

**Report of the Director of Children & Families**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

**Subject: 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**

- Child poverty has devastating impacts on children, the adults children become, and on the societies in which poor children live. Poverty is a day to day reality that results in people living precarious lives, with every decision evaluated- from choosing between heating or food, having a cup of coffee or using the washing machine, buying clothes or shampoo. It is not, however, an individual fault. Poverty is a societal and moral failing, and the emotions and shame that surround people who experience poverty is something that will never leave them.
- The percentage of children who live in poverty is increasing, both locally and nationally. In 2016, 20% of young people (33,485) in Leeds lived in poverty. Across the UK, more than 4.1 million young people live in poverty. In work poverty is also increasing, with 70% of young people living in poverty having at least one adult in work across the UK.
- We know that living in areas of deprivation or in poverty results in differing access to resources, which is an inequality that impacts all areas of a child’s life. We also know that statistics show a significant link between experiencing poverty and poorer life outcomes across health, wellbeing, life expectancy, education and employment.

Poverty is an injustice that strips away opportunities, builds barriers, and reduces freedom. It represents a loss of the rights of a child.

- Statistics across the country show that Leeds is not on its own in the prevalence and negative impacts of child poverty. Its story is not unique, the debate is not original, and the impacts of poverty in Leeds are comparable to the impacts of poverty everywhere.
- What is new, however, is our approach to tackle child poverty. We don't want to talk about poverty just in terms of statistical prevalence, of statistical impact. We know that for children who live in poverty, life is not lived in terms of percentage difference, but of the environment in which they live, where they go to school, how they spend their time. Often, this environment is not meeting their needs.
- Leeds City Council has had a focus on tackling poverty and inequality for some time. The 'Tackling Poverty and Inequality' Executive Board Report, from 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018, provides a detailed overview of the Council's inequality priorities and the work that is being done across the city to tackle poverty. Other pertinent reports include the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the 'Locality Working and Priority Neighbourhood Update' from February 2019, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the 'Digital Inclusion: Tackling Poverty and Inequality' report.
- Despite the Council's focus on tackling poverty, national policy on issues such as austerity have created an increasingly difficult environment to reduce, and mitigate the impact of, poverty.
- It is recognised that the ultimate aim is to eradicate poverty, and that is the long term goal for Leeds- however, to do this, a national approach that allocates resources to tackle poverty, decreases in work poverty, and strengthens the safety net that children, young people and families rely on is crucial.
- Whilst Leeds City Council will continue to fight to eradicate poverty with the powers that they have, in the short term there is a need to mitigate the negative impacts of poverty and inequality.
- 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.
- It is crucial that any strategy, provision or project that is created around children and young people is advised by the perspectives of children and young people. This strategy has been developed with a wide range of partners, including a panel of 'experts by experience'- children, young people and parents who live on a low income. It provides an overview of the work that Leeds is undertaking to improve the lives of children, young people and parents who live in 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
- keeping people safe from harm and promoting community respect and resilience

## **3. Resource Implications**

- Each project will have an individual resource implication. Where possible, a partnership approach will be implemented, to pool resources from a variety of directorates and sectors across Leeds.

## **Recommendations**

- a) That Executive Board approve Thriving: A Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds, which is appended to this covering report
- b) Note the strategic framework in place to tackle child poverty, and the work being undertaken by the council and its partners in the key areas of activity
- c) Note the officer responsible for implementation is the Chief Officer, Partnerships & Health by December 2022

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the 'Thriving' Strategy, which is Leeds' strategic framework to mitigate the impact of poverty for children and young people. The strategy has been created in partnership with children, young people and parents. Tackling poverty forms a key part of achieving the council's vision to build a strong economy in a compassionate city, detailed in the council's Best Council Plan.
- 1.2 The strategy should be understood within the specific context of Leeds, and the city's approach to tackling poverty and inequality. The localities approach, which has been developed by Communities & Environments, has facilitated a greater partnership approach both at local and city wide level. The approach seeks to adopt a new flexible, collaborative working, focussed on our least advantaged communities. At its heart is more joined up, effective service provision, with key services- housing, communities, children's, adults social care- adopting a new working model with a very clear locality focus.

