

Report of the Executive Director of People and Neighbourhoods

Children in Poverty Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. We want to make sure everyone in Stockport has the opportunity to live happy healthy lives. However, we know that for some of our residents they are facing day-to-day challenges of poverty which affect their health, education, wellbeing and future. Addressing the inequalities faced in our borough is one of the biggest challenges facing the Council and partners in achieving this big ambition.

1.2. This report seeks to update scrutiny committee on the work underway to understand, identify and address child poverty. This includes:

- The current context and our understanding of child poverty nationally and in Stockport;
- A view of the work to address children living in poverty in Stockport. Framed by the Stockport Anti-Poverty Objectives 2024 – 2027¹ (and in the context of our Council Plan and One Stockport, One Future);
- Key next steps and areas of focus.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. The activity described in Section 4 has been delivered within the changing national and local context.

2.2. Millions of families experience the realities of poverty. Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation and even discrimination because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society².

2.3. After many years in which there has been no single, universally accepted definition of poverty, the UK government has now identified relative poverty after housing costs as its preferred measure. This change is recent, and previously published statistics still use a variety of measures. In general, the term refers to when people lack the material resources to meet minimum needs:

- Relative low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median in a given year.
- Absolute low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% of median income in a base year, usually 2010/11, adjusted for inflation.

2.4. The government has committed³ to the development of a UK-wide, 10-year Child Poverty Strategy for publication in 2025 to deliver an enduring reduction in child poverty.

¹ [Stockport Anti-Poverty Objectives 2024 – 2027](#)

² [What is poverty? | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

³ [Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy - GOV.UK](#)

The strategy will be based around themes that align well to Stockport's anti-poverty objectives as detailed in Section 3 of this report; increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience and improving local support, with a particular focus on children's early years. The strategy is expected to be a blueprint for a partnership between central and local government to reduce child poverty and its impacts on children and families.

2.5. Child poverty is high in the UK and is projected to rise further unless decisive action is taken at the national level:

- 4.3 million children are growing up in poverty in the UK.
- 9 children in an average classroom of 30 (30%) are living in poverty.
- 7 out of 10 children living in poverty have at least one parent in paid work.
- 47% of children from Black and minority ethnic groups are in poverty, compared to 24 per cent of white children.
- 44% of children living in lone-parent families are in poverty.
- 900,000 children in poverty in England alone miss out on free school meals.

2.6. Furthermore, research by Joseph Rountree Foundation⁴ (2023) suggested that approximately 3.8 million people in the UK experienced destitution in 2022, including around 1 million children.

2.7. Poverty causes ill health, drives inequality in health outcomes and increases use of health and care services. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to live in families that struggle to afford essential costs, like heating and eating. They may also struggle to afford school uniforms and miss out on school trips or activities with friends, which can make them feel more self-conscious and isolated. Children who live in insecure housing may also be forced to move schools often and struggle to maintain networks of friends, which can impact both their education and wellbeing.

2.8. Growing up in poverty also impacts children's future prospects. Children who qualify for free school meals are less likely than those who don't to obtain good English and Maths GCSEs. This is likely to also impact their future job prospects, and children who grow up in poverty generally report lower earnings in adulthood and fewer hours worked.

2.9. Children who grow up in the most deprived areas are also more likely to live fewer years in good health than their counterparts in less deprived areas, and children in poverty are more likely to experience a range of mental and physical health issues.

2.10. Child poverty is caused by a wide range of factors that result in inadequate household resources. The three main drivers of child poverty are:

- income from social security and benefits,
- income from employment,
- the cost of living.

2.11. Families with children face greater costs, and their income can be affected by low pay, lack of paid work, rising living costs and inadequate social security benefits. While a family has dependent children at home, the household's needs are greater, and expenditure rises.

⁴ [Joseph Rountree Foundation](#)

This can include on:

- food
- clothes and shoes
- books
- fuel and public transport
- childcare
- housing
- bills, from energy to internet access
- school costs including uniform, trips and equipment.

2.12. Housing and childcare costs can take up the lion's share of the family budget and vary dramatically across the country. For families in which an adult or child is disabled, energy costs may be particularly high.

