

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**15 OCTOBER 2013**

**FINAL REPORT -  
CHILD POVERTY, DEPRIVATION  
AND ATTAINMENT**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To present the findings of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel following its investigation of child poverty, deprivation and attainment.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The impact of child poverty is far-reaching and is known to severely disadvantage children in terms of attainment levels. Education outcomes are poorest where poverty rates are highest - at every stage of schooling, the poorest children do worse than their better off classmates.
3. Save the Children UK estimates that there are currently 11.6 million children in the UK living in severe poverty. Middlesbrough is the third most deprived Local Authority area in the UK with an average child poverty rate of 37%. This rises to 61% in the case of the worst-affected ward.
4. Middlesbrough, therefore, has significant challenges in tackling child poverty. In light of this, and the current severe economic climate, the panel examined this important issue in order to investigate what action is being taken to mitigate and address child poverty locally and thereby improve levels of attainment.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

5. The panel concentrated their investigation on the following terms of reference:
  - a) *To examine the position regarding child poverty/deprivation in Middlesbrough, including how this is measured.*
  - b) *To consider the impact of child poverty/deprivation on attainment in Middlesbrough, including recent trends and how any progress can be measured.*
  - c) *To consider the role and responsibility of the Local Authority and relevant external agencies/bodies in this issue, including intervention measures.*
  - d) *To examine relevant guidance.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/child-poverty/uk-child-poverty>

## **METHODS OF INVESTIGATION**

6. The scrutiny panel investigated this topic over the course of five meetings held on 20 February, 26 March, 10 April, 7 May and 31 July 2013. A final meeting was held on 21 August 2013 to consider the panel's final report. A Scrutiny Support Officer from Legal and Democratic Services co-ordinated and arranged the submission of written and oral evidence and arranged witnesses for the investigation. Meetings administration, including preparation of agenda and minutes, was undertaken by a Governance Officer from Legal and Democratic Services.
7. A record of discussions at panel meetings, including agenda, minutes and reports, is available from the Council's Agenda committee management system, which can be accessed via the Council's website at [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk).
8. This report has been compiled on the basis of information submitted to the scrutiny panel by Council Officers and relevant outside bodies/organisations.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL**

9. The membership of the Panel was as detailed below:

Councillors J A Walker (Chair), G Purvis (Vice-Chair), M Hanif, S Khan, H Pearson, P Sanderson, B E Taylor, M Thompson and M B Williams; plus Fr G Holland (Co-opted Member).

## **THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINDINGS**

10. The scrutiny panel's findings in respect of each of the terms of reference are set out below.

**TERM OF REFERENCE: *To examine the position regarding child poverty/deprivation in Middlesbrough, including how this is measured.***

11. In examining this term of reference, the scrutiny panel considered information regarding:

- Child poverty in the UK
- Child poverty in Middlesbrough.
- Public perceptions
- Key causes
- Impact of child poverty

### **Child Poverty in the UK**

12. Based on the Government's Department of Education (DfE) measure, on average, throughout the UK, more than one in five children are classified as living below the poverty line. The DfE defines the measure of child poverty as follows:

*'Children are said to be living in relative income poverty if their household's income is less than 60 per cent of the median national income.'*

13. Using this measure, which excludes housing costs, child poverty in February 2013 was 20.2% nationally. While acknowledging this official measure, the scrutiny panel notes that the inclusion of housing costs - which can represent a significant proportion of household expenditure - would significantly worsen this figure. In fact, if including housing costs, it is estimated that nearly 4 million children are living in poverty in the UK. The proportion of children living in poverty grew from 10% in 1979 to 33% in 1998. Today, 30% of children in Britain are living in poverty, which means that the UK has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world. <sup>2</sup>
14. The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that child poverty nationally will continue to increase in the immediate future.

### Poverty in Middlesbrough

15. The End Child Poverty campaign is a coalition of over 100 charities committed to ending child poverty in the UK. In February 2013, End Child Poverty published a Child Poverty Map of the UK. This report provides a localised map of child poverty on the closest possible measure to that used nationally by the government. The figures presented are for mid-2012. According to the Child Poverty Map of the UK, Middlesbrough is the third most deprived Local Authority area out of 405 Local Authorities. 37% of children are living in poverty in Middlesbrough compared to 20% nationally:

#### Top 20 local authorities with highest levels of child poverty

Authority	% of children in poverty 2011	% of children in poverty 2012
1. Tower Hamlets	52%	42%
2. Manchester	40%	38%
<b>3. Middlesbrough</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>37%</b>
4. Derry	36%	35%
5. Belfast	35%	34%
6. Islington	43%	34%
7. Glasgow City	35%	33%
8. Liverpool	34%	33%
9. Newcastle upon Tyne	31%	33%
10. Hartlepool	30%	33%
11. Nottingham	35%	32%
12. Knowsley	32%	32%
13. Newham	37%	32%
14. Strabane	31%	32%
15. Barking and Dagenham	35%	31%
16. South Tyneside	28%	31%
17. Hastings	28%	31%
18. Birmingham	34%	31%
19. Westminster	38%	30%
20. Hackney	39%	30%

16. There are three north east Local Authorities among the ten most deprived areas nationally - ie Middlesbrough (3<sup>rd</sup>), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (9<sup>th</sup>) and Hartlepool (10<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/key-facts>

17. End Child Poverty reports that the percentage of children in poverty in Middlesbrough has risen from 34% in 2011 to 37% in 2012. Middlesbrough's figures are shown in Table 2 below and show that the Thorntree ward has the highest level of child poverty at 61% (1,288 children). Park End, Gresham, Middlehaven, Pallister and North Ormesby and Brambles Farm all have a child poverty level of 50% or above. These six wards are among the most deprived 1% of wards nationally and 13 wards are among the most deprived 10%.<sup>3</sup> Only six of Middlesbrough's 23 wards have child poverty levels which are less than the national average of 20%.

### Middlesbrough Ward Data

Ward	Percentage of children in poverty
Acklam	14%
Ayresome	36%
Beckfield	40%
Beechwood	48%
Brookfield	14%
Clairville	43%
Coulby Newham	20%
Gresham	54%
Hemlington	44%
Kader	14%
Ladgate	35%
Linthorpe	21%
North Ormesby and Brambles Farm	56%
Marlon	13%
Marlon West	9%
Middlehaven	52%
Nunthorpe	9%
Pallister	50%
Park	32%
Park End	56%
Stainton and Thornton	23%
Thorntree	61%
University	45%
<b>Middlesbrough Average</b>	<b>37%</b>

### Public Perceptions of Child Poverty

18. Every year the British Social Attitudes Survey asks over 3,000 people what it is like to live in Britain and how they think that the country is being run. The survey tracks people's changing social, political and moral attitudes and informs the development of public policy.

