Sefton Child Poverty Strategy 2022

Tackling Child Poverty in Sefton

Sefton Council

Sefton 2030
Ready for the future

Contents

Sefton Council

Foreword by Councillor Trish Hardy

Councillor Trish Hardy
Cabinet Member for
Communities and Housing

Sefton Council declared a poverty emergency in March 2021. The Council was then presented with challenging findings of a review of child poverty in Sefton leading to the recommendation that Sefton develop a childhood poverty strategy. This Sefton Child Poverty Strategy responds to these challenges and provides the blueprint for our approach to tackling childhood poverty in Sefton.

The facts reported in this strategy are sobering. We know that too many of our children continue to live on the breadline and changes to benefits and the impact of COVID are likely to increase childhood poverty. Many of the fundamental causes of poverty are out of Sefton Council's and partners' direct control, but we are committed to using our influence to affect change wherever we can.

Sefton Council are committed to strong leadership around tackling poverty. We will put tackling poverty at the heart of our role as a service provider, educator, employer, community leader and landlord.

We will ensure that the poverty emergency workstream complements and strengthens the Climate Emergency Declaration workstream. We will develop a strategy which takes a people and planet approach.

We will also take a collaborative and evidence-based approach, working more closely with partners in the voluntary sector, health, trade unions, further education facilities and community groups. We aspire to share our experience with other councils and national bodies as best practice.

Our council priorities are to increase opportunity in employment and education, support the most vulnerable members of our community and put in place the necessary strategic investment that will deliver positive change for Sefton. Tackling childhood poverty is core to achieving all our priorities and should be squarely at the centre of everything we do.

This includes honoring the pledges we have made as corporate parents to those children in our care and those who are leaving care.

Persistent poverty is not inevitable, and we should not underestimate our ability to affect change locally. We already provide services every day that stop people falling into poverty, and which mitigate the impacts of living in hardship.

The challenges, changes and approach in our strategy chime with priorities in other plans, both in the Council and in the wider health and care system and regional economy.

The strategy provides a comprehensive roadmap for the next ten years. We can all do more to reduce poverty and how it affects children today. We must also look to the longer-term to create lasting routes out of poverty for the families of tomorrow. When we work together to tackle child poverty, we all reap the rewards.

I hope that all partners across Sefton will join together to address the issue of child poverty.   This will not be an easy task, but we cannot ignore the devasting impact poverty has on the lives of our children.

Cllr Trish Hardy

Executive Summary

Sefton's Tackling Poverty Strategy sets out a blueprint for our approach to tackling child poverty in Sefton.

Few of the child poverty challenges in Sefton are unique to our area, and these are the backdrop to this strategy. For example, the cumulative impact of welfare policy, the rising cost of living, and income inequality – the large gap in pay between many jobs that require higher education qualifications, compared to those that do not.

Specific issues in Sefton include, the make-up of Sefton's employment profile, some areas of persistent disadvantage and very low social mobility, greater social inequality in the impacts of the pandemic on low-income households, and the higher proportion of families with additional caring responsibilities.

Child poverty has multiple causes and consequences in the near- and long-term. Reducing child poverty and its impacts across the life-course means getting to grips with the scale and complexity of this issue in Sefton. The Government's Social Mobility Commission describes the effects of child poverty as casting a 'long shadow'. The unequal impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic are already beginning to darken and lengthen that long shadow.

Data set out in the section Poverty in Sefton, highlight the scale of child poverty in our borough, and how it links to the needs of parents and the make-up of Sefton's local economy and infrastructure. Tackling child poverty today and in years to come requires a huge joint effort to improve opportunities and remove barriers related to household income.

- Almost 1 in 6 (8178) under 16s live in relative poverty. Although most parts of the North West have higher rates of child poverty, Sefton has seen an 17% rise over the last 5 years from 2015/16

- Sefton local authority area has the seventh lowest gross median weekly earnings in Cheshire and Merseyside at £445.40. Despite a larger than average public sector in Sefton, only 28 out of 152 local authorities in England reported lower figures in 2021

- Just over 1 in 4 primary school age pupils, 1 in 5 secondary schools age pupils, and almost half of pupils attending special educational needs schools were eligible for free school meals in Sefton during 2021/22

Sefton has already started innovative work to tackle poverty. Giving more children more positive experiences and more equitable opportunities does not always mean investing big sums of money. In Sefton, we believe everyone can help to tackle the unacceptable issue of child poverty by investing our time, attention, and creativity.

Strengths we can draw on are:

- gathering different perspectives and ideas to understand the causes of child poverty and inequality in Sefton and what we can do about them

- working closely with our communities and community assets

- working across the full breadth of our other productive partnerships

- recognising and learning from what already works, for example the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) programme

It is clear we must grasp our opportunities. We have taken an 'asset based' approach to much of our work with communities. We recognise the pride people take in their neighbourhoods, and

Sefton Council

the resourcefulness and community support that comes from times of adversity and hardship.

Our current investment in long term community programmes has been developed in partnership with local people and our voluntary sector and is rooted in communities hardest hit by reforms to the welfare system and economic disadvantage. Much of our commissioned work has been developed by listening to residents and brought to life through multi-sector partnerships. We will continue to develop this asset-based approach and will listen and engage with local people and continually build on the positives.

The pandemic put a spotlight on poverty and how poverty influences children's education and health. At the same time Health, Care and other organisations are jointly tasked to do more to prevent health inequality and to respond to the problems caused by poverty at a local level. This strategy seizes on this new momentum and greater awareness to establish a long-term focus on reducing child poverty today and for years to come.

The following strategy considers Pockets, Prospects, Places as the core focus of our work.

Our goals

1. Reduce the level of poverty and time spent in poverty now

2. Minimise the harmful effects of poverty on educational achievement, health, and wellbeing now and later in life

3. Prevent future poverty for today's children and young people

Our priorities

POCKETS

1. Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

2. Do what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low income families get from local opportunities and support on offer

PROSPECTS

3. Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home

4. Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better off peers.

PLACES

5. Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.

6. Create more connected, accessible and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity and participation

Sefton Council

What is Poverty?

'When a person's resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation).'

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

'In short, child poverty means parents can't afford the basics of food, clothing and shelter.'

The Children's Society

We understand that many people that others might describe as 'living in poverty' do not consider themselves to be living in poverty, or don't associate with words like 'poverty' at all.

In our society, poverty comes from too low household income (both from work and benefits), too high living costs, and too few opportunities to get out of this double-bind.

