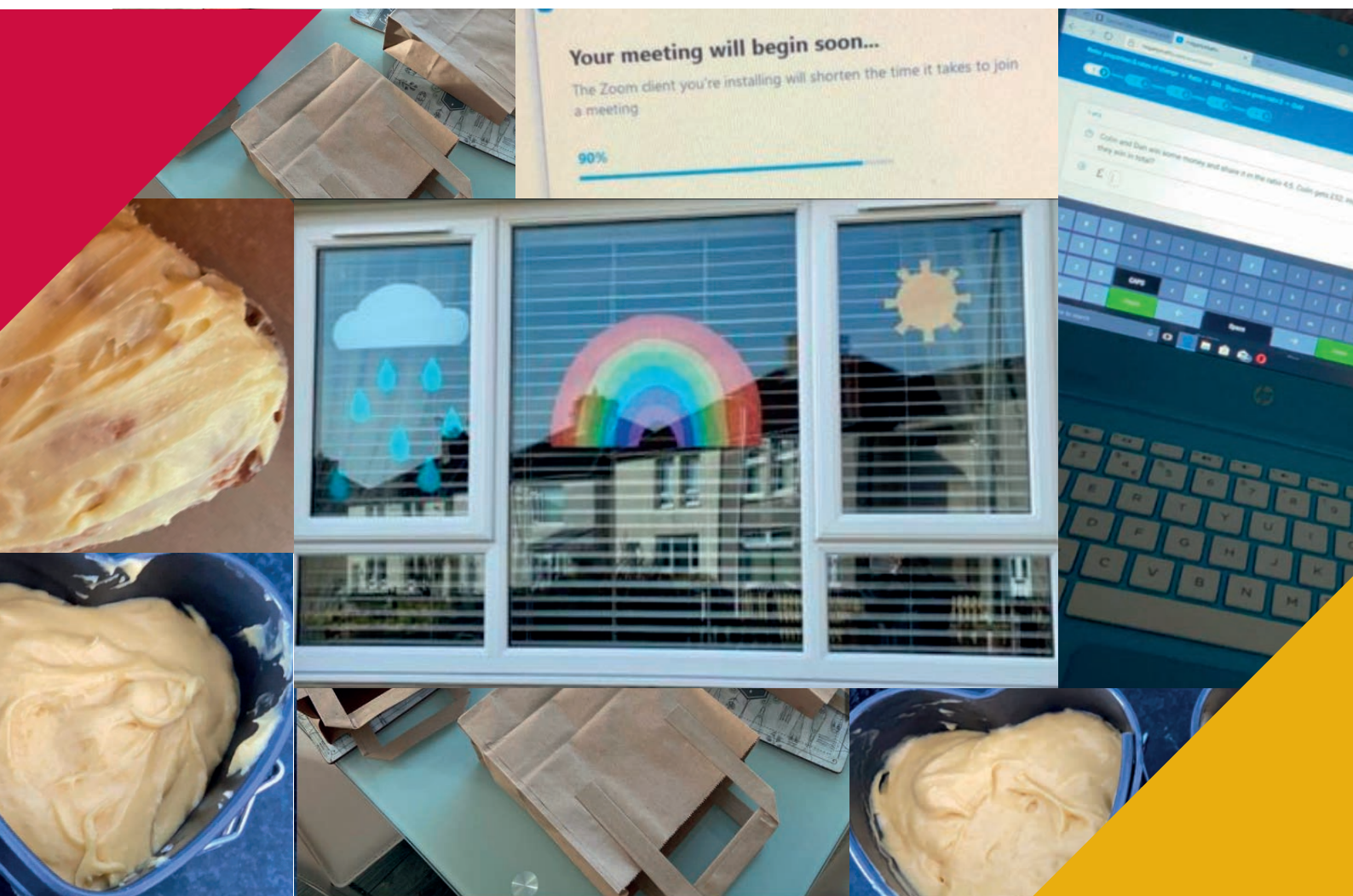# Child Poverty Forum West Cumbria

CHILD POVERTY:
Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty

A REPORT INFORMED BY A WCCPF WEBINAR HELD ON
Thursday 15th October 2020
Samuel Lindow Building, Westlakes Science and Technology Park, Moor Row, Cumbria CA24 3JY

Child Poverty Forum West Cumbria

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Foreword

Our Rapid Response Paper, published on 29th May this year, taking a snapshot of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on children living with the effects of poverty, promised a more considered return to the subject in the light of six or seven months experience of living with its challenges. There was a reasonable expectation that a slowing down of the spread of the virus to manageable proportions would be a good time to pause for reflection and re-assessment of the situation. While that was far from the reality by mid-October, we were able to fulfil our promise to organise a webinar, led by a number of speakers of substance, to establish a more accurate picture of the recognisably devastating effects of the pandemic on many children and their families in West Cumbria.
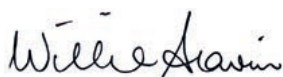
The importance of the event to a cross section of professionals from statutory, voluntary and academic sectors alongside key interested parties from across the community, was evident in the rapid uptake of some seventy places. The number attending and the range of interest was sufficient indication of the importance attached to this opportunity to take stock of the most challenging event in our country's post war history.

As we emphasised in our May report, "the effects of austerity across all public services…has made the challenging effects of COVID-19 all the more difficult." A measure of these effects, according to the Children's Commissioner's 'Annual Report 2019-20', "pre-virus - four million children were living in poverty in England an increase of 600,000 since 2010/11. 72% were from in-work households compared to 58% in 2010/11" (Children's Commissioner, 2020) Little wonder when, it was reported that in 2018 £37 billion had been cut from working-age benefits (The Guardian, 2018). The Local Government Association predicted in its paper 'Local government funding Moving the conversation on', that by 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion over the preceding decade. That means that councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 the Government had provided to spend on local services in the last eight years (Local Government Association, 2018).

While our report provides more than enough statistical evidence from our Keynote Speakers to support the case being made, it also benefits from the supportive narrative from our locally based speakers. This offers a real insight into the experience of the children and families whose lives and opportunities are blighted and whose opportunities severely limited, emotionally, socially and educationally.

Anyone doubting the power of a convincing story need to look no further than Marcus Rashford MBE's 'referendum' on providing free school meals during school holidays. Put alongside the heroic and redoubtable Captain Tom's indomitable spirit in fundraising for the NHS and you have the generosity of thousands upon thousands of our fellow citizens holding a seriously judgemental mirror up to a longstanding systemic failure to feed our poorest children or reward our poorest paid workers.

As a nation, we seem to be giving a strong message to government about what kind of society we want to be. A 'new normal' has to be radically more supportive of those who constantly miss out on the benefits of living in the fifth wealthiest country in the world.

Willie Slavin

Willie Slavin MBE
Chair, West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum

Executive Summary

- This is a follow up report from our rapid review paper, which was published in May 2020, highlighting how Covid-19 would impact on families experiencing poverty. It revealed that the main challenges centred around health and wellbeing, digital exclusion as well as hardship and food insecurity.
- In October 2020 we held a webinar to build an informed understanding of the needs of West Cumbrian families following the Covid-19 crisis and to celebrate the responses in supporting families experiencing poverty. We also hoped to identify key actions that need to be taken to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, promote resilience and inclusion and critically discuss the viability of building a therapeutic community in the anti-poverty response to Covid-19.
- Martin Lennon, Head of Public Affairs, the Children's Commissioner's Office presented on Manifestations of Poverty in the lives of children and offered a national perspective, stressing the importance of good quality early years provision and collaborative working.
- Kaz Stuart, Professor of Social and Health Inequalities and Director of the Centre for Research for Health and Society, University of Cumbria explained the impact of systematic inequalities and argued for the need for society to take a moral stance in our approach to child poverty.
- Pamela Telford, Head, Monkwray Primary School outlined the ways in which their school responded to the physical, social, emotional and education needs of their pupils, principally through their weekly food drops.
- Jacky Kennedy, Head, St Joseph's Catholic School described the challenges they faced as a school during the school closures and the innovative ways the school responded, such as developing new communication systems with families and providing food.
- Lesley Sanczuk, Senior Manager, Children's Services, Cumbria County Council provided an overview of how Cumbria County Council's Children's Trust has responded and expanded as a result of Covid-19, and provided a case study example of how the methodology of Words and Pictures can be used to work therapeutically with families.
- Key themes that emerged from the panel discussion were Early Years; food insecurity; digital exclusion; health and wellbeing; the national context; ethics and social justice
- Recommendations resulting from this webinar, informed by national and regional evidence are:
    o Food security and digital inclusion are fundamental human rights and all children should have access to these.
    o Schools are key anchor institutions and should be viewed accordingly.
    o Trust in the local expertise and ability of local community group by sharing power.
    o Listen to, and respond to, the voice of the child.
    o Champion the benefits of collaboration and data sharing.

Background

Background of West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum

West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum (WCCPF) was formed in 2010 and exists to ensure that the needs of families in poverty are at the forefront of policy and practice when needed. Facilitated by UCLan, our core group consists of representation from the local county and borough councils, along with members from the housing and third sector. We are an open forum and welcome individuals and organisations from any background to join the discussion about how we can best do this.

We have held a number of face to face events and now a webinar, which have informed the publication of a suite of reports, all publicly available. All previous WCCPF reports can be accessed on UCLan's Centre for Citizenship and Community webpage. We also publish a monthly newsletter, highlighting recent news pieces or publications around the subject of poverty. If you are interested in receiving this newsletter please contact Suzanne Wilson on swilson21@uclan.ac.uk or Willie Slavin on willieslavin@aol.com

We will continue to strive to promote the interests of the most vulnerable families in society and welcome you to join us in this mission.

Key findings of Rapid Response Paper

In May 2020, West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum published a rapid response paper highlighting the issues affecting families during lockdown (Wilson, 2020a). The key findings centred around three themes - wellbeing, education and hardship.

Wellbeing

Practitioners had expressed concerns about not only the physical safety of the most vulnerable children and young people but were also worried about the emotional wellbeing of many children and young people across West Cumbria, particularly those with existing mental health needs/ issues.

Education

Schools and youth organisations were concerned about the impact of the extended school closures. In reference to children living in households experiencing poverty they were particularly worried about access to IT, access to teachers (and positive, supportive role models) and the home learning environment.

Hardship

Organisations involved in the community response told us how concerned they were about food insecurity in families already experiencing poverty. They were also worried about the effect of the lockdown on low-income working families, many of whom would now be made unemployed or furloughed.

These findings were used to inform two pieces of evidence presented to the Select Committee for Education in response to the school closures (Wilson et al., 2020a; Wilson et al., 2020b), highlighting the impact the work of WCCPF is having on a national level. They also informed the basis of two international webinar presentations (Wilson, 2020b; Wilson, 2020c).

Context of Covid-19 in current report

At the time of writing, (November 2020), all of Cumbria, like the rest of England, is under national lockdown restrictions. Data made available from Cumbria County Council shows the number of lab-confirmed cases COVID-19 Infections in Allerdale was 620 (634 per 100,000) and 514 (653.9 per 100,000) in Copeland (Cumbria County Council, 2020). These figures were the second and third lowest levels in the county. The number of COVID-19 deaths in Allerdale was 81 (59.2 per 100,000) and 67 (82.7 per 100,000) in Copeland, which was again, the second and third lowest levels in the county (Cumbria County Council, 2020).
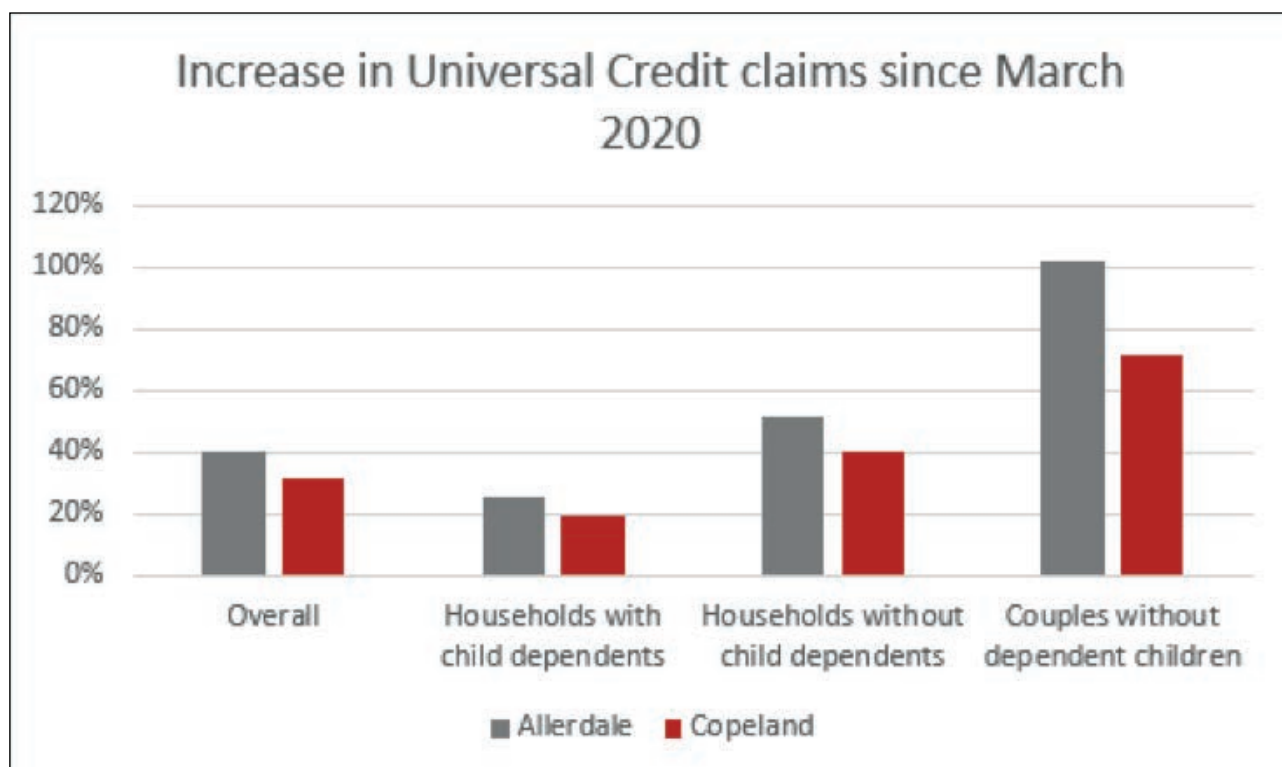

