

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Final Report
Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning

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AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

1. The purpose of the scrutiny panel's review was to examine whether effective and successful models of support are in place, in Middlesbrough, to:
 - a. tackle the root causes of poverty; and
 - b. mitigate the effects of disadvantage on education.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

2. The terms of reference, for the scrutiny panel's review, were as follows:
 - a) To examine local child poverty rates.
 - b) To investigate the effects of poverty on learning and educational achievement.
 - c) To examine the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and its partners to:
 - Tackle the root causes of poverty.
 - Raise the educational attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (for example, through a focus on early years and use of the Pupil Premium).
 - d) To identify good practice and evidence-based approaches that aim to tackle poverty and remove barriers to learning.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Child poverty is on the rise. There are over 4 million children living in poverty in the UK, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies expected this to rise to 5 million in 2020. The Social Metrics Commission recently estimated that 2.3 million children are affected by persistent poverty, that is, they have been living in poverty for at least two of the previous three years. The profile of child poverty has also changed over time, with almost three-quarters of children in poverty now living in households where at least one adult is working.
4. This is a complex issue. Nonetheless, the detrimental impact that poverty has on children's long-term development is well established. Studies consistently show that economic disadvantage negatively impacts children's academic performance. These effects can be seen at the time of reception and continue until children finish their GCSEs¹.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

TERM OF REFERENCE A – To examine local child poverty rates

5. Poverty can be caused by factors such as:
 - low wages, insecure jobs and unemployment;
 - family problems;
 - high costs, including housing;
 - ineffective benefit system;
 - lack of skills;
 - poor physical health;
 - poor mental health; and
 - addictions, including gambling or substances

¹ <https://www.eif.org.uk/blog/child-poverty-and-early-intervention>

Measures of Poverty

6. There are not particularly good measures in existence to assess poverty. One measure that is often used is to identify those households that have an income of 60% lower than the median income level in the country. The latest data published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggests that the median annual gross salary is:
 - Nationally - £24,298
 - Middlesbrough - £19,075
 - North East £21,856
7. In terms of the Child Health Profile published in March 2020, 2016 data had identified that 31.8% (9,450) of children aged under 16 were living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where their reported income was less than 60% median income. This indicator is significantly worse than the England average (17%) and is the highest in country.

Local Indicators for Child Poverty

8. In May 2019, Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Social Policy published the 2017/18 local indicators for child poverty.

2017/18 estimates

9. In 2017/18, in terms of parliamentary constituency, Middlesbrough had 37% of children living in poverty (before housing costs) and 42% (after housing costs). The constituency of Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland had 22% of children living in poverty (before housing costs) and 33% (after housing costs).
10. In 2017/18, in terms of local authority area, Middlesbrough had 32% of children living in poverty (before housing costs) and 39% (after housing costs). In terms of top 20 local authorities with the highest levels of child poverty across the UK, Middlesbrough was ranked as 17th (before housing costs).
11. With regard to the electoral wards with the highest level of child poverty in Middlesbrough:
 1. Gresham and Middlehaven had 61.3% of children living in poverty, before housing costs, and 54.4%, after housing costs; and
 2. Gresham had 53.1% of children living in poverty (before housing costs) and 50.1% (after housing costs).

Measuring Poverty in Schools

12. In schools, poverty/deprivation is measured using a range of criteria, including:
 - The proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM);
 - The Index of Multiple Deprivation rank (IMD); and
 - The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

13. In January 2019, in respect of eligibility for FSM:

- In Middlesbrough’s primary schools, 26.1% of pupils were eligible (national average = 15.8%)
- In Middlesbrough’s secondary schools, 26.9% of pupils were eligible (national average = 14.1%)
- In Middlesbrough’s special schools, 52.0% of pupils were eligible (national average = 37.5%)

14. Middlesbrough’s schools are well above the national average for eligibility for FSM. In terms of the FSM figures, there is significant variation between schools - primary being between 0.5% and 64.7%, secondary between 17.4% and 64.2% and special between 46.7% and 64.2%.

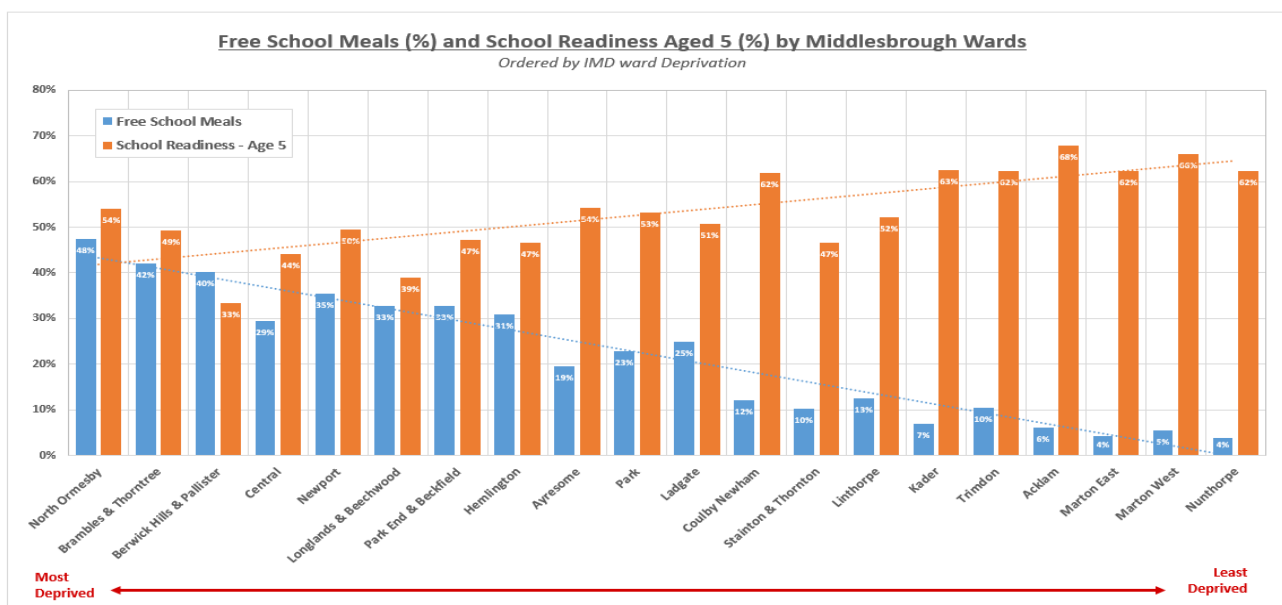
15. In respect of the IMD, of the 43 primary schools in Middlesbrough - 19 scored in the first decile, i.e. the highest 10% of deprivation in the country.

16. In respect of the IDACI indicators, all local areas were ranked between 1 and 32844 (1 is the most deprived and 32844 being the least deprived). In 2019, in terms of the variation between the 43 primary schools, the IDACI index for Key Stage 2 (KS2) demonstrates that schools are ranked from 71.8 through to 27958.9. The percentage of children in each school who score as disadvantaged ranged from 10% to 88.2% of the cohorts. The Local Authority did not receive IDACI information about all schools.

TERM OF REFERENCE B - To investigate the effects of poverty on learning and educational achievement.

