

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

**22 September 2023**

**Child Poverty in County Durham**



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**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 and mitigating the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham since the last update in October 2022.

**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 County Durham continues to experience higher levels of child poverty than those seen across England with an estimated 24.5% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty in the year 2021/22 and 23.6% for children aged 0-19 years. Data from the School Census on pupils living in and attending school in County Durham, since Spring 2020, has shown the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased by 29%, rising to over 22,200 eligible pupils. We also know approximately 24% of families eligible for free school meals (FSM) do not take up the offer.
- 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 presented by the current cost of living crisis. This has involved the proactive development and implementation of a range of support for children and families including

the promotion of the Healthy Start Scheme and Free School Meals(FSM), the continual development of the County Durham Fun and Food programme, promoting access to financial help and support via our Family Hubs and the forthcoming launch of the Start for Life 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) provide comment to inform future priorities.

### **Background**

- 6 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.
- 7 It is estimated that approximately 4.5 million children live in poverty in the UK in 2021/22, and poverty rates are highest amongst families with children. That’s 29 per cent of children, or nine in a classroom of 30. 44% of children living in lone-parent families are in poverty. Lone parents face a higher risk of poverty due to the lack of an additional earner, low rates of maintenance payments, gender inequality in employment and pay, and childcare costs.
- 8 Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. 71% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works.
- 9 Children in larger families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty – 42 per cent of children living in families with 3 or more children live in poverty.
- 10 A recent report by the North East Child Poverty Commission: [‘Getting the building blocks wrong: Early childhood poverty in the North East’](#). highlights almost two in five children in the Northeast (38%) are living in poverty. This rises to almost half – 47% – of Northeast children living in a household with an under 5. The report also highlights the northeast is experiencing a much steeper increase in ‘in-work’ child poverty than that seen across the UK.

### **Child Poverty Working Group**

- 11 The multi-agency 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 to use 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.

- 12 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 aim of the plan is: *to use all available resources to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham.*
- 13 The plan focusses on four key priorities which are:
  - (a) to understand the current level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources;
  - (b) to support all those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham to have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity;
  - (c) promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive and raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.
  - (d) raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.

**Priority 1: To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources.**

### **County Durham Child Poverty data and intelligence**

- 14 The percentage of children living in relative poverty (aged 0-19) 2021/22 in County Durham is 23.6% compared to 24.7% in the Northeast and 19.3% in England.
- 15 Data from the Spring School Census (2023) on pupils living in and attending school in County Durham, shows Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility in County Durham is at 30.9% (22,200 pupils) which is an increase of 29%, compared with 23.9% (17,200 pupils) in the Spring 2020 census, an increase of 5,000 pupils. We also know approximately 24% of families eligible for FSM do not take up the offer.
- 16 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data which is now readily available on Durham Insights. (Please see **Appendix 3** for detailed child poverty data and intelligence in County Durham). <https://www.durhaminsight.info/children-in-poverty/>

- 17 It is clear from the data and intelligence collated on child poverty in County Durham that more children are living in poverty than in previous years. Over one quarter of children aged between 0-4 years live in households deemed in relative poverty. Steep increases in the percentage of children of school age living in poverty is also seen across County Durham. 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.

**Priority 2: All those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity.**

### **Training for frontline staff**

- 18 A Financial Ability Training programme has been developed for all frontline practitioners including Social Workers and One Point staff and key partners. The training, delivered by DCC's Financial Ability team, helps equip frontline staff to discuss family finances, effective budgeting, as well as provide access to range of help and support available to families. To date in 23/24, 6 sessions have been delivered to over 100 members of staff.

### **Advice in County Durham Portal**

- 19 The Advice in County Durham (AiCD) portal provides a quick and simple referral pathway to a broad range of support services for families including benefit and debt advice. All One Point Service practitioners have been trained and registered to use the Advice in County Durham (AiCD) portal. Further roll out across the wider partnership is in the planning phase.

