

Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

Date: 15th September 2021

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city and council's ambitions

- The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds', and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has occurred during the pandemic. This report gives an update on each of these workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps.
- In 2016, Children & Families started to develop a plan around mitigating the impact of child poverty across Leeds. In 2017/2018, a scrutiny enquiry on child poverty recommended that Children & Families integrated more of a central focus on child poverty. The first Child Poverty Impact Board met in 2018, and Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds was launched in 2019.
- The child poverty strategy has been co-created with children, young people, families with direct experience of poverty, third, private and public sector, schools, academics and other organisations.
- We know that the feeling of being in poverty, the feeling of being excluded and the feeling of being ashamed can impact a child for the rest of their life. We don't want this in Leeds. So, we are working together, as a city, to reduce the impact of poverty on young people. This is our moral imperative.
- This report provides information on poverty, which is a key city, regional and national challenge. This priority is reflected in all city strategies contributing to the *strong economy, compassionate city* including the Best Council Plan 2018/19-2020/21, the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Joint Health and Well Being Plan and the Tackling Poverty and Inequality Executive Board report, discussed in December 2018.
- Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this work. Disadvantaged pupils are not a single group; characteristics such as Special Education Need and Disability (SEND), ethnicity, and English as an Additional Language (EAL) interact with disadvantage with varying impacts on progress rates, gaps with non-disadvantaged pupils and the long-term impact of disadvantage.

- Equality Improvement Priorities 2016 – 2020 have been developed to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 by helping the council to identify work and activities that reduce disadvantage, discrimination, and inequalities of opportunity.
- The work fulfils some of the best council objectives and priorities as defined in the Best Council Plan 2018/19-2020/21. These include; improving educational achievement gaps; providing skills programmes and employment support; improving school attendance and reducing the percentage of young people who are not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).
- The strategy aligns with local and city-wide strategies such as the Priority Neighbourhoods work, the Children and Young People’s Plan, Child Friendly Leeds, Future in Mind Strategy, and the Best City for Learning.
- This strategy directly relates to most of the Best Council Plan priorities:
 - tackling poverty, helping everyone benefit from the economy to their full potential
 - reducing health inequalities and supporting active lifestyles
 - making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
 - improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities
 - providing homes of the right quality, type and affordability in the right places and minimising homelessness
 - keeping people safe from harm and promoting community respect and resilience
- This strategy relates to the council priority around the climate emergency. As the climate continues to change, extreme weather patterns across the globe will become increasingly common. The knock-on effects of these changes will be profound; however, it is hard to determine what specifically they will look like. What is certain is that there will be scarcity of various resources, such as food and energy, which could lead to price increases, which will have a disproportionate impact on people who live in poverty. We should seek to mitigate the impact of poverty and reduce insecurity and inequality around these basic needs to build strengthened communities for the future.

Recommendations

- a) That the Scrutiny Board considers and supports the strategic framework in place to mitigate the impact of child poverty, and the work being undertaken by the council and other partners in the key areas of activity.
- b) That the Scrutiny Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Thriving strategy across the city and in particular in each respective Member’s portfolio in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds', and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has occurred during the pandemic. Appendix 1 of this report gives an update on each of these workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

2. Further detail is set out in Appendix 1 of this report in terms of the outcomes and outputs of each project linked to the Strategy for the Scrutiny Board's information.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

3. Extensive consultation has been carried out with regards to this strategy, with private, public, third and education sectors, children, young people and parents, universities and community groups.

What are the resource implications?

4. Each project has an individual resource implication. Where possible, a partnership approach has been implemented to pool resources from a variety of directorates and sectors across Leeds.

What are the legal implications?

5. There are no legal implications.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

6. None.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

7. As mentioned above, this strategy directly relates to most of the Best Council Plan priorities:
 - tackling poverty, helping everyone benefit from the economy to their full potential
 - reducing health inequalities and supporting active lifestyles
 - making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
 - improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities
 - providing homes of the right quality, type and affordability in the right places and minimising homelessness
 - keeping people safe from harm and promoting community respect and resilience

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

8. This is an agreed corporate wide strategy which is ongoing.

b) How will success be measured?

9. The outcomes and outputs set out in Appendix 1 report the outcomes and outputs of each project.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

10. This is an ongoing strategy.

Appendices

11. Appendix 1 – Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds.

Background papers

12. None.

Appendix One

Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

Summary

1. Main issues

This report will provide an overview of Thriving, the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy and the various workstreams that sit underneath the strategy. It will also detail our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing work, impact and next steps.

Latest Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) analysis published on 25th March 2021 found that 4.3 million children were living in relative poverty at the end of the 2019/20 financial year; a 12-year high; equating to 1 in 4 children in the UK. In-work poverty is increasing every year, with 75% of children growing up in poverty living in working families (Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), 2019/20). Poverty is estimated to affect 173,600 people across Leeds (after housing costs are deducted from income (DWP), 2018/2019). Child poverty is increasing, in Leeds and nationally, and it is having very serious impacts on children, the adults children become, and on the societies in which poor children live. Latest local data¹ for year end 2020 revealed 24% of children under 16 (36,496) in Leeds lived in poverty (before housing costs are deducted from income) which is an increase of 9% in a year. This compares to the national figure where 19% of children under 16 lived in poverty (before housing costs are deducted from income).

Poverty intersects with other demographics such as class, ethnicity, age, disability and gender; 46% of children who are from black and minority ethnic groups live in poverty, compared with 26% of children in white British families. Nearly half of those who live in poverty are either a disabled person or live with a disabled person², and the poverty rate for families with a disabled family member rose from 28% in 2011 to 30% in 2017³. Women are more likely than men to live in poverty, with 20% of women experiencing poverty compared to 18% of men. Forty-five per cent of single parents - of which 90% are women - are living in poverty⁴.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Over the next few years, we will start to see statistics that show the extent of poverty across the UK, and how this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Early indications appear to show that those who were previously experiencing poverty have been pushed deeper into poverty, and those who were previously living above the poverty line have been pushed into poverty. The pandemic has worsened existing inequalities, with vulnerable children facing severe and long-term impacts.

Prior to the pandemic, 3 million people in the UK were behind with one or more key household bills⁵. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced household income, led to a rise in unemployment, resulted in significant increases in claims for Universal Credit, and led to six million people falling behind on bills⁶.

The benefit system has been crucial to the national COVID-19 response but has been under extraordinary pressure from an unprecedented wave of applications for Universal Credit (UC). In June 2021 the provisional figure for the total number of people claiming UC in Leeds local authority area is 74,349; this includes all claimants whether they are in employment or not and is 14.4% of working age population (WAP), which is lower when compared to 14.8% in England and 16.2% in West Yorkshire. There is a slight increase of 381 claimants on the previous month in May

¹ These figures are from the [DWP's Children in low income families measure](#) and are updated every year

² [Disability Rights UK](#)

³ [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

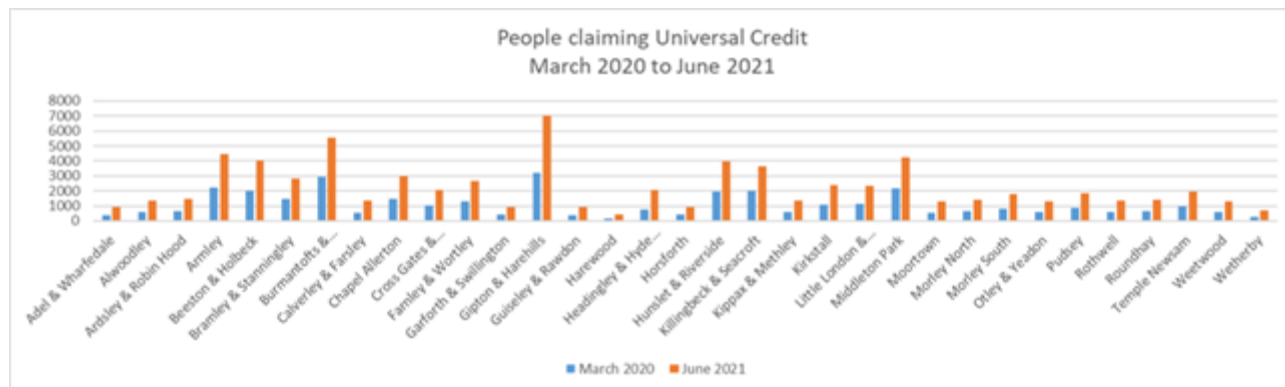
⁴ [Women's Budget Group](#)

⁵ [University of Birmingham](#)

⁶ [Citizens Advice](#)

2021 and an increase of 110% since March 2020. The number of people claiming UC in Leeds that were unemployed in May 2021 is 46,061, which is 8.9% of the working age population. This is a decrease of 1,000 claiming on the previous month in April 2021 and an increase of 95% since March 2020.

All wards in Leeds have seen an increase in people claiming UC due to not being in employment, with the highest impact on our poorest wards. The most affected wards are Gipton and Harehills, where claimants have increased from 11.2%, 2,210 claimants in March 2020 to 23.4%, 4,735 in May 2021, and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill wards where claimants have increased from 11.5% of the working age population, 2,068 claimants in March 2020 to 19.05% of the working age population, 3,590 claimants in May 2021.



COVID-19 has had a severe impact on the Leeds economy. In Leeds there are currently 25,500 people on furlough, and when this ends by October there is an expectation that a proportion of these people will then be made redundant. The Universal Credit £20 top up is due to end in the autumn; with the consequential potential to push families further into poverty. Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned that nationally the cessation of these national support arrangements will pull 200,000 children into poverty as we head into winter 2021.

In addition, a significant number of people have lost their jobs during the pandemic - Citizens Advice published in June 2021⁸ that 360,000 who lost jobs when the pandemic struck are still out of work. A further 2.4 million people on Universal Credit are still looking for work, with four job-seeking claimants for every vacancy. Under 25s were five times more likely to lose their job in the first lockdown than the rest of the working population. In total, more than 200,000 young people have been out of work for six months or more.

