

**Report of the Director of Children and Families**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**

**Subject: Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds**



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**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 CPAG Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) analysis published in 25<sup>th</sup> 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 data<sup>1</sup> for 2018/19 revealed 23% of children under 16 (34,862) in Leeds lived in poverty (before housing costs are deducted from income) which is an increase of 3% since 2016. This compares to the national figure where 18% 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 who live with a disabled person<sup>2</sup>, and the poverty rate for families with a disabled family member rose from 28% in 2011 to 30% in 2017<sup>3</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> [Disability Rights UK](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

Women are more likely than men to live in poverty, with 20% of women experiencing poverty compared to 18% of men. 45% of single parents- of which 90% are women- are living in poverty<sup>4</sup>.

### **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 bills<sup>5</sup>. 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 bills<sup>6</sup>.
- 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 Leeds there were 70,127 people claiming UC in October 2020, which is a 60% increase compared to 2019. Prior to March 2020 there was an average of 600 claims registered in the city per week, this increased significantly from March 2020 and peaked at over 6,800 during April<sup>7</sup>. Looking forward, these families will be adversely affected by cut in UC in autumn 2021, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned that nationally these cuts will pull 200,000 children into poverty as we head into winter 2021.
- 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 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*"<sup>8</sup>. In Leeds there are currently 50,000 people on furlough; and when this ends there is an expectation that a proportion of these people will then be made redundant; with the consequential potential to push further families into poverty

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- 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

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<sup>4</sup> [Women's Budget Group](#)

<sup>5</sup> [University of Birmingham](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Citizens Advice](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Scrutiny Board \(Environment, Housing and Communities\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Children's Commissioner, 2020](#)

- keeping people safe from harm and promoting community respect and resilience

### 3. Resource Implications

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.

### Recommendations

- That Executive Board endorses 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.
- The Executive Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Thriving strategy across the city and in particular in each respective Members' portfolio in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.
- The Executive Board invites the Board to note that the officer responsible for this strategy is the Deputy Director Children and Families; working in partnership across the council directorates.

#### 1. Purpose of this report

1.1 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. It also gives an update on some key personnel changes that have taken place in the past three months.

#### 1.2 Recent changes:

As a result of the recent Early Leavers Initiative scheme a number of senior officers who were involved in this work have left. This includes:

- Chief Officer, partnerships and health Children and Families
- Chief officer Employment and Skills
- Head of Service Children and Families
- Head of Service Early Help Children and Families

***Thriving: the Child Poverty Strategy*** will be now led at an officer level by the Deputy Director of Children and Family Services and the Head of Service for Workforce Development and Change, Children and Families Service. We have now agreed new leads for each of the workstreams that were previously led by officers who have now left the council.

#### 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 costs<sup>9</sup>

- The Government's definition of absolute poverty is not the same as the 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.

A national report released by the Child Poverty Action Group in February 2020 shows that since 2012, the median poverty gap (how far below the poverty line the average family is) has continued to increase. After housing costs are taken into account, families in poverty are now on average £73 a week below the poverty line, up from £56 in 2012/13. The number of children in poverty where all the parent(s) work full time - be they single or couple-parents has doubled from 200,000 in 2012/13 to 400,000 in 2017/18. The poverty gap for lone parents has risen by 36%. These statistics indicate that over the past five years, more children continue to be pushed into poverty, while those in poverty are further away from escaping it.

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 to those who do not live in poverty (Main & Mahony, 2018), they are trying to achieve the same outcomes with less resource, 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 mean 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 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

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<sup>9</sup> [Child Poverty Action Group](#)

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 6 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

## **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 & families who live in poverty.
- We will fight, together, to ensure that every child & 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 safety net 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: Healthy Holidays, Free School Meals, Winter Grants Scheme, Staff training, Uniform Re-Use Scheme, Digital Inclusion and Gambling Related Harm

#### **a) Healthy Holidays – update on recent activities**

- Leeds City Council leads the Healthy Holidays programme in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation. The programme is predominately funded by the Department for Education, alongside Council funding and philanthropic donations through Leeds Community Foundation. For 2020/21, grant funding reached £840,000. From this pot, £244,000 was allocated to the COVID-19 response after lockdown supporting provision from April – July spent on food and activities, while £484,000 was allocated to summer delivery. The rest of the year's allocation was for limited provision during October half term, Christmas and spring half term.
- For 2021, the Department for Education has significantly scaled up the funding available, with £220 million allocated nationally. Leeds City Council has been allocated over £3.5 million for delivery over the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods.

#### **Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- The delivery of the 2020 and early 2021 Healthy Holidays scheme was adapted in line with COVID-19 requirements measures – for examples activities were switched to online or activity packs that were delivered at the doorstep; and face to face activities were done outside where possible, observing requirements for social distancing and numbers.

#### **Healthy Holidays Outcomes and outputs**

- Over the 2020 summer holiday, the DfE funded scheme was delivered across 30 third sector groups, 14 school partnerships and 7 Council Community Hubs.
- 97 data enabled digital devices were purchased and loaned to children and young people via the Leeds City Council library loan service.
- 5,482 children and young people were reached over summer (DfE target of 5,000), with a total of 45,870 portions of food distributed. 70% of participating children and young people were eligible for Free School Meals.

- During October, December 2020 and February 2021 9 third sector groups, 6 schools and 3 Leeds City Council Community Hubs supported 2,591 children and young people, providing 65,671 portions (including weekly hampers) and 2,970 activity packs.
- Over Easter, 31 third sector groups, 43 schools and 10 community hubs provided activities with food. Some groups ran face to face activities, and some groups provided activities and food delivered to homes and/or online activities. All projects delivered in line with Covid-19 safety requirements.