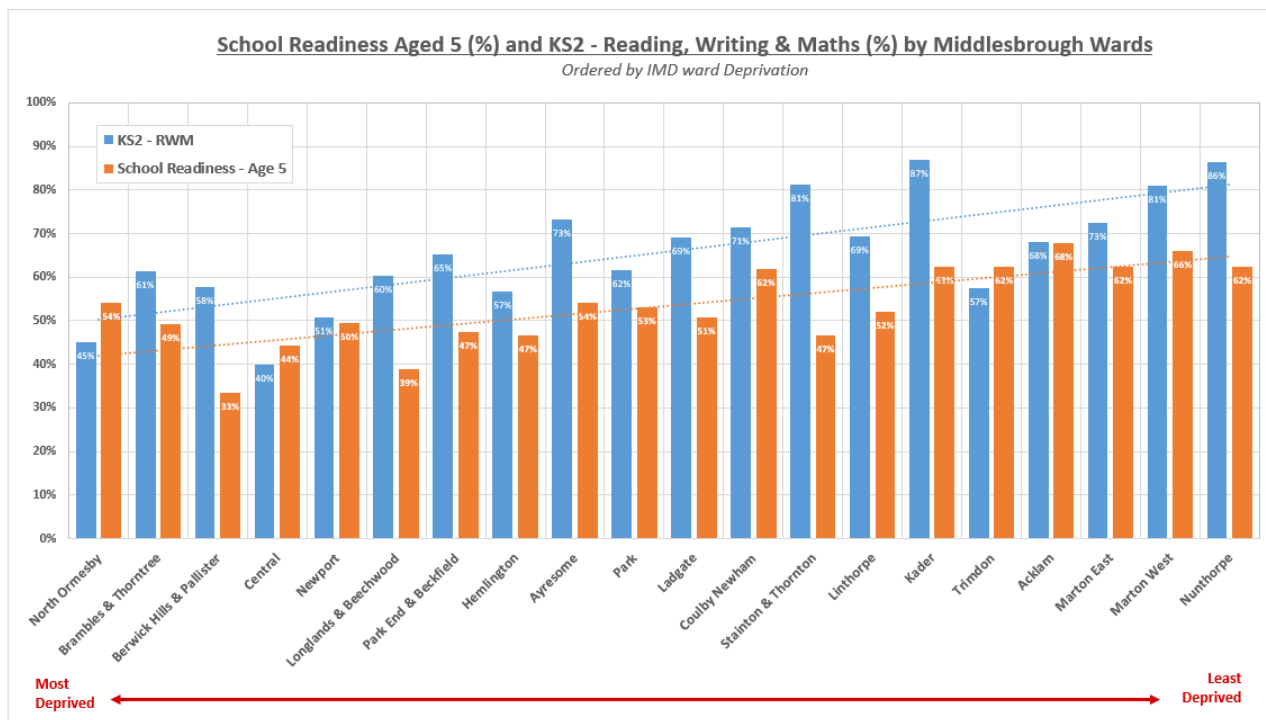
17. Graph 1 below contains figures on school readiness and FSM (at age 5), across all wards in Middlesbrough, from the most deprived to the least deprived. Although there is some variation, the general trend is that children living in the more affluent wards, who are not eligible for FSM, are more likely to be ready for school.

Graph 1



18. Graph 2 highlights that the pattern continues when reviewing KS2 data. More pupils living in the least deprived wards achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

Graph 2



19. Middlesbrough children living in deprivation begin their formal learning at a lower point than their peers. By the end of their first school year in Reception, approximately 14% less children living with deprivation achieve the age-related expectation compared to all other Middlesbrough children. Although it is a struggle to help these children achieve the same progress as their peers and the gap widens as they move through their primary education years, compared to the national picture, the gap is not as wide. In 2018, by the end of KS2, children living in deprived areas of the town were doing better than similar children nationally.

Primary outcomes for Children with Free School Meal (FSM) and Pupil Premium (PP) in 2018 for Early Years (EYFS), Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2)

N.B. Measures are Good Level of Development (GLD) and Reading, Writing and Maths combined (RWM)

	EYFS GLD		Phonics Pass		KS1 RWM		KS2 RWM	
	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National
FSM	53.7%	57.0%	73.1%	70.0%	47.3%	47.9%	52.0%	46.0%
Non-FSM	67.4%	74.0%	82.4%	84.0%	63.7%	68.3%	68.6%	68.0%
Diff	-13.7%	-17.0%	-9.3%	-14.0%	-16.4%	-20.4%	-16.6%	-22.0%

	EYFS GLD		Phonics Pass		KS1 RWM		KS2 RWM	
	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National
PP	53.9%	57.2%	74.7%	72.0%	49.8%	50.2%	54.9%	51.0%
Non-PP	67.5%	74.3%	82.4%	85.0%	64.7%	69.3%	73.1%	70.0%
Diff	-13.6%	-17.1%	-7.7%	-13.0%	-14.9%	-19.1%	-18.2%	-19.0%

20. As children move into secondary school the gap widens in outcomes for children living in deprivation against all other children but the gap is not as wide as the national gap.

21. The Pupil Premium is a grant allocated to schools to improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. In 2018, Middlesbrough children who were eligible for Pupil Premium (PP) funding were still slightly higher in achievement than their national peers at Grade 4+ and in all other measures were similar to national averages at the end of Key stage 4.

Middlesbrough GCSE attainment 2018 in English and Maths Grade 4+ and 5+ English and Mathematics

	4+ E&M		5+ E&M	
	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National
FSM	-	-	21.7%	21.6%
Non-FSM	-	-	41.6%	46.4%
Diff	-	-	-19.9%	-24.8%
	4+ E&M		5+ E&M	
	Middlesbrough	National	Middlesbrough	National
PP	45.1%	44.5%	23.6%	24.9%
Non-PP	70.3%	71.5%	47.2%	50.1%
Diff	-25.2%	-27.0%	-23.6%	-25.2%

22. There is variance across schools with some schools having better outcomes for disadvantaged children than others.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

23. In respect of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), higher rates of those with SEND are identified in the more deprived areas, particularly in respect of central and east Middlesbrough.

24. In January 2018, the School Census identified that there was a total of 4,336 pupils recorded with SEND, of that cohort 31.85% had a Moderate Learning Difficulty, followed by 16.54% with a Severe Learning Difficulty and the third highest proportion was Social, Emotional and Mental Health with 14.14%. Middlesbrough has a higher prevalence of some of the wide-ranging issues which can stem from deprivation and contribute to a continued and increasing rate of SEND in the town.

TERM OF REFERENCE C – To examine the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and its partners to tackle the root causes of poverty and raise the educational attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (for example, through a focus on early years and use of the Pupil Premium).

Evidence from the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG)

25. The Financial Inclusion Group was established in 2009 and initially formed part of Middlesbrough Partnership, however, since the partnership had been disbanded, the work of the FIG has continued.
26. The FIG brings together organisations with an interest in improving financial inclusion in Middlesbrough and mitigating the impact of financial exclusion. The membership of the FIG includes approximately 50 organisations.
27. The FIG operates as a forum for sharing ideas and information to identify gaps and ensure that Middlesbrough's residents receive seamless support from a variety of different organisations.
28. Middlesbrough's key issues and challenges, identified by the FIG, are money lending from loan sharks and companies that charge high interest rates and welfare reform.

Examples of work promoted and/or funded by the Financial Inclusion Group:

- **Benefits Take Up** - In 2013, the Hubs Advice Service was established. In 2015, the FIG was provided with a substantial amount of additional funding. Following on from that, the Benefit Take-Up Campaign was established. The Benefit Take-Up Campaign is a collaborative money management initiative developed by the FIG to help people claim the correct benefits. The campaign brings together advisers from 5 organisations (Actes, Age UK Teesside, Cleveland Housing Advice Centre, Middlesbrough Citizens Advice Bureau, Middlesbrough Council's Welfare Rights Unit & Democratic Services) to provide Middlesbrough's residents with benefits support and advice. The campaign involves advisers providing benefits advice at a series of fixed weekly sessions in local community centres (and other locations) for a two week period. Those who attend appointments are provided with advice on benefit calculation, assistance with claiming, filling in conflicting claim forms and assistance with challenging decisions.
- **Tackling Illegal Lending** - the FIG promoted a 12 month campaign led jointly by the National Illegal Money Lending Team and Thirteen Group. The campaign used the Illegal Money Lending Team's intelligence to target areas where loan sharks are known to operate. Essentially, the campaign promoted awareness of alternatives to loan sharks and provided support to victims of loan sharks. Once funds have been provided by a loan shark, individuals are not advised of how much they owe, they are just expected to continue making payments. Lending money from a loan shark is a vicious circle that individuals struggle to break away from.

- **Fuel Voucher Scheme** - a scheme had been introduced by Middlesbrough Environment City. The scheme provides emergency support to those who have been disconnected or faced disconnection from fuel.
 - **Feast of Fun** - the project is organised by Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland. The project brings together churches, schools and community organisations to support families over the summer holidays. The project assists in reducing the financial burden of summer holidays, on families, and provides safe places for children to have fun and eat healthy food.
 - **Foodbanks** - FIG supports the Trussell Trust in providing emergency food and support to people locked in poverty.
29. FIG is meeting need in an environment of sustained high levels of deprivation and reducing resources. FIG has a small annual budget (£47,500) to fund services that are meeting a need but is under-resourced.
30. Since 2013, the Benefit Take-Up Campaign has advised more than 7,000 people and had identified over £16 million in benefits entitlement. Even though 4 or 5 advisers are available to offer support, some areas are oversubscribed meaning that there is a delay in individuals receiving support. Due to capacity issues and time constraints, advisers are unable to offer support to all those who attend the sessions. There are areas in Middlesbrough that could benefit from a greater presence from the advisers.
31. Advisers have recently visited two schools (North Ormesby Primary Academy and Priory Woods School) to provide parents with advice.