### **Help and support available for families**

- 20 A dedicated web page [Help with your money](#) has been developed for County Durham residents and provides specific help and guidance to families with children. The page has information on a range of support available including applying for Healthy Start (HS), applying for Free School Meals (FSM), debt advice/financial help and help with heating and fuel bills. As part of our Family Hub and Start for Life programme links to this page and promotion of HS is outlined in our Start for Life leaflet and website shared with every prospective or new parent. Please see Appendix 4 for leaflets.

### **Healthy Start Scheme**

- 21 The Healthy Start steering group is working hard to promote and increase the uptake of Healthy Start across the county. Partnership working ensures that Healthy Start is embedded in all agendas, such as the healthy weight and oral health strategies.
- 22 This 'whole system' approach ensures that all service providers have a responsibility for directing families to support. This includes maternity

services and health visiting, to ensure that meaningful conversations with families take place from the earliest opportunity.

- 23 A local Healthy Start leaflet has been developed and distributed through the family hubs and wider partners, recognising that some vulnerable families do not have access to information online. The leaflet was co-produced with families, and it includes local contact details for wider financial advice and support.
- 24 The current uptake of the Healthy Start scheme for those eligible families is currently 75% which is one of the highest uptake rates in England, but we are still working hard to increase this as we are mindful that approximately 1400 families who are eligible for this additional fund are not claiming.

### **Free School Meals**

- 25 The main objective of free school meals is to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are provided with healthy, nutritious food to support their physical, psychological and educational development.
- 26 Eligibility for free school meals increased across the county between 2015/16 and 2021/22 and pushed the total to 22,000 eligible pupils, however, we also know about 24% of eligible children do not take up the offer. This remains a key priority for the Child Poverty Working Group for 2023/24.
- 27 In support of reducing stigma, County Durham schools all utilise a biometric system, which aim to reduce inequality and stigma. However, in a report: *Pioneering new approaches to children's food budgets* (Defreyer et al 2020) it reported that there were unexpected social inequalities built into the system which meant that pupils in receipt of free school meals are not able to carry forward any unspent allowance. A school in Darlington, made a small change to their biometric system, at a minimal cost of £250 which then enabled the pupils to roll over unspent money. During the first year of operation, free school meal pupils spent an additional £17,000 on school food (this amount would be considerably more for a school with very high levels of pupil premium eligibility). Students are able to manage their own meal allowances and have greater spending power to access food at any time of the day, including breakfast and after school. This roll over is capped to each half term period.
- 28 As part of this work the County Durham Youth Council undertook some peer research to help the group better understand the barriers to taking up the offer of FSM and make recommendations for possible solutions. A total of 79 young people took part in the research. The report highlighted ongoing stigma, a lack of time to get served as well as socialise with friends or attend revision sessions and issues relating to parental awareness of eligibility. *Their report concluded: Every child and young person, regardless of their 'entitlement', or 'background', or 'home situations', deserves a good*

*meal, and currently, we're just not getting it.* The report provided a number of suggested solutions which the Child Poverty Working Group will take forward. The report has been shared with the chair of the Durham Association of Secondary Head Teachers and with DCC Head of Education.

- 29 In addition, the Child Poverty Working Group have become involved in a national project to consider and develop approaches to auto enrolment of FSM. Auto enrolment was piloted in Sheffield last year but had some data sharing issues. DWP and DfE are now supporting all LA in the next pilot phase to overcome this barrier. DfE are working with Feeding Britain to work with LAs to explore further options in support of auto enrolment for FSM.
- 30 Due to different LA and schools having a range of approaches to providing access to FSM there is no one way which would support this development. A number of LAs are developing a range of approaches including:
- (a) changes to schools' admission form to include request for parents' national insurance number where eligibility could be checked.
  - (b) Other LA are taking an approach which utilises requests for eg Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit
- 31 Further work with key DCC officers is underway to explore which potential route may work best in support of this auto enrolment approach.