### **Case Study/ Feedback:**

- The quote below is from a family, LS12 based who were shielding due to Covid-19 because their five-year-old son is living with Leukaemia. They were part of the Community Hub scheme and received food for their two children, a tablet and activities through the holidays. The family feedback, through their school revealed:

*Parent of two children says, one of my children is going into hospital for an operation and we have to isolate for 4 weeks, two before and two after, I couldn't believe it when the box and bag arrived. We were so excited to go through the things. We had lots of activities including Lego, there was bread, goodies, crisp, tins etc. This means I don't have to go out or find people to shop for me. My children were so excited and could be heard cheering every time I took an item out. Thank you so much, you really don't know what a difference this has made.*

- As a result of Healthy Holidays, many organisations reported being able to build closer relationships with the families. This facilitated further support offers and referrals to additional services where appropriate. An example of feedback from one frontline project worker further exemplifies the multifaceted benefits of the scheme:

*"Every year Healthy Holidays help people in less obvious ways than anticipated. We think it just addresses the obvious, 'we feed the children and give them something to do' however each year it demonstrates the opportunities it provides for people. Engagement with parents means we can help support with other things such as money, housing advice, bills, adult activities, counselling, volunteering, catering etc. The grant helps us gather information along the way about people, the area and surroundings. It helps identify gaps and it connects people, partners, parents, Children and young people and other organisations as a result"*

### **Healthy Holidays Next Steps**

- Having run an expanded and successful Easter programme, LCC is now working with Leeds Community Foundation, schools, community hubs and third sector groups to develop a significantly larger summer programme, to ensure that schemes reach as many Free School Meal eligible children and young people as possible.

### **b) Free School Meals - Update on recent activities**

- There has been an accelerated increase in the number of FSM claims since COVID-19. The number of FSM awards in March 2020 was 25,874 and by the beginning of May 2020 was 26,624, an increase of 750 in a two-month period. In comparison, the increase in FSM awards from January to March 2020 was 610. A recent update from the Council Tax and Benefits service has indicated that, as of February 2021 the current number of FSM awards is at 30,740, which includes 177 Asylum Seekers.

- Of those pupils entitled to a free school meal (FSM) at the January 2020 census, 19,996 or 78.5%, took up the offer of the meal itself from their school, and therefore 5,477 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.
- Pupils who are in school are still eligible to receive free school meals if their parents/carers meet the benefits-related free school meals eligibility criteria. Pupils in reception, year 1 or year two who are in school, can also receive their universal infant free school meal. Where pupils are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 related absence, schools must work with their catering provider to provide a food parcel that meets the School Food Standards and will support a pupil with healthy lunches. This is only applicable for pupils who are entitled to benefits-related free school meals.
- The DfE strongly encourages schools to provide food parcels for pupils who are not in school. In Leeds most primary schools work with Catering Leeds. Catering Leeds provide hampers for pupils entitled to means tested free school meals. The contents of the hamper provide 5 balanced meals plus a pudding, drink and a snack. Food is compliant with the School Food Standards.
- Most secondary schools and a small number of primary schools contract private catering companies or manage their own catering provision. These schools are responsible for making their own arrangements. If the school has confirmed with their school catering team or lunch provider that it is not in the best interest of pupils to provide lunch parcels, they can consider other local arrangements, which might include vouchers for local shops and supermarkets.

### **Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- 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](#).

### **Free school meals - Outcomes and outputs**

- The Health and Wellbeing Service have worked with council colleagues to produce a comprehensive and detailed report on free school meals eligibility, COVID-19 and uptake data for 2019-20. The report also provides key recommendations for schools and the city. The report was shared with Head teachers and is available [here](#).
- During the pandemic when schools were closed most primary schools in Leeds worked with Catering Leeds to provide hampers for pupils entitled to means tested free school meals. The contents of the hamper provide 5 balanced meals plus a pudding, drink and a snack. Food is compliant with the School Food Standards.
- Other schools use private catering providers or manage and run their own catering provision.

### **Free school meals - Next Steps**

- The team is constantly monitoring increased demand and will be working with schools to encourage take up as per the report.
- To review data from the January census when available to assess take up of FSM during the pandemic

- To further promote the Family Food Leaflet and FSM toolkit so schools and families are aware of current FSM eligibility and how to claim
- To update the FSM E-learning course for schools and frontline workers

