

Child Poverty in County Durham

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

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 October 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 25.8% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty and 21.7% of children under the age of 16 living in absolute poverty. Between 2015/16 and 2020/21 the number of pupils known to be eligible for, and claiming, free school meals increased by 50%, rising to over 20,300 eligible pupils.
- 4 The County Durham Child Poverty Working Group under the guidance of the Poverty Action Steering Group has continued to be proactive and responsive to the impact of poverty and the additional burden COVID-19 has had through the development and implementation of a range of support to address child poverty including the County Durham Fun and Food programme (Holiday Activities with Healthy Food), the promotion of Healthy Start as well as providing additional help and support as a result of the impact of COVID such as the distribution of the Household Support Fund.

Recommendation(s)

- 5 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
- (a) Note the contents of the report; and
 - (b) Note the additional support offered during COVID-19 restrictions.

Background

- 6 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.
- 7 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.
- 8 Additionally, 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.

Child Poverty Working Group

- 9 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.
- 10 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.

Child Poverty in County Durham

- 11 Child poverty in County Durham continues to be on the rise with an estimated 25.8% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty and 21.7% of children under the age of 16 living in absolute poverty. Between 2015 and 2021 the number of pupils known to be eligible for, and claiming, free school meals increased by 50.3%, rising to 20,300 (27.7%) eligible pupils
- 12 The Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data and intelligence which is now readily available on [Durham Insights](#).
- (a) **Relative Poverty:** In the financial year 2019/20 an estimated **25.8%** 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 26.9% while nationally (England) the figure was 19.2%. 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 15,800 (children under 16) to 23,500.
 - (i) An estimated 24.9% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in relative poverty – an increase of 12.3% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16.
 - (ii) The 5 to 10 age group increased during this period, rising by 70.6% to 25.5% of children aged 5 to 10.
 - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 71.1%, rising to 27% of children aged 11 to 15.
 - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 29.5%, rising to 21% of children aged 16 to 19 living in relative poverty.
 - (b) **Absolute Poverty:** In the financial year 2019/20 an estimated 21.7% 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 22.9% while nationally (England) the figure was 15.7%. For County Durham this is an increase from 16.5% in 2015/16, with the number of children living in absolute poverty rising from an estimated 14,600 (aged children under 16) to 19,700.

- (i) an estimated 21.2% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in absolute poverty – an increase of 2% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16.
 - (ii) The 5 to 10 age group increased during this period, rising by 53.6% to 21.1% of children aged 5 to 10.
 - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 57%, rising to 22.9% of children aged 11 to 15.
 - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 21.6%; this meant a rise from 14.3% to 18.5% of 16 to 19's living in absolute poverty.
- (c) **Free School Meals Proxy Measure:** Between 2015/16 and 2020/21 the number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 50% rising to over 20,300 eligible pupils, while the number of pupils on roll increased by 2.3%. Across England the of number pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 52%, rising to 20.8% with the number of pupils on roll increasing by only 0.6%. 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) Peterlee East ward and Aycliffe West ward were joint highest at 46.5%, Woodhouse Close ward was third with 42.6%;
 - (ii) Of the 63 wards, 30 had higher proportions than the county average;
 - (iii) Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 36.1%, followed by the Stanley AAP with 34.6%;
 - (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 38.3%, followed by Shildon, South Church & Chilton FFA at 36.6%. 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, for example, 54.5% of these pupils were eligible for FSM in the Tudhoe Lower Super Output Area (LOSA), with on average over one in four (27.2%) eligible for FSM across the county.
 - (vii) Eligibility for free school meals increased accordingly, across the county increased between 2015/16 and 2020/21 and

pushed the total to 20,300 eligible pupils, however, nearly one in four, are round 24%, were not claimed in 2020/21.

