



Ambitious for our children and young people

Strategy : April 2024 – March 27

Our Rationale

Child Poverty in North East England

The publication in February 2024 **‘No Time to Wait : An ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East’** by the North East Child Poverty Commission warns that child poverty ‘is not only limiting the life chances and outcomes of tens of thousands of children and families across the North East – and their ability to benefit from everything this part of the world has to offer – it is holding the whole of our region back’.

The report sets out the stark picture of child poverty in the North East. Key points are that:

- Between 2014/15 and 2021/22, the percentage of children living in relative poverty, after housing costs across the North East rose by nine percentage points, from 26% to 35% - the steepest increase experienced by any UK nation or region during that time, with the North East currently having the second highest child poverty rate in the UK.
- The number of children living in families attempting to get by on incredibly low incomes has risen by well over 20,000 since 2014/15 - such that one in five (over 100,000) of all babies, children and young people growing up in the North East are now living below the deep poverty line. This includes the more than one in ten (c.60,000) of all North East children living in very deep poverty.
- Every Local Authority area in the North East has a higher rate of children living in relative poverty (after housing costs) than the national average although stark inequalities exist within the North East at a ward level.

Following the publication of the Commission’s report in February, the Department for Work and Pensions produced its statistical update ‘Households below average incomes 1995-2023’ demonstrating clearly that absolute and relative poverty continue to rise to unprecedented levels. That reinforces our determination to mitigate child poverty but also to highlight its causes and call for change because we believe it is important to be ‘ambitious for our children and young people’.

As a society we cannot accept the present trends in child poverty. They have massive implications for the life chances of children in terms of education, health and wellbeing, and future productivity in adult life. The North East Child Poverty Trust (the Trust) therefore believes in the eradication of child poverty. We want to be part of the solution; capitalising on our close relationship with the North East Child Poverty Commission (the Commission) and our independence to trial and test practical solutions that make a difference to children's and young people's lives across the North East.

The Trust's added value

The Trust has the following charitable objectives:

"To mitigate and relieve child poverty in the North East of England by:

- Raising awareness of the issue of child poverty
- Improving knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of, and solutions to, child poverty
- Working collaboratively with public services, voluntary bodies, employers and young people to address child poverty."

In delivering our mission the Trust has the following strategic objectives:

- To align with the North East Child Poverty Commission's policy objectives and priorities for change to mitigate and relieve child poverty in the North East
- To raise funds to support community based, practical activities which address and bring us closer to solving child poverty
- To work in partnership and deliver activities through others

The Trust was established as a distinct entity from the North East Child Poverty Commission. Being a charity has enabled us to raise funds to support community based practical activities to address child poverty and although we remain closely aligned to the issues and values of the Commission, we are free to act independently in pursuit of our charitable objectives.

The Trust is very supportive of the Commission's strategy and seeks to identify opportunities to deliver on the priorities in 'No time to wait', in particular the third priority 'the best start in life for the next generation' and the aspiration:

"We should be ambitious for every baby, child and young person growing up in the North East with a collective vision that no child in our region will be held back by the limitations and obstacles poverty brings. Devolution provides us with a vehicle to work creatively together across systems to begin to make this happen. This work should be shaped in partnership with children and young people"

We also support the aims of the National Lottery Communities Fund Strategy to 2030 to enable children and young people to thrive by:

- creating opportunities for children and young people from all backgrounds to enjoy community experiences
- helping children and young people shape the decisions that affect them and their communities
- providing children and young people access to safe spaces to play, participate, socialise and get support.

A key characteristic of the Trust is that it works in partnership with others rather than attempting to promote a particular brand. We do not seek to compete with other organisations as a direct service provider, but have been able to take a risk based approach to innovative practice whilst seeking sustainability for provision that is proved to be effective, disseminating this practice and rolling it out further. It is clear that our grant aid made a significant contribution through the Leading Link partnership in Northumberland and some other North of Tyne areas, and there is strong evidence that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) summer programme in Northumberland was very well received and delivered a range of positive outcomes for children, parents/carers, and local communities:

“Thank you so much... can’t thank the holiday provision enough for these opportunities, my kids are going to have the best holiday from school they have ever had. I can’t explain how happy this makes me.”

While we believe this adds value to local activity, we will seek to communicate our purpose, our model and our achievements more effectively.

Our principles

We want to celebrate and build on what we believe is a successful model so far:

- We are a slim, agile and flexible organisation with minimal infrastructure (no staff) and will continue with this model, utilising the strong skill base amongst Trustees. We base our work on facts, information and evidence.
- We keep abreast of social issues and new research and work on issues relevant to North East communities, utilising data published by the Commission.
- We work in partnership, building positive working relationships and supporting local community-based initiatives and asset-based community development approaches. The asset-based approach builds on the strengths of individuals and families, supports independence and facilitates community control, making co-production and joint ownership of services more accessible. This is enhanced because we are not in competition with other voluntary organisations.
- We have a focus on delivery and learning from the practice we support, sharing that learning where possible.
- We do not seek to duplicate existing work or compete with other charitable organisations. Rather we seek to identify gaps in provision and find innovative and sustainable ways to meet those needs.
- We raise money to pilot and test practical activities that address child poverty.

- We are a facilitator/enabler of the user voice and seek to champion the voice of those with lived experience of poverty.
- We take a holistic view of children, recognising that insecurity of income, food, fuel, education opportunities and social and cultural capital are all issues to be addressed in the fight against inequality.