### **Cutting the Cost of the School and Pre School-Day**

- 32 The need to address poverty within education settings is a priority. Evidence suggests the cost of the school and preschool 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 aims to support all schools, nurseries and colleges to mitigate the negative impact of poverty on children and has developed a range of cutting cost of the school/pre-school day initiatives.
- 33 The 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' (CCSD) was developed and introduced in 2019. The associated training aimed to support educational settings to gain a deeper insight into the scale and impact of poverty on children and young people, to challenge the stigma associated with living in poverty and support settings to develop practical steps in which to cut the cost of the school day.
- 34 Prior to Covid 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. Due to the impact of Covid, the CCSD has not been delivered to schools between 2020 and 2022. This, however provided an opportunity to revise the programme and also develop a bespoke programme for nursery

schools. The Thrive model has been applied to this work, ensuring all schools, nurseries and colleges get a range of resources and information to help them consider the impact of poverty for their pupils. The revised training programme has been delivered to 16 schools (9 primary, 6 secondary and 1 special school) and 5 early years settings, further sessions are planned as part of the education development plan. See Appendix 5.

## Support to pay for school uniforms

- 35 The Department for Education has published new statutory guidance for schools which seeks to make school uniform more affordable for families. The guidance includes measures on second-hand uniforms, schools' arrangements with suppliers, and ensuring parents have access to clear information about uniform policies. The Children's Society in collaboration with Child Poverty Action Group has developed guidance for schools to help [Affordable School Uniforms: A Guide](#). A dedicated web page has been developed for families to find out about this support [Help with buying items for school - Durham County Council](#). Families who are in receipt of child benefit and require help with buying items for school can also apply for a NE First Credit Union Family Loan. This can provide a parent with a loan of up to £500 without having a credit check. A Family Loan allows families to access a cash loan up front to purchase the required items as well as giving the option to save each month for the future. In a partnership agreement between Durham County Council and NE First Credit Union, an interest free loan of up to £450 plus £50 savings deposit is being offered to qualifying residents. CYPs practitioners are able to refer families who they feel might meet the requirements for the loan. With a sharp rise in applications to high interest lenders expected in the coming months, with rates as high as 2000% APR, this loan can offer a significant lifeline for anyone who needs emergency money.
- 36 The County Durham Youth Council have developed an Affordable Uniform Pledge and have asked schools to sign up to the pledge. To date 41 number of schools have signed the pledge. A relaunch is planned for the new school term.

## Period Products Scheme

- 37 The [Period Poverty scheme](#) has been further extended into the academic year 2023/24 and is available to all state maintained schools and 16 to 19 education establishments in England. It provides anyone who has periods access to tampons, pads and more through their school or college if, for example, they can not afford period products, have forgotten to bring them to school or college or have come on their period unexpectedly. Further information and guidance is available [Period products in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) A communication to schools took place in September 2022 and will be re promoted at the start of the Autumn term 2023 to ensure all schools have access to this offer.

## Additional access to financial support for families

### Household Support Fund

- 38 The Household Support Fund has continued to provide vulnerable families with additional help and support. During 2022/23 the Household Support Fund provided households with children in receipt of FSM with food vouchers during summer and winter school holidays, 69,072 vouchers were issued, equating to £3.9 million expenditure. A discretionary school support fund of £115,700 was established providing essential school items, individual payments to Care Leavers (£100) and to Kinship Carers (£100) as well as 1,400 Christmas Hampers were distributed.
- 39 Children and Young People's Service have been allocated a total of £5,600,000 for the 12-month period, April 2023 to March 2024. The majority of the allocation will be in the form of food vouchers which will be sent to schools (including Early Years providers) for distribution to households where there is a child eligible for free school meals in two payments over the year. Based on current information, awaiting final confirmation, we anticipate just over 30,000 awards will be made supporting over 17,000 families. The value of each voucher will be £75, meaning a total award of £150 per eligible pupil across the two payments.
- 40 In addition, support amounting to the single sum of £100 will be available to each kinship carer household. This support will be available on direct application and subject to necessary checks.
- 41 A sum to cover a single payment of £100 to each care leaver will be transferred from the total allocation to the team supporting work with care leavers, for distribution via their established channels.
- 42 'School Support Fund' payments will again be made to schools to enable them to provide discretionary support beyond the voucher support for such things as:
- (a) essential school uniform and equipment including stationery, school bags;
  - (b) winter clothing (including coats, hats, gloves, underwear /socks;
  - (c) footwear;
  - (d) PE kit;
  - (e) essential household items including white goods;
  - (f) other essential items (including clothing, bedding, personal hygiene and cleaning products).
- 43 This 'School Support fund' can support **any** family the school/college have identified are facing financial difficulty (this includes children not eligible for