- (d) **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).
- (e) **Universal Credit Claims:** The number of households in County Durham claiming Universal Credit (UC) has increased by 48.5% since February 2020, rising to nearly 44,000 households in August 2021. This large rise in is likely due to the effects of the COVID19 lockdown. Within this group the proportion of households claiming UC with children is around 42%, with the largest concentration in single parent households where 30% of households claiming UC were single parent households (13,000 households in February 2020). 'Couple' households with children represented around 12% of UC households, a rise of 67% since February 2020, rising to nearly 5,200 households.

- 13 It is clear from the data and intelligence collated on child poverty in County Durham that more children are living in poverty that in previous years. Families with school age children have seen the steepest rise and localities such as Peterlee, Easington, Woodhouse Close, Shildon and Newton Aycliffe West consistently have high levels of child poverty. It is also evident children with Special Needs and /or Disability (SEND) are overrepresented in child poverty measures.

Impact of and response of COVID 19

- 14 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. Nationally and locally there has been a number of key initiatives to address this impact on children and families.

Free School Meal Vouchers

- 15 During the initial lockdown periods of the pandemic, government-funded vouchers (worth £15 a week) were offered to children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). However, the national scheme was withdrawn prior to the October 2020 half term. In response, the council set up a local scheme to enable those Free School Meals eligible households, to access a payment prior to further government support being provided through the Covid Winter Support Grant.

COVID Winter Support Grant/Covid Local Support Grant

- 16 In December 2020, the COVID Winter Support Grant Scheme was set up. This was then extended and morphed into the Covid Local Support Grant;

funding provided to the Council through these schemes has amounted to £4,726,442. These grants enabled local authorities to support people struggling with the cost of food, energy and water bills, and other associated costs arising from the pandemic. The funding for these schemes ended on 30 September 2021.

- 17 Between December 2020 and September 2021, using this funding, the council distributed 295 hampers to our most vulnerable families, 273 food vouchers worth £80 to care leavers, 600 food vouchers worth £80 to kinship carers, and more than 101,100 vouchers, worth £20 per child per week and covering the school holiday periods, providing support to over 21,000 0- to 19-year-olds across the county.
- 18 We also awarded £270,000 through 330 grants to support vulnerable households with children enabling them to be safe, secure and have access to cooking facilities over the winter and allocated £100,000 to the East Durham Trust and the Durham Foodbanks to administer fuel vouchers.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

- 19 The Household Support Fund (HSF) is the latest iteration of the government support to vulnerable households. The council has been allocated £4,676,100 to administer the HSF, covering support from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Although local authorities have some discretion as to how HSF funding is used, at least 50% must be spent on families with children.
- 20 It is primarily to support people with food, energy, and water bills, but can be used to support households with other essential costs. In cases of genuine emergency, it can also be used to support housing costs if existing housing support schemes do not meet this need.
- 21 Our HSF scheme replicates some of the targeted support initiatives delivered as part of the COVID Winter and Local Support Grants, as well as introducing some new initiatives which will widen our eligibility criteria. Working with our partners to target 'hard to reach' households, our scheme includes a wide range of initiatives.
- 22 Bulk food/fuel vouchers will be available for vulnerable households. In addition, vouchers, worth £60 per child, will be issued to households with children eligible for free school meals in the lead up to Christmas and Easter, and will also be provided for kinship carers and care leavers. We will once again be issuing food hampers to vulnerable households, including care leavers.
- 23 The Winter Support Fund (WSF) has been developed for professionals to make applications on behalf of vulnerable families who are facing financial difficulties to have access to essential household items and clothing to keep them warm, safe and secure during winter.

- 24 Grants will also be made available to schools to help vulnerable households purchase essential items and buy winter clothing (including shoes and school uniforms) for children identified as most in need. For those experiencing fuel poverty, help is being offered through the Warm Homes GP referral scheme, to provide help with the cost of fuel, boiler servicing and repairs.
- 25 Other vulnerable households who need additional support and have not accessed this through the main scheme strands as described above, will be provided with food/fuel vouchers through a discretionary grant scheme administered through the council's Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Additional financial support for families

Advice in County Durham Portal

- 26 All One Point Service practitioners have been trained and registered to use the Advice in County Durham (AiCD) portal. In September 2021, the AiCDP launched a new referral portal and website to improve the referral process. Plans are currently underway to also train and register health visitors, school nurses and children services social workers to use the new AiCD portal. The portal provides a quick and simple referral pathway to a broad range of support services for families including benefit and debt advice.