Importantly, the experience of poverty is wider and more complex than just having little money. The insecurity that comes with poverty and the extra time and energy that goes into managing a low income help to explain why the relationship between income and, health, education and employment outcomes are often so strong and so lasting.

Some people might argue that the best things in life are free, that everyone has opportunities to go outside and exercise, to eat a healthy diet, study hard, have fun and pursue their ambitions. Not making the best of those opportunities might seem like a choice rather than a direct effect of poverty. However, poverty narrows down choices and options in many ways besides cost, and these lead to childhood inequalities.

Understanding childhood poverty

Spotting and responding to the hidden costs and barriers thrown up by poverty is central to the concept of 'poverty-proofing' our services, policies, engagement, and decision-making.

It is also important to acknowledge the current economic and welfare policy context in the UK, especially in the North of England, and in Sefton. Understanding why some families find getting out of poverty an unreachable goal is essential to highlight where change is needed and strengthens the case for early, preventative support.

This strategy emphasises key risks for enduring poverty that carries on from childhood into adult life - where changes from the very start of life could rebalance risks and protective factors and set more children on a path out of poverty.

Through uncovering the mechanics of poverty and inequality, the preventable loss of potential, in all areas of life is clear. Taking effective, wide-ranging action to protect children and families from the short- and long-term effects of poverty must remain a top priority, where our collective efforts can secure lasting benefits for everyone.

Measuring Child Poverty

There are three main ways of measuring and comparing child poverty using numbers:

- Children living in relative low income households where their family has claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the past year and income before housing costs is less than 60% of the middle-ranking (median) income nationally.

- This tells us how many children are impacted by lack of financial resource to provide for basic needs

- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This score combines seven components of deprivation Income: employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, crime, housing, living environment, plus percentage of 0-15s living in low income households.

- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is useful for showing areas where children are more likely to experience wider poverty of experience and opportunity, beyond family income.

- Children Eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Eligibility for FSM is also based on being in receipt of a range of benefits.

- FSM eligibility is a helpful way of understanding changing patterns of childhood inequality both over time and from place to place.

- Of equal importance are methods of capturing the experience of child poverty, including the accounts of those who work with and support children, and the accounts of those with direct experience of living in a low income family

Sefton Council

Poverty in Sefton

- Almost 1 in 6 (8178) under 16s live in relative poverty. Although most parts of the North West have higher rates of child poverty, Sefton has seen an 17% rise over the last 5 years from 2015/16

- Sefton local authority area has the seventh lowest gross median weekly earnings in Cheshire and Merseyside at £445.40. Despite a larger than average public sector in Sefton, only 28 local authorities in England reported lower figures in 2021

- Sefton has a higher rate of part time workers (38% vs 32% nationally), and a 26% larger than average gap in employment rates separating adults with long-terms health conditions compared to the rest of the working age population. As longer-term economic impacts of the pandemic take shape, Sefton has seen an increase in the proportion of people identified as economically inactive, which could be linked to health issues

- In this context in 2020/21, 1 in 6 nursery and primary school age pupils, 1 in 5 secondary schools age pupils, and almost half of pupils attending special educational needs schools were receiving free school meals

- The Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, which covers 189 neighbourhoods in Sefton shows that 31 (16%) are ranked amongst the top 10% most deprived in England, with 5 areas falling into the top 1% most deprived

- Childhood poverty is associated with higher rates of physical and mental health problems amongst children and their parents. Inadequate household income in the face of rising living expenses limits children's access to positive, enriching experiences that aid learning and development

- Inequality, rooted in poverty accumulates

across the life-course. National data comparing populations from either end of the deprivation scale show that children from the most disadvantaged areas are twice as likely to:

- have or be teenage parents

- be exposed to neuro-developmental risks such as smoking, substance use and obesity in pregnancy

- die in the first 28 days after birth

- be obese in primary school and three times more likely to have tooth decay

- be admitted to hospital for a long-term condition like asthma before age 18

- undertake 20 or more hours of unpaid caring responsibilities at age 16 to 24

- The impacts of poverty are pervasive. In 2020, The Education Policy Institute estimated that on average in Sefton, children who experience temporary or persistent poverty are at least 5 months behind in their learning compared to peers at age 7, 10 months behind at age 16, and 21 months behind at age 18. Compared to Sefton, around half of local authorities in England have a smaller attainment gap at age 16, and around two thirds have smaller attainment gaps at ages 7 and 18

- In Sefton, this loss of potential feeds into areas of persistent disadvantage – marked out by lower growth, lower productivity and rising demand on Health, Care and Other services

- In 2018, the Government Social Mobility Commission ranked social mobility by parliamentary constituency from 1 (most socially mobile - least impact of socio-economic disadvantage on education and employment outcomes) to 533 (least socially mobile - most impact). Sefton Central ranked

Sefton Council

96th, Southport 95th and Bootle 502nd.

The latest Government figures published in June 2021 for 2020-21 show that in Sefton 9501 (16%) of children and young people aged 0-19 were living in relative poverty, equivalent to 5 in a class of 30.

Child poverty, Covid-19 and cost of living

- Pre-pandemic Sefton had a higher than average rate of workless families. Child poverty related to in-work low income families grew significantly because of the pandemic. The number of individuals in employment and in receipt of Universal Credit was twice as high in January 2021 compared to March 2020.

- 16-24 year olds are already encountering higher unemployment, hardship and uncertainty. Higher growth in poverty amongst primary children is likely to continue.

- Children who are experiencing continuing or new in-work poverty may be at higher risk of experiencing the biggest deterioration in health, social and financial wellbeing related to the pandemic. It is important to note that these negative effects are common, serious and ongoing.

- Temporary and permanent changes in the labour market introduce a period of instability and uncertainty for many and a need to support new skills development and re-orientation for low income households who are also more likely to be experiencing a downturn in mental health.

- The expected impact of the pandemic on child poverty is an increase in health, social and income inequality – with a larger number of children at risk from poverty and a wider gap in those outcomes, which are most strongly associated with household income and community level deprivation.

- The impact of Coronavirus on need and inequality will require long-term action to mitigate impacts across the life-course. Equity-centred whole place approaches as set out in Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young People's Plan continue to provide the relevant framework to guide the response to changing patterns of need amongst children.

- Existing activities to prevent, mitigate and respond to income deprivation affecting children and families, which are championed through Sefton's Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Partnership have an essential role to play. Important secondary benefits can accompany delivery of this support to families, e.g., enhancing social inclusion, demonstrating respect and boosting self-worth.