Early Years Pupil Premium or FSM). This funding can be used to support pre-school and 6<sup>th</sup> form provision attached to a school.

- 44 A total sum of £195k has been secured by the Best Start in Life Steering Group to provide safer sleeping resources in the home (depending on family need this may include cot/ Moses basket/bed/mattress/bedding/sheets/cellular blankets). The funding can also be used for safety gates, fireguards, home safety packs (door latches, corner cushions), bath & room thermometer packs, blind cleats bed guards. This fund will be administered by the Social Inclusion Team.
- 45 In addition, £81,000 has been allocated for the provision of Christmas food hampers. Working together with Northeast charity Feeding families, Children's Services and 0-19 health professionals will identify families most in need to benefit from these hampers. The funding covers the costs associated of the provision of 2,000 hampers.

### **Stronger Families Grant and Greggs Foundation Trust Fund**

- 46 The Stronger Families Grant (£50,000 p.a.) and Greggs Foundation Trust contribution (£13,500 p.a.) continues to be utilised by frontline practitioners in Children and Young People Services and the wider County Durham Partnership. In the financial year 2022/23 approximately £45,000 250 awards were made to families including disposal of bulky waste, skip hire, home safety equipment, household furniture such as beds and carpets. Ongoing Service Level Agreements are in place with East Durham Partnership and County Durham Furniture Help Scheme to provide furniture and white goods, ensuing local community provides are also supported.

### **Feeding Families Food Parcels and Hygiene Packs**

- 47 In partnership with the Northeast charity Feeding Families and the Rotary Club, approximately 20 food parcels are delivered fortnightly across the county. Demand for these continue to be high and are accessed by frontline practitioners supporting those most in need. The partnership recently extended their offer and we have now arranged for hygiene packs to be delivered to the Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation Team. Packs include a range of personal hygiene products and will be specifically made up for teenage males and teenage females.

### **Reducing Food Waste -The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT)**

- 48 TBBT is an affordable food club, with hubs across County Durham. Members of TBBT pay £8.50 for approximately £35 worth of food including fruit and vegetables, chilled goods and cupboard staples such as pasta and cereal. The food comes from supermarket surplus, food factories and farms. This means contents vary from day to day depending on what is available. Most members feel that they save around £25 a week and just 'top up' from the supermarket when they have seen what is in the TBBT bags each week. Members do not have to come every week. They will

receive a text from TBBT each week, and if they do not want to access the provision that week they can easily opt out.

- 49 A month long campaign in all TBBT Hubs by Citizen Advice is starting in September has been agreed to promote FSM and Healthy Start uptake and help parents apply.
- 50 County Durham currently has 15 TBBT hubs at Annfield Plain, Bishop Auckland, Bowburn, Bullion, Cornforth, Crook, Dawdon, Eden Hill, Haswell, Leadgate, Spennymoor, Stanley, Ushaw Moor, Tow Law and Wheatley Hill.  
<http://www.breadandbutterthing.org/members>