### c) Winter Grants Scheme – update on recent activities

- On the 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, the government announced a £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme (CWGS). This package enabled Local Authorities to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 and covered the period until the end of March 2021.
- The CWGS allocated just over £2.8million to Leeds City Council to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking and lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials. In February 2021 the government announced that the COVID Winter Grants Scheme would be extended to 16<sup>th</sup> April with Leeds being allocated a further £986,468. In April 2021 the government announced an extension to the scheme (which has been renamed the COVID Local Support Grant) until 20<sup>th</sup> June. Leeds will receive an additional £667,660 in funding.
- £1.6 million of the funding was approved to be allocated to for the provision of FSM to children living in poverty in the city for the Christmas 2020 and February 2021 half-term holidays. This includes schools being able to access support for an additional 10% more children that are on their schools roll who aren't eligible for FSM. The additional allocation of funding up until 16<sup>th</sup> April was used to support schools for the provision of FSM for the Easter school holidays. The latest allocation of funding will be used to provide a FSM scheme over the May half term.
- For the Christmas holidays schools were provided two options; the first was to opt-in to a central approach within which Leeds City Council in partnership with ASDA provided hampers for families. This scheme involved Asda and LCC volunteers (approx. 60 FTE) working together (over a 2-day period for Xmas) to pack hampers, which Asda and DPD then delivered direct to the homes of the children. The second option was that schools could elect to administer their own scheme over the holiday period and receive funding per eligible pupil. Alongside the funding, supplementary information was sent out that covered a range of options available to the school for securing provision, including linking in with their catering providers, accessing established hamper schemes and/ or established voucher schemes.
- For February and Easter holidays schools using Catering Leeds as their meal provider were asked if they wanted to opt in to a hamper scheme for the week or receive funding per pupil to provide a scheme (hamper or voucher) of their own. All other schools were funded directly to administer their own scheme. Once again the funding received was based on the number of children on Free School Meals, in families who have no recourse to public funds or are on a low income. A similar scheme will be implemented for the May half term.
- The remaining funding has been used to provide the following support;
  - 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.

### Winter Grants Scheme Outcomes and outputs

- For the Christmas holidays 162 schools opted in equating to 14,866 children receiving hampers or vouchers and 118 schools opted out equating to 17,333 children receiving support directly from their schools.
- For February half term 32,930 children received support.
- For the Easter holiday 33,564 children received support.

### **Case Study/ Feedback:**

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.

### **d) Uniform scheme -update on recent activities**

- 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 amount 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. Supporting this work contributes to the Council's priorities for tackling poverty and climate change. It is estimated that 122,000 KG of Carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) could be saved if every new school starter in Leeds had just one second-hand school shirt or blouse.
- In June 2020, a Facebook group was launched to further conversations, highlight environmental benefits and help existing schemes connect, share ideas and best practice. The group also offers signposting for parents and schools to get involved, donate, volunteer, exchange and access uniform items.
- In September 2020, the Inspiration Guide was first launched in Leeds, including advice and information on running a successful, accessible, engaged uniform re-use service. ZWL linked in with Healthy Holiday projects and promoted the scheme to all summer provisions. The Uniform has been distributed via schools and clusters, with schools participating in Healthy Holidays given first priority. The Inspiration Guide is available [here](#)

### **Uniform Scheme - Outcomes and outputs**

- ZWL have conducted research and mapped over 90 school uniform re-use opportunities throughout the city, both in terms of school and independent community schemes.
- The scheme has also been able to prevent the waste of a large donation of brand new uniform, totalling over 10,000 individual uniform items (1147 boxes), with a retail value of approximately £72,500.

- To date, 28 schools have ordered, received and distributed uniform donations to families in need, with a limited amount still available to order via school clusters.
- Publically available resources for Uniform Reuse now available, are on 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.

### **Uniform Scheme - Next Steps**

- ZWL have now been awarded funding for 'Phase two' of the project. As well as continuing to develop the original project. Phase two will see the launch of the 'The Big Leeds School Uniform Giveaway' a bi-annual city wide event consisting of pop up shops run by community groups and schemes. A tailored Leeds School Uniform Exchange web platform to improve access and search facilities and allowing the scheme to become user-led is also to be launched as part of this phase.
- Further expansion for the project is currently being explored, particularly in regards to ways that the 'Making Second Hand the First Choice for Leeds' message can be translated to include other resources that children may need such as digital devices, stationery and backpacks

### **e) Gambling Related Harm - Update on recent activities**

- The 2018/19 Leeds My Health, My School survey found that 24% of secondary aged pupils had taken part in gambling activity, in comparison, 13% had smoked a cigarette, 7% had tried illegal drugs and 51% had tried alcohol. Of the secondary aged pupils that had gambled; 65% did so with their parent/carer's knowledge. The most popular types of gambling were via gaming or skin betting (21%), bingo (20%) and betting on sporting events (19%). The findings of this survey have been 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.
- Building on this work, council officers from Children's Services, Public Health and the Financial Inclusion Team are working with GamCare and the Young Gamblers and Gamers Education Trust (YGAM) to develop over the next year a communications campaign and a training programme to raise awareness of the issue.
- The campaign and training is being developed through engagement with young people, to help understand and discuss their views on gambling and gaming, what activities they perceive as harmless or harmful, gambling advertising and regulation, and methods of promoting help and support services. The targeted age range for this work has been 11-18 years old.
- The Child Gambling Steering Group is also developing a longer term Communications Plan for 2021, to include joint working with online counselling platforms for young people MindMate and Kooth.
- The Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership website featured a pre-Christmas article on online safety to which information on gambling within gaming was added. This gave parents practical pointers (e.g. set time and spending limits) and links to support websites.

### **Gambling Related Harm Outcomes and outputs**

- 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 since October 2020 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.
- Children's Mental Health Week (1-7 February 2021) presented an opportunity to test some messages on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.
- The council social media platforms promoted two sponsored posts which were seen by more than 35,000 people (almost 100,000 impressions).
- Polls on Instagram Stories proved to be a useful engagement tool, they were completed over 200 times.
- Poll results confirmed that most people underestimated the scale of gambling participation among young people (equivalent to 15,000 pupils in Leeds), they did not know where to get help and support for child gambling.

**Case Study/ Feedback:** 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 videos docs just how people were taught about drugs and bullying."*
- *"It's not easy to stop an addiction it can lead you down a road of risks like starvation homelessness and losing your family and friends cause of it. It's okay to do it once in a while but try to pull yourself away."*
- *"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."*

### **Gambling Related Harm Next Steps**

- The full results of the focus group work and social media promotion are being analysed and processed to inform future communications planning and training packages during 2021.

