

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW (AUDIT) PANEL</b>
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Executive Member / Scrutiny Panel:</b>	Councillor K Welsh – Chair to Statutory and External Partners Scrutiny Panel  Councillor Gerald Cooney, Executive Member (Healthy and Working)
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>REVIEW OF FOOD POVERTY</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	The Chair to Statutory and External Partners Scrutiny Panel to comment on the Executive Response ( <b>Appendix 1</b> ) to the Scrutiny review of Food Poverty and the recommendations made to support future services ( <b>Appendix 2</b> ).
<b>Recommendations:</b>	That the Overview (Audit) Panel note the recommendations detailed in Section 8 of <b>Appendix 2</b> .
<b>Links to Community Strategy:</b>	This review supports the Community Strategy priorities relating to ‘Healthy Tameside’.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	The review itself has no specific policy implications. Should the recommendations of this report be accepted by the Tameside Council’s Executive, the relevant services will need to assess the policy implications of putting individual recommendations in place.
<b>Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)</b>	
<b>Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)</b>	
<b>Risk Management:</b>	Reports of Scrutiny Panels are integral to processes which exist to hold the Executive of the authority to account.
<b>Access to Information:</b>	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Joel Hammond-Gant by:



Telephone: 0161 342 3049



e-mail: [joel.hammond-gant@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:joel.hammond-gant@tameside.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 2

### 1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE STATUTORY AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS SCRUTINY PANEL

- 1.1 I am pleased to present this report of a review into Food Poverty in Tameside, carried out by the Statutory and External Partners Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.2 Over the last five years the UK has witnessed a quick and considerable increase in the need for food aid. As a result, food inequality and food poverty have become key priorities for local authorities and health economies, as evidenced in Tameside by the opening of 12 foodbanks since 2010.
- 1.3 Food poverty is not just defined as a physical scarcity of food, but also a lack of a nutritious, balanced diet. Niall Cooper's 'Below the Breadline' (2014) report approximates that half a million children in the UK live without a minimally acceptable and nutritious diet. This has since become a priority issue identified by the Greater Manchester (GM) Poverty Commission.
- 1.4 Residents are able to access food aid and additional support through a number of referral agencies, with many people citing welfare changes as one of the main factors contributing to them experiencing food poverty. Research evidence generally attributes the rise in food poverty to lower affluence, rising costs of living and welfare changes.
- 1.5 Tameside faces a considerable social, economic and environmental challenge to reduce poverty, deprivation and inequality and to improve the lives of its residents. The Panel felt concerned to investigate the extent of food poverty and strive to support the vulnerable residents and families in need.
- 1.6 On behalf of the Statutory and External Partners Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.

Councillor Kevin Welsh  
Chair of the Statutory and External Partners Scrutiny Panel

### 2. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

- 2.1 Peter Townsend, a leading British sociologist, defined poverty as when:  
*Individuals, families and groups in the population lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities.*
- 2.2 Oxfam and the Church Action on Poverty calculated that over 20 million meals were given to people experiencing food poverty in 2013/14 alone. This is a 54% increase on the previous year, which is indicative of the rate at which food poverty is growing across the country, and how important an issue it is.
- 2.3 The numbers of emergency three-day food packages provided between April 2013 and March 2014 had increased by 163% on the previous year, a figure that equates to approximately 900,000 households. Trussell Trust estimates that 36% of this food aid went to children, signifying that a considerable number of younger people are experiencing food poverty and are in danger of the diet-related health conditions associated to it.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL – 2015/16

Councillor K Welsh (Chair), Councillor Bowden (Deputy Chair).  
Councillors Affleck, Bowerman, Glover, R Miah, Middleton, Pearce, Piddington, Reid, Reynolds, Sidebottom, Sweeton, Whitehead and Bell.

### 4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Aim of the Review

- 4.1 To examine the extent to which individuals and families are experiencing food poverty, the range of contributing factors and the changes that have been made to the way the Council and partners support residents during hardship.

#### Objectives

- 4.2
1. To understand the extent of food poverty in Tameside and the impact it can have on individuals and families.
  2. To examine the range of issues and factors that can lead to a person or family experiencing food poverty.
  3. To review the role of food banks and other services in supporting residents.
  4. To understand how the Council and partners are addressing food poverty and the wider consequences in relation to health and wellbeing.
  5. To explore how strategies and interventions in place are able to improve outcomes and actively reduce the incidence of food poverty.
  6. To examine how resource pressures have impacted on services which operate to support the most vulnerable residents.
  7. To produce workable recommendations that help to reduce the incidence and severity of food poverty in Tameside.

#### Value for Money/Use of Resources

- 4.3 It is important that individuals and families in difficulty are able to access the right level of support in order to address the specific issue(s) impacting them, and improve resilience and outcomes for the future. It is essential that the Council and partners work collaboratively to reduce the impact of food poverty and malnutrition and ensure effective strategies are in place to create sustainable and healthy futures for residents experiencing difficulties.

#### Equalities Issues

- 4.4 Food poverty, malnutrition and food-related illnesses can impact on all sections of Tameside's communities. The review will consider strategies that lead to sustainable provisions of healthy, nutritional foods to all residents in the borough.

#### People and Place Scorecard

- 4.5 The following targets from the People and Place Scorecard relate to the Food Poverty review.