19. Figures compiled in 2010, show that people disagree about the extent of child poverty. While over half (53%) of people think there is quite a lot of child poverty in Britain today, two in five (41%) think there is very little. Most people think that child poverty has increased or stayed the same over the last decade, and most think it will increase or stay the same over the next ten years.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/images/ecp/North%20East\\_LA%20and%20ward%20data%20upload.xls](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/images/ecp/North%20East_LA%20and%20ward%20data%20upload.xls)

20. Around 80% of people think that central government is responsible for addressing child poverty, while a relatively small proportion think that local authorities and individuals or families have responsibility. Even fewer (6%) believe that charities are responsible.<sup>4</sup>

21. Public perceptions of child poverty can often be myths - for example, people believe:

- Child poverty relates to families 'being a bit short' - Compared to the reality of a permanent lack of significant income.
- Child poverty relates to unemployment - Whereas 59% of poor children live in households where at least one adult works.
- Child poverty relates to lone parents - But 57% of children lived in a household with a couple.
- Child poverty relates to benefits or major fraud - Tax evasion costs the UK around £15m per year compared to benefit fraud of £1m.

### **Key Causes**

22. The key causes of child poverty have been investigated nationally and are as follows:

- 75% - Drugs and alcohol problems.
- 63% - Parents not wanting to work.
- 56% - Family breakdown.
- 51% - Lack of education.
- 50% - Long period out of work.

### **The Impact of Child Poverty**

23. The impact of child poverty is well researched and extremely far reaching. Some examples were highlighted to the scrutiny panel:

- Poor children are born too small, with low birth weights.
- Poverty shapes a child's development.
- Increased risk of chronic illnesses - two and a half times more likely to suffer a chronic illness.
- Increased emotional problems.
- Increased risk of medical health problems.
- Living in danger.
- Increased risk of social care intervention.
- Poor progression.
- Continuing disadvantage - affects whole life.
- Poverty shortens life expectancy.

24. Infant mortality locally is 20% above the national average at 5.5 per thousand compared to 4.6 per thousand nationally. One in five children die as infants in Middlesbrough who would not have died if they live elsewhere and the average lifespan for a boy is two and a half years less than the national average.

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<sup>4</sup> National Centre for Social Research (2010) Child Poverty in Britain: Causes and Consequences

25. Health services indicate real concern around the start in life some children in Middlesbrough experience - over 10% of babies have a low birth weight compared with just over 7% nationally.
26. The scrutiny panel was informed that research was undertaken by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Cleveland Unit in relation to the impact of low birth weight babies and how that links to a rising trend of numbers of children with complex needs. This is an issue which the local authority is aware of and which will have to be addressed in the near future, together with its resource implications.
27. In terms of links between poverty and safeguarding, the number of Child Protection Plans in place in Middlesbrough is double the national average and the number of Looked After Children is 88% higher than the national average.
28. In Middlesbrough, 51% of children show a good level of development at the end of Early Years and Foundation Stages, compared with 64% nationally. However this drops to 44% in the most deprived wards. The Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership is currently working to alleviate the pressures on nursery and early years provision.
29. With regard to health and wellbeing, there is an increased risk of mental health problems associated with poverty and deprivation. Hospital admissions for mental health conditions locally are around 4% above the national average and almost double for self-harm. Children's hospital admissions due to injury are 58% above the national average.
30. The scrutiny panel heard that the impact of the recession has exacerbated the problem of child poverty locally and nationally. Unemployment in the north east of England had risen faster than anywhere else since 2009. Middlesbrough has one of the least resilient local economies and unemployment is twice the national average. Benefits have failed to keep up with inflation and female unemployment has risen by 16%. It was highlighted that any significant shift in the female workforce has a direct impact on child poverty.

**TERM OF REFERENCE: *To consider the impact of child poverty/deprivation on attainment in Middlesbrough, including recent trends and how any progress can be measured.***

31. In examining this term of reference, the scrutiny panel considered information regarding:

- National attainment
- Impact of child poverty on attainment
- The position in Middlesbrough

### **National Attainment**

32. Evidence from national attainment data shows that, every year:

- Around 30-35,000 children leave primary school with reading and writing at the level of a seven-year old or below.

- Around 30-35,000 children leave primary school with mathematical skills at the level of a seven-year old or below
- Around 23,000 children leave primary school with reading, writing and mathematical skills at the level of a seven-year old or below

33. Children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds form the majority group among these children.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Impact of Child Poverty on Attainment**

34. The issue of deprivation and attainment is a national one, which has particularly badly-affected urban post-industrial areas such as Middlesbrough. The link between socio-economic deprivation and academic outcomes has been proven by extensive academic research by organisations such as The Sutton Trust and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This is documented elsewhere in the report.

35. The Department for Education (DfE) website indicates that a good education is the key to improving young people's life chances; to enable them to progress into adulthood with the skills and confidence for success. This is particularly true for children from low-income families, who are far less likely to leave schools with good GCSE results than other children. Evidence shows that:

- After prior attainment, poverty is the single most important factor in predicting a child's future life chances.
- Attainment gaps between pupils from deprived backgrounds and their more affluent peers persist through all stages of education, including entry into higher education.
- The highest early achievers from deprived backgrounds are overtaken by lower achieving children from advantaged backgrounds by age seven. By the end of Key Stage 1 (age seven), the likelihood of a pupil eligible for free school meals (which is used as an indicator/measure of deprivation) achieving the expected levels of progress is one third those of a non-free school meals (FSM) pupil.
- The gap widens further during secondary education and persists into Higher Education. The odds of an FSM pupil achieving five or more GCSEs at A\*-C including English and mathematics are less than one third those of a non FSM pupil. Middlesbrough has a wider attainment gap at primary level than at secondary level.
- A pupil from a non-deprived background is more than twice as likely to go on to study at university as a deprived peer.

36. In recent years, a number of government and non-government publications on child poverty have recognised the key role of education. These publications have examined both the impact that deprivation has on education and the role that education can play in improving the life chances of those from deprived backgrounds.

37. Evidence shows that there is a clear link between childhood poverty, reduced employment opportunities and lower levels of earnings. Those who end up with lower earnings are those with a lack of skills and qualifications. In other words, deprivation has a negative impact on educational attainment, leaving young people with fewer qualifications and skills, which in turn, affects future employment.

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<sup>5</sup> Oxford University Press. The Pupil Premium – Making it Work in Your School

38. Poor educational attainment can also have longer-term consequences. There are direct effects on health - for example, quality of diet, chances of smoking - and indirect effects, for example, lower skilled people are more likely to find employment in hazardous occupations where they are at greater risk of accidents. There is also evidence that lower levels of educational achievement can have a negative impact on an individual's engagement with society - for example an increased likelihood that an individual will be involved in illegal activity.
39. In relation to attainment in Middlesbrough, improvement is generally being made each year. Presently, 47.6% of school leavers achieve five good GCSEs including English and Mathematics, compared to a figure of 59% nationally. However, this figure falls to 35.4% for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, illustrating the scale of the issue when deprivation/poverty is taken into account.
40. Locally, there are a number of young people who have poor basic skills, which restricts their future options and prospects. The rates for young people (between 16 and 18) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have generally fallen as a result of intervention and action by the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) but remain above the national average. In 2011/2012, the local youth unemployment rate of 15.6% was almost twice the national average of 8.1%.