The number of children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals (FSM) has also increased substantially, from 25,874 children in March 2020 to 30,740 children in February 2021. The most recent report FSM figures from schools for summer vouchers (July 2020) is at 33,429.

The former Children’s Commissioner has estimated that, as a direct result of the pandemic, 300,000 additional children have been pushed into poverty nationally. She has written that COVID-19 has exposed and amplified the existing inequalities which face children “*Those children already facing the worst life chances have felt the greatest burden from the virus and our response to it... Unless we act now, COVID-19 will become an inter-generational crisis, with the impact of the economic fall-out on parents determining the future prospects of their children*”⁷.

⁷ [Children’s Commissioner, 2020](#)

⁸– [Citizens Advice June 2021](#)

1.1 Recent changes:

In May 2021, the board met for a workshop session to review and refresh the workstreams and to consolidate the membership of the board, following the departure of some key members. The board now has a strong membership and confirmed leads for each of the workstreams. The aims of some of the workstreams have been revised to provide a sharper focus on priority areas of work, as set out in this report.

2. Background information

2.1 Measures of child poverty

One of the difficulties in discussing child poverty is that there is not one accepted measure of child poverty. Different people define and measure poverty in different ways.

The government use two main measures, relative poverty and absolute poverty:

- Those who live in relative poverty have a household income of less than 60% of the current UK average - so households whose total earnings are currently less than £17,760 are living in relative poverty. One in five households in the UK have an income below the poverty line after housing costs, and 30% of children live in households below the poverty line after housing costs⁸.
- The government's definition of absolute poverty is not the same as other organisations' definition of absolute poverty. It is not an international poverty line, and it is not defined as being able to afford basic essentials. The government's definition of absolute poverty is those who earn less than 60% of the median income of 2010/11. So, households currently living on less than £13,166 after housing costs are living in absolute poverty.

However, poverty cannot just be measured in terms of household income. Because of this, in Leeds, we take a wider understanding, alongside the statistics. Poverty is about what you possess in comparison to what the society around you has.

2.2 Causes of Child Poverty

"Child poverty is not inevitable. In the past, child poverty levels in the UK have been significantly lower than they are today" ([Child Poverty Action Group](#)). There is a debate around the causes of poverty that tends to blame individuals for their circumstances. Some people point to addiction, worklessness and lack of aspiration as the causes of poverty. People who live in poverty, however, are not to blame for their poverty. Research shows that people who live in poverty do not do anything differently from those who do not live in poverty (Main & Mahony, 2018), they are trying to achieve the same outcomes with less resources, fewer opportunities, and more barriers to success. There is not a simple answer for what causes poverty, instead there are different aspects that often have some interplay between them: "Poverty rarely has a single cause. A range of factors including rising living costs, low pay, lack of work, and inadequate social security benefits together means some people do not have enough resources" (Child Poverty Action Group).

Living Costs

Increasing costs of rent have resulted in poverty rises in northern England and the Midlands (End Child Poverty). Price rises are outpacing wages, putting pressure on low-income households. Many of these are essential costs, such as food, energy and transport. Households on low income tend to be more reliant on public transport, so the increasing costs of buses, trains and coaches is

⁸ [Child Poverty Action Group](#)

restricting the access of people on low incomes to low-priced food, jobs and accessing healthcare and other services. Energy costs and food costs are increasing year on year, with increases in the prices of food and fuel costing the UK's poorest households an extra £130 per year in 2018 ([Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)).

Employment

"The long-term deterioration of the terms of employment for workers in the lowest-paid 20 per cent of the UK labour market has been a major cause of enduring poverty in the UK. Low wages, the high cost of childcare and part-time work all conspire to reduce incomes. Many low-paid jobs offer no opportunities to progress to better work and better wages. Others are insecure, with unpredictable hours and incomes" (Child Poverty Action Group). People who are not working overwhelmingly want to work, but face barriers to employment (Child Poverty Action Group), such as ill-health, childcare and caring responsibilities for family members. In the past, there has been a focus on strengthening the social security system to ensure that those who are in low paid jobs, or who aren't working, are provided with support so that they don't fall into poverty. However, ongoing welfare reforms are contributing to increases in child poverty.

Social Security

"In-work benefits, such as Universal Credit, are currently insufficient to overcome these labour market challenges and keep people out of poverty. In addition, the very high costs of housing and childcare increase families' risk of poverty. It is generally accepted that where people are out of work or don't earn enough money, the social security system should provide a safety net to prevent them falling into poverty. Unfortunately, this is not the case." (Child Poverty Action Group). The Economic Affairs Committee presented [evidence to the Government](#) showing that the five-week wait for the first Universal Credit payment had a damaging impact on adults and children. This wait is the main factor pushing people into deep poverty, entrenching debt and disproportionately harming women and disabled people. Universal Credit has been named as a key factor in causing soaring rent arrears and the increasing use of foodbanks.

A list of suggested actions that could be taken to lift families out of poverty can be found here: [Child Poverty Action Group](#), however ensuring decently paid jobs, providing good, accessible childcare, improving the social security system and having a central focus on tackling child poverty would all help. *"Modest increases in income reduce hardship swiftly and effectively. In 2001, child poverty was 400,000 lower than in 1999 and severe hardship among out-of-work families almost halved – from four in 10 to less than one-quarter in just two years"*(Child Poverty Action Group).

2.3 The Leeds Approach

In 2016, Children & Families started to develop a plan around mitigating the impact of child poverty across Leeds. In 2017/2018, a scrutiny enquiry on child poverty recommended that Children & Families integrated more of a central focus on child poverty. The first Child Poverty Impact Board met in 2018, and Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds was launched in 2019.

The child poverty strategy has been co-created with children, young people, families with direct experience of poverty, third, private and public sector, schools, academics and other organisations.

We know that the feeling of being in poverty, the feeling of being excluded and the feeling of being ashamed can impact a child for the rest of their life. We don't want this in Leeds. So, we are working together, as a city, to reduce the impact of poverty on young people.

This is our moral imperative

There are 7 workstreams which sit under the Child Poverty Impact Board:

1. Readiness for learning and school-aged education
2. Housing and provision
3. Empowering families and safeguarding
4. Financial health and inclusion
5. Transitions and employment
6. Best start for health and wellbeing
7. Green spaces

Our Ambitions

- We will be innovative, together, to break down the barriers that poverty creates.
- We will be brave, together, to revolutionise the way that Leeds works with children, young people and families who live in poverty.
- We will fight, together, to ensure that every child and young person who experiences poverty can thrive.

Thriving has **five fundamental principles**:

- 1) All work needs to be informed by the knowledge of children, young people and parents/carers
- 2) All projects need to work with a wide variety of partners
- 3) The focus is on changing structures, not individuals
- 4) We need to reframe the language and understandings that are used
- 5) Research is incorporated into every project

3.0 Main issues

This section provides an update on each impact workstream, the projects that sit within the impact workstreams and details responses to COVID-19, impact and next steps.

3.1 Financial Health & Inclusion

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every family to be equipped with the support, guidance and opportunities needed to live financially secure and stable lives.*** This workstream is led by Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare Communities and Environments.

The main projects are: Financial health and inclusion support directly to families; Increasing engagement in wider support and guidance to families to support financial health and inclusion; and Ensuring knowledge and understanding of financial health and inclusion issues and support.

3.1 Priority 1: Increasing engagement in financial health and inclusion support directly to families

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

The key areas of activity for priority 1 are the Healthy Holidays programme, the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG) and Free School Meal uptake.

a) Healthy Holidays

Leeds City Council leads the Healthy Holidays programme in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation to provide enriching activities and healthy food to children living in poverty in the city. For 2021, the Department for Education has allocated Leeds City Council over £3.6 for delivery over the Easter, summer and Christmas holiday periods.

A successful Easter programme was delivered (data below) which due to COVID measures was a mixture of face to face, online or offsite provision. Summer provision is now underway with delivery of programmes from approximately 130 providers including schools, community hubs, and third sector organisations. Additional activities including swimming, visits to parks and visitor attractions are also being provided. Healthy and nutritious food is being provided by Catering Leeds, Fareshare, Rethink food, Hamara and Give a Gift.

b) COVID Local Support Grant

In June the Department for Work and Pension announced an extension to the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG) until the end of September 2021, with Leeds City Council receiving £2.67 million. Since December 2020, Leeds City Council has received £7.61 million in total. The remit of the scheme is to provide support for food, fuel and essential items to vulnerable families and individuals. Guidance from the DWP states that a minimum of 80% of the funding should be spent on families with children, and a minimum of 80% on food/fuel. Since the funding was first announced in November 2020 the council has prioritised this spend for supporting children eligible for free school meals over the holiday periods. For the latest funding extension, 100% of the CLSG has been used for free school meals over the summer holidays, with additional funding of circa £520,000 being contributed by the council.

c) Free School Meals

The Health and Wellbeing Service have worked with the Council Tax and Benefits Service to support schools and communicate information relating to FSM and COVID-19. A new E-learning training course has been developed to support schools and replace the face-to-face training course previously offered. Full guidance on free school meals during the coronavirus outbreak is available [here](#).

Outcomes and outputs

a) Healthy Holidays

In Leeds Easter provision (some face to face, some direct delivery/ online) was delivered through:

- 31 third sector groups
- 26 school partnerships (representing 43 schools)
- 10 community hubs

In total, third sector organisations, schools and LCC community hubs reached:

- 2,513 children through face-to-face clubs
- 6,407 children through remote delivery
- 63,020 portions of food were provided
- 2,907 adults supported through schools and hubs

Following on from a successful Easter programme, 133 schools, third sector organisations, Breeze, Youth Service and council community hubs and libraries have received, through a bidding process, funding to run fun and free activities with a meal over the summer for Free School Meal eligible children and young people. This comprises 45 school partnerships, 50 third sector organisations, 27 community hubs and libraries, 5 Breeze camps, and 6 youth service programmes. Provisions will be supported to adapt flexibly to any outbreaks.