<b>Low Income</b>	• Low Income – Children / Older People / All People
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### 5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 To meet with Diane Barkley, Poverty and Prevention Manager; and Ben Gilchrist, Chief Executive, Community and Voluntary Action Tameside, to receive an overview and background of food poverty in the borough.
- 5.2 To meet with Vivien Robinson, Partnership Manager for Tameside and Oldham (Department for Work and Pensions), to receive information on how the Department for

Work and Pensions is supporting people and families in food poverty in Tameside, in particular through the Jobcentre Plus.

- 5.3 To meet with Nigel Morgan, Joint District Manager, Citizens Advice Tameside, to receive information on how the service is helping people in food poverty and creating referral pathways.
- 5.4 To meet with Trisha Jarman, Coordinator for Tameside East Trussell Trust Foodbank, to receive information on the numbers of people accessing food aid, the driving factors leading to people experiencing food poverty and the joined-up work undertaken by foodbanks and partners to alleviate the impacts on residents.

## 6. REVIEW FINDINGS

### Local Picture

- 6.1 Poverty is a cross-cutting issue that is impacting on the health, wellbeing and future prospects of individuals and families in Tameside. The impacts of food poverty are becoming more pervasive and are having an increasingly damaging effect on people and families of all ages.
- 6.2 Poverty itself is a complex issue that is difficult to define. The European Union (EU) defines relative poverty as a household with less than 60% of the median income of a household of a similar composition. The table below contains the most recent available data on median household income for Tameside, published in the Council's Audited Statement of Accounts 2013/14. It shows that as at September 2014, Tameside had a lower median household income than both Greater Manchester and Great Britain.

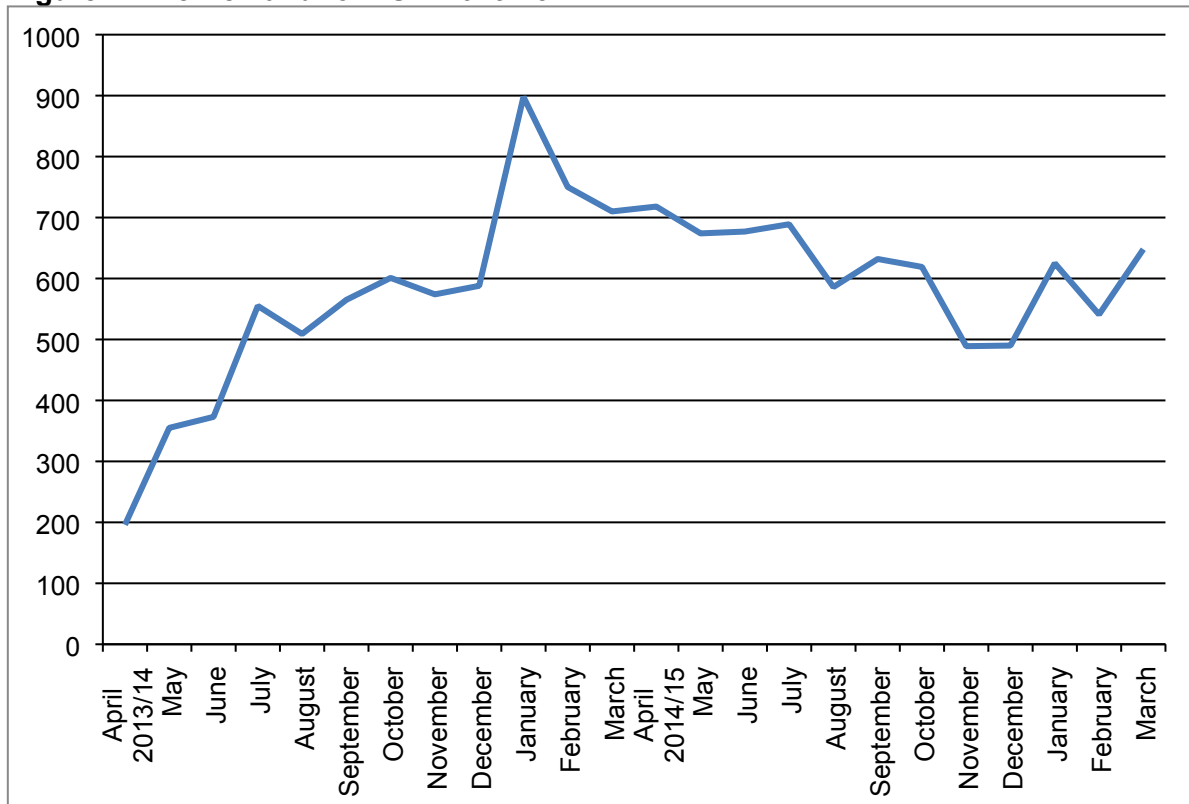
**Figure 1. Median Household Income and Relative Poverty**

Area	Median Household Income	Relative Poverty (60% of median household income)
Tameside	£25,395	£15,237
Greater Manchester	£26,320	£15,792
Great Britain	£27,510	£16,506

- 6.3 Relative poverty is not always the most effective definition for poverty, however, as if all income falls equally relative poverty will not change. Minimum Income Standard (MIS) is sometimes preferred an alternative measure of poverty as it is based on what members of the public believe people and families need to achieve an acceptable standard of living.
- 6.4 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that in 2016, a family with two children needs to earn a household income of at least £37,800 a year before tax to achieve the MIS income level, and single people at least £17,100. It also states that in 2015, the average out-of-work single person only achieved 40% of what the public believes they need.
- 6.5 Other research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2014 found a correlation between rising poverty levels in the UK and the 20% rise in households on an inadequate income between 2011 and 2014. It is estimated that 18% of the people receiving 'inadequate' incomes are in fact earning below the Living Wage Foundation Living Wage.
- 6.6 As at January 2016, a total of 24,608 residents (17.6% of the working age population) were claiming out-of-work benefits in Tameside, which is the highest proportion of any local authority in the North West. This statistic reiterates the comparatively low levels of affluence in Tameside and how residents are potentially more vulnerable to hardship.