### **The position in Middlesbrough**

41. The Performance and Planning Manager for Children's Services explained that a wide range of data is available which highlights the impact of child poverty on attainment levels. However, the service area's work does not focus on deprivation as a key characteristic but concentrates on gathering information on individual children in order to develop appropriate support. This applies to all children, whether they are under-achieving or gifted and talented. Support packages could be in the form of long or short-term interventions. It was also highlighted that where communities have high levels of deprivation, there are more children with special needs, which puts further pressure on schools and their resources.
42. Officers from Wellbeing, Care and Learning provided the scrutiny panel with an overview of research that it has undertaken since 2005 around areas of socio-economic deprivation and the effect on educational outcomes. It was advised that there are four primary indicators used to establish levels of deprivation, either by school or ward:
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility - Qualification for eligibility is derived from the benefits to which parents are entitled.
  - The Pupil Premium - This was introduced by the government in 2012 and is covered elsewhere in the report. It is an additional payment to schools to be used to raise standards through interventions aimed at disadvantaged pupils.
  - The third indicator is The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and is a nationally recognised score that takes into account housing, crime, employment and education in determining a Deprivation Score per Local Super Output Area (LSOA).
  - The fourth indicator is similar in make-up to the IMD but is known as the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indicator (IDACI) and is based on parental income from benefits, such as Child Tax Credit. This measure started at zero and ended at one and the higher the score, the greater the deprivation.



43. In terms of LSOAs, it was explained that these are clusters of post-codes that have similar characteristics. LSOAs are scored and ranked into approximately 32,500 LSOAs in the country. Using 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, there are 88 LSOAs in Middlesbrough. One LSOA in East Middlesbrough is ranked 31,728 very close to the most deprived LSOA - ie Bromley.

44. Analysis of the relevant data for Middlesbrough illustrates that:

- There is a high incidence of pupils in the highest ranking LSOAs in the country.
- Free School Meal eligibility is twice that of the national average.
- Almost 40% of Year 11 pupils in Middlesbrough live in the top 6% most deprived areas and over 50% live in the top 10% most deprived areas in the country.
- Around 28% of students in year 11 are in the most deprived 1000 LSOAs in the country.
- Over 75% live in the top 50% of most deprived LSOAs in the country.
- Less than 10% live in the top 10% least deprived wards in the country.
- At Key Stage 2 there is a clear correlation between deprivation and attainment, although there are individual schools which outperform their peers in similar circumstances.
- In terms of Key Stage 4 (GCSE) outcomes over time, data shows a correlation between deprivation and attainment. However this is less acute so could indicate that measures employed in schools to combat the effects of socio-economic deprivation are starting to have a beneficial effect. It should be noted that progress and attainment in secondary schools remains an area for improvement.

45. The scrutiny panel heard that deprivation cannot be considered in isolation when examining factors that impact on attainment. There are other elements that contribute towards academic outcomes, with the strongest correlation nationally relating to prior attainment. This means that the best indicator of an individual's future performance is their past performance. Research has also shown that this also refers to parental academic level being a strong indicator of pupils' academic achievement.

46. Ethnic origin can also be a relevant factor, with research having also been undertaken in this area. This illustrates a potential issue for children for whom English is their second language. This can cause difficulty in terms of parental engagement as such parents may be less likely to encourage reading and speaking English at home.

47. Gender has also been found to be a contributing factor, with data illustrating that, at GCSE level, girls generally outperform boys.

48. All Middlesbrough schools receive annual data that can be split in different ways, such as by year group, class or individual pupil. This allows an effective targeting of resources, by identifying under-performance as well as highlighting gifted and talented children.

49. On a positive note, from 2011, there has been an improving picture in Middlesbrough in terms of achievement. Primary outcomes are good and, at secondary level, the latest GCSE results (A\* to C GCSEs) were close to 48%. The projection for next year was to achieve 52%, which would be the first time Middlesbrough had achieved higher than 50%.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE: *To examine relevant guidance; and  
To consider the role and responsibility of the local authority and relevant external agencies/bodies in this issue, including intervention measures.***

50. In March 2010 **The Child Poverty Act** was passed, legally binding the Government to a commitment to eradicate child poverty in Britain by 2020. For the first time ever, government and local authorities were set targets to end childhood poverty for good. The Act places a duty on local authorities and partners to '*Cooperate with a view to reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their areas*'. They are also required to prepare and publish local child poverty needs assessments and to develop joint child poverty strategies.<sup>6</sup>
51. The Act sets four income-based UK-wide targets that were intended to be met by 2020. The targets are based on the proportion of children living in households with:
- Relative low income - This measures whether the incomes of the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. The target is less than 10%.
  - Combined low income and material deprivation - This is a wider measure of living standards. The target is less than 5%.
  - Absolute low income - This measures whether the poorest families are seeing their income rise in real terms. The target is less than 5%.
  - Persistent poverty - This is defined by the Act as living in relative poverty for at least three of the last four years. The target in relation to this is to be set in regulations by 2015.
52. The Act required the Government to publish a strategy outlining its plans to meet these targets and to ensure, as far as possible, that no child experiences socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>7</sup>
53. The Government's **Child Poverty Strategy** initially covered the period 2011-2014 and set out the measures that the government would take to support The Child Poverty Act 2010 and support disadvantaged families and the most vulnerable. At its heart are strengthening families, encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and providing support to the most vulnerable.
54. The strategy focuses on improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children, and sits alongside the Government's broader strategy to improve social mobility. The core ways to achieve this are:
- A stronger focus on ensuring that families who are in work are supported to work themselves out of poverty, families who are unable to work are able to live with dignity and not entrenched in persistent poverty, and that those who can work but are not in work are provided with services that will address their particular needs and help them overcome barriers to work.
  - A stronger focus on improving children's future life chances, by intervening early to improve the development and attainment of disadvantaged children and young people throughout their transition to adulthood.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childpoverty/a0066610/support-to-meet-the-local-duties-of-the-child-poverty-act>

<sup>7</sup> The Child Poverty Act (2010)

- A stronger focus on place and delivering services as close to the family as possible. This will be achieved by empowering local partners and ensuring that local diversity can be recognised and by developing strong local accountability frameworks.

55. In terms of Middlesbrough Council's responsibilities and action taken to date, the scrutiny panel considered information regarding:

- Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy.
- Children's Trust and the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Fulfilling Lives.
- The Troubled Families Programme.
- Locality Forums.
- The Pupil Premium

### **Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy**

56. The scrutiny panel received an overview and update on Middlesbrough's Child Poverty Strategy. The panel heard that the purpose of the strategy is to:

- Provide a framework within which partners can work together with a shared vision to meet joint outcomes associated with reducing child poverty
- Enable a wide range of partners to carry out their statutory and moral duties to reduce child poverty in Middlesbrough
- Ensure that the views of families and children are taken into consideration in the shaping of plans to reduce child poverty.<sup>8</sup>

57. Strategic analysis reports three key causes of child poverty in Middlesbrough:

- Low aspiration - Individuals lack the motivation and support to achieve their potential.
- Low Income - Family income is insufficient to ensure a good quality of life.
- Poor environment - Physical, social and emotional surroundings have a negative impact upon life chances.

58. The delivery of improved outcomes depends on shared responsibility by partners to deliver services to address child poverty. In order to address relevant issues, the development of Middlesbrough's Child Poverty Strategy was informed by the documents detailed below:

- Children and Young People Trust Needs Assessment
- Children and Young People Plan
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Tees Valley Economic Assessment

59. Leadership on tackling child poverty is the responsibility of Middlesbrough Partnership. The partnership's Executive Board acts as the Child Poverty Partnership Board, with thematic partnerships playing a key role in ensuring that:

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<sup>8</sup> Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2014

- Child poverty is a priority in key strategies and plans.
- Leadership and accountability for child poverty is clear.
- There is a key focus to partnership working.
- Impact is measured and progress reviewed on a regular basis.