Additional activities and support have been embedded into the summer programme, with training on activities and food provided. A free swimming offer has also been created for eligible children to access swimming lessons. Sessions at Lotherton Hall and Temple Newsam are also provided.

Types of activities include indoor and outdoor sports, arts and crafts, music, trips away, cooking, cycling, dance, drama and yoga.

Key partners include Leeds Community Foundation, FareShare, Rethink, Catering Leeds, Hamara, Give a Gift, Streetgames, LS14 Trust, Breeze, Youth Service, Parks and Countrysides, Active Leeds, and a variety of other council and non-council partners.

Feedback from school provisions (Easter):

"During the last year COVID 19 had impacted on families in numerous ways. Families have lost income and have found this pandemic very challenging. It was good to see pupils during their break/ lunchtimes just sitting and talking to each other which for me and the team was very powerful, to start to engage with their friendship groups again. One parent e-mailed to say 'thank you for everything we have given her child, the opportunity to smile again and look forward to getting back to some normality. She came home with a smile on her face, which has not been obvious for a long, long time:'"

"Forty-seven per cent of our school community are entitled to free school meals, and many of these families experience food poverty on a regular basis. We have had a significant number of families say what a difference the food boxes and activity pack have made. One of our children remarked that they couldn't remember the last time they had a new book and getting the activity pack felt like Christmas."

"One mum who is a single parent with one child, on a debt management plan after fleeing from domestic violence. She is working but has been furloughed and doesn't qualify for any benefits. She is just keeping her head above water and has told that towards the end of each month she often goes without food and her child lives on dried pasta and bread, etc. She told us that the food provided through the Healthy Holidays Scheme was a godsend to her and meant she didn't have to spend any of her own money to provide food for herself and her child throughout the 2 week period of the Easter holidays. She was extremely grateful for this help. She also said that she and her child spent quality time together using the play equipment and games provided."

b) COVID Local Support Grant

Children and young people eligible for free school meals, living in low-income families or in families with no recourse to public have received support equivalent to £15 per week over the following holiday periods;

Holiday	Number of children and young people
Christmas (two weeks)	32,389
February (one week)	34,432
Easter (two weeks)	33,564
May (one week)	34,681
Summer (six weeks)	35,753

The following feedback and quotes have been collected from schools:

- *"I have to say this has been easy for schools and an amazing service. Well done!!!!"*
- *"Thank you all for your hard work on this. We really appreciate your efforts in making sure our families have enough food for over the Christmas break."*
- *"From what I have heard so far, parents are pleased with the contents of the hampers. Personally, I think it's been a really good system. Slightly frantic getting info to and from parents but much better than the voucher system from last lockdown so thank you! Everyone will be happy and fed!"*

- *"Thank you. Just heard from the family that they have received them and are extremely grateful!"*

The scheme also provided opportunities to link families into wider support networks. For example, a single parent on Employment Support Allowance was found to be receiving the lowest payment. The client emailed the school and additional support was provided, in this case providing a food hamper and referring the parent to the Emergency Support Network, so that they can be linked to ongoing support through third sector organisations.

Approximately 70% of the CLSG has been used to support children and young people with support over the holiday periods, with the remaining funding used to provide:

- Vouchers for food, fuel and essential items directly to low-income families with children under the age of 4 and care leavers.
- Assistance towards the cost of fuel to families and individuals claiming Council Tax Support.
- Support to third sector organisations and charities who support vulnerable families and individuals for food and essential items through the Leeds Food Aid Network and Leeds Baby Bank.

c) Free School Meals

There has been an accelerated increase in the number of FSM claims since March 2020. The number of FSM awards in March 2020 was 25,874 and by July 2020 was 28,378. A recent update from the Council Tax and Benefits service has demonstrated a continued increase, as of July 2021 the current number of FSM awards is at 33,429, which includes 177 asylum seekers.

Of those pupils entitled to a free school meal (FSM) at the January 2020 census, 78.5% took up the offer of the meal itself from their school, and therefore 21.5% missed out. Take-up is consistently slightly higher in primary schools than in secondary schools. Data is regularly collected to monitor take-up and the accelerated increase in FSM claims. The Health and Wellbeing team works closely with schools to encourage take-up.

Next steps

In terms of Healthy Holidays, monitoring and evaluation of the summer programme will be undertaken and will feed into the planning for the Christmas provision.

The Department for Work and Pensions have indicated that there will be no further extension to the CLSG after 30th September. As the numbers of children eligible for free school meals continue to increase, we will continue to monitor these figures closely and work with schools to encourage uptake of the benefit.

A key concern is that many of the current support schemes for families will end in September including CLSG, self-isolation payments, furlough and significantly the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit payments. Many of these schemes have provided vital support to families who were struggling on low incomes prior to the pandemic. The board will make this a key priority through the autumn including the potential for additional meetings to focus on it.

3.2 Priority 2: Increasing engagement in wider support and guidance to families to support financial health and inclusion

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID:

In terms of engagement in wider support and guidance, current focus is on the Uniform Re-use scheme and gambling-related harm work. Work to address digital exclusion and link families to credit union is being developed (see next steps section).

a) Uniform scheme

Leeds City Council and Leeds Community Foundation have funded Zero Waste Leeds (ZWL) to bring a co-ordinated uniform reuse scheme to the city. The aim of the scheme is to reduce the number of uniforms sent to waste, reduce the stigma of wearing second-hand clothing and tackling poverty through encouraging more families to reuse and donate rather than to feel pressured to buy new uniform every term.

Phase one of the project (2019-20), saw ZWL create publicly available resources for uniform reuse in the city; the School Uniform Exchange Facebook page, the digital inspiration guide to setting up or getting involved in uniform reuse schemes and the digital map of existing schemes (both independent and school-led) in the city.

Phase two of the project focused on launching 'The Big Leeds School Uniform Giveaway', a bi-annual city-wide event consisting of pop-up shops run by community groups and schemes. In addition, a tailored Leeds School Uniform Exchange web platform with improved access and search facilities has also been launched, allowing the scheme to work towards becoming more user-led.

b) Gambling Related Harm

Recent analysis of the 2019/20 Leeds "My Health, My School" survey found that 26% of secondary-aged pupils had taken part in gambling activity, in comparison, 11% had smoked a cigarette, 7% had tried illegal drugs and 52% had tried alcohol. Of the secondary-aged pupils that had gambled, 59% did so with their parent/carer's knowledge. The most popular types of gambling were bingo (21%), skin betting (19%) and betting on sporting events (18%). The findings are in line with the findings of the 2018/19 results which were the impetus to initiate work to ensure schools, children and parents are aware of the issues surrounding underage gambling, particularly online, and the links to harmful behaviours. Although work with schools has slowed due to the focus on COVID-19, work has been progressing; most recently two new webpages on gambling issues have been added to the Leeds MindMate website, one for ['17 or under'](#) and another for ['18 and over'](#), both of which have been co-produced with young people.

Outcomes and outputs

a) Uniform Scheme

A total of 104 unique uniform exchanges are now operating throughout the city, and The Leeds School Uniform Facebook group has over 1,700 members.

Although 'The Big Leeds School Uniform Giveaway' suffered significant delays and barriers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are now 12 pop-up shops in locations across the city confirmed for summer 2021, with further shops and events pending. As well as providing good quality, free school uniform, the shops will provide a highly visible opportunity to promote the scheme and its aims to the public. The details of these events are available publicly online and have also been shared with cross-council colleagues and financial inclusion partners, particularly those supporting children and low-income families.

The new dedicated website platform was launched in March 2021 and recorded 1,623 views. This increased significantly to 5,141 recorded views in July 2021. The new website platform has also allowed for further evaluation and analysis of the digital presence of the project; since 21st June,

78% of views have been new visitors to the page, and 22% returning. In addition, approximately 130 people have been directed from the Leeds.gov.uk website.

b) Gambling Related Harm

Through working with the Voice, Influence and Change Team and the Leeds Safeguarding and Children Partnership, two focus groups and surveys of young people have been undertaken to inform this work. In total, 11 young people attended the focus groups and 130 responses have been gathered from the online surveys. One of the messages agreed by young people was that we should be talking about risks of gambling and gambling as part of gaming e.g. financial or mental health impacts, to counter-balance the 'fun' side. Quotes from young people as part of the "Youth Voice" online survey:

- *"Most of the time you spend a lot of money and don't get anywhere near what you spend back. Stats show only 13.5% of gamblers ever win. It is also highly addictive."*
- *"I think it's so normalised in today's age, especially amongst young lads who aren't exactly as open about their mental health, it's an escape. Thinking twice, knowing the risks ... it needs to be less normalised, and people need to learn from a younger age the effects of gambling and they need to see video docs just how people were taught about drugs and bullying."*
- *"Show shocking statistics about how gambling will affect people. Don't sugar-coat it because if you do, they might not take it seriously."*
- *"More highlighting of what gambling companies do to get you hooked - free daily giveaways and stuff like that."*

Next steps

- Work will continue to develop the Uniform Re-use scheme across the city, Zero Waste Leeds have received further funding from the council for phase 3 of the project. This will include further expansion of the existing project as well as employment of a part-time coordinator for sustainability and management of the project. Discussions are also taking place to look at extending this provision to back-packs and school essentials.
- In terms of the gambling-related harm work, the insight gathered over recent months will be used to inform future communications planning and training packages during 2021, with the aim being to be able to better engage schools once they return in September 2021.
- Other areas of focus for priority two are digital inclusion and the services of Leeds Credit Union for children, young people and families. The council is currently exploring further options for new initiatives which could provide digital devices for those in need. This will involve working with teams across departments, as well as alongside external partners such as Leeds Credit Union, Leeds Community Foundation and Zero Waste Leeds.