### **f) Digital Inclusion Update on recent activities**

- It has been recognised that existing digital exclusion issues in the city for both children and adults have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leeds City Council and partners are looking at ways to tackle these issues through existing schemes such as Healthy Holidays and 100% Digital Leeds.

### **Digital Inclusion Outcomes and outputs**

- Healthy Holidays (HH) 2020 supported digitally excluded children by:
  - a) Purchasing and lending 97 iPads with data allowance to HH community hubs and schools, with support from 100% Digital Leeds
  - b) Funding the Tech Angels initiative, managed by Solidaritech CIC as part of Digital Access West Yorkshire. They have a target of securing 200 donated laptops to refurbish and donate, with a data allowance, to children via Healthy Holidays community groups. <https://tech-angels.net/donate/>

### **Digital Inclusion Next Steps**

- The Council is also 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.

### **3.2 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

#### **a. Perinatal Education – update on recent activities**

- The **Baby Steps** service works with vulnerable pregnant women and families and they have continued to provide antenatal and postnatal support during this time. This support has been provided over the telephone and via digital means and where this has not been possible they have delivered physical resources to people's homes. Children and Families PH Team have managed to secure funding to improve digital access to perinatal education and support groups. This funding will be used by partner organisations to deliver vital services such as Baby Steps virtually - with the ability to loan devices to families with no access to the necessary equipment. Practitioners will also use these contacts as an opportunity to share key COVID 19 messages, encourage testing, self-isolation and promote the welfare services that will enable parents-to-be, children, young people and their families to stay well during the pandemic.
- The 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service (PHINS) have produced a digital Preparation for Birth and Beyond (PBB) resource to support families and as of October 2020 are piloting delivery of virtual groups in three areas across the city via Microsoft Teams. Bosom Buddies breastfeeding support services have adapted during this time and have continued to provide support to hundreds of women and families via digital means - running successful weekly Zoom support groups, and continuing one to one support over Zoom and the phone. The Perinatal Parenting Programmes Network (3Ps) has now resumed and provides an opportunity for services to provide updates at this time of change and it facilitates learning between groups and organisations. The next 3Ps meeting will focus on trauma informed care and also supporting a traumatised workforce to support families

### **Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- Face to face delivery of perinatal education programmes has clearly been impacted by COVID-19 and the associated restrictions. Services have worked hard to continue to

support families and they continue to adapt their service provision as the situation evolves with services being adapted to virtual delivery as detailed below.

## **Perinatal Education Outcomes and outputs**

### **Baby Steps**

- The **Baby Steps** Service have received 189 referrals (April 2020 – Dec 2020), have completed 130 home visits and 76 mums have attended 6 or more virtual sessions.
- Service User Feedback:
  - *Went really well. Better than expected. At first was concerned how we were going to do it because of covid but it worked really well. Got all the information needed and watched the video links by email.*
  - *I looked forward to it each week.*
  - *The only thing to have made this experience better would have being able to meet other expectant mums however that could not have been helped due to the current pandemic*
- With regard to Zoom Breast Feeding Support they are seeing around 20 women on each weekly call.

### **Preparation for Birth and Beyond (PBB)**

- Currently 3 groups are running (17 attendees) with 2 more planned in the coming weeks. We are currently working with the provider to increase number of virtual groups and to re-introduce the face to face PBB offer as soon as possible.
- Recent small virtual PBB group facilitated. All attendees reported how beneficial it was to be able to access the course virtually. They had all felt quite isolated as they had been working from home. They enjoyed being able to chat with other parents to be and have now started a WhatsApp group so they can stay in touch. Another group have recently all had their babies and in the postnatal catch up session they all reported how valuable it had been to get to know others and they have continued to use the WhatsApp group for peer support.
- For all virtual groups run so far the activities evaluated well as people said that they felt that they were able to get involved. One lady who hadn't considered breastfeeding said that she would, after hearing information on the course, offer her baby the first feed. The information around brain development and pathways was well received, and people reported that they were not aware just how much babies did and how they communicate. People reported that they would feel more confident knowing how to communicate with baby and how to recognise different baby states.
- Another currently running course has a larger number of attendees. There are five fathers attending and they report they can do this because the course is virtual and they are working from home. They are enjoying having the opportunity to explore parenthood with other couples.
- As well as the already discussed benefit of meeting other parent to be, other themes from evaluations included the benefits of knowing about antenatal relaxation, baby brain development, touching bump/playing music/reading to baby antenatally and more confidence in feeding and caring for baby.
- **Feedback has been very positive – 100% would recommend it**
  - *“It’s good to meet other people who are pregnant at last”*
  - *“Really informative and have looked forward to coming each week”*
  - *“It was good to get the facts around safe sleep”*
  - *“Having a small group was brilliant it made it easy to chat and comment”*
  - *“Great to hear that you are not alone, others are going through the same thing”*
  - *“Got to meet other mums”*

## Perinatal Education Next Steps

- To further roll out virtual antenatal parent education and support those who are digitally excluded to access such support.

### b. Best Beginnings/Baby Buddy App Update on recent activities

- Best Beginnings have updated the content on the app in relation to COVID-19 and pregnancy. In Leeds there has been a further drive to direct women and families to the Baby Buddy app for support during the lockdown. Promotion of the app and its particular usefulness during this time has been achieved via local practitioner networks and social media communications at a city wide level.