60. As the Child Poverty Act 2010 was published by the previous (Labour) Government and the current (Coalition) Government has been in power since 2011, there is a need for Middlesbrough's Child Poverty Strategy to be refreshed and updated. The Strategy needs to reflect the Coalition Government's vision for the future of the UK, as set out in current Child Poverty, Social Justice and Social Mobility Strategies. The strategy also needs to take into account the ongoing and current radical welfare reform programme.

61. In addition, reference was made to the future role and involvement of the recently-established Health and Well-being Board. The Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for promoting integration and partnership working between the NHS, social care, public health and other local services. It is envisaged that future work of the Board will encompass working in respect of the link between child poverty and ill health.

### **Middlesbrough Children's Trust and the Children and Young People's Plan**

62. The scrutiny panel was provided with an overview of the involvement of Middlesbrough Children's and Young People's Trust in reducing the impact of poverty on children and young people.

63. Children's Trusts were created to bring together all organisations responsible for delivering children's services. The aim was to improve the lives of children and young people in the local area by delivering better services and strengthening responsibility and accountability amongst a range of partners and through the development of an agreed local strategy - The Children and Young People's Plan.

64. It was explained that the Trust is not a separate organisation but a partnership bringing together all organisations in Middlesbrough with responsibility for services to children, young people and their families. Each partner organisation retains its own functions and responsibilities within the wider partnership framework. The Trust is overseen by a multi-agency Children and Young People's Trust Board and supported by a multi-agency Executive.

65. Following completion of a Children and Young People's Strategic Needs Assessment, the Middlesbrough Children & Young People's Trust set priorities for the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014, as well as to inform the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Child Poverty Strategy. One of the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan is to reduce the impact of child poverty, as well as to safeguard children and young people, tackle risk-taking behaviours and build resilience and improve children's health and emotional well-being. All of these priorities are underpinned by raising educational attainment levels across Middlesbrough.

66. The Children and Young People's Plan includes the following local statistics pertaining to Middlesbrough:

- In some neighbourhoods 59% of children live in households with an income defined as below the poverty line.
- 30% of neighbourhoods are within the worst 10% in the North East.
- 32% of children live in households where no one is working, compared to 20% nationally and 23% regionally.
- It is estimated that a number of children aged 0-16 living in poverty is 9,373.
- 9.6% of young people aged 16-18 are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Eight wards account for over 60% of the NEET population, indicating a strong correlation with deprivation.
- 36.9% of pupils achieved five or more A\* to C GCSEs including English and Maths - which is below the national average of 49.8%.
- The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need (SEN) has reduced over the past five years to 3.6%, compared to a national average of 2.7%.

67. The Children and Young People's Plan acknowledges that child poverty affects many families in Middlesbrough, influences the lives of the town's children and impacts directly on the economic wellbeing of the town. Low income determines every aspect of family life and children's development and this places an increased demand on local services and budgets.

68. With high unemployment and low attainment levels, Middlesbrough has significantly more challenges when tackling child poverty than most of our neighbouring authorities. Reducing child poverty is therefore not simply about lifting children above an income line - it is about transforming the experiences, living standards and life chances of disadvantaged families with children, in order to break cycles of poverty that persist across generations.

69. The key focus of the Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Trust is on early help with targeted support for children, young people and their families. This early intervention is linked to key concerns about:

- Children and young people not in school and not achieving in line with national or regional comparators.
- Preventing youth offending.
- The support needed by parents and carers to provide good parenting.
- Maternal health and early births.
- Levels of worklessness.
- Domestic violence and substance misuse.

70. The scrutiny panel heard that Middlesbrough is restructuring services to focus on early intervention and prevention to ensure that children get the best possible start in their education. This will also assist in breaking down the barriers that exist within families and communities. In the current financial climate, the strategy of focussing on early intervention will have a significant impact on some local authority services as it will mean reductions in other service areas.

71. The Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Trust is aiming to address the following issues in order to address child poverty:

- Reconfiguration of services - to focus more on vulnerable families.
- Development of Locality Forums.
- Single Assessment of Need providing additional support and training - so that all agencies work to the same framework.
- Targeted/commissioned activities and research - eg maternal health/low birth weight, numbers attending Accident and Emergency, injury prevention. These are areas of high concern that have a direct impact on the health and well-being of children.
- Influencing and attracting external and internal funding bids - eg WISE (which is concerned with worklessness and employment young people and adults), Youth Contract, Fulfilling Lives and Injury Prevention).
- Workforce Development - Developing common principles and competencies for all staff.
- Using local indicators to shape the Troubled Families programme to meet local need.

72. Further information on Fulfilling Lives; The Troubled Families Programme; Locality Forums; The Pupil Premium; the establishment of Locality Forums; and the Welfare Reform Group is shown below.

### **Fulfilling Lives**

73. The Big Lottery Fund's new £165m Fulfilling Lives: A Better Start initiative aims to deliver a step change in preventative approaches in pregnancy and the first three years of life to improve life chances of babies and young children.

74. The key features of the programme are:

- The investment of £30-£50 million in three to five areas nationally, for eight to ten years.
- Each area runs a variety of programmes and initiatives to improve outcomes for children in three key areas of development: social and emotional development; communication and language development; and nutrition.
- There will be a 'systems change' in the way that local health, public services and the voluntary sector work together to put prevention in early life at the heart of service delivery and practice.<sup>9</sup>

75. Middlesbrough has been successful in being selected to reach the final stage of application for funding from the Fulfilling Lives programme. This has been a highly competitive process to date, starting from 117 local authorities putting in expressions of interest. The position at late August 2013 is that 41 applications were selected for first stage scrutiny, with 15 being selected to go through to the final stage. As a consequence of reaching the final stage, Middlesbrough will benefit from development funding and intensive support from the Social Research Unit at Dartington to develop a fully worked up strategy and plan for service re-design.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/betterstart>

## **Troubled Families Programme**

76. Nationally, the Government has identified 120,000 troubled families to 'turn around' over the next three years via its Troubled Families programme. These are households who:

- Are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Have children not in school.
- Have an adult on out of work benefits.
- Cause high costs to the public purse.

77. Further problems within these families also often include issues such as domestic violence, relationship breakdown, mental and physical health problems and isolation.

78. One estimate shows that in over a third of troubled families, there are child protection problems. Whilst another estimate suggests that over half of all children who are permanently excluded from school in England come from Troubled Families, as do one-in-five young offenders.

79. The cost of these families in public spending terms is very significant and is estimated at £9 billion a year. The vast majority of this sum is spent on reacting to their problems, and most importantly, most of the money being spent is not providing lasting results and changing lives.

80. The Government is to change the name of the national programme to Strengthening Families. The Middlesbrough programme will target 570 families over a three year period. Of these, 475 will be subject to a payment by results programme. The Authority is currently working with 190 troubled families, which is the target number for the first year of the programme. From September to December 2012, 33 families met Government criteria that allowed Middlesbrough Council to claim results payments totalling approximately £630 000.