3.3 Priority 3: Ensuring knowledge and understanding of financial health and inclusion issues and support

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID:

This is a new priority with the aim being to ensure that the council and partner services supporting families have a good understanding of financial health and inclusion issues and the wider support services available. Further details on how this priority will be addressed are set out in the next steps section.

Outcomes and outputs

As this is a new priority the outcomes and outputs will be reported in the next reporting cycle.

Next steps

Work for this priority over the coming months will include:

- Establishing a clear and concise narrative using poverty statistics, data and local evidence.
- Working with colleagues in children's services to develop training and engagement material to promote routes to support for financial health and inclusion.

4 **Best Start for Health & Wellbeing**

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every Leeds baby from conception to age two to have the best start in life, especially those who are the most vulnerable.*** This workstream is led by Kathryn Ingold, the Chief Officer - Public Health.

4.1 Priority 1 Preparation for Birth and Beyond (PBB)

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

Preparation for Birth and Beyond courses have been offered virtually since September 2020. The courses are delivered by a multi-agency team including staff from the 0 – 19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service, children's centre staff and maternity staff. The course is delivered virtually between 5 and 7pm. Eighteen groups (4 sessions for each group) have been delivered since September, with 110 mothers and 39 fathers/partners attending. The courses have recently been increased to 5 sessions, including one on post-natal care.

Providers are currently meeting demand for the Preparation for Birth and Beyond courses, by running back-to-back courses. In addition, requests to attend the course have increased, indicating that communication from midwives to families about the offer is improving.

We have reflected on learning from COVID and feedback from parents. Plans are in place for face-to-face training to return. These sessions will be offered in areas with the highest level of need, targeting priority areas. Virtual sessions will remain available for those who can confidently and easily access them. For those who cannot access virtual sessions due to lack of a device – a loaning service is available to ensure accessibility for all.

Outcomes and outputs

The virtual sessions, delivered between 5 and 7pm, have been evaluated. Feedback has been positive. One observation is that more fathers are attending when compared to daytime face-to-face sessions. In addition, those that attend are present at more sessions. The current course is being attended by 12 mothers and 9 fathers/partners. It is planned to continue the early evening sessions to enable to opportunity for more partners/fathers to attend.

Session 3 PBB feedback (May cohort)

What have you done to strengthen your baby's brain connections?

"I did feel silly, but I and partner have spent more time talking to my baby and now I'm getting used to it we really like doing it."

"We talk more to baby, but we noticed baby liked it when I sat in the sunshine in the warm weather."

"We have been talking and reading to baby."

"We sing to baby."

"Dad has started talking to baby as he wants baby to recognise him, he didn't do it before."

"I like stroking my bump and can feel baby is happy."

One thing that you have learnt that you did not know before?

"I did not know about the stages of labour; it was really helpful to know."

"About the benefits of breastfeeding."

"Breastfeeding and safe sleep has been really important to know about."

Five dads asked for breastfeeding for dads' leaflet and asked questions about how they can support breastfeeding.

Is there anything that you learnt that you would do with baby?

"What a breastfeeding latch looks like and how I can find video support to help positioning and attachment."

"I will try breastfeeding the information has been helpful as I was worried about it."

"Transition stage of labour."

"Labour stages were so important to know about I think I know what will happen now."

"All of the information has been really helpful."

Next steps

An annual timetable is currently being developed including a blended offer so that parents have the choice of attending either virtual or face-to-face courses.

Staff from the Infant Mental Health Service are providing additional training for practitioners who deliver PBB to increase their confidence in facilitating face-to-face courses.

4.2 Priority 2 Baby Buddy App

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

Baby Buddy is an app that is free to use. It provides evidence-based support and information which is accessible at any time. Currently, approximately 30% of pregnant women/parents in Leeds use the app. In the early stages of COVID-19 the app was updated to reflect relevant guidance and has continued to do so throughout the pandemic, providing a central point of evidence-based information for users 24/7.

Midwives and 0-19 practitioners share the app when doing home visits and contacts, and many also use the films to support content during the contact. During virtual contacts and PBB sessions the app is also discussed and demonstrated.

During the most recent PBB and Baby Buddy forum (June) the CEO of Best Beginnings, the company who developed the app, attended to give an update to practitioners which was well received and valued.

Additional capacity is required to promote the app in order to support more pregnant increase uptake.

Outcomes and outputs

Data from the last quarter shows that there were 845 users, the majority being mothers aged 20-35 with the highest proportion from East (Killingbeck and Seacroft, Crossgates) and South (Middleton, Morley) Leeds.

The most frequently accessed tools are the films which cover all areas of pregnancy, feeding and parenting.

Feedback from practitioner delivering virtual PBB – *“Baby buddy is an excellent resource and is well received by parents. We always use and signpost to the ‘understanding your baby’ films as a really helpful source of understanding about how parents can relate and understand their baby once they are born – it also helps them to understand why this is important during pregnancy and it seems to put the pieces together for them when we talk about brain development in the session.”*

A recent national study (2020) exploring experiences, attitudes, and needs of users of a pregnancy and parenting app (Baby Buddy) during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that 97.0% of respondents reported that Baby Buddy was currently helping them, with many commenting that its role was even more important given the lack of face-to-face support from health care and parenting organisations.

Next steps

Baby Buddy are launching version 2.0 in summer 2021. This version will cover from pregnancy to 1 year (currently is pregnancy to 6 months). This has potential to be more beneficial for parents and families extending it to a timeframe/age where services are routinely less involved.

Leeds practitioners and parents have been offered the opportunity to be involved with the beta testing phase of Baby Buddy 2.0. Once this is launched additional promotional activity will be required to help people navigate the changes and opportunities available in the new app.

4.3 Priority 3 Economic wellbeing pathway

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

The 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service has reviewed and updated the economic wellbeing pathway and uploaded onto the internal intranet to make it easier for practitioners to access. The pathway describes how the 0-19 PHINS and Early Start practitioners will support families to achieve economic wellbeing. This includes support to families to:

- Maximise income
- Manage debt
- Access support services
- Reduce fuel bills
- Develop financial literacy
- Access education and work

The pathway includes links to a huge range of support that practitioners can signpost to.

At the request of the commissioner the service has undertaken an audit to identify the number and nature of referrals made as a result of the service using this pathway.

In addition to the economic wellbeing pathway, additional COVID funding has been provided from LCC Public Health to pay for a COVID-19 Champion LCH 0-19 services. The post holder worked as part of the Clinical Triage Team offering more specialist advice and guidance on COVID-19 management to the wider service and provided telephone support to struggling families. The post holder also followed up requests from colleagues to ensure children and families identified during 0-19 service mandated and targeted contacts had the information and practical support they needed eg. provision of food, medicine, emotional health support or access to funding.

Outcomes and outputs

Cycle one of the audit of the Economic Health and Wellbeing pathway highlighted that around a third of expected referrals were not made. As a result, the pathway was updated and made more accessible. The audit was then repeated and 100% of expected referrals were seen.

The pathway highlighted families living in poor quality of housing in the city which was felt to be getting worse and impacting on health. The lack of council housing available make it a challenge supporting families.

O-19 PHINS service reported the following outputs delivered by the COVID co-ordinator:

- Co-ordinated, updated and promoted a valuable directory for the citywide support of families.
- Supported families with issues with regards to housing, accessing food support and directing to financial support.
- Provided listening and advice to families struggling with life and difficult circumstances.
- Distributed 300 food vouchers to those families most in need.

Next steps

The 0-19 service plan to provide all staff with training on the economic wellbeing pathway and repeat the referral audit over the coming 12 months.

The system for reporting activity delivered to promote economic wellbeing is being reviewed to ensure that information recorded is correctly coded.

5.0 Housing & Provision

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want to support every family and young person living in social housing in Leeds to achieve a sustainable tenancy***

This workstream is led by Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing, Resources and Housing.

5.1 Priority 1 – Joint Working Between Housing and Children’s Social Work Teams to Support Families in Council Tenancies

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

Initial meetings have been held between Housing Management, Leeds Housing Options and Children’s Services to identify opportunities for greater connection. To date, Housing’s engagement with Children’s Services has in the main been via Leeds Housing Options. Moving forward, a manager from Housing Management will be attending the Housing Working Group to identify opportunities for strengthening connections and wrap-around support for families in council tenancies – this will include connecting local housing and social work teams, identifying single point of access for practitioners to refer cases where a housing intervention is needed for a family, perhaps triaging cases and allocating to a relevant local team.

Outcomes and outputs – to include data and case studies and focus on equality and diversity when reporting

New priority – no data or case studies at this point. Success will be measured by evidence of increased collaboration in relation to particular cases. Case studies to be included in next report.

Next steps

Progress joint work between Housing Management, Leeds Housing Options and Children’s Services to identify key priorities, strengthen collaboration and connect local teams to ensure a more seamless approach.

5.2 Priority 2 – Refreshing the Rehousing Pathway for Care Leavers

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

As with priority 1, initial meetings have been held to identify opportunities for greater connection. Moving forward, Housing Management will be in attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure closer working, consistent approach to wrap around support of care leavers in new council tenancies.

Outcomes and outputs

New priority – no data or case studies at this point. Success will be measured by evidence of increased collaboration in relation to particular cases. Case studies to be included in next report.

Next steps

As with priority 1, make progress with the joint work to identify key priorities, strengthen collaboration and connect local teams.