- 6.7 Data collected by Trussell Trust records a rise of over 2000% in the number of people accessing food aid in the North West since 2011/12. The introduction of food banks and more robust food aid support for residents has helped to slow this increase; however, the number of people in need of this support is still rising annually.
- 6.8 The Council established Tameside Support for Independent Living (TSIL) in April 2013 after local authorities were made responsible for developing local services to replace the Social Fund, including the provision of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants. Funding was provided to local authorities to facilitate local welfare schemes until April 2015, when this was stopped.
- 6.9 Due to the growing resource pressures and removal of funding, the Council was unable to continue TSIL and can no longer provide emergency payments for people who need money for essentials such as food and utilities. Tameside Resettlement Scheme was introduced as an alternative solution, however, this is specifically aimed at helping residents aged 16 and over who are on low incomes and who need help moving out of an institutional or unsettled life by providing household furniture and white goods.

**Figure 2. The Demand for TSIL 2013-15**

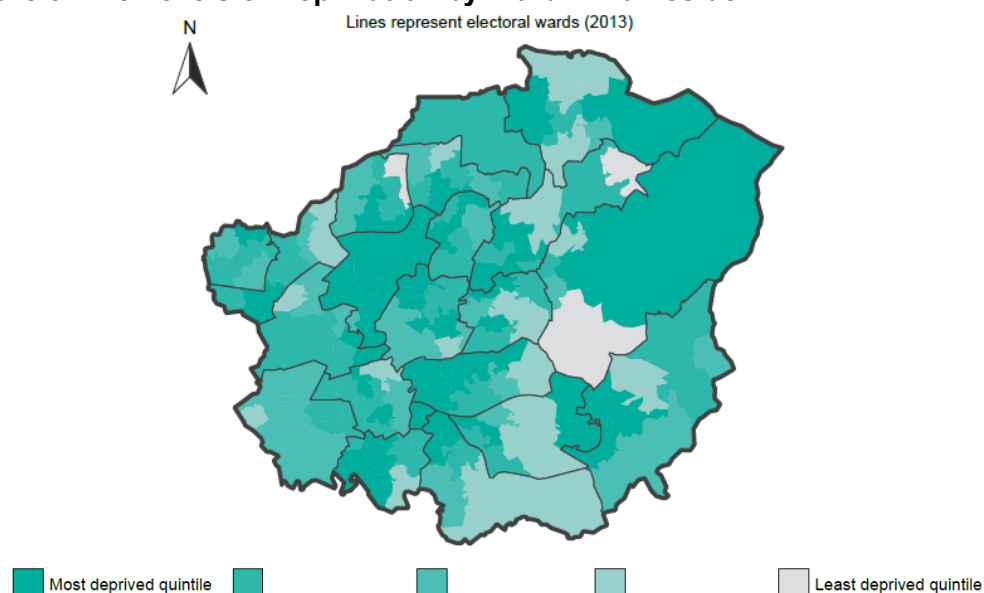


- 6.10 The graph above displays the total number of applications made each month to TSIL between April 2013 and March 2015. It shows that the number of accepted applications increased most dramatically during 2013/14 after the scheme was introduced, with applications plateauing through 2014/15.
- 6.11 Of the 6674 applications made in 2013/14, 70% were accepted, compared to 58% of the 7388 applications made in 2014/15. This can be attributed to the fact that people were entitled to two applications within a 12 month period, meaning that a number of claims made in 2014/15 were ineligible repeat applications.
- 6.12 Demographic data was collected while TSIL was in operation and reveals that a higher proportion of men (58%) than women made claims, and that people aged 25-34 years were

the age group most in need of support. Furthermore, approximately 17% of applications to TSIL were made by people with a disability.

- 6.13 Food poverty does not just refer to a lack of available food and going hungry. 'Below the Breadline' by Niall Cooper emphasises that a person can experience food poverty simply by not having access to a minimally acceptable and nutritious diet.
- 6.14 As documented in the Poverty and Social Exclusion research project (2013), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, there is widespread agreement on what constitutes as a minimally acceptable diet:
- Over 90% of people agree that every day children should have three meals, fresh fruit and vegetables, and a meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent
  - Over 75% of people agree that every day adults should have two meals, fresh fruit and vegetables, and meat, fish or a vegetarian alternative every other day
- 6.15 Unhealthier diets are increasingly common due to poorer quality and less nutritious produce being more readily available at cheaper prices. Data collected in Sport England's Active People Survey shows that as at January 2015, Tameside is the 10th worst district in the country for eating '5-a-day' and has a higher-than-average proportion of overweight and obese people.