- 1.3 Relevant reports include: *Best Council Plan Refresh 2019/20* paper, the *Inclusive Growth Strategy: Delivery* paper, the *Tackling Poverty and Inequality* report, the *Children & Young Peoples Plan* and the *Health and Wellbeing Strategy*.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 For children, experiencing poverty often leads to the loss of rights. The UN Convention Rights of the Child details 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life. Six are particularly relevant to child poverty; articles 3, 6, 12, 24, 26 and 27.

- 2.2 A brief overview of each right is as follows:

### **2.3 Article 3**

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

### **2.4 Article 6**

States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

### **2.5 Article 12**

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### **2.6 Article 24**

States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

### **2.7 Article 26**

States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child.

## 2.8 *Article 27*

States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

2.9 The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has said that all children living in poverty are vulnerable, but some groups are particularly vulnerable. These include: younger children, children who have immigrated and children living in single parent households.

2.10 As referenced in the Tackling Poverty & Inequality Executive Board Report, 2018, the impact of austerity measures over the past decade have led to an increase of in work poverty, and in the level of poverty experienced by different demographic groups.

2.11 Austerity has had a disproportionate impact on women. In the UK there are around 5.1 million women in poverty (20%), compared to 4.4million men (18%). When it comes to public spending cuts, women are disproportionately affected as on average they use more public services and are the majority of welfare benefit recipients, they make up the majority of the public sector labour force, and they are more likely to have to make up for services which are no longer provided by, for example, increasing the amount of unpaid care work they undertake. Additionally, women are also the part of the labour force most often on low pay.

2.12 When looking at the cumulative impact on UK households by 2022 of all tax, social security and public spending policies carried out since 2010, the Equality and Human Right Commission (EHRC) found that women will lose on average £940 from the reforms, compared with a loss on £460 on average for men. Women lose more than men at every income level.

2.13 The EHRC also found that other minority groups will also be affected more severely. Ethnic minority households will lose more than white households – the average loss for black families is 5% of income, more than double than for white families. Single parents will lose around 15% of their net income, and families with disabled children will lose an average of £3,300 per year.

2.14 The cost of poverty to the UK is approximately £78 billion per year. To tackle the impact and cost poverty has on individual's lives, it costs £69 billion- £1 in every £5 of all spending on public services (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Counting the cost of UK Poverty, 2016). If we, as a city, do not act the risk is one that is both moral and economical- poverty creates an unequal and inequitable system, which not only brings increased cost to all of our services, it also holds the moral cost of restricting the realities of Leeds citizens.

2.15 Popular rhetoric around poverty takes an individualised approach to blame those who live in poverty for their poverty. Worklessness, addiction, dependency on the welfare state, and a lack of aspiration to achieve- amongst others- have all been

blamed for the increasing percentages of people who live in poverty. Common representations, both in policy and wider society, show people who live in poverty as doing things differently (and worse) than people who do not live in poverty. However, 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.

- 2.16 Poverty is not just the absence of food, warmth, housing, clothes and toiletries- it is the stigma, the shame, the exclusion, and the degrading manner in which people who live with poverty are treated. Social exclusion can be defined as the 'inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life and, in some characteristics, alienation and distance from mainstream society (Duffy, 1995). Exclusion can impact on every area of a child's life, from not being able to do homework to not feeling welcomed in the city centre. It can be exclusion from friendship groups, for not having the right trainers, for not having the right food, for not wanting to have people round your house. It is a subjective experience that is difficult to quantify, but the feeling of being excluded can impact someone for the rest of their life.
- 2.17 People who live in poverty are rarely provided with the opportunity to influence strategic direction or policy around alleviating poverty. Decisions about their lives, the provision that they can access, and the support that is provided is often done 'to them', rather than 'with them'. Similarly, poverty is commonly understood and discussed through statistics and 'gaps'- which, whilst being of fundamental importance, only tell half of the story. Therefore, we are reframing the rhetoric on poverty. We need to understand the impacts of poverty from the perspective of people who experience it every day. Similarly, the ways in which poverty is experienced by children cannot be understood through solely looking at adult poverty. To understand how poverty impacts the lives of children and young people, we need to talk to children and young people. We cannot just focus on eradicating adult poverty as the solution to child poverty.
- 2.18 To truly tackle poverty, we need to work with 'experts by experience'- people who live, or who have lived, in poverty, to change the structures that exist- rather than focussing on individual behaviour. We need to look at our policies, practices, and provisions, our ways of working, language around poverty and understandings of poverty, to better support people who live in poverty.
- 2.19 The work of the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, who are currently on their third commission, has heavily influenced this strategy and the focus on reframing the debate (<https://www.leedspovetrytruth.org.uk>). Poverty Truth's mantra is 'Nothing about us, without us, is for us'. They work with city and civic leaders and people living in poverty to better understand the challenges that poverty brings.
- 2.20 To address and improve the issue of poverty, a revolutionary approach is needed. The reductions in public sector budgets- with an approximate loss of £266 million for Leeds City Council between 2010 and 2020, in addition to rising demands on services and increasing cost pressures, has resulted in a challenging situation. This

