



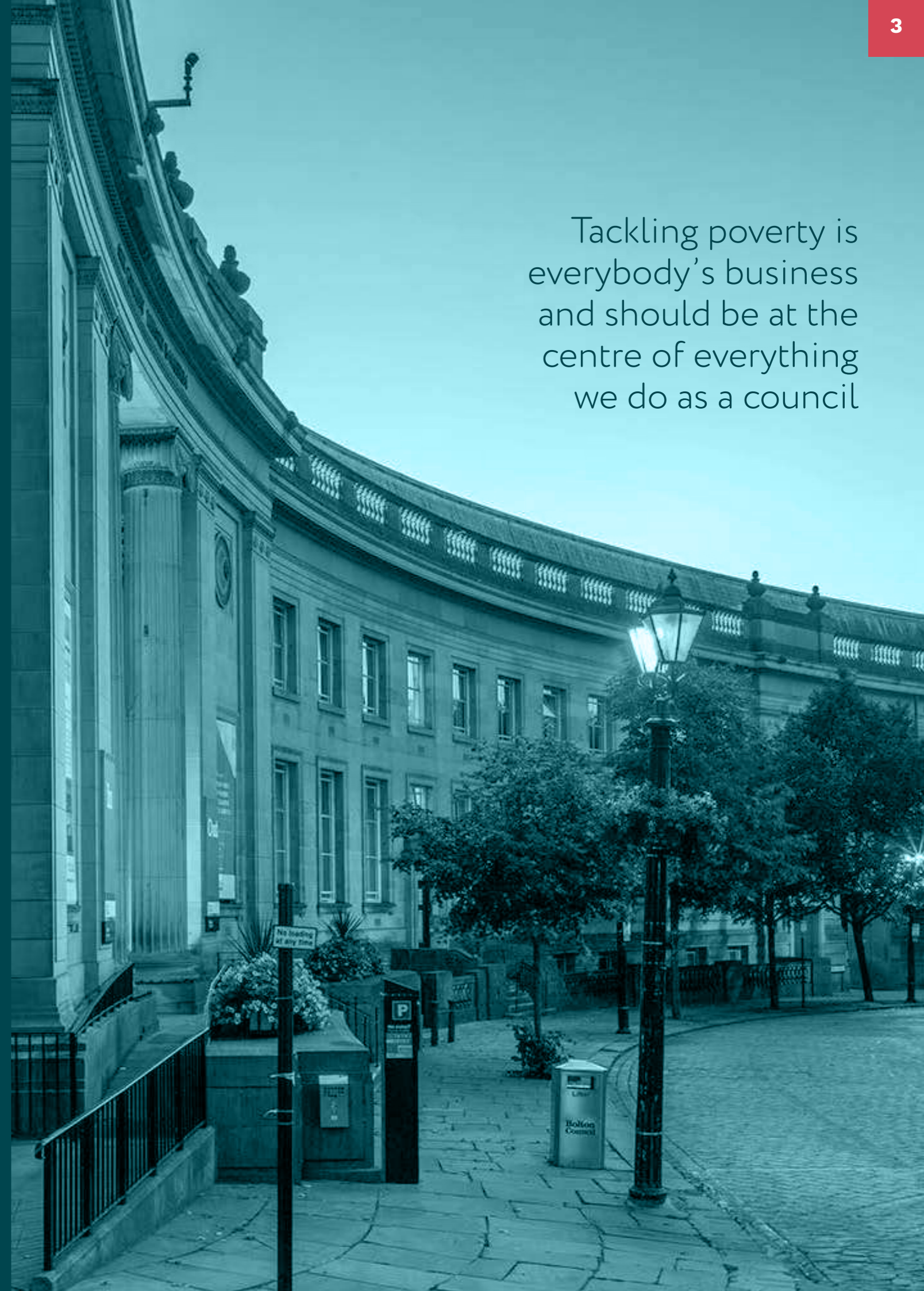
Building a better future for Bolton

TACKLING POVERTY STRATEGY 2024 - 2027

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Tackling poverty is everybody's business and should be at the centre of everything we do as a council



FOREWORD

Bolton is a proud borough, with a rich history of collaboration – committed to coming together to improve the lives of our residents.



Cllr Nick Peel
Leader of the Council,
Bolton Council



Cllr Rabiya Jiva
Executive Cabinet
Member, Stronger
Communities

The Council recognises the pressures being faced by our residents, with cost-of-living demands, decreasing life expectancy and the need for social care increasing. We understand the profound impact poverty has on individuals and we acknowledge that times have been difficult. Currently in Bolton a significant portion of the population (26%) reside in areas that fall within the top 10% of the most deprived nationally, whilst there are over 30,000 children living in poverty.

The rising costs of essentials like food and energy bills has exacerbated the struggle for many. This has led to an increased need for services. Now is a key time to develop this strategy.

We acknowledge that a partnership approach is needed across the borough, encouraging genuine collaboration between services and organisations to form concrete actions in terms

of addressing poverty. Tackling poverty is everybody's business and should be at the centre of everything we do as a Council, as a partnership and as a borough.

This strategy has the full backing of the council leadership. It will act as the driver to helping our residents that are just surviving to go on to thrive and achieve a better quality of life. Through this strategy we are confident we can realise these ambitions.

Building stronger communities is a cabinet-level priority for this council and that means working collaboratively with partners and residents. This Anti-Poverty Strategy for Bolton has co-production at its heart and comes with a firm commitment to draw in local people's lived experience. We are taking a strength-based approach to ensure that the focus is on individuals and communities that can work together with us to deliver actions to address poverty.

Underpinning the strategy are three main themes pivotal to how we combat poverty:

- 1 Prevention and reduction**
- 2 Mitigation**
- 3 Working together**

The strategy and the accompanying action plan will include the thoughts and perspectives of residents with lived experience. Their practical involvement will help shape the delivery of the work being undertaken. Within the strategy, our approach will be to actively listen and understand, ensuring we mitigate against that reality for future generations.

As part of our work on Bolton 2040, we have an emerging all age prevention framework to wrap around several strategies and projects that the council, along with partners, is in the process developing.

We are looking to prevent people from falling into poverty and this is a key focus of our work. It's only through working together we can deliver the ambitions of this strategy.

02

Introduction and Benchmarking

Poverty is a significant issue in the UK, with 21% of our population,

14.3 million people, living in relative poverty after housing costs.

(Department for Work and Pensions, 2024).

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a significant issue in the UK, with 21% of our population—14.3 million people—living in relative poverty after housing costs.

(Department for Work and Pensions, 2024).

The situation has worsened in recent years due to the combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis. The pandemic disrupted lives and livelihoods, leaving many households increasingly vulnerable. This has been compounded by sharp increases in the cost of essential goods and services, particularly energy, fuel, and food, alongside real-term wage cuts and the impact of welfare reforms. These factors have deepened inequality, making it even harder for those already struggling to get by and pushing many who would not usually face such challenges into financial hardship.

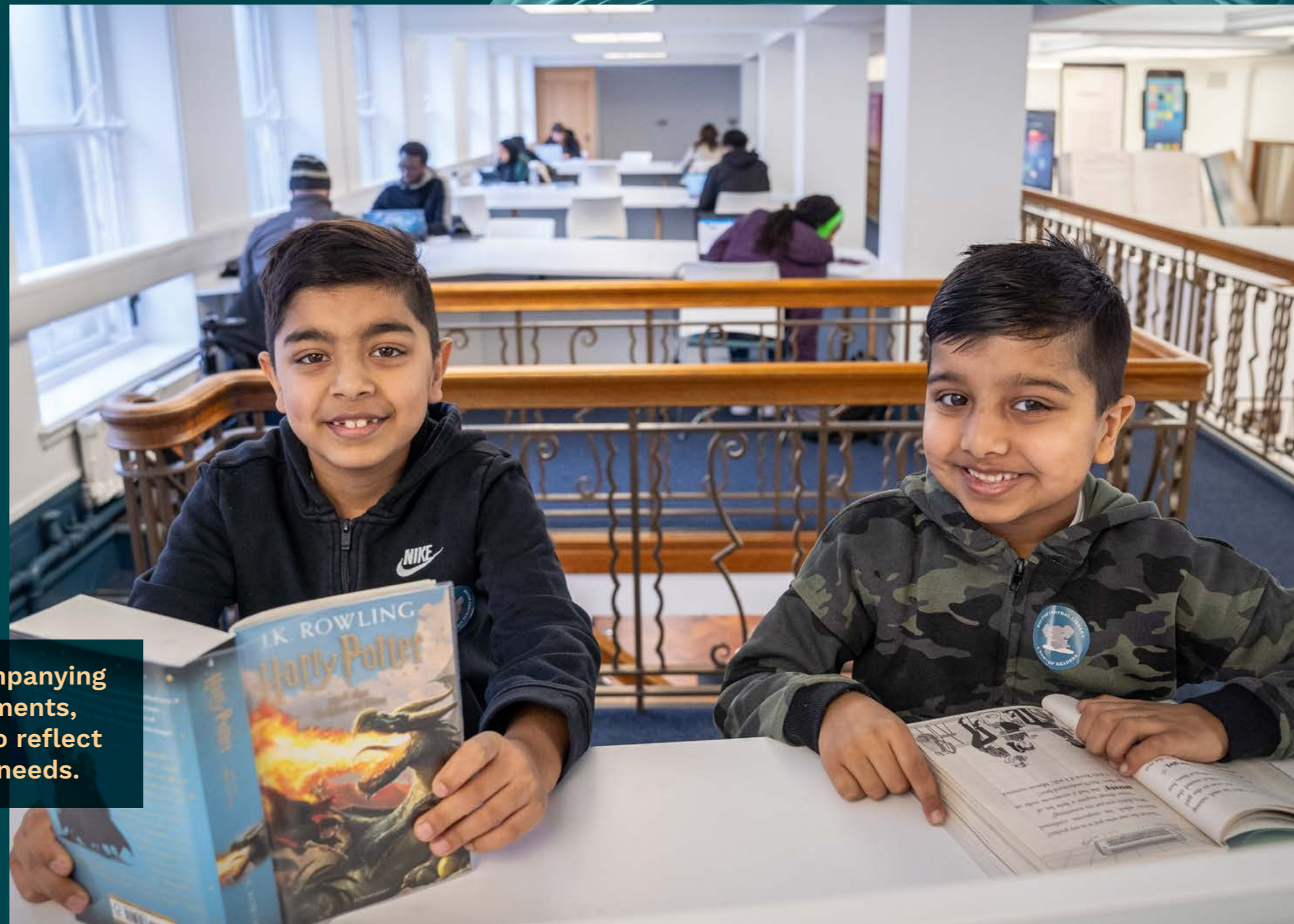
From the outset, it is clear there are significant challenges ahead. We recognise these obstacles, which only strengthen our resolve to take decisive action to support our community. While some fundamental causes of poverty are beyond the control of the council and its partners, there are many areas where we can make a tangible impact. It is crucial to emphasise that addressing poverty requires an

action-focused, whole-organisation, whole-system approach. It is not the responsibility of a single organisation but a shared priority for all of us. In Bolton, our multi-agency partnership approach is recognised as a critical strength, and this collaborative effort will drive our strategy forward.