2.13. The latest research by Child Poverty Award Group (CPAG)⁵, shows that the cost of raising a child to age 18 is now £260,000 for a couple (up from £166,000 in 2023) and £290,000 for a lone parent (up from £220,000 in 2023).

- In-work families are struggling – a lone parent with two children working full time on the minimum wage can only cover 69% of the cost of a child, while a similar couple can only cover 84%. For a lone parent on the minimum wage with three children, the share covered falls to 45% (63% for a couple on the minimum wage with three children). Work, on its own, is not sufficient to enable families to reach a basic standard of living and social security plays a crucial role.
- Out-of-work families are struggling even more – an out-of-work family with two children has less than half the income required to meet the cost of a minimum acceptable standard of living (39% in a couple family, 44% in a lone parent family).

2.14. CPAG research suggests that going to school in the UK costs families⁶:

- At least £864.87 per year for primary school children (£352.86 for uniform alone), equates to £18.69 a week (before childcare costs are accounted for).
- At least £1755.97 per year for secondary school children, (£481.77 for uniform alone), equating to £39.01 a week.
- This means that the total cost of meeting a child's minimum educational needs across all 14 years of school is £18,345.85.

2.15. Research in Scotland has identified that the families most likely to experience child poverty include⁷:

- Lone parent families
- Families with at least one person with a disability
- Families with 3 or more children
- Minority ethnic communities
- Families with children aged under 1
- Families in which the mother is aged under 25.

2.16. These risk factors demonstrate that poverty occurs and is experienced differently in different families and highlight the importance of intersectionality – the overlap between poverty and protected characteristics including age, gender, ethnicity and disability.

⁵ [Child Poverty Action Group - The Cost of a Child in 2024](#)

⁶ [Child Poverty Action Group – Minimum Cost of Education](#)

⁷ [Child poverty - Poverty and social justice - gov.scot](#)

3. STOCKPORT CONTEXT

- 3.1. Stockport's approach to reducing child poverty is an integral part of the Fair and Inclusive thread that runs through the strategy documents that drive our work as a borough and is embedded within our One Stockport Local neighbourhoods and prevention programme. One Stockport, One Future frames inequality and life chances for children as the first big challenge of our time and identifies Fair and Inclusive Stockport as our approach to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be happy, healthy and succeed in life. Addressing child poverty and the consequences of child poverty are identified as key to the second big thing – our ambition for Stockport to be the best place to grow up.
- 3.2. Our strategic approach to poverty in children in One Stockport One Future is reflected in our strategic measures of success. One of our two strategic measures is to reduce the gap in outcomes within and between our communities. Among our 16 supporting measures for the five big things in One Stockport, One Future are 6 measures of child poverty and closely related measures:
- Percentage of children living in low-income households
 - Number of affordable homes
 - Employment rates for 16–64-year-olds
 - Number of young people not in education employment or training
 - Child development at 2.5 years and
 - Educational attainment at two years
- 3.3. Stockport's council plan focuses on poverty within both the Fair and Inclusive cross cutting theme and Ambition 4; delivering for those who need it most, and introduces the council's 6 anti-poverty objectives, which were formally adopted in March 2024. The objectives include:
- Objective 1: To ensure a strategic and systematic approach to anti-poverty work is in place which is rooted in the lived experience of people experiencing poverty.
 - Objective 2: To maximise the income of residents through access to fairly paid, flexible and good quality work
 - Objective 3: To maximise the income of residents through provision of high quality easy to access advice including on benefit entitlements
 - Objective 4: To provide support to residents in a financial crisis
 - Objective 5: To prevent next-generation poverty by working with children, young people and their families.
 - Objective 6: To increase the numbers of people in affordable and stable housing and reduce homelessness
- 3.4. Stockport's Children and Young People Plan (2024-2027) recognises the rapid increase in the percentage of children living in poverty, and that birth rates have increased most rapidly in the more deprived areas of Stockport. The plan sets out a clear aim to reduce the achievement gaps between people living in poverty in Stockport and their peers both locally and nationally.
- 3.5. Stockport's current data on child poverty paints a stark and rapidly worsening picture:
- In 2022/23, 15.8% of children (9372) were living in absolute low-income households, a 26.8% increase compared to 2021/22 (7390). In 2022/23, 20.9% (12,395) were living in relative low-income households, a 14.5% increase since 2021/22 (10,828).