Evidence from Public Health

32. In an attempt to address the impact of poverty, the Child Partnership has been developed. The partnership involves a range of professionals (including midwives, health visitors and staff from children's centres) all working collaboratively to ensure that children are provided with the best start in life. The development of the partnership has achieved a significant reduction (34%) in the number of women smoking in pregnancy and a significant increase in referrals to talking therapies. The partnership also ensures that development delays are being identified at the earliest possible point and that women are screened for alcohol use during pregnancy.
33. The different initiatives aimed at tackling poverty in Middlesbrough include:
- **The Healthy Child Programme** - a public health programme for children, young people and families which focusses on early intervention and prevention.
 - **Dental health** - undertaking work to increase dental registration, introduce tooth brushing schemes and raise the profile of oral health.
 - **Healthy Start Vitamins** - vitamins are available for pregnant women and children up to the age of 5. Families are eligible to receive the vitamins, if they are on benefits.
 - **Food poverty** - food banks are funded via the Food Power Alliance (Middlesbrough Council).
 - **Fuel poverty (Affordable Warmth)** - there is now an action plan in the South Tees area.

- **Welfare Rights Advice Service.**
 - **Live Well Centre** - providing signposting to welfare support.
 - **Fund elements of period poverty and support with staffing resources.** Regular distribution centres are now in operation.
 - **Holiday Hunger** - focusing on free meals, building communities and supporting community cohesion, health activities and education.
 - **Support for the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG).**
 - **Target health services and screening services to areas of high deprivation** in respect of cervical screening, bowel screening, healthy heart checks etc.
 - **Improve access to health services.**
 - **Stop before the knock.**
 - **Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership (MAP),** including poverty proofing.
34. Work is being undertaken to introduce the My Little One scheme in Middlesbrough. My Little One asks women to complete some questions prior to attending booking or early bird appointments. The questions assess the vulnerability of women, and dependent on the outcome of the questionnaire, women receive targeted newsletters and signposting to relevant services. The information provided by the questionnaire enables the midwife to tailor the booking appointment and meet the needs of individuals.
35. A vulnerable parenting pathway is being developed to provide early targeted support, in the first 1000 days, for parents and families.
36. There is currently a disconnect between prevention services and early help. Therefore, work is being undertaken to introduce an integration pilot with the Health Visiting Service, School Nursing Service and the School Readiness Team. A matrix has been completed to assess leadership, governance, delivery and planning - in an attempt to establish a more co-ordinated approach.

Evidence from the School Readiness Team

37. The role of the School Readiness Team is to work with parents to help them understand that they are their child's first educator and to encourage and support them in that role. The School Readiness Team is located in the Education Achievement Team and has responsibility for children's centres, the Family Information Service (the funded childcare element) and two Council nurseries (Stainsby and Bright Stars). The Family Information Service is a statutory duty of the Local Authority and is responsible for all funded childcare in Middlesbrough.
38. The School Readiness Team works in a number of ways with families who have children aged 0-5 years. The School Readiness Team:
- helps children become ready for nursery and primary school;
 - provides access to good quality childcare, including free early education for two, three and four year olds;
 - supports childcare settings (nurseries and childminders across the town) in terms of the quality and standard of their provision; and
 - links closely with the Early Years Strategic Board.

Funding

39. Funded childcare is one of the strategies used to encourage parents to place their children in settings that will enable them to learn.

Children's Centres

40. The children's centre offer is delivered via the School Readiness Pathway, a model created in 2015 in partnership with health colleagues. The model consists of multi-agency key contact points for each child and identifies clear points for interventions to improve a child's learning and development. The model, which is promoted by the Local Government Association, is deemed best practice.

Universal Offer

41. There is a universal offer, whereby any residents of the town can attend any children's centre in Middlesbrough. The universal offer includes Baby Play, Stay and Play, child and health clinics and parenting programmes - all have a focus on making every contact count and promoting conversations around early learning with parents and carers.
42. The School Readiness Literacy Pathway is a multi-agency model, with contacts at key developmental points in a child's life, progressively building on from one contact to the next. The books that are available are linked to development and milestones.
43. The Borrow-a-Book scheme was launched in 2017 in all of the children's centres and is about removing barriers to families accessing libraries. Data from January to December 2019 had shown that an extra 727 families had joined the library via children's centre sessions and 759 books were issued to parents at those sessions.
44. In respect of the universal offer, parents also have the opportunity to attend parenting programmes. The programmes available are the 0-5 Family Links Early Years workshops and the Public Health initiative HENRY (healthy eating and nutrition for the really young). Children's centre staff deliver both parenting programmes on a termly basis. Positive feedback has been received from parents in respect of the programmes.

Targeted Offer

45. The targeted offer is delivered in partnership with health colleagues. When a child turns 2 years and 3 months, an Ages and Stages Questionnaire is undertaken by health visitors. The questionnaire is a national tool that uses a scoring system to measure where a child sits in terms of their developmental milestones. If a child is identified as not meeting their milestones, then they will be referred into the School Readiness Team. The School Readiness Team will then work with the family, in the home for a 6 week period, to deliver the Play and Learn Together intervention. The intervention is a tool created by the team to share specific key messages with families, including helping parents to understand how they can help improve their child's learning and development. The work focusses primarily on improving communication but also involves developing fine motor skills. When the work is completed, the health visitor reviews the child's development milestones at their 3 month review. At the present time, there has been a 97% success rate.

Early Help Offer

46. One of the team's newly developed interventions is available to all those under 5 who sit within families open to family case work in Stronger Families. On average, that figure includes 248 children at any given time. The intervention is entitled 'Chat, Play, Read and Sing' and children's centre staff share specific key messages with families aiming to close the word and attainment gap. The team will visit the family's home on one or two occasions to deliver the intervention. The Department of Education is promoting the intervention to develop best practice nationally.
47. The majority of parents do engage with the team. However, for those few who are reluctant to engage, joint handover home visits are planned between Stronger Families and the School Readiness Team. The School Readiness Team will only become involved with the family, once the Lead Practitioner has advised it is the appropriate time to offer support. The team is well equipped to encourage families to participate, as staff have been fully trained to engage with families.
48. For those children with SEND, there is an Early Years Specialist Support Service. The service trains staff in settings to support children with SEND.

Tackling Development Gaps

49. The Local Authority has staff within the School Achievement Team (Early Years Development Lead) and the Stronger Families School Readiness Team (Early Years Quality Lead). Those members of staff work with all settings to ensure children from the most deprived backgrounds are given the best of opportunities by working with schools and settings in a number of ways:
 - The Early Years Development Lead provides bespoke support to nurseries and schools, based on an individual needs basis. The support focusses on all aspects of learning and development to support improved outcomes for all children.
 - Cluster meetings have been established termly to share key early years messages and provide opportunities for practitioners to share good practice. The forum is providing opportunities for relationships to develop, with more teachers and practitioners moderating together and sharing good practice and resources.
 - Moderation drop-in sessions have recently been established to encourage Reception teachers to make accurate judgements when assessing children's progress towards achieving the early learning goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is hoped that by providing termly opportunities and sharing experiences, outcomes will improve.
50. The School Readiness Team recently secured a £30K grant, from the Government, which has been used to commission the childcare sufficiency audit and the person commissioned has used the Mosaic approach to profile every household in Middlesbrough with under 5's. The work reported that the most deprived areas are those with the highest level of need. It also identified that there is a surplus of settings in the most affluent wards and a lack of settings in the more deprived wards. The School Readiness Team plans to work with providers to discuss solutions.
51. There is currently no data set for attainment on entry to nursery. The Local Authority has undertaken work to encourage schools to start recording data on entry to nursery, however, only 6 schools have shown a willingness to record this information. It is

essential to capture an accurate baseline of individual children's attainment as early as possible to inform planning and maximise learning.