- In 2022, the Institute of Fiscal Studies cautioned that income inequality and material deprivation are set to rise rapidly in the current 2022 economic context. Lone parent families, those with four or more children, and families affected by disability are expected to experience early and serious reductions in living standards.

Sefton Council

Our Approach: Sefton's Strengths and Challenges

Sefton's strengths

Sefton has already started innovative work to tackle poverty.

Sefton's strengths are in our commitment to tackling poverty and inequalities, our wide and productive partnerships and our community assets.

What works?

We will continue to deliver and expand programmes which are already having an impact and continue to invest in developing innovative approaches which address the causes of childhood poverty. In Sefton, we believe that everyone has a role to play in tackling this unacceptable issue.

Focus on need and causes of poverty

We are focused on addressing the persistent inequalities faced by families and are committed to working together to create conditions which enable everyone to fulfil their long-term potential. We recognise the need to support vulnerable adults and families and keep them safe, healthy and as independent as possible and we work in partnership with our communities to enable them to cope effectively with changes, demands and crises.

Making connections

We are committed to investing in, inspiring and supporting the younger generation to get the best outcomes from their education to go on and find adequately paid, sustainable work or supporting young people through community education and beyond, developing lifelong skills and training.

Working Together

We have also taken an 'asset based' approach to much of our work with communities and we recognise that communities are very resilient

because they have had to cope with crises or hardships that others do not. Our current investment in long term community programmes has been developed in partnership with local people and our voluntary sector and is rooted in our most vulnerable communities. Much of our commissioned work has been developed by listening to residents and brought to life by maximising local, robust partnerships. We will continue to develop this asset-based approach and will listen and engage with local people and continually build on the positives.

Networking change

A recent anti childhood poverty event brought senior leaders together who recognised that tackling childhood poverty is a statutory responsibility, an agency responsibility and a wider community responsibility. Everyone in Sefton can help to support the work of this strategy, drawing upon all aspects of the population, from agencies, local businesses, and community groups to inspiring individuals. Our approach will be to build on the existing multi-agency working group who work in partnership to alleviate poverty with a range of these agencies and organisations in the borough.

Maximising incomes is essential to reducing childhood poverty in Sefton. Our drive to do that will be supported by a comprehensive action plan which also seeks to address the persistent inequalities faced by families living in poverty. We aim to prevent people from experiencing poverty in the first place, as well as mitigating the impacts of poverty and supporting people to lift themselves out of it.

In Sefton we will put tackling poverty at the heart of all we do, making sure that we narrow inequalities and that everyone in Sefton benefits. We will protect low-income families from the brunt of the cuts we face, and we will continue to challenge UK welfare reforms which risk more children being pushed into poverty.

Sefton's Challenges

Sefton faces challenges in education and attainment, employment, housing, fuel poverty, maintaining social cohesion, engagement, economic regeneration and growth.

Barriers to achieving a better income form work and benefits

Sefton's Welfare Reform Partnership group recognises that moving forward, it will be important that Sefton residents are equipped with the education, skills and knowledge to maximise all opportunities to move out of poverty and the local authority works closely with our wider partners to support the change we want to see.

Local insights tell us that access and availability barriers are both important to address. Availability refers to the existence of roles that pay the National Living Wage, offer contractual security, opportunities for development and progression, and enable flexible working for those with caring responsibilities. Sefton's economic base is comprised of a large public sector and a private sector largely comprised of small businesses. Historically, this combination has not been able to deliver secure, adequately paid, good quality work to all employees.

Access to available opportunities can also be a limiting factor, for example the cost and availability of childcare and transport and limited capabilities around literacy or online access or from additional health or learning needs -these can all be barriers to maximising income from benefits as well as work.

Life chances of Cared for Children

In June 2022, just over 600 children were

Sefton Council

formally cared for in Sefton. The health and wellbeing disadvantages of being in the Children's Care system are well documented. It is striking that the Department for Education Post 16 education and labour market outcomes for looked after children (June 2021) found that

- Post-16 educational achievement is far lower for children and young people in care than for their peers

- Labour market outcomes are also much poorer

- For those in employment, there is a £6000 pay gap 11 years after finishing compulsory schooling (around 27 years old) between all individuals and those who had contact with the care system and this gap has widened from around £4000 8 years after GCSEs.

Housing

Housing costs are also increasing and increased costs in private sector renting mean rents are likely to be higher than for example, in the social housing sector, where conditions in many cases may be poorer. Enough provision of decent, affordable housing will be important therefore, if poverty is to be truly alleviated. Without it, any actions on other areas such as education and employment will be less effective as they will be impacted upon by high housing costs. Having the right type of accommodation in the right place is also an issue. Some parts of the borough face a shortage of family accommodation. These are some of the challenges which this strategy will face in terms of being able to truly succeed in reducing poverty including the fact that right now, Britain faces an acute cost of living crisis.

Parts of the borough also remain characterised by terraced housing, where much of the older stock brings problems around ensuring properties are of a decent standard from both an environmental and fuel poverty perspective. Sefton has areas which are more concentrated in terms of

deprivation, and some of these pockets centre around areas of social housing, particularly in the south of the borough which is perhaps unsurprising given that people in social housing tend to be on lower incomes.

It is important that any economic generation also benefits the borough's residents and builds on both social capital and cohesion and embraces the need to focus on developing local communities as an intrinsic and fundamental part of economic success. This locally driven growth idea sees social success in the form of more jobs, decent wages, and general local rising standards of living, as not just an end of the line outcome, but also an input. To achieve this, we must have a deliberate and conscious set of policies which support business growth and private gain alongside actions to strengthen the local economic infrastructure. This includes repurposing and refreshing the Sefton Economic Strategy (expected summer 2022) to take account of the impact of Covid pandemic.

Meaningful engagement and dialogue

Sefton has a long history of involving children and families in planning, but meaningful participation requires thoughtful planning and adequate resource as well as a clear understanding of what helps families get involved and what might stand in their way. Our challenge will be to ensure we do engage fully with the most vulnerable families to ensure we are confident that we are tackling

the right obstacles and pressures that remain stubbornly in their way.