81. The scrutiny panel was advised that the scale of this issue nationally and locally could be on a larger scale than first envisaged. Information was provided in relation to two recent case studies of families in Middlesbrough that were previously unknown to the authorities living in extremely squalid conditions. Such cases are clearly of great concern and have highlighted a need to ensure that all agencies share available information. Accordingly, Children's Social Care has now moved to a First Contact system to facilitate more agencies being based together so that more information about families can be shared.

82. With regard to identifying children in need through the education system, it was explained that parents have a right to educate their children at home. Whilst the Local Authority can provide support and arrange an annual visit, it is up to parents to determine whether any support is accepted. It is therefore not necessarily the case that children living in poverty requiring support/intervention will be picked up through the education system.

83. In terms of available support, the scrutiny panel highlighted the expectation, or hope, that families will access the support that is available to them. While services provided in Middlesbrough and regulated by OFSTED are generally recognised as good quality, this is irrelevant if the neediest families do not use the services. Take up of services such as Surestart can therefore be an issue in this regard.

84. Reference was also made to the issue of access to affordable childcare, which can be a barrier to parents being able to take up employment. A recent Government announcement of free childcare for all children under two years of age was highlighted. However, the panel notes that it is often difficult to find suitable/affordable childcare for children of school age.

### **Locality Forums**

85. Three Locality Forums have now been established in the east, north and south and west of the town. A core group membership meets fortnightly to discuss individual cases. There are also monthly meetings where managers from children's social care, health, adolescent mental health, Children's Centres, the Integrated Youth Support Service, community safety and schools meet to share information and determine how any issues can be best addressed.

86. The Locality Forums have worked well to date, particularly in sharing informal intelligence. This is being used to take a co-ordinated approach to tackling problems of vulnerability among children and young people.

### **Pupil Premium**

87. In April 2011, the government introduced The Pupil Premium. This is additional funding given to schools so that they can support their disadvantaged pupils and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. The Pupil Premium is rising to £1.875 billion in 2013-14, with schools attracting £900 per disadvantaged child.<sup>10</sup>

88. In response to a query on whether the Local Authority could direct schools as to the most effective way to spend the Pupil Premium, it was advised that this was not possible. However, based on results/attainment, information is shared with all schools to highlight areas that they may wish to address. In addition, Ofsted undertake themed inspections of how schools use the pupil premium.

89. The Authority has also looked at some ideas produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggesting that the Pupil Premium money might be more effective if it is spent collectively rather than individually. The Authority is keen to develop partnership working with all schools but recognises that this approach could become more fragmented as more schools move to academy status.

90. The Sutton Trust has published some research on the range of effectiveness of measures introduced using the Pupil Premium, from high to low impact. The highest impact has been found to be through assessment and learning and working at classroom level with data and pupils to make simple steps to progress. The least effective measure has been found to be the imposition of school uniforms.

91. It was confirmed that all schools can access this research but that, ultimately, individual schools decide which interventions might be most effective for their pupils. While the scrutiny panel recognises the autonomy of schools in this regard, it was suggested that may be an opportunity to involve the Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership in sharing and disseminating examples of best practice among schools, as well as by providing support to schools prior to OFSTED inspections.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium>



92. It is presently unclear what the Local Authority's role will be in future in terms of monitoring and challenging schools and academies. Whilst Value Added is still used as a measure of progress, the Contextualised Version of Value Added as a measure has now been abolished. Previously, for example, if a school had a high level of free school meals this would have been taken into account in attainment judgements and target setting. However schools and academies are now all expected to progress at the same rate, regardless of their context.

### **Welfare Reform Group**

93. The scrutiny panel expressed concern that the Government's ongoing welfare reforms and changes to benefits have added to local problems. Under the reforms, families will receive money directly rather than rent being paid directly to landlords. It is feared this could lead to more evictions as some families would be unable to manage their budgets and finances.

94. The panel heard that a Welfare Reform Group has been established to support young people and families with financial advice. Staff have received training and information to support families who are experiencing changes to their benefits due to the Government's reforms.

95. In addition to the involvement of the local authority in this issue, the scrutiny panel heard that the actions and policies of the Government also impact, both directly and indirectly. This includes employment initiatives that help parents into work, measures to address youth unemployment and interventions aimed directly at children and young people. Particular reference was made to the following:

### **Education Reforms**

96. The Government's Department for Education (DfE) indicates that the best schools have shown that children from deprived backgrounds can succeed and thrive when given the right support.<sup>11</sup> The Government's intention is that education reforms will drive up standards for all, by giving schools greater autonomy, driving up teaching quality and overhauling exams and the curriculum. For example:

- There is early intervention to identify children in need of extra help. Phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 will ensure that those who are at risk of falling behind are identified and can receive further support;
- A high proportion of Free Schools are opening in deprived areas, which the DfE indicates will free teachers and schools in disadvantaged areas to do what is best for their pupils;
- Academies are intended to transform the quality of education in the most disadvantaged areas in the UK.

### **The Fairness Premium**

97. In 2010, the Government announced £7 billion funding for a 'fairness premium.' This gives all disadvantaged two-year-olds an entitlement to 15 hours a week of pre-school education, at a cost of £300 million a year. The premium supports the poorest children from the age of two to the age of twenty, at three crucial stages:

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<sup>11</sup> OECD (2009) 'PISA 2009 Results'

- Delivering an expansion in investment in free early education by providing an extra £300 million a year by 2014-15. This will ensure that all disadvantaged two year-olds have access to 15 hours a week of free child care, in addition to the 15 hours already available to them at three and four years.
- Schools will play their part and do more to help those from poorer backgrounds. Through the Pupil Premium, schools will receive additional funds to target help at the most disadvantaged pupils - £2.5 billion by the end of the current Government Spending Review period.
- Widening participation in, and improving fair access to, higher education. All those with the ability should have access to higher education irrespective of family income. Alongside reforms to higher education, the National Scholarship Programme will help some of the most disadvantaged students with the cost of their study - representing a Government commitment of £150 million a year by 2014/15 and supplemented by additional contributions from universities and colleges.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Youth Contract**

98. In response to the challenge of youth unemployment the Government has announced a £1 billion Youth Contract to help the young unemployed into work. The Youth Contract, which was launched in April 2012, will provide nearly half-a-million new opportunities for 18-24 year olds, including apprenticeships and voluntary work experience placements.

### **The Early Intervention Grant**

99. The Early Intervention Grant (EIG) was introduced by the Government to replace a number of centrally directed grants to support services for children, young people and families. This aimed to bring together the funding for early intervention and preventative services for the most vulnerable children, young people and families. It is a pot of funding allocated to local authorities and is not ring-fenced, allowing greater flexibility and freedom at local level, to respond to local needs, drive reform and promote early intervention more effectively. The Government's Department for Education (DfE) website indicates that Middlesbrough was allocated Early Intervention Grant funding of £10,685,976 in 2012-13. However, the scrutiny panel was advised that this is not allocated to the authority as a separate grant but is provided as part of core-funding.

### **The role and involvement of external agencies and bodies**

100. The scrutiny panel contacted the following bodies/agencies, which have been involved in research into, and measures to address, child poverty.