Chart 1: Increase in Universal Credit claims since March 2020

Economically, Cumbria presents a complex picture. Areas dependent on tourism, principally Eden and South Lakeland, have experienced by far the most profound impact on their local economies. On the other hand, West Cumbria has been somewhat less impacted by the economic consequences of Covid-19 and the consequent restrictions due to the number of people employed in the nuclear industry. The August figures show that since March (which is treated as the pre-Covid position) the number of households on Universal Credit has risen in West Cumbria in households with child dependents and without child dependents These increases are lower than the national average, the biggest increases are in couples without dependent children (Department for Work and Pensions, 2020).

The most recent figures (published 2019) show that child poverty in West Cumbria is below the national average of 30% at 28% in Allerdale and 27% in Copeland. However, 10 wards in Allerdale and 8 wards in Copeland have child poverty figures above the national average (End Child Poverty, 2020). National child poverty data is not yet available to describe the impact of Covid-19, however, Free School Meal (FSM) applications are often used as a proxy for disadvantage in educational settings and these data can help to give some indication of families who are newly experiencing financial difficulties. Recent data from Cumbria County Council, 2020 shows us that across Cumbria, Copeland saw the lowest increase in FSM applications (8%), with Allerdale showing the third lowest (46.2%). These figures again, highlight the protective factor that the nuclear industry and supply chain had on families in Copeland (Cumbria County Council, 2020).

All data emerging from the Covid-19 outbreak must be viewed in a context where many communities were facing significant hardship before the crisis.

See Appendix A for a more detailed description of poverty across Allerdale and Copeland.

Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty Webinar 15th October 2020

At WCCPF we wanted to facilitate a discussion focusing on how to build a therapeutic community around children experiencing poverty. By referring to a therapeutic community we are meaning following:

"In order to realise their potential as individuals and active citizens, children require an environment that fosters personal growth. They need to form relationships with others in an atmosphere of trust and security, they need to be valued, accepted and supported by those around them and they need to take real responsibility for themselves, others and their environment" (Oxford Health Complex Needs Service, 2018).

Purpose
Following publication of West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum's report 'Child Poverty: The impact of COVID-19 on families in West Cumbria' in May, WCCPF held a follow-up webinar which aimed to:

1. Build an informed understanding of the needs of West Cumbrian families following the Covid-19 crisis.
2. Celebrate the responses of the health, education and housing sectors in supporting families experiencing poverty. These may be families who have been experiencing hardship before Covid-19 or are perhaps facing these challenges for the first time.
3. Critically discuss the viability of building a therapeutic community in the anti-poverty response to Covid-19.
4. Identify key actions that need to be taken to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and promote resilience and inclusion.

This report presents the key findings and emergent themes that arose during this event, triangulating these with national and local data applying a deductive, bottom up approach. The report concludes with recommendations for policy and practice and we challenge local and national government and statutory bodies to take these into account.

The webinar attracted an audience of 70, coming from the community, voluntary and public sectors across Cumbria and beyond. The presence of a number of academics from universities across the country demonstrated

just how effective WCCPF is in getting its message out in a manner that draws recognition from such a broad spectrum of interested parties.

While presentations from The Children's Commissioner's Office, University of Cumbria and Cumbria County Council set the scene, critically it was the input from two local head teachers that brought the lived experience of families into the conference. Their graphic accounts of life during lockdown detailed the stark reality of the role schools played in simply keeping children and their families fed, as a necessary pre-condition of encouraging educational engagement, which made the most lasting impact. The speaker's presentations, transcribed below, were complimented by an enthusiastic discussion in the event chat room, and brought some key issues to light, alongside providing questions and challenges to speakers.

Speaker Summaries:

Martin Lennon, Head of Public Affairs, the Children's Commissioner's Office:
Manifestations of poverty in the lives of children

The presentation, given on behalf of the Children's Commissioner, discussed the mitigation of child poverty, however, the office argues that as a society we should be aiming for the alleviation of child poverty. Recent research shows us that 30% of children in England are now living in poverty, this is much, much higher than any other age group of the population - 21% of working age adults are in poverty and 16% of pensioners. This is historically a new phenomenon, traditionally rates of poverty amongst pensioners and children were quite similar, but decisions over the last ten years in particular (freezes on Child Benefit, issues around the transfer from Working Tax Credits to Universal Credit and issues like the Benefits cap) have contributed to quite a significant rise in both absolute and relative levels of child poverty. In both Copeland and Allerdale around 2,000 (20%) children are living in relative poverty, that is not as bad as some of the worst areas, but the numbers are still significant.

The Children's Commissioner welcomes the focus on a therapeutic response to child poverty, considering the kind of eco system in which we are responding to poverty and the wider structures. The debate about child poverty can often get very abstract, and that is why it is useful talking about a therapeutic approach, which is obviously a child-centred approach.

The Early Years Foundation stage assesses children across seventeen domains of development, it looks at areas such as communication, emotional regulation, etc. The Children's Commissioner is particularly worried about children who start school or get to the end of reception and fail to meet half or more of their development indicators. These are children with significant development issues across multiple domains of development, and it is very strongly correlated with poverty. This means that children are not prepared or school ready which can have a negative impact across the lifespan of the child.

In light of the importance of the early years, we need to consider the different kinds of approaches that we can have to help families, to help children get to this point, because even from this early stage it can very difficult for a child to catch up. Across West Cumbria about 11-13% of children are starting school with serious development issues, which is one of the most worrying manifestations of poverty. Nationally these figures vary from around 5% in the wealthiest areas to around 30% in areas with the highest levels of deprivation.

A basic expectation of all children is to leave education with at least a Level 2 qualification, which includes five GCSEs or the equivalent, an apprenticeship, a technical qualification or a BTEC. Nationally between 85%-88% of children achieve this expectation, but the likelihood of children in receipt of free school meals reaching the age of nineteen and leaving education without any substantive qualifications is lower. This difference exists across West Cumbria, and like national figures the gap is growing slightly.

To better understand this marginalisation, we need to consider the conditions which children come into school with and leave school with. Based on the serious case reviews of some children who sadly died in the course of youth violence, the Children's Commissioner published a report reflecting on children's trajectories and all the opportunities to have helped the child and the family. Within the report a fictional case of Ben is presented:
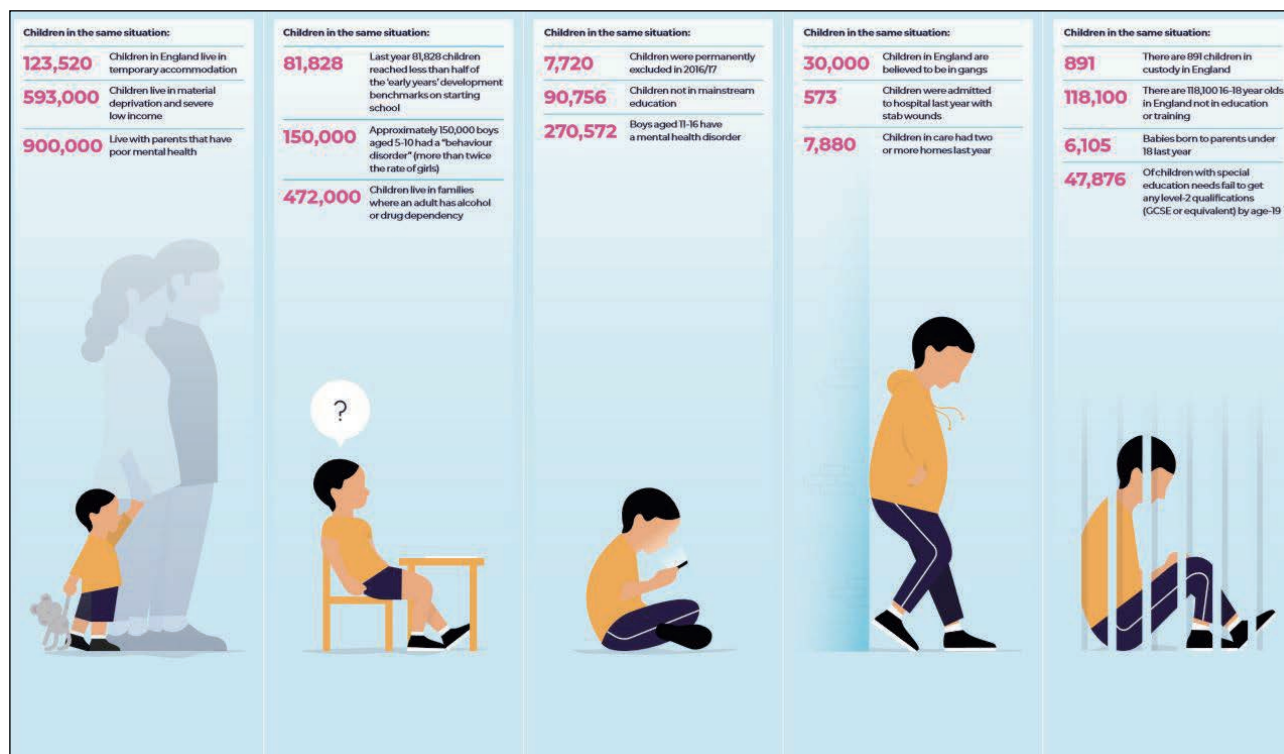

Figure 1: A case study example of life course marginalisation and missed opportunities

As a young child, Ben was raised in a home with parents experiencing poor mental health, living in material deprivation (which is very serious, low income), and in temporary accommodation.

When Ben starts school, he is one of 81,000 children who started school with very low levels of development. He presents with a behavioural disorder, similar to 150,000 boys, where they struggle to control their behaviour, which make it harder to engage in school. This may result in permanent exclusion, and again that's more likely to turn into a mental health disorder if children aren't given help earlier.

This trajectory can result in some really serious problems in teenagers where things have gone really, really wrong. Of course, it's absolutely not the case for all children living in poverty, most children in poverty still don't come anywhere near these very serious harms. However, the way children start off in life, and the failure of the state to teach those, you know, reachable and teachable moments to help children stacks the odds against them at this point here. When we see children coming into you know really significant harm or real disruption, there have
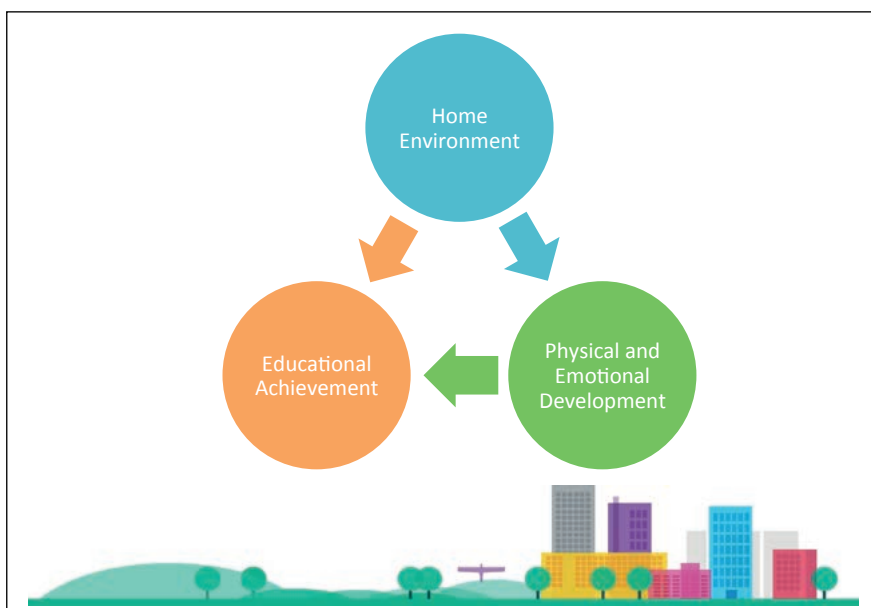

Figure 2: Key elements in building a therapeutic community around a child

always been a huge number of opportunities to intervene earlier. This is the key message when considering therapeutic support and interventions.