approach to tackling child poverty is revolutionary in a time where local authorities are facing increasing difficulty to fund anything other than statutory services.

2.21 In a time of increasing poverty and decreasing budgets, we cannot make meaningful change unless we work together, tying in the intelligence, resources and work that is being done across the city to develop new knowledge and assess what makes the most difference, and why. We need everyone to get on board; young people, families, communities, schools, academies, education settings, private sectors, third sectors, public sectors, universities, faith groups, not for profit organisations and other partners. The city wide approach that is being adopted, which includes working with Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors who have contributed an incredible amount to young people and families in Leeds, and other partners, will utilise the strengths and resources across the city to tackle poverty and improve lives.

### **3. Main issues**

3.1 Thriving aims to eradicate the bubbles of frustration in the systems that support people, through creating inclusive, equal partnerships, made up of children and young people, council directorates, schools, education provisions, academics, third sector, private sector, public sectors, and community representatives. These partnerships use their knowledge and expertise to investigate the impact of poverty on a specific area of children's lives, and then work together to create projects that mitigate this impact.

3.2 Thriving has four fundamental principles:

1) All work needs to be informed by the voices of children, young people and parents

2) All projects need to work with a wide variety of partners

3) The focus is on changing structures, not individuals

4) Research is incorporated into every project

3.3 This approach links in with multiple areas of existing work across the council which are demonstrating real impact with a view to more accurately monitoring the effectiveness of interventions in mitigating the negative outcomes of living in poverty on children in Leeds.

3.4 The voice of children, young people and their families are at the heart of this work. Over the past year, Leeds City Council, the University of Leeds, Child Poverty Action Group and CATCH worked in partnership to develop a panel of 'experts by experience'- young people and parents who live on a low income. Three young people, three young adults and three parents worked collaboratively over six months to discuss the day to day impact of poverty on their lives. The panel were trained in research tools, and conducted peer research with young people and adults in their community. The panel developed three snakes and ladders boards, one around the impact of poverty on education, one around the impact of poverty on employment and university, and one around the impact of poverty on lone

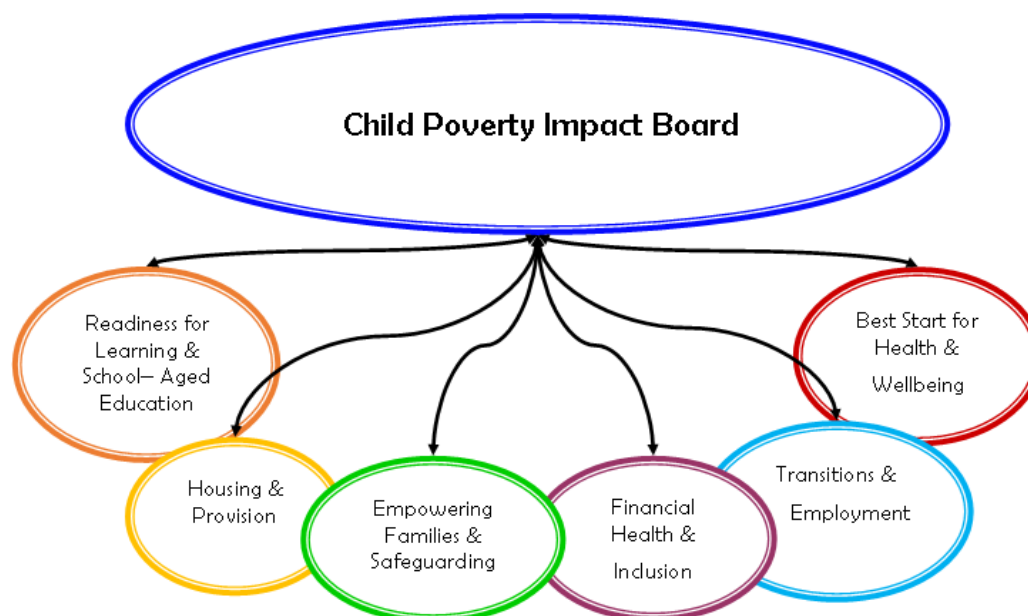
parenthood. These games, the final report and the video, have been incorporated into a wide variety of events, including conferences on: Inclusive Growth, Poverty & Education, and the Child Friendly Leeds Poverty Event. There has been discussions in the Child Poverty Impact Board on the outputs. The panel have also worked closely on the refinement of the child poverty strategy, as well as being involved in various projects that sit under the child poverty work. The online version of the report can be found in appendix 2.

