



South Tyneside Council



CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2025

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Foreword

South Tyneside Council, working closely with local partners, has taken significant action toward its ambition (set out in the South Tyneside Vision) of achieving financial security for all residents. This includes hosting three Poverty Summits, forming a multi-agency Poverty Group, appointing an Anti-Poverty Coordinator, coordinating a network of Welcoming Places, planning a Poverty Truth Commission, and developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

This strategy, focussed specifically on reducing and eliminating Child Poverty, sets out the work that the partnership is doing to support residents at the sharp end of the cost-of-living crisis, incorporating longer term goals in recognition that preventing poverty is better than the cure.

The Child Poverty Summit, held on 9th October 2024, highlighted the significant levels of child poverty within the Borough and provided an initial platform for the development of this South Tyneside Child Poverty Strategy. This has helped to strengthen collaborative working, discuss the challenges facing our young people and families and prioritise immediate actions.

The number of children living in poverty in South Tyneside and across the region has risen over the past decade, despite the huge amount of work that is going on. Approximately a third of children in South Tyneside are living in poverty. We also know that an estimated 23% of children in England that are living in food insecurity are ineligible for free school meals under the current eligibility criteria.

These figures are shocking and its impossible not to feel emotional when you hear the conditions that many of our families are living in.



Child Poverty Summit held in October 2024

Child poverty is a social failure that has devastating impacts. It is linked to low birth weight in babies, higher rates of infant mortality, poor physical and mental health and much more.

It is so important that young people are involved in these discussions so that we can shape the strategy together. South Tyneside's Youth Council were involved in the organisation of the Summit and led a debate to stimulate discussion around the room on issues such as the extension of free school meals, the financial impact of the two-child benefit cap on families and key drivers of poverty. By working with members of the Youth Council we can ensure that children's voices are heard through the passion and insight they bring to the discussion. We have also worked with younger pupils in our primary schools as well as gaining insights and feedback from various youth groups. We are keen that the voice of children and young people is at the heart of the work that we do.

As a Council, we've boosted crisis funding, school uniform and holiday provision and Council Tax support as well as support for our fantastic food banks, community food shops and the community food bus, all providing low-cost food and signposting to support services.



Cllr Dixon and Yacub Ahmed presenting at the Child Poverty Summit

We are committing to do even more; such as raising the key issues from the recent Child Poverty Summit with the Combined Authority and Government; enhancing support to schools to reduce the cost of the school day and support parents just above the Free School Meal threshold; encouraging take-up of Free School Meals; rolling out more Baby Boxes to new parents; providing further welfare, skills and wider support within Family Hubs and other key community settings; and expanding advice on money matters and help on sustainable cooking to parents within school settings.

We must work collaboratively across local, regional and central government and with key partners in the public voluntary and private sectors to target support to those who need it the most.

This strategy sends a clear and resounding message: together, we can address child poverty.

Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader – South Tyneside Council

Vision and Ambitions of South Tyneside

In October 2022, the Council and partners launched a new 20-year vision for South Tyneside. That vision – to make South Tyneside a place where people live healthy, happy, and fulfilled lives – was informed by the latest evidence and engagement with a wide range of people.

Five 'Ambitions' were identified:



Financially secure

Residents will have what they need for a good standard of living.



Healthy and well

Residents will enjoy good mental and physical health throughout their lives. They will have the best start in life and be able to age well.



Connected to jobs

Residents have access to jobs, skills and learning. They will have the skills and confidence to apply for a wide range of local jobs. These jobs will be in key and growing areas of employment and benefit all of our borough.



Part of strong communities

Residents will live in clean, green and connected communities where they feel safe.



And we want these things for every resident, so we are committed to:






Targeting support to make things fairer

We will target support at the residents and parts of our borough that need it the most, reducing inequalities and making things fairer.

Linked strategies and policies

In March 2024, the Council approved the Anti-Poverty Strategy which details prioritised areas of action across the Borough to work towards alleviating levels of poverty. The key focus areas are specified below:

Key focus areas:

 <p>Financially secure</p>	 <p>Healthy and well</p>	 <p>Connected to jobs</p>	 <p>Part of strong communities</p>	 <p>Targeting support to make things fairer</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support • Access to food • Support with fuel costs • Reduce cost of school day • Training for volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best start in life • Support those at risk • Decent housing for all • Digital inclusion • Tackle health inequalities • High quality early years provision • Reduce homelessness • Access to leisure and cultural activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and skills • Reduce in-work poverty • High quality careers advice • Affordable and accessible transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map out essential services • Welcoming Places • Voice of lived experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data sharing • Research and evaluation • Lived experience informs actions • Influence national government

The **Anti-Poverty Strategy** links in with wider strategies and policies with the **Child Poverty Strategy** actions running parallel to wider poverty work across the Borough.



The South Tyneside Vision, Ambitions and Strategy



Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy



The South Tyneside Anti-Poverty Strategy
The Child Poverty Strategy

The Challenge

With many households already struggling, the cost-of-living crisis has placed unprecedented pressure on household budgets. While inflation hasn't risen as fast as it once was, prices are still going up and people are still being squeezed.

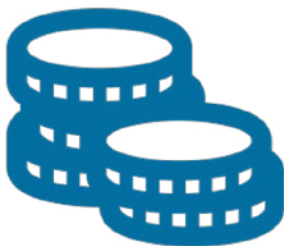
Those in the lowest incomes are hit the hardest, and we know that children are the population group most likely to be living in povertyⁱ with lone parent families at particular risk.ⁱⁱ In 2024, the cost of raising a child to 18 was £260,000 for a couple and £290,000 for a lone parent. A lone parent with two children working full time on the minimum wage can only cover 69% of the cost of a child, while a similar couple can only cover 84%.ⁱⁱ

Far too many families in our Borough are going without the things we know are essential to lead healthy, fulfilling lives, forcing them to make impossible decisions between heating their homes and feeding their children. The consequences of poverty, both on the individual and societal level, are significant. Child poverty is estimated to cost the UK £39.5 billion per year in lost tax and earnings, unemployment benefits, and additional public services spending.ⁱⁱⁱ

Poverty is also a key social determinant of health and is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes. Devastatingly, this includes the number of years a person might expect to live in good health (or live at all).^{iv}

Nationally, child poverty has risen over recent years and nearly a third (29.2) of UK children were living in households in poverty in 2022/23.^v

As well as wide ranging negative impacts in later life, poverty places children at increased risk of adverse health, social and educational outcomes.