There are certain groups of children and young people that the Children's Commissioner is most worried about in England. These include children around gangs, the ones admitted to hospital because of traumatic injuries, the children in care who are being shunted around the system and had two or more care homes in a year, some children going into custody, those who drop out of education altogether at sixteen, the legal age of education leaving is now eighteen. These issues are also the most expensive for the state.

However, all these issues may have been avoided had some therapeutic interventions been provided earlier, those which look at the relationship between a child's home environment, their physical and emotional development and their educational achievement. The Children's Commissioner is keen to look at educational achievement in relation to a child's home environment and from their physical and emotional development. We need to consider the many stages that poverty manifests in a child's life which impacts firstly on their home environment and then on their physical and emotional development, and then on their educational achievement. The relationship is not direct and it's not linear.

This provides many opportunities to mitigate the impacts of poverty and to help children, and to improve their life chances and better therapeutic interventions, more help, which would both be better for children and more financially viable for the state in the long-term.

Kaz Stuart, Professor of Social and Health Inequalities and Director of the Centre for Research for Health and Society, University of Cumbria: Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty

During the first months of Covid-19 Kaz and colleagues have conducted research into people's experiences of Covid-19 with 12,325 people responding to surveys and a range of calls for stories (available at Stuart et al., 2020a). The research found that people's experiences could be described as fitting into three categories - biological or heath issues, psychological issues and social issues. The table below provides an overview of the main issues (both positive and negative) arising from the research:

Health issues	Psychological issues	Social issues
Difficulties of shielding – limited access to food and medicines	Worsening psychological wellbeing and illness	Isolation and loneliness
		Loss of physical contact
Worsening health conditions (diabetes, blood pressure, IBS, skin conditions)	Stress, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, OCD behaviours	Mostly loss of meaningful activity – sport and hobby
Worsening exercise and food habits	Overriding sense of 'worry'	Changes to habits such as eating and activity
	Multifaceted, long term 'low level'	
Unable to access medicine or appointments	A number of positive strategies identified as self-help	Loss or change of employment and work place activity
		Loss of earnings
Cancelled procedures and operations		Difficulties supporting relatives – children / parents
		New use of online platforms as strategies to replace face to face interactions.

Table 1: The bio-psycho-social impact of Covid-19 (from Stuart et al., 2020b)

Many of these issues overlapped or worsened one another. Shielding status, for example, increased worry (psychological) and increased loneliness (social). Inability to attend a podiatry appointment (health) may lead to less walking (social), increased isolation (social) and overall loss of fitness (health). Loss of earnings impact on all biological, psychological and social outcomes. As a result, we can expect the impact of Covid-19 to be complex, involving biological, psychological and social needs (Biopsychosocial or BPS) and long term, as these impacts take effect over time.

All this does not happen equally to people either. There is no level playing field. The circumstances people are born into affects their life chances, as do their choices, but choices are often constrained by where we live, the resources we have and the cultural norms we grow up in. This diagram from Public Health England illustrates the impact of the 'un-level' playing field. We can expect this gradient to get steeper as a result of Covid-19.
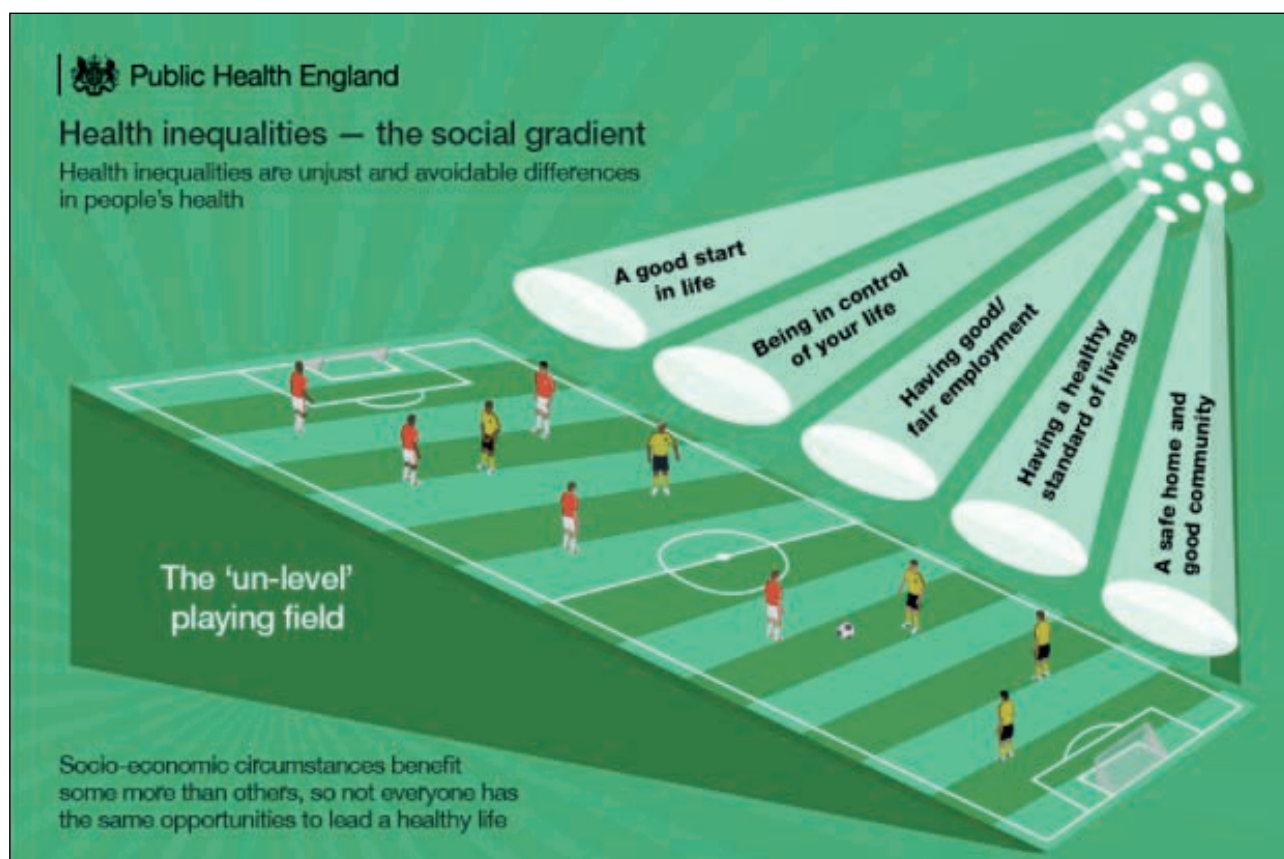

Figure 3: Health Inequalities- The Social Gradient (Public Health, 2017)

We need to understand that poor circumstances lead to poor outcomes which go on to act throughout the life course, one issue leading to another. Each of these issues can also cause other social and health outcomes and so we get multiple, interrelated psychosocial issues creating a vicious cycle as shown below. So many poor outcomes are psychosocial stressors in and of themselves (Sapolsky, 2005, p.94). The converse is also true, and by improving living conditions we can improve wellbeing, reduce stress and improve functioning, creating a virtual cycle of thriving.

The seriousness of the impact of these inequalities cannot now be denied though, as Sir Michael Marmot, the World Health Organisation Commissioner in Social Determinants of Health said;

"Reducing health inequalities is….an ethical imperative. Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale" (CSDH, 2008).

This analysis may lead us to think that the disadvantaged are the 'losers' in this system of inequity. Evidence now shows, however, that is it everyone in society who suffers when there is disadvantage. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) in The Spirit Level, Why Equality is Better for Everyone prove that societies which are most unequal also have higher rates of all social issues.

Much is already in place to support people in moments of dire need, but whilst such efforts may help people in their moments of need, they fail at the fundamental task of creating a more equal, equitable or socially just society. To understand how we might change things Kaz presents a system of inequality which draws on other theoretical models (e.g. Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991), using the metaphor of a water course.
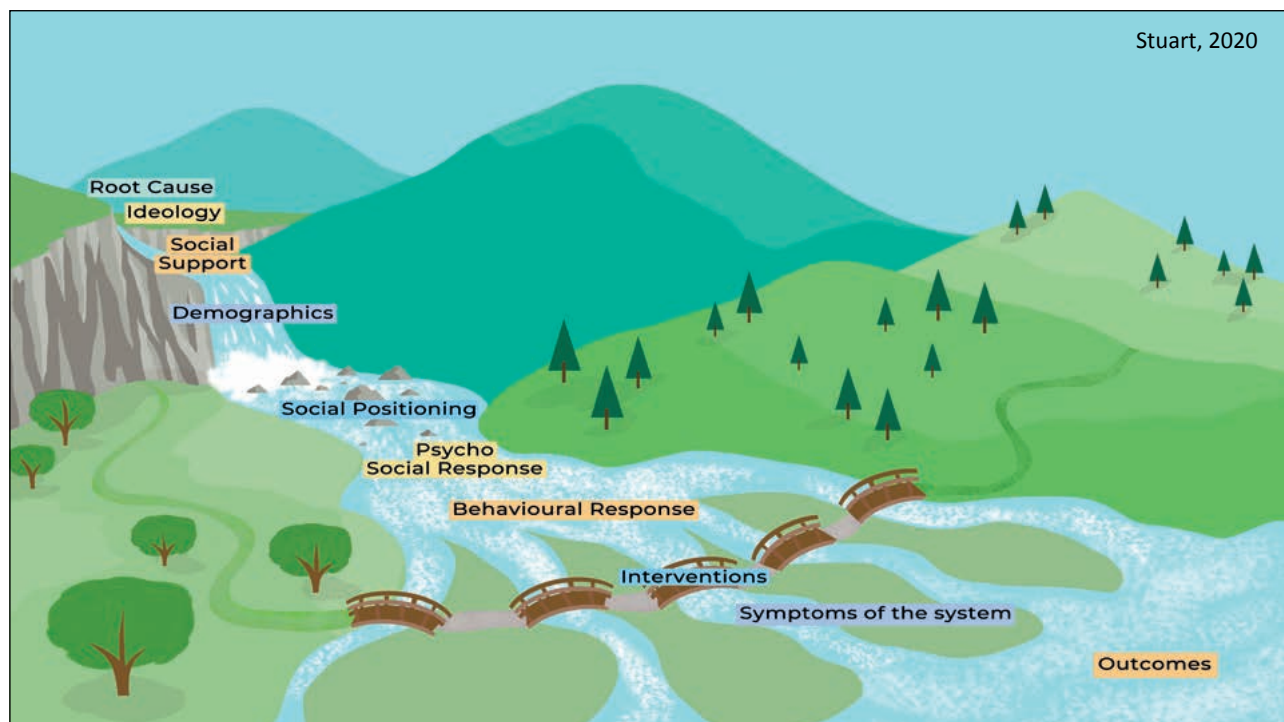

Figure 4: A river course model of inequality

At the end of the river course is the sea of inequality with huge; social issues, injury, disease, mortality.

Part of Diagram	Main Label	Solutions
Source of river	Inequitable access to resources	• Redistributive policies such as fair taxation (e.g. Scandinavia), and safety net policies such as the living wage for all (e.g. Finland), pay transparency (e.g. Sweden). • Requires political activism locally and nationally – see the Equality Trust website.
Cliffs	Ideological forces	• Challenge these discourses locally and nationally. • Provide evidence that it can be different. • Embed 'equity' in local decision making. • Develop a Commissioning framework which has an ideology of 'equity' embedded in it. • Use equity assessment tools to evaluate services.
Straits	Social support	• Petitioning for local and national improvements to and across welfare, health, education and social care systems. • Revise the relationship with the 'state' as per Hilary Cottam's work on Radical Help. • Increased interagency working and collaboration – people, not service users. To think and act 'family' not 'individual'. • Co-design services.

Part of Diagram	Main Label	Solutions
Waterfall	Demographics and context	• Nothing can change a person's DNA, but places could be made more equitable with regeneration, development funds, philanthropy. • The Place Standard is a good tool to assess how well places support someone's wellbeing. • At the front line – investment in housing and heating. A zero tolerance of homelessness and substandard housing stock.
Rocks	Social positioning	• Challenge and support for all people, practitioners, managers, Commissioners to treat everyone with respect (Stuart et al., 2019). To work in a trauma informed way, to think and act in a strengths-based way. • Seek to publish stories that show the positives of communities rather than allowing stereotypes to embed.
Division	Psycho-social response	• Alleviation of anxieties about basic needs through either improvements to the state systems of support (above) or less preferentially, increased support at the front line. • Increased informal and formal support for mental wellbeing – peers, community, coaches, therapists, the whole range.
Tributaries	Behavioural response	• Increased investment into specialist services to support people with risky behaviours that are non-blaming, empowering, strengths based, interagency and family oriented.
Bridges	Interventions	• A broad range of practical services addressing basic needs as a priority.
Shore line	Symptoms of the system	• Addressing issues above would hopefully decrease inequalities around employment and education, health and mental health.
Sea	Outcomes	• Greater social justice.