There are significant challenges ahead, however we recognise in general, people in poverty are not a static group. We know that families move in and out of poverty according to their circumstances and our focus also means work on community cohesion continues to be important. We know that poverty affects children's ability to thrive. We know that children growing up in poverty do less well in school, and poorer children are more likely to have poorer mental and physical health. These children are less likely to see employment as an   option and cannot be perceived as a natural progression for many people who simply do not have access to these broader opportunities. We also know that there are many challenges ahead but despite these challenges that we still face in Sefton, we are committed to tackling childhood poverty and will endeavor to ensure this unacceptable issue remains at the forefront of our future planning.

Our strategy will align to Build Back Fairer

The 2010 Marmot Review, 'Fair Society Healthy Lives', was tasked with finding the most effective evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities in England and highlighted six common goals as key areas of focus. In February 2020, 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on' was published. Alarmingly, the paper showed that since 2010 life expectancy in England has stayed the same. Life expectancy between the least and most deprived has become steeper and those in the most deprived

areas are experiencing shorter life expectancy.

All of this has been made worse by the COVID-19 Pandemic, which has further increased the growing health inequalities in England, the North-West and Sefton. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the report is vowing to 'build back fairer' by tackling the social, economic, and environmental determinants, all of which we have considered and included in our strategy to tackle childhood poverty.

Our commitment is clear to ensure our key partners continue to work together to tackle inequalities, embed prevention and support better health for the children, families and communities of Sefton. The common goals to tackle inequalities to build back fairer are identified below;

- Give every child the best start in life.
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
- Create fair employment and good work for all.
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.
- Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes.
- Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

This strategy is rooted in extensive research and data which highlights the extent of the health inequalities between people of different socio-economic backgrounds.

The data illustrates health inequalities that are likely to have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and how in-depth local research and insight with Sefton stakeholders and our residents has brought to life the real issues, barriers and challenges our communities face on a daily basis in Sefton.

Sefton Council

Pockets

Maximising financial resources of families on low incomes

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic we were seeing a rise in child poverty driven by low pay, unstable working contracts and rises in the cost of living.

In the UK, educational attainment often brings a high return in terms of salary. Pressures in the wider economy in the public, private and voluntary sectors have led to more uncertain, low earning roles. Reform of welfare policy has increased in-work and out of work poverty.

Within this economic context, having few qualifications and being on a low income (whether in or out of work) makes it very challenging for parents to access and benefit from opportunities to increase their income potential. Negative effects of poverty on health and wellbeing add in additional barriers, whilst large family size or family breakdown widen the gap between income and cost of living.

COVID-19 has disrupted employment and reduced family income. Added costs of lockdown such as heating and feeding children at home and missing out on some of the vital support such as free school meals has put further strain on people's pockets.

Recent changes to welfare are taking money out of the pockets of people in Sefton. The £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit came into effect on the 6 October 2021. The £20 increase helped provide £1,040 extra support for the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

Sefton's economy includes several sectors that can be described as low growth and lower paid. The public sector is a larger than average employer and many businesses are small-scale enterprises. Paying the Living Wage is not an ambition that every employer can easily achieve.

This makes it difficult for many parents and young adults to achieve an acceptable standard of living through work alone. And this is especially so for those with few qualifications, additional health needs or disability.

In addition, higher than average rates of part-time working, caring responsibilities and national welfare policy mean that in-work poverty is usual in Sefton. Lone parents are at higher risk of poverty, but the pandemic has significantly increased the number of two parent households seeking benefits support.

"...The problem of child food poverty in the UK today is not down to a lack of food. It is instead that too many families do not have enough income to afford to put food on the table"

Emma Revie CEO, The Trussell Trust

"Central to any strategy for tackling poverty is to maximise incomes, this is true to families both in and out of work"

Poverty Alliance

Sefton Council

Our Priorities

Pockets priorities are about raising household income and enabling limited family finances to do more for children and families.

Actions in this area are aimed at putting more money in people's pockets and reducing the impact of living costs as a driver of inequality.

This means creating better opportunities for parents and carers to participate in rewarding work that brings families closer to an acceptable and sustainable standard of living.

Poverty-proofing actions have a big part to play in achieving our child poverty goals. This means Identifying and reducing or removing cost and other barriers linked to poverty that stop low-income families from benefiting from opportunities and support. And applying concepts of added social value, and Anchor Institutions to the full

Working on Pockets priorities lowers risk of continuing childhood poverty today and helps to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in years to come.

Priority 1

Increase the number of households who can access employment and training opportunities that provides acceptable standard of living.

Priority 2

Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer

What is already working well?

We've already invested heavily in boosting Sefton's economy, with a particular focus on improving youth employment rates through our Sefton@Work programme, which has made a real impact.

We have refocused InvestSefton to specifically address inequalities. It supports business and inward investment and leads on supporting economic growth in the borough. The objective is simple, to make Sefton an attractive and easy place for businesses to start, operate, grow and thrive. The team has made a significant impact to the local economy and together with the Councils Business Rates team has delivered £97.7 million of business support grants to 23,000 recipients in Sefton.

We also ensure that our families living in poverty have discretionary access to our Leisure offer, in addition to providing positive activities and support to our children and young people that address their physical health and mental wellbeing.
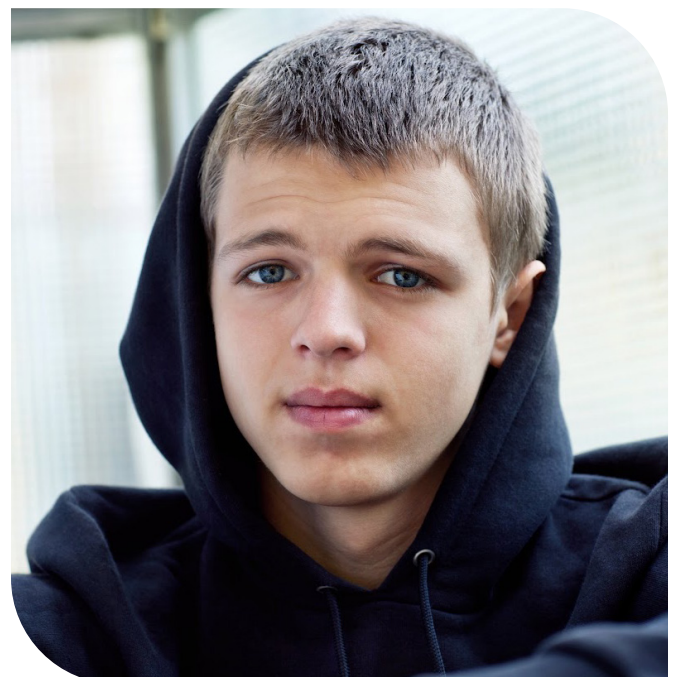
Case Study

Sefton has developed an Affordable Warmth Service (AWS). This involves employing two case workers and a co-ordinator, who help vulnerable residents navigate the changing and limited funding landscapes. Helping to reduce fuel poverty through behavioural change, energy efficiency improvements, increasing income and reducing debt.