**Figure 3. The Levels of Deprivation by Ward in Tameside**



- 6.16 The above image shows the differences in deprivation across all wards in Tameside based on national comparison, using quintiles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010. It reveals that deprivation is widespread across the borough, with the darkest areas reported to be some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England in Tameside's Public Health Profile 2015.
- 6.17 The same report from Public Health also states that 22.7% of children in Tameside are living in households in poverty, meaning that they are living in households with an overall income that is less than 60% of the median average for the borough.
- 6.18 Free school meals are available in England and Wales and provide children with a nutritious meal that they otherwise may not have been able to have. A child may be eligible to receive free school meals if the household is in receipt of any of:
- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (if not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after becoming unqualified to receive it
- Universal Credit

**Figure 4. Number of Tameside Pupils Taking a Free School Meal**

	Number of pupils on roll	Number of pupils claiming free school meals	Number of pupils claiming free school meals as a percentage of total pupils on roll	Number of pupils in Greater Manchester claiming free school meals as a percentage of total pupils on roll
Nurseries and Primary Schools	22,268	3,960	17.8%	16.9%
Secondary Schools	12,900	2,412	18.7%	16.6%
Special Schools	395	153	38.7%	39.6%

6.19 The table above shows data published in the 2016 Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics report from the Department of Education. It shows that there is a higher proportion of children in nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools in Tameside claiming free school meals than the average for Greater Manchester.

#### **Conclusions**

1. The number of people accessing food aid support in the North West has risen by over 2000% since 2011/12.
2. Approximately 22.7% of children in Tameside live in households in poverty, meaning that their household income is less than 60% of the median annual household income for the borough.
3. Tameside has a higher proportion of children in nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools claiming free school meals in comparison to Greater Manchester.
4. Reduced funding has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to continue delivering support schemes such as TSIL.

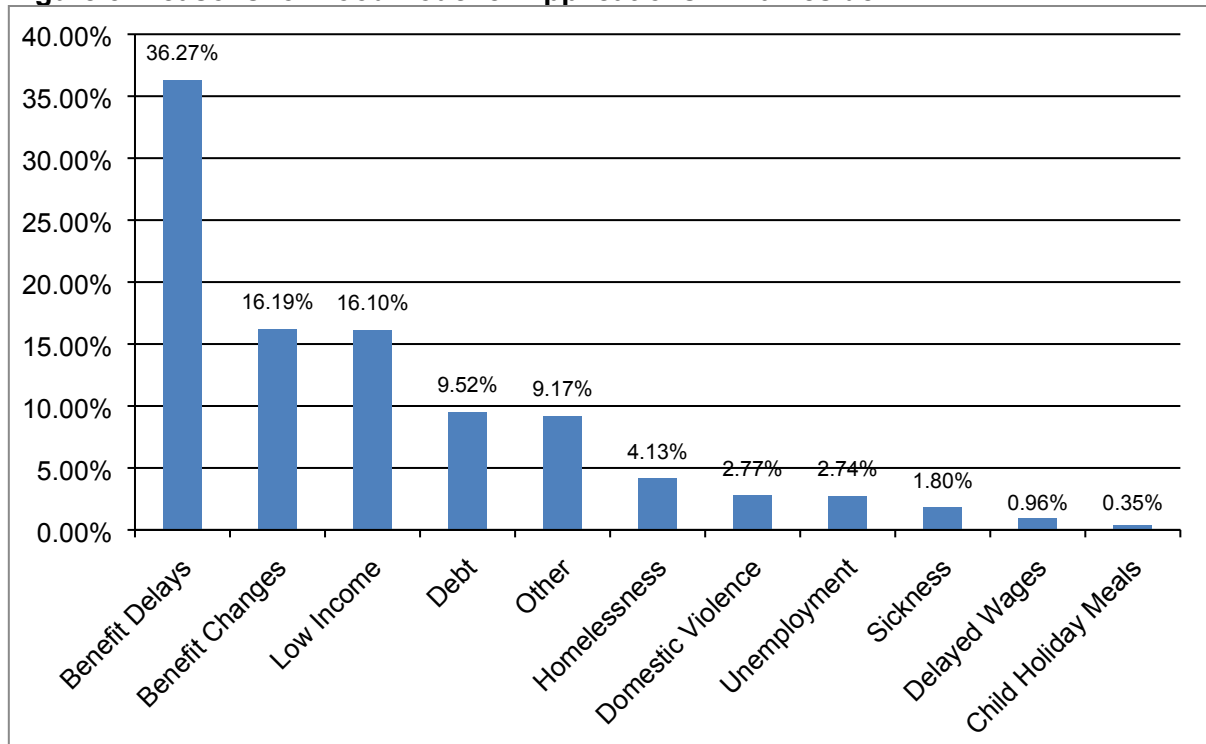
#### **Recommendations**

1. That the Council looks to utilise the demographic data collected to further target resources to support the most vulnerable groups and communities in the borough.

#### **Causes of Food Poverty**

6.20 A combination of factors is stretching household budgets to unmanageable levels. Welfare reform, rising food prices, housing costs, energy bills and low wages are some of the many contributing causes. The most frequently cited reason for requiring food aid in the UK is having insufficient money to afford and sustain a nutritious provision of food.