Table 3: Solutions to a river course of inequality

This metaphor shows how inequality can be experienced at any time in their life. Many people, do, however believe that inequality is not only necessary, but desirable. A range of myths perpetuate this position, such as the beliefs that elitism is efficient and makes everyone richer. None of these are logical or moral arguments for inequality, but rather defenses that enable those in positions of privilege to maintain them whilst also absolving themselves of the responsibility to help others with less favourable life chances. In this respect, talking about poverty as a moral or consequential issue is an important issue we tackle together, as advocated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020).

An equal society would provide equal opportunities to all regardless of who they were, it is clear that England is far from equal. An equitable society would ensure the 'levelling' of the playing field to ensure those with disadvantages had more support enabling equal opportunities. Through developing a positive cycle of empowerment, we can collectively challenge inequality, disabling ideologies, impoverished welfare, negative social positioning. This will diminish their impacts and increase wellbeing for everyone.

For more information on Professor Stuart's model please see her full paper 'Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty' (Stuart, 2020).

Dale Hill, WELL Director: Schools and Covid

In June 2020, an evaluation of likely COVID Impact took place in West Cumbria. The methods applied included a survey, completed by 91 schools in Allerdale and Copeland, interviews with school leaders, teachers and support staff and scrutiny of Education Endowment Foundation's Rapid Evidence Assessment of the impact of School Closures (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020b).

The key findings are summarised below:

Finding 1: There is evidence that disruption to the education of disadvantaged pupils will have had a disproportionate impact on their achievement. The median estimate indicates that the gap would widen by 36%.

Do you think the needs of disadvantaged students will have increased during the school closure period?

- Significant increase
- Slight increase
- No Change
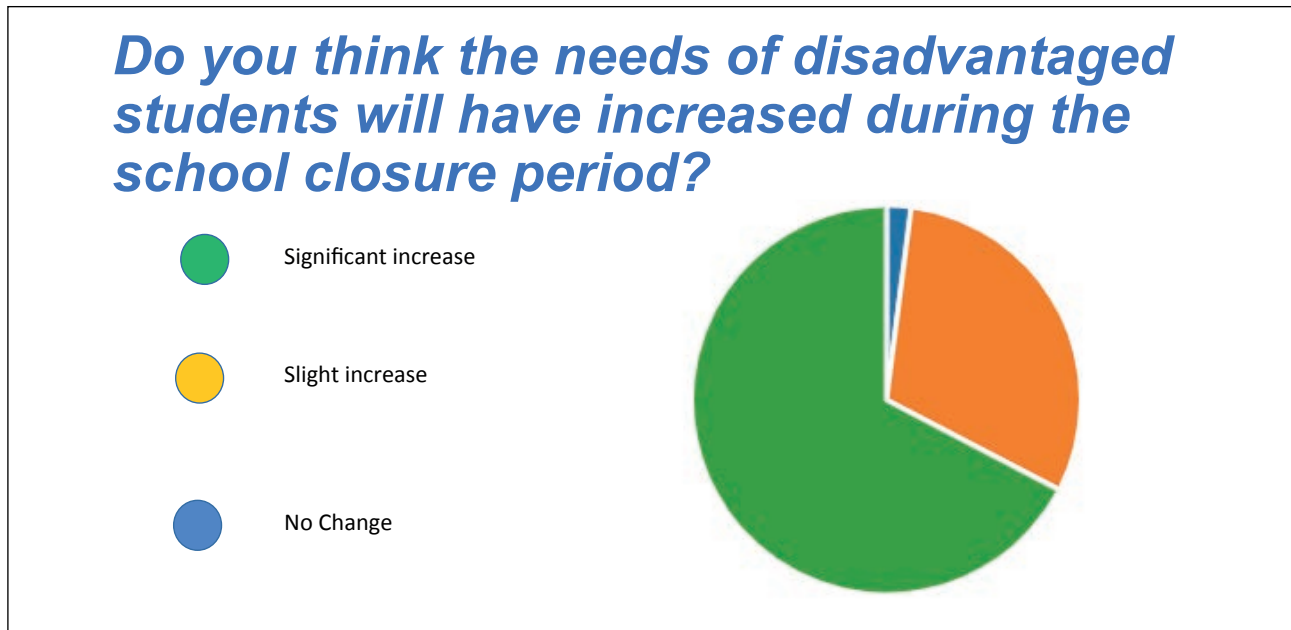
Figure 5: Teacher Perceptions of Increased Needs in Disadvantaged Students

What do you think will be disadvantaged students' greatest needs?

- Social, emotional and mental health
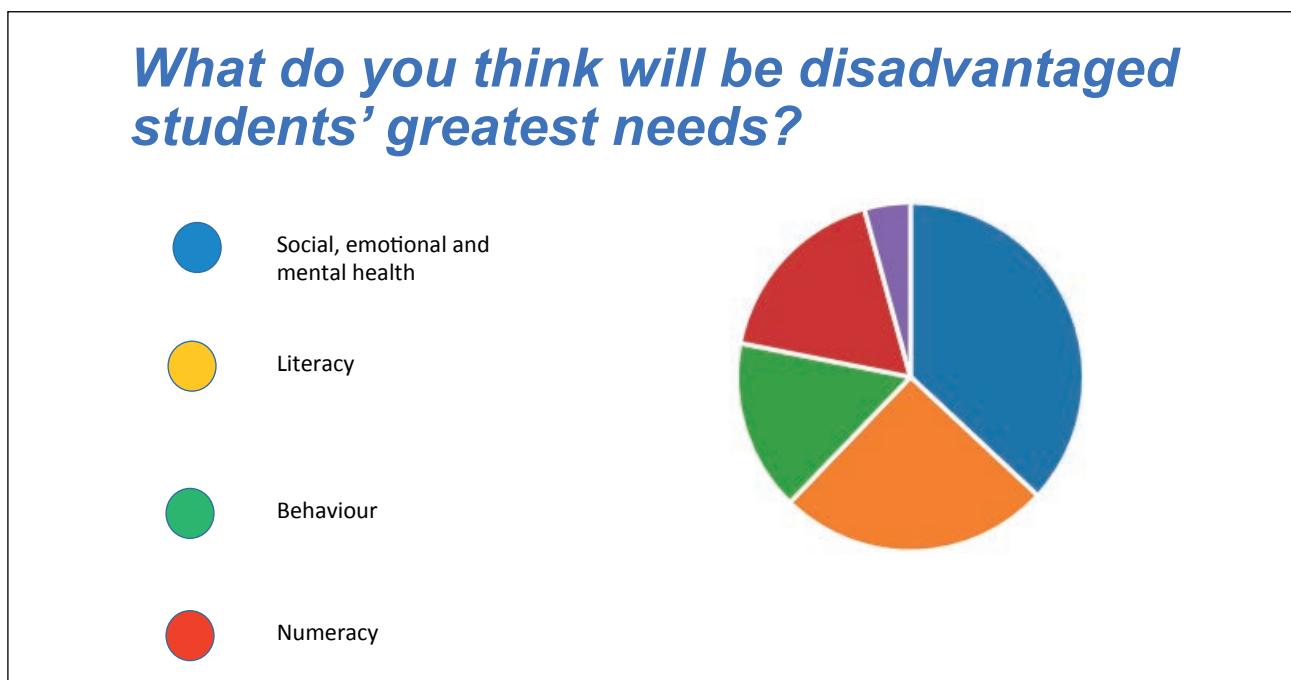- Literacy
- Behaviour
- Numeracy

Figure 6: Teacher Perceptions of Nature of Disadvantage Students' Needs

Finding 2: Access to technology was a priority for disadvantaged learners.

Finding 3: School leaders were concerned about the impact on emotional resilience and learning readiness given the stress many students will have experienced in lockdown and uncertainty about progression in education, employment or training.

Finding 4: There is a need to place a strong focus on literacy support to close gaps, particularly in the Early Years.

Finding 5: There were concerns about likely increases in FSM, and potential impact on education and well-being

In reality, schools have never "closed": assessing, supporting learning, safeguarding and most important of all - caring – everything that is a school has continued, every day. School leaders, teachers and support staff are a precious resource. Therefore, we must together challenge media terminology and ensure that the work of schools in our communities is championed and visibly supported.

Pamela Telford, Head, Monkwray Primary School, Whitehaven: "Be Brave, Be Bright and Be YOU!"

Monkwray Junior School is situated within the catchment area for Kells, Woodhouse and Greenbank in Whitehaven, with almost half of their pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding. The most recent Ofsted Inspection rated the school as Good, commenting that:

> *Across the school, staff work together and are committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils and are focused on ensuring that all pupils will meet their potential. Staff never give up on a child at Monkwray Junior School.*

This highlights the nurturing ethos of the school, which actively seeks to engaged with parents and carers to ensure the best outcomes for their pupils. The school takes the perspective that children arrive at school carrying imaginary small bags with the usual childlike thoughts in, for example, 'who will I play with today?', 'will I be able to do my maths?'. Others pull behind them their full 22kg suitcase bag allowance with endless worries that (very often) they are happy to leave at the school gate. These children see school as a place that is safe and secure. They like the rules and routines, they know who they will interact with, who will be in their classroom and they want to be here. They view school as a safe place.
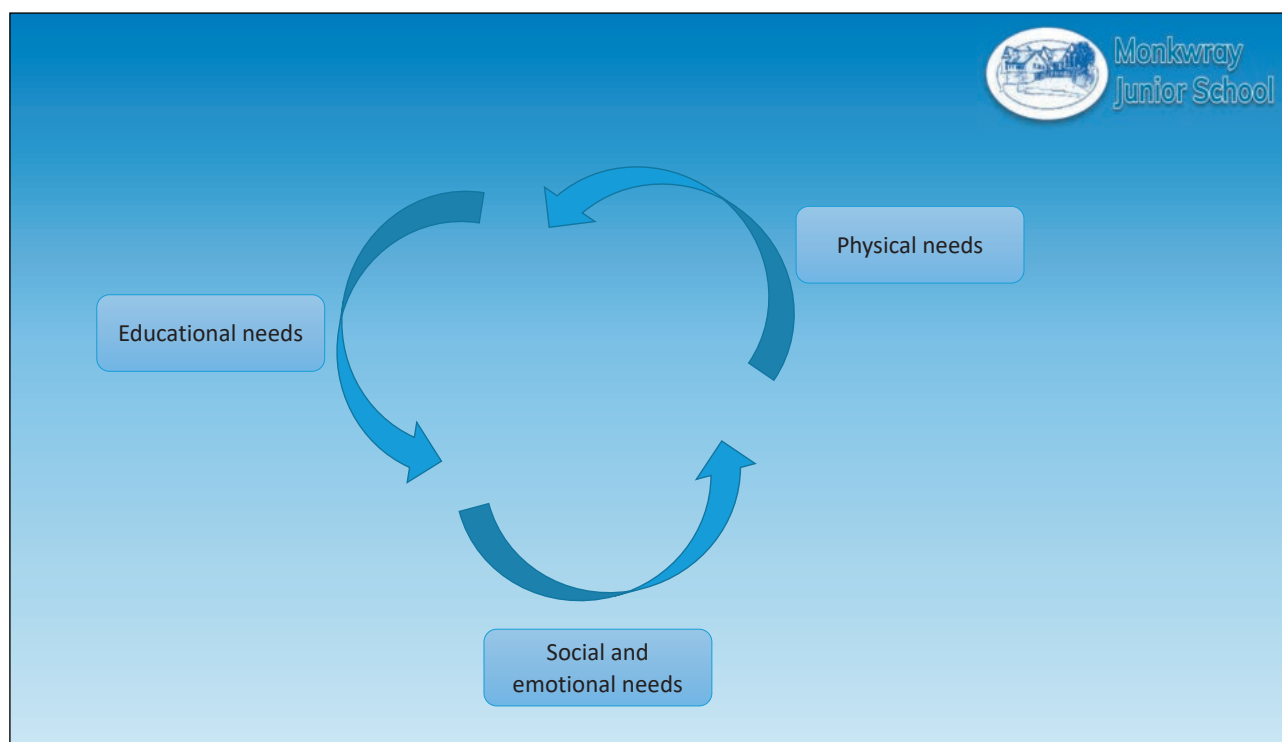

Figure 7: Holistic Approach to School Closure Response

Monkwray Junior School approached the school closures with three priority areas: educational needs, physical needs & social and emotional needs.

Under normal circumstances Monkwray runs a targeted breakfast club where a mixture of children attend due to a number of issues, such as due to attendance issues, they just need time to settle into the day, a place to do their homework or to have someone to chat to. Free snacks at break time were available to all children and the passionate and dedicated school cook makes the children a range of food, such as toast, crumpets and hot chocolate. However, one of the children's favourite snacks is fruit. Many pupils don't get this option at home for various reasons, such as cost or availability or not high on the priority list at home.