The Cost of Child Poverty



Child Poverty & Parental Employment



Children In Care



Tooth Decay



Childhood Obesity



Free School Meal Eligibility

For example, the data shows that:

- **Children living in the poorest 20% of households in the UK are four times more likely to develop a mental health disorder as those from the wealthiest 20%.ⁱⁱⁱ**
- **In England 2023, the rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system was 1.6 times as high in the most deprived decile than the least deprived.^{iv}**
- **It is estimated that the rise in child poverty between 2015 and 2020 led to over 10,000 additional children entering care in England.^v**
- **In 2023, Year 6 children living in the most deprived areas of the country were more than twice as likely to have experience of tooth decay (23%) as those living in the least deprived areas (10%).^{vi}**
- **Digital Exclusion is an additional poverty related challenge. This can hinder access to homework activities, connectivity and can further impact on financial security. Research by the Centre for Social Justice has found that customers who cannot shop online pay 25% more on average for a range of products including insurance, food, and mobile services.**

We only get one childhood and the consequences of not addressing child poverty are unthinkable. Poverty can be a very stigmatising experience and that despite feeling financial strain, those experiencing poverty can be uncomfortable requesting help and advice. In a 2024 survey of local parents conducted to inform this strategy, 61% told us that they would not feel comfortable approaching schools for financial guidance or signposting. More needs to be done to break down this stigma and key to the work of South Tyneside Council and partners is creating a supportive / non stigmatising environment where people feel able to reach out for help and no one goes without the support they need.

This demonstrates the urgent need now, more than ever, to work closely with partners to look for new, innovative ways to support our most disadvantaged young people and their families.

“Childhood, after all, is the first precious coin that poverty steals from a child.”

Anthony Horowitz, Author

What is Poverty?

Poverty centres on insufficient income to meet basic needs and occurs when an individual's resources fall below minimum needs, hindering participation in society.

Measures of poverty include:

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Minimum Income Standard (MIS) – MIS itself is not a measure of poverty, but is what the public has told the JRF is sufficient income to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living. In 2024, this was £28,000 a year for a single person, while a couple with two children would need to earn £69,400 a year between them.^{vii}
- Relative income poverty, where households have less than 60% of contemporary median income.
- Absolute income poverty, where households have less than 60% of the median income in 2010/11, uprated by inflation.
- Material deprivation, where you can't afford certain essential items and activities.
- Destitution, where you can't afford basics such as shelter, heating, and clothing.

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the society in which they belong.”

Peter Townsend (Sociologist and Founding Member of Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), 1979.

We know that the situation in South Tyneside is particularly acute:

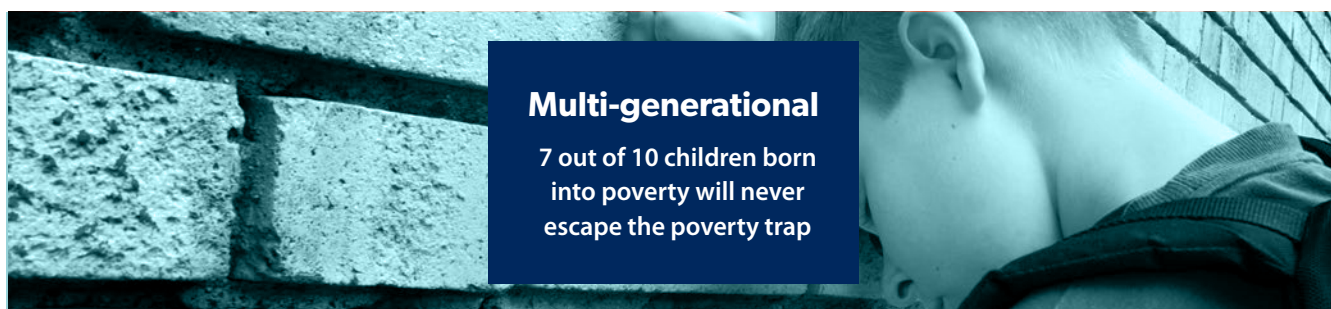
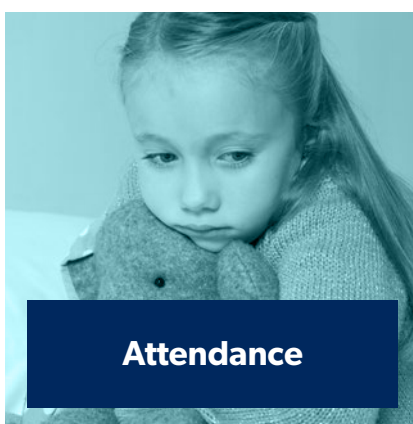
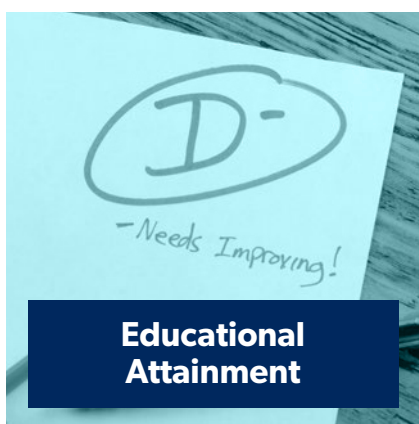
- In 2022/23, there were an estimated 10,084 young people in South Tyneside living in poverty (32.4%) – a 5.1 percentage point increase since 2015.^{viii}
- A third of South Tyneside neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally and nearly half are in the 20% most deprived.^{ix}
- South Tyneside was ranked the 26th most deprived area out of 317 local authorities nationally in the latest index of Multiple Deprivation (2019).^x
- 1 in 5 (20.5%) of the South Tyneside residents (16+) have no qualifications (2021).^{xi}
- An estimated 12.6% of employees in South Tyneside were earning below the Living Wage Foundation rate in 2023 (£10.90).^{xii}
- Approximately 16,000 children live in households in receipt of Universal Credit (August 2024).^{xiii}
- In 2023, around 3,800 children in South Tyneside were affected by the two-child limit – 12% of all children in the Borough.^{xiv}
- In 2023, there were 14,000 households in which no adult was in employment – 26.7% of all households (the highest percentage in the North East).^{xv}
- Hospitality & Hope report that 40% of those accessing crisis food bank support are now in work.