Moving into our next phase of development, we believe it is important to remain closely aligned and respond to the policy objectives set out in the blueprint for a regional child poverty strategy 'No time to wait'. We stand ready to engage with this and to respond to initiatives being developed by the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), and any future Government initiatives on reducing inequalities for children and young people.

Our plan

Communication and sharing learning

We will implement our plan to improve our digital presence by developing our website and social media. We will also explore how best to have links to our information on other partner websites in order to raise our profile and present our story more effectively. This will involve developing our narrative and web content with a view to explaining and sharing our story, establishing wider awareness and credibility based on our track record. Our narrative describing our achievements so far will draw on the work done by Leading Link: the recent evaluation report provides an opportunity for us to distil key findings, build on the key learning points and disseminate good practice. An annual report of social impact might also be useful.

Impact and sustainability

We want to continue supporting existing work by Leading Link on the wider holiday activities and young leaders programmes, promoting sustainability of effective practice and securing impact. We will seek opportunities to expand this model in other parts of our region. It was also acknowledged that by sharing learning and practice about what is working in communities we might seek to influence political thinking and spending.

Exploring gaps in provision and opportunities for innovative practice

However, we also want to look to the future and explore other models to impact on child poverty. The phenomenon of child poverty influences all young age groups from birth to late teens and beyond. One possible area of focus for a next pilot where we want to try and influence provision might be for very young children, i.e. thinking creatively about giving children the best start in life. Indeed, it is the third priority of the regional strategy "the best start in life" where we think we can make a difference, for example by extending HAF, developing a baby box tailored to local need,

considering distributing books for young children on a regular basis to support early years education

Another area in the spectrum of poverty relates to opportunities for young people in the run up to leaving school and their development of life skills and readiness for the world of work and the Young Leaders model again is worthy of further expansion. All our approaches to new activity need to identify gaps in provision, explore models of delivery and find potential new partner organisations. We will therefore seek to develop projects in support of the regional child poverty strategy.

Developing work in other parts of the region

So far we have targeted our resources on North of the Tyne, and it was recognised that we should seek to build on our strengths and develop our approach across the whole region. To do so we are starting to develop our links with other local organisations with the aim of offering community and youth-led programmes, building local partnerships and capacity and support for local organisations, particularly on Teeside and south of the Tyne.

Seek funding opportunities

All of these ambitions depend on funding and resources. We therefore need to continue to identify potential funding opportunities.

Horizon scanning in a changing landscape

The child poverty agenda is becoming ever more prominent. It features as a priority in the North of Tyne mayoral election, and we should engage with Local Authorities as they produce their own strategies, and be prepared for initiatives which a change of Government might bring.

Public Health and Health Trusts also have a role to play in the anti-poverty agenda and we should explore building relationships with these agencies in support of the objectives of the regional strategy.

Children, young people and family voice

Alongside this we should consider how we amplify children's and family's voices, working with others to ensure this voice is reflective of experiences across the region. The Young Leaders model may provide a way forward.

Summary and next actions

We will:

1. Ensure our project development aligns with the policy objectives of the regional child poverty strategy. We will focus on the third priority, 'the best start in life for the next generation', identifying innovative projects to contribute to this agenda.
2. Be ready to respond to any initiatives which devolution and/or a change in Government might bring by forging links, participating in consultations and responding to emerging proposals.
3. Continue with our partnership model of working with Leading Link, seeking longer term sustainability. We will explore how to expand this HAF+ model further, developing our work more widely across the region.
4. Work up a proposal for promoting the Young Leaders programme in other parts of the region as a means of empowering the voice of young people.
5. Work up a proposal for project development to support very young children.
6. Build our relationship with agencies in Teesside and south of the region, identify gaps in services and potential partner organisations, particularly in relation to early years provision.
7. Continue to seek funding opportunities, alongside other local organisations.
8. Ensure that our projects are properly evaluated to ensure learning can be shared.
9. Raise our profile across the region, developing our web presence and social media, and sharing learning. Trust members who are also Commission members should seek to raise the Trust's profile in that forum.
10. We should review our Protocol with the Commission to ensure it remains fit for purpose and maximises the effectiveness of the relationship between us.

Trustees roles

To make this strategy a reality, we will need to review Trustees' roles. We will update the Trustee Skills Matrix and our existing profiles to enable us to identify where our recruitment can strengthen the existing diversity and skill base of the Board. We will also seek to develop a basis for wider Trustee involvement in our operations to develop our organisational expertise.

We adopted the Charities Governance Code in 2019 and have kept that under review. The consortium of charities responsible for the Code will review it in the coming year and we will re-examine our own Governance Framework to ensure that we continue to adopt best practice in good governance.

By the end of this strategy

- We will have a higher profile in the region and will be recognised as making a strong contribution to the child poverty agenda.
- We will be seen as a conduit for delivery by the Commission and the new devolved administration.
- Holiday activity should be embedded in localities and the young leaders programme further developed.
- Evidence of achievements and effective practice would be routinely collated, celebrated and disseminated in a collaborative approach to addressing child poverty.
- We will have expanded our activity more widely in the region so that we are not just seen as a North of Tyne organisation.
- We will have made a clear contribution to the third priority of the regional strategy, to give children the best start in life.
- By working co-operatively with key agencies, we will see an improvement in child poverty rates in the North East.

The Commission's website is at: <https://nechildpoverty.org.uk/> and the regional strategy is at: [No time to wait full report.pdf \(nechildpoverty.org.uk\)](#)