During lockdown staff members carried out fruit drops which were available to all families, not just those receiving Free School Meals. This is because many families at the school do not qualify for FSM, although their income is very stretched to cover the basics. The fruit drops consisted of four pieces of fruit in a small brown bag with our school logo – 'Be Bright, Be Brave, Be You' and were delivered to all 119 pupils homes.

Initially the drops received a mixed reception, some houses engaged well and chatted and asked questions, others seemed a little less sure. However, because the school have worked hard to develop positive relationships with families every family answered their door and engaged in some way. The school was concerned that some families would not be maintaining a school routine and the fruit drops revealed that a number of children were in bed at midday. However, families were also seen going for walks together.

These drops took place fortnightly on different days and very quickly staff realised that this small task was having positive effects on other areas. For example, teaching staff were not only setting work for the children to do at home but also making a phone call to them again on a two-week cycle. Parents started asking more questions and pushing their children to do more at home. During the fruit drops staff could also ask parents if they were struggling and encourage them to do a small activity or two.

It was felt that the fruit drop visits had a moderate impact on learning. Some parents and pupils did the work that was being set because they knew school staff would be coming, and some did it because they knew they would be able to help encourage the children to do something. However, the lockdown highlighted the IT challenges faced by many families, with not all families being technologically savvy. Some struggled to access the internet, some were unable to do it as they were using one device for the whole family and education was not high on their list of priorities. Some have their own issues with reading and writing. To counter this the school tried to make work tasks both straight forward but interesting.

All the children appeared happy to return and work was done to reassure parents about the reopening of schools. Monkwray provided a Q&A style guidance document to parents in the summer holidays which they were encouraged to read with their child and message the school with any questions they had.

The whole school has followed a programme called 'Bounce Back to School', a six-week programme where children, staff and family activities run in parallel with each other. Topics included Getting Back on Track, Love and Loss, Planning and Dealing with Change, Coping Skills, Celebrate Nature and Staying on Track. Small groups were made for those felt to be the most vulnerable, allowing them time to talk and chat about their experiences with lockdown to run on a weekly basis. A small group of eight pupils are working with a teacher and Play Therapist on a specific programme under the Time to Share Bereavement Service for those who have suffered a loss.

Staff will continue to support both pupils and their families and it is anticipated that there will be wider gaps both academically, socially and emotionally to fill. It is acknowledged that the methods used to support families will be very different to strategies used in the past, but the school will endeavour to make sure all the children in school leave Monkwray Junior with happy memories.

Jacky Kennedy, Head, St Joseph's Catholic School, Workington: SJCHS Lockdown

As soon as the school closures were announced St Joseph's responded quickly in establishing good communication networks with parents. Information was sent to parents in writing and through a social media presence which provided daily updates. The school made a decision we would only communicate in fifty to a hundred words on every media possible, and e-mail, Instagram, and Facebook became the main conduits of information. Those daily messages were maintained right throughout lockdown and included pictures or videos. This meant that every single day, parents received information, if we've got any infection or not and opened up a transparent communication with parents. This was complemented by a system of communication, both for staff welfare and for students' welfare. This was a pyramid system of students e-mailing tutors and tutors e-mailing back, and the same for the staff, because it's so important to keep track of our staff as well, once the school had gone into a lockdown situation.

Work was set using an online system together with lines of communication. However, it quickly emerged that the percentage of paper-based work students required was given was greater than anticipated, with many students experiencing digital exclusion. There were also the other issues of not having internet, not having devices, or parents obviously working from home, so the devices were taken. There were also examples of parents who were closely supervising their children, wanting to see what the children were doing, and paper was easiest for them. To overcome this issue workbooks were ordered for those who needed them, which were then delivered to students homes.

The most staggering challenge was that around food. It soon became clear the FSM provision was inadequate for students and their families. To support families the school delivered food packs every Monday from March to July to 135 FSM families. St Joseph's delivered two bags of groceries per child that would provide enough to make lunch for their families for the week. We allocated staff into teams and ensured that the same member of staff went to the same house. There were probably about a hundred parents who came in to collect, and about maybe thirty to forty deliveries going on. This proved successful in getting parents to come and talk to the school, they could initiate conversations about food, school, welfare, anything the parents wanted to talk about. This was run by the catering team and the lead on Pupil Premium who organised the rotas. This scheme not only helped to build relationships with families but to maintain them.

It was important that students remained engaged in their education. To ensure that all children were engaged a system to track communication with students was introduced and those found not to be engaging were visited at home by a member of staff. School was also physically open on Mondays to provide opportunities for students and families to visit or collect food.

St Joseph's have used the school closure as an opportunity to reflect upon and revise their practices. More structure has been included in the day and expectations have been deliberately made simple, clear, unambiguous and fair. The school aims for outstanding behaviour. Detentions and isolation have been removed from the school, with the view to developing a family atmosphere. The students are aware of expectations and because of the improved communications with parents, the family are dealing with the consequences of negative behaviour.

Considerable time has been dedicated to supporting the emotional welfare of students, working with students to develop positive coping mechanisms through our Personal, Social, Economic (PSE) programme. An increased focus on the community has been implemented with a weekly prayer focusing on the community and a weekly litter picks in the local community. Students have responded well to other changes we have made, such as an increase in practical and outdoor lessons, family dining and dedicated time each morning where the students are read to for 30 minutes by their tutor.

The school have faced considerable challenges in ensuring that all students have access to an electronic device. There are cases within the school where children under social workers still have not received a device, despite this being a key government initiative. In response the school have launched their 'One to One' device scheme, where families can purchase a laptop at a low price with monthly payments. We now live in a digital era and every child has a right to connect with that world.

The Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent school closures have also taught the school about the students. Staff learned that students want to be in school. The younger students are well and resilient, with older students

experiencing significant issues with their mental health. The school has also learned about the strains surrounding collaborative working during crisis, with agencies supporting schools having different protocols for student contact which was confusing. Consistent protocols within collaborative work are, according to St. Joseph's, essential in order to ensure that a therapeutic community is built around all children.

Lesley Sanczuck, Senior Manager, Children's Services, Cumbria County Council:
Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty and Helping Children Make Sense of Their Lived Experience

Cumbria County Council are developing an Early Help, 'Think Family' approach, which considers, amongst a number of things, how children understand and make sense of their world in the current context in which we live in. We want to develop a system that supports families in that therapeutic way, and trying to get our communities to be therapeutic and nurturing and to support each other.

The Think Family approach is a system to deal with children as if they were traumatised and in a therapeutic way. We have to stop thinking about children and stop thinking about adults as separate, we have to think about the family, because if we don't help the adults to face and address some of the challenges that they experience, we are always going to have children who don't reach their attainment levels, who don't come to school, who are traumatised, who self-harm, who have mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. Children are significantly impacted on by the experience of the adults who care for them, and that includes living in poverty, living in
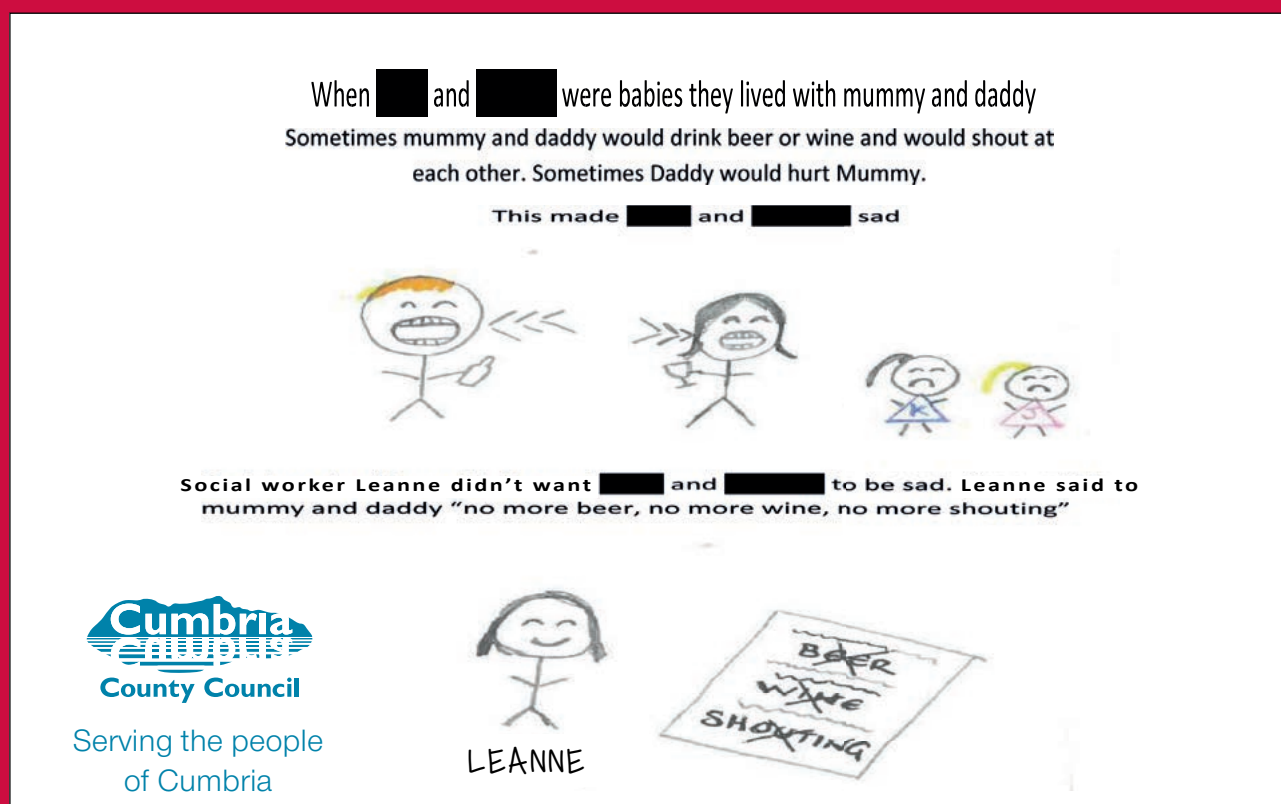
When the children were babies, they lived with their mummy and daddy. Sometimes mummy and daddy would drink beer or wine and would shout at each other. Sometimes daddy would hurt mummy. This made the children sad. You can see under the words there's a picture of mammy and daddy shouting at each other and the two children feeling really sad. The social worker, Leanne, didn't want the children to be sad. Leanne said to mammy and daddy, no more beer, no more wine and no more shouting. Hence, a little picture of Leanne and the list of the beer and the shouting.

Figure 8: Case Study Example of the Words and Pictures Approach to Working with Families

deprivation and living with domestic violence, mental health, substance misuse, which we know is prevalent throughout our communities. The Think Family approach provides an opportunity to develop a system where we do things differently.

Covid has added a different dimension, a different impact, introducing families who are facing new challenges, adults who twelve months ago would never have seen themselves as vulnerable. Evidence from Universal Credit claims, those on furlough and decreases in the employment rate show that is significant, which is also going to impact heavily on families already living in poverty and deprivation. Running alongside of that, because families have isolated for the period of time, we're also beginning to see some hidden harm, which has been observed when children returned to school. We're now beginning to see some of the impact of Covid on their behaviours, their ability to communicate with each other, the way they present, the things that they were worried about that they weren't worried about previously.