- In 2021/22, 8% of children live in a family where the two-child limit of benefits had an impact on their income.
- 8569 children (20.7%) are in receipt of means-tested Free School Meals (FSM)⁸
- 10,497 households with children in Stockport received universal credit in May 2024, around 52% of all households receiving universal credit in the borough.⁹

3.6. In 2023/24, 291 households with dependent children in Stockport were owed a homelessness prevention duty (i.e. were threatened with homelessness), 35% of the total, and 169 were households with dependent children in Stockport were owed a homelessness relief duty (i.e. were homeless), 29% of the total.¹⁰

3.7. The activity outlined in Section 4 is delivered within these national and local challenges.

4. ACTIVITY AGAINST THE SIX ANTI-POVERTY OBJECTIVES

4.1. Lived Experience

4.1.1. **Objective 1: To ensure a strategic and systematic approach to anti-poverty work is in place which is rooted in the lived experience of people experiencing poverty.**

4.1.2. Poverty Proofing the cost of the school day is a programme in which enables schools to properly understand the barriers from the perspective of the child and their family and enables school leaders to challenge the attitudes of staff where they are not conducive to supporting the agenda. Schools who engage in Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day hear from children and parents about the impact that school costs have on them and their ability to pay / engage in school activities, and this is an important channel through which we hear the voices of children and young people who are living in poverty. School leaders work to adapt their provision to be more mindful of these costs for children and families.

4.1.3. *Parent "School trips are always an extra expense which worry me. I do always pay for them, however, it is something that I worry about."*

4.1.4. **Objective 2: To maximise the income of residents through access to fairly paid, flexible and good quality work.**

4.1.5. The Council and partners such as the NHS, are working together to provide a joined-up approach to accessing work and skills support in our communities, in particular with a view to addressing family poverty. The In Work Progression offer will commence in January, to support individuals in low paid or insecure hours employment to progress their careers. In addition, the Work Well programme starts in December 2024 to provide low intensity preventative support for those in employment or recently unemployed, where a health condition puts at risk the ongoing participation in the labour market. Underpinning these two programmes, the Council is employing a Work and Skills Navigator, also placed within community settings such as Family Hubs and libraries to improve access to the offers for local residents, and ensure they are supported to access the most appropriate provision for their needs. This all adds to the existing offer of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff embedded in Family Hubs.

⁸ SMBC Neighbourhood Profiles, August 2024

⁹ [Stat-Xplore](#)

¹⁰ [Statutory Homelessness in England](#)

We also continue to address the need for access to good quality employment through the delivery of local Inclusive Jobs Fairs and encouraging more local employers to join the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and commit to paying the real living wage.

4.1.6. Action 2.7 – Improve access to and the take-up of good-quality affordable childcare so that it is not a barrier to employment, particularly for women.

4.1.7. The take up of early education and childcare remains high in Stockport. In 2024, 99% of 3–4-year-olds were benefitting from attending an early education place, higher than the national average take up (95%). The number of vulnerable two-year-olds benefitting from funded early education continues to be very high at 91% of those eligible, higher than the national average (75%). In addition, 98% of these two-year-olds are in early years provision that is rated good/outstanding by Ofsted. This means that children in Stockport are accessing high quality early education and childcare which support their journey to school readiness and in addition it enables their parents to return to work or access training if appropriate.

4.1.8. The increase in funded early education for children of working parents aged two years from April 2024 will mean that more parents can get help with their childcare costs. This will be extended to children from nine months from September 2024. Additional support towards childcare costs is also available for parents on Universal Credit or through Working Tax Credit scheme to enable more working parents of young children to return to/remain in or start work after maternity and paternity leave whilst children are benefitting from high quality early education.