'Helping families manage their money' webpage

- 27 A DCC web page has also been developed specifically to help families manage their money. The page has information on a range of things including applying for healthy start vouchers, applying for free school meals, debt advice/financial help and help with heating and fuel bills. This website also provides practitioners with a comprehensive source of information to share with families. [Helping families manage their money](#)

School Benevolent Fund

- 28 The council resumed temporary administrative responsibilities for the Benevolent Fund (a charitable trust) in October 2020 and approved more than 955 applications for a £35 grant towards winter coats and/or school shoes. To date there are an additional 229 applications currently "in process" and 267 applications waiting to be processed. Trustees of the fund are currently being consulted on the review of the fund and future administrative arrangements.

Stronger Families Grant

- 29 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 162 Stronger Families essential items grants, of which 85 we were able to fund through the Greggs Foundation Fund. In addition, we have processed 94 skip hire/bulky waste requests and 22 home safety equipment requests.

Healthy Start

- 30 In April 2021, weekly payments increased from £3.10 to £4.25 for the government's Healthy Start scheme, which helps with the cost of buying milk, baby milk and some foods. The scheme also gives access to free vitamins.
- 31 The scheme changed in the autumn of 2021 to make it easier to use and more flexible. A new digital scheme will replace paper vouchers with a prepaid account that will be automatically topped up every four weeks with the payment.
- 32 The uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers has traditionally been low. To help increase take-up in Durham, we continue to promote and raise awareness of the programme with both families and partners. Specific actions to increase uptake have included setting up a working group with partners; Public Health have developed bitesize training sessions for practitioners in order to help raise awareness of the programme with over 500 staff now trained. The partnership approach has focussed on increasing engagement and marketing of Healthy Start underpinned by an action and a communications plan.
- 33 A localised healthy start voucher leaflet has also been developed recently and circulated to partners. See Appendices 3. Work by the NHS Business Services Authority is also being progressed to launch a digitised Healthy Start Scheme and an updated leaflet for parents.
- 34 The focus on take-up in Durham has led to an increase over the last year – increasing from 54 % in September 2020 to 68 % in September 2021 (there are currently 3,820 individuals benefitting from this scheme in County Durham against 5,633 who are eligible). The current 68 percent take-up is higher than both the regional average (67.9 %) and the national average (60.6%).

Free School Meals

- 35 Eligibility for free school meals increased across the county between 2015/16 and 2020/21 and pushed the total to 20,300 eligible pupils, however, nearly one in four, are round 24%, were not claimed in 2020/21. A number of specific actions have been taken to increase the uptake of FSM for eligible families including:
 - (a) Introduction of biometric systems in schools (mostly secondary) so that FSM pupils/students are not identifiable;

- (b) Pupil led School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAGS) are encouraged to consider how their school approaches FSM take up. Schools then develop their own action plans to address the issue;
- (c) Encouraging schools to use the FSM eligibility checking system (run the catering support team) so that families do not have to produce benefits related paperwork – and take it to admin within a school;
- (d) Monitoring of take up within each primary school in the School Meals contract. Schools with low take up are discussed and relevant action plans are developed to encourage take up for all pupils (not just FSM);
- (e) A pilot in 2 schools last term (1 primary 1 secondary) where the Welfare Assistance team offered bespoke ‘financial advice’ and benefit checks to ensure families are receiving their entitlement. This was a pilot and it resulted in a few families then receiving FSM as well as other relevant benefits. Welfare Assistance are currently looking into the feasibility of rolling this out in more schools. The east of the county will be targeted in a larger pilot of this approach next.
- (f) Schools sharing clear and simple information on their websites about the benefits of FSM / Healthy Start vouchers and how to apply.
- (g) Schools encouraging parents to apply as it supports the school with Pupil Premium funding.
- (h) Schools introducing a ‘free’ breakfast for any FSM pupil – (encourages pupils/ families to apply for FSM).
- (i) Extending the lunchtime period in secondary schools so that students can use their FSM entitlement for mid-morning break (especially for pupils may not have had breakfast).

