



Report to: Health & Wellbeing Committee, 15th November 2021

Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes & Communities

Subject: UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE CHILD POVERTY TASK & FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendation

That the Committee:

1.1 Notes the contents of this report; and

1.2 Directs officers to engage Worcestershire County Council Public Health Service with a view to preparing a Worcester City Child Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

2. Background

2.1 A Child Poverty Task and Finish Group (T&FG) was established in November 2019 to investigate child poverty in Worcester and develop proposals of how the City Council could help to address some of those areas that it had statutory responsibility for or influence over as a public agency.

2.2 The work of this group produced a final report with 8 proposed recommendations (A – H) and these were considered by the Communities Committee on the 17th March 2021. All recommendations were approved.

2.3 This report intends to provide an update on the delivery of each of the recommendations.

3. Recommendations

A. The City Council work in partnership with the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board to address the health inequalities resulting from child poverty.

3.1 The consultation is awaited of the new draft Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This will be an opportune time for the Health and Wellbeing Committee to respond and raise the health inequalities resulting from child poverty and make sure this is identified and addressed in the final strategy.

B. To seek agreement with the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider child poverty within the established health inequalities groups and or create a specific countywide group to address child poverty.

C. To work in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Board to complete a food poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessments with a focus on children.

- 3.2 The Children and Young Persons Board has clearly identified child poverty as a priority within their Plan. This will be used to ensure a plan is put into place to address child poverty. This work is yet to be scoped. Committee members will recognise the importance of Councillor Matt Lambs recent appointment and role as the Council's Children and Young Persons Champion in relation to this Partnership and the delivery of their plan in addressing local Worcester City need.
- 3.3 A new Public Health Consultant has also joined Worcestershire County Council. She has direct experience of conducting a joint strategic needs assessment and a plan of action in Birmingham and has seen the Worcester report and is keen to meet. This is currently being organised. At this point in time a food poverty JSNA has not been commissioned and is an action this committee could request via a recommendation that instructs officers to work with public health colleagues.
- 3.4 Worcestershire Children's First will continue to deliver Holiday Activities and Food for the next couple of years. There is now more scope in the Department for Education Funding to provide hampers. City Council officers are working with partner organisations on a scheme to deliver food hampers this winter to pupil premium families, with an aspiration to extend this offer to just about managing families. The Household Support Grant received by the City Council could be used to fund this extended offer.

D. A local multi-agency Worcester City Child Food Poverty Group to be set up to monitor the situation post Covid 19 and co-ordinate the delivery of support to tackle food poverty in the city.

- 3.5 The inclusion of this role is to be considered by the existing Healthy Worcester Partnership and will be an action at the next scheduled meeting.
- 3.6 The Oasis Academy Warden continues to provide education and to build an interconnected community, recognising that educational needs do not exist in isolation from the needs of the whole person. The Academy also now has its own new healthy eating canteen supported by the School Food Plan.
- 3.7 The Healthy Start Scheme which provides Healthy Start vouchers is moving to a card system removing the stigma experienced by families. The scheme provides access to cow's milk, fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables, infant formula milk and fresh, dried, and tinned pulses and vitamins based on meeting the eligibility criteria.

E. To support the Foodbank in finding a new location and a new service model (hub and spoke model) so that it can operate to its best ability.

- 3.8 Discussions are continuing regarding the renewal of the lease and locate an alternative site. This information is commercially sensitive and cannot be shared. A private briefing was prepared by the Foodbank on this matter and discussed at the Communities Committee Briefing in May.
- 3.9 Officers remain in close contact with the Foodbank and at the current time there has not been a request for additional support. They are still receiving a high demand for services.

F. To consider if any suitable council land and/or allotment space can be used e.g., for community vegetable patches to help address food poverty etc.

3.10 An Allotment review has been completed and reported to Environment Committee on the 25th May 2021. This determined at the current time, there remains a waiting list for allotment space, and it is not possible to use as community food patches.

G. To review the relationship of Worcester Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme with food poverty along with other similar schemes being delivered by partners across the city.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of applications for DWAS assistance 2019/20	109	100	146	126
Number of applications for DWAS assistance 2020/21	105	119	142	199
Number of applications for DWAS assistance 2021/22	150	160		

3.11 The number of DWAS applications has been higher in the first 2 quarters of 2021/22 compared to the previous last 2 years. A range of other government grant funding is also being used to address food poverty and energy costs which are both elements of the DWAS scheme and may be reducing the number of applications. A review of the DWAS scheme will be commenced in the next few weeks and the results will be reported to Communities Committee in the first quarter of 2022. This will take into account the demand being addressed by short term funding streams and the potential impact when these are fully utilised.

H. To make the best use of the £50,000 corporate funding to address food poverty

3.12 At this current time there is no clear use for this funding, particularly with the levels of new government funding being made available to address food poverty and rising energy costs. It is proposed to accrue this funding for utilisation during 2021/22 and following the findings of the DWAS review.

4. Next Steps

4.1 As part of identifying the role that the City Council can play in tackling child poverty the report seeks this Committee's endorsement for working with colleagues from Worcestershire County Council Public Health Service in order to commission a Worcester City specific Child Poverty JSNA. Undertaking this piece of work and having this level of data will enable us to focus on what more we could be doing in respect of statutory services we deliver such as Housing and Council Tax, but also in our non-statutory roles including grant support, leisure and community engagement etc.

4.2 Work to deliver the outstanding recommendations will continue and future update reports will be provided to this Committee on a bi-annual basis.

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Background Papers: N/A