4.1.9. Objective 3: To maximise the income of residents through provision of high quality easy to access advice including on benefit entitlements

4.2. Family Hubs

4.2.1. The council is working to increase access to expert advice on benefits advice and employment through the maturity of the Family Hubs model. This includes the co-location of DWP Supporting Families Advisors within the Hub Sites improving access to accurate benefits information and advice for families in communities they live in.

4.3. Healthy Start Vouchers

4.3.1. The Council and partner organisations continue to promote Healthy Start Vouchers to increase the number of eligible people applying for the scheme. To increase awareness and uptake, the following has taken place: regular briefings for staff including Start Well Development Day, Team Around the Place meetings, PVI (Private Voluntary and Independent) Early Years Settings Network; regular posts on Start Well social media and Council communication channels; Healthy Start promoted at Money Maximising Roadshow events; printed application leaflets given out with every birth registration at Stockport Registry Office; information shared digitally with parents via Essential Parent; and GM Training video shared with DWP, who are sending reminders to all relevant people on Universal Credit and work coaches have added Healthy Start Vouchers to their checklists.

4.3.2. As of July 2024, 1,395, parents are in receipt of the vouchers. In Stockport, around a third of those eligible are not in receipt of Healthy Start (similar to the national average).

4.3.3. To further increase take-up, the following activities are planned:

- Work in partnership with Stockport Homes to explore installing card readers at Your Local Pantries to be able to accept Healthy Start as payment.
- Target promotion with Stockport Food Network to ensure information on Healthy Start is shared.
- Explore the widening of Healthy Start vitamin availability to Family Hub venues not already supplying.
- Continue to promote Healthy Start through all channels mentioned above.
- Work with our trusted partners in the community to see if language is a barrier for parents to access Healthy Start.
- Continue to support GMCA and national campaigns for autoenrollment, increase in the amount per week, increase the CAP set and changing the eligibility age to 5, to match the start of FSM provision.
- More awareness raising needed to get children on Universal FSM enrolled to Income based FSM as soon as they are eligible.

4.3.4. **Objective 4: To provide support to residents in a financial crisis**

4.4. Household Support Fund

4.4.1. In 2023/24, the council received £4.326m from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund. In total, £3.420m was awarded to households with children, equating to 83.5% of total spend. 46,677 awards were made which benefited 36,490 households.

4.5. Family Support Vouchers

4.5.1. A central element of the Household Support Fund, Family Support Vouchers are provided to eligible children including those in receipt of means-tested Free School Meals and Early Years equivalent plus households with a school-age dependent in receipt of Council Tax Support and/or Housing Benefit.

4.5.2. In 2023/24, eligible families will receive Family Support Vouchers worth £195 per eligible child, totalling c.£2,871m. Family Support Vouchers are provided as cash vouchers either digitally or via post and are paid per child so as not to disproportionately affected larger families.

4.6. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

4.6.1. Funded by Department for Education (DfE), the HAF programme spent £785,952 on activities and food during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2023/24. 31,896 places were delivered across 44 clubs, by 31 providers over the three holiday periods, benefiting an estimated 4,218 families, including 685 families with a child who identifies as having SEND.

4.6.2. The council uses £0.175m of the Household Support Fund to expand the HAF offer to include food and activities at May, October and February half terms plus food hampers at Christmas. In 2022/24, 4,962 places were delivered by 18 providers over the three half terms, benefiting an estimated 2918 families.

4.7. Early life

4.7.1. Using Household Support Fund monies, the council has invested in Early Life (previously Early Essentials Stockport) to expand their existing offer from 0–3-month-old babies to supporting 0–5-year-old children. It is expected the Early Life will move into their new premises by the end of 2024.

4.8. Chelwood Food Bank Plus/Zarach

4.8.1. From January 2025, Zarach have decided to amend their operating model meaning that the Zarach Stockport initiative delivered by Chelwood Food Bank will end. However, Chelwood will continue to address bed poverty for non-school age children, or for those that do not fit the Zarach criteria.

4.8.2. In the new year, Chelwood aim to address other bed needs, such as children not in state schools, cot beds for children under school age and sofa beds for those that do not have ample space for an extra bed. The council will continue to use Household Support Fund to support this initiative.