- 3.5 There are two parts to this work: The Child Poverty Impact Board (CPIB), which is a city wide equal partnership that will apply robust measures and targets to reduce the negative impact of child poverty, through using research informed interventions and projects, and six Impact Workstreams.
- 3.6 The aim of the CPIB is to have a multi-organisational body with overall responsibility and strategic oversight of the Impact Workstreams. Each project or programme within the Impact Workstreams is accountable to the CPIB, which has overall responsibility for the projects that are implemented. One of these responsibilities is to decide whether a project is to continue, based on its impact. Every six months, the projects should be evaluated by the steering group, reflecting on the project plan as a guide for progress. Once the evidence has been gathered, they can be taken to the CPIB for discussion. If the projects are found to be having little/no measurable effect, they should be considered for discontinuation.
- 3.7 As the impact of projects can be measured in many different ways, individual projects will be evaluated against unique criteria, which will be decided by the steering group for each Impact Workstream. Based on the outcome of the evaluations, the workstream steering group will decide whether to continue with the project. The CPIB can offer guidance throughout this process. Similarly, each project will have an individual timescale for design, implementation and review.
- 3.8 The CPIB meets every four months. At these meetings the CPIB will discuss the impact that individual projects have had, assess their progress and propose plans for the future. The CPIB will also discuss other strategic matters, in line with their responsibilities for the oversight of Thriving.
- 3.9 The Impact Workstreams will involve a wide range of partners across the city; they will develop, create and evaluate low cost, high impact projects that improve the lives and experiences of children and young people who live in poverty. These projects will research the impact of poverty, but, crucially, will see what we can change or improve to make a difference and mitigate this impact. This work will be research led, with students and academics from universities in Leeds contributing to developing and assessing the impact of these interventions.
- 3.10 The Impact Workstreams are clustered around six areas; Best Start for Health & Wellbeing, Employment & Pathways, Readiness for Learning & School Age Education, Housing & Provision, Empowering Families & Safeguarding and Financial Health & Inclusion.
- 3.11 The workstreams may consist of new areas of work, or they may involve enhancements to existing areas of work. The aim of having the workstreams is that



we can focus on improving a specific area of children and young people's lives that is affected by poverty. We adopt a partnership approach because addressing these issues is the responsibility of everyone who works with and cares about children and young people.

- 3.12 An overview of the work that has already commenced, or that is planned to start, is detailed for each workstream below. An annual report will be provided to Executive Board that contains an update on the Impact Workstreams and the CPIB.



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

- 3.14 The initiative '*50 things to do before you're 5*' has been launched. This project is a large scale partnership between early years provisions, schools, academics, private organisations, NHS and Leeds City Council. It has developed and released an app and card sets for parents and carers that encourages no cost activities which develops children's oracy and vocabulary, through experiential learning activities.

- 3.15 *The 3A's Strategy*, which aims to reduce the gap in educational attainment for all vulnerable children and young people, has been launched. This strategy is focussed around the collective drive to improve the Attendance, Achievement and Attainment of all our children and young people, but particularly those who are vulnerable and/or less advantaged. A Leeds 'Year of Reading' has been launched in partnership with Booktrust. This partnership will bring over £1 million worth of books and resources into the city across 3 years, with much of this being targeted at areas of high deprivation. There will be a specific focus on early reading as we know that students from poorer backgrounds are often behind academically before they start school and then struggle to catch up across the primary age range. Our aim is that over time we will have narrowed this gap for 4 and 5 year olds by working with them and their families earlier and more effectively.