- Barnados
- Together Middlesbrough
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Sutton Trust

101. Each of the above organisations was contacted with a request for information on its activities, in particular on any programmes that are/have been operating in Middlesbrough. No response was received from Barnados or the Sutton Trust. Background information was provided by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, although

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<sup>12</sup> Department for Work and Pensions - Department for Education Child Poverty in the UK: The report on the 2010 target

the Foundation does not have any current programmes running in Middlesbrough. Information obtained from research and directly from the organisations is set out below.

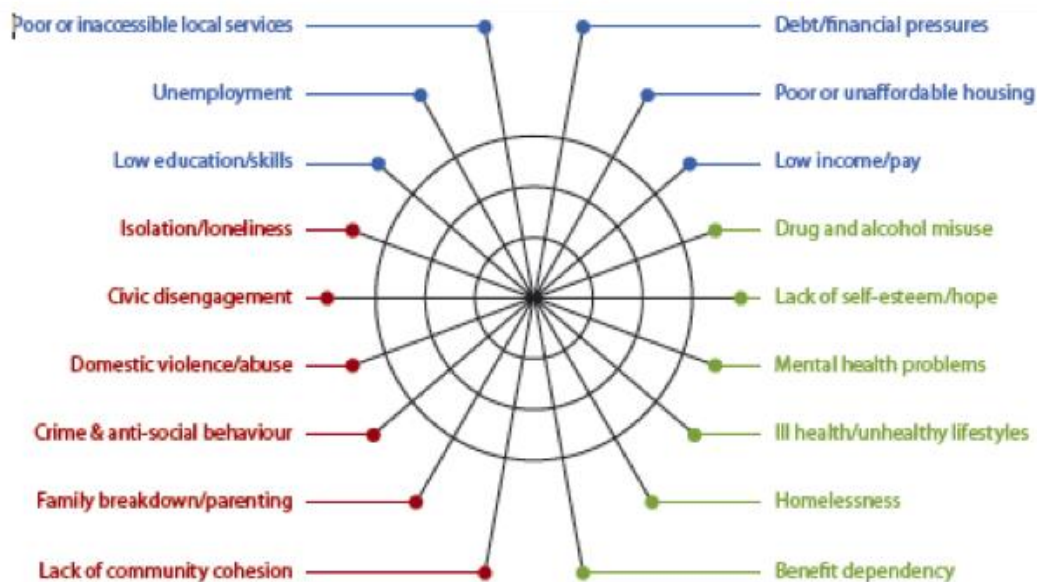
102. A representative of **Together Middlesbrough** attended a meeting of the scrutiny panel. Together Middlesbrough is a joint venture between the Church Urban Fund and the Diocese of York, which was launched by the Archbishop of York in December 2012, to enable churches to help the poorest people in Middlesbrough.
103. Together Middlesbrough is locally managed with representatives from a variety of churches. Support and resources are provided to churches and Christian projects seeking to address poverty in Middlesbrough and surrounding areas, where deprivation is a pressing concern.<sup>13</sup>
104. Local church leaders and activists, recognising the significant challenges faced by individuals and communities in Middlesbrough, organised a conference in early 2012 called 'Bridging the Gap'. The aim was to bring together local Christians with a concern about poverty. The event led to the formation of Together Middlesbrough - a broad partnership of churches of many traditions concerned about tackling poverty in local communities.
105. Heather Black, Development Officer for Together Middlesbrough provided the scrutiny panel with an overview of the work that the organisation undertakes with churches and faith-based projects around issues of child poverty/deprivation. It was explained that Together Middlesbrough has 3 strategic aims:
- To enable local churches, Christian organisations and community projects to tackle poverty more effectively by working more closely with each other.
  - To make the response of churches of all traditions within the Middlesbrough area sustainable by being better resourced and supported.
  - To build a network of churches and Christian projects, and give a voice on the local and national stage to their work and concerns about poverty
106. Information was submitted to the scrutiny panel on research undertaken by the Church Urban Fund, which explores the complex nature of poverty.<sup>14</sup> This illustrates that although the standard measure of child poverty is based on income, the experience of poverty for children and families is much more than lack of material resources, as illustrated by the following diagram, known as *the web of poverty*.

- See diagram on following page -

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cuf.org.uk/together-middlesbrough>

<sup>14</sup> [www.cuf.org.uk/web-of-poverty](http://www.cuf.org.uk/web-of-poverty)



107. The above diagram highlights:

- Poverty of identity - where people lack a strong sense of self and their intrinsic worth, or where their identity is devalued by others. Where this is missing, it can lead to depression, low self-esteem, poor health, dependency, and drug or alcohol misuse.
- Poverty of resources - where people lack the possessions, skills and resources to negotiate what can be an overwhelming existence. Where resources are limited, so are people's choices and opportunities.
- Poverty of relationship - where people lack a set of relationships that strengthen and support, and on which individual, family and community life are built. Where relationships are under pressure or where communities are fragmented and hostile, it is difficult to thrive in human terms.

108. The Church Urban Fund published a report on measuring child poverty in February 2013<sup>15</sup> which supported the view that broader measures of child poverty are needed to give a fuller understanding of the lived-experience of poverty for children, which can inform local and national policy.

109. The Church urban Fund has also highlighted issues that relate to how children in particular experience poverty. These children not only face a lack of material resources, with limited choices and opportunities, but also are more likely to suffer from poverty of identity and relationships. Research undertaken by the Children's Society<sup>16</sup>, shows that the impact of poverty can be felt across all areas of children's lives, affecting their economic well-being, their mental and physical health, their social relationships and the opportunities and choices open to them. These complex issues prevent children and young people from flourishing and fulfilling their full potential:

<sup>15</sup> [www.cuf.org.uk/research/CUF\\_response\\_child\\_poverty\\_measurement\\_consultation](http://www.cuf.org.uk/research/CUF_response_child_poverty_measurement_consultation)

<sup>16</sup> [www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/the\\_heart\\_of\\_the\\_kingdom.pdf](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/the_heart_of_the_kingdom.pdf)

*‘The experience of poverty in childhood can be highly damaging and the effects of poverty are both pervasive and disruptive. Poverty permeates every facet of children’s lives from economic and material disadvantages, through social and relational constraints and exclusions, to the personal and more hidden aspects of poverty associated with shame, sadness and the fear of difference and stigma.’<sup>17</sup>*

110. For many children poverty comes into their lives close on the heels of other difficult and painful circumstances. This could be the onset of unemployment, sickness and disability, family breakdown, domestic violence, upheaval and change.

111. The personal and social repercussions of poverty are often overlooked and easily disregarded, especially when policy concerns are focused on other (perhaps more tangible) concerns such as children’s school attendance and performance. However, being seen as a ‘poor’ child in an affluent society, where poverty is associated with stigma and shame, can be a painful and damaging experience. The priority of tackling child poverty clearly needs to focus on lifting families out of income poverty, but must also tackle some of these more complex needs, which are the daily experiences of children living in poverty.

112. Churches are rooted in local communities across Middlesbrough. Clergy and church ministers often live in the communities they serve, and are usually the only professionals living in the poorest neighbourhoods. Churches have a long tradition of seeking to support the most vulnerable in society and do so with a grass-roots, community-based approach, seeking to work alongside individuals and families, nurturing mutual support and building local resilience.