Evidence from Education

52. The Inclusion Strategy was introduced in January 2019. The main aim of the Inclusion Strategy is to reduce both fixed-term and permanent exclusions and ensure that support is provided to pupils in mainstream schools, where possible.
53. In terms of access to education, the service aims to ensure that all children and young people gain access to a school place. Maintaining learning and a school place can be much harder for children from areas of higher deprivation, either because of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or through lack of skills in the family home. The impact of ACEs on school attendance is a particular concern and is a strategic priority for the Local Authority. An attendance action plan has been developed, which identifies priorities that will be pursued with the Local Authority's partners. To improve attendance, the development of a local strategy and marketing campaign are also planned. Some schools already have effective strategies and interventions in place.
54. As part of the School Improvement Project which ran until September 2019, the Local Authority had worked with a range of developing schools in central and east Middlesbrough that were struggling to improve their levels of achievement and progress. Those schools often had the highest percentages of children living in deprivation and strategies were offered to schools to raise aspirations and develop teaching and leadership strategies to close achievement gaps.
55. Following the summer 2018 outcomes, five of the primary schools (originally identified as developing through their outcomes data) improved to the extent that they were no longer in the category. Summer 2019 outcomes suggested that 8 primary schools in the category improved to the extent that they were no longer classed as developing. Fourteen schools eligible for developing schools funding had been inspected by Ofsted during the School Improvement Project. All of those schools had retained their previous judgement (all but one were good or outstanding) and two retained their outstanding judgements, despite outcomes that were lower than the national average. 89% of schools in Middlesbrough are now good or better. The majority of school Ofsted reports recognised the improvements in areas funded through the School Improvement Project and recognised the Local Authority's contribution to improving pupil outcomes.
56. The School Improvement Strategy allowed for sharing of best practice and provided support to schools to enable them to develop and excel, regardless of their current level of achievement. There were good signs of progress for some of Middlesbrough's schools in the highest areas of deprivation in the town.
57. The Local Authority funded Children North East to carry out poverty proofing reviews in three Middlesbrough schools (as a pilot), and a brief guide has been developed by the schools and shared with others.

58. There are various routes where best practice can be shared via the learning hubs for English, maths, leadership, management and Special Educational Needs (SEN). There is also a network that has been established for Parent Support Advisors to discuss effective strategies to support parents and families.

Evidence from Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership (MAP)

59. Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership (MAP), which was part of the School Improvement Project, had worked closely with schools and key partners to remove barriers to learning to secure a bright future for all children and young people. MAP's key priorities, which had been identified through consultation with schools in 2017, were removing barriers to learning, parental partnership and careers and employability.

60. In terms of removing barriers to learning, MAP had:

- offered bespoke support to schools to address needs;
- provided multi-agency team around the school support to collectively develop action plans and monitor the implementation of those actions;
- led on the roll-out of restorative practice in schools;
- offered whole school training and conferences, which links to MAP's priorities;
- led a Poverty Proofing Working Group;
- provided a weekly update to schools to share a wide range of support and services; and
- supported schools to access funding.

61. In terms of parental partnership, MAP had:

- commissioned training for a multi-agency team of 17 individuals to deliver Family Links Nurturing Programme;
- arranged delivery of the Talking Teens programme;
- arranged informal coffee morning sessions for parents to support progression;
- provided bespoke support to schools - family learning, wellbeing sessions for parents and delivery of multi-agency support; and
- set up a Parent Support Advisor (PSA) Network.

62. In terms of careers and employability, MAP had:

- worked with Globalbridge;
- facilitated a Secondary Leaders Network;
- set up a Primary Careers Network and delivered a primary careers pilot to increase aspirations and employability skills;
- offered bespoke support, reviewing the vocational and alternative curriculum offer in schools;
- worked with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to enable the schools to access TVCA funding; and
- engaged with schools during Global Entrepreneurship Week in respect of food poverty and encouraging schools to set up eco shops.

63. An annual review was undertaken in 2018/19 to demonstrate the positive work undertaken by MAP. The review concluded that MAP had offered a wide range of much needed support and there is a clear impact of work and support to improve life chances of children, young people and families.

64. Funding for MAP ended in March 2020, as it was part of the School Improvement Project which was funded for a time limited period.

Evidence from Schools

Breckon Hill Primary School

65. In summary, the following practices and strategies are used by the school to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty on education:

- The school uses Pupil Premium funding primarily to increase teaching capacity across the school.
- The school employs a School Therapist to provide pupils with effective support to promote emotional resilience and positive mental health. No stigma is attached to visiting the therapist.
- The school has a good working relationship with the Manager of Breckon Hill Community Centre, enabling pupils and their families to access a whole range of activities, opportunities and support.
- The school pays for all visits and the Year 6 residential, thereby removing barriers and enabling all pupils to participate.
- The school has excellent resources. A new Year 6 Hub has been developed and pupils have access to a large sports hall and an ISportsWall. The ISportsWall combines learning with keeping fit and active.
- The school conducts research to identify best practice, both locally and nationally, in respect of the Pupil Premium and supporting those with SEND.
- The school conducts appraisals regularly, which facilitates the development and progression of members of staff.

North Ormesby Primary Academy

66. In summary, the following practices and strategies are used by the school to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty on education:

- The school has small class sizes as it is acknowledged that smaller groups contribute to more effective learning and teaching.
- The school offers effective continued professional development (CPD) opportunities to members of staff.
- The school operates a dual system of teaching whereby pupils learn in the classroom but they are also provided with the resources, assistance and support to learn outside of the classroom.
- The school uses Pupil Premium funding to employ a Safeguarding, Attendance and Family Support (SAFS) Lead. The SAFS Lead provides vital pastoral and mental health support for pupils and staff.
- The school has an eco shop, which provides groceries and school uniforms at a significantly reduced price.
- The school has invested greatly in the early years, specifically phonics and reading.
- The school is a huge advocate of the use of technology and addressing the digital skills gap. Every child from Reception upwards to Year 6 has a 1:1 iPad. iPads are used across the whole curriculum, including maths, English, science, art etc. Pupils are provided with the ability to be the creators of their own content - developing presentations, animations and video content. Having 1:1 iPads for pupils had been

critical during lockdown, as pupils took their iPads home and the school had been in a position to provide a strong digital offer of home learning from the outset.

- The school uses virtual reality to enhance the experiences of pupils and improve language, vocabulary and communication skills.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after school club. Breakfast club is seen as a necessity as it provides a social element to the school and ensures that the pupils have eaten breakfast and are ready to learn. After school club enables pupils to participate in activities such as circus skills, breakdancing etc.
- The school subsidises the majority of school trips and visits, acknowledging the financial burden that requesting money can put on families.
- The school has created a 'Remarkable Minds' package, which includes a selection of approaches, philosophies and training that members of staff can draw on to develop the mental health and well-being of all pupils. 'Remarkable Minds' is a pathway that sits alongside the academic pathway, which highlights the importance of - Academic Resilience - the school has worked closely with Young Minds and has access to high quality training from the charity to learn the best ways to build academic resilience for pupils; Metacognition - as the lead for the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) trial 'ReflectED', the school has become very strong in reflective learning and the importance of having a 'Growth Mindset'; Restorative Practice - following promotion of restorative practice by the Local Authority, the school has worked to implement a culture of restoration, structured conversation and building of relationships; Thrive - three members of staff have been through intense training on the Thrive approach to help the school develop resilient and confident children. Thrive is a dynamic, developmental and trauma-sensitive approach to meeting the emotional and social needs of children; and ELSA - with four trained 'Emotional Literacy Support Assistants', the school offers regular provision and interventions to those pupils with emotional needs.

Park End Primary School

67. In summary, the following practices and strategies are used by the school to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty on education:

- The school had worked with FareShare to develop a school grocery shop that is managed by pupils. Parents/carers are able to purchase 10 items for £2. The shop is really well attended and has grown in popularity over the past 18 months. During lockdown, the school implemented a new model whereby parents/carers collected food when they visited school to collect the packed lunches for their children. The school has been providing nutritious pre-packed bags of groceries free of charge to families during the Coronavirus pandemic and Middlesbrough Rotary Club has donated funds to the school to enable this to continue until Christmas
- The school intends to host a careers drop-in session for families. The session plans to involve local partners and businesses providing information and guidance to parents.
- The school provides a free breakfast club for all pupils. Approximately 150-200 pupils attend the breakfast club each day. Providing a free breakfast to pupils reduces the financial burden on parents. In light of the Coronavirus pandemic, the school has developed a new way of working whereby toast is available to every pupil on arrival at the school, not just those who attend the breakfast club. The school is supported by Greggs which means pupils can request toast throughout the school day.
- The school provides a low cost after school club for pupils. The school charges £3 per evening and each pupil is provided with an evening meal. This support has enabled parents to return to work.

- The school supplies free PE kits to pupils.