This strategy outlines the key priorities and actions we will focus on to address poverty in Bolton. It is designed to work alongside other local strategies, plans, and programmes of work, ensuring a comprehensive approach to supporting those in need. This strategy also includes a commitment to advocating at a national level, ensuring that Bolton's voice is heard in the broader debate on poverty. By building evidence from our local efforts, we aim to influence national policy and contribute to a more equitable society.

Our strategy and the accompanying action plan are living documents, ready to evolve over time to reflect our community's changing needs.

This adaptability is crucial in ensuring that our efforts remain relevant and effective in addressing the ongoing challenges of poverty.



BENCHMARKING

Bolton's Anti-Poverty Strategy aligns with the ongoing efforts across Greater Manchester to address poverty.

Influenced by the growing number of public bodies in Greater Manchester and beyond, which are taking a strategic approach to addressing poverty at a local level, Bolton's approach is in harmony with other anti-poverty activity in the city region.

Recognising that we are at a critical moment in the need to address poverty, this awareness has focussed the council and its partners to develop an Anti-Poverty Strategy with clear objectives and a collective determination to address the issue across partners.

Resolve Poverty, a recognised leader on poverty in the UK, has worked closely with the council and its partners in the development of this strategy. Resolve Poverty has provided guidance and support, drawing from their extensive policy and programme work on local responses to poverty. This includes utilising best practices, policy ideas, and insights from their report, Local anti-poverty strategies – good practice and effective approaches. The report included case studies from across the country, and we have sought to ensure that the Bolton strategy adheres to the good practices identified through this research.

Through this strategic partnership, Resolve Poverty will continue to work closely with the council and its partners over the lifetime of the strategy.



80
Warm Spaces across the borough with grants awarded over £80k



Supporting residents into work. Working Well provision - job starts
282



78
boilers replaced for residents



6
Cost of living events held, over 620 attendees, since Nov 2022



Library - Digital Employment and Skills
355 adults 18+ on a low income received a free SIM providing up to a year of free data via the Greater Manchester Databank



Housing standards have assisted **476** households to improve their housing conditions



Over £5m invested into Bolton communities since 2019



Public Health funded Age UK role, assisted **294** older people to secure additional benefits to the value of over £800k*



183 rough sleepers supported into accommodation



3,000 children supported through early help



Family Finance, Fun & Food Project
10 events held at local primary schools



544 residents helped to manage over £2m pounds worth of debt, securing £149k worth of financial gains



66.3% take up of places for two year old disadvantaged families childcare offer



Local Welfare Provision spend over **£1.2m**



310 individuals received one to one support around preparation for volunteering roles and if necessary, extra training given

Figures from 1.4.23 – 31.3.24

*Figures from 1.1.23 – 31.12.23

Our residents

Bolton's population



298,903



72,458
aged 0-17



175,030
aged 18-64



51,415
aged 65+



14,930 stay at home to look after family/home.



3,453 births in 2021



2,132 children with special educational needs



63.9% of pupils achieving a good level of development at EYFS (aged 0-5yrs)



0.14% children and young people were permanently excluded



322 of our **544** Looked After Children are in in-house foster placements



15% of Looked After Children adopted



190 Care leavers



4,331 of adults are accessing long-term support



1,469 residents have a different sex from the one registered at birth



2 year lower life expectancy than England average



26% live in an area that is among the 10% most deprived nationally



65% of 40-74 year olds receive an NHS Healthcheck



18% (16+) have a disability



25,980 unpaid carers



31.24% ethnic minority



7,345 Armed forces veterans



5,695 LGBT+ community



Within Bolton, life expectancy varies by 14.9 years (male) and 9.9 years (female)



Children and young people make up **19%** of all offenders in Bolton



93% of babies visited by public health nurses within 14 days of birth



89.7% of adults with a learning disability live in their own home or with their family



03

Our vision and principles

OUR VISION FOR A BETTER-OFF BOLTON

In developing this strategy, residents and partners told us what matters most and provided invaluable insights that have created our vision.

Their perspectives highlight the need for a comprehensive strategy that addresses immediate and long-term needs, ensuring no one in Bolton is left behind. The work in this strategy forms part of our wider borough vision, to support our most vulnerable residents.



Our vision for this strategy is clear:

- No one in Bolton should be living in poverty, forced to choose between heating and eating, or worrying constantly about making ends meet.

- Everyone in Bolton should be able to achieve their potential and feel happy, healthy, and valued.

- Everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility.



PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

We have established guiding principles that everyone involved in tackling poverty in Bolton can embrace, ensuring that we work together effectively towards our shared goals. These principles form the foundation of our strategy and set our collective efforts.



Working in partnership

Poverty is everybody's business. By using the strengths and assets within our communities, we focus on what individuals and groups can contribute and how we can collaborate to implement actions that combat poverty.

Bolton's communities have demonstrated remarkable resilience and unity during challenging times, and this collective approach is essential for the success of our strategy.

Evidence-based

Our approach will be informed by best practices and carefully monitored and evaluated.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our actions are based on the best available evidence and achieve meaningful outcomes.

Respect and dignity

Central to our work is the commitment to treat everyone with respect and dignity.

We aim to raise awareness of poverty, work together to reduce stigma and ensure that all residents of Bolton are treated with the dignity they deserve.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The development of this strategy was shaped through close collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders and residents who have lived experience of poverty.

Together with representatives from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors (VCSE), public services, health services, housing associations, businesses, and council officers, we have developed a strategy reflecting a deep understanding of our community's challenges.

This strategy involves extensive research, data analysis, and meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders. Through this comprehensive approach, we have gained valuable insights into the everyday challenges, barriers, and issues confronting our communities. Moreover, we have highlighted the positive work already underway within our community to prevent, mitigate, and reduce poverty.

Our engagement with residents and key local stakeholders identified the specific needs and evidence of poverty in Bolton.

It allowed us to anticipate and plan for future challenges over the next three years. This collaborative process emphasised the importance of building on existing good practice while exploring ways to better leverage available assets and resources to enhance our community's resilience.

It's important to note that this engagement is an ongoing process. As such, this strategy remains a living document, subject to change as we respond to changes in the external environment and emerging needs within our community.

Our story so far...

Covid-19 pandemic lockdown begins and furlough scheme introduced.

Many low-income workers face increased risk of poverty.

2020

2021

The cost of living starts to rise.

High inflation is driven by factors including:

- Covid-19 pandemic
- Disruption to global supply
- Rising oil and gas prices
- Russian invasion in Ukraine
- Living costs soon outstrip wage and benefit increases.

Inflation reached a 41 year high and peaked at 11.1%.

High costs of everyday essentials left low-income households financially vulnerable. Many people who were previously able to manage started to struggle.

Bolton's response:

- **Organisation of cost of living events**, webpage and leaflet to showcase support available.
- **Bolton's Fund** - ensuring cost of living support is reaching into our communities.
- **Warm Welcome** - co-ordinated process led by Bolton Council's Library Service.

2022

2023

Establishment of the Anti-Poverty Working Group to develop a co-produced strategy, drawing upon members expertise, ensuring poverty "is everybody's business".

Development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy including:

- Resident and partner events
- Online surveys
- Lived experience groups
- Data analysis
- Development and launch of the Money Advice Referral Tool

2024



LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Our strategy is not developed in isolation; it incorporates and reinforces actions from existing local strategies and plans.

It co-ordinates with the work being done across Greater Manchester to address poverty and draws upon effective practices and impacts from places across the UK with strong policies and strategies focused on addressing poverty.

This integration is essential for coordinating anti-poverty activities and achieving shared goals.

As the strategy evolves, it will continuously consider and incorporate insights from local and national strategies and plans to ensure that anti-poverty efforts in Bolton remain coordinated and effective.





04

Talking about
poverty and
what it means
in Bolton

WHY DEFINING POVERTY IS IMPORTANT

Defining poverty in Bolton is essential as it helps us identify and understand our community's challenges, ensuring we know who is affected.

This clarity guides the development of actions, directing resources and support to those who need it most and where they will have the most significant impact. Misunderstanding poverty, along with confusing its risks, causes, and consequences, can lead to stigma. A clear definition helps us address these misconceptions, reduce stigma, and create more effective solutions for those affected by poverty.

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“Poverty is the lack of basic resources and opportunities to survive or thrive.”

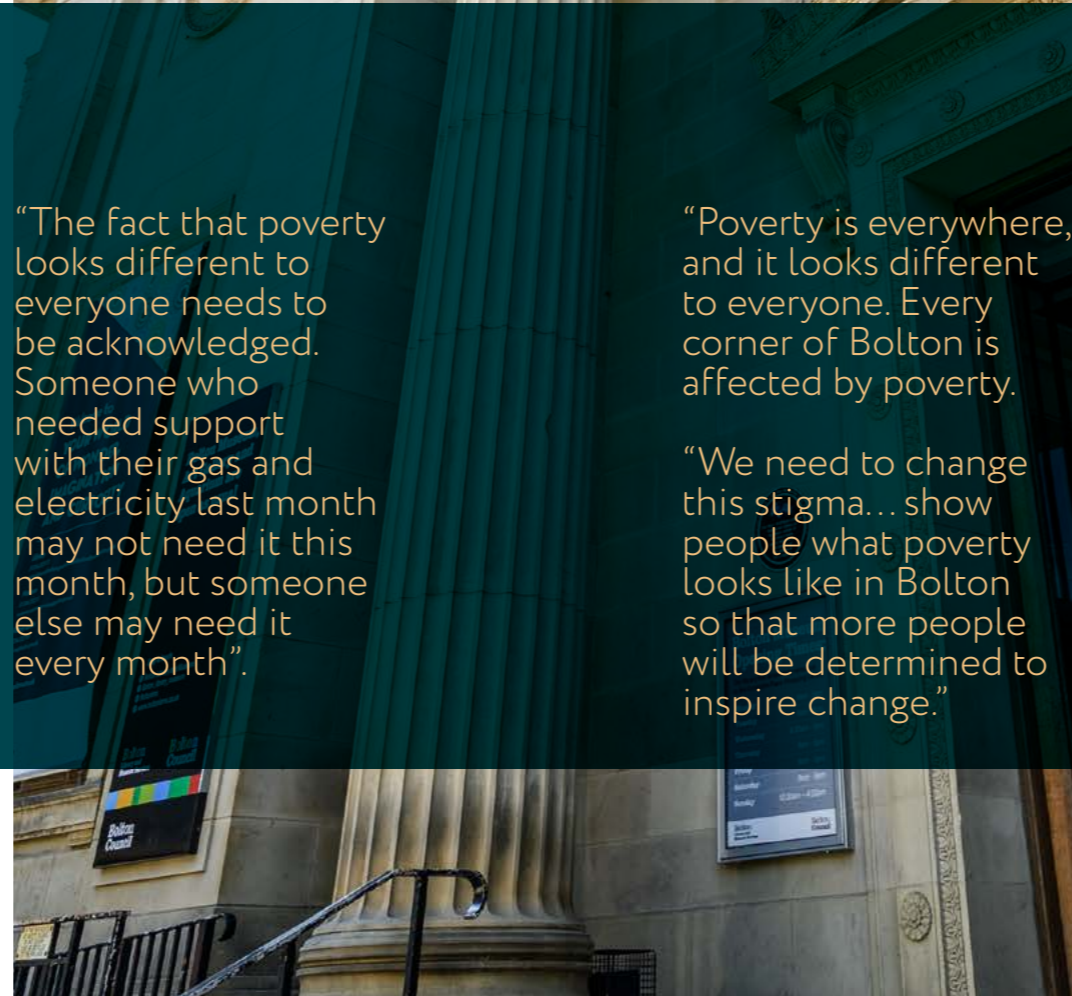
“Poverty in its basic form is a ‘lack of’ that means an individual or family does not have the basics or even the ability to lead a flourishing life.”