Cutting the Cost of the School Day Programme: raising awareness of child poverty

36 The need to address poverty within education settings is a priority. As previously highlighted the steepest increase in child poverty is seen in families with school age children. 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 Child Poverty Working Group has developed a learning and development programme ‘Cutting the cost of the school day: raising awareness of child poverty’, which 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. Currently, 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.

- 37 During 2020/21 there has been very little opportunity to deliver further programmes within educational settings due to the impact of COVID restrictions. This has however provided an opportunity to review the programme and a revised offer is currently being developed using the 'Thrive' model providing guidance to all schools and bespoke training to targeted schools in areas of high deprivation. This will be a key action for 2022.

The Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniform) Act 2021

- 38 Statutory guidance for the new law passed by Parliament in April 2021, which will make school uniforms cheaper in England has recently been announced. This policy will make schools place affordability at the centre of their uniform policy and is expected to limit the number of logos on uniforms, allowing parents to buy more items from supermarkets and shops other than a school's main supplier.
- 39 There is also a 'strong emphasis on second-hand uniform, advocating the benefits of this and requiring all schools to make this available to parents in some way. For example, they could either provide this service themselves or participate in other appropriate established local schemes.
- 40 A mobile app has been developed and accessed via Families Information Service. [Recycled Uniform Distribution Points and Funding Opportunities](#)

Period Poverty

- 41 The [Period Poverty scheme](#) has been re-promoted to County Durham Schools ensuring that they all provide accessible free personal hygiene products for young people.

Reducing Food Waste

- 42 'That Bread and Butter Thing' (TBBT) is a food surplus charity which works with local organisations to redistribute surplus food stuffs on a weekly basis. £250,000 has been allocated by the PAG to set up 10 'That Bread and Butter Thing' food hubs. Approximately 50 families engage with each of the five currently operational hubs each week – which provides access to low-cost food and access to advice and provides a steppingstone from the crisis support through food banks and through the Welfare Assistance Scheme. Work is underway with community groups to open a further five hubs in the coming months.
- 43 Feedback from volunteers, and residents is very positive at all hubs and the scheme has received positive media coverage. Feedback received by

TBBT from families is that they feel they save around £26 every time they shop with TBBT.

Enriching Holiday Activities with Healthy Food – ‘Fun and Food’

- 44 County Durham has for the past three years coordinated holiday activities with food programme over school holidays with funding secured from the Poverty Action Group. (see appendices 5). In 2021 Department for Education (DfE) confirmed national funding to provide free enriching holiday activities and healthy food for children on free school meals. The council was allocated £2,383,860 by the DfE to co-ordinate and deliver free holiday activities and healthy food for children eligible for free school meals during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2021. 10% Of the funding supports coordination. The aim of the programme is for children who attend:
- (a) to eat more healthily over the school holidays
 - (b) to be more active during the school holidays
 - (c) to take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well-being
 - (d) to be safe and not to be socially isolated
 - (e) to have greater knowledge of health nutrition
 - (f) to be more engaged with school and other local services, and
 - (g) children and families develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and are effectively signposted towards other information and support for example health, employment and education.
- 45 A delivery model for the provision and distribution of funding has been development and included:
- (a) A central project coordination team to coordinate the programme ensuring the effective targeting of high-quality provision for vulnerable children especially those on Free School Meals (FSMs).
 - (b) Locality based provision funded through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). Funding is distributed via AAPs to local providers based on the % of children on FSM. An uplift is provided to support rural localities.
 - (c) The procurement of contracted provision to fill gaps in local provision/ or gaps for specific age groups such as adolescents (area based and countywide provision) with larger providers.

(d) Internal service providers (Schools, alternative education providers, Leisure Services and 0-19 Family Centres).