**Figure 5. Reasons for Food Voucher Applications in Tameside**



- 6.21 The graph above shows the most common causes of food poverty in Tameside and the proportion of food vouchers provided to the people and families experiencing them. Benefit delays and benefit changes are the two most common causes, accounting for 52.46% of all food vouchers issued in 2014/15.
- 6.22 This was a 4.23% rise on the previous year, which suggests that the overall impact of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) is growing and is affecting a larger proportion of Tameside's population each year.
- 6.23 **Welfare Reform** – Since the Welfare Reform Act was introduced it has quickly become one of the principle causes cited for people experiencing food poverty across the country. Citizens Advice and other referral agencies report that one of the major impacts of the Act is the increased prevalence and severity of benefit sanctions.
- 6.24 The Benefit Cap, introduced in 2013, has reduced total benefit allowances to £500 per week for households with children and £350 per week for households without children. These are planned to be reduced further in November 2016, to £385 and £258 per week respectively, with the additional reductions being taken from Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Income Support.
- 6.25 It is stated by Citizens Advice that 58% of benefit sanctions are successfully challenged and revoked, highlighting that the financial strain and consequences created by sanctions could be prevented. If more people were aware of the work that Citizens Advice and other agencies undertake, the proportion of revoked benefit sanctions could be even higher.
- 6.26 **Living Costs** – The 'Below the Breadline' report documented the noticeable strain that rising living costs have had on household incomes since the recession began. With an estimated 25% increase between 2008 and 2013, a number of households on low incomes are finding it progressively more difficult to afford housing payments, energy and food.
- 6.27 On top of this, roughly 40% of all households are faced with the 'heat or eat' dilemma, and 20% of parents have gone without food to ensure that their children have enough to eat. This evidence highlights the difficult situations people face when in poverty.



- 6.28 **Food Costs** – Food banks and other authorities are in agreement that the price of food in the UK over the last decade is contributing to households' evolving spending and eating habits. Kellogg's found in its 2013 Hard to Swallow report into food poverty that people are spending on average 20% more money on their food shopping for 7% less food altogether.
- 6.29 The Department for Education, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Annual Report 2012 on Family Food found that the average weekly food budget was £41.37 per person, a figure that is increasing on previous years. It is estimated that the average UK household will spend 11.6% of its total money on food over a year.
- 6.30 DEFRA also found that households in the lowest earning 20% of the country spent higher proportions of their incomes on food (up to 16.6% of their annual income). This reiterates the fact that households with lower affluence may spend more than they can afford on food and are potentially compromising their capacity to afford other essentials as a result.
- 6.31 **Housing Costs** – UK housing costs have risen to be among the highest of any country in Europe. The National Housing Federation finds that the average person spends approximately 40% of their annual income on rental payments; private rental sector prices have risen by 67% between 2002/03 and 2011/12.
- 6.32 Along with heightened housing costs, cuts to services and increasing resource pressure on local authorities have contributed to a lack of housing supply in a lot of regions in England. The 2011 Census shows that local authority waiting lists for social housing have increased 80% since 2001, exceeding 1.8 million households by the end of 2014.

#### **Conclusions**

5. Food poverty can be the outcome of a wide range of factors, but is most often the result of a complex combination of interlinking and interrelated causes.
6. Changes to welfare payments and benefit sanctions following the Welfare Reform Act in 2012 have clearly been identified as contributing to the rising levels of food poverty in Tameside.
7. Roughly 40% of households are faced with the 'heat or eat' dilemma and 20% of parents have gone without food to ensure that their children are eating adequately.

#### **Recommendations**

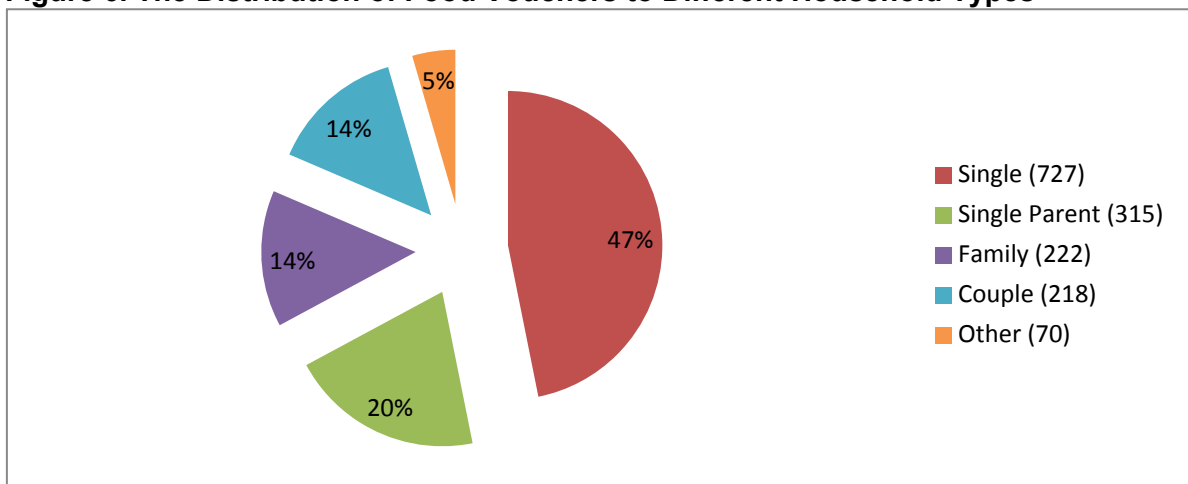
2. That the Council and partners actively promote the work of Citizens Advice, Action Together and other third sector services to ensure that as many residents as possible are aware of the financial, social, and food aid support they could receive.

#### **The Role of Foodbanks**

- 6.33 Food aid has always been provided when needed, however before 2010 the concept of food poverty was largely unknown. Since then, it has become a matter of local and national urgency, which is reflected in how quickly foodbanks have been established. In Tameside 12 food banks have been opened since 2010.
- 6.34 Figures collated from the 440 Trussell Trust foodbanks around the UK show that three-day emergency food supplies were provided to households in crisis on 50,318 separate occasions between April 2015 and March 2016. Given the growing need for food aid, more food banks and centres for emergency support are expected to be established.
- 6.35 Not only are families and households struggling to obtain enough food, they are unable to purchase other necessities including fuel, baby milk and nappies. As a result, foodbanks have had to evolve and adapt to the priority needs of local communities in order to provide the most effective support.