Every family who can just afford to get by, every child who has not eaten breakfast at home because it can be provided in school, even those who have to switch from branded to store-name foods.”

“The fact that poverty looks different to everyone needs to be acknowledged. Someone who needed support with their gas and electricity last month may not need it this month, but someone else may need it every month”.

“Poverty is everywhere, and it looks different to everyone. Every corner of Bolton is affected by poverty.

“We need to change this stigma... show people what poverty looks like in Bolton so that more people will be determined to inspire change.”



Our definition of poverty

There is no universally accepted definition of poverty, but it is broadly agreed that poverty is fundamentally about a lack of material resources. Bolton defines poverty relatively, as lacking the financial resources to meet basic needs and fully participate in society, primarily driven by inadequate income.

In developing the strategy, we asked residents and partner organisations about what poverty means to them.

The key themes that emerged regarding poverty in Bolton include:

INSUFFICIENT INCOME: Poverty is lacking the necessary resources to meet basic needs and to participate fully in society. This is primarily driven by inadequate income.

HOUSING INSECURITY: Families without secure accommodation often live in temporary or unsuitable housing due to the lack of affordable options.

WORKING POOR: People who are employed but still cannot afford basic needs or occasional luxuries due to low income and the need to make cutbacks.

LACK OF HOPE: Many people experience a sense of hopelessness, feeling that it is impossible to make a change or improve their lives, with no clear path to progress.

THE STIGMA OF POVERTY: Poverty often carries a stigma, which can lead to feelings of pride that can prevent people from seeking help.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL: Not everyone's experience of poverty is the same. Stakeholders emphasised the need for the strategy to highlight that people's paths can vary significantly based on factors such as the area they grew up in or their parent's financial situation. This diversity of experience highlights the need for a refined approach to addressing poverty, acknowledging that it can be experienced in different ways depending on an individual's circumstances.

ONGOING CYCLES: People described poverty as a never-ending cycle that requires consistent support and active efforts to create and sustain change.

THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

Residents and partners highlighted poverty's profound and far-reaching impact on the lives of residents in Bolton.

The following key areas emerged:



Mental and physical impact

The strain of living in poverty significantly affects residents' physical and mental wellbeing.

Chronic stress, anxiety, and related health issues were frequently mentioned by organisations providing frontline support.



Cultural and social exclusion

Poverty creates substantial barriers to cultural and social participation, reinforcing cycles of exclusion.

Limited access to education, professional development opportunities, and community activities further isolate those in poverty, reducing their ability to break free from these circumstances.



Geographical pockets of poverty

Certain areas in Bolton, such as Rumworth North, Central Bolton, Halliwell, and Brownlow Fold, are more acutely affected by poverty.



Climate

Poverty and climate change are closely linked, with people on low incomes more vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate and less able to adapt to its effects. For those on low incomes, this often means facing rising energy costs, limited access to green spaces, and poor air quality that can lead to significant health problems. Recognising these challenges, the council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to addressing these issues. Our climate change strategy, closely aligned with our anti-poverty efforts, sets out our approach to creating a more resilient and equitable community. This includes enhancing green spaces, planting more street trees, promoting sustainable transport focusing on walking and cycling, and reducing carbon emissions across our buildings and fleet.

We are also committed to ensuring that new developments meet climate change targets, supporting sustainable waste management, and promoting green economy skills. Additionally, we are working closely with the voluntary and community sector and our volunteer networks to drive climate action at the local level.



Intersectionality

Some groups within the community are disproportionately impacted by poverty due to a combination of various socio-economic factors, such as minority ethnic groups, lone-parent families, disabled people, care leavers and unpaid carers who face distinct barriers to financial security, exacerbating their vulnerability to poverty. We have formally adopted the socio-economic duty, which incorporates considerations of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage alongside the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

This commitment is embedded in our equality impact assessments, equality plans, and broader decision-making processes and strategies. This ensures that the council systematically considers the impact of its decisions, translating our commitment to fairness into actionable practice.

Poverty is everywhere, and it looks different to everyone.

MYTHBUSTING POVERTY

Poverty is often surrounded by misconceptions and stereotypes that misrepresent the realities faced by those living on the lowest incomes.

These myths not only misinform the public but also contribute to the stigma that prevents individuals from seeking the help they need, trapping them in a cycle of hardship.

As we developed this strategy, residents and partners highlighted the profound impact of this stigma on our community. It can deter people from acknowledging their struggles and accessing available support, further deepening their challenges. Therefore, a crucial component of our strategy is to actively dispel these myths and stereotypes.

Here are some of the most common myths about poverty and the realities that counter them...

MYTH

Poverty is due to individual failures, such as not wanting to work.

REALITY

Many people living in poverty are employed, often in multiple jobs, yet still struggle to meet basic needs due to low wages and rising living costs. In 2022/23, 63% of children and working-age adults in poverty lived in families where at least one adult worked part-time or more, highlighting the rise of in-work poverty.

(Health Foundation, 2024)



MYTH

Welfare benefits are too generous and encourage dependency.

REALITY

Current working-age benefits are insufficient to meet basic needs. Analysis by The Trussell Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) reveals that the weekly Universal Credit standard allowance falls £35 short of covering essential items for a single person and £66 short for a couple.

Further analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research (2023) projects that out-of-work support will decline to just 11.2% of weekly median pay by 2030, even when assuming annual benefit increases in line with inflation. This would mark the lowest level of support since records began, highlighting the inadequacy of current welfare benefits as a genuine safety net.

MYTH

There is a “culture of poverty” where negative attitudes and behaviours are passed down through generations.

REALITY

The challenges faced by those living in poverty are not the result of a shared culture or negative behaviours. Instead, they stem from structural barriers, systemic discrimination, inequalities, and social exclusion.



MEASUREMENTS OF POVERTY

There is no perfect measure to assess poverty, as it is a complex issue requiring a range of measures to provide a full picture. The two most commonly used measures of poverty based on disposable income are relative and absolute.

Measure of poverty

Relative poverty: households with net incomes of less than 60% UK median household income, in the same year.

Absolute poverty: households with net incomes or less than 60% of the UK median household income, in the base year (2010/11), adjusted for inflation.

Meaning

Relative poverty measures how the income of the poorest households compares to average incomes.

Absolute poverty looks at the incomes of the poorest households compares to average incomes over time to track how income is keeping pace with rising costs.

**In 2022/23,
14.3 million**
(21% of the UK)
were living in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC)

**In 2022/23,
12 million**
(18% of the UK)
were living in absolute poverty after housing costs (AHC).

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2024)

The table below outlines some of the other most frequently cited measures of poverty:

Measure of poverty

Joseph Rowntree Foundation's (JRF) Minimum Income Standard (MIS)

Material deprivation

Destitution

Persistent poverty

Meaning

MIS itself is not a measure of poverty but is what the public has said is sufficient income to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living.

It asks the public what goods and services households currently need to reach a basic standard of living and then works out how much income is needed to purchase these items.

In 2023, a single person needed to earn £29,500 a year to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living, and a couple with two children needed to earn £50,000 between them.

Where you cannot afford certain essential items and activities which are deemed to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living and social participation.

In 2022/23, 3.8 million working-age adults in the UK experienced material deprivation, or 9% of working-age adults in the UK.

The JRF defines destitution as those who have gone without two or more essentials in the past month because they couldn't afford them, or whose income is so extremely low that they are unable to purchase these essentials for themselves.

Essentials are defined as having a home, food, heating, lighting, clothing, shoes, and basic toiletries.

JRF found that 1.8 million households experienced destitution in 2022, a 64% increase since 2019. The essentials that most destitute people went without most often were food (61%), followed by heating (59%).

Persistent poverty is defined as households experiencing relative poverty for at least three out of the past four years.

Based on data from the Understanding Society survey, between 2018/19 and 2021/22, 12% were in persistent low income after housing costs (AHC).

Sources: JRF (2023b); Department for Work and Pensions (2024)

DRIVERS OF POVERTY

Poverty is driven by a range of factors that limit people's ability to meet their basic needs and fully participate in society.

These factors not only push individuals further into financial insecurity but also act as barriers, trapping them in a cycle of poverty. As outlined below, there are three key drivers of poverty. The table that follows details these drivers and the factors that influence them.



Insufficient income from employment

Labour market inequalities—such as inadequate pay, job insecurity, and limited opportunities for progression—leave many workers struggling to make ends meet, especially as wage growth lags behind inflation. Furthermore, the lack of access to skill development and career advancement traps many in low-paid, unstable jobs, worsening poverty and financial insecurity.



Increasing costs of living

With inflation reaching a forty-year high, low-income households are facing increasingly tough choices in their daily spending, often forced to decide between paying bills, buying food, or using gas and electricity. These households are spending a much more significant portion of their income on essentials. A 2024 study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies highlights the disproportionate impact of rising food prices on those living in poverty. The study found that the least well-off were hardest hit by “cheapflation” during the 2021-23 period, with their food costs increasing by 29.1%, compared to a 23.5% increase for better-off households.