- 46 With partners, we delivered a wide range of sessions including performing arts, sports camps; cookery sessions; arts and craft sessions; and themed outdoor family activities etc.
- 47 During the Easter holiday period 2021, **6,860** children, of which 757 were children with special educational needs and disability, engaged in activities and received a free healthy meal.
- 48 During the six weeks summer holiday period 2021, more than **19,000** children, of which more than 900 were children with special educational needs and disability, engaged in activities and received a free healthy meal. In addition, more than 4,100 activity packs and resources were delivered to community groups and families and nearly 2,000 free Vegetarian Society food parcels were distributed. Please see link to short video of the summer provision. <https://youtu.be/B-bMGonp49I>
- 49 As DfE funding could not be used for provision during the May and October half term holidays in 2021, additional council funding was allocated to meet this need. The council invested £143,000 in extending these schemes to those holiday periods, with over **5,500** benefitting in May with final uptake for October currently being calculated.
- 50 In October 2021 (autumn budget), the government announced further funding to continue the holiday activities and food programme going forward. £200 million of national funding was announced, but we await the funding allocations to the council.
- 51 Durham's Youth Council recently conducted a consultation with children and young people to help inform and shape the development of the Fun and Food Programme. Over 700 children and young people took part in the consultation and a report was produced by the Youth Council and presented to the central coordination team. The report has been shared with delivery partners to help them when planning future provision of holiday activities with food.

'Poverty Proofing' Leisure Centres

- 52 This project involves consultation and research into the barriers around access to our leisure facilities for children, young people and their families, particularly in relation to cost and pricing. The consultation to date has identified a number of improvement areas that we can action over the next few months. Equipment is an identified barrier, and we will introduce a clothing and equipment recycling scheme for swim related products such as costumes and goggles which will be open to everyone and will support those that cannot afford to purchase these often-costly items. This will start in January 2022.

- 53 Culture, Sport, Tourism Service plan to work closely with the 'Fun and Food' (Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme), team and Education Durham in 2022 to introduce free top up swimming lessons to those in lower socio-economic areas that missed out on school swimming during COVID as they are the least likely to be accessing our learn to swim programme.
- 54 A poverty proofing task group has been exceptionally proactive in reaching the children most at need to access our free holiday swimming programme, 40% of the children that attended over the summer were on free school meals. The next priority is to review our concessionary rates and to develop a proposal for March 2022 on how we can make our wider activities more affordable to children, young people and families. This will include the concept of adding a concession to the current concession for under 19's to support those that are in lower health and socio-economic groups. This work will be led by Public Health and supported by the task group.
- 55 Culture, Sport and Tourism is also reviewing their children and young people's programme to improve the offer and pricing will be included in this piece of work. Staff training is planned to take place addressing inclusion to ensure that facility staff are fully informed about issues relating to poverty and to ensure that children young people and families are treated appropriately.

Family Centres in County Durham

- 56 The government recently launched its vision for a network of Family Hubs across England. Family Hubs will be designed to provide family help early, when it is needed – from pregnancy, through the child's youngest years and later childhood, and into adolescence until they reach the age of 24 and will aim to ensure that all families have access to the same high-quality services and supportive relationships within their local area. Hub buildings are supported by virtual offers, with services for families with children of all ages. This vision aligns to County Durham's 0-19 Family Centres in ensuring all families with children requiring additional help and support have a 'one stop shop' in their local community. As part of the menu of support and advice available through Family Centres all 15 County Durham Family Centres provide access to:-
- (a) a community pantry with non-perishable foods;
 - (b) signpost to Community Fridges and Food Banks;
 - (c) pre-loved clothes including winter coats and local school uniforms;
 - (d) personal hygiene packs, including period poverty packs;
 - (e) access to Citizen Advice Bureau, Credit Unions and budgeting training programmes/cooking on a budget courses;
 - (f) Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programmes;

- (g) Young Parents Programme access to credit union and incentive to save scheme.