## Best Beginnings/Baby Buddy Outcomes and outputs

- There were 3388 downloads of Baby Buddy in Leeds during 2020, over one third of the birth cohort. The report shows continued consistent downloads from parents-to-be in Leeds with an increase in downloads Sept-Dec in comparison to the previous two years. The highest downloads were recorded in Chapel Allerton, Middleton park, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill and Moortown by mothers in the 25-30 age range.

## Best Beginnings/Baby Buddy Next Steps

- Further promotion is needed to reach the diverse population in Leeds and future insight work with target populations will inform this. Professional staff forums give the opportunity to regularly remind staff about the benefits of offering Baby Buddy. To support this a short infomercial will be re-shared with staff along with opportunity for discussion and sharing ideas with an aim to increase downloads. The information is already shared in regular newsletters and this will continue.
- A new 3.0 version of Baby Buddy is in the testing phase and will be ready to roll out later this year. New promotional resources will be made available to teams to encourage even more parents-to-be, especially fathers, to download the app.
- Statistics regarding the reach of Baby Buddy are available on request

## 3.3 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

### Update on recent activities

#### Framework for Practitioners

- The framework for practitioners has now been developed and has been made available to all practitioners who work with children and families. It can be accessed from the [Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#). The content of the framework was launched on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020 with a follow up month of poverty themed activities, webinars, resources and briefings on the theme of Poverty Awareness for Practitioners. The framework forms an integral part of social work induction in Leeds; and feedback from practitioners is that they feel more confident in having conversations about poverty.

## Workforce Development

- A survey was sent out across the service to identify training needs so we can adapt the workforce development offer. Feedback from the survey has been collated and will be used to inform the workforce development offer. To be efficient and effective in reaching practitioners on a large scale, webinars, briefings and resources will be collated and incorporated into the workforce development offer. This work will include feedback from people with lived experiences to help practitioners understand how to support and what is helpful, what is not. Master Classes around poverty have been held. The financial inclusion team, which is based in communities and Environment directorate in Leeds City Council has worked with the 3 social work area teams around understanding entitlement to benefits and support for families including where they can access help. During December's Poverty Awareness Month; the financial inclusion team delivered briefing sessions online to the workforce, and attending area team meetings.

## Connecting services

- This part of the workstream has grown and developed more with a clear theme emerging of the strength of community and third sector engagement. After the launch of Poverty Awareness month in December our next steps will be to create more community based forums for third sector, community groups and Children and Families Services and the wider council to connect. Through the connections already built, there has been a clearer pathway to target need and distribute resources. For example, a large supply of toiletries such as shower gels, shampoo and conditioner donated by a local charity was acquired through this building connections work by the Families First Manager and again these were given to families who needed them. Another example was partnering with **Hamara centre** to provide work with community leader on the provision of cultural food. We also worked with a group called **Damasq** who support refugees and asylum seekers to provide digital devices to all children on their caseloads who didn't have them and funded a school tutoring programme for parents who have English as a second language. It is clear that there is a lot of good will in Leeds on a localised and city wide level, but the connecting of services has enabled a more cohesive response to need. The expansion of this work stream is key to tackling the impact of poverty.
- There is ongoing work with community leaders and a recent session was delivered by Children and Families staff regarding early help and the support that is available from early help services. We also have the Stronger Families programme which is focused on supporting families where there are multiple barriers to progressing to work.

## Empowering Families & Safeguarding Outcomes and outputs

- In total we ran 11 events in the month of December with approximately 200 staff attending from Children and Families wider workforce as well as voluntary sector
- The workforce development offer in December has significant interest and excellent feedback and included:
  - Launch of the Leeds Tackling Poverty Framework
  - Masterclass - The Impact of Poverty
  - Masterclass - What is Poverty?
  - Social Justice and Universal Credit
  - Financial Inclusion
  - Leeds Community Gambling Service
  - Surviving Economic Abuse webinar on 'Economic Abuse'
- In addition, we provided the workforce with a toolkit of resources such as webinars and films to aid ongoing learning

- Since July last year poverty has been included as a factor on Mosaic (electronic recording system). This means that we can record poverty as a factor for children who are referred to the Front Door. Since July 2020 we have had 174 child contacts and early help contacts where poverty was one of the known factors. (We believe this does not accurately reflect numbers as can only be recorded if it is known at the point of referral)
- What the information does tell us that the highest number of children who had poverty as a factor, also had a physical disability or illness. Abuse or neglect, domestic violence and homelessness were other factors that were high in numbers when poverty was also a factor. This data though a small sample, shows our most vulnerable children are more likely to living in poverty.
- Case Studies are available on request
- Work has commenced to look at how we collate quantitative and qualitative data including identifying poverty as a factor at the point of first contact with Early Help or Social Work Service and gathering the lived experience of people using services to learn and better our offer. A questionnaire has been designed to seek feedback from users of services and to learn how to improve lived experiences and this will be translated to the 11 most common languages so we can begin to understand cultural different aspects poverty. We are exploring options for a reporting tool re quality and quantity of our support.