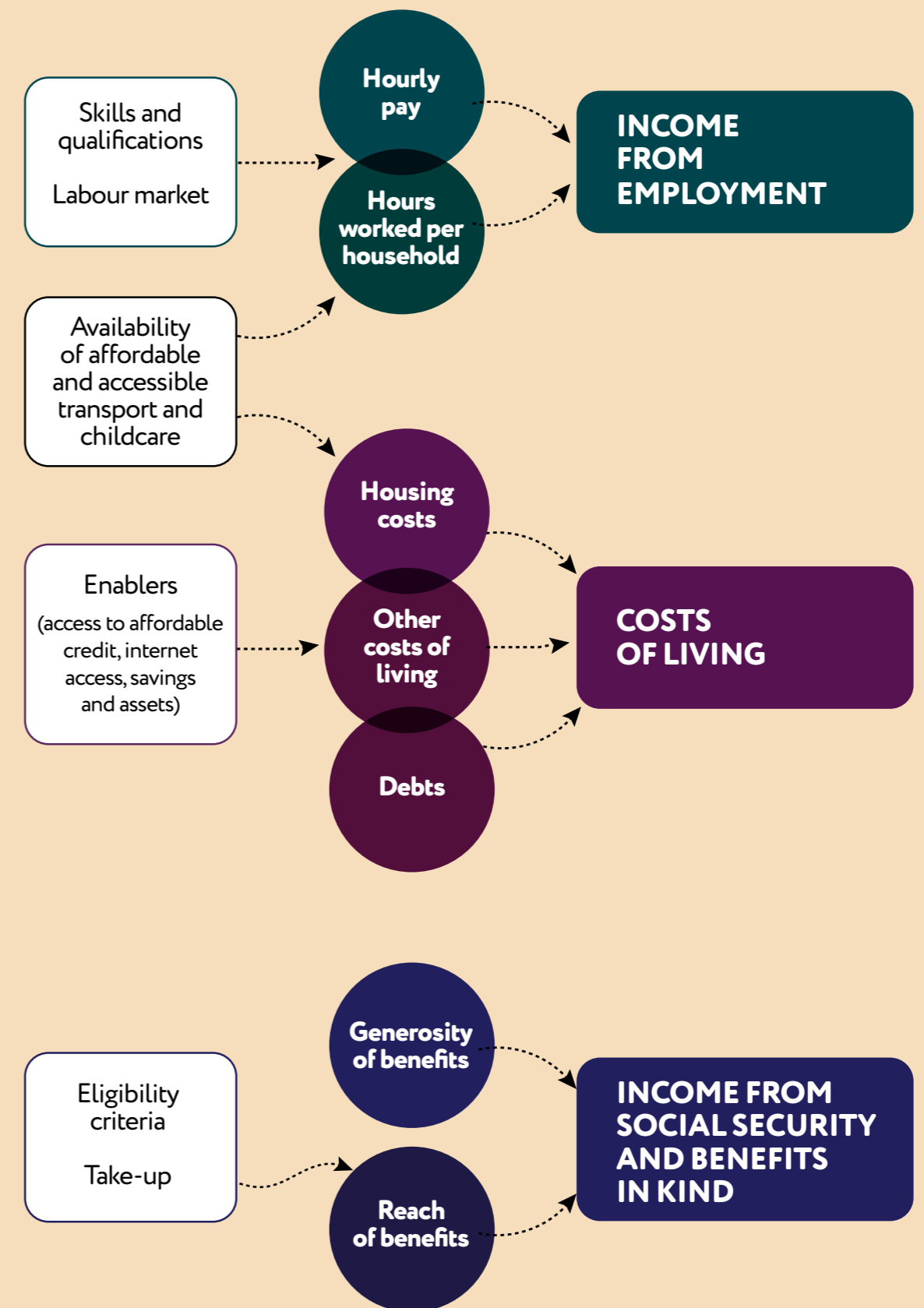
Addressing these drivers requires coordinated action from the national government. However, the council and local stakeholders have a critical role to play, and this strategy sets out the actions they are taking to address their impact in Bolton.



Insufficient income social security and benefits in kind

A decade of austerity measures, coupled with cuts and freezes, has significantly eroded the effectiveness of working-age benefits. The social security system now falls short of protecting people from experiencing poverty.

Additionally, the complex and often cumbersome administration of benefits makes it difficult for individuals to access the support they need. This complexity leads to lower take-up rates, payment delays, lost information, and inappropriate sanctions. Policy in Practice (2023) estimates that £18.7 billion in income-related benefits and social tariffs goes unclaimed each year. They estimate that £7.5 billion of Universal Credit is unclaimed by 1.2 million households.

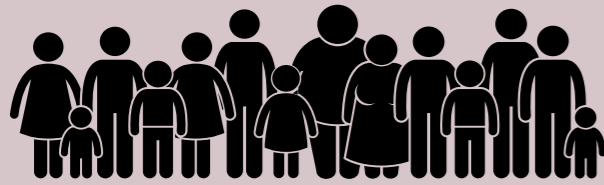




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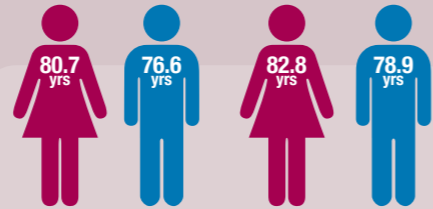
Bolton Profile

Bolton Profile



Population
298,903

The borough has a higher proportion of older people (65 years plus) than Greater Manchester as a whole. Around half of Bolton's residents are aged under 40.

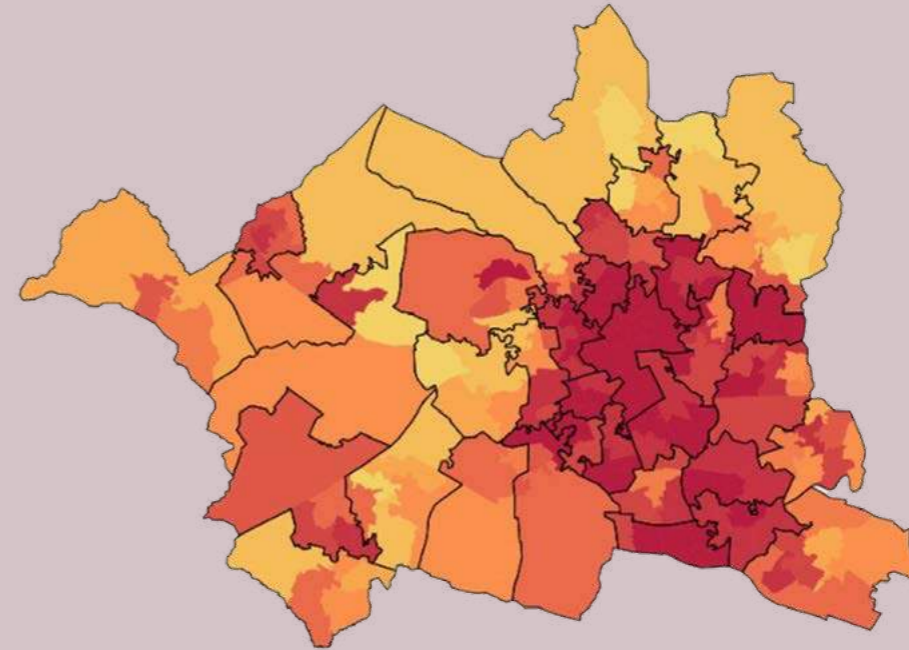


Bolton **England**

Life expectancy at birth varies across Bolton by 10.3 years for males and 8 years for females (2016-20).

Life expectancy for Bolton as a whole for males is 76.6, 2 years younger than England; and for females 80.7, also 2 years younger than England (2020-22).

IMD 2019 ACROSS LSOA'S IN BOLTON COMPARED TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF DEPRIVATION IN ENGLAND



Using 2021 census data, lower layer super output areas (LSOA's), population estimates, **26% of the Bolton population live in an area that is among the 10% most deprived nationally**, while 45% of the population live in an area that is among the 20% most deprived nationally.



37.8% of Bolton residents have attained an RQF4 or higher qualification, compared to the national average of 47.3%. (RQFA 4 or higher qualification means: HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent)

4%

OF THE BOLTON POPULATION LIVE IN AN AREA THAT IS AMONG THE 10% LEAST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY, WHILE 12% LIVE IN AN AREA THAT IS AMONG THE 20% LEAST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY.

41.6%
(30,586) **OF CHILDREN LIVE IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.**



The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 years in Bolton who were claiming unemployment-related benefits was 6.6% in July 2024, an increase compared with July 2023 when it was 5.6%.



THE AVERAGE MONTHLY PRIVATE RENT IN BOLTON WAS £759 IN JULY 2024.

This was an increase from £700 in July 2023, a 8.5% rise.

As of March 2024, **Bolton's unemployment rate for individuals aged 16 and over stood at 6.3%**, significantly higher than the North West average of 4.5% and the national average of 3.9%.



14.9% of households in Bolton are estimated to be in fuel poverty. This is higher than the national average of 13.1%.

LIVED EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

While data is important, it is essential to go beyond the numbers and engage with the lived experiences of those directly affected by poverty and the organisations on the frontlines.

Central to our work has been ensuring that the voices of Bolton residents with lived experience of poverty inform the development of the strategy and action plan and will continue to shape its implementation and monitoring.

Engagement with our local community and partners took various forms, as outlined previously. Among these efforts, Resolve Poverty's engagement work brought together 24 Bolton residents with lived experience of poverty, representing a diverse range of ages, backgrounds, and

life circumstances. Recruitment was carried out by members of the Anti-Poverty Working Group and via Resolve Poverty's existing contacts in the community. This included Leverhulme Primary School, Bolton CVS, Bolton at Home, Urban Outreach, Be Strong and local youth groups.

These sessions provided a deep understanding of the impacts of poverty in the borough and helped identify the key priorities for developing the strategy and ongoing anti-poverty efforts. Participants were given a monetary thank-you for their involvement in these sessions.

What residents told us matters to them...

Feedback from residents has been pivotal in identifying the key themes and priority actions for this strategy. They shared the real-life impact of poverty and financial stress, highlighting how low income restricts choices and opportunities.

Many residents reported struggling to afford basic living costs, with some resorting to rationing food or avoiding heating to reduce expenses.

They emphasised the desire to thrive with dignity, without relying on emergency aid such as foodbanks.

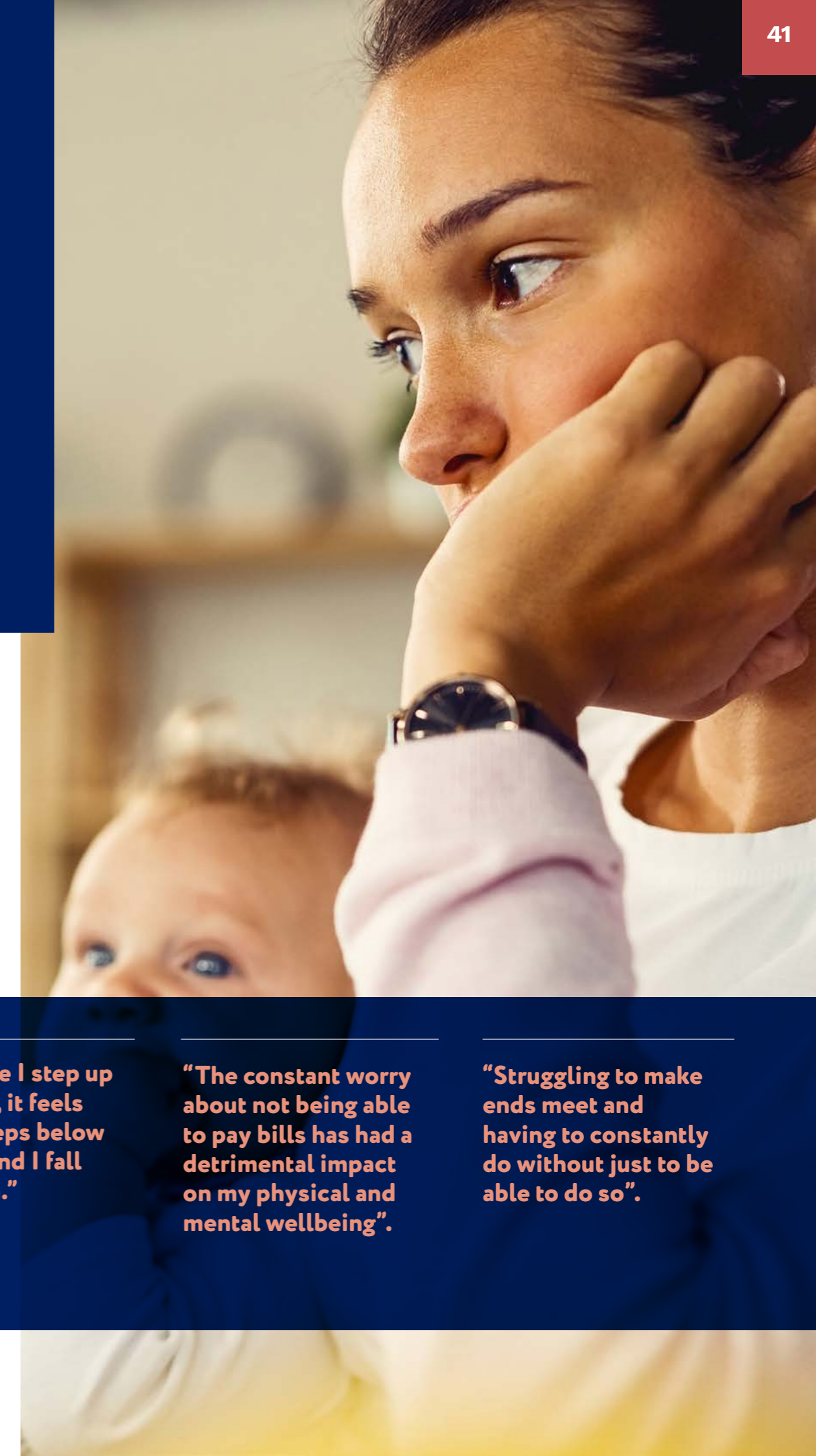
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“I can feel myself sliding into poverty and know there is nothing more I can do to budget to slow down. I'm working full time in the health service and have no disposable income”.