4.8.3. **Objective 5 – To prevent next-generation poverty by working with children, young people and their families**

4.8.4. A key focus for Stockport Family continues to be addressing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on those that experience the greatest disadvantage. The ongoing crisis is continuing to have far reaching implications for families with the borough's most vulnerable children, young people and families feeling this most acutely.

4.8.5. The actions we are taking:

- Maximise the opportunity provided by Family Hubs to prevent child poverty.
- Ensure children are ready for school by delivering our Start Well strategy.
- Deliver the Poverty Proofing programme widely in our schools and expand the offer to Early Years settings.
- Work with the VCFSE to support the Youth Alliance to be an effective voice for young people which impacts on our plans and services.
- Support attendance and attainment of children entitled to free school meals.
- Prevent youth homelessness by supporting families under pressure.
- Work with schools to make school uniforms affordable or establish other support to access uniforms.
- Proactively work with children who are persistently absent post-lockdown.

4.8.6 In addition to this, we will work with central government as they prepare the national Child Poverty Strategy to ensure that the strategy is effective in reducing child poverty in Stockport and ensure that its implementation is integrated with our existing Stockport approach.

4.8.7 Success will be measured by:

- Improvements in Early Help reporting outcomes particularly regarding financial stability and other poverty related outcomes within the supporting families framework.
- An increase in the numbers of disadvantaged children achieving the prime areas of learning by the end of reception.
- Increase the numbers of schools which have had a Poverty Proofing assessment.
- Youth Alliance meets regularly and there are examples of how their input has been considered in strategic decisions.

- Narrow the gap in attainment between children on free school meals and those who are not entitled, at the end of Early Years, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4
- Fewer families apply for support with buying school uniforms.
- Improved access to good quality universal information help and support through Family Hubs digital, buildings and outreach approaches, measured through digital engagement data and the Family Hubs outcome monitoring framework
- Reduce the persistent absence rates to pre-pandemic levels for disadvantaged children.

4.9. Maximise the opportunity provided by Family Hubs to prevent child poverty

- 4.9.1. One Stockport Family Hubs are a physical, virtual and a neighbourhood approach designed to make it easier for families to access information, help and support. They are not just about Hub buildings.
- 4.9.2. They provide access to support for families from pregnancy through to teenage years (this is up to age 25 for children and young people with SEND), within neighbourhoods and cover all aspects of family life. One Stockport Family Hubs vision is to support families to start well, live well and thrive. In line with this vision, we are currently working to integrate Family Hubs into One Stockport Local, making clear that Family Hubs are there to support everyone, including those who live alone, or don't have children.
- 4.9.3. Family Hubs offer access to a range of services including pregnancy and antenatal care, infant feeding, children's health and development, play sessions, SEND specific support, parenting, housing, cost of living support, training and employment opportunities, finding childcare, youth activities, help to stop smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health, mental health and wellbeing, and relationships.
- 4.9.4. Data from the first year of operation shows that of 167 web enquiries, 22% were for "Cost of Living / Welfare / finance / benefit" issues and most of these enquiries were linked to the Cost-of-Living helpline or DWP supporting families advisors. Of the 167 total web enquiries, 80% were from families in "universal" or "help" levels of the I-thrive levels of need framework meaning that these are families who are not open to Early Help Services or Children's Social Care. This small data set indicates that there is a need and demand for getting better information help and support to all families across all levels of need when it comes to issues of poverty, particularly if we want to have greater impact in preventing issues escalating to high cost, crisis intervention within children and families and wider services.