The AWS have installed over 402 heating systems (replacement boilers or new central heating systems), a further 128 repairs, insulation and white goods upgrades.

The team have increased the income families through extra benefits, £70,000, £6.300 for Warm Homes Discount applications and £4.500 for better fuel deals.

The team have also dealt with 75 fuel debt cases and 22 water debt clients. The team has successfully cleared £33,000 of fuel debt and £22,000 of water debt.

Case Study

Practical support is being provided for our Looked after children and care leavers, including

- Free Prescriptions available to Sefton Care Experienced young people

- Council Tax Exemption for all Sefton Care Experienced young people to age 25yrs. The Council will provide up to 100% discount of the Council Tax to Sefton care experienced young people aged 18 or over and up to the date of their 25th birthday, who live in Sefton and who were, previously, looked after by the local authority. The Discount will be applied after any other discounts such as Sole Occupier Discount and Council Tax Reduction. If the young person is living outside of Sefton their council tax liability will be paid on a quarterly basis until their 25th birthday.

Sefton Council

Priority 1

Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

- Promote Sefton 'Caring Business Charter' this will help care experienced and other vulnerable young people prepare for access the world of work.

- Strengthen social value added and corporate social responsibility in policies linked to investment and commissioning decisions

- Encourage Sefton partners to sign-up to become an accredited social value award partner: https://www.livingwage.org.uk/accredited-living-wage-employers

- Link our work with the Carer's strategy to address barriers to employment for those with caring responsibilities

- Sefton partners taking a prominent role in the development of the Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter, which has a strong focus on creating sustainable employment opportunities for local people

- Co-produce guidance for employers with people who experience hidden income-related barriers to poverty

- Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent benefits sanctions

Caring Business charter, Named business will:

Offer at least one targeted opportunity per year for a care experienced or other vulnerable young person in Sefton. This could comprise:

- Apprenticeship

- Part-time or full-time employment

- Structured work experience

- Mentorship and Coaching

- Guarantee interviews for care experienced people, providing the candidate meets the minimum criteria for the vacancy in question.

Sefton Council will:

- Help develop the above opportunities to align to the needs of the employer and its sector.

- Connect the business with suitable candidates.

- Support the ongoing development of the relationship between the employer and the young person.

- Ensure recognition of the contribution the Caring Business is making to its community.

Sefton Council

Priority 2

Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer including encouraging employers to pay the real living wage.

- Action to protect adequate access to affordable childcare – continue to promote access to/knowledge of funded places

- Research and pilot community wealth re-distribution initiatives

- Develop/adopt simple framework to poverty proof design and delivery of services and support

- Address barriers to uptake of free school meal offer and Healthy Start Vouchers

- Providing reduced cost or discretionary access to positive leisure activities and programmes that benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of families living in poverty

- Promote those services already providing access to free resources and activities key to improving life chances such a libraries and arts venues.

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities as successfully as possible. In the Pockets element, key links are to:

- Sefton Council Economic Strategy and Action Plan

- Liverpool City Region Plan for Prosperity

- Build Back Fairer from Covid-19 in Cheshire and Merseyside (Marmot Foundation Plan with Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System and Sefton Integrated Care Partnership)

- Cheshire & Merseyside Social Value Award

- Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter.

Sefton Council

Prospects

Improving the life chances of children in poverty

Children from poorer families in Sefton are getting an unfair start in life. The attainment gap in schools means poorer children often do less well at school than their more affluent peers. This 'gap' widens as children go through school, with fewer poorer children heading off to 'positive destinations' and ultimately, to better paid work

Even brief episodes of financial hardship are known to impact children's learning, health, and wellbeing at the time and into the future. This is especially relevant given the recent and ongoing impact of the pandemic on family and working life.

Research suggests that even when young people from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds in Sefton achieve the same qualifications, they do not achieve the same income as adults. This gap is larger in Sefton than most other local authorities.

About 70% of the difference in adult incomes is explained by differences in educational attainment. The other 30% is attributed to other advantages, usually associated with greater affluence, which can give children and young people from higher income backgrounds an additional edge when it comes to acting on education and employment opportunities. For example, family financial support to relocate for work or study, more influence from parents' social and working networks, more developed social skills.

We know there are specific advantages that come with socio-economic advantage in Sefton. The home learning environment in childhood, for example has a big influence on future adult earnings. Therefore, risk factors such as lower parental qualifications and having a parent with long-term health needs are predictors of continuing poverty in adulthood.

The home learning environment covers material resources like having a laptop, having private space to study and sleep, as well as experiential resources like opportunities to travel and try new activities which benefit development and learning, as well as the support parents can offer to assist learning at home. Therefore, current childhood poverty is a risk factor for future poverty.

The impact of poverty on the home learning environment negatively influences both educational attainment and children's social capital and social skills. These are strong predictors of adult income in the current economic context in the UK, and especially in the North of England.

Poverty affects school attendance for a variety of reasons. Some children are unable to attend school as their parents cannot afford fuel and travel costs, or they are more likely to be absent with sickness as their families cannot afford heating, hot water, and a healthy diet. For some children, not having the right uniform and missing breakfast, things that we take for granted, were barriers to children setting foot in a school. This may lead to another issue, bullying, which is a huge concern when children are unable to dress like their peers, and have poorer quality clothing, shoes, and school bag

"Poverty destroys life chances. You cannot level up the country with millions of children in poverty so it's vital the Government brings forward a credible plan to reduce poverty."

Imran Hussain, Director of Policy, Action for Children

Sefton Council

"It is time to see child poverty as one of the four major political, economic and social challenges facing us, along with decarbonising our economy, providing health and social care to an aging population, and preparing the labour market for automation. We need to treat it with the same seriousness, and even greater urgency."

Anne Longfield OBE Children's Commissioner for England

Our priorities

Prospects priorities are about tackling the causes of the education gap and income gap and providing better routes out of poverty for parents and children.