5.3 Priority 3 – Supporting Families in Council Tenancies to Maximise their Income

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

During the pandemic our officers have noted the following trends:

- We have continued to support tenants to claim UC, although we have seen smaller numbers of new UC claimants than earlier in the pandemic. We have also seen an increase in 'advice' calls due to many tenants using the benefits system for the first-time following job losses during the pandemic. This has resulted in us supporting more tenants with New Style JSA/ESA, as many of these tenants meet the criteria for the new style legacy benefits.
- There has also been an increase in requests for support where debt is an issue, an increase in mental health issues reported and in children struggling without their normal routine and support systems, especially children in need who are vulnerable. We have sought to respond to these issues, making referrals for support where appropriate.
- We have made more referrals to external partners such as Green Doctor, Foodbanks and with Smallwood Trust, who provide grants for young families and DV victims.

Outcomes and outputs

April 2020 – March 2021 – we supported 5947 households of which 1929 households were with children – securing £4.11 m additional income of which £1.14m was for households with children

April 2021 – June 2021 – we supported 1222 households of which 415 were households with children – securing £493k additional income of which £140k was for households with children

Case studies

Case study 1 – Ms A – single parent with 6 children

The case was referred by the Housing Officer due to high rent arrears. Our Housing Officer Income (HOI) contacted Ms A who advised that 2 of her children had recently returned following a spell living with their father. Our HOI identified that since their return, the children had not been added to the UC claim, meaning that the tenant's UC claim was around £500 short each month.

Our HOI assisted with declaring all 6 children within UC claim, which increased the child element significantly and was able to obtain a backdated payment of child element of approximately £1100, due to the family's vulnerabilities and how the shortfall had made it difficult to feed the family.

Our HOI applied for DHP which was refused, as Ms A did not meet the criteria. Our HOI then completed a budgeting exercise with Ms A and some areas of expenditure were highlighted as having room for reduction in the medium term. Our HOI made an additional referral to Smallwood Trust who work mainly with young families and victims of DV. The Trust were able to award a one-off grant for £500 to assist with the reduction of rent arrears. The reduced rent arrears and additional child element has now made it possible for tenant to set up an affordable repayment arrangement with the Housing Office and the arrears are reducing.

Case study 2 – Mr and Mrs B – couple with 3 children

Mr and Mrs B were referred by their Housing Officer as had fallen into rent arrears. Our HOI contacted Mr and Mrs B, who advised that they were struggling with 'little money'. Our HOI immediately made a referral to the local foodbank for assistance.

As English is not tenants' first language it made some of the conversation difficult, however our HOI managed to access their UC account and realised that there had been an error in the setting up of their UC claim. Mr and Mrs B had provided details of their children, but they had put the details in the wrong section. This meant that since the start of UC claim no child element was being received and incorrect housing costs were being paid. This had been ongoing for 3 months.

We used our contacts with the DWP and in conjunction with the DWP's Social Justice Team, arranged for an interpreter to contact the family, who amended the details for them whilst explaining what they were doing, then escalated the case to a decision maker at UC with a request to backdate the missing child element and housing cost underpayments. By the Monday of the following week a backdated payment had been made into the tenant's bank account for nearly £2000 and ongoing UC put into payment at the correct rate.

Mr and Mrs B's rent account is now clear, with a managed payment in place at tenant's request.

Next steps

DWP Co-Location Programme

- We are working with the DWP to relaunch late September/October, and this will support links between the 7 Job Centre Plus sites across Leeds and LCC local area housing offices. The purpose is for LCC and DWP to work more closely together, identifying issues that may prevent UC claims being paid on time, and assisting each other to solve the issues when raised for the benefit of our tenants.

£20pw Benefit Uplift due to COVID

- It was announced in March 2021's budget that the uplift would continue for a further 6 months. If this ends in October 2021 many of our tenants and their families are likely to be impacted by £20pw/£87pcm. We will look at ways in which we can assist those families by revisiting and completing fresh benefit health checks and assessing any other avenues of support available at the time.

6.0 Employment & Transitions

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every young person and family to have the relevant skills and experience to access and secure well paid employment.*** This workstream is led by Martyn Long, Head of Service Employment and Skills

6.1 Priority 1 - Raise awareness for access to employability and skills provision to support people into work and/ or improve their skills.

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

The Employment and Skills service offers a wide range of targeted employment support programmes and employer-led sector specific interventions alongside the universal information, advice and guidance offer available from Jobshops in Community Hubs. In June, pre-bookable slots of 45 mins were made available at Jobshops in Armley, City Centre, Compton, Deacon House, Dewsbury Road, Hunslet and Reginald Centre, this runs alongside the virtual/remote offer.

Employment and Skills is continuing to act as a "Kickstart Gateway", to help provide placements for young people who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. The programme will provide funding to employers to offer 6-month placements for eligible businesses. Three hundred and sixty placements have been approved from January to date, with 107 placements filled.

The service also delivers and commissions adult learning (post 19) in community settings to re-engage local residents in learning each year. This provision is targeted to the 20% most deprived SOAs with a focus on Priority Neighbourhoods. This includes Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) provision designed for parents (or other carers of children) with English and Maths needs, or is for families where English is not the primary language. Often these courses are linked to schools or children's centres, and 176 parents attended a FEML course during the 2020/21 academic year.

Over the last 12 months, new methods of delivery were developed to include blended learning e.g. digital delivery through mobile phones coupled with home-learning options, remote delivery options to include outdoor learning and the return to face-to-face learning when restrictions permitted with reworked delivery spaces to ensure COVID security. In addition, the service also developed home learning resource packs with a flexible approach to increase pastoral support with a particular focus on vulnerable learners and to include learners who are unable to access online learning.

Youth Engagement Project @ Leeds Arts Gallery. Two information sessions were held on 7th and 14th June, as a result of which 10 young people have started a 6-week pilot volunteer programme. These young people will build employability skills, develop and host creative programmes for visitors and explore employment and training pathways within the arts sector. In addition, young people will have the opportunity to complete an arts award. Of the 10 young people involved in the programme 8 are care leavers or children looked after.

Stronger Families aims to provide early help to families with a dependent child who have multiple barriers in terms of progression into work or accessing education or training to develop their skills. There are 11 partners who employ key workers for Leeds and Bradford and six partners who deliver tailored support to participants in the areas of debt, mental health wellbeing support, specialist IAG and employment support and advice and parenting support.

Outcomes and outputs

Parents can access a range of employment support services and data collected across Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) recorded a total of 1,753 new customers accessing the services, of whom 66% are from the 20% most deprived SOA's in the city. Twenty-four per cent had a child under 16 years of age and 12% were lone parents. While this information is requested of service users, a

number prefer not to provide this information. Supporting 9 children looked after and 88 care leavers, of whom 33 have been supported into positive education or employment outcomes including 6 internships with the Civil Service.

April – June 2021	No. of residents supported	Residents supported with a child under 16 yrs		Lone supported Parents	
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Jobshops	629	166	26%	86	14%
Employment Hub	1,124	263	23%	133	12%
Adult Learning	2,534	271	11%	88	3%

Recruitment activity has continued to take place during the pandemic and a total of 885 people were supported into work by the service in the period April – June 2021, of whom 45% are from the top 20% most deprived SOA's of the city. Jobs were secured across all sectors with the largest numbers in health and care, food retail, logistics, distribution, and transport, digital and technology.

In the academic year 2020/21, 2,534 adults started on a community based delivered or an online skills course through the Adult Learning Programme, of whom 55% of learners are from the top 20% most deprived SOAs in the city. Delivery of the 2020/21 programme commenced in September with 16 commissioned providers delivering online courses with an increased focus on digital skills and work focused courses. Since the start of the new academic year, September 2020, 824 courses have been advertised on the Leeds Adult Learning website.

CASE STUDY: An 18-year-old care leaver accessed support through the Employment Hub. Through extensive discussion, skill assessments and also looking at current opportunities raised his aspirations and identified elderly care roles as a job that he was interested in. Through CV, interview preparation and building confidence, secured and accepted a role starting in mid-August at a care home. Throughout the process of applying for jobs he had accommodation issues and has been living in temporary accommodation throughout this period which has caused considerable distress after having steady accommodation with foster carers for many years. He is now looking forward to the future of starting his new job, earning a wage and securing steady private accommodation with his girlfriend.

The Stronger Families programme has supported 1592 parents, of whom 66% have moved to a positive outcome. Two hundred and ninety-four gained employment, 533 parents engaged with education and training and 119 are activity searching for work.

"I have a much better relationship with my children now I'm able to spend more time with them and enjoy the time with them. I started distance learning I never thought I could do a course but {my Keyworker} believed in me and that meant a lot I have never had that before. My life has changed so much whatever I needed {my Keyworker} was there whatever problems I had are gone. I lost my mum quite young and never got to experience that motherly figure that just had your back. [My Keyworker} was like the mum I never got to have and I will always be eternally grateful and thankful for everything. I couldn't recommend the stronger family's program enough."

Next steps

Employment and Skills are waiting on two further submissions for funding; the first through LCR WYCA "Gainshare" will allow us to support any residents not currently eligible through ESIF programmes. This will include those on zero-hour contracts classed as employed, those at risk of redundancy and those in low paid, insecure jobs. The second is a further bid to ESIF to support

young residents (15-24) who are either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Currently there are two ESIF programmes that are due to finish in the next few months that are supporting these residents. An update is expected imminently on both submissions.

Leeds One Workforce Narrowing Inequalities Group (LOWNI) are working towards a model to engage, recruit and develop a health and care workforce from local communities with an event to focus on the Priority Neighbourhoods within the South of the City in September.

The Retail and Hospitality Sector are developing a programme with employers, Leeds City College and The Engine Room, to provide taster sessions and upskilling support for participants in order to allow them to access opportunities in the sector. The initial programme is set to be delivered in August 2021, with a one-week programme covering key skills in hospitality.

Red Kite View, the new children and young person's mental health unit in Armley, will be recruiting from July to end of September. A virtual jobs fair will take place on the 13th for the Health Support Worker and Assistant Support Worker role.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Jobs Fair is planned for 28th July at Leeds Market. Support is being provided by the service to encourage businesses to sign up and attend. The Employment Hub will also be represented to ensure residents are aware of the offer available for jobseekers.