## **Empowering Families & Safeguarding Next Steps**

- We have recently been successful in a DfE innovation bid through partners in practice and this Leeds City Council project will distribute short term funding to the 22 Clusters which support schools, so they can invest in innovative approaches to providing practical support for families to mitigate family poverty, and to add to the delivery of services that will have a positive protective impact on families and communities during the pandemic. They will also support workers in Leeds to adapt to changed ways of working, utilising practice approaches developed by the Rethink Team to provide a high quality services to families. This funding amounts to £390,000 up to end of March 2021 and the money will be spent on additional mental health support, expanding an online positive parenting programme (Triple P), and additional outreach support for young people at risk, food support and a range of other services to support the impact of covid. Our 22 clusters directly received £200,000 in total and will also benefit from the city wide spending as detailed above
- The workforce development team is planning to offer learning and development on poverty related themes as part of their annual offer. This will include holding the Poverty Awareness Month in December each year, collating resources and sharing them with the workforce, working with poverty being a key part of induction for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) and continuation of master classes around poverty.
- In the next few months, a survey will be launched to understand how social care is viewed, and what experiences of social care parents have had. This will be primarily electronic, but with optional paper copies, and it will be translated into a range of languages.
- To continue to look at how we collate quantitative and qualitative data and roll out survey as detailed above
- Families First team are working in conjunction with the Communities directorate to identify areas in Leeds to launch Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) projects. This would see members of the community being trained to signpost and support other members of the community. We also hope that we would be able to offer accredited training to Level 2 in Early Interventions.

- We are working with Leeds Community Foundation who have been successful in securing a free print run. Education services are providing key stage documents that we can print out and we will target children who do not have digital access at home through schools and clusters.

### **3.4 Housing & Provision**

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every family to live in housing that is safe, appropriate and affordable.*** The housing focus remains on two specific areas of work; the implementation of **Selective Licensing** to improve housing conditions and support for families and the **enhanced income service** to ensure we maximise household income through a range of benefit and Universal Credit related support. This workstream is led by Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing, Resources and Housing

#### **a. Enhanced Income Update on recent activities**

- Between April 2020 and December 2020 the Housing Officer Income Team worked with 4385 households, securing just over £3million additional income in total for them. Of these households, 1385 were households with children, helping secure around £983,000 in additional income. The average amount secured for each household with children the team worked with is around £710. Income for households with children from has been sourced from a range, some 16 different sources, with the top five income streams generating the most additional income for households with children being:
  - Personal Independence Payments £290,000
  - Universal Credit £533,000
  - Housing Benefit £1,208,000
  - Discretionary Housing Payments £260,000
  - Council Tax Support £241,000

#### **Enhanced Income Outcomes and outputs**

- April – December 2020 - £3 million additional income for 4385 households; of which 1385 households we with children; securing £983,000 additional income

#### **Case studies:**

- Joint Tenants no longer living as husband and wife:** Mr & Mrs B are joint tenants with two children, but no longer in a relationship. This provided complications with benefit entitlement involving both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (UC). Mr B was difficult to engage with initially and struggled putting his trust in any form of support work. Our Housing Officer Income managed to develop a relationship with Mr B and assisted him in making a claim for UC, whereby both tenants were receiving the correct housing support. Our Housing Officer Income successfully appealed a Housing Benefit overpayment and secured 'Under Occupancy' exemptions for both claims, ensuring full rent is payable moving forward. Following the intensive work carried out by our Housing Officer Income, Mr B agreed to further housing support referrals being made, ensuring he is supported in the long term helping make a more sustainable financial future for the children's parents.
- A vulnerable young person:** Miss C is a young tenant who is pregnant and was suffering from domestic violence and financial abuse from her partner. The team's Housing Officer Income:
  - Identified this as a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) case and liaised with all relevant professionals ensuring all safeguarding concerns were reported.

- Made referrals to the Leeds Welfare Support Scheme to assist with emergency food and utility costs
- Liaised with DWP who backdated Universal Credit Housing element costs, clearing £1,700 of rent arrears.
- Helped the tenant with an online banking application to prevent benefits being paid into her abusers account, which had led to incidents of financial abuse in the past.

Social services are now undertaking a financial capabilities assessment and ongoing support is being provided by Engage Leeds.

### **Enhanced Income Next Steps**

- Moving forward we are determined to ensure that we continue to provide the best support possible to our tenants. We are exploring ways to mainstream our approach to UC within the service. There have been improved outcomes achieved during the pandemic, through working from home and supporting tenants through telephone and online means. While we may wish to move some types of work back to face to face in the future, we are committed to learning from the pandemic and maintaining these improved practices where appropriate.

### **b. Selective Licensing Update on recent activities**

- This scheme will introduce licensing for all privately rented properties in 2 identified areas in Leeds; Harehills and Beeston. It is essentially a licence to ensure standards are met by Landlords which aims to improve housing conditions for residents in Leeds.
- Unfortunately, the pandemic has materially affected the implementation of selective licensing in both Beeston and Harehills. Whilst we have continued to visit and inspect properties where we have safely been able to do so based on Government guidance, we have and are still not in a position to undertake proactive visits, door knocking street by street as originally planned before COVID. This has meant that we have not been able to start to cross the threshold of properties as planned and proactively address conditions, management of the property and mean the issues individuals and families may be facing with partners to make the difference to lives. At present it is difficult to plan to determine when we will be able to start this activity as we need to make sure that it will be safe for all parties involved.
- We have been continuing to process licences and have now started to issue both draft and final licences following the suspension of requesting the payment of licence fees. In addition, we have investigated those landlords where evidence is available and it is safe to gather who have not applied for a licence and potentially operating illegally. We have 52 properties currently under investigation of which 36 have been commenced with a view to taking formal legal action

### **Selective Licensing Outcomes and outputs**

- Whilst the service has continued to address conditions in properties and deal with the needs of those who we have received queries from partners or residents this has been based on Government guidance and no proactive visits have been able to be undertaken.

