

Middlesbrough Council's Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

21st October 2019

Briefing Note

This is a briefing note outlining some background information to the Northern Housing Consortium, in addition my discussion points for the Middlesbrough Council's Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

The Northern Housing Consortium

The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) represents the views of housing organisations in the North of England. We are a membership organisation made up of local authorities, ALMOs and associations that provide social housing for tenants.

Not only does the NHC bring its members together to share ideas, we represent their interests and ensure they are heard at a regional and national government level.

The NHC is delighted to have members based outside of the North as, while we have a Northern approach to policy and public affairs, we know practical approaches to realising efficiencies and demonstrating value for money is not geographically restricted.

Further details of the work of the NHC can be found at <https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/about-northern-housing-consortium/>

The North East Child Poverty Network

The NHC took over the administration and facilitation of the above network back in 2013, prior to that it was facilitated by Stephen Crossley who was then the Child Poverty Co-ordinator for the North East Child Poverty Commission, which is a network of different organisations across the region coming together whose aim is to build public and political support for actions that improve the lives of children living in poverty in the North East.

The original purpose of the network was to support LA's across the region to help them with their Child Poverty Strategies and plans, since the NHC have taken this on it has been extended to both Housing Associations and Local Authorities across the region, as poverty is a huge issue for housing providers since the onset of welfare reform, universal credit austerity in general.

The network meets quarterly across the region (mainly in NHC members office spaces) different colleagues from organisations attend depending on what is on the agenda and who this is relevant to in the business. Other organisations who can support the sector in tackling poverty and mitigating the impact of poverty are also part of the network, who include:

- Greggs
- Children North East
- DWP
- Street Games
- Big Lottery
- North East Child Poverty Commission

The aim of the network is to connect NHC members together to share best practice around tackling and mitigating the impact of poverty on children, young people, families and the wider community. This is done through providing a platform for NHC members and others to showcase their approaches, share challenges and issues, hear from external agencies and hear an update around policy.

Achievements to date include:

- Learning and adopting approaches in their own organisations
- Setting up of local School Holiday programmes
- Partnership approaches
- Benefitting from different pots of funding from Greggs in offering school breakfast clubs in areas of most need, providing household items through a pot of funding from Greggs. In addition, setting up local sports activity through Street Games.
- The network was instrumental in gathering intelligence around the need of school holiday food and activity programmes across the region and feeding into the feasibility study for the Big Lottery [A Day out not a Hand Out Project](#) facilitated by the North East Child Poverty Trust and delivered by Children North East.

Middlesbrough Context

The most recent child poverty figures (published May 2019) placed Middlesbrough 17th out of the top 20 local authority areas in the UK with the highest levels of child poverty before housing costs (BHC). It is the only local authority area in the North East in this 'top 20' table.

31.9% - or 11,555 - children in Middlesbrough were living in poverty in 2017/18 before housing costs (a fall of 4.0% on 2016/17), compared with a UK-wide BHC figure of 22%.

In Middlesbrough, there is a huge disparity between the most and least deprived areas, with the wards of Marton and Nunthorpe both having BHC child poverty rates of 12.3%, whilst the wards of Middlehaven and University both have rates of 61.3% and the figure for Gresham is 53.1%

Middlesbrough does not sit in the 'top 20' local authority areas with the highest levels of child poverty after housing costs (AHC), but this figure stands at 38.8% (or 14,054 children) – a fall of 5.4% on 2016/17. This compares with the UK-wide AHC figure of 30%.

Again, there is a significant gap between the most and least deprived areas in AHC child poverty rates, with Middlehaven and University wards both at 54.4%, whilst Marton and Nunthorpe stand at 21.5% and Marton West at 17.0%.

Best Practice across the NHC Membership and wider partners.

The role of the NHC is to bring members together to share best practice and learn from one another, and to showcase the great work being done across the North.

Below is a list of some examples of the excellent project and approaches adopted by some North East members of how they are tackling and mitigating the impact of poverty on children, families and local communities:

North Tyneside Council

- Set up two partnership boards in two of the most deprived wards in the area, education is a key focus for the partnerships and delivery plan. The Partnership Boards are quite new so no impact has been identified to date, there will be a focus around educational achievement as well as other areas. The driver for setting up this approach was the [Cost of Poverty](#) research.
- Not using the word poverty as aware that this causes stigmatisation and using the term deprivation – language is important.
- Four priority areas: Education, Employment, Housing and Environment and Health.
- Partnership approach is key, as the LA cannot achieve this alone.