More evidence, including at ward level, is available at data.southtyneside.gov.uk

Potential Impact on the Child

Poverty can have a life-long effect on a child and leave a devastating impact, continuing into adulthood.

The effects are wide reaching and can impact negatively on the following:



The Lived reality

As a Council, we've committed to strengthening our approach to listening and learning from our residents and communities and coproducing solutions to the challenges they face.

Throughout the development of both the Anti-Poverty Strategy and this Child Poverty Strategy, the voice of families and young people have been pivotal. Engagement and consultations have taken place through the work of the South Tyneside Poverty Truth Commission, ongoing, honest conversations with our key partners, drop-in sessions across the Welcoming Place network, school surveys and workshops, localised community meetings and the wider work of the South Tyneside Poverty Group.



Focused work with children and young people has been central to the development of the anti-poverty work programme. The insights gained from engagement with school pupils, youth groups and the fantastic South Tyneside Youth Council have been invaluable in identifying the priorities for action set out in this strategy. This level of engagement will continue throughout the ongoing implementation and monitoring of the actions, to ensure collaboratively 'we get this right'.

These ongoing conversations emphasise the scale and devastating impact of Child Poverty. Dialogue with families and young people within South Tyneside highlight that:

"Poverty makes me feel like a failure because I can't always meet her basic needs."

"She worries about bills and family finances; she will check shopping receipts." Mother talking about her 13-year-old daughter.

"Homelessness kills aspiration." Female in her 20s that was homeless at 16yrs old.

"As a young child going back to school after the Christmas holiday, I would sometimes feel embarrassed or ashamed when telling the class what I got for Christmas after hearing what my classmates got for Christmas."

"I don't like feeling jealous that my friends have things that I don't."

"Getting into debt and not being able to afford paying it back so making debt situation worse."

"Less money left for fun activities and unexpected expenses."



Families comment on struggling to meet the costs of clothing and school uniform, energy bills, food and school dinners, transport, childcare, trips, homework equipment and the general affordability of everything.

School staff and frontline services witness first-hand the challenges facing families and young people. As part of the 'reducing the cost of the school day' pilot, implemented in September 2024, school staff contributed through surveys, training sessions and as participants at the South Tyneside Child Poverty Summit.

Observations include:

- "Children who have holes in their shoes, skipping breakfast, can't afford trips. Leads to low self-esteem."**
- "Students unable to buy uniform or PE kit or be able to afford replacing when they lose items."**
- "Hunger leading to the lack of concentration."**
- "Children unable to experience the wider world and opportunities out there."**
- "Families who admit they are struggling and can't afford the basics like food, especially difficult at Christmas."**
- "Our youngest children often have 'hand me down' uniform shoes and coats that are ill fitting."**
- "Some of our children do not have a suitable winter coat."**
- "Sometimes the lack of personal hygiene from certain individuals or attending school with unwashed or dirty PE kit."**

Our Approach

At a time of constrained public sector budgets, we are prioritising and targeting support to those that need it most, while ensuring that all children have the best start in life.

It is essential to balance promoting the availability of universal services accessible to all, for example free Healthy Start Vitamins, with targeted support to families in a way that's proportionate to their level of need.

Prioritising actions to reduce stigma is a key aspect and the implementation of universal interventions is a proven method of removing barriers and encouraging more families to engage.

There is an understanding that the likelihood of a family being in poverty can increase with the presence of certain factors.

The North East Child Poverty Commission report *'No time to wait: an ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East'* published in February 2024, identified families more likely to be impacted by poverty.

This includes:

- Families with children under 5 years of age
- Single parent families
- Households where a parent or child has a disability
- Families from a minority ethnic background
- Families with three or more children
- Out of work families
- Care-experienced young people and children and young people in kinship families
- Younger parents

Many families could fall into more than one of these groups.



Targeting support to make things fairer is at the heart of all decision making

Actions need to be targeted to meet the needs and address the barriers and challenges that specific groups are facing. This targeted approach ensures that resources are focused on areas and interventions that can have the biggest impact in alleviating child poverty across South Tyneside.

“Babies, children and young people growing up in poverty across our region deserve better – and they don’t have time to wait.”

Amanda Bailey (North East Child Poverty Commission)

School Based Challenges

Education can provide a route out of poverty for young people, yet despite the essential value a high-quality education can have, there remains barriers that can make attending school daily a real challenge.

Through engaging with parents and school staff in nursery, primary, secondary and college settings, it is evident that many find the cost of the school day a strain on family finances. Finding money to provide uniforms, shoes, packed lunches, trips, digital devices, events, clubs and other expenses, were all things those we spoke with told us can be a real struggle. This is then exacerbated when families have more than one child or a family member with additional needs.

Challenges in school

Staff training sessions, parental surveys and workshops that have taken place with young people have highlighted the significant financial challenges in relation to the cost of the school day.

These include:

- Staff Poverty
- Uniform and P.E kit
- Non-uniform days
- School trips and events
- Digital Poverty
- Food Poverty
- Transport costs
- Rising energy costs
- Period Poverty
- Additional costs for a child with Special Educational Needs

Schools are working hard to help and put interventions in place to support families. Examples of this includes Breakfast Clubs, uniform bursaries, device loan schemes, and signposting to wider support mechanisms.

Areas across the UK are using innovative policy interventions to reduce child poverty. In London, there is a commitment for every primary school child to access a free school meal. Scotland provide a baby box of essential items for all new babies. A number of regions have initiated a free school meal autoenrollment system including Durham, Newcastle and Northumberland.

Within South Tyneside, we have developed a 'reducing the cost of the school day' audit tool and training programme to support staff in raising awareness and signposting to the support available. This audit tool explores interventions already established within schools and suggests further potential actions.

