

## Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Turning The Tide on Poverty Update - April 2022

#### **Background and Context**

Since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group made its final report and recommendations to Cabinet in August 2020, there has been significant progress in implementing those recommendations. However, the situation has changed rapidly and repeatedly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and response, followed more recently by the Cost-of-Living Crisis being experienced due energy increases and changes to taxation and benefits being implemented in April 2022.

The Task and Finish Group discussed the themes identified within the Marmot Report 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'. Marmot published a further report 'Build Back Fairer' examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national measures taken to manage it on health inequalities. Further recommendations were made on short-, medium-, and long-term measures that should be taken to mitigate these adverse impacts (see Appendices). Turning the Tide on Poverty describes the approach in Torbay to embed these Marmot themes and recommendations.

The Torbay Covid-19 Recovery Board reviewed and updated the impact assessments and agreed to align the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy with Turning the Tide on Poverty work streams in revising approach to recovery planning. There are now key strategies and plans in place to deliver on these themes including the Economic Strategy currently under development and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is out for consultation. In addition, there is a Strategic Housing Strategy and Children's Improvement Plan in place both overseen by Boards.

National policy has also influenced the situation with a shift in the pandemic response to Living with Covid and statements of Levelling Up missions. It was important that while responding to and implementing national policy that we were reviewing the situation on the ground in our local communities.

A series of multi-sector workshops have been held, to explore how as a local system we can address key issues driving health inequalities. These were guided by the policy objectives recommended in the Marmot review. The workshops were held around four inter-dependent themes:

- **Best Start:** Give every child in Torbay the best start in life and enable them to maximise their capabilities and control over their lives
- **Fair Employment:** Maximise opportunities for people in Torbay to access good, fair work which pays a living wage
- **Ill Health Prevention:** Strengthen the role of ill-health prevention in Torbay
- **Healthy Standard of Living:** Ensure that rented accommodation in Torbay is of a good standard that supports good health.

## Purpose of this report

This report sets out the key actions which have been identified through these workshops, forming an overarching action plan which we believe is achievable and measurable; and sets out a recommendation as to the next steps which should be taken to progress it.

## Workshop insights – Local data

Data intelligence was shared with workshop participants to help inform discussion and lay bare the challenges to address:

- 18.7% of Torbay households are classed as “workless”, and wages are below national and regional averages. Higher earning residents tend to work outside of Torbay.
- Torbay has an above-average proportion of households in private rented accommodation (25%), with 60% of these in receipt of Housing Benefit.
- Torbay has a below-average proportion in social rented housing (8%).
- One third of all children (and one half of all Free School Meal eligible children) are not “ready for school”. We also have high rates of cared-for children.
- Torbay has the highest suicide rate in England and high rates of self-harm in children and young people.
- The gap in life expectancy between most and least deprived areas is 8 years

## Workshop insights – Community voices

Inclusion of community voices at the workshops yielded some powerful insights, both around the issues facing our community, and also the strengths and assets which are often overlooked. Some of the key points raised repeatedly in sessions have included:

1. **We are facing a “perfect storm” of poverty**, with a worsening economic picture leading to rising demand, support services being overwhelmed across sectors. Many people simply cannot reduce their essential expenditure any further, nor increase their income; no matter what they do.
2. **Stigma and shame** remain at the forefront of people’s experience of poverty, which has a significant effect on their mental health, self-worth, motivation and physical wellbeing. Poverty is a traumatic experience for many; this often goes unrecognised. The use of language such as “deprived” or “vulnerable” is deficit-based, stigmatising, and can be a barrier to trust; particularly of statutory services.
3. **People experiencing hardship can be extremely resourceful, creative and resilient.** This often goes unrecognised but is at the forefront of empowerment and reinforcing dignity and self-worth.
4. **More advocacy and “hands-on” support is needed.** The system is difficult to navigate - there are a lot of services helping, but they are not joined up and do not always signpost well to each other. Having online information or remote support does not work well for many people.
5. **Foundation life skills** such as budgeting, cooking from scratch, home management etc which could empower individuals and help them manage their circumstances are not learned, through no fault of an individual’s own. The importance of such skills is not emphasised enough, and results in a kind of “failure demand” which creates pressure on food banks, debt support services and so on.