Specific Support for Care Leavers

- 57 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 2020 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 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). Care Leavers are also eligible for Council Tax Exemption from 1 April 2017 the council implemented a policy of exempting care leavers from council tax up to the age of 25. This policy offers additional support to those leaving care to facilitate their transition to independent living. This support totalled around £0.17 million of council tax reductions in 2020/21.

DurhamWorks

- 58 A range of support is provided to children and young people in order to raise their aspirations and resilience as they prepare to progress into further education, training or employment. For example, schools are offered a range of work-related learning and enterprise programmes. These engaging activities help to promote a range of career sectors, develop skills and aptitudes that employer's value, as well as provide opportunities for pupils to meet with Business Ambassadors from local businesses.
- 59 Through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, pupils who are identified as being at risk of not making a successful progression into post-16 learning are provided with a range of support, including: one-to-one mentoring, motivational activities, as well as opportunities to learn more about the world of work. During the 2020-21 academic year, 800 Year 11 pupils were supported through this programme, of which 707 (88.4%) have progressed into a positive education, employment or training destination. During the 2021-22 academic year, support is also being offered to school sixth form students whose education has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 60 Young people who do not make successful transition into post-16 learning continue to receive support through the DurhamWorks Programme. This is a £29 million programme which supports unemployed young people aged 16-24 to progress into work, training, education or volunteering. Since DurhamWorks commenced in March 2016, 8,750 unemployed young people have been supported by the Programme, of which 5,949 have progressed into a positive education, employment or training destination. DurhamWorks is funded by the European Social Fund / Youth Employment Initiative (£21.8 million) with match funding of £7.2 million provided by

Durham County Council and its delivery partners. The programme is working to progress as many young people as possible prior to the end of December 2021 when the current programme will end. After this date, DurhamWorks will continue, as £16 million of additional funding has been secured to support young people until December 2023

- 61 There continues to be close collaboration between DurhamWorks and DWP to establish a number of 'Youth Hubs' across County Durham. These are currently operating in Peterlee and Stanley, with plans to establish a Youth Hub in Bishop Auckland from early 2022. Youth Hubs are spaces that provide support to unemployed young people from a range of partners around employment and skills.
- 62 The Kickstart scheme provides funding for job placements for young people (aged 16 to 24) claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding covers the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of six months, associated employer National Insurance contributions, employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions, and a grant of £1,500 per job to cover setup costs and employability support.
- 63 Eighty-one job placements are available across Durham County Council, all of which are benefiting from additional council funding which ensures all participants receive the Durham Living Wage. Ten people have now been recruited and with a process to recruit to the remaining 71 posts now being implemented.

Future Developments

- 64 The CPWG will continue to be proactive and responsive to the needs of our communities, especially during the ongoing impact of COVID-19. The child poverty data and intelligence will provide a better understanding of our communities impacted most by poverty and therefore help us to ensure all efforts are targeted at these communities. The CPWG plan on a page and associated action plan will be reviewed in early 2022 in line with the broader Poverty Action Group priorities and will include:-
- (a) DCC CYPS will conclude the review the School Benevolent Fund along with Board of Trustees;
 - (b) We will continue to develop and deliver a comprehensive 'Holiday activities with healthy food programme' across County Durham in line with DfE guidance and feedback from children, young people and families;
 - (c) We will refresh the 'Cutting cost of school/ pre-school day' programme using the Thrive Model to develop a robust and targeted offer;

- (d) Develop and implement an inclusive offer to children, young people and parents/carers promoting accessible leisure services across County Durham.

Conclusion

- 65 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 are increasing for children and young people living in our county. Areas of high deprivation have been further impacted by COVID-19.
- 66 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

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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

Probity of DfE Holiday Activities with Food Funding. Probity of Household Support Fund.

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 vulnerable parents

- 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



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Appendix 3 Healthy Start Leaflet for Parents

Healthy_start_leaflet_



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Appendix 4: Cutting the Cost of the School Day

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Appendix 5: Together 4 Fun and Food