River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT)

68. In summary, the following practices and strategies are used by the school to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty on education:

- In terms of pastoral care, RTMAT has a large pastoral team, which includes a full-time Attendance Officer, Admissions Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mental Health Lead and Personal Development Leads for each Key Stage who are responsible for each pupil's pastoral care.
- RTMAT uses Pupil Premium funding to provide each pupil with their first uniform on entry to the school, including blazers, jumpers and ties. Also, as and when required, the school will provide shoes, shirts, trousers etc. By providing uniforms at this early stage, barriers to learning are removed from the start of each pupil's school journey.
- RTMAT has 'Helping Hands', which is a large store room that has second-hand clothes, bedding, household items etc. Therefore, if a family is in need, the school can provide those necessities.
- All learners are given breakfast on entry to the school.
- RTMAT has employed a Mental Health Lead. The Mental Health Lead had previously been employed as a nurse with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The lead provides mental health and behavioural support to pupils and offers 1:1 support and small group sessions.
- RTMAT arranges training for members of staff in respect of interventions.
- In order to increase the experiences of those living in deprivation, RTMAT arranges for every pupil to visit a theatre and a restaurant. In addition, every pupil has the opportunity to walk up Roseberry Topping, which has assisted pupils with developing their resilience.
- RTMAT pupils have the opportunity to attend a residential, which is paid for by utilising Pupil Premium funding, therefore, there are no cost implications for families.
- RTMAT always ensures food is available for pupils as lack of food has a detrimental impact on a pupil's progress and attainment.

69. Each of the four schools highlighted the importance of sharing best practice between schools to identify solutions and ensure effective support is provided to pupils and their families.

School Uniforms

70. Throughout the review, Members expressed concern over the growing cost of school uniforms. An Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Bill, which makes provision for guidance to schools about the costs aspects of school uniform policies is due to have its report stage and third reading on Friday 27 November 2020. It is hoped that as part of any new legislation, there will be guidance to schools on helping disadvantaged families with the costs of a uniform. It should also point out ideal best practice to have a scheme where recyclable uniform can be collected by the school to help families that are struggling with costs.

Evidence from the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)

Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA)

71. The Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) exists to provide infrastructure support to Middlesbrough's voluntary and community sector (VCS).
72. The MVDA currently supports over 800 voluntary and community sector organisations and grassroots community groups (VCOs). The number of VCOs responding to the issue of poverty in families is significant.
73. The MVDA has previously managed several projects, for example, work has been undertaken to identify how the VCS support early help, the issues around kinship carers and the youth offer.
74. Over the past 10 years, the MVDA has become increasingly aware of the escalating impact of poverty on children and families. Most notably, austerity, public sector cuts and increasing levels of poverty within working households has impacted significantly upon children, young people and families with consequential impacts upon children and young people's capacity for learning and educational achievement. In response, the MVDA has seen a stark rise in the emergence of grass-roots community level groups and community activists responding to poverty.

Linx Youth Service

75. The Linx Youth Service aims to help young people achieve their full potential and become active citizens within their communities.
76. As part of the youth offer, the range of services offered by Links Youth Service includes:
 - open access youth clubs;
 - detached session;
 - 1-2-1 family support;
 - support in schools;
 - holiday activities;
 - the key fund and Social Action Projects; and
 - events and partnership.
77. In terms of providing support in schools, Linx delivers sessions in Lingfield Academy, Unity City Academy and Trinity Catholic College.
78. In terms of the detached sessions, the sessions are offered as part of the early intervention offer by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The team of qualified youth workers operate in Grove Hill, Hemlington, Netherfields and Whinney Banks. The work of the team is demand led, with the team being assigned to hotspots of antisocial behaviour.
79. In terms of family support, Linx usually provides support to families over a period of six weeks, however a holistic family centred approach is taken to determine the level of support required. The work undertaken by Linx helps enable children and young people to continue with their education.

80. In terms of holiday and partnership activities, young people are consulted and involved in designing packages of activities.
81. Feedback received in respects of the Linx Youth Service demonstrates the positive impact of Linx support on young people. Young people comment that support from Linx makes them feel safe, enables them to make positive changes and empowers them to succeed. Apprenticeships have been offered by Linx, enabling young people to achieve a Level 3 in youth work.
82. Current funding was due to end in April 2020.

Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation

83. Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation is a self-sustained charity and is not financially supported by Middlesbrough Football Club.
84. From an education perspective, the charity has a few approaches aimed at addressing poverty in education and learning, namely the blanket, diversionary and targeted approaches. The blanket approach involves activities that are available to all young people, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. The diversionary approach involves activities such as Kicks, which uses the power of football to engage young people who may otherwise be difficult to reach in some of the most disadvantaged areas. Those activities enable the charity to engage with some of the most hard to reach people in the community by delivering programmes which inspire and upskill young people and adults. And finally, the targeted approach involves working with those young people who have social, emotional and mental health needs; those who have been permanently excluded or those who are not accessing mainstream education provision.
85. Recently, the foundation has moved away from using football as the primary vehicle for creating social change and has begun employing educational professionals and mental health professionals to support young people.
86. The foundation has engaged successfully with academies. The charity has aligned its work to each academy's mission, ethos and also Ofsted requirements. The foundation offers educational courses and workshops to provide qualifications and increase the skills, knowledge and aspirations of young people and adults.
87. The foundation delivers 52 core programmes in schools, those programmes span across a period of 10 weeks to the full academic year. When taking into account shorter periods of engagement, that number of programmes increases to around 65.
88. The foundation previously arranged a literacy programme with the Central Library, 500 children and young people accessed the programme across Middlesbrough's schools. Following delivery of the programme, over a week period, a large proportion of those pupils then joined the library.
89. The foundation delivers educational courses and workshops to provide qualifications and increase the skills, knowledge and aspirations of young people.
90. Where possible, the foundation works with other VCOs to provide a multi-agency response.

Grandparents Plus

91. Grandparents Plus is a national kinship care charity, which aims to ensure that kinship carers are recognised, valued and supported.
92. With the majority of kinship carers being grandparents sometimes that can result in barriers to learning - as the education system has changed significantly over the years with the introduction of I.T. Grandparents Plus provides training to kinship carers on topics, such as internet safety.
93. Kinship Active is a project run by Grandparents Plus in partnership with Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation and Teesside University. The project works with kinship care families to increase activity in children and carers through intergenerational family activities, which have been shown to have a positive impact on physical, cognitive and social health.
94. In terms of engagement with schools, schools are not necessarily aware of the issues and difficulties encountered by children in kinship care and this results in those children being suspended and/or excluded as a result of their behaviour. There is a need for engagement between kinship carers and schools to enable schools to better understand each family's circumstances and provide effective support.
95. Funding for the Project Worker post, based in Teesside, was due to end in April 2020.

TERM OF REFERENCE D – To identify good practice and evidence-based approaches that aim to tackle poverty and remove barriers to learning.

Evidence from the North East Child Poverty Network

96. The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) had taken over the administration and facilitation of the North East Child Poverty Network in 2013. The aim of the network is to connect NHC members and enable them 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 receive updates around policy.
97. The achievements of the network include:
 - learning from others and adopting approaches informed by best practice;
 - setting up local school holiday programmes;
 - adopting partnership approaches;
 - benefitting from different pots of funding from Greggs (in offering school breakfast clubs in areas of most need and providing household items to ensure sustainable tenancies); and
 - setting up local sports activity through Street Games.
98. Examples of good practice to tackle the root causes of poverty and mitigate the effects of disadvantage on children, families and local communities include:
 - **North Tyneside Council** set up partnership boards in two of its most deprived wards. The four priority areas for the partnership boards cover education, employment, housing and health. In respect of education, the partnership boards

work closely with schools in the wards to introduce improved transitional arrangements and encourage parental engagement. The boards work with schools to overcome the difficulties/challenges identified in engaging with parents. In terms of employment, North Tyneside had identified a high percentage of single households on zero hour contracts. Therefore, the boards put arrangements in place to upskill those individuals and work with training providers to ensure courses are delivered in a flexible way. In terms of housing, the boards work with private rented sector landlords to achieve higher property standards by offering free trips to the skip yard, which has proven popular. In terms of health, the boards implemented changes to contracts with GP practices. The GP practices in the more affluent areas of North Tyneside did not receive an incentive to increase take-up of health checks and vaccinations. Incentivising became more focussed on the deprived neighbourhoods to boost the uptake in the more disadvantaged wards.