In order to provide a critical focus and response, Cumbria County Council's Children's Trust Board has developed six locality partnership groups, which identify priorities for each area and work together to address these issues. Running alongside that, what the partnership has been able to develop is therapeutic professional support around schools, so every school has got a list, a picture of people, of professionals, who they can contact to help them with various problems. We appreciate the need to keep schools, as well as our families, at the centre of everything that we do around our system to provide and develop therapeutic communities because schools are going to see some of the impact of Covid-19 first and they're going to feel it hardest.
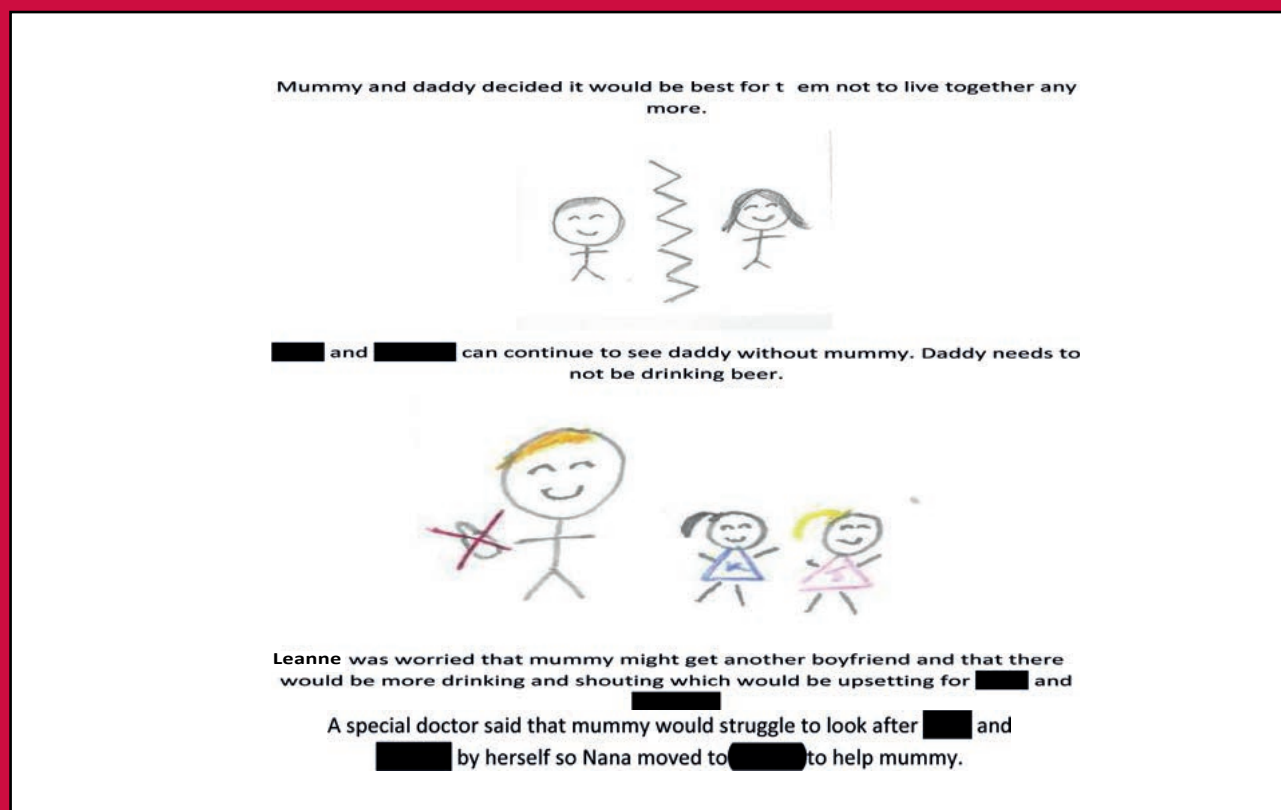
Mummy and daddy decided it would be best for them not to live together anymore and this can see how that's drawn out. The children can continue to see daddy without mummy, and daddy needs to not be drinking beer. Again, the picture of daddy not drinking beer and the two children can be seen. Leanne was worried, that's the social worker, that mummy might get another boyfriend, and that there would be more drinking and shouting which would be upsetting for the children. A special doctor said that mummy would struggle to look after the children by herself, so nana moved in to help mummy. We can begin to see that family network developing and that support to work with the children and to work with the family, with everybody having a clear understanding of what it is everybody's worried about.

Figure 9: Case Study Example of the Words and Pictures Approach to Working with Families

It is important to ensure that parents can communicate their experiences to children and this can be done through a sign to safety methodology within social work practice and Words and Pictures. Figures 8 to 11 show a series of real-life words and pictures that was done by a social worker with parents, and telling their story to their children. Therapeutically, children and families are able to heal and repair if they understand what has been happening for them, and that they've got appropriate people to support them to do that.

Through understanding the issues, understanding the story and the lived experience of those children, we've been able to develop what we call a support network, a safety network around those children.

Addressing poverty through a therapeutic community approach.

Poverty has far reaching consequences and impact on children and young people's lived experience. In some parts of West Cumbria families have incurred generational poverty, linked to long term unemployment and a myriad of inequalities. This can make meeting the needs of children and young people difficult. If we are serious about addressing poverty and creating therapeutic communities, as services and organisations we have to work closer together and closer with the community of west Cumbria.
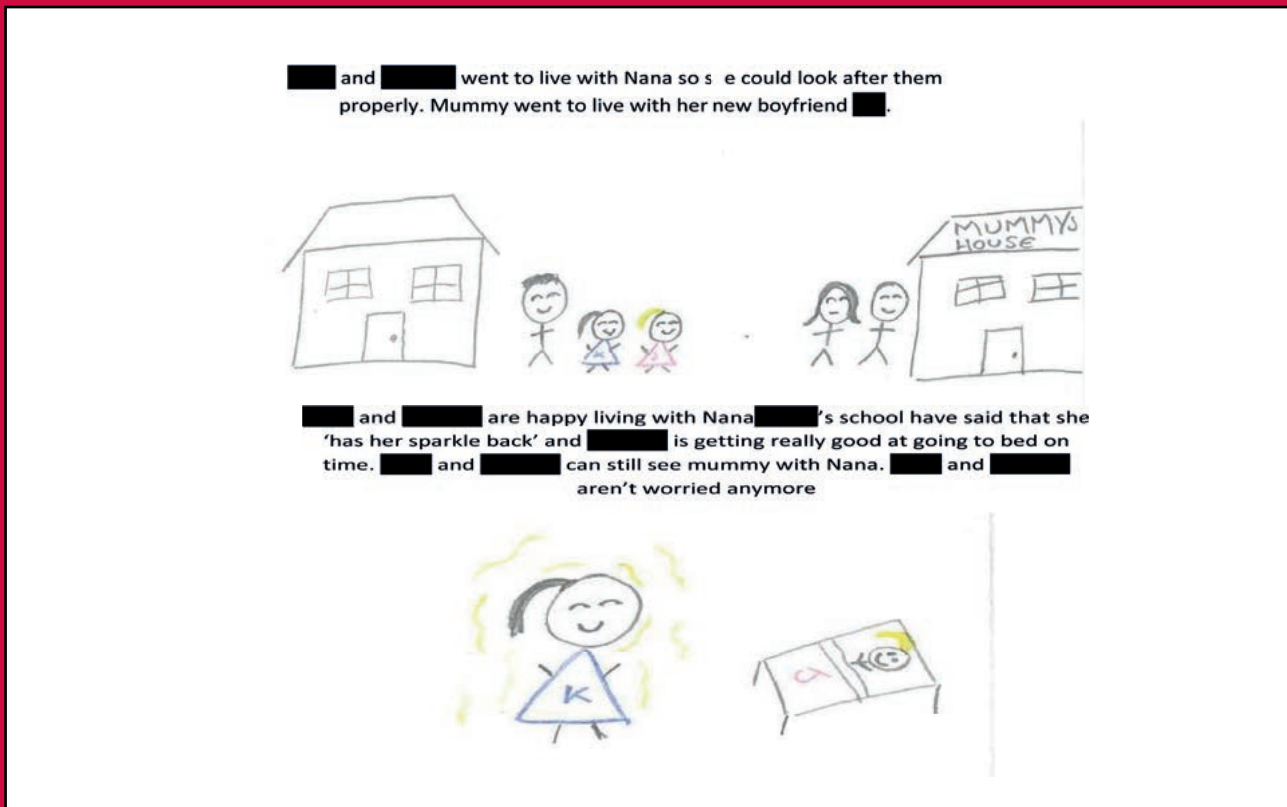
The children went to live with nana so she could look after them properly, mummy went to live with her new boyfriend. The children are happy living with nana, school have said they have their sparkle back and that one child is getting good at going to bed on time. The children can see mummy with nana and aren't worried anymore. The progress with the nice bed and the young child there can be seen.

Figure 10: Case Study Example of the Words and Pictures Approach to Working with Families

Developing a "think family" approach is a step forward as the choices adults make have a significant impact on children's lived experience. It is impossible to support children and young people without helping adults to understand the impact of their choices have on their children. The all too often present issues of drug and alcohol misuse and domestic abuse, surrounded by poverty have an all too frequent impact on children's ability to grow and flourish. No parent or community wants this for their children.

In supporting families we need to move from transactional relationships to relational relationships. A 'doing with' approach instead of a 'doing to' approach. Children do best when they are brought up in their family and community networks. Our aspiration for all children is that they are brought up in such communities. Some families will need long term, relational based support in order to make this happen. Organisations need to develop in order to provide this long-term therapeutic approach that families can access.

We need to start with early help and prevention, through understanding the needs of our communities and identifying issues as they arise and at the earliest opportunity, supporting families to address their challenges, using a strength based approach, with common clearly understood language moving away from professional jargon that is often meaningless to those we wish to support.

One approach is based on the Signs of Safety methodology, developed in southern Australia (Turnell & Murphey, 2014). This approach has been developed within Early Help, using signs of wellbeing signs of success. The
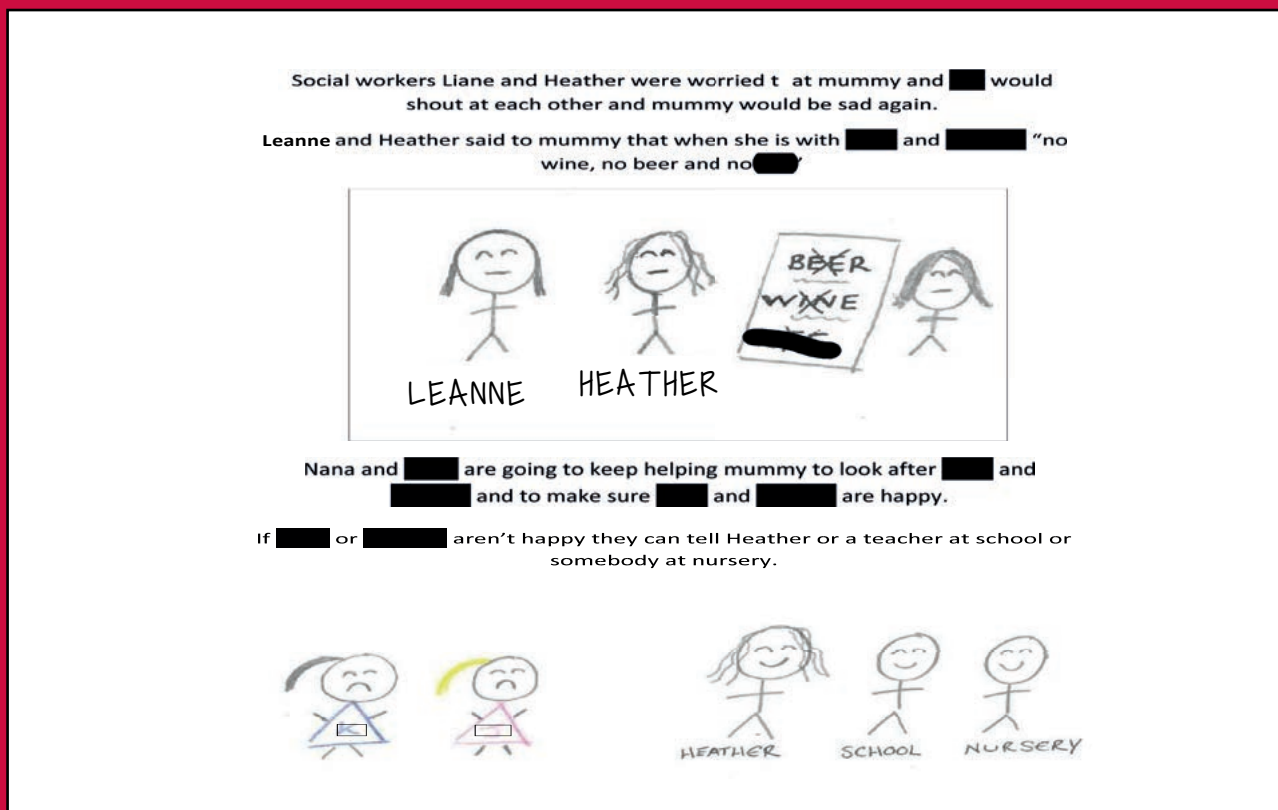
Social workers, Leanne and Heather, are worried that mummy and the new boyfriend would shout at each other and mummy would be sad again. Leanne and Heather said to mummy that when she's with the boyfriend, there's to be no wine, no beer and no shouting. Nana and the children are going to keep helping mummy to look after the children and make sure that the children are happy. If the children aren't happy, they can call Heather or tell the teacher at school or somebody at the nursery.

Figure 11: Case Study Example of the Words and Pictures Approach to Working with Families

Serving the people of Cumbria

approach focuses on the families strengths, working alongside families to help them understand and recognise what it is they do well, what they are worried about and what they feel and think needs to happen. This is done in a number of ways:

- Developing family networks who are there for each other in good times and bad, which can keep children safe and within their family and community.
- Working directly with children and young people to help understand their lived experience.
- Ensuring families know about the things those involved in their lives are worried about, and also what success/ wellbeing will be like for the family, using clearly written and agreed worry statements and signs of success goals.
- Using words and picture with families to help parents explain to their children what is happening.
- This is often very powerful for children and parents.

The impact of COVID 19 is affecting all of us, with those living in poverty affected the most. We have seen hidden harm, families who would not have previously been touched by poverty now affected and the trauma and pressure that has brought to bear has meant more children being affected and potentially harmed. It is imperative that the Early Help, preventative, think family approach is able to respond to these new and additional challenges.

It would be naïve of us to think that children do not understand what is happening around them and the impact poverty and associated influences have on their lives. Having therapeutic communities and approaches is one way to support and nurture our children and help them to heal and repair to thrive and flourish, to be the best they can be.