**6. Services themselves are struggling.** Across sectors, those supporting people in poverty are overstretched and their wellbeing needs to be supported. Capacity in some areas is simply insufficient, and we may need to consider aligning resource to current priorities.

## Developing Actions

With limited resource, it was agreed that as a system we should focus first on building upon and expediting existing programmes of work which would support the Marmot policy objectives. These have therefore been considered as part of this process.

Outputs of each workshop were reviewed and a set of priority actions for implementation in 2022/23 were identified. These were then presented by leads to multi-sector partners at a final workshop, for further discussion and agreement. A summary of these is shown below:

Workstream	Responsible Leads	Priority Action
<b>Best Start:</b> Give every child in Torbay the best start in life and enable them to maximise their capabilities and control over their lives	Nancy Meehan and Rachael Williams	1. Increase the availability of employment and training opportunities for our care experienced and SEND children and young people, aligned with our Corporate Parenting offer and Child and Family Friendly Torbay
		2. Implement the Early Help Strategy and Family Hub Model
<b>Fair Employment:</b> Maximise opportunities for people in Torbay to access good, fair work which pays a living wage	Alan Denby and Carl Wyard	1. Develop a programme to make undesirable sectors more attractive, including training
		2. Increase face-to-face activity to promote opportunities and sectors, break down misconceptions
		3. Develop "Ambassador Employers" scheme to promote working in certain sectors
<b>Ill Health Prevention:</b> Strengthen the role of ill-health prevention in Torbay	Bruce Bell and Julia Chisnell (NHS Leads to be identified)	1. Roll out MECC and Connect 5 programme across the Community and Voluntary Sector (Low or no cost)
		2. Expand of the HOPE programme, across a range of both topics and settings (low or no cost)
		3. Develop further peer support opportunities within the community (moderate cost)
		4. Implement the Wellbeing Guardian Model across NHS providers and Torbay Council (moderate cost)
<b>Healthy Standard of Living:</b> Ensure that rented accommodation in	Tara Harris	1. Increase access to affordable accommodation
		2. Improve access to information and support, for both tenants and landlords.

Torbay is of a good standard that supports good health		3. Improve energy efficiency, both in terms of properties themselves and tenant behaviours
<p><b>Practical support around Finances:</b> In addition, through discussion it was identified that there is particular need to provide more support/capacity around financial issues of benefits, debt and money management. It is suggested that as an action, a working group be set up to look at how provision could be increased/maximised.</p>		