**Priority 3: Promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive.**

### **DfE Holiday Activities with Food Programme 2022 - Fun and Food**

- 51 The Department for Education (DfE) provided all Local Authorities with funding to provide free holiday activities and healthy food for children that are eligible for benefits related free school meals during Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2022. Durham was allocated £2.3 million to provide free 'holiday clubs' and committed offering all eligible and other vulnerable children access to a range of enriching activities with healthy food. The aim of the programme is for children who attend provision to:
- (a) eat more healthily over the school holidays;
  - (b) be more active during the school holidays;
  - (c) take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well-being along with their wider education attainment;
  - (d) be safe and not to be socially isolated;
  - (e) have greater knowledge of health nutrition;
  - (f) be more engaged with school and other local services and 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.
- 52 Recognising the need and demand for holiday activities with healthy food remains during half term holidays an additional £80,00 from Public Health for February half term 2022 and £150,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for May and October half terms 2022.
- 53 Holiday Activities with Healthy Food has been branded as 'Fun and Food' in County Durham. A dedicated webpage is now available for families and

providers [www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood](http://www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood) and also a Facebook Group [Fun and Food County Durham | Facebook](#)

- 54 A central coordination team lead on the programme and have developed a partnership delivery model. Funding was allocated to a range of partners including Voluntary and Community, private providers, schools, 0-19 family hubs, leisure services, secure children's home and libraries.
- 55 Throughout 2022 a total of 46,000 children and young people engaged in Fun and Food provision (all main holidays and half term holidays).
- 56 Partners delivering projects have been particularly creative and all activities were delivered face to face and included arts and crafts, environmental and wildlife activities, STEM activities and sports & physical activity, yoga and wellbeing. Healthy meals and snacks were provided with each activity.
- 57 In recognition of lower numbers of older young people attending previous Fun and Food provision, a development worker role has been appointed to work with stakeholders and partners across the County to scope and develop an integrated, county wide, community based, physical activity programme targeting 11–16-year-old children and their families.
- 58 The programme has begun to look to expand specialist provision for children and young people with SEND and will work with universal providers to ensure that provision is accessible for all children and young people. Specific branding for these two offers has been developed. See appendix 6.
- 59 Additional support was available in Summer 2023 working together with Northeast First Credit Union to attend Fun and Food activities and enable families to maximise income and encourage responsible borrowing and savings. Feedback on uptake is not as yet available.
- 60 Durham have been allocated £2.3 million for Holiday Activities with Healthy Food for the holiday periods Easter, Summer and Christmas 2023. In addition to this the Poverty Action Steering group allocated £425,000 for half term holidays February 2023 – February 2024 to ensure there is a consistent offer.

## **Education Fun Fund**

- 61 The Children in Care Council (run with Investing in Children) exists to give children in care and care-leavers a voice and help them to have a say in the way their care service is run. All children and young people that are looked after in County Durham are automatically members of the CICC (Children in Care Council) and can take part in discussions and issues raised. In April 2021 Durham Children in Care Council (CICC) established the Education Fun Fund (EFF). The project evolved when CICC members identified that young people should be more involved in shaping how the Pupil Premium Fund supports their education.

- 62 Durham County Council's Virtual Headteacher allocated £5,000 for CICC to develop a project so that young people can be supported to apply for up to £150 towards something that is educational and beneficial to them but also includes fun and enriching activities.
- 63 The members of CICC together with Investing in Children were successful in gaining £15,000 funding from the Poverty Action Steering Group to further develop the EFF and are now able to support young people that are not care experienced. This includes vulnerable young people that are supported by a Social Worker, enabling vulnerable young people to take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience and well-being along with their wider education attainment. As of May 2023, 30 applications have been approved. Each applicant is unique and individual. Some examples of successful applications have been:
- (a) Money towards a piano and lessons.
  - (b) Sensory equipment.
  - (c) Experiences and days out e.g., a summer football camp, a trip to a castle, an aeroplane simulator.
  - (d) Uniform and equipment for sports and activities e.g., martial arts, duke of Edinburgh.
  - (e) Materials, books and programmes e.g., art supplies, studying materials and other educational items for school, college or hobbies.