Suggestions include:

- Swap Shops
- Device and databanks
- Map out the cost of the school year
- Free trips using the local area
- Packed lunch and school dinners sit together
- Free Breakfast Clubs
- Spread out cost of trips - payment plans
- Period Dignity Programme
- Family tickets for events
- Signposting to support

What is Working well?

- We've successfully rolled out our network of **12 Family Hubs**, which have now been accessed by thousands of families from right across the borough. A range of professionals and service providers, including midwives, health visitors, early help workers and adolescent workers are located at the hubs to provide a 'one-stop-shop' so that families need only tell their story once

Around 80 organisations now work from the hubs, although staff work within other locations too as well as in families' homes as part of an effective outreach service. This is one of South Tyneside's commitments, as part of a wider ambition, to ensure the 'best start in life'.



Feedback from sessions delivered within Family Hubs

- Anyone who lives in South Tyneside and is at least 10 weeks pregnant and / or has a child under 4 years old can claim free **Healthy Start Vitamins** every 8 weeks.



200 Baby Boxes allocated to new families

- South Tyneside Council purchased an initial **200 Baby Boxes** through the Children's Foundation and distributed through the Health Visitor Services. A further 200 Baby Boxes will be allocated through funding secured from the North East Combined Authority as part of the South Tyneside anti-poverty work. The Baby Boxes, alongside the training sessions delivered to new parents, have received positive feedback;

"I have loved the session every week, getting to know all about what is in the box. I feel more prepared for when baby comes."



Children enjoying the Holiday, Activities and Food programme

Holiday, Activities Food

- Our **Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) Programme** offered a staggering 28,603 sessions during 2024 across the spring, summer, and winter school holidays with 6,250 children and families attending at least four activities.

“The HAF activities are amazing. My two children went to different activities, and they absolutely loved it. They even made friends who they have since stayed connected with.”

- In 2024, 1000 low-income families received help with **new school uniform** costs through the Household Support Fund.
- More than 1,000 families across South Tyneside receive **supermarket vouchers** to help ease financial pressures associated with food costs during school holiday periods.

connexions

SOUTH TYNESIDE

- Connexions South Tyneside continues to provide **targeted and tailored support to young people** who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), aged 16-18 and up to 25 for those with SEND needs.

All identified NEET young people have an allocated adviser who can offer support to enable them to access suitable education and training and reach their future goals.

78% of young people who have accessed previous programmes (September 2023 – December 2024) have progressed into employment or training.

- We have extended the **Elective Home Education (EHE) Offer** and have dedicated advisers who provide support to this cohort. In partnership with Youth Work colleagues, we have also developed Youth Connect which is a bespoke youth group for 15-17 year olds who are EHE or NEET. The focus is on supporting young people to develop softer skills and move a step closer to training or employment.

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- Working with partners, including Connexions South Tyneside, the Council's Economic Growth and Skills team have programmed a series of **'Your Next Steps Live'** events to support young people to make informed decisions about their post-16 education, employment and training. **So far in 2024/25, these events have supported over 960 young people, parents and job seekers with training and employment opportunities**, as well as specific events to promote apprenticeships and supported internships.



- **Young Carers Commitments** developed to help education settings identify young carers and support them in connecting with vital support. This also includes a Young Carers ID card, resources and South Tyneside are the first council in the country to sign and make a commitment to the Young Carers Covenant.
- Support for **young care leavers** including shopping vouchers over Christmas and warm packs containing blankets, hot drinks and other helpful items to support independent living.

- In 2024, the **Welfare Support Team** has secured **£8.5million+ in financial gains** for 3,188 residents and assisting a further 4,454 customers with applications for crisis and community care support during 2024.
- The South Tyneside Council Tax Reduction Scheme gives a Council Tax discount to eligible households who are on lower incomes in South Tyneside. **18,000 households across South Tyneside get financial assistance with their Council Tax** every year. Of that, around **11,000 working age customers** benefit from the Council's local scheme which offers up to 90 per cent discount for those who need support the most.

- **117 attendees attended the Child Poverty Summit** held in October 2024. Representatives from a wide range of organisations were in attendance including schools, nurseries, Family Hubs, VCS organisations, Health, Council Officers and Lead Members. This provided an opportunity to strengthen collaborative working and initiate the thinking behind this Child Poverty Strategy.
- This year we have continued to support community partners to deliver a range of services to help alleviate food poverty. This has included working closely with **Hospitality & Hope to support the opening of a third community shop.**



Cookery classes in community settings

- **Further funding supports the Key2Life community food bus project** which brings low-cost food and support to a wide range of areas within the Borough. The food bus has extended its reach and now visits 12 stops, enabling a greater number of residents to access this much needed service.

- We have supported the **five established food banks** in the Borough with a further £125,000 in 2024 to provide food packages and advice to residents facing financial hardship.
- The Council, in partnership with voluntary organisations, have supported the development of a **sustainable food partnership** to improve and extend provision of nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food.
- We provided all primary schools with a **£2500 discretionary fund to provide free school meals to families who were struggling financially** but were above the eligibility threshold.

South Tyneside's Commitment

South Tyneside Council established a multi-agency South Tyneside Poverty Group in 2022 and has since held two Anti-Poverty summits, which has informed an anti-poverty work programme and related support for residents throughout the cost-of-living crisis.

The Council's **Anti-Poverty Strategy** was agreed in March 2024 and in recognition that no one organisation can tackle poverty alone, partnership working is at the very heart of our approach.

The **Child Poverty Summit**, held on 9th October 2024 kickstarted the development of the South Tyneside Child Poverty Strategy. Representatives from a wide range of organisations were in attendance including schools, nurseries, Family Hubs, Voluntary Sector Organisations, Health, Council Officers and Elected Members. This provided an opportunity to strengthen collaborative working and initiate the thinking behind the emerging strategy.

A number of **key themes** emerged from the Summit including food insecurity and the low earnings threshold for free school meal provision, the cost of the school day and the challenges and barriers facing families and young people, along with the direct link between child poverty and health inequalities and the importance of reducing in-work poverty.