- 3.16 *Period poverty* is one area of poverty led social exclusion which has had raised national attention over the last two years. Period poverty refers to having a lack of access to sanitary products due to financial constraints.

- 3.17 Alongside the problems that individuals who can't afford sanitary protection face, there are also issues of stigma and embarrassment around discussing menstruation. This can lead to a situation where individuals can't afford sanitary protection, and are too embarrassed to discuss the problem- so there is a lack of data and research around this topic. There have been links, however, with period poverty and a lower school attendance.
- 3.18 A city wide approach to tackling Period Poverty has been in development for the past year. The approach is based on a collaboration between Children & Families and Communities, and includes partnerships with third, public, private, and academic sectors.
- 3.19 The approach has been led by children, young people and parents, and partnerships have been developed with a variety of public, private, third, academic and education sector partners to identify current practice and develop a scheme that meets the need in a non-stigmatising, sustainable way.
- 3.20 Period products that are in packaging that has been designed by a young person in Leeds will be supplied for free in schools and community hubs from early 2020. Products in plain packaging have been supplied to schools and community hubs since autumn 2019. There is also ongoing discussion with a company that is interested in working in partnership to develop an app. The Leeds specific products will be launched in 2020, and products in plain packaging are being provided in schools and hubs from October.

### 3.21 **Housing & Provision**

- 3.22 Housing have undertaken a broad assessment of work that is currently ongoing, and have identified key priorities to further develop this work, including:
- Deliver a minimum of 500 private rented tenancy sign ups through private sector lettings scheme where property standards inspection take place to ensure they are fit for purpose.
  - Minimise the number of families accessing temporary accommodation by finding suitable PRS properties that meet their needs.
  - Offer of a housing needs assessment and floating housing related support services where a customer or professional highlights a housing issue.
  - Offer a robust tenancy relations service for those at risk of illegal eviction or harassment from their landlord, focus on rogue landlords and applying civil penalties or prosecution for breaches of housing standards.
  - Continued support for Leeds Neighbourhood Approach in Holbeck, and the implementation of selective licensing in Harehills and Beeston. This will lead to all PRS properties in those areas being inspected and conditions improved.
  - Increased role of property inspections in the wider PRS market to identify sub-standard accommodation and cases of overcrowding.
  - Create links to the local GP's, Schools, ASC, CSC and local community support groups to identify cases where housing conditions may be influencing child development / poverty issues.

- Provide a proactive tenancy management service through specialist Enhanced Income Officers to existing council tenants, in particular, supporting larger families impacted by the Universal Credit, the benefit cap and other welfare changes and seeking to maximising income through Discretionary Housing Payments for those that need extra help to meet housing costs.
- Promote and signpost a range of services to help reduce or prevent child poverty, for example, promoting the Credit Union, ESOL, Money Buddies service and raising awareness about issues such as loan sharks and gambling awareness.
- Deliver an £80m investment programme each year to drive continuous improvements in council housing quality, and support sustainable and economic growth employment opportunities in the construction sector.

These functions are now embedded within the day to day activities across the housing functions. However, the service intends to target particular attention in the coming months to 2 specific areas of work:

- The implementation of selective licensing and the opportunities to make a real difference to vulnerable tenants in these deprived areas and,
- Further work to support the enhanced income service to ensure we maximise support to vulnerable tenants across the city.

### **3.23 Empowering Families & Safeguarding**

3.24 Within this workstream, the main project is 'Poverty Proofing Social Care'. The British Association of Social Work has been developing an anti-poverty practice guide to support members in their work with service users living in poverty. Leeds will work with BASC and key academics to develop a model of 'poverty proofing practice' that aims to train social workers and key staff in poverty and it's impacts- and support families in mitigating the impact of poverty. There has been a substantial amount of preliminary work to establish the best method of developing this framework, with key collaborations with academics and the Poverty Truth Commission.

3.25 A master class for social workers on the topic of poverty with Professors Brid Featherstone and Kate Morris was held in Leeds. Work with the University of Leeds to look at the best way to turn academic findings on topics of child poverty into useful information for practitioners has started. Research into the understandings of social workers in relation to poverty is ongoing. Workshops have been held with Heads of Service within Social Care to look at the impact of poverty on social work practice.

