (e) Refresh 'Cutting cost of school/ pre-school day' programme and
- (f) continue to explore the feasibility of developing an approach to poverty proofing leisure and cultural programmes within Culture, Sport and Tourism Service.

Conclusion

- 55 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. Current data and intelligence tell us in all measures of poverty, rates are increasing for children and young people living in our county. Areas of high deprivation have been further impacted by COVID-19.
- 56 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. Ongoing support and oversight from elected members is welcomed.

Background papers:

- None

Other useful documents

- None

Author(s)

Karen Davison Tel: 03000 268 904 k.davison@durham.gov.uk

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. £100,000 funding from Public Health.

Consultation

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

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality of opportunity for children and families most at risk of negative impact of poverty

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 (2020-2021)

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

1. To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham.

2. Practitioners across the County Durham Partnership have the skills and knowledge to help support children and families at the earliest opportunity who are affected by poverty

3. Narrow the gap in access to culture, leisure, sport and wellbeing for children and young people

4. Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment

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

- a. Using local intelligence and feedback from children, young people and families we will have an up to date and accurate understanding of child poverty which informs our targeted response across County Durham;
- b. We will have a set of key measures of poverty across County Durham;
- c. Communications will be streamlined and coordinated through the CPWG.

- a. 100 schools/organisations across the County Durham Partnership will sign up to Poverty Pledge;
- b. We will deliver 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' programme to an additional 75 schools and colleges;
- c. We will deliver Cutting the Cost of the Pre-School Day to 50 early years settings;
- d. We will increase the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers

- a. Programmes across Culture, Sport and Tourism meet community need, address inequalities and are accessible for vulnerable children and families;
- b. We will coordinate countywide 'Together 4 Fun and Food' programme during the school holidays

- a. Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers at GCSE;
- b. We will reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET to 4.2% and the proportion of young people whose destination is not known to 1.2% by 2021;
- c. We will deliver Work Related Learning and Enterprise activities to 6,000 primary and secondary students during each academic year;
- d. We will provide transition support to 900 Year 10 and Year 11 identified secondary school students during each academic year as part of DurhamWorks NEET Preventative Programme.

Actions: What are we going to do?

- 1.1 We will develop a County Durham Child Poverty fact sheet to help inform service development to ensure we target the most vulnerable children and families;
- 1.2 We will explore the use of Business Intelligence solutions to target children, families, schools and communities in greatest need to improve communication and engagement of targeted groups;
- 1.3 We will work with a group of school aged young people to better understand what poverty means to them and what help and support they need to mitigate negative impact on them and their family;
- 1.4 We will develop and report against a set of agreed child poverty measures;
- 1.5 We will ensure all communications across the partnership will be agreed and coordinated through the Child Poverty Working Group.
- 1.6 We will apply the Approach to Wellbeing to specific areas of Child Poverty developments.

- 2.1 We will develop an implementation plan to launch to Poverty pledge across County Durham;
- 2.2 We will deliver 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' (CCSD) programme to an additional 75 schools/colleges across County Durham; focus on communities top 30%;
- 2.3 Develop and implement Cutting Cost of the Preschool Day to 50 nurseries and preschool settings;
- 2.4 We will explore a model to further extend CCSD to include audit of impact;
- 2.5 Deliver 3 financial training programmes for front line practitioners working with CYP&F on financial literacy/budgeting;
- 2.6 Develop and implement a 'core poverty offer' in and through all Family Centres;
- 2.7 Develop and disseminate a Poverty Guide for practitioners;
- 2.8 Train all OPS and CSC staff to use the Advice In County Durham portal;
- 2.9 Promote financial assistance by raising awareness and use of Welfare Campaign Team to maximise income for families including assistance to support childcare costs;
- 2.10 Explore feasibility of developing and implementing a 'poverty proofing' support package for care leavers including an incentive to save scheme;
- 2.11 Explore how best to promote Healthy Start Vouchers to most

- 3.1 Explore the feasibility of developing an approach to Poverty Proofing leisure and cultural programmes within Culture, Sport and Tourism Service;
- 3.2 Undertake a feasibility study of establishing a budget to support improving access to leisure facilities (e.g. discounts, promotion and transport) for children and families referred by social care and health agencies;
- 3.3 Develop and implement a coordinated countywide 'Together 4 Fun and Food' (holiday activities with healthy food) programme;

- 4.1 DurhamWorks will provide support to young people who are NEET to progress into sustained education, employment and training pathways, including Apprenticeships;
- 4.2 DurhamWorks will provide specialist careers advice and pathways for Looked after Children, Care Leavers and SEND to enable young people to realise their aspirations;
- 4.3 We will deliver Work Related Learning and Enterprise activities (DurhamWorks), as well as Future Business Magnets competition (Business Durham) in primary and secondary schools.
- 4.4 DurhamWorks will deliver a NEET Preventative programme to Year 10 / 11 students identified at risk of becoming NEET in targeted secondary schools (including special schools and alternative education providers).
- 4.5 We will develop and deliver a DurhamEnable programme to support individuals who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to access employment.

Enabling Factors: What will make our outcomes possible ?

We will apply the County Durham Wellbeing Approach principles to all work of the Child Poverty Working Group

Workforce development based around making every contact count

Strong leadership and leading by example across all areas e.g. councillors, leaders, education

County Durham Area Action Partnerships

Whole system approach to ensure effective interventions

Appendix 3: Case study CAB, July 2020

Background:

'G' has a limited capability for work related activity and she receives Employment and Support Allowance. She also receives Personal Independence Payment at the standard rate of daily living. Her friend claims Carers Allowance for looking after her. G has a condition; Tourette syndrome, has an unstable personality disorder, has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Sciatica in her back. G lives in a private rented property and is liable to pay £115.38 a week. The local housing allowance does not meet the full rent payable and so she has to top her Housing Benefit up by £27.93 a week. She receives full Council Tax Reduction. G has one child, aged 9 months and the Child Benefit is in payment. She has NOT made a Tax Credits or Universal Credit claim following the birth of her child 9 months ago.

Advice:

G was referred by her One Point Service, Family Support Worker to the CAB Adviser. Benefits calculations was conducted.

Outcome:

CAB Worker wrote to the DWP on the clients behalf to ask for a Severe Disability Premium to be included in the Employments and Support Allowance calculation. (£66.95 a week) Client was referred to the HMRC Needs Enhanced Support Team NES to help with a Tax Credit claim. (Child Tax Credits £54.32 a week). A referral to Durham County Council Housing Solutions to help G pursue a Discretionary Housing Payment application to help with the shortfall of rent; (DHP £27.93 a week). **Maximised weekly income by £149.20/ £7758.40 annually.**

Appendix 4: Together 4 Fun and Food