## Next steps and Recommendations

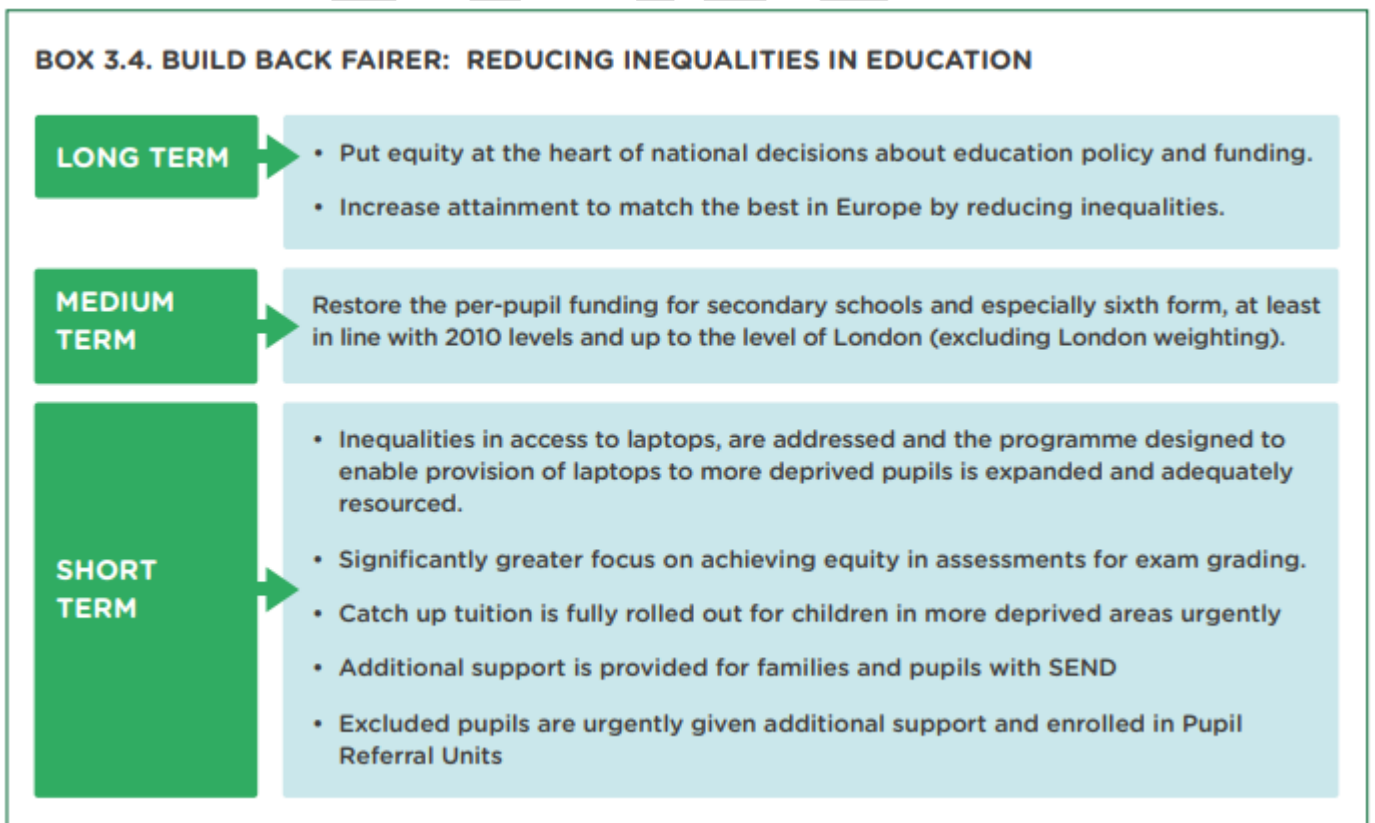
1. Each of these actions is effectively a project/programme in itself, and therefore will require further workup so that there is a clear delivery plan with achievable timescales, which ensures accountability and measurability. Resourcing would need to be considered, and business cases developed as appropriate. We need to consider if any kind of programme/project management is required to drive delivery and ensure cohesion between the workstreams.
2. Agreement is required on the governance for these actions. Should they naturally sit within existing programmes in their respective areas, or as a separate work programme, or both?
3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and consider how the proposed actions fit with the Council's overall strategic objectives and the timescales for delivery.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Build Back Fairer: Reducing Inequalities in Early Years



### Appendix 2 – Build Back Fairer: Reducing Inequalities in Education



## Appendix 3 – Recommendations to Build Back Fairer for Children and Young People

### BOX 4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO BUILD BACK FAIRER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

#### LONG TERM

- Reverse declines in the mental health of children and young people and improve levels of well-being, from the present low rankings internationally, as a national aspiration.
- Ensure that all young people are engaged in education, employment or training up to the age of 21.

#### MEDIUM TERM

- Reduce levels of child poverty to 10 percent - level with the lowest rates in Europe.
- Increase the number of post-school apprenticeships and support in-work training throughout the life course.
- Improve prevention and treatment of mental health problems among young people.

#### SHORT TERM

- Reduce child poverty:
  - Remove the 'two-child' and benefit cap
  - Increase child benefit for lower income families to reduce child and food poverty
  - Extend free school meal provision for all children in households in receipt of Universal Credit.
- Urgently address children and young peoples mental health with a much strengthened focus in schools and teachers trained in mental first aid.
- Increase resources for preventing identifying and supporting children experiencing abuse.
- Develop and fund additional training schemes for school leavers and unemployed young people.
- Further support young people training and education and employment schemes to reduce NEET and urgently address gaps in access to apprenticeships.
- Raise minimum wage for apprentices and further incentivise employers to offer such schemes.
- Prioritise funding for youth services.



## Appendix 4 – Build Back Fairer: Recommendations for Creating Fair Employment and Good Work for All

### BOX 5.4. BUILD BACK FAIRER: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING FAIR EMPLOYMENT AND GOOD WORK FOR ALL

#### LONG TERM

- Establish a national goal so that everyone in full time work receives a wage that prevents poverty and enables them to live a healthy life.
- The social safety net must be sufficient such that people not in full time work receive a minimum income for healthy living
- Engage in a national discussion on the balance of the work-life balance including consideration of a four day week.