Acting early, and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home

Enabling children to broaden their horizons throughout childhood, with experiences that nurture positive expectations of themselves and their futures

Poverty-proofing the way that education, training, and employment opportunities are resourced, designed, and delivered – striving for equity

Priority 3

Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home

Priority 4

Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers

What is already working well?

There has already been significant investment in supporting children's early years in Sefton, most notably through our Integrated Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families.

The Early Help Assessment and planning tool facilitates coordinated multi-agency support. It enables professionals to efficiently identify the emerging needs of children and young people at risk of poor outcomes.

We have successfully secured three Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to work in our schools. The MHSTs work in Sefton schools as part of the system-wide local transformation plan for children and young people's mental health.

We have also commissioned mentors in schools to provide positive activities to improve the health, wellbeing, school attendance and engagement of children and young people through our 121 Programme.

We have also launched the Sefton Young Persons Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit to support schools and colleges to improve their mental health offer. It provides information about local and national services. And our young people can access online support via Kooth mental wellbeing service.

Sefton Council

Case Study

Libraries have a key role in improving literacy for children living in poverty. They provide free access to reading material and run activities to encourage reading for pleasure. Story and Rhyme time sessions in every library are free sessions for parents and young children to begin a love of stories and this is encouraged throughout their formative years through storyteller sessions, the summer reading challenge, children's creative writing workshops and graphic novel groups. Libraries loan their books for free so it's an activity inclusive of children living in poverty. The path to improving literacy begins when a new child is born and the library service organizes a Bookstart pack for each new child born in Sefton where the baby is gifted their first book for free at 7-month-old.

Literacy is a key skill in relation to children's educational attainment and personal development. Good that the wider benefits of literacy engagement are recognised. Libraries story & rhymetimes for example, contribute to achieving language development, parental attachment and supporting new parents from social exclusion.

We plan to develop a Start Well early years system with a range of services including the NHS, Local Authority, Schools, private early years settings and wider stakeholders. This will strengthen the offer of services offered to children as they grow and thrive.

We are about to pilot a young person's version of the Living Well Sefton Service. This will empower our young people to make healthy choices whether that relates to food, physical activity, or healthy relationships.

Introduction of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework and training means key partners and stakeholders have bought in to the value of trauma-informed practice. The person-centred whole-family approach aligns with the principles in this strategy.

Novel initiatives like Kingsley & Co bookshop reflect many aspects of our approach to child poverty. Kingsley & Co creates an inclusive, universally appealing environment where children and families can participate in fun activities, with support available to maximise learning and development in reading and communications. This type of experience also boosts social skills and parents' self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Initiatives like Parenting 2000 are delivered in a poverty-proofed way, minimising barriers to access and engagement, and offering parents support across a range of poverty and mental health-related issues alongside a focus on parenting.

Partners also recognise the effective cross-sector partnership work focusing on vulnerable children and families, which has been tested and strengthened through the pandemic. Network and information assets can enable effective advocacy for change and funding.

Case Study

Kingsley and Co are a literacy project with the vision to engage as many children as possible with stories, reading and adventure. As well as a bookshop/café in Bootle Strand, they work in schools and run workshops as well as many other events which you can check out on their website https://www.kingsleyandco.org/about

Ykids have been working in the community of Bootle for over 17 years running both large scale community events and weekly kids clubs for children ages 4-18. Ykids aims to invest in children and young people, who then gain confidence and self-belief to make be the change they want to see in their community.

Our Priorities

Priority 3

Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home.

- Conduct a poverty-proof audit to ensure the design and delivery of services and support minimises hidden barriers to participation and maximises benefits

- Create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development, social skills, and social support, e.g., toy libraries – and pre-school socialisation as supported in local libraries

- Promote universal positive parenting, attachment and bonding messages, underlining shared experiences of parenting

- Assess support needs linked to home learning environment as early as possible through more integrated working between employment, housing, welfare, early years, and health services

- Support inclusion by addressing education attainment gap where children have a lower literacy age than their chronological years, particularly in alternative provision

- Support educational attendance and access to the full school offer, for example greater utilisation of Education Welfare Officer or develop a Family Mentor offer

Priority 4

Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers.

- Work with educators and employers to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach. This should include enabling children and parents to learn about different employment and education routes that are open to them as early as possible and consistently across their time in school

- Ensure all children and families get to share in positive experiences that broaden children's horizons, enrich learning, and positively influence expectations of the future

- Give more attention to supporting children, families and carers to gain confidence in literacy and communication skills and adopt communication policies that lessen the impact of lower literacy skills or additional communication needs.

- Promote digital inclusion so that children and families have access to the IT equipment that can support home learning.

- Adopt a social mobility accreditation framework e.g., the Social Mobility Index from the Social Mobility Foundation https://www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities with greater success. In the Prospects element, key links are to:

- Sefton Council's Children and Young People's Plan and Education Excellence Strategy

- Early Help Strategy

- Emotional Health & Wellbeing Strategy

- Child of the North Report: Building a fairer future after Covid-19

- Build Back Fairer the Covid-19 Marmot Review

- Reports of the Social Mobility Commission, including State of the nation 2021: Social mobility and the pandemic.

Sefton Council

Places

Creating connected, inclusive, distinctive environments where everyone can enjoy the good things in life

Places priorities are about ensuring the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well. And doing all we can to limit the impact of poverty on participation.

Some children in Sefton grow up experiencing persistent disadvantage. In these neighbourhoods' low household income and other aspects of deprivation affect all or most areas of life. Poverty often continues for lengthy periods of childhood.

The Social Mobility Commission research has characterised these areas as having very low social mobility, meaning that children are very likely to remain in relative low-income households when they leave home, just as their parents are more likely to have experienced poverty when they grew up.

This situation will tend to maintain the pattern of lower productivity, lower growth sectors that are a significant aspect of Sefton's current employment profile. Young people may be more likely to move away for work and education. Businesses may be more likely to invest in enterprises that can operate on low pay, insecure contracts using low-cost premises.

In other parts of Sefton there are smaller pockets of income deprivation effecting children. Evidence shows that children from low-income families who grow up in predominantly more affluent areas experience relatively worse outcomes, perhaps because their needs are more hidden or overlooked.

Research on the link between childhood income and surroundings and inequalities in health and life chances continues to emerge. It highlights a broad range of issues – some are obvious, and some are more easily overlooked. For example, living in poor quality housing can affect both physical and mental health and learning through more exposure to air and noise pollution, lack of privacy, cold and discomfort, reduced access to garden space, more limited equipment for cooking, play, and online access.