“Every time I step up the ladder, it feels like the steps below crumble, and I fall back down.”

“The constant worry about not being able to pay bills has had a detrimental impact on my physical and mental wellbeing”.

“Struggling to make ends meet and having to constantly do without just to be able to do so”.



Several key themes and priorities emerged, including a focus on prevention, addressing the rising cost of living, managing debt, improving access to support services, combating stigma, fostering community engagement, enhancing the role of frontline services, and advocating for policy changes at the national level.



Prevention

We heard that there needs to be a greater focus on early intervention, ensuring that financial education is embedded in schools and community programmes, providing both young people and adults with the skills and knowledge they need to manage their finances effectively from an early age.

Cost of Living

The rising cost of living emerged as a significant concern, with many residents struggling to afford basic necessities such as heating and food. The feedback emphasised that this issue has drastically reduced the quality of life for many, forcing difficult trade-offs between essentials.



Debt

Debt was a prevalent issue among residents, with many expressing concerns about their ability to manage or escape mounting financial pressures. Some residents shared how they had difficulty accessing credit, so they and others they knew regularly borrowed from each other to get by.



Stigma

Residents commented on the shame and stigma often associated with living in poverty. Some shared that feelings of pride and fear of judgment led them to exhaust their savings before seeking welfare benefits.

Access to support services

Residents shared their experiences accessing support services, highlighting challenges in identifying the correct information and advice due to the numerous entry points. They emphasised the importance of making support services more accessible by meeting people where they are and ensuring that these services are visible and embedded within the community.

Community engagement

Residents expressed a strong desire to be meaningfully involved in local decision-making, particularly on how resources are allocated within their communities. They emphasised that their participation should be more than tokenistic, with a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes.

Residents also highlighted the importance of being treated equally in discussions, ensuring their expertise and experiences are valued. One participant captured this sentiment, stating,

“We want to actually go into a room and sit with these professional people without feeling we shouldn't be there, that we have no right to be there. That we are just like them.”

“

Lived Experience Case Studies

Angela is a single mother of two children and is out of work due to health issues.

She used to struggle with affording one-off items, but this has become more frequent since the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Angela now struggles to afford food and utility costs for her household and has resorted to using



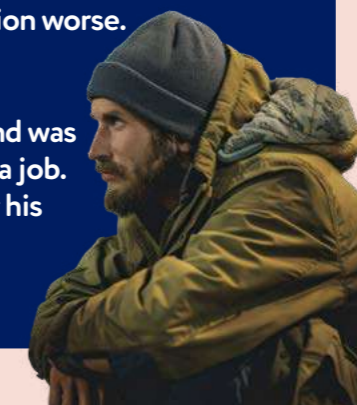
more blankets at home to stay warm and receiving support from foodbanks.

She has fallen behind with Council Tax payments and had previously taken out a payday loan. Angela sought support from Bolton's Money Skills Service, to improve her finances and shared that she wouldn't have known what to do without their help. She was worried about others in her community who were stuck in a cycle of borrowing off each other and were struggling with rising debts.

Andrew had previously been homeless, after having significant debts and rent arrears.

He shared that he “didn't understand what a payday loan was” and that this had made his situation worse.

After receiving help from Be Strong, Andrew felt more financially stable and was attending employment events to find a job. He was hoping to continue improving his finances and his mental health had already improved.



Using these insights, we have refined our strategy to outline how we will work together in partnership over the next three years to address poverty in Bolton. Our focus will be on prevention, mitigating the impact of rising living costs, ensuring people have access to advice and financial support, and working together to make poverty everyone's business in Bolton.

The role of frontline services

Residents highlighted the positive impact that frontline services and organisations in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector have in addressing poverty in Bolton, emphasising the strong partnership working across the community.

Services such as Men in Sheds, The Mill Community Grocery at King's Church, Bolton at Home, and Bolton's Money Skills service were noted for providing vital support that improved residents' finances, mental health, and overall wellbeing.

Lobbying for change

Residents emphasised that the local authority and key stakeholders should actively advocate for broader policy changes at the national level to better support local residents, businesses, and organisations.

They highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between residents and national decision-makers by promoting residents' voices within these advocacy efforts or directly involving them in spaces where they can push for change.

ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to ensuring that residents with lived experience continue to meaningfully shape and influence our work.

By utilising existing mechanisms for engagement, we will keep residents at the heart of our strategy and decision-making process. Our approach is rooted in actively listening, understanding, and responding to the insights of local people and stakeholders. We will sustain this engagement in collaboration with our partners to ensure our actions reflect the community's needs.



Our ongoing commitment includes:

- Conducting consultations on key issues that affect our residents.
- Partnering with key stakeholders to lead lived experience engagement activities, gathering valuable insights from, for example, frontline services.
- Promoting active involvement in local community events.
- Offering training and volunteering opportunities that empower residents to become advocates for change.
- Ensuring that people are recognised for the time and experience they share, promoting an equitable approach to engagement and maximising opportunities for those who may not otherwise participate.



Our approach is rooted in actively listening, understanding, and responding to the insights of local people and stakeholders.



06

Key themes and priority actions

KEY THEMES AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

At Bolton, we are committed to addressing poverty and working together to achieve our vision of ensuring that no one lives in households affected by poverty and deprivation.

Our strategy is focused on identifying and prioritising key actions and themes that will help us make meaningful progress towards this goal.

There is a great deal of fantastic work being done locally to prevent and reduce poverty. While it is not possible to encapsulate every initiative in this strategy, we are concentrating on the crucial themes and priority actions that our partners and residents have identified as essential.

Through stakeholder engagement, we have pinpointed three critical themes central to our strategy and ongoing efforts to combat poverty:

- 1 Prevention and reduction**
Focusing on long-term responses to prevent and reduce poverty. Actions that the council and its partners can undertake to address the root causes of poverty, aiming to reduce its prevalence in Bolton.
- 2 Mitigation
(supporting people struggling in poverty now)**
Efforts by the council and its partners to provide targeted support to those directly affected by poverty, helping to alleviate its immediate effects and improve quality of life.
- 3 Working together**
Strengthening partnership working to ensure better collaboration between organisations in Bolton, utilising our strengths, resources, and capabilities more effectively.



This section highlights a select number of actions undertaken by the council and partners across the borough. These featured actions demonstrate our commitment to making meaningful progress on the key priorities. While these specific actions are showcased here, they represent just a small portion of the extensive work happening throughout the borough. To further illustrate the impact of our collective efforts, we have also included case studies of other initiatives that align with the identified priorities.

The themes and priority actions outlined here form the framework for the accompanying action plan, which offers a detailed overview of the broad range of efforts carried out by the council and its partners. This action plan will be reviewed and developed annually to ensure it addresses the community's evolving needs.

PREVENTION AND REDUCTION

Our focus is on addressing the root causes of poverty to reduce its prevalence across Bolton.

We aim to minimise the risk of poverty by identifying those at risk and connecting them with the right support before a crisis occurs. By working in partnership, we strive to reduce household costs, increase access to essential services, and alleviate financial burdens on those already struggling.

Our key priorities are maximising income, promoting an inclusive economy, improving educational attainment, and enhancing access to affordable, safe, and secure housing. These priorities guide our strategy as we move forward, ensuring that our efforts are focused on creating a sustainable, supportive environment for all residents.

PRIORITY 1

Helping people maximise their income, including helping them claim the benefits and support they may be entitled to, managing their household expenditures, and reducing debt.

We will...

Provision of a vast range of mixed support across the borough, including benefits and debt advice, benefit checks and tribunal representation / processing, entitlements and financial capability offers. This is not an exhaustive list but services available to support this priority action include:

- Bolton's Money Skills Service
- Bolton At Home
- Bolton Community Homes Partnership
- Citizens Advice Bury and Bolton
- Farnworth Baptist Church
- Bolton Council's Welfare Rights
- Bolton Council's Home Visiting Team
- Macmillan Benefits Adviser post
- Age UK

CASE STUDY

Bolton's Money Skills Service (BMSS)

BMSS offers free, impartial money guidance to people who live, work and study in Bolton.

BMSS advised a resident who is a single parent and has multiple health problems. The resident had council tax arrears going back several years and water arrears. Part of the council tax arrears were with enforcement agents (bailiffs).

The team spoke with the Council Tax Department, which agreed to recall the account from the bailiffs. They agreed to put several different amounts together under a payment arrangement at the minimum level. BMSS submitted a discretionary council tax reduction application for help with the

current year's charge.

The application was successful and as well as paying the current year, the resident has been given discretionary help for some previous years, which have reduced the outstanding amount she has to pay.

The team applied to the United Utilities Trust Fund for help with her water arrears and they paid off almost the full outstanding balance, and they placed her on any of the other water hardship schemes for which she is eligible. BMSS's intervention has helped reduce her debt and removed a great deal of stress from her life.

PRIORITY 1

CASE STUDY

Citizens Advice Bury and Bolton (CABB)

CABB is an independent and impartial advice provider in Bolton dedicated to supporting residents with various issues, including housing, welfare benefits, money and energy advice.

Recently, they provided critical assistance to a Bolton resident who was sleeping in their car, caring for a disabled child, and facing a cancer diagnosis.

The CABB Housing Team thoroughly assessed the housing circumstances and facilitated a best-interest meeting with the client and housing services to find suitable temporary accommodation.

Additionally, the Welfare Benefits Team at CABB found that all their income was joint claims of legacy benefits with their ex-partner; they were receiving Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Carers Allowance

(CA). They advised and assisted them with a Special Rules (SR1) form and assisted to claim Universal Credit (UC).