### **3.26 Financial Health & Inclusion**

3.27 The Financial Health and Inclusion Workstream are running a number of projects that relate to child poverty- specifically, the Healthy Holidays work and Schools Savings Schemes.

- 3.28 The aim of the Schools Saving Schemes is to try to get Leeds children into a savings habit from an early age and to get used to managing their money. 35 primary schools have established a savings club with Leeds Credit Union.
- 3.29 Children's services and governors support service are to work with Leeds Credit Union to establish more savings clubs in Leeds schools, particularly in deprived areas of the city. Four frontline training sessions were arranged by Children's Services in February 2019. Further training is available to be booked and can provide front line staff with information about financial support mechanisms in order to be able to assist families to better deal with the financial difficulties that they may face.
- 3.30 Over the last two years, the Communities directorate, in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation, have funded third sector groups to provide food and activities over the summer holidays.
- 3.31 This year, the programme reached 5,441 unique children and young people, and there was a total headcount of 51,576 young people. Additionally, 903 adults attending with their children were recorded, and there was a total headcount of 2,686 adults. Projects were awarded £549,598 with funds provided by Communities and Environments, Leeds Community Foundation (which secured funding from the Asda Foundation and Jimbo's Fund), and the Department for Education.
- 3.32 The partnership between LCF, Communities and Children's worked well, and during the summer holidays, over 50 Leeds local venues, 42 education provisions and 10 Community Hub venues hosted a range of free Healthy Holiday activities for children and young people.
- 3.33 All Healthy Holidays programmes provided a hot or cold lunch for the children and young people, and some programmes also provided breakfast, snacks and food parcels. Leeds Community Foundation are undertaking research on the programmes, which estimates that 66% of attendees were facing issues accessing food. Throughout the summer food was donated by FareShare and Rethink Food. The food distributed by FareShare alone included an incredible 15.21 tonnes of intercepted food, otherwise destined for landfill, with an estimated retail value of £21,645. This equates to 4,375 trays/crates of food. In addition Leeds Catering provided hot meals for the community hubs and some schools. An extensive and impressive range of activities and day trips were offered to the children and/or their families.
- 3.34 The food provided throughout the Healthy Holidays programme has helped to alleviate holiday hunger, which is an increasing problem our city is facing. The programme provided for families living in the 10% most deprived communities. Many of the children who attended receive free school meals (FSM) during term time. The highest percentage of FSM entitlement in the schools taking part was 84%, compared to a national average of 13.6% for all school types, measured in January 2018. Every school that ran a Healthy Holidays programme had a figure higher than the national average. Projects estimated that two thirds of the children attending struggled to access food in the holidays. Feedback from numerous project staff indicated children had not eaten breakfast that morning, or since the previous

day's lunch. These are powerful indicators of the need for a programme that offers food during school holidays.

3.35 These projects provided meals and free activities to children and young people who would usually access free school meals during term time. The activities have:

- Reduced the impact of holiday hunger and other pressures on families and increase opportunities and experiences for young people in the areas of greatest need
- Reduced holiday hunger, holiday inactivity & holiday isolation
- Some projects were providing not just lunch, but breakfast or a mid-morning snack, or even dinner/takeaway boxes as well.
- Many could not turn away younger siblings and/or parents who also turned up hungry
- Some of these children were either getting no meal at home, or cheap, highly unhealthy meals (packet of crisps, bread and jam/chicken & chips)

The funding is also supporting:

- FareShare & Rethink Food intercepted food provision
- StreetGames workshops for staff & volunteers
- Public Health training & support resources
- "Cooking on a shoestring" recipe book
- Change4Life Disney activity material
- Project co-ordination & evaluation

There are also wrap around services that are being provided, such as:

- Debt/Money advice
- PC/wifi access for online claims
- Staff support for online claims
- FSM, Healthy Start vouchers
- Pay As You Feel cafés
- Food bank/parcel support
- Connecting to other free activities
- Local/LCC support schemes
- School uniform exchanges
- Emotional and social support/networks

3.36 Evaluative reports are being produced by Leeds Community Foundation, Childrens and Communities. A series of meetings have been set up with key partners, to look at lessons learnt and the continuation of the scheme for next summer.