4.10. Ensure children are ready for school by delivering our Start Well strategy

- 4.10.1. Key activity specific to preventing child poverty in the earliest years of life include:
- Prioritising the first 1001 days of life – 72 families with children under 2 received targeted HSF4 vouchers in 2023/24, benefitting 125 babies. Total amount spent £7500. The highest number of requests came from the Offerton, Hazel Grove and Great Moor footprint.
 - Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) continues as a successful peer led, professionally supported parenting programme. During the academic year 2023/24, 131 parents completed EPEC courses benefitting 245 children. 17 parents have also successfully gone on to complete the Parent Group Leader training. Since establishment in 2018, the EPEC Hub have trained and recruited 76 Parent Group Leaders, a number of whom have secured employment or gone into further training. The Hub have further developed inclusive practice and extended reach within marginalised communities. Engagement with dads has increased through virtual

delivery and for the first time, working in partnership with YARAN, the 'Being a Parent' course has been delivered with non-English speaking parents and in Farsi. In September 2024, delivery will extend to Arabic speaking families.

- Increasing the uptake of Healthy Start remains a Start Well key performance indicator. In June 24, the overall uptake for Stockport families was 65.7%. The uptake in some wards is good e.g. Reddish South is 80.6%, whereas in other wards it is much lower e.g. Norbury and Woodsmoor 31.8%. The original action plan for increasing uptake has been refreshed and updated to consider Family Hub developments.

4.10.2. **Deliver the Poverty Proofing programme widely in our schools and expand the offer to Early Years settings**

4.10.3. Work continues in Stockport to enable schools to identify where barriers exist that make it harder for children to access the same educational opportunities as their peers. The process, known as Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day, enables schools to properly understand the barriers from the perspective of the child and their family. It also provides an opportunity for school leaders to challenge the attitudes of staff where they are not conducive to supporting the agenda. All the schools that have undertaken a full Poverty Proofing audit (endorsed by Children Northeast) have learned something new about the lived experience of their communities. Most schools have gone on to develop a long-term action plan to address these issues, and school leaders have ensured that changes are fundamental and sustained. This has led to improved attendance and learning outcomes for children where schools have been involved in the project and embraced the learning that it brings. Headteachers have also explained how it has changed their leadership at a deep level and the difference it has made to their decision making.

4.10.4. Schools are sensitive to the needs of their children and are keen to ensure that their children are well fed. This can be difficult to achieve within the parameters that exist within the system, particularly for example, in terms of the real cost of a meal, how this is funded, the way in which choices are made and recorded as well as portion size.

4.10.5. Schools are responsible for identifying and organising their own arrangements for providing food at lunchtime. There are a range of companies operating across Stockport that schools can choose who they would like to provide their school meals. A number of schools also provide breakfast food and snacks as part of wraparound care that is organised by individual schools. School fruit and vegetables are provided for all children in early years and key stage 1 through the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS), funded centrally. A few schools fund an offer fruit and vegetables in KS2 as well. Further work is needed to ensure all children who are living in poverty are able to access food in school, which is both sufficient, funded and is delivered in a way that does not identify children as being those who need financial help. Feeling as sense of belonging is key to children's success in school and such identification can be detrimental to children's self-esteem and their future achievements.

4.11. Proactively work with children who are persistently absent post-lockdown

4.11.1. The attendance rates of those children who are living in poverty has improved from 88.9% in 23/24 to 90.1% in 24/25. In primary schools the improvement is from 90.9% to 92.6%. The improvement is less significant in our secondary sector, from 85.7% to 86%.

4.11.2. The improvements have been driven by a collective effort from our schools and LA services to focus upon the need for all children to reach an attendance of 96%. Focussed planning for children as well as a strategic focus in school have contributed to our improvements which overall are developing at a faster rate than is seen across the country.

4.11.3. Where schools have engaged in the Poverty Proofing programme, we have seen improved attendance for children eligible for FSM and identified as 'disadvantaged' compared with schools who have not engaged with the programme.

Impact on attendance data



The % of primary schools who saw improved attendance from 2021/22 to 2022/23 and 2022/23 to 2023/24 for children eligible for FSM and identified as 'disadvantaged'.

Schools where a CNE Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day audit has NOT taken place.

2021/22 to 2022/23	2022/23 to 2023/24	Sustained over 2021 to 2024
50%	39%	16%

Schools where a CNE Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day audit HAS taken place.