Recognising the individual's complex needs, CABB took proactive steps to connect them with further assistance.

Specifically, they referred the resident to the MacMillan advice project at Bolton Hospice.

As a result of these interventions, positive outcomes were achieved, including increased income to £1220/month through UC, the homelessness situation addressed and improvements in the health and wellbeing of both the child and resident.



PRIORITY 1

CASE STUDY

Age UK Bolton

Age UK Bolton offers information, advice and assistance on a wide range of issues, affecting people over the age of 50 and their carers.

Mr and Mrs A live in social housing. They both have serious health problems and care for each other. He is of working age and has severe mental health difficulties. She is over pension age and has mobility problems.

They had previously applied for Pension Credit but were told they were not entitled as they are classed as a mixed-age couple (one is over pension age, and one is under pension age).

However, upon investigation it was found that they met one of the exceptions to this rule which meant they should be eligible. They were helped to reapply but were again turned down. Age UK Bolton challenged this decision and while waiting for a new decision, the clients

were wrongly advised by staff at Pension Credit that their claim was lost and to make a new claim. This would have led to them losing their backdated payment. The team got them back on track and the original decision not to award Pension Credit was overturned and was backdated to the start of the original claim.

In the meantime, Mrs A was also helped to receive the high-rate Attendance Allowance of £108.55pw.

In the end they were awarded Pension Credit of £239.90 per week and they got a backdated payment of £4,791.04. In total they were £18,119.40 per year better off.



PRIORITY 2

Promoting an inclusive economy by improving access to good quality sustainable employment. Addressing barriers to employment through supporting access to training and upskilling and promoting flexible opportunities that suit individual skills and needs.

We will...

Embed employment support across all Bolton At Home activities. A core employment offer includes work clubs, barrier-busting, and help with CVs in UCAN centres.

CASE STUDY

Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

Bolton Council staff do an outstanding job working in our communities and with residents, providing the vital services we all rely on.

Membership of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter demonstrates our commitment to continuing to improve the working lives of staff so that they feel valued, supported, and included.

Launched in 2019, the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter is a voluntary membership and assessment scheme that aims to raise employment standards across the city region. Organisations and companies of all sizes and sectors can sign up for the

Charter, which now has over 100 Members.

All 10 Greater Manchester councils are now signed up to the Good Employment Charter, formally committing to providing good working practices.

The Good Employment Charter is doing positive work to ensure people are paid fairly and treated appropriately and that opportunities to progress are available to all.

PRIORITY 3

Improve educational attainment with routes to further education, training, or employment and opportunities for learning throughout life.

We will...

Offer services and programmes around intervention, prevention and targeted engagement. This includes identifying early on, children and young people who are at risk of low attainment levels and supporting them through a number of projects and interventions.

Bolton Wanderers In The Community also provide lifelong learning through employability projects, supporting individuals not in education, employment or training to continue their learning and aiming to provide them with the necessary skills for employment.

CASE STUDY

Bolton at Home (BH) Employment and Work Experience Programme

BH's Employment and Work Experience programme provides experience within a work environment and knowledge of the day-to-day demands and etiquette of working.

It helps develop new skills and build confidence, can provide a reference for prospective employers, and helps us meet our key outcome of supporting tenants and residents into employment and training every year.

In September 2020, the Chancellor announced a new Kickstart Scheme to encourage employers to create more work opportunities for unemployed people displaced by the pandemic. The BH group created 22 of these roles, which proved to be a huge success. BH prides itself on its social values, creating real job opportunities for unemployed people, and offering wrap-around employment

support to help people move on into more permanent roles.

Due to the government's Kickstart Scheme ending, BH has been looking to create ongoing opportunities internally that give unemployed people a chance to gain meaningful employment with wrap-around support to boost their chances of moving into a prosperous career.

Supporting residents is more important now than ever, given the economic impact of COVID-19 and the rise in living costs; in April 2022 and again in October 2022, inflation reached its highest recorded level, affecting the affordability of goods and services for households.

PRIORITY 4

Improving access to affordable, safe, and secure homes.

We will...

Influence the development of the next Affordable Homes Programme through strengthening partnership arrangements within the latest devolution deal, to ensure it meets residents' needs whilst working with Bolton tenants to access welfare and hardship funds. We will also work

with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to co-design the next GM Housing Strategy with key stakeholders aiming for zero carbon, making cost-of-living support available through private landlords whilst ensuring the Good Landlord Charter is widely recognised.

CASE STUDY

Bolton at Home

Bolton at Home (BH) owns, manages, and maintains over 18,000 homes across the borough.

It has a long history of being more than a traditional landlord delivering landlord functions. BH is heavily invested in its customers and communities, understanding that a wider investment creates neighborhoods that do not just survive but thrive.

BH is maximising its ability to deliver new homes (development programme through to 2025/26), working collaboratively on development sites, schemes to maximise impact and reduce costs, developing ways to use modern methods of construction to accelerate delivery.

Below are some of the key activities they are currently undertaking:

- Target to build 1,500 homes - continue to deliver approximately 75% low cost rented accommodation, the remaining properties being made available for low-cost home ownership products. On target to achieve this as they've now gone beyond their 1000th new build handover and with another circa 600 in the pipeline.
- Continue to work closely with Bolton Council to bring forward strategic sites for affordable housing and with other partners such as HIVE Homes,
- who BH invest in to secure additional funding to develop more properties. This is ongoing, with sites such as Avenue St which was acquired from the Council.
- Continue to acquire affordable rented and shared ownership properties through s106 Agreements with private developers on their development sites. In April 2024, they have acquired over 250 properties to-date through this process with over 200 more awaiting completion. The good working relationship they have with Bellway, Persimmon and Morris Homes has continued to ensure that a good supply of s106 properties continue to be delivered with a further 240 either on-site or in contract and about to commence.
- Continue to consider Modern Methods of Construction in new build developments, building on the success of the modular homes at Victory Rd, Little Lever. They are currently continuing to monitor the modular industry as there are challenges around cost and deliverability that have hampered progress in this area. We will continue to watch this area, joining local forums and gathering feedback from counterparts.



MITIGATION

Our approach to mitigating the impacts of poverty in Bolton is centred on providing timely and targeted support to those facing financial hardship, ensuring that people can meet their essential needs.

We are committed to improving access to vital services by streamlining referral processes, enhancing signposting, and increasing awareness of the available support across the borough.

Additionally, we aim to ensure that everyone can participate in social, cultural, and leisure activities, recognising the critical role of community engagement in reducing social isolation and supporting mental and physical health. We will continue working closely with partners to provide necessary goods and services, ensuring effective support for those in need.

PRIORITY 5

Improving access to services, including referring processes, signposting, and raising awareness of available support.

We will...

Develop a Family Help offer to provide the right support at the right time to families. This will bring together Family Hubs and Early Help. Providing a place-based approach to reducing escalation of need across education, health and

social care, including a coordinated approach to Demand Management to avoid costs across social care, education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and alternative provision, transport and continue to deliver good outcomes.

CASE STUDY

Resolve Poverty- Money Advice Referral Tool (MART)

Resolve Poverty (RP) is a recognised leader on poverty in the UK and exists to end poverty in Greater Manchester and beyond.

RP believes it is vital that financially vulnerable households have access to advice-based support services to boost household income and financial resilience. However, for many frontline organisations helping people deal with poverty, information on where to refer people for appropriate support and advice is not always easy to find.

To simplify the process and put the key information at the fingertips of organisations and professionals, we have co-produced the Money Advice Referral Tool (MART), which originated from a project in Scotland. The MART has been developed in six boroughs of Greater Manchester, with Bolton being the latest addition.

How the MART works

The MART aims to help people get assistance with financial difficulties earlier. It does this by making it simple for any organisation engaging with people struggling financially to take steps to maximise that person's income. The MART guides the user

through a three-stage conversation, first identifying the underlying cause of a person's financial difficulty, then looking at the options to tackle this, and finally identifying an appropriate expert organisation to refer/signpost the individual to. This includes organisations that can help with issues that may have caused their financial difficulties in the first place or be compounding these difficulties – mental health, for example.

Feedback from other boroughs shows that users find the document simple to use and that it only requires them to make very few and very limited choices. The MART user does not need expertise in money issues as they are not giving advice.

A wide-ranging working group, including representatives from the council, VCSE organisations, foodbanks, housing groups, and people with lived experience of poverty, is developing the content of the borough-specific version for Bolton.

Visit Bolton MART at www.bolton.gov.uk/mart

To download a paper version visit

www.resolvepoverty.org/money-advice-referral-tools

Tonge Saturday event 16th March 2024

Bolton Family Hubs and Start Well Centres are places where families with children under the age of five (and beyond) can share both the joys and challenges of parenthood.

The Family, Food, and Fun Event was a free event designed to support Bolton families facing the rising cost of living, which is impacting many households. Urban Outreach provided food demonstrations, enhancing families' cooking skills and nutrition knowledge by preparing veggie chili wraps and salsa. The Play and Youth Service offered outdoor activities for older children, while Noteweavers organized sensory and musical activities, and Proud 2B Parents led craft activities. There was something for children of all ages and for every family. Attendees received a free air fryer or slow cooker to support low-cost cooking.

The event successfully engaged local communities with the Family Hubs, allowing Family Hub Practitioners to promote the wide range of services and groups available across the Hubs. Over 100 people attended the event. Some families were already familiar with the Hubs as they regularly attend with their children, while others had never visited before and were unaware of the services available. Those

newly introduced to the Hubs were pleasantly surprised by the range of activities offered, particularly the sessions for children aged 0–4.

After speaking to the Family Hub Practitioners about these sessions, one parent remarked,

“My son would love that! He loves nature and outdoor activities; I’m going to bring him next week!”

—referring to the Little Bats sessions.

All families took part in the activities and shared with staff how much they enjoyed the day.

The event helped break down barriers to accessing the Family Hubs, as attendees were able to meet the staff who deliver group sessions and explore the spaces where these sessions are held. As a result of this event, it is hoped that those newly introduced to the Family Hubs will continue to use the services in the future.



PRIORITY 6

Improving opportunities for everyone to participate, including social, cultural, and leisure activities.

We will...

Provide a wide array of free-of-charge complimentary activities and social gatherings, various craft workshops, and reading groups, ensuring they remain accessible to all residents of Bolton. Furthermore, our collaboration with partners to present free and low-

cost cultural events is a testament to our commitment to nurturing a love for storytelling and reading for pleasure. Highlights of our agenda include the Summer Reading Challenge, alongside a series of free films, activities, and storytelling at the libraries.

CASE STUDY

Bolton Central Library - Cultural Activity in Bolton

There is clear and growing evidence of the impact creativity, culture and heritage have on quality of life, social mobility, skills, health, and wellbeing.

Bolton has an impressive number of cultural venues, and it has a powerful community and voluntary sector and excellent cultural partnerships. Recently there has been a concerted effort, stimulated by the launch of Bolton's Cultural Strategy, to slice cultural activity through everything we do across the Borough, from our regeneration projects to our Major Events Programme and education offer.

Bolton Council ringfenced a significant percentage of Bolton's Community and Place UK Shared Prosperity Funds to invest in Bolton's cultural activity.