Comments from attendees included:

"I am now more aware of the shocking truth about child poverty in the borough"

"Child Poverty is everyone's concern"

"A reminder not to prejudge people who are in poverty - there are so many ways and circumstance that allow someone or a family to be in poverty"

"Addressing child poverty requires a whole system approach with contributions from a number of stakeholders"

"Child poverty must always be at the forefront of everything we do"

"South Tyneside community have an amazing commitment to support our children and families"

"The level of child poverty in our region, but the passion from organisations to make change"

"You have all sent a clear and resounding message: together, we can address child poverty"



Commitments

All attendees completed a 'promise card' and made a commitment.

Examples include:

- To become more informed about opportunities and support available to students, staff and parents and to signpost, including childcare options
- To be mindful of costs implications to families when organising events, activities and decision making
- Increase uptake of entitlements
- Commitment to explore Real Living Wage from specific organisations
- To drive forward with a new work and health programme with South Tyneside as a pilot within the National 'Get Britain Working' Agenda
- To ensure the voice of specific demographics are heard – young carers, young people living in care homes, care experienced young people and care leavers
- Remove potential barriers to accessing cultural and leisure venues
- To lobby for change at regional and national levels including extension of Free School Meals

- To work in collaboration with other services/ organisations to tackle child poverty and improve chances for our young people
- To ensure to capture the voices of lived experience
- To listen and engage with all our partnerships
- Making all decisions and strategies through a poverty lens
- Specific projects including SEND placements, education focused on nutrition, free activities and food for families, to increase the stops of the 'community food bus', and extend youth club provision in specific areas

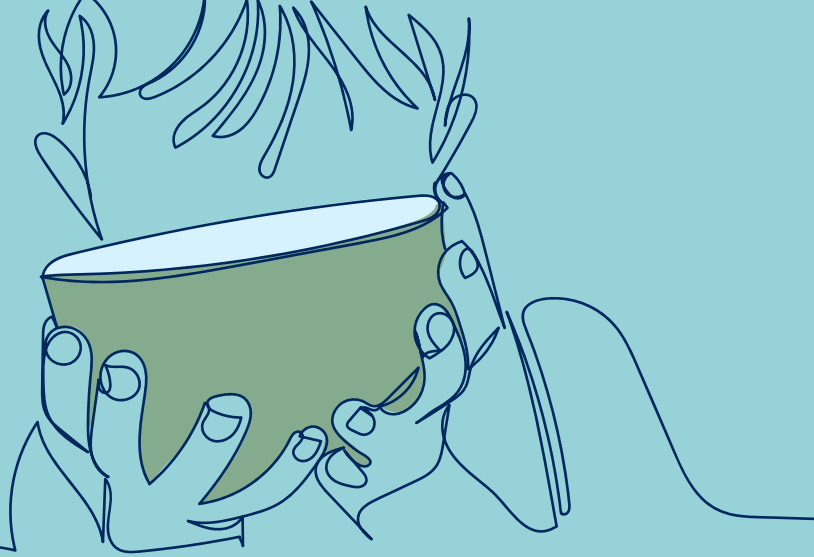


The Pledge Network - organisations working in partnership to support residents



Pupils from Toner Avenue Primary School visit Ryder Architecture to see their ideas being brought to life as part of our Powering the Future: South Tyneside and Beyond challenge with Little Inventors and Dogger Bank Wind Farm

CHILD POVERTY SUMMIT VISUAL MINUTES



KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY

- > Link between child poverty and health inequalities
- > Emotional Impact
- > Food insecurity
- > The cost of the school day
- > Challenges facing families and young people
- > In-work poverty



CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

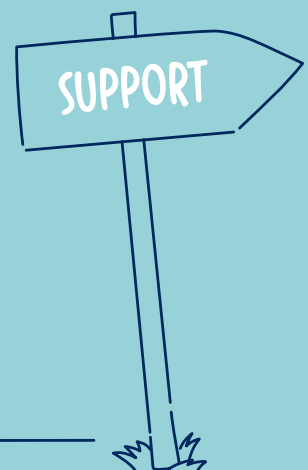
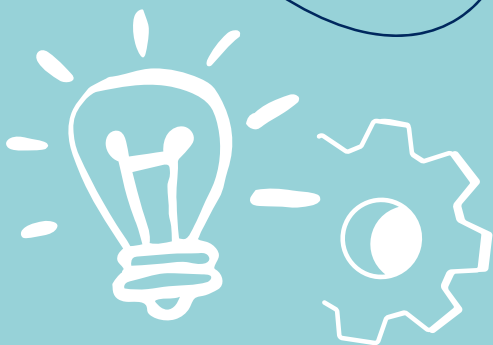
FOCUS AREAS

- > Advice and guidance
- > Education Settings
- > Childcare
- > Youth provision
- > In-work Poverty
- > Free School Meals
- > Poverty Awareness training
- > Increased uptake of entitlements



PROMISE FROM ATTENDEES

- > To signpost to support
- > To be mindful of costs to families
- > Increase uptake of entitlements
- > To listen and engage with all partnerships
- > Capture the voices of lived experience
- > Free activities and food for families
- > Extend youth club provision
- > Make all decisions through a poverty lens
- > To lobby for change



The Action Plan

The Child Poverty Strategy will be implemented in conjunction with the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

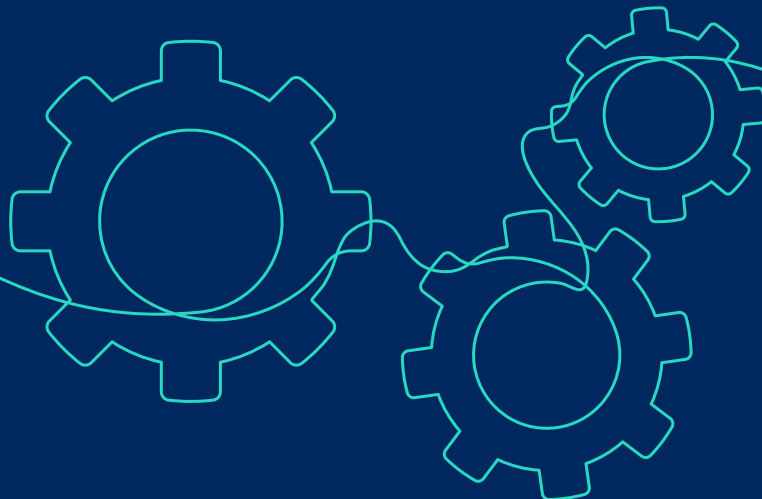
Actions are driven through the South Tyneside Poverty Group and partnerships within the Borough and North East Combined Authority.