Working group developed to identify education, employment and training opportunities from the Child Friendly Leeds business ambassador network. The ambition is to connect the identified opportunities with the services who are supporting children looked after, care leavers and NEET young people.

6.2 Priority 2 - Connecting parents / carers to Family Learning provision to enhance children's learning through activities, techniques and games delivered in schools

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

Many schools have been unable to accommodate face-to-face teaching and have been using community rooms for other purposes such as break-out rooms, isolation rooms and counselling support. There has also been the added pressure of staff being asked to cover lessons at short notice due to isolation procedures, further impacting delivery. Other barriers have included anxiety about COVID testing, ventilation in classrooms, mask wearing and a lack of access to ICT equipment at home. However, this has given us the opportunity to adapt delivery by using a blended approach to flex learning. Examples of this are:

- Learning in the community – Going on a Bear Hunt was a project delivered in partnership with Public Health and ran over April and May in LS12, with a target to reach 50 learners. The course was delivered over Google Classroom with tutors keeping in touch with learners over the phone and email. Learners made a story sack based on the book and filled it with fun, new activities each week to use with their children. Resources were either posted or collected from the local children's centre each week.

Remote learning was delivered using Google Classroom, electronic or paper work-packs depending on need, with 1-1 tutorial support provided. Delivery included:

- Phonics: Introduction to Phonics, Instrumental Sounds, Body Percussion and Rhyme & Rhyme
- Supporting Children's Learning: Games, Book Activities and Early Years
- Homework Support: English and Maths
- Learning Outdoors: Spring, Summer and Wildlife on your Doorstep
- Treasure Books
- School Transition (aimed at Year 6 pupils)

In addition to this, classroom delivery started again recently at Seacroft Grange School. Delivery included: Treasure Books (Going on a Bear Hunt – English focus, which ran from April to June), (Very Hungry Caterpillar – maths focus, which ran from June to present).

Outcomes and outputs

- Internal FEML provision – over this period, 53 learners enrolled on courses (69 enrolments). There was a retention rate of 98.6% and 100% of these learners achieved the objectives of the course.
- 35% of the parents enrolled on courses were from BAME communities and 100% of them achieved the outcome of the course.
- 17% of parents enrolled declared a learning disability, with 100% of them achieving the learning outcomes.
- 100% of parents were from the top 20% SOA or above.
- Learning in the Community – Going on a Bear Hunt: Target – 50, achieved – 75 (24 Adults, 51 Children).

Next steps

- Lockdown has had a huge impact on children, not just in terms of academic progress, but a large number of pre-school children have not developed the basic skills they need to start school. Development work is currently underway to ensure the delivery of learning which will support children to develop these skills alongside the academic learning such as phonics and maths.
- Work is underway to strengthen existing relationships with localities' teams. This will help to ensure that we are delivering targeted learning in the right areas.
- Term one of next year's delivery will focus on taster sessions in order to engage with as many families as possible, with a full curriculum review underway over the summer and in term 1. This will ensure the curriculum remains relevant and takes account of the challenges of the previous 16 months.
- Work is underway to develop a social media presence for Family Learning, which will form part of a wider development plan for this area of work, to ensure we are targeting the families who are most in need.

6.3 Priority 3 - Ensuring career information, advice and guidance supports young people to move into Education, Employment or Training (EET) from school

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

- A Leeds careers network for Careers Leads in Leeds which meets termly. The session discusses good practice, share data, information and key messages.
- Start to Apply and Apply in Leeds – a platform to find out about careers opportunities in Leeds and a single way of applying to more than one destination.
- On-going work to develop provision for the growing numbers of 16+ learners to ensure there are good quality learning places for all pupils in this age group.
- Leeds City College along with Leeds Pathways Support Team work with schools and Learning Providers in Leeds to identify the most vulnerable year 11 learners early in the calendar year. This annual piece of work is named 'The moving On Project': young people are identified, and a signposting event takes place where the young people can be supported into the most appropriate learning for them. This last two years the event has been virtual: providers such as Progressions pitch their offer to schools; Learning Curve specialise in learning for those young people who want to progress into the uniformed services. Focussing on fitness and basic skills young people will develop in the areas the army will be looking for as an example. Schools will see this presentation and decide which

- of their students would fit this avenue rather than a mainstream college pursuing 'A' levels.
- The Virtual School partnership with Leeds City College (Children Looked After Progression Champion) providing a range of advice, guidance, planning and transition support to looked after children moving into Leeds City College learning Pathways.
- Positive outcomes from a small pilot of a partnership with the Pathways team and the Employment and Skills Hub looking at looked after children at risk of becoming NEET.
- Virtual School on-line learning to support June's social care practice theme Pathway Planning <https://youtu.be/JGxemvGsu1k>
- Virtual School/Go Higher West Yorkshire partnership - "Care to Go Higher" training delivered to 10 foster carers, 5 personal advisers and 3 residential practitioners supporting young people with advice and guidance about pathways into higher education, breaking down barriers and myths and increasing awareness of the support available to care leavers in higher education.
- Virtual School Consultant for Previously Looked After Children support, training and advice to kinship and SGO services.
- Virtual School links with third sector/voluntary providers providing employability skills, mentoring etc.
- Employability activities to schools include virtual mock interviews (John Smeaton Academy and Leeds East) a virtual apprenticeship presentation at Lawnswood school and a careers fair supported by employers at Woodkirk Academy.
- CEIAG (careers education information, advice and guidance) network event for careers practitioners across the city – agenda items included an update on T Levels, the revised CDI framework and a presentation by colleagues in Children and Families Services about sustained destinations.
- Three editions of the CEIAG newsletter have been published. The June edition was dedicated to the support available for NEET young people.

Outcomes and outputs

A pilot was launched in April 2021 which is delivering, monitoring and evaluating IAG support for an 'at risk' identified children looked after (CLA) cohort. There are 13 young people who have been referred into the project, they have been identified via the Virtual School and are all in year 11. Of the 13 young people identified, 7 are being supported by the Employment Hub service and 6 supported by the Pathways Team. Evaluations and outcomes from the project are due to be collected and summarised in September 2021.

An updated version of the Start in Leeds careers guidance platform has been launched – the site currently has 41,593 registered users with 20,713 students actively using the platform.



	Deprivation Rank	Young People who are NEET ^{1 2}		Young People whose status is 'not known' ^{1 2}	
Time Period	IMD 2019	As at 31/03/2021		As at 31/03/2021	
Leeds		395 (2.4%)		854 (5.2%)	
Cluster	1= most deprived; 22= least deprived	No.	%	No.	%
2gether	7	35	2.9%	64	5.3%
Aireborough	19	8	1.1%	24	3.3%
ARM	17	9	0.7%	34	2.6%
Beeston, Cottingley and Middleton	4	22	2.6%	45	5.4%
Bramley	3	24	3.1%	36	4.7%
Brigshaw	14	10	1.8%	45	8.1%
EPOS	22	<5	0.5%	21	2.7%
ESNW	16	5	1.0%	12	2.5%
Garforth	18	<5	0.7%	12	2.9%
Headingley - Kirkstall partnership	10	11	2.1%	18	3.5%
Horsforth	20	5	1.3%	9	2.3%
Inner East	1	49	3.8%	80	6.3%
Inner West (ACES + Farnley)	6	35	4.1%	49	5.7%
J.E.S.S	2	49	4.4%	59	5.2%
Lantern Learning Trust	8	5	2.0%	9	3.6%
Leodis	15	5	1.4%	6	1.6%
Morley	11	16	2.0%	39	4.8%
Otley/Pool/Bramhope	21	8	1.8%	12	2.8%
Pudsey	12	20	2.1%	32	3.3%
Rothwell	13	14	2.1%	38	5.8%
Seacroft Manston	5	43	4.3%	61	6.1%
Templenewsam Halton	9	10	1.7%	32	5.4%

Next steps

- Review annual service offer for schools – apprenticeship presentations, employment brokerage support etc.
- A joint letter with Children and Families Services will be sent to all year 11 parents to provide details of information and support available to Year 11 leavers.
- An online Next Steps event will be uploaded onto Start in Leeds around results time in August and will remain on the site until September. The pages will include current college and 6th form vacancies along with where to go for support and guidance including jobs and apprenticeships.
- Development of a new Leeds Apprenticeship Hub website.
- Early-stage planning for the Leeds Apprenticeship Festival 2022.
- The Virtual School is also in the process of bidding to secure additional funding from the DfE as part of a pilot to strengthen capacity for young people in care and care leavers throughout years 12 and 13 with specific aims of increasing sustained EET pathways and attendance/engagement, increasing the quality and visibility of CEIAG in PEPs and Pathway Plans and ensuring secure EET transitions when young people leave care, reach the end of year 13 and beyond.

7 Empowering Families & Safeguarding

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want to change the structure around social care to better support children, young people and families living in poverty.*** This workstream is led by Farrah Khan, Head of Service / Principal Social Worker, Children and Families Service.

7.1 Priority 1 – Connecting services to better support families

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

The Families First team and 3 Early Help Hubs have been working with clusters, schools, health, third sector around supporting families and recognising indicators of poverty.

The hubs are a responsive service, outcoming referrals for support within a 24-hour period to ensure that support and advice is timely.

They work closely working with the welfare support team, assisted through the DfE PIP Grant. Multi-disciplinary teams benefit from working together within the hubs ensuring a “think family work family” approach is applied.

The hubs and Families First team also take lead for the Relationship Matters (RPC) Programme supported through hubs and Early Help more broadly. There are recognised links between parental conflict, worklessness and poverty. The Families First team are also working with the housing team to notify of inappropriate private rented accommodation when working with families. Part of this work also involves working with West Yorkshire Fire Service to ensure that all homes are provided with free fire alarms.