6.36 Foodbanks receive referrals from a large network of agencies such as Citizens Advice, GPs, schools and housing associations. Following the identification of a person or family in need, they can discuss the main issues impacting them and provide food vouchers accordingly.

**Figure 6. The Distribution of Food Vouchers to Different Household Types**



6.37 The graph above shows that in 2015/16, single people and single parents accounted for the majority of food vouchers issued in Tameside. This data from the Trussell Trust emphasises the vulnerability of single adult households in the current financial climate.

6.38 Food parcels cannot be obtained without a voucher and the current system allows three vouchers to be given to an individual or household over a six month period. This robust system has helped Trussell Trust and other food banks eliminate any attempts to falsely acquire food. Referral agencies do have the authority to increase or decrease the number of vouchers allowed dependent on circumstances.

6.39 All food parcels provide a minimum of three days' non-perishable tinned and dried foods that have been donated by the local community. Trussell Trust has worked with nutritionists to make sure that food parcels contains sufficient nutrition for adults, children and different sized households. They are also aiming to produce a book of simple recipes that can help people to make meals with minimal resources.

6.40 **Additional Help** – Foodbanks can provide a number of other services outside of food parcels. Trussell Trust are providing a six-week budgeting and cookery course in certain areas of the UK, with a view to rolling these out to as many areas as possible. The course aims to equip people with cookery skills, an understanding of planning meals from an economic and nutritional point of view, and teach people simple financial management techniques to budget more effectively.

6.41 The Trussell Trust has formed links with a number of debt and financial advice services to strengthen their Financial Triage and Debt Advice project. This allows the foodbanks to use both in-house local advisors and national telephone and online help to deliver the most informative advice possible.

6.42 National Energy Action is working in partnership with the Trussell Trust foodbanks to create Fuel Banks to make sure that people don't have to choose between heating their homes or spending money on other essentials including food and toiletries. The energy provider npower is also working on this, with a view to establishing Fuel Banks within existing foodbanks. Energy credits to the value of up to £49 can be provided to those in need of help managing their living costs.

- 6.43 In order to help families in Tameside with children receiving free school meals, a number of foodbanks run holiday clubs that offer a range of workshops and activities for children to take part in, while providing meals for them and their families. The clubs help people to recognise that they are not the only family in need during the holidays.
- 6.44 Despite foodbanks and other similar services becoming more widely utilised, not all people in need will access the appropriate services. It is believed that there is still a large cohort of people experiencing food poverty across the country who do not utilise the services that can help to alleviate the impacts on them.
- 6.45 **Foodbank Forum** – A Foodbank Forum has been established in Tameside which allows a range of Stakeholders to meet and discuss best practice and keep informed on particular food poverty issues or trends.
- 6.46 The Foodbank Forum also provides authorities with an opportunity to collect and share data and information to help develop a clearer view of the demographics and groups of people most affected by food poverty and its related impacts. There is a consensus that data and information sharing needs to improve to ensure informed methods are in place that provide the best support for residents.

### Conclusions

8. A total of 12 foodbanks have been opened in Tameside since 2010.
9. Foodbanks provide a number of other services on top of food parcels, including budgeting courses, cooking classes and holiday clubs for families whose children receive free school meals.
10. Tameside Foodbank Forum was established to provide stakeholders and authorities with the opportunity to collect and share data and information to inform future strategies and best practice.

### Recommendations

3. That where possible the Council supports foodbanks to establish initiatives, schemes and programmes to tackle food poverty.
4. That work is undertaken to establish a borough-wide database of intelligence that promotes data sharing and collection between a number of partners including foodbanks, referral agencies, schools and early years providers, to improve and inform poverty alleviation and prevention strategies.
5. That the Council and partners publicise and raise awareness of the work being undertaken by foodbanks and other support services, to encourage more people in food poverty to access these resources.

### Tackling Food Poverty

- 6.47 The Council is signed up to the Greater Manchester Poverty Pledge, which while not being a statutory requirement, ensures that all local poverty prevention strategies are aligned to the key themes across Greater Manchester.
- 6.48 The Council outlined its own local plan for tackling poverty within the Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17, which focuses on the following three key themes:
- **Working Together** – In order to make the significant, borough-wide changes that are needed, the Council is seeking to deliver more effective strategies and actions through a holistic, partnership approach.
  - **Alleviating the Impacts of Poverty** – It is imperative that households in poverty are supported to reduce the severity of any of its impacts, manage their living costs, and improve their access to services.

- **Prevention of Poverty** – To prevent families and households experiencing poverty in the future, it is vital that long term strategies are created that focus on developing a more resilient, self-sufficient economy.