“No time to wait: an ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East”

The four main priorities align to the North East Child Poverty Commission report.

The headings include:

- 1. Maximising Family Income**
- 2. Making work a route out of poverty**
- 3. The best start in life**
- 4. Overarching Priority**



1. Maximising Family incomes

A report produced by Policy & Practice in February 2024 highlighted that across the North East region there are £1.33 billion annual unclaimed entitlements.

This could relate to a combination of factors including lack of awareness of the entitlement, pride, stigma or a complicated system to navigate. A key priority is raising awareness and supporting our families to access these financial gains. This is a key enabler in reducing Child Poverty.

Actions include:

- **Improve access to financial support**, products and services through partnership working, training and effective signposting. Making every contact count - through localised drop-in sessions within Welcoming Places, Family Hubs, schools and other community venues.
- **Providing targeted support** to families just above the free school meal threshold and understanding which interventions make the biggest difference. For instance, learning from the current pilot initiative providing discretionary funding provided for schools to allocate free meals to families who are struggling financially. Implementation of auto enrolment process across the borough. This process will ensure families are automatically registered for a daily free meal and have the option to opt-out of the entitlement if required.
- **Making better use of data** to enable targeted support to increase uptake of entitlements and inform future campaigns.
- **Deliver workshops** in schools and Family Hubs to raise awareness and signpost to support, particularly focused on families with increased risk of experiencing poverty.
- **Boosting awareness of key benefits** through targeted campaigns, advice from the Welfare Support Team and Citizen's Advice and a planned annual programme of face-to-face drop ins and promotions.
- Extension to a further 10 schools of the '**reducing the cost of the school day**' programme. This involves awareness raising training, financial support guidance and the suggestion of interventions to support families, for example, help with uniform costs.



Signposting to support - South Tyneside Energy Roadshows

- **Training for school staff** (including office and frontline lunch staff) and Governors to highlight the challenges facing families and young people, to make decisions through a poverty lens and to be equipped to signpost to support available.
- **Allocated Welfare Support** Advisors across 12 schools, to provide financial advice and increase the number of families claiming their entitlements.
- Map out and promote the availability of digital equipment, free or reduced cost internet access, data, and skills training across the borough to **help support families experiencing digital poverty.**

2. Making work a route out of poverty

Nationally, 7 in 10 children living in poverty have at least one parent in paid work. The proportion of North East children in poverty that are from working families has risen from 56% to 67% in less than a decade.

It is essential to emphasise that poverty is not a choice, and some families can be working more than one job but with rising costs, can still struggle to make ends meet. This strategy recognises the valuable role of quality employment, skills and good pay, for both adults and young people as a key tool to support, empower and equip families to move out of poverty.

Actions include:

- Engaging with employers to encourage becoming **Real Living Wage** organisations and explore potential local barriers to paying this wage. The Real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate based on living costs and is currently a minimum of £12.60 (October 2024). This is in comparison to the National Living Wage which will be a minimum of £12.21 from April 2025.
- Continue to educate and support to develop **inclusive recruitment and retention** practices through the work of the Employment Skills Team and The Pledge network of organisations. Support to identify and create good quality inclusive job vacancies will ensure that those who need it most are supported to work.
- Prioritise **accessible and affordable childcare** for those in or seeking employment. Work with local providers to secure sufficient childcare places in line with the governments childcare reform for early years and primary age children.
- Undertake a **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment**. This corresponds with the government commitment to offering a free breakfast club in every primary school in England with the early adopter scheme commencing in April 2025.
- Locally support the Government ambition of providing all age **careers advice**, via South Tyneside Works and other local provision, to ensure that residents understand opportunities and career routes and can access well-paying work to help them out of poverty.



South Tyneside Works Employment and Skills Navigators at Your Next Steps Live

- Widen **training and skills provision** further into community settings, providing further outreach activities to offer accredited qualifications, careers guidance and volunteering opportunities. Ensure high quality careers advice is accessible for all. This directly links to Government plans which commits to every 18-to-21-year-old in England having access to an apprenticeship, quality training and education opportunities or help to find well paid work, under a new 'Youth Guarantee'.
- **Support residents with additional needs** or multiple barriers to employment to access health, skills and employment programmes.

- **In-work poverty** – widen out systems in place within the Council and NHS including the 'Better Health at Work Award' and the 'Financial Wellbeing Audit' through Society Matters. This audit will survey school staff, Pledge organisations and VCS settings to determine specific challenges employees face and suggest potential interventions.
- To work collaboratively with the North East Combined Authority to drive forward several new programmes such as Connect to Work - a new work and health programme and an economic inactivity Trailblazer programme highlighted in the Government's '**Get Britain Working White Paper**'.

Annual event providing employment and training guidance

- Continued delivery of the **Your Next Steps programme** which supports young people to explore their post-16 education, employment and training opportunities. Interventions will include our 'Your Next Steps Live' events to support young people to make informed decisions about their post-16 education, employment and training.
- Encouraging, through awareness raising sessions, Pledges and other South Tyneside organisations to offer **work experience/placements and recruitment opportunities** to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and to assist with removing potential barriers, for example, transport costs.

3. The best start in life

Providing the best start in life is essential to support health, development and shape outcomes for the rest of a child's life.

We only get one childhood and by supporting the early formative years we not only support the babies and children but also their parents and carers, ensuring positive outcomes for all South Tyneside families.

Housing plays a big part in tackling child poverty. It provides a safe place for children to grow and learn. It is also one of the biggest costs which families must continue to meet on an ongoing basis. If families lose their home the effects can be devastating and cause lasting damage to children's lives. The Council are committed to helping residents, including by supporting them to sustain their tenancies, preventing homelessness, making homes warmer, building more affordable homes, as well as improving standards and quality across all sectors. We will work with our housing association, VCS organisations and other partners to do this.