2021/22 to 2022/23	2022/23 to 2023/24	Sustained over 2021 to 2024
56%	60%	39%

Positive impact of Poverty Proofing on attendance for children eligible for FSM and identified as 'disadvantaged'

+6%	+21%	+23%
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Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*

4.12. Work with schools to make school uniforms affordable or establish other support to access uniforms.

4.12.1. Across the Borough a number of Primary schools ensure that school uniform is affordable through the expectation that school logos are not mandatory. A few schools have adapted their uniform expectations, including the choice of footwear, so that this is more affordable for families. Several schools have engaged with colleagues from the community and inclusion team, who have delivered sessions about money lending and loan sharks.

4.12.2. After engaging in Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day, an infant school heard from the parental community their worries about the cost of uniform, including footwear. The school worked closely with them to agree upon a suitable uniform that children could wear all day, every day that enabled them to be involved in physical activities and PE sessions whilst wearing the same clothes and shoes for non-active lessons.

4.12.3. After engaging in Poverty Proofing the Cost of the School Day, a school reviewed their activities and access associated with the summer fair. This enabled a number of families to attend who had previously felt excluded due to the costs associated with attending. Families welcome the affordable wraparound care that is provided in a number of schools.

- *“You can book flexibly – you can also just turn up. The children love going”*
- *“I have to be at work at 8.30 and my wife at 8 so neither of us would be able to work if it wasn't for the pre-school”*
- *“It's a lifesaver – I wouldn't be able to go to work if it wasn't for breakfast club”*

- *“Personally we think the lunch/breakfast club and after school club are brilliant value”*
- *“Breakfast/after school are a lifesaver for us as we have no family to support with childcare and we both are in employment and have our own business so without these we couldn't earn our wages, and we budget for each terms costings”*

4.12.4 A number of schools no longer mandate for uniform to have the school logo and a number offer a re-loved offer.

- *Parent “I haven't needed to use the resources yet but have seen the school provide pre-loved uniform items for struggling families, I think this is a great idea.”*

4.12.5 Parents, carers and children were all clear that they could wear uniform without the school logo. We didn't hear from anyone who experienced or saw negative behaviour towards children wearing uniform without a logo.

- *Child “You have to wear blue – it doesn't have to have the logo.”*
- *Child “It doesn't have to have a logo.”*

4.13. ReLoved Uniform 4 All

4.13.1. Using Household Support Fund monies, the council commissioned Cherry Tree Project to set up and deliver a pre-loved school uniform scheme. The project will contribute to both addressing poverty (through providing access to pre-loved school uniform) and the council's Climate Action Now commitments. All library buildings are donation points and to date over 700kg of uniform has been donated.

4.13.2. It is planned that the scheme will start to distribute items (initially via referrals from schools) in early 2025.

4.14. Work with the VCFSE to support the Youth Alliance to be an effective voice for young people which impacts on our plans and services.

4.14.1. In recent years the Council has invested in a number of community and equality networks and alliances. The ambition being to strengthen connection and influence of communities from different identities and experience. Listen! Youth Alliance is one of these groups and also forms one of the borough's six strategic partnerships. Coordinated by Pursuing Individual Excellence (PIE), the Listen! Alliance acts as a consultative body that promotes the voice of children and young people, in order to influence decision making processes to inform and shape the work of the council i.e. gathering bi-monthly data about the opinions of young people in Stockport, store and share this information with relevant stakeholders.

4.14.2. Autisk has also been commissioned to support the work of the Youth Alliance - Listen!, to ensure that the on-going development and impact of youth voice for children and young people with SEND needs within Stockport are included. Autisk support people with autism, anxiety and other disabilities / learning difficulties. In addition to this, Listen! are now specifically collecting data to understand the cohort of young people who have additional needs and disabilities as well as ethnicity as we know cost of living and poverty disproportionality impacts particular cohorts.

4.14.3. Poverty and the high cost of living are continuous concerns for young people, and Listen! sought data from young people last year on these issues and will be doing so again in January 2025 to gather their thoughts and experiences in relation to this.

5 REPORTING

- 5.1. Ongoing performance reporting will continue through the Portfolio Performance and Resource Report process and through performance oversight of the Stockport Children and Young People's Plan.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

Background Information

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