- 6.49 **Working Together** – The Council has looked to strengthen its links with a range of partners including schools, food banks, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Citizens Advice and Action Together (formerly Community and Voluntary Action Tameside), in the hope that food poverty alleviation and prevention strategies will be wider reaching and help more members of Tameside's communities.
- 6.50 There are already strong links between foodbanks and third sector organisations such as Citizens Advice, which saw 5,865 people who were in need of food aid in 2014/15, providing them with food vouchers and referring them to foodbanks. Households are also accessing Citizens Advice when in need of other essential items such as baby milk formula, nappies, pet food and toiletries.
- 6.51 Prompted by the publication of Greater Manchester Poverty Commission report in January 2013, Tameside Poverty Action Group was established in October 2014. The Group holds quarterly meetings to ensure that all partners are kept up to date on any current issues or themes relating to food poverty in the borough, and are properly implementing the Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17.
- 6.52 Another key aim of the Tameside Poverty Action Group is to encourage members of all communities, groups and authorities in the borough to work together in partnership to tackle poverty more effectively, achieve measurable outcomes and make a significant difference in Tameside.
- 6.53 The Council has also begun working closely with Registered Social Landlords, the Job Centre Plus and voluntary agencies to ensure that all relevant authorities understand the changes made by the Welfare Reform Act, how residents in Tameside are being affected by these, and determining the most effective support mechanisms.
- 6.54 Work undertaken with Registered Social Landlords aims to improve landlords' awareness of the different factors that can lead people to experience poverty, and provide them with the information on how to refer people to the correct agency. It is also hoped that this work will make landlords take more responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their tenants.
- 6.55 **Alleviating the Impacts of Poverty** – Food poverty can lead to serious illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, malnutrition and obesity, owing to an increased intake of cheaper, salty and sugary processed foods. Improving the health and wellbeing of all residents is central to reducing the impacts of food poverty as well as preventing it in future.
- 6.56 Food poverty has been identified by public health professionals across the UK as a healthcare priority, with 170 professionals penning an open letter to the Prime Minister expressing their concern at the growing numbers of people in poor health as a consequence of food poverty, and urging the government to take bold action and create an equitable food policy.
- 6.57 The Council introduced the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16 to establish policies that more effectively improve local health. The strategy has helped to develop a better understanding of the impacts that a person's social and economic environments can have on their physical and mental health, which has helped to inform early intervention and prevention strategies.
- 6.58 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to reduce the impact of the current economic climate and rising living costs by:

- Improving the health of the working age population and enabling them to find and maintain employment
  - Improving the school readiness children and young people to secure brighter futures for the next generations in Tameside
  - Helping people of all ages to become more healthier and less reliant on healthcare services
- 6.59 A number of healthcare services are striving to raise public awareness and understanding of eating healthily to improve overall health and wellbeing, as well as help more people to make healthier lifestyle choices. In addition, Tameside Public Health's Children's Nutrition Team are supporting Tameside schools to develop a healthy food culture, with the incentive of food awards. This has benefitted the children in participating schools.
- 6.60 MIND, a charity that focuses on supporting people with a variety of mental health issues, is putting a greater focus on using its 'MIND guide to food and mood' to improve peoples' mental health by encouraging healthier relationships with food. This ambition is backed by scientific research that has found that a healthy relationship with food and nutrition is important in maintaining positive emotional and mental health.
- 6.61 Schools have an important role to play in helping to manage food poverty. It is crucial that all staff in education services are aware of food poverty, how to identify its signs and how to discuss the matters sensitively with students. Schools can also provide children and their families with food vouchers and refer them to food banks.
- 6.62 In April 2016, Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for School Food, wrote a letter asking all people with concerns about children possibly going without enough food in the school holidays to come forward and provide information. This survey is intended to help both the mapping and research that will improve the understanding of, and response to 'holiday hunger'.
- 6.63 **Preventing Food Poverty** – Since the Welfare Reform Act was introduced, a number of Council services have been proactive in making sure that all residents in Tameside are aware of, and are receiving the fullest entitlement of financial support possible. These additional entitlements from the DWP, include:
- Hardship payments for certain claimants whose benefit is sanctioned or disallowed
  - Short-term advances for people who are awaiting a first pay-day of benefit
  - Winter fuel payments
  - Cold weather payments
- 6.64 The Council is also looking to improve community resilience to prevent future food poverty by raising levels of employment and affluence in Tameside. The Working Well programme was established in March 2014 and is designed to help up to 50,000 people receiving Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Greater Manchester to overcome the barriers that are preventing them from maintaining a job.
- 6.65 In March 2016, the Council joined-up with the DWP to deliver Phases 2 and 3 of its Working Well scheme. Phase 2 will see the capacity of the programme expand to support up to 15,000 individuals by 2017, and Phase 3 will continue this expansion to 50,000 people. Through the Jobcentre Plus, the DWP is now actively referring individuals to the scheme who are suffering with a range of issues, including:
- Physical health issues
  - Homelessness
  - Low confidence and/or motivation
  - Childcare problems
  - Low skills and/or qualifications
  - Debt

**Figure 7. Profile Estimates for Working Well Referrals between March 2016 and 2017**

ESA and WRAG claimants who have a 18 or 24 month prognosis	41.23%
Lone Parents on Income Support where the youngest child is 3/4 years old	23.14%
Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants who completed their work programmes	11.71%
Commenced their Work Programme in receipt of JSA but were in receipt of ESA upon completion	8.17%
Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimants who have completed the Work Programme	6.99%
In low paid employment, receipt of in-work benefits, or cycling in and out of insecure employment	6.53%
JSA claimants who completed Work Programme at least 1 year previously	5.54%