Supported the development of the food network at the outset of the pandemic; good links made with 3rd sector organisations which have continued throughout the pandemic.

Bronze meetings continuing to take place to better join up services and consider emerging trends and needs within localities.

Stronger Families Programme has been extended for a second time as a result of the pandemic due to concerns around unemployment levels and barriers to parents obtaining education, training or employment.

The combination of the strong infrastructure that the local authority brings and the diversity and community engagement that third sector brings to the table are really strong ingredients and the best of both worlds. From the outset we recognised that support needed to be rooted in the local community where there was local knowledge and intelligence to add value to this work. Not only do third sector partners know their communities well, but we know that those who are socially excluded are far more likely to engage with a local agency than someone from the local authority who may be perceived differently.

The wealth of knowledge, resources and skills that the partners bring to the table provides a rich tapestry to support families and improve outcomes. It allows for the sharing of ideas, peer support, sharing knowledge and all the added value of the wider work that the third sector partners are involved in, which can often be a pathway to encourage parents onto the programme. The breadth of the local authority enables the programme to be part of a wider landscape of support in addition to broad expertise regarding workforce development, governance, national policy and also links with the wider employment strategy. This has supported a strong interface with the Supporting Families programme and strong partnerships with DWP colleagues as those relationships were already established prior to the programme. This has enabled a good interface between the two programmes but also a strong pathway into support from DWP.

The Families First Team have worked closely with colleagues at Zero Waste Leeds in driving the development of the Uniform Scheme.

Update from Zero Waste Leeds:

"101 exchanges and counting - and that includes 72 schools.

We've employed a project coordinator, Tracy and she's doing a good job of keeping in touch with the schools and encouraging more exchanges - she's currently looking at LS8, 9,10,11,12,13 and 14 and working out where the gaps (and which schools in those areas do have an exchange) and then we'll target them.

There will be some pop-up shops over the summer: Harehills, Morley, Seacroft, Pudsey and we're looking at taking tables at some Breeze events.

We've got some leaflets promoting our website and the events if you know anyone who would like them - all the HH schemes are taking them and LCC Hubs etc.

We're also working on Together for Sport - a similar idea to the uniform exchange where we will encourage donations of sport kit and get it to the kids who need it so that they can take part in HH activities over the summer and just generally play sport, join clubs etc."

Outcomes and outputs

Stronger Families Impact assessment completed this year found that:

81% of families came from the most deprived areas of Leeds and Bradford.

Stronger families have worked with 863 parents who had issues with debt. The average person referred had £7418 worth of debt. Most debts arise from high energy costs and falling behind on payments, and a few are due to long-term illness and unemployment. Most people are social tenants or renting from private landlords. In total Stronger Families have helped people to deal with £1,595,000 worth of debt.

SF Feedback from a parent:

'There was one week I had no money or food. She didn't know but came with a food parcel and Morrison's voucher. She has supported me in applying for college courses. She has emailed them when we were unsure of deadlines and printed different forms I have needed.

I am starting college in two weeks. I have my daughter every day and twice a week overnight (to be full-time in a staggered way. My keyworker continues to support me with my low mood and prompts me to seek my GP's advice.

I would say to anyone with children who's struggling to get in touch with Stronger Families/ Barca. You have to put the work in but so long as you know they are on your side, it's so much less lonely to have support.

My daughter and I still have a way to go but I couldn't have done this without my keyworker's continued support. My daughter has also had someone to talk to. I hope I can volunteer or work in a job to help people eventually as this support has been our lifeline more than a handful of times.'

Case Study:

xxxx is 16 years old girl arrived to the UK two years ago and went to xxxxx Academy. xxxx missed few years of education due to war in Syria and being misplaced and moving places. She was determined to compensate all the time she lost from her education and worked really hard, but she needed extra support. The tutoring project allowed us to support xxxx in different ways as she

was offered one to one as well as group tutoring to improve her English and prepared her for the college interview where she was accepted, and this was great news for xxxxx and us. xxxxx was shy at the start and slowly she began to ask more questions and become more specific in what she needs to work on such as how to analyse "GCSE selected story" and that reflect on how she become more confidence and having a clear target for her education journey. xxxxx also attended math lessons and she showed a massive improvement steps and she is considering retaking her subjects as she feels she is more capable. The last two years were extremely challenging as xxxxx did not just face and has to learn how to settle in a new environment and learn a new language but also the pandemic brought extra challenges where education was online and school were overwhelmed with all these challenges. We have also assure xxxxx and she knew she can ask the team anything related to her education and we remembered the day where she was expecting phone call from college and it has not happen and then the next day till everything was sorted and she secured a place at xxxxx College from September.

We are pleased for xxxxx and we will follow her journey with the commitment she showed, positive attitude and determination we have no doubt that she will reach her goal.

Her tutor said: "my support as an ESOL tutor and proving EAP (English for Academic purpose) will linguistically prepare them to be the best they can be in their future education and life choices."

Xxxx: "I am very thankful for the support and guidance, it helped me a lot and improve my level."

Next steps

Following discussions with the Health Visiting (HV) team, there are a number of families living in poverty and struggle to access basic safety equipment such as plug socket covers, and cupboard locks.

The process for HVs at present is to refer to the children's centre to see if there is available funding - if there is this can often take a few weeks to process and order needed equipment.

We have agreed with the HV service that we will use Sastipen funding from Public Health to create 'baby safety packs' these will include the above items and a baby gate. These packs would be stored at the HV offices so they can be given to families in need immediately.

The Early Help Hubs are starting a monthly forum to help raise understanding of Early Help and support. Third sector organisations and small community groups will be invited to the forums to share their work. This will also provide a forum to share ideas and collaboration opportunities.

The Families First team are planning "myth busting" sessions over the summer holidays targeting YP who are care leavers around the COVID vaccine. They will also be accompanied by health colleagues to deliver the vaccine locally in Hunslet.

7.2 Priority 2 – tackling inequality in accessing services and support

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

There is a clear disparity in families who are from Black or Minority Ethnic groups between access of EH services and families referred in relation to safeguarding concerns to children's services.

Audit work undertaken by the LSCP showed Leeds followed the national trend of over representation of Black and Minority Ethnic children subject to child protection plans.

A supervision guide around understanding culture and identity has been developed for all team managers to use in supervision to support practitioners in understanding culture and identity to help tackle biases.

Master classes on Culture and Identity have been part of the core training offer for social workers and EH/Family support workers. January's practice theme was Culture and Identity.

The GRT Team are now part of Families First and have worked closely with health colleagues to target the uptake of the COVID vaccine in communities where there can be reluctance to engage with services. This has resulted in a proactive door-to-door offer of the vaccine and increased uptake by 57 adults in Harehills.

Families First Team are hosting a service awareness/welcome to Leeds session for 47 new asylum-seeking families from Afghanistan arriving in Leeds in July and August.

Care experienced parents are also more likely to have a pre-birth assessment when they are pregnant. The work of the Futures Team who work with YP under 25 who have had a child removed from their care highlights the over representation of care experienced parents having a child removed.

Work done through the Voice and Influence team with YP who are both care leavers and parents showed how young people felt judged by practitioners from a range of services for their childhood experiences. At the deputy director's development session in May messages were shared from YP via recorded videos with team managers across children's services.

Outcomes and outputs

We have a survey now translated into the 12 most spoken languages in Leeds to get feedback on support received.

Feedback received by the Voice and Influence Team and Futures Team will be incorporated into the development of the revised pre-birth assessment and support offer.

Case studies will be shared with consent on the new offer hoping to launch by December 2021.

Next steps

Teams across children's services are undertaking the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark. This is a programme that teams undertake to help build learning and cultural competency. This is aimed at increasing awareness of people's own biases that impact on decision-making.

The development of a revised Pre-Birth Assessment and Support Offer for Care Experienced parents.

Further master classes on Culture and Identity and inequalities to be delivered as part of the core training offer, as well as training workshops on these themes.

Audit work across children's services to show improved understanding of Culture and Identity and the impact of inequality in assessment and plans.

7.3 Priority 3 – Workforce Development

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

The workforce development offer has been fully virtual since the start of the pandemic and has not changed due to high number of infection rates in Leeds.

However, the positive side of this has been improved uptake of training and briefings sessions as well as accessing recorded webinars.

The Tackling Poverty Framework for Practitioners working with children and families in Leeds was launched in December 2020 and is hosted on the [LSCP website](#) to allow for accessibility for practitioners across the city.

The launch of the framework was part of a practice theme of Poverty Awareness across children's services. This included training, briefing sessions and master classes throughout December. This will now be repeated annually every December.

Understanding poverty is now a core part of training offer for social workers and family support/EH workers in Leeds.

Outcomes and outputs

Feedback from staff was very positive and there is more understanding of the work of third sector and other departments in the council amongst workers.

A survey was done to understand the workforce's understanding of poverty which has informed the training offer.

Next steps

Plan Poverty Awareness Month for December 2021.

8.0 – Readiness for Learning

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people who live in poverty.***

Author: Update from Kelly Newby and Karen Jessup

Current Priorities

8.1 Priority 1 Early Years - Take up of free nursery places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

- There has been identification of families not taking up two-year-old offer for free early education entitlement (15-hour free offer when meeting specific criteria). Community plan for supporting at home has been actioned. Golden ticket approach has been implemented which means every parent who has a child who is eligible for a place receives a letter with a golden ticket which they take along to their preferred provider. Home learning activity packs have been produced by the children's centre teachers and these are being distributed by children's centre family outreach workers to all families who are eligible to take up a 2-year-old place; during the visit a discussion takes place to encourage take up. This has the Early Years (EY) steering group oversight. (Key link Jayne Ford and Rebecca McCormack).