### 3.37 **Transitions & Employment**

3.38 In 2018, a project that was based on a partnership approach between the Employment & Skills Service, City Development and Children & Families directorate was established. This project built on from positive outcomes around supporting

parent/carers into work, evident from the integration of different services into Children's Centres.

- 3.39 Using a research based approach, Employment & Skills and Children & Families created a prototype embedding staff skilled in employment and skills, into Children's Centres in Leeds. The aim of the work was to enhance adult learning and employability in Children's Centres through identifying and supporting those parents who wish to move into learning or work. The project also seeks to improve children's educational attainment through family learning opportunities. The key to the approach was working with a range of partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions and a range of adult learning providers.
- 3.40 An action research project, targeted in two Children's Centres (City and Holbeck and Middleton), aimed to assess the practicalities of the approach, learning, good practice and impact, before the model is extended to additional areas.
- 3.41 The key objectives were to:
- Expand the learning offer
  - Increase the number of parents taking part in learning
  - Increase the number of those who want and are able to work, moving into employment
  - Enable parents to access other facilities within the locality and improve confidence
- 3.42 A new project will be started in West Leeds, with a similar theme of working in partnership to support parents into employment/ training, but with an additional locality based approach. This will be developed through a range of partners, both city wide and locally, and is supported by conversations around advancing the Healthy Holidays work.
- 3.43 This approach will work with a variety of partners to provide volunteering/ work experience/ work, and takes a pincer approach- working with parents to develop the 'soft skills' and experiences that are needed to thrive in a working environment, and working with businesses for them to adapt to supporting/ employing local parents.
- 3.44 It will be developed over the next few months, and work with key partners such as Leeds Community Foundation to learn from good practice in other areas.
- 3.45 This advances the work that has been undertaken, as the initial work prepares parents for work, develops their self-confidence and soft skills. This further development then supports parents in transitioning into employment through opportunities within their area.
- 3.46 For the scheme to work, however, there needs to be adaption on all sides- local and city wide businesses are vital partners, to adapt their processes to better engage with people who have experienced poverty.
- 3.47 If successful, this could be a scheme that is rolled out in all areas of the city, and that ties in with key strategies.

### **3.48 Best Start for Health & Wellbeing**

3.49 The *Best Beginnings*' initiative aims to enhance early parenting capacity and increasing breastfeeding by making available localised evidence-based information. This initiative provides the information via the Baby Buddy app and the Baby Express newspaper. The project is being carried out in frontline services in Leeds and has a specific focus on young parents living in deprived circumstances.

3.50 Designed to provide stage appropriate knowledge, awareness and confidence, the Baby Buddy app provides personalised information to parents to be and in the year after the baby is born. Locally it is being used regularly by professionals to support their consultations.

3.51 Work continues in partnership with Best Beginnings to enhance the information available on the app, most recently around food and activity for a healthy pregnancy and infant mental health. The app has a geolocation facility that enables parents to access local information, aiming to enhance communication and reduce isolation.

3.52 The Perinatal Parenting Partnership Board is developing the perinatal education offer across the city. Current work includes the development of an inclusive, up to date antenatal offer card and a postnatal offer card. This will enable providers to better engage families in the range of programmes available from pregnancy to age two, reduce potential duplication and enable us to develop a better understanding of the reach and the impact of perinatal education in the city.

## **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 EAL (English as an Additional Language) 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.

### **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 NEET.
- 4.3.4 The strategy collaborates with local and city wide strategies such as the Locality 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 reduce poverty, 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 Each project will have an individual resource implication. Where possible, a partnership approach will 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- which will help to eradicate 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
- 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 For this reason, we need 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.
- 5.6 We need a radically new approach to tackle child poverty, with all organisations sharing information, resources and good practice, to ensure that all barriers that young people face are broken down.
- 5.7 At a time when child poverty is increasing and the statutory requirement for local authorities to have a child poverty strategy has been removed, we are refusing to allow poverty to blight the lives of our children and young people.
- 5.8 Thriving is the first step in a long journey to work better, together, to improve opportunities, and enable better outcomes, for our children and young people.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That Executive Board approve Thriving: A Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds which is appended to this covering report
- 6.2 Note the strategic framework in place to tackle child poverty, and the work being undertaken by the council and its partners in the key areas of activity
- 6.3 Note the officer responsible for implementation is the Chief Officer, Partnerships & Health by December 2022

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</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.