- 6.66 The table above shows the breakdown of the 1102 referrals that are estimated to be made to the Working Well scheme from residents in Tameside between March 2016 and 2017. It shows that residents receiving ESA and/or WRAG with an 18 or 24 month health prognosis are expected to make up the highest number of referrals.
- 6.67 The Working Well Programme has helped to contribute to a reduction in unemployment in Tameside, which is now 5.2% and below the UK average (5.4%). However, as Figure 1 shows, Tameside still has a lower median household income than Greater Manchester and Great Britain, which can make residents more vulnerable to food poverty and other related issues.
- 6.68 Improving educational attainment has been highlighted in the Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17 as an important area of focus to reduce and prevent all poverty. A well-rounded education can help to reduce food poverty by improving a person's career prospects, future income and understanding of issues such as food poverty.
- 6.69 A number of schools in Tameside have expressed an interest in arranging student visits to local foodbanks to make the younger population more aware of the reality of food poverty, its health impacts and the importance of learning to sustain a healthy, nutritious diet even on lower budgets.
- 6.70 The Council's Debt Advice team and other agencies such as Citizens Advice provide free financial advice that can help people whose food poverty is a result of low income and/or arrears. In 2014/15, Citizens Advice handled over 1.5 million debt enquiries across the UK. Through the Financial Skills for Life scheme, Citizens Advice are trying to help people to prevent themselves falling into future debt and avoid poverty.
- 6.71 Citizens Advice in Tameside has also introduced targeted training sessions to improve peoples' budgeting skills to further reduce the numbers of households in rent arrears. Additional computer training sessions are being carried out to improve peoples' range of employable skills and assist with online job applications.
- 6.72 **Going Forward** – The Council's Health and Wellbeing Board is currently in the process of discussing a new, more focused direction with Tameside's Single Commissioning Team, to make sure that future strategies are aligned with tackling the priority health issues and inequalities affecting Tameside's residents.
- 6.73 The Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17 relies on effective partnership working and requires the full engagement of all partners. The Strategic Neighbourhood Partnership is tasked with monitoring and assessing the overall success of the Strategy, which will inform future decision-making and poverty prevention strategies.

## **Conclusions**

11. Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17 focuses on promoting a unified, partnership approach across Tameside to counter the current and future impacts of food poverty.
12. In order to meet the challenges posed by reduced resources, the Council has initiated more joined-up work such as with the DWP to develop the Working Well programme over the next five years and expand its clientele base to 50,000.
13. Early intervention and prevention is key to improving the levels of food poverty in Tameside and reducing the number of households experiencing it in future.
14. Links are being established between foodbanks and schools in Tameside with a view to improving the knowledge and awareness that young people have of budgeting and maintain a sustainable, nutritious food plan.

## **Recommendations**

6. That schools further enhance their relationship with foodbanks to improve all-age-all-community awareness of food poverty.
7. That the Council and schools look to determine the incidence and severity of food poverty to ensure that the most appropriate and effective support is in place.
8. That future Health and Wellbeing strategies are informed by, and aligned with the current key food poverty themes and priority issues.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The number of people accessing food aid support in the North West has risen by over 2000% since 2011/12.
- 7.2 Approximately 22.7% of children in Tameside live in households in poverty, meaning that their household income is less than 60% of the median annual household income for the borough.
- 7.3 Tameside has a higher proportion of children in nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools claiming free school meals in comparison to Greater Manchester.
- 7.4 Reduced funding has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to continue delivering support schemes such as TSIL.
- 7.5 Food poverty can be the outcome of a wide range of factors, but is most often the result of a complex combination of interlinking and interrelated causes.
- 7.6 Changes to welfare payments and benefit sanctions following the Welfare Reform Act in 2012 have clearly been identified as contributing to the rising levels of food poverty in Tameside.
- 7.7 Roughly 40% of households are faced with the 'heat or eat' dilemma and 20% of parents have gone without food to ensure that their children are eating adequately.
- 7.8 A total of 12 foodbanks have been opened in Tameside since 2010.
- 7.9 Foodbanks provide a number of other services on top of food parcels, including budgeting courses, cooking classes and holiday clubs for families whose children receive free school meals.

- 7.10 Tameside Foodbank Forum was established to provide stakeholders and authorities with the opportunity to collect and share data and information to inform future strategies and best practice.
- 7.11 Tameside Poverty Strategy 2014-17 focuses on promoting a unified, partnership approach across Tameside to counter the current and future impacts of food poverty.
- 7.12 In order to meet the challenges posed by reduced resources, the Council has initiated more joined-up work such as with the DWP to develop the Working Well programme over the next five years and expand its clientele base to 50,000.
- 7.13 Early intervention and prevention is key to improving the levels of food poverty in Tameside and reducing the number of households experiencing it in future.
- 7.14 Links are being established between foodbanks and schools in Tameside with a view to improving the knowledge and awareness that young people have of budgeting and maintain a sustainable, nutritious food plan.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the Council looks to utilise the demographic data collected to further target resources to support the most vulnerable groups and communities in the borough.
- 8.2 That the Council and partners actively promote the work of Citizens Advice, Action Together and other third sector services to ensure that as many residents as possible are aware of the financial, social, and food aid support they could receive.
- 8.3 That where possible the Council supports foodbanks to establish initiatives, schemes and programmes to tackle food poverty.
- 8.4 That work is undertaken to establish a borough-wide database of intelligence that promotes data sharing and collection between a number of partners including foodbanks, referral agencies, schools and early years providers, to improve and inform poverty alleviation and prevention strategies.
- 8.5 That the Council and partners publicise and raise awareness of the work being undertaken by foodbanks and other support services, to encourage more people in food poverty to access these resources.
- 8.6 That schools further enhance their relationship with foodbanks to improve all-age-all-community awareness of food poverty.
- 8.7 That the Council and schools look to determine the incidence and severity of food poverty to ensure that the most appropriate and effective support is in place.
- 8.8 That future Health and Wellbeing strategies are informed by, and aligned with the current key food poverty themes and priority issues.