This resulted in events such as Put Big Light On, a magical light festival which took place across six nights in December 2023 which attracted huge applause and feedback from residents that it made them feel happy and proud of the place they call home.

The investment has also supported other organisations such as Rock-It, Bolton Pride, Hive Artists, Creatives Now, and Bolton Film Festival, to develop their own creative practice and share it with the residents of Bolton through festivals, exhibitions, and participatory workshops.

PRIORITY 6

CASE STUDY

Bolton Central Library – New Community Floor

Bolton Central Library has recently undergone a £4 million investment through the Towns Fund Programme.

Central to this renovation was the creation of a new mezzanine floor which had community use at the heart of its design.

Consultation with residents has shown that although book borrowing is still fundamental to library services, there is a growing need to provide flexible and free community space for programme activity and lounge areas. The new community mezzanine floor provides space for games groups, craft and

knitting groups, local interest groups and much more.

This programme of activity makes the library an equitable social space, a place where anybody can come and take part or simply spend time in a warm space.

For some, it will reduce the impact of loneliness and isolation and for others, it will simply bring entertainment – both are important to a healthy and happy population.



PRIORITY 6

CASE STUDY

Bolton CVS

Bolton's Fund is a flagship VCSE grants program covering the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton.

The programme is managed by the Council's VCSE Infrastructure Partner, Bolton CVS. Since 2019, Bolton's Fund has been supporting Bolton's VCSE, driving innovation and fostering projects to benefit people and communities. Since 2019, over £5 million has been distributed to grassroots VCSE groups in Bolton. Bolton's Fund was established for the people of Bolton; as such, applications for Bolton's Fund grants are assessed by a team of independent, trained community volunteers.

Queens Park Bowling Club – Small Grant for £1,850 from Bolton's Fund

Queens Park Bowling Club is based in the centre of Bolton. Throughout the season, members come together to participate in competitive and non-competitive matches. The club promotes social interaction, encourages physical activity, and fosters connectivity between people.

The club's Chairman approached Bolton CVS in early 2022 to help secure funding to carry out essential maintenance on the green and to keep the clubhouse open during the winter months. Bolton CVS' Funding and Grants Officer supported them in applying to Bolton's Fund. In August 2022, they were awarded a grant of £1,850. This small grant funded repairs to benches and covered grounds maintenance costs, ensuring the green was suitable for play throughout the season. It also enabled them to keep the clubhouse open during the winter, allowing members to gather even after the bowling season and reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The confidence the club gained from applying for and managing their first Bolton's Fund grant encouraged them to bid again. Working with Bolton CVS, they submitted another application to extend and continue the activities already funded.

The second grant funded the clubhouse opening for another winter, offering activities such as dominoes, table bowls, and a pool. Members were also provided hot food and drinks, thereby reducing social isolation and offering support during the cost-of-living crisis, when many could not afford to heat their homes. They were also able to cover some of the playing fees so that members were not excluded due to economic pressures. The club currently has about 50 active members, and Bolton's Fund has helped them grow and support their members significantly.

Ken Holcroft, Chairman, said:
"The grant to keep the club open in winter was a godsend. We got people coming back who we hadn't seen socially since Covid. We got 5 or 6 new people coming in, and the whole club blossomed again. It's carried on— that spirit is still there now as we've got into the season. It's just livened the club up wonderfully well. People are going home happy, and they're not alone anymore due to new friendships. The support has been fantastic. Bolton CVS has been on the other side of a phone, email, or meeting to support us through the process. We're not tech-savvy, and you made it so easy and tailored to our needs."

PRIORITY 7

Ensuring those who require immediate assistance are supported to access goods and services.

We will...

Support our residents through the cost of living with the provision of food. This takes place in locations across Bolton that include further support, such as debt advisors and job clubs.

CASE STUDY

Bolton Care and Repair

Bolton's Care and Repair Service is Bolton Council's Home Improvement Agency, delivered in partnership with Bolton at Home.

Its aim is to help people maintain their independence and remain living in the comfort of their own homes.

Mrs. B's boiler was 17 years old and had stopped working. She has multiple health conditions, and the boiler breakdown, along with not having heating or hot water, caused many problems affecting her health and wellbeing. The boiler was assessed and deemed unrepairable, so the only option was for her to buy a new boiler, which she could not afford.

This financial pressure was causing her to become stressed and anxious, which also impacted her physical health.

Mrs. B was in receipt of eligible benefits. The case officer assisted her in making the grant application process as streamlined and easy as possible.

The grant was approved within four weeks. Mrs. B was extremely grateful for the grant funding and the speed at which it was processed. She provided feedback that the new boiler had alleviated her anxieties and worries and made a huge difference in her life.

WORKING TOGETHER

In Bolton, our approach to tackling poverty focuses on collaboration and partnership.

By bringing organisations across the borough together and sharing information and best practices, we aim to make better use of our collective resources and capabilities.

Our key priorities include continuing the work of our anti-poverty partnership group to guide the strategy's implementation, ensuring support services are tailored to meet individual needs, and providing assistance in a way that respects dignity and effectiveness. We are also committed to involving people with lived experience of poverty in shaping the services and policies that affect them, ensuring their voices are central to driving real change.

PRIORITY 8

Establishment of an Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group that will contribute to the implementation of the strategy.

We will...

Continue operating our anti-poverty working group, merging it with the Cost-of-Living Strategic Group to create an Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group. Drawing on expertise enabling a real understanding of the

issues facing Bolton residents. We will ensure the strategy addresses key themes, actions, and priorities derived from consultations and data analysis and monitor its progress as it evolves.

CASE STUDY

Anti-Poverty Partnership Group

In September 2023, a working group was established to assist in developing the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The strategy needed to be very much co-produced, and the establishment of this working group was vital in gaining commitment from partners and ensuring that "poverty is everybody's business." However, we are also aware that Bolton has a purposeful history of working in partnership around financial inclusion for over 20 years.

The working group comprises Bolton Council Services, Citizens Advice Bury & Bolton, Urban Outreach, Bolton at Home, Youth Leads UK, Bolton Wanderers In The Community, CVS, Age UK, DWP and Farnworth Baptist Church. Also, part of the working group is Resolve Poverty, a not-for-profit organisation working to prevent/reduce poverty across Greater Manchester and beyond.

Acknowledging the importance of reflecting the views of those with lived experience within the strategy, Resolve Poverty have delivered focus groups to a diverse range of residents, with emerging themes being considered as the strategy develops.

The group meet on a regular basis with the role and purpose of the group being to:

- Draw on members' expertise, allowing us to understand the issues facing Bolton residents.
- Ensure the strategy addresses key themes, actions and priorities derived from consultations and data analysis.
- Once the strategy has been developed and is live, the delivery group will be very much part of its governance and monitoring, as it progresses.

PRIORITY 9

Ensuring that all support services are tailored to meet individual needs, promoting dignity and effectiveness in the assistance provided.

We will...

Connect with the Health Inequalities Program at Bolton NHS and Foundation Trust which has a clear focus on education and awareness for staff on health inequalities, knowing patients and their needs and work with locality colleagues on standardising the process to an equality and health inequalities impact assessment.

CASE STUDY

Working Wardrobe

Working Wardrobe, set up by Bolton at Home, provides the Bolton community with the best possible chance of making a great first impression in interviews, helping individuals transition from unemployment to employment.

It supports customers in becoming economically active and living better lives. As the economy improves, the environment improves, and people become happier and healthier (both physically and mentally). They are also better positioned to access the services they need, as well as being able to support their families.

Romi initially came to Working Wardrobe for interview clothes, help with her CV, interview preparation, and a sector-specific mock interview.

With previous experience in HR and working in a patisserie, Romi had numerous skills, but she faced multiple barriers and struggled to convey her abilities in applications and interviews. Unsuccessful interviews had impacted her confidence and mental health.

Confidence building and interview technique improvement were offered, and she was successful in getting the job.

Her new role was not due to start for two months, and Romi wanted to work in a customer service setting before starting, so we supported her in applying for the Adult Work Experience Scheme with Bolton at Home.

Romi was successful in her application and worked as a volunteer for Working Wardrobe. This helped her engage with the local community, build confidence, meet new people, and complete courses in our Customer Training Programme, which helped her upskill. Romi started her new role and continued to volunteer with us in her free time.

Due to her language barrier, she didn't feel confident in writing an application form, so she came to us for further support. The Working Wardrobe assisted her in writing an application for a new role and coached her further in interview preparation. Romi was successful in being offered the role.

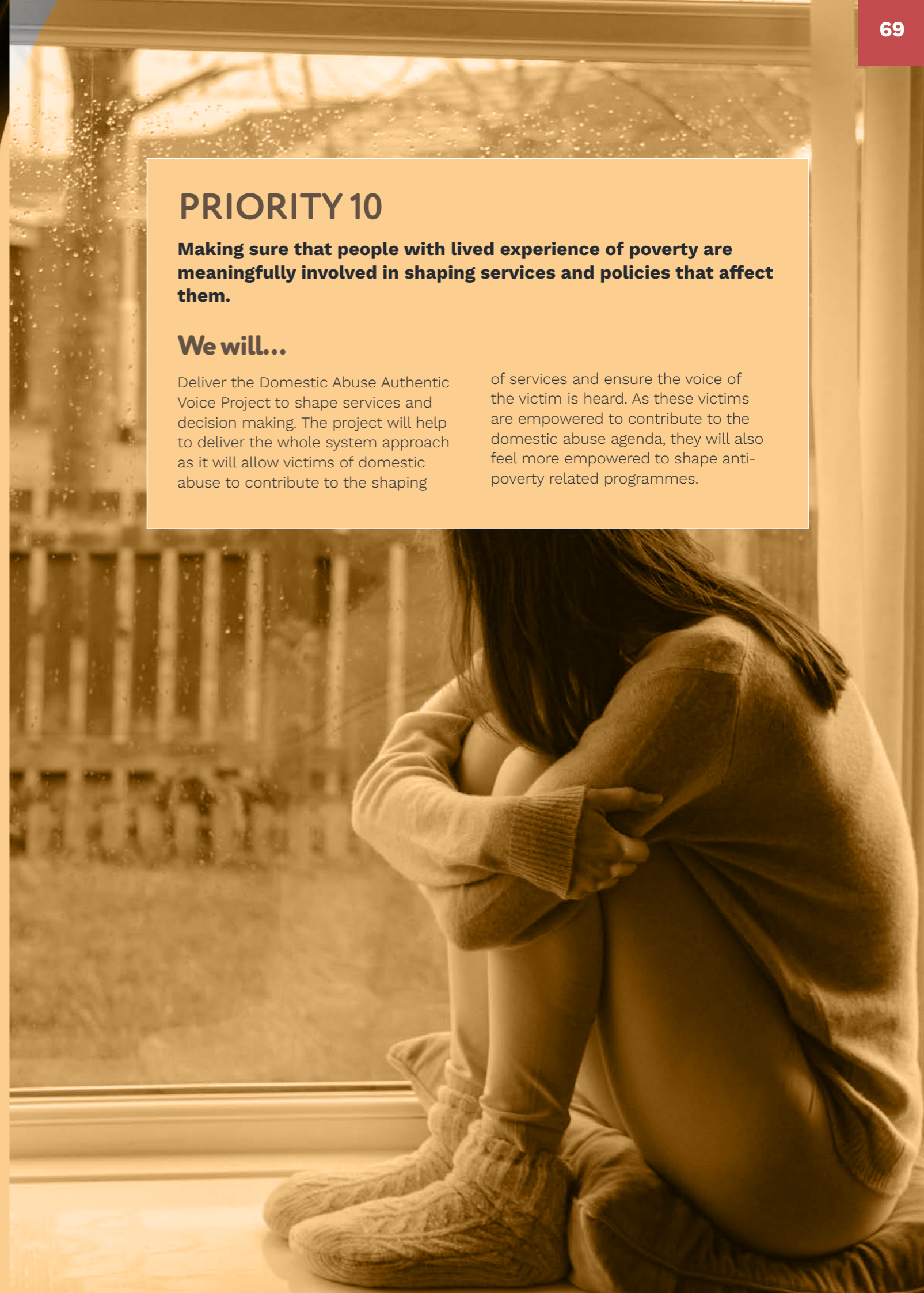
PRIORITY 10

Making sure that people with lived experience of poverty are meaningfully involved in shaping services and policies that affect them.