113. This community based work, recognises the unique dignity of individuals and aims to foster responsibility, rather than seeing ‘the poor’ as problems to be solved. Churches in Middlesbrough have initiated a wide range of projects and activities that address all three areas of the experience of poverty affecting children and families described above. These include:

- a) Middlesbrough Foodbank - This was set up by local churches in response to local poverty and the ongoing national welfare reforms. It began in September 2012 and now works in partnership with the local authority in response to changes to the social fund. The number of people fed is shown in the table below. This demonstrates that, the number of people accessing the foodbank in the last three month period was greater than in the preceding seven month period.

<b>No. of people fed</b>	<b>Sept 2012-March 2013</b>	<b>April 2013-June 2013</b>
Total no. of people fed	951	1074
Total no. of children fed	327	338

- b) Christians Against Poverty - Free debt counselling support. Staff and volunteers work with clients until they are debt free. The service links up with other provision such as the foodbank and also signposts people to local churches and groups providing support.

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<sup>17</sup> T Ridge. Living with Poverty: A Review of the Literature on Children’s and Families Experiences of Poverty HMSO

- c) Methodist Asylum Project and Open Door North East - Two local church-based charities working with some of the poorest and most marginalised people and families. The project provides household goods, clothing and bedding as well as befriending and mutual support.
- d) Safe Families for Children - A Christian charity set up by Sir Peter Vardy, providing support to families in crisis where support from family members or friends is lacking. Host families care for children during periods of crisis, allowing parents respite to deal with a range of problems so they can continue to care for their children
- e) Parent and toddler groups/family support - A recent audit of church social action undertaken by Together Middlesbrough<sup>18</sup> shows that 51% of churches provide parent and toddler groups or family support activities. Rooted in local communities these groups provide a safe place to play with toys and resources, which may not be available at home, whilst also reducing isolation for parents, providing mutual support and support with parenting.
- f) Trinity Youth & Children's Project (TYCP) - A children's project based at Holy Trinity Church, North Ormesby, where child poverty is 55%. Last year TYCP worked intensively with 336 children through after-school clubs, workshops and holiday activities, and overall with 500+ children through community based activities. The project provides a safe place for children to learn and flourish, with access to resources and opportunities they could not otherwise afford.
- g) Children/youth clubs and uniformed groups - An audit by Together Middlesbrough, shows that 42% of churches provide children's clubs and uniformed groups e.g. cubs, scouts, guides and 27% provide youth clubs. These offer a place for children and young people to belong, supporting their sense of identity and offering a positive environment for them to learn and flourish. Uniformed organisations are actively working with local churches to create new units in the more deprived areas of Middlesbrough e.g. North Ormesby & Brambles Farm.

114. **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)** has explored the effect of poverty on children's education. The Foundation's work explores how poverty affects children's education, and the role of education as a route out of poverty.

115. Previous JRF research and DfE statistics show that the 'attainment gap' begins to emerge early in children's lives, even before entry into school, continues throughout childhood and culminates in there being a considerable gap at age 16 and beyond. It is well documented that children growing up in poorer families tend to have lower levels of educational attainment and participation in post-compulsory education than their more privileged peers<sup>19</sup>.

116. Research in 2010, focussed on 'aspirations, attitudes and behaviours' and used a number of sources of data on groups of children growing up in the UK today, from early childhood, through to late adolescence.

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<sup>18</sup> Report to be published in October 2013, a survey of Christian Social action across 80 churches and Christian projects in the Middlesbrough area

<sup>19</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2012) The Role of Aspirations, Attitudes and Behaviour in Closing the Educational Attainment Gap

117. The research showed that educational deficits emerge early in children's lives, even before entry into school, and widen throughout childhood. For example:
- By age three, there is a significant gap in cognitive test scores between children in the poorest fifth of the population compared with those from more affluent backgrounds.
  - The attainment gap at age five grows during the primary school years, so that:
    - (i) The highest early achievers from low-income households are overtaken by lower-achieving children from more affluent backgrounds by age seven; and
    - (ii) By age eleven, about three-quarters of children from the poorest fifth of families reach the expected level at Key Stage 2, compared with 97 per cent of children from the most affluent fifth.
  - Although the gap between the richest and poorest children has started to fall over the last decade, the gap at GCSE level remains large, with the latest DfE figures indicating that pupils eligible for free school meals are almost half as likely to achieve five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE as those who were not eligible (30.9% per cent compared with 58.5%).
  - Poorer children are half as likely to go on to study at university as their more affluent peers.<sup>20</sup>
118. These findings suggest that attitudes and behaviour are potentially important links between socio-economic disadvantage and children's educational attainment.
119. **The Sutton Trust** was established fifteen years ago. Its key objective is the promotion of social mobility, by providing educational opportunities for those from non-privileged backgrounds.
120. The Trust's ability to promote social mobility has been strengthened by the establishment of the **Education Endowment Foundation** (EEF), using funds provided by the Department for Education. The aim of the EEF is to develop and extend effective ways of lifting standards in the lowest attaining primary and secondary schools, helping to narrow the gap between students from the poorest families and their counterparts.
121. The Sutton Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) have developed a Teaching and Learning Toolkit which is an independent resource that provides guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The Toolkit is an accessible summary of educational research and it identifies the best approaches for increasing the attainment of disadvantaged students. It also identifies which approaches offer less promising chances of success - it concludes that schools are *unlikely* to see good results from investing in:
- Teaching Assistants (at least in the way schools currently deploy them).
  - Ability grouping.
  - Reducing primary school class size (except in Reception and Y1 with class size reduced to below 15).
  - Performance-related pay for teachers.

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<sup>20</sup> Goodman, A. and Gregg, P. (2010) Poorer children's educational attainment: How important are attitudes and behaviour?

122. In order of impact, the eight approaches with the most robust evidence and relevance to primary aged pupils are:

1. Effective feedback on learning - For children and teachers on children's performance relative to learning goals to encourage the child.
2. Self-regulation - Teaching children strategies to motivate themselves and plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.
3. Peer tutoring - Learners work in pairs or small groups to provide each other with explicit teaching support.
4. Early intervention - High quality early years provision, with a strong education focus and activities which support early reading and number concepts.
5. One-to-one tutoring - Intensive one to one remedial tuition, for short, regular sessions over a set period of time to enable children to catch up with their peers.
6. ICT - Investing in digital technologies to support learning.
7. Phonics - Important component in supporting the development of early reading skills.
8. Parental involvement - Activities that involve parents in supporting their children's learning.

123. In addition to the above, **Save the Children UK** has been extensively involved in schemes to help families and tackle child poverty in the UK. For example, its *Eat, Sleep, Learn, Play* programme supports children living in the most severe poverty by providing families with household essentials, like a child's bed, a family cooker or educational books and toys.

124. Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an award-winning project that supports parents to improve their children's learning and development at home, so they can reach their full potential at school. Save the Children indicates that FAST has shown some very positive results, with 3,600 children assisted in 2011. Information from the Save the Children website indicates that:

- The FAST programme seeks to redress the achievement gap by building stronger relationships between parents, children, teachers and their communities so children have a better chance to fulfill their potential.
- Weekly sessions include coaching parents to lead activities in which children take turns, listen to rules, answer questions and to do as their parents ask, and also to play with their children and share a family meal together.
- Teachers reported a 10% improvement in children's reading, writing and maths after completing the FAST programme.
- There was a 52% reduction in poor child behaviour at home and a 40% reduction of poor behaviour at school.
- 90% of parents said they had stronger relationships with their child.