Key Themes

The webinar aimed to build an informed understanding of the needs of West Cumbrian families following the Covid-19 crisis and celebrate the responses of local organisations. We also hoped to identify key actions that need to be taken to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and critically discuss the viability of building a therapeutic community in the anti-poverty response to Covid-19. In light of these aims, the emerging themes arising from the webinar presentation and subsequent discussion (highlighted in red) will now be reviewed.

Early Years
The importance of good quality, responsive early years education arose during a number of presentations and also within the event chat room. Martin Lennon's presentation highlighted the consequences of missing opportunities to support children at the earliest opportunity. Pamela Telford's presentation provided a vivid example of the challenges some families face in providing their children with the means to meet their basic needs and the ways in which schools can respond. Lesley Sanczuck's presentation illustrated how the world can be viewed by young children in vulnerable situations.

> "If we don't get it right in the early years, we are letting our children down."

These findings are presented at a time where early years provision has been significantly affected by the lockdown, with just 7% of children accessing such provision during lockdown (Sutton Trust, 2020). In their report 'COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #4: Early Years', the Sutton Trust report that many parents reported a particularly negative impact on their child's social and emotional development and wellbeing, and some providers have indicated impacts on physical development for those from deprived homes in particular. Losing access to high quality early education is likely to have serious effects on all children, but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, widening already existing school readiness gaps. Furthermore, the Sutton Trust found that vulnerable children and those with particular needs, including Special educational needs and disability (SEND), and those in families suffering financial stress during the pandemic, are most likely to be struggling, but many have dropped off the radar without regular attendance at their provider, despite the efforts of many providers to support such children remotely.

> "We need to be supporting families pre-birth, the first 1001 days are of vital importance."

The critical importance of speech and language development emerged in both the discussion and the chat highlighting the disjointed nature of government policy which produces a false dichotomy in the separation of education and care. Speech and language development is designated as education, whereas speech therapy, a critically important complementary service, is located in Health. These need to be better connected. As was observed with a note of frustration, "good education is good childcare, and good childcare is good education." Delegates emphasised the need for, and the value of, collaboration and parental engagement in this area. (See Appendix C for a case study example of how one local early years provider responded to the crisis).

> "From pre-birth to beyond we must work with parents to recognise their responsibilities in helping their children. Speech and language goes across all domains."

> "Though collaboration, less hiding behind our agency policy and procedures and the inertia that this can lead to an early, holistic, family approach."

WCCPF would like to encourage and support initiatives by local groups and services to explore approaches to working closer together.

Food insecurity

Our Rapid Response Paper highlighted concerns about food insecurity during and following Covid-19, and documented the provision of food pantries and community response. These concerns have been confirmed, with schools providing vivid examples of the challenges experienced by families experiencing poverty and innovative ways of overcoming these barriers. Before the October half term 8,982 free food parcels had been delivered to 1,294 individuals in Allerdale and Copeland under the national scheme (Cumbria County Council, 2020), it would be reasonable to assume that this figure is significantly higher when the dedication and hard work of schools, youth providers and community groups are factored in. Our previous report emphasised the prevalence of food insecurity in West Cumbria and documented the provision of food pantries and community response. Accounts from both primary and secondary school teachers only add to the evidence presenting a worrying pictures of families at risk of hunger in West Cumbria.

> "I am concerned about lack of access to nutritional food and food poverty increasing over the winter months due to the added cost of fuel over the darker, colder months."

The issue around government responsibilities to provide FSM to children during the October half term received much media attention, and during this second wave of the pandemic a second wave of generosity and kindness was ignited by community groups. National and local evidences outlining the ongoing economic consequences of Covid-19 suggest that food insecurity could be an issue facing many families in West Cumbria for some time. See Appendix D for a case study example of the local authorities worked with the third sector have responded to the crisis.

> "Access to nutritional food is so important to the mental wellbeing of children, as 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut."

WCCPF recognises the need highlighted during the webinar for a fundamental change to the provision of food to those children and families in need. Our communities have shown great effort and resilience in working to help those in need and WCCPF would now like to support organisations to explore creating long-lasting changes to practices both locally and in national policies.

Digital exclusion

Our Rapid Response Paper also highlighted concerns about digital exclusion during and following the Covid-19 lockdown. These concerns have been confirmed, particularly with schools reporting unexpected levels of difficulties with accessing IT.

> "This is what makes a difference - commitment to help children achieve and belief in them all. Policy makers have so much to learn from leaders like you."

Nationally, poorer pupils are likely to have more limited device and internet access and are less likely to have home environments conducive to learning (IFS, 2020). Digital exclusion leaves childrens at risk of underperforming, as

they are unable to receive the same standard and quantity of teaching as their peers (Educational Policy Institute, 2020a). This is especially worrying since even before the pandemic hit and the schools closed it was estimated that, according to current trends, the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students would take 500 years to close (Educational Policy Institute, 2020b).

> "There may be an issue in children's homes that it's not just access to a laptop/device but to Wi-Fi."

Given the reported inadequate delivery of IT equipment promised during the first lockdown, it is dispiriting for schools to find that subsequent government funding for IT provision was surreptitiously cut by 80%. A statistical detail that went almost unnoticed in the FSM furore.

> "The attainment gap is set to start widening again after 9 years of attempting to close it, it's down to all the factors we have been discussing."

WCCPF recognises that digital exclusion is an issue for many children households and that there may be opportunities for local practical solutions by encouraging organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors to collaborate; the Forum would welcome and be supportive of this approach.

Health and wellbeing

Our previous paper highlighted the health and wellbeing vulnerabilities of children experiencing poverty during and following Covid-19. These concerns have been confirmed, with concerns being expressed by teachers, along with the University of Cumbria highlighting a "worsening of psychological wellbeing and illness".

> "These children will have a significant number of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)."

We know anecdotally that teachers are seeing an increase in the demand for mental health support within both primary and secondary schools. Some schools are providing counselling from already stretched budgets. This comes at a time where youth provision remains to be a historically underfunded but much needed resource, with Covid-19 forcing some providers to close altogether.

> "We need to identify trauma and impact for both adults and on the lived experience of our children. The system needs to work in a therapeutic trauma informed way."

Barnardo's predicted that children returning to school would be experiencing grief, anxiety about catching the virus, separation anxiety and other pressures. The charity has also revealed that its practitioners are already supporting many young people with mental health problems caused by Covid-19, including symptoms of anxiety, stress, sleep dysregulation, depression, reduced self-esteem, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) behaviours, paranoia and self-harm (Barnardo's, 2020). Unfortunately, these predictions have been confirmed by anecdotal accounts from schoolteachers in West Cumbria.

> "Play therapy can be amazing for traumatised children. We are not teachers but had to teach, parent and care for our children - not easy for any of us."

The national context

Covid-19 is revealing previously ignored existing inequalities families in poverty were experiencing across the UK before the crisis. Although some of the government response to the virus has been devolved to local authorities and a more localised approach has been applied with the tiered lockdown system, support for families experiencing poverty and hardship is still being impacted on by wider political contexts. Martin's presentation showed the impact that austerity has had on families in poverty, with child poverty continuing to rise when that effecting the older age group is falling. Within Kaz Stuart's presentation she encouraged us all to consider the role we can play within the national context, particularly around challenging the disempoweringly damaging language that is often used when speaking about families in poverty. A new dialogue built around strengths and abilities is urgently required.

"The point about "scale" is crucial - "no epidemic was ever eradicated through treating individual cases"."

At the time of writing recent government policy decisions relating to child poverty, notably, the failure to extend the FSM voucher scheme during the October half term and the illogical and disappointing 80% reduction in the promised provision of IT equipment to these same children, provoked a high degree of public dissatisfaction. In a welcome but telling U-turn the Government has committed £9bn into the welfare system which equates to £1,000 more for families on Universal Credit this year. The Government have also committed to provide £63 million in funding for councils to provide emergency assistance to families with food, essentials and meals.

"The situation described, of poor coordination between departments, is one of the outcomes of austerity. As is the lack of information about the impact of that."

Attitudes and behaviours

Looking beyond the whole raison d'etre of support for families experiencing poverty, Kaz Stuart offered a strong reminder of the importance of us all, as moral citizens, to reflect upon our own attitudes and behaviours towards those children and families experiencing poverty unable to support themselves.

"Trusted adults are so, so, important."

Underpinning all our deliberations it is worth just reminding ourselves that children have well defined human rights enshrined in both national and international law (for example, United Nations, 1989) which can be summed up as:

- *Right to Survival – to life, health, nutrition, name, nationality.*
- *Right to Development – to education, care, leisure, recreation, cultural activities.*
- *Right to Protection – from exploitation, abuse, neglect.*
- *Right to Participation – to expression, information, thought, religion.*

"Continuity of the support is also critical for children: the same adult in whom they can put their trust."

While it would be convenient to conduct a tick box exercise on this list, such an exercise would simply highlight a feature of our own recent reports which seeks to encourage a shift from prescriptive, transactional ways of working, to a more relational based approach. Evidence provided from schools provides vivid examples of ways in which schools have transcended a transactional way of working, fulfilling only their statutory obligations, to going above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of their students. These schools featured in this report present case study examples of how schools can utilise their discretionary powers and act as key anchors in their community.

"Those different approaches to connecting with people in different ways is fantastic and a lot to learn from."

There is something in the close encounter with a hungry child that evokes a moral imperative to respond generously as evidenced by our schools and by the response to Marcus Rashford's compelling narrative of his childhood experience. Caroline Hartnell talks in her blog 'Reframing Poverty' about the ability of messages with values to change thinking (Hartnell,). Hartnell notes that framing the discourse around values, notably justice and compassion, de-politicises, and de-polarises, the conversation.

Just as important as our actions is the language we use to describe, report and debate the situation many families find themselves facing in meeting their basic needs.

Recommendations

1. **Food security is a fundamental human right for every child:**
   One of the most startling and immediate concerns arising from the outbreak is the unearthing of a real food insecurity crisis both nationally and locally.

   Evidence from schools reveals that the food provided by the Government through schools, during the first lockdown, had to be supplemented by schools and charities. Article 24 of the UN Convention states "adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water" is a fundamental human right.

   In light of the current debate around the provision of FSM vouchers and the evidence emerging from foodbanks and similar providers, we question why statutory provision is pitched at a level that fails to provide a basic sustainable standard of living for something like 4 million children in England. It would appear that the contribution of the charitable sector is now factored into the economic algorithm on a par with the statutory sector as an essential element.

   While in no way accepting that this situation is beyond our power at local level, we urge all statutory, voluntary and community organisations to further co-ordinate all additional food provision that many of our families have come to depend upon during the present pandemic and beyond.

   > "Food is really important for children; it provides security and reassurance. Some children depend on school for food. It is part of their social psyche."

2. **Address digital inclusion:**
   The inadequacy of the provision of IT equipment to schools had been recognised in our Rapid Response Paper and by the evidence presented vividly by one of our headteachers. It is disheartening for schools to find that subsequent promises of government investment in IT equipment to schools has been cut by 80%. Signs that, at a Cumbria wide level, this matter is being taken seriously and a county wide solution is being sought, is very encouraging. We would however, return to our previous plea for a thorough and far reaching investigation of the potential of IT enhanced learning to contribute to closing the attainment gap for those students who do not enjoy the devices or the Wi-Fi connection to benefit fully from their education.

3. **Schools are key anchor institutions and should be viewed accordingly:**
   The accounts from schools presented in this paper and elsewhere (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020c), provide countless examples of how they responded to the needs of their families. It must be remembered that most children spend a significant amount of time at school and it must also be remembered that many schools are already operating under considerable financial pressure, which will only increase as the pastoral needs of their students emerge.

   There is readily available evidence that schools are operating under extremely pressurised circumstances with constant disruption from both staff and pupil requiring self-isolation. This is likely to continue until the pandemic is under control.

   There is a case for therapeutic intervention to overlap the school divide.

   > "As a school we are trying desperately to provide digital equipment and Wi-Fi access to all students as giving the PP/FSM kids paper versions further compounds the social divide"

4. **Trust in the local expertise and ability of local community groups by sharing power:**
   Before the October half term, local figures show that 52 community groups in West Cumbria provided some form of Covid-19 related help and support to the local community, the second and third highest in county, behind South Lakeland.

   Bridging the gap between these responsive programmes and mainstream provision into a cohesive force could be one of the real bonuses to emerge from the pandemic.

We suggest that the identification of 'social' First Responders, volunteers who can be, with appropriate training, be on call at community level may be a first step in capitalising some of the goodwill that has emerged during these demanding times.

Our Rapid Response Paper provided case study examples of the ways in which community groups responded to the immediate needs of their community using their local expertise and skills. We encourage local authorities to respond pro-actively to the recommendations outlined in the recent government commissioned report 'Levelling Up Our Communities' by Danny Kruger MP.

Power

The new social model we need - more entrepreneurial, more trusting, and with opportunity levelled up across the country - requires a great transfer of power and wealth to our communities.