#### MEDIUM TERM

- Reduce the high levels of poor-quality work and precarious employment.
- Invest in good quality active labour market policies
- Increase the national living wage to meet the standard of minimum income for healthy living

#### SHORT TERM

- Provide subsidies or tax relief for firms that recall previously dismissed workers
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to be extended to cover 100% of wages for low income workers
- Enforcement of minimum wages so that the large number of workers who are currently exploited earn their entitlement

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## Appendix 5 – Build Back Fairer: Ensuring a Healthy Standard of Living for All

### BOX 6.3. BUILD BACK FAIRER: ENSURING A HEALTHY STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ALL

#### LONG TERM

- Establish a national goal so that everyone in full-time work receives a wage that prevents poverty and enables them to live a healthy life without relying on benefits.
- Make the social safety net sufficient for people not in full-time work to receive a minimum income for healthy living.
- Put health equity and wellbeing at the heart of local, regional and national economic planning and strategy.
- Adopt inclusive growth and social value approaches nationally and locally to value health and wellbeing as well as, or more than, economic efficiency.
- Review the taxation and benefits system to ensure they achieve greater equity and are not regressive.

#### MEDIUM TERM

- Make permanent the £1,000-a-year increase in the standard allowance for Universal Credit.
- Ensure that all workers receive at least the national living wage as a step towards achieving the long-term goal of preventing in-work poverty.
- Eradicate food poverty permanently and remove reliance on food charity.
- Remove sanctions and reduce conditionalities in benefit payments.

#### SHORT TERM

- Increase the scope of the furlough scheme to cover 100 percent of low-income workers.
- Eradicate benefit caps and lift the two-child limits.
- Provide tapering levels of benefits to avoid cliff edges.
- End the five-week wait for Universal Credit and provide cash grants for low-income households.
- Give sufficient Government support to food aid providers and charities.



## Appendix 6 – Build Back Fairer: Creating and Developing Healthy and Sustainable Places and Communities

### BOX 7.3. BUILD BACK FAIRER: CREATING AND DEVELOPING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES AND COMMUNITIES

#### LONG TERM

- Invest in the development of economic, social and cultural resources in the most deprived communities.
- Ensure 100 percent of new housing is carbon-neutral by 2030, with an increased proportion being either affordable or in the social housing sector.
- Aim for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, ensuring inequalities do not widen as a result.

#### MEDIUM TERM

- Increase deprivation weighting in the local government funding formula.
- Strengthen the resilience of areas that were damaged and weakened before and during the pandemic.
- Reduce sources of air pollution from road traffic in more deprived areas.
- Build more good-quality homes that are affordable and environmentally sustainable.

#### SHORT TERM

- Increase grants for local governments to deal with the COVID-19 crisis to cover immediate short term funding shortfalls.
- Increase government allocations of funding to the voluntary and community sector.
- Increase support for those who live in the private rented sector by increasing the local housing allowance to cover 50 percent of market rates.
- Remove the cap on council tax.
- Urgently reduce homelessness and extend and make watertight the protections against eviction.

## Appendix 7 – Build Back Fairer: Strengthening the Role and Impact of Ill Health Prevention

### BOX 8.4. BUILD BACK FAIRER: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF ILL HEALTH PREVENTION

#### LONG TERM

- A National Strategy on Inequalities led by the Prime Minister, to reduce widening social, economic, environmental and health inequalities. This should be a high priority for government policies and public investments. A major benefit of this strategy will be to reduce inequalities in the social determinants of health to reduce inequalities in health.
- Build a Public Health system that is based on taking action on the social determinants of health and reducing health inequalities

#### MEDIUM TERM

- Develop social determinants of health interventions to improve healthy behaviours and reduce inequalities.
- Public Health to provide the expertise to inform development of a whole of government health inequalities strategy.

#### SHORT TERM

- Funding for Public Health to be at a level of 0.5% of GDP with spending focused proportionately across the social gradient
- Public Health needs to develop capacity and expand focus on social determinants of health. The pandemic highlights how poverty, deprivation, employment and housing are closely related to health, including mortality from COVID-19 and impacts from containment.

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