Outcomes and outputs

- **Two-year-olds take-up**

Leeds currently has a take up of 65.8% (Spring term 2020/21) & 72.2% (Summer term 2020/21) of eligible children for 2-year-old free places in early education. There is particular concern for take up in some areas of Leeds

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • Beeston – Spring term 20/21 62.7% | Spring term 20/21 62.6% |
| • Harehills - Spring term 20/21 44.1% | Spring term 20/21 47.7% |
| • Burmantofts - Spring term 20/21 55.3% | Spring term 20/21 65.1% |

- **Three and four-year-olds take-up**

Take up of 3 and 4-year-olds is at 97%. This is reasonable, as compared to statistical neighbours. However, this hides the variation in areas for eg:

- Beeston take up of 3-4, 89% (49 children)
- Harehills 81%, (219 children)
- Burmantofts 79%, (83 children)

Next steps

We want to increase:

- Take up of 2-year-olds across the city to 90% by three years
- Take up of 2-year-olds in high needs clusters to 90% by three years
- Take up of 2-year-olds open to CiN and CP Plan to 90% by three years
- Take up of 3 and 4-year-olds in the highest needs clusters (6) to 100% by three years

This will be actioned through a focus on data, liaison with social workers regarding the importance of this essential resource, development of a one-minute guide which is currently being published, and an Early Years one-page plan which will notify DWP families four times a year. In addition, there will be targeting of 170 CIN, CP and LAC children aged 2-4 not taking up early learning offer through social workers, Early Help Hubs RES teams, Early Start teams.

8.2 Priority 2 – Emotional Health and wellbeing/ Mental Health

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

- DfE Wellbeing for Return to Education - Grant delivered a free joint offer between services to schools and clusters. Worked with partners in health to avoid any duplication and offer a response to support specific mental health needs arising locally.
- Recovery curriculum and resources for CYP with Special Educational Needs (SEN) – developed and delivered free online.

Outcomes and outputs

- DfE evaluation report submitted to national grant provider.

Phase 1

- Access to a 3-hour training WfER package for all schools. The training provided pre-recorded content and two breakout room activities and supported discussion. Following the training schools were given access to the pre-recorded YouTube file which they could use in school and the PowerPoint file which also gave them access to trainer notes. Schools were offered supervision for their implementation to deliver the training in school. After the dates which had been offered schools can still access the content of the training online (link to the training package on Leeds for Learning).
- **146 staff members** from **101 education settings** trained.
- **92%** of participants that gave feedback rated the training as **good or excellent**.

Phase 2

- Within the cluster meetings led by the EP, activities from the Wellbeing for Education training were used. These activities enabled staff to explore staff well-being, a case study, or the concept of trauma within an online small group meeting.

Phase 3

- Staff who accessed Phase 1 training (and could show this by having completed an evaluation) had access to a 3-hour implementation. Staff were invited to a virtual small group workshop which gave space to consider how they have implemented the training and to support them to plan next steps through using the PATH framework.

- All settings can access additional training online training on extended school absenteeism, emotion coaching and meaning-making about understanding why children may be behaving as they are.
- Evaluation in progress.

Currently developing phase 3-part b for autumn term for all schools.

Online resources access to date

Pages	Provider	Public Views
Overview: Wellbeing for Education Initiative	Wellbeing for Education	2160
Webinar Resources: Wellbeing for Education Initiative	Wellbeing for Education	942
Learning Inclusion	Wellbeing for Education	24

Next steps

- The Mental Health Support Teams initiative is expanding into clusters with high levels of deprivation. A national-funded pilot is rolling out MHST to clusters over the next 3 years with the first two coming online in January 2022. Emma Hughes is the contact with Jayne Bathgate Roche Lead Commissioning Officer - CCG.
- Continued offer to all schools to support targeted mental health needs in response to the pandemic within the schools' context. Embedding of universal and systems support in the education context until March 2022

8.3 Priority 3 – The 3 As strategy - working with schools to improve attendance, achievement and attainment.

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

- The Director of Children and Families' Services has created a centralised single point of access for schools and settings to contact with queries regarding COVID-19. In addition to enabling schools and settings to access all the support available to them through a single point, outgoing communication has also been strengthened. The director has been sending regular bulletins to schools, settings, partners and other stakeholders to guide them in providing the best possible support to children and families across the city and also to support in the implementation of government guidance within the Leeds context of COVID-19.
- Throughout the pandemic, Bronze meetings have taken place for primary, secondary and special schools, led by the Head of Service for Learning Improvement and other senior officers from the Learning Improvement Service. The meetings have offered leaders of schools and settings from across the city the opportunity to discuss key and current issues about the pandemic. The sessions have been attended by relevant officers from the local authority, e.g. health and safety, human resources, communications, the attendance service etc. Their presence has enabled attendees to ask questions on a wide variety of subjects and to regularly receive an immediate response.
- With the pandemic having such an impact on the lives of children and young people in the city and the settings they attend, there is a need to amend and update the 3As strategy. Local authority colleagues have begun the process of making these amendments, initially through consultation with learning settings from across the city and for all ages from 0 – 19. Four consultations took place, each focusing on an age range: early years, primary, secondary (including special schools and alternative provisions) and post-16. The sessions

- were called the Big Learning Conversations.
- The SEND and Inclusion Strategy consultation with families, schools, children, young people and other partners has been completed. See priority 4.
 - The new Deputy Director for Children and Families is now in post.

Outcomes and outputs

- The additional communication channel between the Director of Children and Families, and the Children and Families' leadership team, with schools and settings across the city has seen a strengthening of these relationships.
- Schools, including academies, and settings across the city have expressed their gratitude for the support provided over the course of the pandemic by officers and elected members of the council.
- Bronze meetings have been well attended and the direct and regular communication between the leaders of learning settings and a variety of officers from the local authority has strengthened relationships and developed an understanding of the pressures we have all been under during the pandemic.
- The Big Learning Conversations were well attended with dozens of senior leaders from across the learning landscape participating and contributing to determining what the city must focus on as we move forwards.

8.4 Priority 4 – Support for Vulnerable learners

Update on recent activities including impact of COVID

- Risk assessment system for all Children and Young People (CYP) with Education and Health Care plans (EHCP) shared with schools, with expectation of school responsibilities. Protocol for identifying CYP if needed to the local authority for support.
- In addition, there has been support to alternative providers for developing risk assessments.
- Training links established between Area Inclusion Partners (AIPs), Admissions and attendance team. These support improvements with fair access protocol for swifter access back into school.
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) panel continues to operate to provide an immediate advisory service

SEND and Inclusion Strategy

- Consultation with partners completed.
- There is a pilot on fixed term exclusions in progress.
- Educational Psychologist (EP) support provided to Early Help Hubs and signpost during the period of the pandemic to strengthen SEND offer at Early Help level.

Outcomes and outputs

- Work is ongoing regarding strategy development.
- Change to fair access protocol. AIPs take a stronger lead role.
- See employment and skills priority for vulnerable year 11 and Virtual School work.

Next steps

- SEND and Inclusion Strategy launch in autumn. The strategy will encompass the SEND and Inclusion focuses for disadvantaged groups and draw on key data on poverty and other vulnerability. It will report to the SEND Partnership Board.
- This will cross reference with employment and skills priority for vulnerable year 11 and Virtual School.

9.0 Green Spaces

The Poverty Impact Board has identified a new priority – equitable access to green spaces across Leeds.

Research ([PHE Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020](#)) notes that access to green space has a positive impact on physical health such as self-assessed general health, cardiovascular mortality in adults, weight management, mental health, stress management and associations with a favourable birth weight.

This research also shows that access to green space has a positive impact on mental health – reduced stress, emotional well-being and improved resilience. For children and young people, the benefits of having access to green space are influenced by developmental stage and both the type of green space they have access to.

Evidence of the impact on health related to COVID-19 ([BMJ](#)) outlines that exposure to green spaces may strengthen resilience and support mental health in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Outdoor recreation in green spaces has emerged during the present pandemic as an essential tool to combat distress.
- Exposure to green spaces facilitates recovery from physiological stress and improvement of cognitive performance. This aids in strengthening mental resilience by dampening the body's stress response.
- Green spaces may stimulate physical activity and improve physical resilience.
- Purposeful or pro-environmental behaviour and the anticipation of seeing interesting species may activate positive emotions and improve emotional resilience.
- Gathering outdoors, even at a safe distance, improves social cohesion and helps people to feel connected to the outside world, thus reinforcing social resilience.

The most economically deprived areas have less available good quality green space. People exposed to poor quality environments are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes than people who enjoy good quality environments. Unequal provision of good quality green space means those who are at greatest risk of poor physical and mental health may have the least opportunity to reap the health benefits of green space.

Nationally one in eight British households has no garden, the percentage of homes without a garden is higher among ethnic minorities, with Black people in England nearly four times as likely as White people to have no outdoor space at home. Source: [ONS](#).

There is a lot already happening in Leeds and the Child Poverty Impact Board has agreed that influencing access to and provision of green space in Leeds will become a new priority.

10. Conclusions

Experiencing poverty has a significant correlation to poorer outcomes across a wide range of life indicators. This is a problem that is growing, both in Leeds and nationally, and it is clear that a radical approach is needed to reduce the impact of poverty.

In Leeds, we believe that a young person's life chances should not be impacted by their background or the area in which they live. We want to ensure that poverty presents no barriers for our children and young people, and we want all people to have access to the same opportunities, regardless of their background. We believe that all children and young people should have the freedom to choose their pathway, and that we can work together as a city to tackle any limitations that poverty may place on these pathways. This is a moral imperative.

We also know the challenges that are faced, both by the people who live in poverty, and by the services who work across the city. We need to focus on mitigating the impact of poverty on children and young people whilst we work as a city to improve the structures around people who experience, or are at risk of, poverty.

For this reason, we need to continue to work as a city, to share our understandings, knowledge and practice, to learn about the day-to-day impact of poverty for children and young people and then to work with children and young people to tackle this impact.