Actions include:

- Through our **Family Hubs**, supporting young people and families to access child health, parenting and relationship help, along with support to improve school readiness.
- Working with Family Hubs to increase the take-up of **Healthy Start Vouchers** to ensure all our babies and youngest children benefit from vitamins, milk and fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Through the Family Hubs, increasing the allocation of a further 200 **Baby Boxes** enabling access to much needed early provisions and stimulation activities for newborn babies including first books, toys and blankets.
- Expand the offer of funded **family learning courses**, including healthy cooking within 20 schools and budgeting programmes available for all schools and Family Hubs.

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Budget Bites cookery sessions in schools



Holiday, Activities and Food sessions

- Promote the **youth provision** offer across South Tyneside through a mapping exercise of what is currently offered, identifying gaps, and working with young people and families to determine what provision is needed and where.
- Exploring **Free School Meal** options, including young people in this process, to look at meal options and the lunchtime experience, help remove financial challenges, reduce stigma and partner up with Local Supermarkets to explore provision and allocation of fresh produce.
- Prioritise building more **new homes** for sale, for rent, and for affordable home ownership. We need to build more social and affordable housing for rent too; homes that provide people on low incomes with security, decent living conditions and affordable rents.
- Poor housing conditions affect child development as well as their health and wellbeing. We will prioritise that housing (whether rented or owned) is of decent quality, free of hazards and that **housing needs are met**. For example, making sure Council and housing association homes meet decent homes standards; making sure that landlords are aware of their responsibilities and the enforcement action the Council can take.
- Publish a new **Housing Strategy** and a new **Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy**. This will focus on prevention to identify and support households who are at risk of homelessness, including households with children, and young people leaving care.
- Continue to **support children in care** or leaving care ensuring suitable placements, guidance and ongoing support.
- **Making homes warmer** can support a child's good physical and mental health. We aim to ensure that the borough has a stock of warm, healthy homes, as well as continuing to tackle fuel poverty. For example, through successfully implementing our Fuel Poverty Strategy, plus wider work by Council teams, we continue to improve the Energy Performance Certificate ratings of Council homes as well as providing support to Council tenants and the wider community.
- Most private landlords take their responsibilities seriously, provide homes of a reasonable standard, and treat their tenants fairly. However, too many households that rent privately live in poor conditions, paying a lot of their income to do so. We aim to help create a higher quality, **better managed private rented sector**. For example, we will work with the private sector to explore developing Private Sector Housing and Home in Multiple Occupation Strategies. We will work with private landlords to encourage and support them to improve standards and increase the supply of affordable homes.
- To ensure that households get the support they need to help **prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies** through making information and support available to all residents and equipping all staff to effectively signpost to advice and services.
- Promote housing and services available to **support survivors of domestic abuse**; ensuring that victims and their children feel safe and supported in safe accommodation, both to seek help and to rebuild their lives.

4. Overarching Priority

Poverty prevention and reduction is 'everybody's business' and all decisions should be made through a poverty lens. This includes budget planning and all policies and strategies.

Actions include:

- Commitment to collaborate with the **Poverty Truth Commission** to ensure the voice of lived experience drives forward change.
- Building on the positive model of engagement delivered through the work of the Social Navigators and Social Prescribers, equip other practitioners to ask families the right questions, signpost to support and **make every contact count**. These opportunities include staff conducting home repairs, telephone conversations within Customer Services, school staff and any organisations that engage with families and young people.
- To ensure the views of lesser heard voices/ those often excluded from the decision-making process are heard including young carers, young people living in care homes, care experienced young people, SEND pupils, care leavers and our BAME communities. This will be through **planned engagement sessions**, surveys, and the valuable insight of staff and volunteers.
- To **lobby for change** at regional and national levels including expansion of Free School Meals (FSM) to all young people in primary, secondary and college living in families receiving Universal Credit. Further lobbying for the extension of Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) provision.
- **Long term funding** for VCS organisations – to sustain support for families, young people and enable long-term planning.
- Using our **collective funding power** and work with anchor institutions to maximise purchasing power and impact.
- Prioritising poverty prevention and **targeting support to make things fairer** within budget plans.
- Supporting organisations to consider their decisions and practices through an **anti-poverty lens**.
- Feeding into the region wide **Child Poverty Strategy** and **Child Poverty Reduction Unit**.
- Through our dedicated influencing strategy and close working with the North East Combined Authority, continue to **campaign for long-term change** around specific policies that have a direct, negative impact on the families of South Tyneside.



South Tyneside Youth Council - lobbying for change



Working with anchor institutions - Pledge Workshop, Port of Tyne, May 2024

Monitoring Impact

This strategy identifies plans for the next decade in order to see a significant reduction in relative child poverty across South Tyneside. To monitor delivery of the identified actions, progress will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Alongside reflection on progress updates, a number of headline measures will be tracked and reported to the South Tyneside Poverty Group, Health and Wellbeing board, Lead Members and full council where appropriate.

The Government has said that success will look like a fall in the headline measure of poverty with, improving the lives of those children experiencing the most severe and acute forms of poverty, a stated priority too. South Tyneside will mirror this measure of success and break this down into further specific measurable outcomes.

Current levels of Child Poverty and existing challenges and barriers are highlighted within this strategy. This forms the initial baseline and along with local intelligence from our partners, will be used as a starting measure to track progress and identify further required interventions.

Actions within this strategy involve a system wide approach targeted at mitigating, preventing, and alleviating child poverty. The measures that we have identified are therefore diverse, including system wide indicators and service level indicators such as, specific numbers of families receiving support, the number of employers engaged with, or funds secured.



Ongoing engagement with members of South Tyneside Youth Council

Continued engagement with schools, youth groups and other organisations will run parallel, and the South Tyneside Youth Council will be involved, in a formal capacity, as part of the monitoring process.

There is recognition that change happens both regionally and nationally and that this strategy, along with prioritised actions, will continue to evolve in order to react to an ever-changing landscape.

Regional and National Picture

The work in South Tyneside links closely with the regional action plan being led by our North East Mayor Kim McGuinness, and the work of the Child Poverty Reduction Unit.

The Mayor hosted the first regional Child Poverty Summit in November 2024 and made a clear commitment, in both her manifesto and during the Summit, to prioritise addressing child poverty.