### **Improving access to Leisure Centres**

- 64 Culture, Sport and Tourism Service (CST) have continued the good partnership work with the 'Fun and Food' programme from previous years and carried forward into 2023. Access to free holiday and weekend inflatable and swimming sessions has been extremely popular, with the service continuing to provide free weekend swim sessions and Splashability sessions for children with SEND, with **1067** free swims from April – June. Weekend free swimming sessions continue this financial year, free swimming during the April, May and Summer holiday periods funded by Fun and Food has had to date had **20,666**. Fun and Food has also provided water fountains in all pool sites and given out thousands of free water bottles to children attending free swimming, as well as continuing to provide healthy snacks.
- 65 In partnership with Fun and Food, the service is providing free gym memberships to targeted young people over the age of 11 with **92** memberships provided to date working with a broad range of partners such as Young Carers. 0-25 Community Family Health Service and CAMHS.

- 66 CST has also developed a physical activity framework which will ensure that the service has a more targeted approach to support health inequalities and to address the barriers to children and families accessing sport and leisure facilities, which includes affordability, this links into the recently approved physical activity strategy led by Public Health.

### **Family Hubs in County Durham**

- 67 As reported in the Cabinet Report December 2022, Durham is one of 75 areas who have received additional funding to develop its Family Hub and Start for Life (SfL) offer. Durham will receive around £4.4 million funding over the three-year programme (22-25). The Family Hub and Start for Life programme is designed to provide 'one stop shop' access to family support, 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.
- 68 As part of the government's expectation guidance on Family Hubs, access to debt and welfare support is a key expectation and including all Family Hub practitioners being able to
- (a) provide guidance about financial support available and can connect to further support if required including VCS organisations such as Money Helper, Step Change, Citizens Advice, Christians Against Poverty and provide access to virtual services including a online information webpage.
- 69 Additional to the above expectations parents and carers have access to the following via their local Family Hub
- (a) pre-loved clothes including winter coats and shoes, school uniforms, baby clothes and equipment.
  - (b) a community pantry with non-perishable foods.
  - (c) signpost to Community Fridges and Food Banks.
  - (d) access to Christmas Food Hampers.
  - (e) personal hygiene packs.
  - (f) access to Citizen Advice and Credit Union support, budgeting training programmes/cooking on a budget course.
  - (g) Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programmes.
  - (h) Young Parents Programme access to credit union and incentive to save scheme.

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

- 70 The latest verified data (June 2023) shows that the proportion of young people aged 16-17 who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in County Durham is 5.6%, compared to an average rate of 5.4% for the North East and an average rate of 3.2% for England.
- 71 The proportion of young people in County Durham whose destination is 'Not Known' is 0.5%, compared to an average rate of 0.7% for the North East and an average rate of 1.8% for England. It is worth noting that the combined rate of young people who are NEET / Not Known in County Durham is lower compared to the same period in 2019 – 6.2% (June 2023) compared to 7.0% (June 2019). The number of 16-17 years olds who are NEET in County Durham is 636 and the number whose destination is Not Known is 61. The overall number of 16-17 year olds in County Durham is 11,323.
- 72 A range of support is provided to young people to raise their aspirations and resilience as they prepare to progress into further education, employment, or training. This includes the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, the Workplaces Project, as well as DurhamWorks Programmes for young people aged 16-24.
- 73 DurhamWorks Programme for Schools supports young people in Years 10 and 11, who are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET, to make a successful transition into post-16 education, employment or training. The Programme is delivered in secondary schools, special schools, and alternative education provision. Young people receive a combination of careers guidance, one-to-one mentoring support, as well as the opportunity to participate in a range of activities that are focused on transition support, improving motivation, and Work Related Learning and Enterprise. Delivery of these activities are supported by Business Ambassadors, who are volunteers from local businesses and organisations.
- 74 The Workplaces Project provides opportunities for young people in Years 10 and 12, to gain a valuable insight into the world of work and find out about the skills and aptitudes that employers value through bespoke visits to workplaces. They learn about specific employment sectors, different job roles within those sectors, as well as recruitment processes. They also spend time with employees to find out about their pathways into work, in order to show them that employment is an achievable goal. The Workplaces Project supports young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET and who may lack confidence and / or support from their immediate family to progress into work in future. The Workplaces Project is delivered in secondary schools, special schools, as well as alternative education provision, and it dovetails with the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools.
- 75 Young people who do not make a successful progression into post-16 learning receive support through DurhamWorks, DurhamWorks 3 and

DurhamWorks Futures. DurhamWorks supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET, including one-to-one transition support, the opportunity to obtain English and maths qualifications, as well access to a range of learning provision to support their progression into education, employment and training.