- **Hartlepool Borough Council** focussed on three themes - mitigating the impact of poverty on those that are suffering, pathways out of poverty for adults (training and work) and pathways out of poverty for children and young people (education, learning and aspirations). Hartlepool Borough Council also has an aim to ensure that no one goes hungry (children and adults). Hartlepool has a strong relationship with the VCS and together there is a network of support across town, which provides families with direct access to all forms of help and support (including school uniforms, food, income maximisation, benefit advice, clothing, training and volunteering). Community hubs deliver a 'one stop shop' where multiple services are offered to provide seamless support for individuals. Hartlepool Borough Council also provides workshops and seminars to schools, social workers and health visitors and other frontline services around the issues that affect families, so that services and interventions can be targeted effectively.
- **Karbon Homes** has established a Money Matters Team, which assists tenants with budgeting and enables them to maximise household incomes. Tenancy sustainability and money management is a big focus. As a result of the intense support provided, there has been financial gains of £6m to customers over the past year. In light of the welfare reform, Karbon Homes has increased the size of the teams, offering a more bespoke service and adopting a smart referrals approach.
- **Clarion Futures**, part of Clarion Housing Group, provides a telephone service as well as face-to-face to support for residents. To address the root causes of poverty, Clarion Futures has a money guidance service, offers fuel poverty advice and a white goods fund. It is planned that the white goods fund will be extended to food and fuel vouchers in the next 6 months. Clarion Futures has also set up a series of food pantries using a social supermarket model.
- **Northumberland County Council** provides place based holiday provision, which focusses on working with children and families and mitigating the impact of poverty. Northumberland County Council is delivering a full programme of events/training to support educators, enabling them to become confident and equipped. There is a strong focus on inequalities and social mobility, including universal targeted work experience, relationships with creative and cultural partners and an ambitious multi-agency children and young people's plan. A Children's University has also been set-up, which provides strategic support to young leaders. Northumberland County Council also provides holiday provision, which increases children's confidence and resilience, enables them to develop friendships and assists in ensuring children return to school ready to learn.

Evidence from Children North East on Poverty Proofing the School Day

99. Poverty Proofing the School Day is a project developed by Children North East. The project looks at the confines of the school day to identify measures and strategies that schools can implement to overcome the barriers to learning that children and young people from families with less financial resources face. By reviewing school policies, practices and procedures, the effects of poverty can be mitigated within the school gates. Whilst most of the themes raised across schools are generic, barriers and how they can be tackled are specific to each setting.
100. What is most distinctive about the approach is that all pupils in a school are interviewed in focus group sessions. The audit involves engagement with staff, parents and governors through conversations. All parents, staff and governors are also invited to fill out questionnaires. The audit is therefore based on a whole-school consultation, hearing directly from children living in poverty about their experiences.
101. Most of the issues raised in the action plans are generic across schools. These include extensive issues around ability/behaviour and setting, bullying, uniform, exams, extra-curricular activities, support for parents and families, food, homework, resources, transport, tutor groups/support for pupils, and school leadership and governance. These generic issues are routinely, if unintentionally, stigmatising children living in poverty and contributing to the increasing cost of the school day.
102. The culture, procedures and practices of schools can vary greatly, even those with similar levels of deprivation. Therefore, there is a need to assess each school in order to uncover the specific institutional and cultural practices, which stigmatise pupils.
103. There are numerous benefits for the school as a result of going through the process, including a shift in whole school ethos and culture and the opportunity to make changes in response to the action plan, with maximum impact on pupils. Viewing all practices through the lens of poverty, does play an important part in eradicating barriers to learning for pupils that are economically poor.
104. In terms of Poverty Proofing the School Day, in 2016, Newcastle University produced an evaluation and development report. The report stated that 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 (FSM), 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.

Just Change Campaign – Tyne and Wear Citizens and Citizens UK

105. In most schools Free School Meals are administered by providing pupils with a daily allowance (usually up to £2.30) on a cashless card that can be used at the school canteen. Yet in almost all schools across the UK, if a student on Free School Meals does not use their allowance by the end of the day their credit is deducted and may be retained by the school and/or catering provider.
106. It was through Poverty Proofing the School Day that the issue of Free School Meals change was first identified as a widespread issue.

107. Pupils explained that the way Free School Meals are run is holding them back and setting them apart from their peers. Pupils questioned why funding intended to provide them with lunch is taken away from them if they do not use their full allowance on a specific day.
108. The Just Change campaign identified that up to £65 million earmarked for the poorest children is being taken away from them.
109. The recommendations proposed by the Just Change campaign are as follows:
- **An equal treatment principle:** Pupils with Free School Meals should be entitled to the change from lunch money just like other students regardless of whether the change is due to absence or unspent. This should happen regardless of whether the meal is provided by a Local Authority, an in-house or a private provider.
 - **A written commitment for action:** All catering providers (schools, local authorities and private companies) should provide a written commitment on their school meal contract to guarantee they will operate a Just Change system.
 - **Ring fenced funding for free school meals:** The Department for Education, and devolved administrations across the UK, should develop a national policy to ring fence money thereby ensuring that funds for Free School Meals are spent purely on the flexible provision of school meals for the benefit of eligible children.

Best Practice and 'What Works'

110. In terms of expert organisations sharing 'what works', information has been obtained from the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and the Education Endowment Fund (EEF).

Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)

111. The EIF champions and supports the use of effective early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of experiencing poor outcomes.

EIF Blog - Child Poverty and Early Intervention

112. In 2019, the EIF published a blog stating the following:
- There is strong and consistent evidence showing that individualised home visiting support offered during the child's first few years can significantly reduce the learning gaps typically associated with low family income. Case in point are findings from a recent trial of Parents as First Teachers in Zurich, which observed significant improvements in young children's language and self-regulatory skills when offered on a twice monthly basis to the city's 10% most deprived families, from birth until age three.
 - Studies also show that parenting interventions effectively help disadvantaged parents manage high levels of stress which would otherwise negatively impact the parent-child-relationship. For example, findings from a trial of the Incredible Years programme with disadvantaged communities in Ireland observed increases in positive parent-child interactions alongside decreases in parent reports of stress and depression.
 - Despite these positive gains, we should be clear that early intervention is not a panacea for preventing poverty, nor can it fully reverse all of its negative impacts. Poverty chronically deprives children of the resources necessary for them to thrive,

as well as decreasing their resilience to stress and various physical illnesses. We also know that many of the short-term gains achieved by effective early interventions often fade away when children remain in deprived circumstances for long periods of time.

- Unsurprisingly, the evidence suggests that early intervention services are likely to be more effective when they are combined with measures to reduce poverty, for example, those which support parents' access to work, training and improved community resources. For example, studies involving the Family Nurse Partnership programme in the United States show that programme participation increases young mothers' entry into workforce when policies specifically ensure that education and training opportunities remain available. Studies also show that family stress and children's achievement improves when policies increase parents' access to employment and higher wages.
- A focus on effective early intervention is needed alongside new efforts to reduce child poverty. These two courses of action are not alternatives, we need to do both. Reducing economic disadvantage could remove some of the need for early intervention, but not all of it. Not all of the variation in children's outcomes is explained by socioeconomic factors: even if we were to eliminate economic disadvantage entirely, there would still be some children who need additional, targeted support².

EIF Report - Engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents - An evidence review

113. Reducing parental conflict and supporting family relationships has become increasingly prominent in national policy in recent years. In 2019, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) was commissioned by Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake a review to understand what is known from the literature about encouraging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents to take up, fully participate in, and complete parenting and parental conflict programmes and services.

114. The review highlights various strategies that could be employed to better recruit and retain parents in evidence-based programmes and services.

115. The recommendations of the review are as follows:

- a) Interventions should be closely matched with the needs, concerns and lifestyles of the target audience.
- b) Monitoring data about attendance should be collected throughout intervention delivery.
- c) Engagement requires a multifaceted response which addresses the main barriers encountered by the target population before an intervention begins.
- d) A focus on workforce skills and capacity is needed to build the strong relationships that are conducive to sustained engagement.
- e) Growing the UK evidence base on engaging families depends on fostering a culture which values evaluation and evidence-based decision-making.
- f) A functioning local early intervention system is necessary for engaging families.
- g) Action is needed to remove the stigma associated with accessing relationship support³.

² <https://www.eif.org.uk/blog/child-poverty-and-early-intervention>

³ Early Intervention Foundation (2019) - Engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents An evidence review

Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)

116. The Institute for Fiscal Studies was founded in 1969 and established as an independent research institute.

A home-visiting programme for disadvantaged young children: final report for the feasibility study

117. In 2019, a report was published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies. The report highlights that while risks in early childhood can have long-lasting effects, so too can intervention programmes targeted at an early age. Research from around the world has shown that well-designed early childhood interventions that target disadvantaged children can promote healthier long-term development.

118. The study focused on implementing the curriculum from the 'Reach Up and Learn' (Reach Up hereafter) programme in Peterborough. This programme has been extensively evaluated, finding significant - and often long-lasting - benefits for children's development.

119. At the core of the Reach Up programme is a curriculum focused on promoting children's development. By building a parent's knowledge of child development and confidence in playing and interacting with the child, the programme supports stronger parent-child interactions and a more stimulating home environment, which in turn promote children's intellectual and social development. The curriculum is delivered by trained home visitors through regular visits to children under the age of 2 and lasting for around two years.