- Reforms to the use of data and digital technology to empower individuals and communities;
- Reform of procurement and Commissioning to ensure that social enterprises and community groups - not just big public and private sector organisations - can play a proper role in public services;
- A new Community Power Act to give communities formal powers to effect change in their neighbourhoods.

Box 1: Levelling Up Our Communities, Kruger (2020).

Likewise, we urge local authorities to consider the recommendations proposed by Nesta in their report 'People Power Shift' where they outline eight fundamental people-powered shifts that we think will accelerate the transition to a more people-powered future for our public services:

▶ **People-powered shift 1**
Unleashing collective power

▶ **People-powered shift 2**
Fundamentally shifting public service culture, mindset and structure to support people-powered approaches

▶ **People-powered shift 3**
Changing commissioning from procurement to involvement and design

▶ **People-powered shift 4**
Starting from social connections and relationships

▶ **People-powered shift 5**
We the people – the do-it-together society

▶ **People-powered shift 6**
Shifting how we evidence and value people-powered approaches

▶ **People-powered shift 7**
Investing in the conditions and capabilities for for people power

▶ **People-powered shift 8**
Realising the neighbourhood as the unit of change

Figure 12: Peopled Power Shift (Nesta, 2020).

"'Response - ability' - we all need to work out how we can respond...."

5. **Listen to, and respond to, the voice of the child.**
   This builds on arguments that WCCPF has been making on a national level surrounding authentic child and youth community development co-production and engagement with policy development (Slavin & Wilson, 2019; Wilson & Slavin, 2019). As stated elsewhere (Wilson, 2020d), children and young people, particularly those in already marginalised positions, will be impacted by the secondary effects of the Covid-19 crisis. We urge local authorities, funders and those working with these groups to think innovatively about how they can include children and young people in the recovery effort.

"Using a strength based relational approach, moving from transactional ways of working to a relational approach"

6. Champion the Benefits of Collaboration and Data Sharing

Covid-19 has provided the opportunity to revolutionise how agencies work together to support families. The rapid response saw effective multiagency collaboration to ensure that expertise and resources were allocated appropriately and agreed data sharing practices ensured that the families in most need were supported by the appropriate services.

The establishment of subsidiary Children's Trust Boards within each Local Council area is a welcome and positive step forward that is already bearing fruit at community level. Their emerging Action Plans are testament to the commitment to collaboratively develop an all-embracing approach to ensure that the needs of our children and young people become a priority. We would reiterate the qualitative imperative to build a network of support that re-builds a service based upon trusting relationships. Transactional-ism has failed and has no place in a therapeutic community.

Furthermore, we argue that collaboration goes beyond local authorities and the public sector working alongside the third sector. We encourage a revision of traditional structures in light of the recommendations of UCL's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose report, 'Welfare 5.0: Why we need a social revolution and how to make it happen':

Four sectors for a social revolution:
- Organic intellectuals: Those who can produce new ideas inspiring global imaginations in all disciplines, science, design, history, economics, anthropology.
- Organised civil society: Artists, movement makers, labour unions, activists, those who bring creativity, knowledge and above all lived experience of another way.
- New industrialists: Business leaders who, walking in the footsteps of enlightened forbearers, will challenge their peers believing that a new era is only possible with the design of new social systems and in particular new norms for labour.
- The state: A new generation of leaders who will dare to forge new alliances and design new frameworks.

Box 2: Cottom's Four Factors for a Social Revolution (2020).

"We need a shared assessment system between health and early years providers for the early years, so we don't miss children so easily"

Concluding Comments

The Covid-19 pandemic and secondary effects continue to impact on children and young people across the county. However, local data overwhelming tells us that these impacts are being felt most intensely in families experiencing existing inequalities, such as poverty. As services across all sectors continue to feel the pressure of the crisis, we urge all West Cumbrians to critically reflect on their own innate generosity of spirit to continue to support those experiencing hardship. It is only by doing this that we can work together to build a genuinely deeply embedded therapeutic community around our children and families.

Responding to the body of evidence available both in the body of this report and in the growing evidence in our appendices and references, there is an increasing body of opinion that we need to re-visit the question of what kind of society we want to be part of. The same consensus overwhelmingly favours a bottom-up approach with its beginnings in a grassroots conversation. Even allowing for our bias as a group, we insist that there is no better starting point for that critical debate than asking what we kind of society do our children deserve?

We are happy to recommend the formation of a therapeutic community along these lines as a starting point:

"in order to realise their potential as individuals and active citizens, children require an environment that fosters personal growth. They need to form relationships with others in an atmosphere of trust and security, they need to be valued, accepted and supported by those around them and they need to take real responsibility for themselves, others and their environment" (Oxford Health Complex Needs Service, 2018).

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Appendices

Appendix A

% of children in Allerdale living in poverty 2019 (End Child Poverty, 2019)		
	Before Housing	**After Housing**
Allerdale	19%	28%
Ewanrigg	29.7%	37.3%
St Michael's	25.6%	34.1%
Wharrels	20.9%	32.6%
Moss Bay	29.1%	37.0%
Aspatria	20.9%	32.6%
Flimby	29.7%	37.3%
Solway	20.9%	32.6%
Ellenborough	22.3%	30.5%
Holme	20.9%	32.6%
Moorclose	21.3%	32.2%

% of children in Copeland living in poverty 2019 (End Child Poverty, 2019)		
	Before Housing	**After Housing**
Copeland	19%	27%
Distington	22.7%	34.4%
Moresby	22.7%	34.4%
Kells	26.7%	33.5%
Sandwith	26.7%	33.5%
Mirehouse	26.7%	33.5%
Newtown	18.9%	31.7%
Haverigg	18.9%	31.7%
Holborn Hill	18.9%	31.7%

Universal Credit Applications in Allerdale and Copeland % Change from May 2019 to May 2020 (Cumbria Intelligence Observatory, 2020)		
	Couples	**Single**
Great Britain	202.983% increase	87.2038% increase
England	203.923% increase	87.6838% increase
Cumbria	167.325% increase	60.4498% increase
Allerdale	98.8962% increase	32.0225% increase
Copeland	76.6187% increase	30.7425% increase

Appendix B: The Experience of Lockdown through the Eyes on West Cumbrian Children
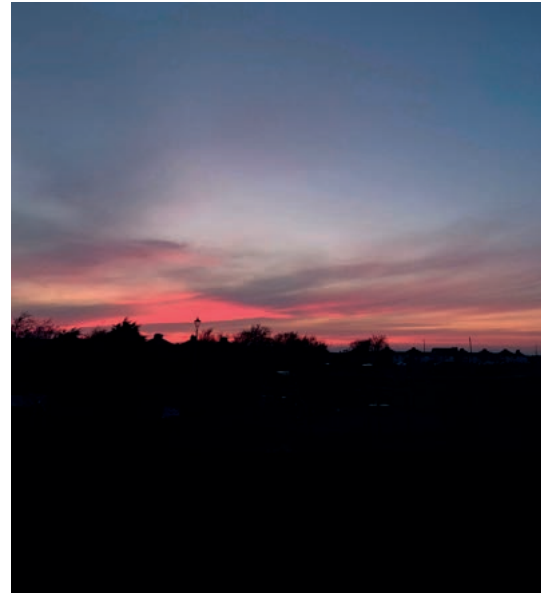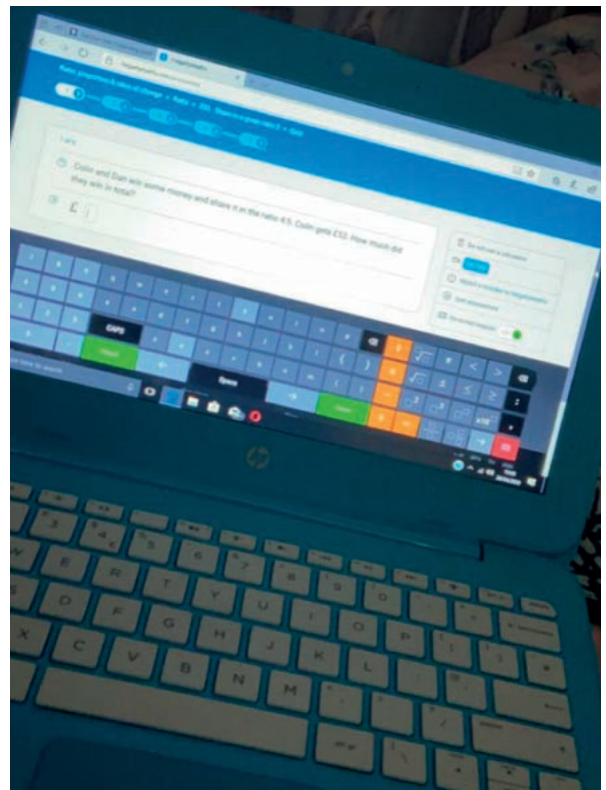

Day 22. Bleached another T-shirt, cut the grass and painted the fence xx

Day 31. I took this really nice photo of the skyyyyyy xxx

Day 10. We baked these and brownies but I don't have a pic xx

Day 35. Did homework and watched riverdale all day xx

"After lockdown I want life to be a better where everyone respects each other and nobody discriminates against people for things they can't help"

"I do worry about vulnerable people in family because I don't want them to get sick, but it's also helped my mental health because I don't have to worry about what I look like in my hair and make-up and can also be myself"

"We have more schoolwork to do but we've learnt less".

Appendix C: An Early Years Response to Covid-19 and Lockdown

Howgill Family Centre practitioners have continued to support children and families before, during and after the lockdown in the following ways:

Early Years
Helping and supporting 100 2, 3 and 4-year-old children across 4 term time only settings in areas of disadvantage and poverty – Cleator Moor, Mirehouse, Kells and Whitehaven. 1 private voluntary and independent (PVI) setting for children 0-5 years

Before the Lockdown
• extra hygiene and talking and playing with the children about keeping safe
• changing routines for children and parents
• updating risk assessments
• communication with parents
• supplying parents with activities and resources to support home learning
• ensuring all parents had the means to maintain remote contact with staff
• posting activities, information and support on social media and Tapestry

During
• regular communication with parents throughout the lockdown
• keeping social media updated with help, support and advice for parents
• arranging supplies of materials and resources for parents to collect to support home learning
• posting activities information and support on social media and Tapestry
• helping parents to access childcare from the hubs
• liaising with parents and schools to ensure as smooth a transition as possible in the circumstances
• liaising with professionals such as social workers and health visitors to support for example Early Help and child protection
• transfer of key information to support statutory processes
• regular surveying of parents to ensure they had childcare when they needed it
• enrolling new children in readiness for the new term
• staff accessing online training

After
• ensuring compliance with COVID guidance to open settings as safely as possible
• creating bubbles of children in response to parental demand for services
• planning and preparation
• continuing help, support and advice for parents to support their children at home
• planning and delivery of speech, language and communication programmes

Appendix D: The Thrift Project – Working in Partnership

As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, various projects were introduced in Copeland at pace to ensure that the financially vulnerable had access to food during lockdown and beyond.

Copeland Borough Council provided 280 emergency bags of ambient food and over 160 care packs via referrals from partner agencies through funding from Sellafield Ltd and donations from a major supermarket; a food pantry was set up in Cleator Moor with funding through Cumbria County Council and ran between April and July, providing 1800 fresh and ambient food parcels to 191 families; over a five week period 5000 hot meals were provided through a project funded by Sellafield Ltd and delivered through Rosehill theatre. This was alongside established food provision provided by North Lakes Foodbank and local community projects.

When lockdown measures eased and more people were able to do their own shopping, people returned to work and online shopping slots increased, it was clear that there would still be people who were faced with food poverty or hardship who would require support, but that this support needed to be provided through a planned, partnership approach to address the issues behind the need for help with food.

As part of the local response a Food and Financial Resilience working group had been set up to address the emerging pressures people faced around food, bringing together the County Council, Borough Council, statutory services as well as third sector and community organisations. The Thrift project was set up, led by Phoenix Enterprise Centre (PEC) in Cleator Moor, to take over the food pantry that had been established and put in place support around individuals and families to address the issues that had led to them accessing emergency food. Cumbria County Council provided further funding through their Local Committee to run the project for a further 13 weeks and Copeland Borough Council donated the leftover items from their emergency provision along with a commercial fridge.

Citizens Advice Copeland, Whitehaven and District Credit Union (WEDCU) and Family Action, who hold the Child and Family Support contract for 0-19's in Copeland, were able to refer households to PEC for subsidised or free food where they were accessing ongoing support via another agency. This meant that help could be provided with claiming welfare benefits, maximising income, debt advice, digital skills and budgeting advice and that people could be signposted to other agencies who could support them, with those supported able to move off the food provision when their circumstances or financial situation had improved.

Working in partnership on this project meant that holistic support could be provided, with agencies able to refer to each other to maximise the support available to individuals and families faced with food poverty. Moving forwards the Food and Resilience Group is looking at shared growing spaces where communities can come together to learn about growing and cooking food, connecting with wider organisations to enhance the support that is available and linking to health and wellbeing, along with securing longer term funding for the Thrift project.