

# South Tyneside Partnership

## Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

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### Poverty Group Update and Cost of Living Response

Report of Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Corporate Lead – Policy & Insight and Laura Liddell, Anti-Poverty Strategy Coordinator

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#### **Why Has this Report Come to the Health and Wellbeing Board?**

1. To provide the Board with an update on the work of the Poverty Group and the wider Partnership on anti-poverty activity and the response to the cost of living.
2. This follows the last update to the Board in June 2023 and previous discussions at the Board preceding the Anti-Poverty Summit which took place in September 2023. The Board receives quarterly updates on this topic as it aligns closely to the Financial Security ambition within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
3. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to discuss and note the report and endorse the next steps set out.

#### **Which Outcome is this Linked to Within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and How?**

4. Financial Security to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

#### **How Does This Report Contribute to the Cross Cutting Theme(s)?**

4. The work set out in the report demonstrates public involvement and community engagement through initiatives such as welcoming places.

#### **Purpose of Report**

5. This report provides an update to Health & Wellbeing Board on the work of the South Tyneside Poverty Group and the Partnership's response to the cost-of-living crisis, following the last update to the Board in June 2023.

#### **Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that the report is discussed, noted and the next steps endorsed.

## South Tyneside Anti-Poverty Summit

7. The South Tyneside Anti-Poverty Summit, the follow up to the cost-of-living Summit held in October 2022, was held in September 2023. It saw 99 attendees from 36 organisations come together to discuss the response to the cost-of-living crisis and how to move towards longer-term interventions to tackle poverty.
8. Keynote speakers included the Leader of the Council and Lead Member, Hospitality & Hope, Action Station South Tyneside, the Parish of Jarrow & Simonside, Key Community, the North East Child Poverty Commission, Citizens Advice and the thinktank New Local.
9. Group work was carried out, considering what is and is not working and what would make the biggest difference. Delegates could then visit nine different zones, including the Plinth platform, Welcoming Places (and the recent independent evaluation – see Appendix 1), local employers and the support they are offering staff, the Healthy Homes pilot project, the Fuel Poverty strategy and energy support, winter readiness, period dignity donation scheme and the social navigator project.
10. A Q&A session was held with the speakers and the Council's Chief Executive to answer audience questions before the Summit closed. A summary of the main points and next steps were circulated to attendees two weeks after the Summit with a pledge to share an update two months on, by the 11<sup>th</sup> November.

## Key Themes

11. A number of key themes clearly emerged from the Summit. These included:
  - Listening to people with lived experience and putting them at the heart of decision-making, particularly through the Poverty Truth Commission
  - Making advice for residents simple, accessible and easy to find
  - Boosting data sharing between organisations and looking at autoenrollment for support where possible
  - Supporting frontline teams and volunteers to make every contact count
  - Collaborating on funding bids and looking at more flexible and long-term funding
  - Working with employers to reduce in-work poverty
  - Take a more localised approach to ensure coordination across partners and to help identify where any gaps in support lie.
12. There was also a clear view that one organisation alone cannot tackle these issues and how important it is to continue to collaborate and share assets, resources, and spaces. This was summed up by some of the feedback from the event. For example, attendees said that; *Loved meeting new partners to discuss how we can work together;* *“Commitment and energy of the participants;”* *“willingness to make a difference;”* *“great to be with like-minded partners;”* *“there is a lot of good work going in South Tyneside and people are passionate about helping others.”*

13. In addition, as New Local explained, *“so much work is happening but the constraints local areas of operating in are significant”* given that most levers are in the control of central government. Therefore, there is a clear need to continue to highlight to Government and others the impact of poverty in South Tyneside.

### Identified Areas of Action

14. Ten specific actions were identified from the Summit and progress has already been made against each.
- **Support the sustainability and development of Welcoming Places;**  
source funding for Welcoming Places this Winter (helping places access external funds and look at other resources) and revamp the Welcoming Places brochure to make it clearer what places offer and how they can signpost to other services.
    - The Council and Inspire are supporting Welcoming Places to access external grants and apply for further funds, along with non-financial support, while funding is already being secured from private sector contributions and Pledge organisations.
    - The Welcoming Places brochure has been adapted, ensuring accuracy of times, dates and includes specific information of activities on offer. This will be ready for distribution prior to December.
    - Ongoing promotion through social media, website, map, leaflets, big screens and more to support sustainability and signpost venues to all residents.
    - Welcoming places newsletters are produced monthly and distributed to all relevant agencies and providers to signpost towards support, while the first in-person meeting was held in October. External speakers have presented to Welcoming Places to share expertise and provide essential information, including on Domestic Violence, energy efficiency and Cancer Care.
    - Plans are being developed for support over Christmas with volunteers from Fire & Rescue available as they were last year.
  - **Link training and skills provision (through South Tyneside Works and partners) into key local community settings, such as Family Hubs, Welcoming Places, and the Community Food Bus so that people accessing those spaces can access training opportunities.**
    - Training providers are working closely with the Welcoming Places with a provider now able to work with both volunteers and attendees to develop basic numeracy skills, health and safety and a wide range of accredited training opportunities.
    - Through successful funding applications, a programme of cultural activities has been implemented with welcoming places able to offer sessions include upcycling, craft, and museum focused activities.
    - Further funding opportunities and links with the Foundation of Light have also enabled enhancement of the provision of Sport/Physical Activities.