120. The strong evidence base for Reach Up in a variety of cultural contexts makes it a promising candidate for improving the outcomes of very young children in England. However, it is clear from other early interventions that programmes cannot simply be transplanted, unchanged, from one context to another. Instead, they must be adapted to local strengths and needs, and must complement the existing network of services. This is particularly important in our case, since the English context is characterised by both higher incomes and a much higher baseline level of services than the countries where Reach Up has previously been implemented.

121. Even though local authorities already offer and commission a number of programmes for vulnerable young children, a home-visiting intervention focused on child development for children aged around 6 months at baseline and following children and their families for about two years would significantly complement the existing service offer. Even though the pilot only involved up to five visits, the overwhelming positive feedback received is evidence that the intervention holds potential to benefit children's cognitive and behavioural development. The next step is to evaluate the intervention via a randomised controlled trial.

122. Such an evaluation of the intervention would not only add to the international evidence base about the potential of home-visiting interventions to strengthen the home learning environment, but also provide policymakers with robust evidence on a

promising intervention that can reduce developmental gaps between children born into disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers in England.⁴

Education Endowment Fund (EEF)

123. The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.

Closing the Attainment Gap

124. In January 2018, the EEF published a document entitled 'The Attainment Gap'. The report summarises 15 of the key lessons the EEF has learned from its six years funding work:

1. **Early Years education has huge promise in preventing the attainment gap becoming entrenched before children start school.** However, it has not - yet - yielded as much as it should. Professional support and training for early years workers is key. Areas with potential include communication and language approaches; self-regulation strategies; and parental involvement.
2. **What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference:** improving teaching quality generally leads to greater improvements at lower cost than structural changes. There is particularly good evidence around the potential impact of teacher professional development; but the supply of high-quality training is limited.
3. **Targeted small group and one-to-one interventions have the potential for the largest immediate impact on attainment.** Some whole-class and whole-school interventions have shown promise but may take longer to show results.
4. **The transition between phases of education - notably early years to primary, and primary to secondary - is a risk-point for vulnerable learners.** Schools need to diagnose pupils' needs as soon as possible in order to put in place effective support to help those falling behind to catch up.
5. **The challenge of improving post-16 attainment is a particular issue for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.** A majority of students eligible for free school meals have not achieved a good standard in English and mathematics by age 19. More evidence is needed to identify the best ways to improve outcomes for these learners.
6. **Pupil Premium funding is a valuable focus to support senior leaders in raising the attainment of disadvantaged young people.** But it is vital that schools (as well as early years and post-16 settings) consider how all their resources can be used to achieve this goal. Good teaching for all pupils has a particular benefit for disadvantaged pupils.
7. **There is a strong appetite for educators to engage with and use evidence.** Up to two-thirds of senior leaders use our Teaching and Learning Toolkit to make decisions, while more than 10,000 schools in England have signed up to take part in one of the EEF's trials so far.
8. **Robust and independent evaluation of high potential programmes is not only possible, but essential.** Evidence is a crucial tool to inform senior leaders' decision-making and help them identify 'best bets' for spending. Time and money is too scarce to stick with approaches and programmes which do not make a real

⁴ Institute of Fiscal Studies (2019) - A home-visiting programme for disadvantaged young children: final report for the feasibility study

difference. The effective use of evidence means strategically abandoning ineffective approaches, as well as implementing new ones with positive evidence behind them.

9. **We know enough in key areas of teaching and learning to start making a positive difference now.** While generating new evidence remains essential, in areas such as literacy there is no excuse for not deploying the existing, extensive evidence to support teaching practice - as we are doing, for example, through our £10 million campaign to boost the literacy of primary-age pupils in the North East. Our growing bank of EEF guidance reports gives teachers the best available evidence in a range of key areas.
10. **The £5 billion per year asset of teaching assistants can be deployed more effectively.** Though previous research had suggested that teaching assistants can have a negative impact on children's learning, EEF trials have shown how, when properly trained and supported, teaching assistants working in structured ways with small groups can boost pupils' progress.
11. **How a project is implemented is vital and arguably as important as its content.** Successful projects have clarity around their structure, objectives and target group, with high-quality training and materials that allow for adaptation and strong implementation. The EEF's forthcoming guidance report, *A School's Guide to Implementation*, draws out what we have learnt over the last six years.
12. **Most programmes are no better than what schools are already doing:** around 1-in-4 EEF trials show enough promise for us to re-invest in. Teachers and decision-makers are right to be discerning about where they spend their limited funds.
13. **Catch up is difficult: we should aim to get it right first time round for all children.** The EEF evaluated over 20 catch-up programmes that aimed to support struggling readers at the transition from primary to secondary school. Though some were shown to be effective in boosting attainment, no single programme delivered enough to close the gap.
14. **Essential life skills (or 'character') are important in determining life chances and can be measured in a robust and comparable way.** Much less is known, however, about how these skills can be developed and whether they lead to increased academic attainment. This is a major focus of work for the EEF.
15. **Sharing effective practice between schools - and building capacity and effective mechanisms for doing so - is key to closing the gap.** Teachers and school leaders now have access to a significant and growing body of academic research with enormous potential to improve pupil attainment and save schools money. But we know that research on its own is not enough; applying the findings to the classroom is a real challenge. We believe no-one is better-placed to support schools in doing this than teachers themselves.⁵

Pupil Premium Guide

125. Closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is the greatest challenge facing English schools.
126. In June 2019, the EEF published a new guide on the Pupil Premium. The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium aims to support schools in spending their Pupil Premium to maximise the benefit for their students.

⁵ https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_Attainment_Gap_Report_2018_-_print.pdf

127. Considering a tiered approach to Pupil Premium spending can help schools balance approaches to improving teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies:

1. Teaching

Spending on improving teaching might include professional development, training and support for early career teachers and recruitment and retention. Ensuring an effective teacher is in front of every class, and that every teacher is supported to keep improving, is the key ingredient of a successful school and should rightly be the top priority for Pupil Premium spending. Examples include professional development, recruitment and retention and support for early career teacher.

2. Targeted academic support

Evidence consistently shows the positive impact that targeted academic support can have, including on those who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement. Considering how classroom teachers and teaching assistants can provide targeted academic support, including how to link structured one-to-one or small group intervention to classroom teaching, is likely to be a key component of an effective Pupil Premium strategy. Examples include - structured interventions, small group tuition and one-to-one support.

3. Wider strategies

Wider strategies relate to the most significant non-academic barriers to success in school, including attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support. While many barriers may be common between schools, it is also likely that the specific features of the community each school serves will affect spending in this category. Examples include - behaviour approaches, breakfast clubs and increasing attendance.⁶

128. The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit is an accessible summary of educational research designed to support teachers and school leaders who are making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. It covers strategies that schools might consider using Pupil Premium funding to support, such as Teaching Assistants, Mastery Learning and Small Group Tuition. The EEF's resources are freely available online: www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

⁶ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/pupil-premium-guide/>

CONCLUSIONS

129. Based on the evidence, given throughout the investigation, the scrutiny panel concluded that:

Tackling Poverty

- a) Although the primary focus of the review was to investigate ways of mitigating the impact of poverty on learning and education, evidence received identified that there is a need to deliver a more joined-up, collaborative and integrated approach to tackle poverty and promote social mobility, cutting across a wide range of areas - such as education, employment support, welfare, health and affordable housing, which need to be considered together. The Local Authority and its partners are currently delivering effective support and services to tackle poverty and mitigate its impact, however, further work is required to develop a partnership approach and a coherent strategy to ensure that poverty remains high up on the agenda for every organisation and to maximise the resources available, across all sectors and agencies (including the Voluntary Community Sector). As local partnerships are currently operating throughout the borough, the Local Authority may choose strengthen, expand and re-focus existing partnership arrangements to develop a coherent strategy and strategic approach to prevent poverty and address the root causes of disadvantage. Focussing on social justice and removing the stigma associated with poverty is crucial.
- b) Throughout the review it was identified that income maximisation was key in providing the opportunity to lift families out of poverty, this can either be achieved through the creation of sustainable employment opportunities, or, for those who will not benefit from sustainable employment, providing access to the benefits they are entitled to. Evidence suggests that there are various organisations that are committed to delivering welfare support and the Benefit Take-Up Campaign, is a collaborative money management initiative developed by the FIG to help people claim the correct benefits. However, due to capacity issues and time constraints, some areas are oversubscribed. Development of a partnership in Middlesbrough will ensure the expertise and capacity of all organisations can be accessed, ensuring that the most deprived areas gain a greater presence from advisers. In addition, advisers could be located in Middlesbrough's schools to provide welfare rights advice for parents to help maximise family income.