- 76 DurhamWorks 3 supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET, with a specific emphasis on supporting young people identified as vulnerable, including young people who have SEND, young people who are Looked After / Care Leavers, young parents, young people who are offenders / at risk of offending, young carers, as well as young people who have mental health issues. DurhamWorks 3 is focused on securing employment outcomes for young people within a defined timeframe. Therefore, employer engagement activity is a key feature of the programme.
- 77 DurhamWorks Futures is a programme for young people aged 16-24 who are NEET and are within an identified vulnerable group, including those who have previously received a Social Care intervention, those identified as SEN Support in school, those who have previously been excluded from education, and those who have previously attended alternative education. There is a focus on providing young people with intensive support, to develop their motivation, confidence and work ready skills.

## **Future Developments**

### **Financial Inclusion in Education Settings**

- 78 Funding has been secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group and the One Point Service for a 12-month pilot of the Financial Inclusion Support Officer (FISO) programme in County Durham and the creation of three full time posts to deliver the programme across 9 secondary schools (3 schools per FISO post). Schools will be identified using child poverty related data and intelligence on Durham Insights along with co-production with education leaders and head teachers who are already very engaged with issues related to child poverty.
- 79 The FISO programme actively explores new ways to tackle child poverty and overcome the current challenges related to the cost-of-living crisis. It focuses on maximising entitlement to generate income from social security benefits and on supporting parents/carers to pursue pathways into employment. It also supports families by providing advice on support available for children such as free school meals, clothing grants etc.
- 80 The FISO programme will support the further development of Durham's Cutting the Cost of the School/Preschool Day. A key element to this will be co-production with children, young people and parents/carers to ensure that the cutting the cost programme is meeting the needs of the school community at a local level including developing tools and resources to help support families and also a workforce development programme to raise

awareness with all school staff about the issues faced by families living in poverty and those affected by the cost of living crisis.

- 81 The service is education-centred with experienced financial inclusion support officers being embedded in schools as personal, named contacts for parents/carers to support them in identifying and making sense of the benefits they qualify for, navigating the application processes and identifying and accessing any other forms of support that may be available to them e.g. Early Help services, holiday activities with food programme support or numeracy support through the Multiply (DurhamWorks) programme.

## **Conclusion**

- 82 Poverty continues to be a key concern 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. The current cost of living crisis is exacerbating the financial pressure on many families. 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 are welcomed.
- 83 A Briefing note will be shared with Council Members in September outlining all financial support available to families across County Durham.

## **Background papers**

- None.

## **Other useful documents**

- None.

## **Author(s)**

Karen Davison

Tel: 03000 268904



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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **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, 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.

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## **Appendix 2: Child Poverty Plan on a Page**

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Attached as separate document.

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## Appendix 3: Child Poverty data and intelligence September 2023

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- 1 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data which is now readily available on Durham Insights.  
<https://www.durhaminsight.info/children-in-poverty/>
- (a) **Relative Poverty:** In the financial year 2021/22 an estimated 24.5% of children under the age of 16 were living in relative poverty in County Durham. Across the Northeast the figure was slightly higher at 25.2% while nationally (England) the figure was 19.2%. For County Durham this is an increase from 17.5% in 2015/16, with the number of children in living in relative poverty rising from an estimated 15,500 (children under 16) to 22,300.
  - (i) An estimated 27.1% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in relative poverty – an increase of 13% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16;
  - (ii) The number of children aged 5 to 10 increased during this period, rising by 45% to 22.7% of children aged 5 to 10;
  - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 57%, rising to 24.4% of children aged 11 to 15;
  - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 18.8%, rising to 20.4% of children aged 16 to 19 living in relative poverty.
- (b) **Absolute Poverty:** In the financial year 2021/22 an estimated 20.2% of children under the age of 16 were living in absolute poverty in County Durham. Across the Northeast the figure was slightly higher at 20.8% while nationally (England) the figure was 14.7%. For County Durham this is an increase from 17.2% in 2015/16, with the number of children living in absolute poverty rising from an estimated 15,300 (aged children under 16) to 18,100.
  - (i) an estimated 22.7% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in absolute poverty – an increase of 1.3% 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 26% to 18.3% of children aged 5 to 10;
  - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 40%, rising to 20.3% of children aged 11 to 15;
  - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 5.8%; this meant a rise from 15.2% to 17.5% of 16 to 19's living in absolute poverty.