Living in a neighbourhood with higher levels of deprivation and childhood poverty is often means living with more air pollution, greater dependence on public transport, and more difficulty accessing services and good quality natural environments. The range and cost of retail options is often tailored to lower cost options, which are not always sold at lower prices.

The physical and social environment in which children grow up probably influences future expectations of where life will take them. To say that we need to raise children's aspirations overlooks the experiences that shape children's view of the world, themselves and their place in it.

Our priorities

Place, space, or environmentally focused actions are about offering children and families from low-income backgrounds more day to day experiences that promote health, development, and learning.

Equitable changes can apply to home environments, streetscape and neighbourhoods, school and civic environments, and public spaces. Work under the Places priority is not about undermining the connection and affection many

Sefton Council

people feel for the place they grow up. Prioritising connectivity, shared spaces, buildings, and streets built with a child's eye view on inclusivity and accessibility, does not mean sacrificing distinctiveness, sense of place or belonging.

Research suggests that places that enable more mixing between different parts of the community may promote social mobility by offering children a greater breadth of experience and possibility. Social bridging and bonding can be supporting through various policies e.g., housing and planning, education, transport, and digital inclusion, as well as grass-roots wealth redistribution schemes and poverty-proofing design and delivery including focusing on prevention through diversionary activities to prevent children entering the criminal justice system, where they can learn together with pro social peers

Priority 5

- Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.

Priority 6

- Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation

What is already working well?

Sefton is in a strong position to develop the Place Priorities in this strategy. On the employment and labour-market side Sefton has strong track record of establishing school leavers in employment, education, and training. And has an equally strong offer for continuing adult learning and skills development, supported by links with the private sector, public, and voluntary sectors including health and social care services.

Sefton also has a strong Supported Internship Programme, providing support and opportunities for young people with Special Educational Needs to access employment.

On the place-making side of the Places priority, Sefton Council has already developed strategies on economic development, recovery and regeneration that reflect Marmot principles and recognise the major influence of social and environmental factors on health, wealth, and opportunity.

The Council Housing Programme is an increasingly positive area of work, which is benefiting low-income families through selective licensing for private landlords, prioritisation of affordable housing need, active involvement of social housing providers in many health improvement initiatives, and the well-established work of the affordable warmth team.

Through its partnership working, especially with voluntary community and faith sector, Sefton has a strong asset in its networks and information resources, which make it easier to link people to support on offer in each part of the borough.

Sefton Council

Priority 5

Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.

- Incorporate evidence planning tools and frameworks into policy and process to support meaningful community engagement and pro-health and pro-equity schemes.

- Continue action to increase active travel amongst car-owners

- Create healthy living spaces by e.g. greening public realm, active travel infrastructure, reducing emissions, reducing out-sourcing in favour of supporting home-grown employers.

- Ensure stronger connectivity between housing, health, and other providers as part of the governance arrangements for the Sefton Partnership

Priority 6

Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation

- Lobby strategic transport authority to ensure poverty is not a barrier to accessing and freely using the public transport network

- Use active travel networks to connect into areas of higher deprivation and offer children and adults safe routes between different areas of the borough, including community and natural assets

- Explore options to create equal opportunities for low income families to participate socially on an equal footing, for example using social investment or community enterprise models to develop business initiatives that offer skills development, reduce isolation and allow everyone to participate in fun experiences like eating out

- Continue to make best use of culture, arts, leisure and community development initiatives to challenge the way we see different places and neighbourhoods and to bring people together through exciting new experiences

- Utilise our community assets (public, voluntary and private) and their potential to act as community hubs, allowing opportunity for community connection and social inclusion.

- Work with external funders including private sector to bridge the digital divide children from low income homes often experience at home and school

- Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.

Working together

Connecting to other plans, strategies, sources of evidence and inspiration is important will help us deliver our Child Poverty Strategy priorities with greater success. In the Places element, key links are to:

- Sefton Local Plan

- Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan

- Sefton Council Climate Strategy

- Sefton Digital Strategy

- Sefton Growth Strategy

- Sefton Council Bootle Area Action Plan and other planning and regeneration strategy

- Sefton Partnership Integrated Commissioning Plan

- Cheshire & Merseyside ICS Green Plan

Sefton Council

Our principles

Sefton's Welfare Reform and Anti-poverty Groups recognise that change needs to happen both at a national and a local level if childhood poverty is to be addressed. We intend to take forward a strategy that will improve the lives of children and families who are experiencing poverty and deprivation for whatever reasons. We recognise that this can only be done by working together and involving all stakeholders in the process. In seeking to achieve this we will be governed by a number of principles in terms of how tackling childhood poverty in Sefton will be delivered.

Involving People

It's clear that services designed without people who have direct experience of poverty often fail to meet their needs. We will continue the engagement approach throughout the life of the strategy and action plan working with third sector organisations as facilitators for conversations with the community.

Communication, Respect and Removing Stigma

Treating everyone with dignity and valuing every contribution will be central to all we do. We all have a responsibility to challenge the stigma associated with poverty, but we will also challenge how we address stigma within our own organisations. Listening to and involving our residents, understanding their experiences and using their advice will be central to development of our strategy, our action plan and our delivery.

Resilience

Our focus will be on helping individuals and households to manage the challenges described above. Building resilience in people and communities and ensuring families can navigate and easily access support to move them on from

poverty will be a core factor in our action plan.

Person Focused

We recognise that tailoring services and support to the different types and places of poverty and the different needs and characteristics of all our communities and identities is essential and we acknowledge that one solution does not suit all. Innovation, service design, delivery and support will be rooted in relevant and local need.

Removing Barriers

It is important that we remove barriers to accessing our services so that families can get the support they need at the time they need it, as well as removing barriers that prevent some people from taking part in life, socially and economically. Individuals have told us that even some of our free and universally available services have barriers that we weren't aware of. We will be introducing poverty into our impact assessment process to make sure the services we design, and deliver are accessible, appropriate and ready to meet the needs of families living in our borough.

Using evidence

Our decisions will be evidence based and we want to make sure that our strategy and action plan will contain activities and interventions which are proven and robust. We will ensure that our performance is outcome focused and that we are able to monitor and evaluate our action plan whilst making the details of performance and evaluations widely available.

Sustainable

We intend to plan our actions for the long term, in an ongoing discussion with our residents so that we can design and build services, infrastructure and organisations that are affordable and accessible whilst avoiding short term pilots with short term offers without appropriate exit strategies and long-term solutions.