- This includes armchair exercise, walking groups and funding continues to be available for implementation of further activities.
- A planned programme of training opportunities for staff and volunteers is in place. Training delivered has included safeguarding, active listening, emotional wellbeing, resilience, becoming a safe space, food hygiene, fire safety, A better U training, illegal money lending, suicide awareness training and support to become job ready.
  - The International Day for Older people incorporated a planned week of links to training, wider agencies, and interventions to specifically support the ageing population.
- **Work in partnership to help those most at risk this Winter** through the launch of a Winter Readiness card for frontline workers, volunteers and key organisations prompting them to ask vital questions of those most at risk, allowing them to signpost them to the required help and support (be that on benefits, housing, vaccines, social connectedness and more).<sup>1</sup>
    - Winter Readiness cards are being distribution and training for frontline workers, volunteers and key organisations has commenced. This enables short and meaningful contacts to signpost them to the required help and support.
    - A Vaccination Programme for both Covid and Flu is underway. A successful linking of other experts including Oral Health and ABU Champions is running alongside this.
    - The Cost-of-living support directory has been amended to include clearer advice to enable staff/volunteers to signpost to additional services. This will be ready for distribution prior to December.
    - Further work is underway with energy providers to ascertain support during winter months.
  - **Review the role of the South Tyneside Poverty Group** to ensure it is inclusive and includes a link to people with live experience, such as through the Poverty Truth Commission. We will also look at other ways to include the voices of people with lived experience within decision-making processes.
    - The multi-agency Poverty Group met, as part of its monthly cycle, on 12<sup>th</sup> October and a discussion on membership took place in order to ensure representatives from all sectors with further attendees now invited.
    - The Poverty Truth Commission is discussed monthly within the Poverty Group. A lead community link is in place and is in the process of visiting Welcoming Places, food banks and others to engage people with lived experience.
  - **Begin developing an Anti-Poverty / Inclusive Growth Strategy** using the New Local report on Designing Out Destitution<sup>2</sup> as a framework to shape our

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<sup>1</sup> [Council Helps Residents with 'Winter-Ready' Campaign - South Tyneside Council](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Designing Out the Most Severe Forms of Hardship in Local Areas - New Local](#)

plans and performance. This will frame the direction of our work and influence the new North East Combined Authority coming into effect next May.

- Research is underway on the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy using the New Local framework and incorporating the key elements of the work undertaken so far. Further meetings are scheduled to coordinate this further in line with the new North East Combined Authority coming into effect next May.
- The new Anti-Poverty Strategy Coordinator is leading this work and playing a key role in coordinating activity.<sup>3</sup>
- **Map out the support available at a local level and convene mini-summits to enable further coordination** of services and identify where the gaps in support lie, exploring new ways of extending support.
  - The implementation of a pilot, localised meeting is in the planning stages. The initial focus area will be Jarrow and a meeting is scheduled for early December. This will link in all relevant agencies and the voices of the residents to ascertain what is currently working well and identify potential barriers/gaps in services.
  - Further mapping exercises will continue and the mini summits extended to additional localities from January onwards.
- **Use the South Tyneside Pledge to work with local businesses to reduce in-work poverty**, working with them on issues such as pay and conditions, flexible and hybrid working and supporting their employees' health and well-being. Work with the private sector to help with key projects such as Welcoming Places.
  - The Pledge Newsletter requested funding and support from the private sector to help with key projects such as Welcoming Places.
  - During the next Pledge Event scheduled 10<sup>th</sup> November, DWP will present benefit advice on issues including pay and conditions, flexible and hybrid working and exploring myths around benefits.
  - Work around in-work poverty includes information provided around the Period Poverty Scheme.
  - Further exploratory meetings are scheduled to focus on the findings of in-work poverty surveys conducted by the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the impact of interventions.
- **Work in partnership with DWP, Welfare Support Team, Citizens Advice, Age Concern and other key partners to drive further progress on benefit maximisation**, boosting awareness of key schemes and reducing myths.

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<sup>3</sup> [Tackling Poverty in South Tyneside - South Tyneside Council](#)

- A public campaign focused on Pension Credit has taken place and anecdotal feedback from support agencies, such as Citizens Advice, has indicated a significant increase in enquiries. Further work is underway with DWP to provide more support for those eligible for Pension Credit.
- Further planned campaigns include information for carers and myth busting information to be shared around the migration benefit system, as well as on childcare support (as outlined above).
- **Review data sharing and look at our approach to intelligence gathering and sharing**, while exploring auto-enrolment opportunities
  - Work is underway to look at how best to share information with partners, including through a cost-of-living support directory, provision for more partner leaflets in key places and an increased presence of the Teams channel. A working group has also been formed to explore Free School Meals auto-enrolment.
- **Continue to lobby Government and explore opportunities for further research and evaluation**, such as Big Local Jarrow's Universal Basic Income pilot, the North East Child Poverty Commission and campaigns on free school meals.
  - Big Local Jarrow are working on a pilot project focused on Universal Basic Income. This will enable 15 selected residents to access an additional £16 per week.
  - Close links are established between the North East Child Poverty Commission's strategy providing opportunities for shared lobbying of key priorities.
  - Ongoing research and evaluation of key projects is underway and embedded links with Newcastle University in order to establish further project opportunities.
  - The Council continue to look at Free School Meals and HAF eligibility and how this could potentially be extended.