### **Selective Licensing Next Steps**

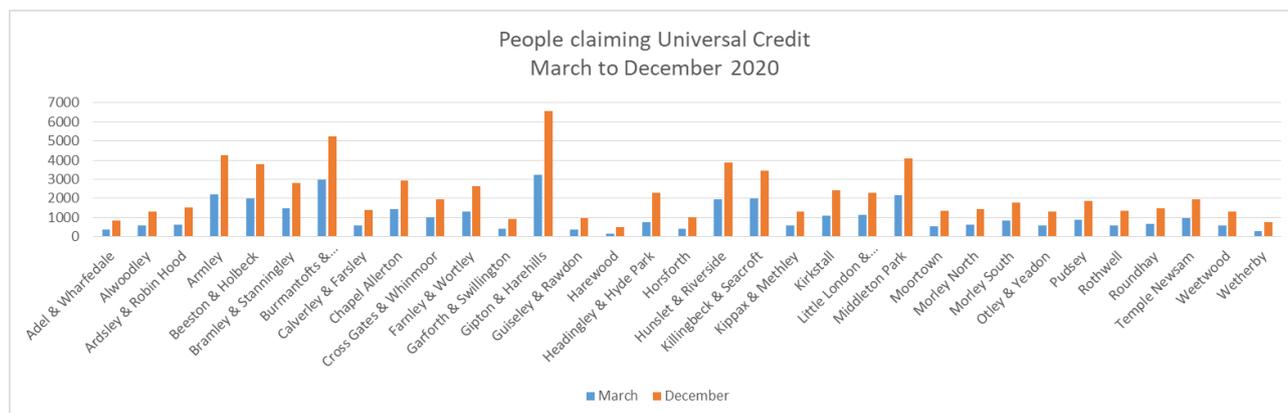
- To continue to investigate all cases based on Government guidance
- To continue the licensing process to allow compliance visits to occur as soon as safe to do so to ensure safe living conditions and to work with partners to address needs
- To continue to target landlords who fail in their legal duties but support those who do

## **3.5 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

### Employment and Transitions – update on recent activities

- The various stages of restrictions have had an impact on the Leeds economy. The latest Government data shows that 43,100 people were furloughed in Leeds in November 2020. The continuation of the Government’s furlough scheme means that it is still too soon to know the full impact on job losses throughout 2021, although it is likely to be significant.
- The Universal Credit (UC) claimant figures for December, published on 26 January, show the provisional count of people claiming UC (in and out-of-work) in Leeds was 73,079. This is an increase of 1,998 on the previous month and an increase of 106% since March 2020. Of these claimants, 43,302 were not in employment in November, an increase of 773 on the previous month and an increase of over 82% since March 2020. All wards in Leeds have seen an increase in unemployment and an increased uptake of in and out-of-work benefits but there has been a disproportionate impact on our poorest communities. The most affected wards are Gipton and Harehills with over 6,000 UC claimants in December and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill with over 5,000 followed by Armley and Middleton Park wards. These are also the wards with the highest number of children living in low income families.



### Employment Support Services

- 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. Recruitment activity has continued to take place during the pandemic.
- The service also delivers and commissions adult learning (post 19 years) 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, 636 parents attended a FEML course during the 2019 /20 academic year.
- New methods of delivery were supported 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 secure. In addition, the development of 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.

### Partnership Activity

- In October the Leeds Economic Recovery Framework was developed and sets out an approach with the aim that would enable the Council and the city to adapt quickly during this uncertain period, whilst striving to build more resilience into the Leeds economy and continuing to deliver Inclusive Growth. The 3 pillars underline the approach and is centred on the need to:
  - Respond. Where required, continue to take immediate actions to support businesses, workers and the economy as we have done since lockdown in March 2020.
  - Reset and Renew. Ensure we understand the challenges and opportunities that we face in recovery and that we have a clear focus and direction on the projects and partnerships that will address them.
  - Build Resilience. Maintain a long term view of our aspirations to deliver inclusive growth, address the climate emergency and be the best city for health and wellbeing. Ensure that our decisions lead us towards these goals.

### Employment and Transitions outcomes and outputs

- A total of 2,701 people were supported into work by the service in period April – December 2020. Jobs were secured across all sectors with the largest numbers in health and care, food retail, logistics, distribution and transport, digital and technology
- Parents can access a range of employment support services and data collected across quarter 1 to quarter 3 (April to December 2020) recorded a total of 2,980 new customers accessing the services of which 19% had a child under 16 years of age and 7% were lone parent. This is lower than in the same period in the previous year. While this information is requested of service users, a number prefer not to provide this information.

April-December 2020	No. of residents supported	Residents supported with a child under 16 yrs		Lone Parents supported	
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Jobshops	607	174	29%	66	11%
ESIF 18 plus	1,425	299	21%	105	7%
ESIF Routeway	510	38	7%	13	3%
ESIF YEP (NEET)	348	24	7%	5	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,890</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>7%</b>

- In the academic year 2019/20, 4,988 adults enrolled on a community based delivered or an online skills courses through the Adult Learning Programme, of whom 58% 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, 490 courses have been advertised on the Leeds Adult Learning website.