Partnerships

We recognise that tackling childhood poverty is everybody's business so we will ensure there is shared and joint understanding of the issues around poverty in our region which can only be resolved by working together, collectively, productively and in strong partnership.

Use of resources

We are operating in a time of shrinking budgets and increasing demand. It is important; therefore, we make the most of our pooled and combined resources to maximise impact. We will work closely with our partners to better understand our collective spend on tackling childhood poverty across all our service areas and look at every opportunity for joint resourcing to maximise outcomes.

These guiding principles will underpin everything we do to address childhood poverty and in doing so, work in partnership and collectively to mitigate the challenges that we recognise and hope to overcome.

Summary and next steps

Tackling poverty is a long-term aspiration and will not be achieved overnight. An important next step is to take an honest look at how our poverty reduction goals stack up against how services and other types of support are resourced, designed and delivered at the moment.

To give this strategy its best chance of success we also need to consider what else needs to be in place to take our goals and priorities from words on a page to change in the real world.

Our Plan for Change sets out the types of actions we can take to drive change in each of our priority areas and get us closer to our overall goals. It will also incorporate elements of our approach to poverty reduction and set out the underpinning support that will help positive change take root.

We still have a lot to learn. The causes and consequences of childhood poverty are complex and inter-linked. There will be foreseeable and unexpected challenges and opportunities. In this context, we will take a pragmatic approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the strategy. For example,

- Monitoring progress towards delivery of key milestones

- Selecting measurable changes to tell us whether expected improvements in equity of access and outcomes are on track

- Finding out about the experiences of local communities and services

Sefton Council

Sefton's plan for ending child poverty

Pockets	Prospects	Places
Immediately	**Immediately**	**Immediately**
We will maximise the financial resources for families on low income	We will focus on the needs of parents and carers to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home	We will support social cohesion, diversity and participation in shaping our borough
For all time	**For all time**	**For all time**
We will create better opportunities for parents and carers to participate in rewarding work	We will create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development	As employers we will add social value and environmental benefits wherever we can
We will develop and adopt a framework to poverty proof the design and delivery of services and support given to families	Employers and educators will work together to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach	Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.

Sefton Council

Pockets

Priority 1

Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living

- Strengthen social value added and corporate social responsibility in policies linked to investment and commissioning decisions
- Encourage Sefton partners to sign-up to become an accredited social value award partner: https://www.livingwage.org.uk/accredited-living-wage-employers
- Link our work with the Carer's strategy to address barriers to employment for those with caring responsibilities
- Sefton partners taking a prominent role in the development of the Cheshire & Merseyside Anchor Institute Charter, which has a strong focus on creating sustainable employment opportunities for local people
- Co-produce guidance for employers with people who experience hidden income-related barriers to poverty
- Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent
- Establish closer inter-agency working to prevent benefits sanctions

Prospects

Priority 2

Doing what we can to reduce the cost of living and to remove financial and other barriers that lower the benefit low-income families get from local opportunities and support on offer including encouraging employers to pay the real living wage.

- Action to protect adequate access to affordable childcare – continue to promote access to/ knowledge of funded places
- Research and pilot community wealth re-distribution initiatives
- Develop/adopt simple framework to poverty proof design and delivery of services and support (see model of child poverty)
- Address barriers to uptake of free school meal offer and Healthy Start Vouchers
- Providing reduced cost or discretionary access to positive leisure activities and programmes that benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of families living in poverty
- Promote those services already providing access to free resources and activities key to improving life chances such a libraries and arts venues.

Places

Priority 3

Acting early and focusing on the needs of parents to create the best possible support for children's learning and development at home.

- Conduct a poverty-proof audit to ensure the design and delivery of services and support minimises hidden barriers to participation and maximises benefits
- Create more equitable opportunities for pre-school socialisation for parents and infants to enhance language development, social skills, and social support, e.g., toy libraries – and pre-school socialisation as supported in local libraries
- Promote universal positive parenting, attachment and bonding messages, underlining shared experiences of parenting
- Assess support needs linked to home learning environment as early as possible through more integrated working between employment, housing, welfare, early years, and health services

Sefton Council

Pockets	Prospects	Places
Priority 4	**Priority 5**	**Priority 6**
Narrow the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers.	Ensure the places where we live and spend time are strong on the fundamental, universal things everyone needs to live well.	Create more connected, accessible, and inclusive spaces, that support social cohesion, diversity, and participation.

Pockets (Priority 4)

- Work with educators and employers to enhance learning and development using a whole family approach. This should include enabling children and parents to learn about different employment and education routes that are open to them as early as possible and consistently across their time in school

- Ensure all children and families get to share in positive experiences that broaden children's horizons, enrich learning, and positively influence expectations of the future

- Give more attention to supporting children, families and carers to gain confidence in literacy and communication skills and adopt communication policies that lessen the impact of lower literacy skills or additional communication needs.

- Promote digital inclusion so that children and families have access to the IT equipment that can support home learning.

- Adopt a social mobility accreditation framework e.g., the Social Mobility Index from the Social Mobility Foundation https://www.socialmobility.org.uk/index/

Prospects (Priority 5)

- Incorporate evidence planning tools and frameworks into policy and process to support meaningful community engagement and pro-health and pro-equity schemes.

- Continue action to increase active travel amongst car-owners

- Create healthy living spaces by e.g. greening public realm, active travel infrastructure, reducing emissions, reducing out-sourcing in favour of supporting home-grown employers.

- Ensure stronger connectivity between housing, health, and other providers as part of the governance arrangements for the Sefton Partnership

Places (Priority 6)

- Lobby strategic transport authority to ensure poverty is not a barrier to accessing and freely using the public transport network

- Use active travel networks to connect into areas of higher deprivation and offer children and adults safe routes between different areas of the borough, including community and natural assets

- Explore options to create equal opportunities for low income families to participate socially on an equal footing, for example using social investment or community enterprise models to develop business initiatives that offer skills development, reduce isolation and allow everyone to participate in fun experiences like eating out

- Continue to make best use of culture, arts, leisure and community development initiatives to challenge the way we see different places and neighbourhoods and to bring people together through exciting new experiences

- Utilise our community assets (public, voluntary and private) and their potential to act as community hubs, allowing opportunity for community connection and social inclusion.

- Work with external funders including private sector to bridge the digital divide children from low income homes often experience at home and school

- Provide high quality housing in locations close to local amenities, including family housing close to town centres.

Sefton Council