- Save the Children's vision is that by 2014, it will establish over 400 groups across the UK, improving the life chances of 50,000 children and training more than 8,000 new practitioners.
  - The organisation is looking for local authorities to work with it to expand FAST in more communities.
125. Another organisation involved in addressing child poverty and attainment is The Classes and Advice Network, known as **CANparent**. CANparent brings together 13 organisations who are experienced in running parenting classes and offering support to families. These have been specifically chosen because they have a track record in delivering classes that work.
126. The organisation is currently giving all parents/carers in Middlesbrough, Camden and High Peak a £100 voucher to spend with the CANparent Classes and Advice Network (one voucher per parent/carer). The scheme is open to all parents and carers of a child from birth until the end of school year one who live work or study in the trial areas, or who has a child who attends school or nursery there.
127. CANparent classes cover all of the topics any parent of a child from birth until the end of year one will face - be it daily routines; managing relationships; team parenting; why play is important; behaviour or practical solutions to everyday challenges. While every family is different and every child is different, many parents find that they go through the same challenges, issues and joys as others. CANparent vouchers can be used to obtain support with issues such as:
- Learning through play.
  - Parents working together as a team.
  - Communicating and staying calm.
  - Managing sleep issues.
  - Coping with difficult behaviour.
  - Rules and routines.
  - Understanding different stages of a child's development.

## CONCLUSIONS

128. Based on the evidence gathered in the scrutiny investigation the Panel concluded that:
1. It is estimated that there are around 1.6 million children in the UK living in severe poverty. The position in Middlesbrough is stark - it is the third most deprived Local Authority area in the UK with an average child poverty rate of 37%. This rises to 61% in the case of the worst-affected ward. The current state of the national economy, ongoing cuts in public spending and welfare reforms mean that this position may yet worsen.

2. The impact of child poverty is far-reaching and is known to severely disadvantage children in terms of attainment levels. Education outcomes are poorest where poverty rates are highest. At every stage of schooling, the poorest children do worse than their better-off classmates. Childhood disadvantage and children's educational outcomes are closely linked to adult outcomes, which means that poverty can continue into adulthood and then into the next generation of children. Evidence suggests that school attainment is correlated to development as early as 22 months. The 'attainment gap' therefore begins to emerge in children's lives even before entry into school, continues throughout childhood and culminates in a considerable gap at age 16 and beyond. Research has shown that effective early intervention can enable disadvantaged children to catch up and succeed.
3. In recent years, attainment levels have generally improved across Middlesbrough at both primary and secondary levels. However, these are still behind national levels. In addition, the number of 16-18 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has fallen but remains well above the national average and the local unemployment rate overall is around twice the national average. These statistics help to illustrate the importance of reducing levels of poverty and thereby narrowing existing attainment gaps to improve educational outcomes even further.

Middlesbrough Council is actively working to address child poverty by working with its partners and relevant agencies and through publication of its Child Poverty Strategy and Children and Young People Plan. In terms of educational outcomes, the authority and its partners are involved in delivering relevant support and interventions to all children and young people where there is an identified need, including those affected by disadvantage. In addition, Middlesbrough's particular problems have been recognised in a number of quarters:

- The Diocese of York and Church Urban Fund has launched the *Together Middlesbrough* Project to enable local churches to assist the poorest people of Middlesbrough.
- CANparent has brought together thirteen organisations to deliver support and parenting classes to relevant families. There is a need to ensure that the scheme's full potential is realised and that take up of the £100 parenting-class vouchers that Canparent has made available to all parents/carers with a child under one year old in Middlesbrough is maximised.
- The authority's bid for funding from the Big Lottery's Fulfilling Lives programme has reached the final stages of the bidding process. If the bid is ultimately successful, funding to support troubled families in Middlesbrough will be made available for a period of eight to ten years.

All of the above are welcomed by the scrutiny panel as the basis of further and continued work.

4. The Pupil Premium payable to schools to support disadvantaged pupils is to rise to £900 per child. This represents a considerable sum of funding to be made available across Middlesbrough and a further opportunity to improve standards through appropriate early intervention to support children living in poverty.

5. While the local authority cannot direct schools in respect of use of the Pupil Premium, there may be an opportunity to involve the Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership in sharing and disseminating examples of best practice among schools, as well as by providing support to schools prior to OFSTED inspections. In addition, as the level of payment of the Pupil Premium is based on the number of free school meals, it is imperative that every effort continues to be made to encourage take-up of free meals.
6. It may be beneficial to examine work undertaken by other local authorities in respect of child poverty and deprivation to determine whether any schemes or initiatives successfully tried elsewhere could be beneficial in Middlesbrough.
7. Save the Children UK indicates that it is looking to work with more local authorities to expand its Families and Schools Together (FAST) project, which is aimed at supporting parents to improve their children's learning and development at home. As the FAST project is already involved in the CANparent scheme in Middlesbrough, it could be beneficial to further develop FAST in Middlesbrough.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

129. Following the submitted evidence, and based on the conclusions above, the scrutiny panel's recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Executive are as follows:

1. That Middlesbrough Council's work in partnership with local health services, public services and the voluntary sector to put prevention in early life at the heart of service delivery and practice is continued and that, with particular regard to measures relating to deprivation and its impact on attainment:
  - a. That the Middlesbrough Child Poverty Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 are updated to reflect the change of National government in 2010 as well as the fact that targets included in the Child Poverty Act 2010 are unlikely to be met.
  - b. That mechanisms that are in place to measure and evaluate the impact of interventions relating to deprivation and attainment, and to take corrective action as necessary, are reviewed to ensure that they work at maximum effect.
2. That an appraisal is undertaken in respect of the Save the Children UK Families and Schools Together (FAST) project and its involvement in the CANparent scheme locally and the possibility of expansion of the FAST project in Middlesbrough is explored.
3. That continued liaison is undertaken with schools in respect of the most effective future use of the Pupil Premium, in particular to ensure that appropriate interventions are made at the earliest opportunity. This should include involving Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership in identifying and sharing among schools examples of best practice regarding the use of the Pupil Premium, as well as by assisting and supporting schools prior to OFSTED inspections, for example by arranging mock inspections.

4. That Middlesbrough Council's Wellbeing, Care and Learning Department undertakes an exercise to identify examples of best practice among other local authorities in respect of measures to address child poverty and deprivation. This should ascertain whether any schemes or initiatives successfully tried elsewhere could be beneficial to Middlesbrough.

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  - Lesley Spaven - Partnership Manager, Childrens Trust & Performance - Wellbeing, Care and Learning.
  - Kathryn Warnock - Principal Corporate Development Officer - Assistant Chief Executive Office.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

131. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:
  - Reports to and minutes of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 20 February, 26 March, 10 April, 7 May and 31 July 2013.
  - Websites and publications listed in the relevant footnotes of this report.

**COUNCILLOR JEANETTE WALKER**

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