We will...

Deliver the Domestic Abuse Authentic Voice Project to shape services and decision making. The project will help to deliver the whole system approach as it will allow victims of domestic abuse to contribute to the shaping

of services and ensure the voice of the victim is heard. As these victims are empowered to contribute to the domestic abuse agenda, they will also feel more empowered to shape anti-poverty related programmes.



PRIORITY 11

Integrating the socio-economic duty to ensure that poverty is a key consideration in strategic decisions. We are dedicated to embedding this duty throughout the decision-making processes of public, private, and voluntary-sector organisations.

We will...

Develop new social value processes, which in time will stimulate further investment into communities and create further opportunities for individual residents. Supporting partnership development via Voice & Influence spaces whilst working to grow the Lived Experience Panel – with a broader, more diverse range of people.

CASE STUDY

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

The socio-economic duty is a powerful tool available to public authorities to address socio-economic inequality and a central component of our strategic approach to addressing poverty in Bolton.

The council voluntarily adopted the socio-economic duty over ten years ago, recognising its importance in guiding strategic decision-making and policy development. The council is committed to embedding the socio-economic duty across the decision-making processes of public, private, and voluntary-sector organisations. By doing so, we aim to ensure that all policies and decisions consider their potential impact on socio-economic inequality, helping to mitigate its effects and promote greater equality in our community.

The following example, which details the council's Holiday Activities & Food programme, shows the duty's practical impact. Through the Equalities Impact Assessment process, it

became evident that prioritising areas with higher rates of poverty was essential.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and co-ordinated by the Local Authority, Bolton's #HAF2024 programme continues the year with its summer offer.

The funding supports children and families on benefits related Free School Meals providing positive activities and food for a minimum of four hours a day for four days a week. The funding covers a week of delivery over Easter, four weeks delivery over summer and a week of delivery over the winter holidays. Activities must have a physical and enriching element along with some food education to complete the offer.

Governance

A multiagency steering group made up of public, private and voluntary organisations in Bolton agreed that the core principles of Team Bolton's HAF delivery would be 'local', 'data driven' and within a 'Bolton context'. These core principles underpin the 5-strand delivery model demonstrated in Figure 1.

Led by an independent chair, the steering group agree on strand budgets based on successful provider applications and need.

Figure 1



Targeted Communication for Free School Meal (FSM) families

All FSM eligible families receive a unique VIP invitation and ID number giving them early access to book Holiday Activities & Food provision during the HAF periods in 2024.

The invitation signposts them to the HAF microsite (www.bolton.gov.uk/HAF) where sessions from all providers are listed in easily accessible 'BL' postcode tabs.

The microsite also outlines a universal offer, family events and links to essential support.





07

Implementing the strategy

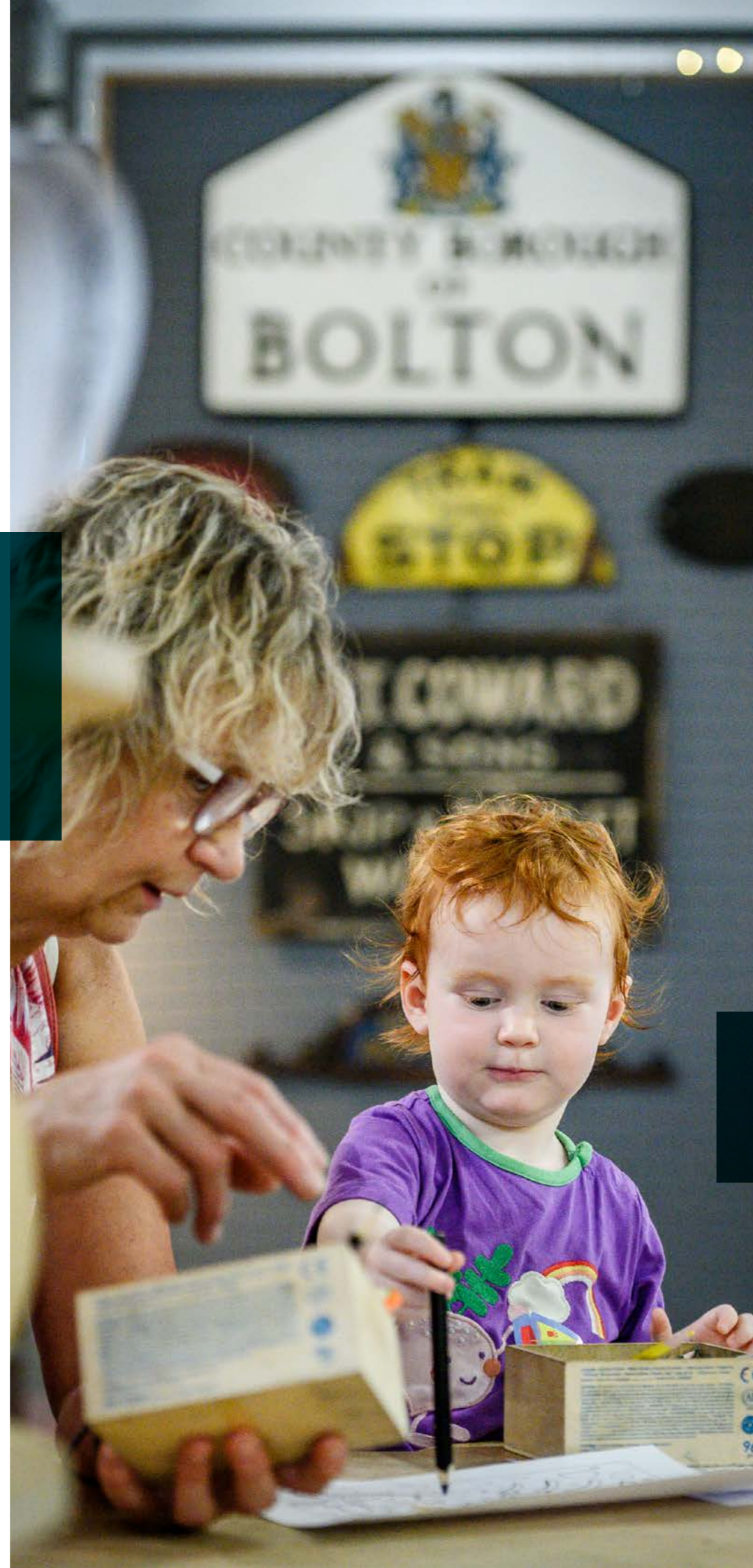
ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Accompanying the Anti-Poverty Strategy is a detailed annual action plan that the Anti-Poverty Working Group has collaboratively developed and will continue to refine and deliver.

This plan includes:

- **Priority actions linked to the strategy's key themes, detailing timelines, responsible parties, and monitoring and evaluation indicators.**
- **Links with other strategies, locality plans, and related programmes, ensuring alignment and coherence across initiatives.**

The success of this action plan depends on a coordinated, system-wide effort and the active participation of all stakeholders. It is essential that all partners consider this strategy and action plan when planning and implementing any future work, ensuring that their efforts line up and support the broader objectives we aim to achieve.



GOVERNANCE

The Tackling Poverty Strategy has a clear governance structure. This includes internal and external mechanisms to review progress regularly and refine our approach.

To lead the implementation of the strategy and its accompanying action plan, the Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group will be established by merging the existing Anti-Poverty Strategy Working Group with the Cost-of-Living Strategic Group, which includes council officers and key partners from various sectors. This group will monitor and measure the strategy's impact while acting as a critical friend, providing valuable insights and constructive feedback to enhance its effectiveness.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group's membership will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains diverse and representative of all key stakeholders, ensuring all relevant perspectives are included in the decision-making process.

Supporting this group is the Cost-of-Living Operational Group, a well-established collective of frontline service providers who meet monthly.

This group plays a crucial role in circulating essential information, sharing best practices, and implementing effective tools that can be directly applied within the community to strengthen the strategy and drive the action plan forward.

The Vision Board will support the delivery of anti-poverty work within the framework of Bolton 2040.

Resolve Poverty will act as a critical friend as part of the strategic partnership, providing ongoing support and guidance for the strategy's implementation.

It will ensure that the strategy follows best strategic and policy practices, stays informed by the latest local, sub-regional, and national developments, and supports regular evaluation to measure its effectiveness.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY

Over the next three years, we will monitor the impact of our actions, assess our progress, and adjust our approach as needed based on ongoing reviews of the current landscape.

We will evaluate key performance indicators and analyse economic data to gain insights into the poverty landscape and identify emerging changes. Additionally, we will conduct regular horizon scanning to stay up to date on new challenges and legislative changes that might affect poverty levels in our region.

Understanding that real progress takes time and requires flexibility in the face of a shifting economic landscape, we will continuously evaluate our strategy to ensure it remains relevant and practical and that what we measure the success of this plan is meaningful and appropriate.

Therefore, our approach will centre on:

- Identifying specific local and national indicators to monitor the progress of our efforts, focusing on measurable improvements in access and outcomes. Given the challenges in obtaining comprehensive data, our approach will be practical, relying on the most relevant and actionable information available to inform our decisions and evaluate our impact.
- Understanding the real-world experiences of local communities and service users is vital. We will gather ongoing feedback to ensure our strategy aligns with the needs and priorities of those it serves.



The following tables provide examples of high-level key performance and economic indicators that might be used to monitor and evaluate our progress.

These examples illustrate the types of metrics we will track, with further details outlined in the action plan:

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of residents supported to access financial support
- Number of residents provided with advice on benefits, budgeting, and debt
- Number of residents who progress to positive destinations following employability advice
- Number of Bolton employers that have achieved Living Wage accreditation

ECONOMIC INDICATOR

- Number of children living in relative poverty before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC)
- Percentage of the population who are unemployed
- Percentage of the population who experience fuel poverty
- Number of people claiming unemployment benefits

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy. Your insights and ongoing support have been crucial in shaping our direction.

We especially acknowledge the members of the anti-poverty working group, whose dedication and expertise have been instrumental in this process. We appreciate your ongoing involvement as we move into the implementation phase.

Thank you to the following members of the anti-poverty working group...



APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

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