- (c) **Free School Meals:** Between 2015/16 and 2021/22, figures released by DfE estimated the number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 43.9% rising to over 19,400 eligible pupils, while the number of pupils on roll increased by 2%. Across England the of number pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 43.1%, rising to 19.7% with the number of pupils on roll increasing by 4%. As table 1 highlights across County Durham, the proportion of children and young people eligible for FSM has increased over the last five years – however, the increase is greater than the England average. In terms of claiming, the percentage has also increased – however the increase is less than the England average.

		<b>18/19</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>change</b>
Durham	Eligible	21%	31%	+10pp
	claiming	15%	23%	+8pp
England average	Eligible	17%	23%	+6pp
	claiming	12%	19%	+7pp

**Table 1:** FSM

- 2 The rise in FSM is due to a combination of Universal Credit roll-out (and associated protections) and the cost-of-living crisis. In the Spring census, schools fill in a box saying how many of their FSM children had a meal on that day. It is only at school level, though, not person level. So the statement that it relates to 24% of *families* might not be entirely accurate – it could be that one child in a family took their meal and another child did not. The 76% figure is an internal calculation from Durham’s maintained schools (so it covers people in our schools, not children living in Durham. We lose pupils over the borders, most notably to Gateshead and Sunderland.)
- 3 The DfE published their calculations, and they make it 75% take up for both maintained schools and academies in Durham.
- 4 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team has disaggregated FSM eligibility data from the school census to local areas to produce a local FSM proxy measure (Ward, Area Action Partnership (AAP) and Family First Areas (FFA) with the following results:
  - (a) Peterlee East ward had the highest eligibility at 54.2%, followed by Aycliffe West (53.2%), Woodhouse Close ward (46.5%) and Horden (46.4%);
  - (b) Of the 63 wards, 35 had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (c) Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 39%, followed by the 4 Together AAP with 38.7%;

- (d) Of the 14 AAPs, six had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (e) Easington Families First Area (FFA) had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 42.1%, followed by Peterlee FFA at 40%. Of the 14 FFAs, ten had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (f) Children with a SEN Support Plan or Education Health and Care Plan show disproportional disadvantage, for example, 61.1% of pupils living in the Midridge Central 2 Lower Super Output Area (LOSA) were eligible for FSM, with on average over one in four (29.6%) eligible for FSM across the county.
  - (g) one in four, round 24% (DfE) of families eligible for FSM did not take up offer in 2020/21.
- 5 **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).
- 6 **Universal Credit Claims:** The number of households in County Durham claiming Universal Credit (UC) has increased by 63.1% since February 2020, rising to nearly 46,500 households in February 2023. This large rise in is, in part, likely due to the effects of the COVID19 lockdown. Within this group the proportion of households claiming UC with children is around 45.4%, with the largest concentration in single parent households where 33.3% of households claiming UC were single parent households (15,700 households in February 2023). 'Couple' households with children represented around 11.6% of UC households, a rise of 74% since February 2020, rising to 5,400 households.

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## **Appendix 4: Information Leaflets for Families**

4a – Financial Support

4b – Healthy Start Leaflet

4c – Family Hub Start of Life

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Attached as separate documents.

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## **Appendix 5: Cutting the Cost of the School Day**

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Attached as separate document.

## Appendix 6: Fun and Food Branding