April- December 2020	No. of residents supported	Residents supported with a child under 16 yrs		Lone Parents supported	
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Adult Learning (Academic Year 2019/20)	4,988	636 (FEML)	13%	204	4%

## **Employment and Transitions – next steps**

- Employment and Skills support will remain a vital part of what we will be doing to aid recovery. This includes the continued efforts of the Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network and partners across the Employment and network to aid collaboration between partners from across sectors to provide support for priority groups and sectors impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

## **3.6 Readiness for Learning & School Aged Education**

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people who live in poverty.*** This has been incorporated into the 3As strategy and Leeds Year of Reading. The main project underneath this project is: Period Products. This workstream is led by Karen Jessup, Principal Educational Psychologist, Children and Families

### **Period Products – update on recent activities**

- In a project that has been co-produced with young people, Leeds has developed a period products scheme, within which free period products are being distributed in schools and community hubs. The aim of the scheme is to provide period products for all those who may find it difficult to access them, and to decrease the stigma around periods. The scheme is a result of a partnership with young people and parents, third, private, public sector organisations, schools and the University of Leeds. This project was established in 2018, and has been managed through a partnership of Children & Families, Communities & Environments and Civic Enterprise Leeds. Financial support for the scheme was established through private sector sponsors, elected members and Children & Families. Prior to the pandemic, products were sent out to schools and community hubs through Civic Enterprise Leeds.

### **Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- During the pandemic, products were instead distributed through the emergency food response, key third sector organisations and Catering Leeds. After the first lockdown, the scheme reverted to distributing products through schools and the open community hubs.

### **Period Products - Outcomes and outputs**

- Since October 2019 over 52,000 packs of products have been distributed in Leeds across schools and community hubs and interest and demand continues to be consistently demonstrating a need across the city. Qualitative feedback on the impact of the scheme is planned to be gathered, however the pandemic has delayed this piece of work.

### **Period Products - Next Steps**

- Qualitative feedback will be gathered as soon as it is safe and possible to do so within schools and community hubs.

## **3.7 Tackling poverty and inequality**

This is an area of work that sits above the impact workstreams, and is fundamental to the work of the board and all of the projects.

### **Tackling poverty and inequality update on recent activities**

- In March 2020 Leeds City Council started outreach, engagement and communication with residents who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This work was able to commence rapidly due to the existing partnerships that already existed in the City.
- A targeted and citywide approach to communication and engagement has been developed to respond to the crisis working with voluntary and community organisations, businesses and statutory partners.
- Task groups have been established to identify strong, clear, evidence based COVID-19 messages to aid more effective communication with communities and priority groups which can be championed by local leaders and communities. Key messages are tailored and communicated using a variety of formats - infographics, British Sign Language (BSL), easy read formats, audio, video, street signage, social media, community radio stations. Translated messages have also been produced in the top 12 languages used in the City.
- The Communities of Interest network was established to ensure information and support connects with the most marginalised and vulnerable communities in Leeds. The network brings together representatives from diverse communities from across Leeds to discuss and identify priority needs/issues and opportunities. Membership includes organisations representing Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME), migrant and disability groups.
- The Leeds Outbreak Plan has identified specific work and resources for the Third Sector through the Communities of Interest Network. This builds on existing capacity and capability of the Third Sector to take a proactive, preventative and asset based approach to prevent and manage outbreaks in local communities and communities of interest. As well as, promoting community trust and engagement in the COVID-19 plan. By utilising expertise and networks we have been able to tailor our approach to prevention, outbreak management, testing, tracing, communication and support, further enhancing local two-way dialogue.

### **Tackling poverty and inequality - Outcomes and outputs**

- Work continues in the city to understand the differential and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on inequality. Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities is already an important ambition for the city and for Leeds City Council and a range of interventions had already been established through a new place-based, more integrated approach to service delivery in some of our poorest neighbourhoods.
- Since this issue was last considered by the Citizens and Communities Multi-Agency Silver Group, work continues at a local, regional and national level on the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities. The key message is still that COVID-19 is not the great leveller and has shone a light on the great divides in our society. Over recent weeks, more data and analysis has been published, both on the direct health impacts of COVID-19, but also on the emerging social and economic consequences. On the 2nd June, Public Health England (PHE), published the findings on how different factors such as age, sex and ethnicity affect COVID-19 risks and outcomes. Age is the most significant risk factor. Of people diagnosed with COVID-19, those who were 80+ were seventy times more likely to die than those under 40.

### **Tackling poverty and inequality - Next Steps**

- During the COVID-19 pandemic locality working ceased operating under its normal arrangements. This was to enable work to take place to support and respond to COVID-19 crisis work. This work is ongoing and is progressing through stages of development

## **4 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

**4.1.1** 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.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best city in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity. Screening form attached at appendix 1.

## **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 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.

4.3.2 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.

4.3.3 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)

4.3.4 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

### Climate Emergency

4.3.5 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 a price increase, 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.

## **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 This report provides an update on existing services provided by the Council, schools and other partners. Any costs to the Council due to COVID-19 will be fed through to the financial reporting associated with this. This report does not introduce new areas of strategy, however should a need for this be identified in future this will take into account current financial pressures and the need for savings to be identified across the Council. Where possible, a partnership approach would continue to be implemented, to pool resources from a variety of directorates and sectors across Leeds.

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 This report is subject to call in.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 None

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 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.

5.2 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

5.3 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.

5.4 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.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 That Executive Board endorses 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.

6.2 The Executive Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Thriving strategy across the city and in particular in each respective Members' portfolio in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.

6.3 The Executive Board invites the Board to note that the officer responsible for this strategy is the Deputy Director Children and Families; working in partnership across the council directorates.

## **7 Background documents<sup>10</sup>**

None

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<sup>10</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.