Through the North East Combined Authority there is a commitment to convening partners, testing approaches and funding interventions. As a direct result of this opportunity, South Tyneside have secured funding to drive forward actions. Examples of this include funding to expand the 'reducing the cost of the school day audit', family learning cookery classes within schools, welfare support beyond the school gates and a further 200 Baby Boxes to be distributed to new parents. This demonstrates the regional commitment and determination for meaningful, proactive interventions.

While there is a huge amount of work going on to alleviate poverty in South Tyneside and within the region, there is clear recognition that many levers to action real change are still in the control of central government. We are collaboratively lobbying hard for change. Instead of dealing with the effects of poverty there needs to be embedded systems to stop families and young people being in poverty in the first place.

There is a clear need for robust national strategies aimed at tackling the root causes of poverty, not just the symptoms, to improve children's life chances and outcomes. South Tyneside has a strong voice within the national agenda through the dialogue between Regional Mayors and Central Government; particularly with Cllr Dixon as portfolio holder for the Combined Authority's child poverty reduction work.

The Government's ministerial taskforce and commitment to a 10-year National Child Poverty Strategy by Summer 2025. We know that this strategy will focus on four themes: increasing incomes; reducing essential costs; increasing financial resilience; and better local support. This is a positive step to eradicate child poverty and as a Borough we will ensure that the voices of South Tyneside contribute to this national policy.



“When I stood as Mayor I said that child poverty would be our number one priority and we will measure the success of what we do together in the number of children we lift out of poverty.”

North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness

Key Contacts

Action Station

Offers free advice on money, debt, and other services.

Call: **0191 455 8122**

Citizens Advice South Tyneside

Citizens Advice offer free and confidential advice on a range of topics.

Call: **0191 455 7958**

The Housing Options Service - Free housing advice and help if homeless, rough sleeping, fleeing domestic violence or at risk of becoming homeless for any other reasons.

Call: **0800 141 2645** (freephone) – Monday to Thursday, 9am- 5pm, and Friday, 9am- 4.30pm

Call: **0191 456 2093** - out of office hours

Email: housing.options@southtynesidehomes.org.uk

Welfare Support Team

The service is free and confidential for anyone living in South Tyneside.

Call: **0191 424 6040**

Email: welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk

Website: www.southtyneside.gov.uk/welfaresupport

Cost of living Support

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/costofliving

Family Hubs

All Saints Family Hub

Whitehall Street, South Shields, NE33 4SU

Call: **0191 420 7657**

Bede Family Hub

Reginald Street, Boldon Colliery, NE35 9DG

Call: **0191 422 0030**

Biddick Hall & Whiteleas Family Hub

Galsworthy Road, South Shields, NE34 9JD

Call: **0191 423 4980**

Boldon Family Hub

Reginald Street, Boldon Colliery, NE35 9DG

Call: **0191 519 5920**

Hebburn Family Hub

Campbell Park Road, Hebburn, NE31 1QY

Call: **0191 428 7650**

Horsley Hill Family Hub

Norham Avenue North, South Shields, NE34 7TD

Call: **0191 456 9404**

Jarrow Family Hub

Stanley Street, Jarrow, NE32 3BD

Call: **0191 483 6630**

Marine Park Family Hub

Flagg Court, South Shields, NE33 2LS

Call: **0191 456 5418**

Primrose Family Hub

Lambton Terrace, Jarrow, NE32 5QY

Call: **0191 424 4900**

Ridgeway Family Hub

Park Avenue, South Shields, NE34 8AB

Call: **0191 456 7751**

Riverside Family Hub

Garrick Street, South Shields, NE33 4JT

Call: **0191 423 4971**

Whitburn & Marsden Family Hub

Cleadon Lane, Whitburn, SR6 7NS

Call: **0191 456 9404**

<https://southtynesidefamilyhubs.co.uk>

Hospitality and Hope

Anyone living within a mile and a half of a store can access its food services, receiving a free membership upon presentation of a valid form of ID, allowing them to shop there once per week.

Hudson Street (NE34 0AD) Open: Monday – Friday 9.30am to 2pm. Wednesday open until 3pm.

Horsley Hill (NE34 6RF) Open: Monday – 9.30am to 3pm. Wednesday and Friday - 9.30am – 2pm.

Fowler Street (NE33 1NS) Open: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday - 9.30am – 2pm

Key2Life Community Bus

This mobile food service requires no membership and everyone is welcome on board regardless of circumstances. Goods are sourced to 'sell' at the lowest possible cost to shoppers – all prices are suggested minimum donations and serve to cover costs only.

See website for current bus timetable: www.keycommunity.org.uk/key-community-bus/

Food banks

Food banks help individuals and families in crisis. This could be because of sudden unemployment, delays in benefit payments, benefits sanctions and financial problems.

They give food parcels to people while they get help to sort out their crisis.

To receive a food parcel, you may need to be referred to a food bank by a professional such as a housing officer, social worker, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) advisor, doctor or health advisor.

Local food banks

Hospitality and Hope

A food bank and support service for vulnerable and homeless people in South Tyneside. They offer food parcels on a referral system and offer help with supported housing and health and wellbeing services.

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/10892/Hospitality-and-Hope

Hebburn Helps

A food bank and crisis response team providing food parcels, clothing, baby equipment, household items and more.

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/10459/Hebburn-Helps-Community-Food-Bank-Crisis-Response-Team

Key2Life Food Bank

Key2Life work with South Tyneside Churches Together to provide emergency food and support to anyone in the borough experiencing hardship.

They are based at Boldon Lane Library with drop-off points around South Shields.

www.keycommunity.org.uk/what-we-do/key-to-life-foodbank/

Bede's Helping Hands

A volunteer run organisation serving South Tyneside. They are based in the former Primrose Library in the Scotch Estate, Jarrow.

0191 816 3021

www.facebook.com/groups/bedeshelpinghands/

Boldon Community Association

The community association, based in New Road in Boldon Colliery, offers a food bank for the local community.

www.boldonca.co.uk

Family Gateway

Working across the North East, Family Gateway supports families who are living in poverty or disadvantage and are struggling to bring up their children on very little money.

www.familygateway.co.uk

For further information:

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