The impact of poverty on learning

- c) The detrimental impact that poverty has on children's long-term development is well established. Studies consistently show that economic disadvantage negatively impacts children's academic performance. These effects can be seen at the time of Reception and continue until children finish their GCSEs⁷. Children with strong foundations start school in a position to progress, but too many children fall behind early. Evidence suggests that it is essential to capture an accurate baseline of individual children's attainment as early as possible (on entry to nursery) to inform planning and maximise learning. Middlesbrough children living in deprivation begin their formal learning at a lower point than their peers. By the end of their first school year in Reception, approximately 14% less children living with deprivation achieve the age-related expectation compared to all other Middlesbrough children. Although it is a struggle to

⁷ <https://www.eif.org.uk/blog/child-poverty-and-early-intervention>

help these children achieve the same progress as their peers and the gap widens as they move through their primary education years, compared to the national picture, the gap is not as wide. Early Years education has huge promise in preventing the attainment gap becoming entrenched before children start school. Education is one of the main routes out of poverty and how well poor children do at school has the biggest impact on their future incomes.

Early Intervention

- d) The earliest years of life are a crucial period for children's development, interventions during this period can have long-lasting benefits. Research from around the world shows that well-designed early childhood programmes, particularly those that target disadvantaged children, can promote healthier long-term development and help to mitigate inequalities. Previous research by IFS and others suggests that visiting parents at home to support them in providing a nurturing and stimulating home learning environment can have long-lasting impacts on children's development⁸. Evidence suggests that the School Readiness Team, midwives, health visitors and staff from children's centres play a vital role in identifying and supporting children's early speech, language and communication needs. Furthermore, interventions developed by the School Readiness Team are being promoted by the Local Government Association and the Department of Education to develop best practice nationally. However, there is currently a disconnect between prevention services and early help. As a result, work is being undertaken to introduce an integration pilot with the Health Visiting Service, School Nursing Service and the School Readiness Team in an attempt to establish a more co-ordinated approach.
- e) Unsurprisingly, evidence suggests that early intervention services are likely to be more effective when they are combined with measures to reduce poverty, for example, those which support parents' access to work, training and improved community resources.⁹ In relation to poverty and tackling economic disadvantage, a focus on effective early intervention is needed alongside new efforts to reduce child poverty. These two courses of action are not alternatives, there is a need for both.

Schools

- f) Breckon Hill Primary School, North Ormesby Primary Academy, Park End Primary School and River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT) have established effective practices of support for families living in poverty. Evidence suggests that good teaching for all pupils has a particular benefit for disadvantaged pupils and small groups can boost pupils' progress. The schools have adopted 'universal' approaches with activities open to all children with extra steps taken to engage disadvantaged children, rather than specific programmes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, which in practice are stigmatising. Evidence suggests that there are some parents who do not wish to acknowledge their financial difficulties and refuse support from schools. Development of a meaningful and collaborative partnership, which includes agencies that work directly with disadvantaged and vulnerable families (such as employment services), will help enhance referrals for support.

⁸ Institute of Fiscal Studies (2019) A home-visiting programme for disadvantaged young children: final report for the feasibility study

⁹ <https://www.eif.org.uk/blog/child-poverty-and-early-intervention>

- g) In terms of tackling the root causes of poverty and mitigating the effects of disadvantage, the schools have dedicated members of staff to provide pastoral support, promoting the emotional resilience of pupils and providing a valuable link to families; provide small group and one-to-one interventions for pupils; use their resources to develop the skills and roles of their teachers and teaching assistants; assist families with gaining access to a whole range of activities, opportunities and support; provide resources, assistance and support to pupils to learn outside of the classroom and financially support families e.g. by running shops that provide access to low-cost or free groceries and household items and by paying for school trips, school uniforms, PE kits, breakfast club provision etc. The schools offer 'extended schools' programmes, including breakfast and after school clubs. These can be particularly beneficial for children and families on a low income because they allow parents to work outside limited school hours and raise family incomes, boost the attainment of disadvantaged children through activities, and provide children with healthy food.
- h) Evidence suggests that mechanisms have been developed to ensure that effective practice is shared between schools. MAP had offered a wide range of much needed support to schools and evidence suggests that the value of MAP support for poverty proofing and other initiatives should not be underestimated. However, it would be beneficial for teachers across Middlesbrough to receive training from Children North East on the barriers to learning that exist because of poverty and for the Local Authority to work alongside the charity to identify common threads that exist in schools. Upon completion of this work, schools would benefit from receiving a good practice guide that highlights the effective practices used in tackling the root causes of poverty and mitigating the effects of disadvantage. In addition, the Local Authority should work with schools and catering suppliers to encourage implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Just Change campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

130. The Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:
- a) That a partnership be developed to deliver a more joined-up, collaborative and integrated approach to tackle poverty and promote social mobility, cutting cross employment support, welfare, housing, early years provision, education, public health and family support.
- b) That a coherent strategy be developed to ensure that poverty remains high up on the agenda for every organisation in Middlesbrough and to maximise resources available across all sectors and agencies (including the Voluntary Community Sector).
- c) That, once established, the partnership:
- a. develops a monitoring tool to effectively measure poverty rates and trends in Middlesbrough; and
 - b. submits data on an annual basis, to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, to demonstrate the impact of its work and to highlight the practices, interventions and strategies that have been most successful in tackling poverty.

- d) That, in respect of those areas that have high levels of deprivation, the Local Authority works with the Financial Inclusion Group to ensure there is a greater presence from advisers offering benefits support and advice in the community.
- e) That, in respect of those areas that have high levels of deprivation, the Local Authority works with the Financial Inclusion Group and schools to introduce school-based advisers to provide welfare rights advice for parents, to help maximise family income.
- f) That the Local Authority works with schools to capture an accurate baseline of individual children's attainment as early as possible (on entry to nursery) to inform planning and maximise learning.
- g) That the Local Authority works with Children North East to:
 - arrange training for teachers on the barriers to learning that exist because of poverty;
 - identify common threads that exist in schools; and
 - develop a good practice guide that highlights the effective practices used in tackling the root causes of poverty and mitigating the effects of disadvantage.
- h) That the Local Authority works with schools and catering suppliers to encourage implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Just Change campaign.
- i) That the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel writes to the Secretary of State for Education to request that census data for early years is collected in July instead of January, when numbers are at their highest - as this data determines the Dedicated Schools Grant for the following year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

131. The Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance with its work:
- Luke Bramhall, School Research and Delivery Lead, Children North East
 - Tracey Brittain, Senior Strategic Development Officer, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA)
 - Rob Brown, Director of Education, Partnerships and Prevention, Middlesbrough Council
 - Leanne Chilton, Regional Head Teacher, River Tees Multi Academy Trust (RTMAT)
 - John Daniels, Chair of the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG)
 - Sara Davidson, Strategic Lead for Education, Middlesbrough Council
 - Clare Elliot, Manager of Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership, Middlesbrough Council
 - Sheila Marley, School Readiness Manager, Middlesbrough Council
 - Darren McGlenn, Kinship Care Programme Manager, Grandparents Plus
 - Lorna Nicoll, School Research and Delivery Practitioner, Children North East
 - Sara Mirsalehi, Operational Manager, Linx Youth Service
 - Craig Nicholson, Head, North Ormesby Primary Academy
 - Catherine Parker, Consultant in Public Health, Middlesbrough Council
 - Satty Rai, Member Engagement Manager, Northern Housing Consortium
 - Julia Rodwell, Head, Park End Primary School

- Rebecca Scott, Advanced Public Health Practitioner, Middlesbrough Council
- Joanne Smith, Head, Breckon Hill Primary School
- Annaleigh Wynn, Education Manager, Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation

ACRONYMS

132. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

- ACES - Adverse Childhood Experiences
- FSM - Free School Meals
- KS - Key Stage
- EEF - Education Endowment Fund
- EIF - Early Intervention Foundation
- EYFS - Early Years Foundation Stage
- FIG - Financial Inclusion Group
- GLD - Good Level of Development
- IDACI - Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index
- IMD - Index of Multiple Deprivation
- IFS - Institute for Fiscal Studies
- MAP - Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership
- PP - Pupil Premium
- RWM - Reading, Writing and Maths
- VCS - Voluntary Community Sector
- VCO - Voluntary Community Organisations
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

BACKGROUND PAPERS

133. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports to, and minutes of, the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 23 September 2019, 21 October 2019, 16 December 2019, 20 January 2020, 17 February 2020 and 14 September 2020.

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