Hartlepool Borough Council

- Focus on three themes:
 - ✓ Mitigate impact of poverty on those that are suffering
 - ✓ Pathways out of poverty for adults (training and work)
 - ✓ Pathways for Children and Young people (education, learning and aspiration)
 - ✓ Sub-heading – No one goes hungry (children and adults)
- They are aware that as a LA they need to be more joined up, there are examples of good work across the Borough, this occurs in pockets but don't have a strategic co-ordinated approach to it.
- Have a strong relationship with the VCS and together there is a network of support across town offering families direct access to all forms of help and support, including school uniforms, food, income maximisation, benefit advice, clothing, training and volunteering.
- Work with a whole host of partners including Job Centre Plus, Adult Education, staff hold seminars and workshops with schools, social workers, health visitors and other

front line staff to keep them up to date with the issues that affect families so they can target their services and interventions appropriately.

Karbon Homes

- Have an established Money Matters Team – assisting tenants with budgeting and maximising household incomes and laying the foundations for leading successful lives. Since its inception back in April 2017, Karbon tenants have made £6m of financial gains as a result of this service – most of which has come about from benefit uptake as well as interventions and appeals. With the introduction of Universal Credit, and the ongoing impact of a raft of reforms to the benefits system, there has never been so much demand for the team's services.
- Karbon also provides a Foundations of Life programme which offer an employment and digital support service available to all **Karbon Homes'** customers. The team of advisors work closely with customers to help build the skills, experience, qualifications and mind set to maximise your potential, achieve your career aspirations, and increase your digital skills.

Clarion Housing Group

Clarion Futures part of Clarion Housing Group provides a money advice telephone service as well as face to face to support for residents in fuel poverty. To address the root causes of poverty we have a money guidance service, fuel poverty advice and white goods fund (to be extended into food and fuel vouchers in the next 6 months) which directly challenge poverty. These are accessed via a telephone advice service. We also support income maximisation through a team of Welfare Benefits Officer and Tenancy Sustainment Officer to support people who are at risk of eviction to maintain their tenancy.

From their experience, the root cause of poverty is lack of income (insufficient income), and unstable and low income (so you don't have enough income at any one point to save cash to see you through the tougher periods), rather than financial behaviour. The poverty premium (inflated prices of goods and services because you're on a low income) exacerbates this. So, whilst they do some work around financial education and good money behaviour to make sure residents are able to make their money go as far as it possibly can, interventions which increase household income, such as making sure people have access to all the benefits they're entitled to and helping people to get and sustain a job, are key to tackling the root causes of poverty.

Clarion Futures have also set up a series of food pantries- a social supermarket model combining a small membership fee for a range of food as well as Jobs and Money advice. Their most recent food pantry has just opened in South Shields. Through community engagement work and referrals, they promote money management and the money advice services Clarion Futures provides.

Children North East – Poverty Proofing the School Day

The successful project aims to support schools to identify and overcome the barriers to learning that children and young people from families with less financial resources face.

The project provides a toolkit to poverty proof the school day, to reduce stigma and remove barriers to learning and to assist schools in exploring the most effective way to spend pupil premium allocation. Poverty Proofing the School Day consists of an audit for each individual school, questioning pupils, staff, parents and governors. The result is an action plan tailored to each individual school to address any stigmatising policies or practices.

In the 2016 evaluation report of the project there was evidence of impacts in relation to the programme aims in many of the schools, including improved attendance and attainment, greater take up of free school meals, more effective use of pupil premium funding, a less costly school day, and an increase in the uptake of school trips and music tuition by the most disadvantaged pupils. A more up to date evaluation report will be published shortly.

For further information please visit <http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/>.

The examples above provides an overview of the different approaches adopted across the region in tackling and mitigating the impact of poverty on children and families. By supporting families in managing their budgets and putting more money in their pockets can help relieve some of the stress and pressures on parents and adults to provide them with some space to help their children with their physical and emotional needs.

Early intervention and partnership working are some of the key recommendations from across the sector in supporting children and their educational attainment.

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