

Child Poverty Action Report 2018 - 2019

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 18th December 2017. The aim is to eradicate child poverty in Scotland. Targets are set for achievement by 1 April 2030 with interim targets to be achieved by 1 April 2023.

The Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local Child Poverty Action Report as soon as practicable after the end of each reporting year. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year to contribute towards the targets and the measures proposed for the future.

A draft Child Poverty Action Report is attached for consideration. It seeks to demonstrate that child poverty is being addressed in Argyll and Bute. The Plan sets out our vision as:

“We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a difference.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the Child Poverty Action Report and appendix be considered and following approval, be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 June 2019.
- That progress on Child Poverty actions be reported to and overseen by the Community Planning Partnership in order to strengthen links to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

Child Poverty Action Report 2018 - 2019

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 18th December 2017. The aim is to eradicate child poverty in Scotland. Targets are set for achievement by 1 April 2030 with interim targets to be achieved by 1 April 2023. These are stretching given that Scotland has been going backwards against such targets in recent years.
- 2.2 The Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local Child Poverty Action Report. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 to contribute towards the targets and the measures proposed for the future.
- 2.3 Officers have prepared a draft Child Poverty Action Plan and associated information document that covers the required factors and looks to demonstrate that child poverty is being addressed in Argyll and Bute. This is the first annual plan and further plans will be presented on an annual basis for approval. The Plan sets out our vision as:

“We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a difference.”

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Child Poverty Action Report and appendix be considered, and following approval, be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 June 2019.
- 3.2 To note that updated Child Poverty Action Reports will require to be prepared, approved and published annually jointly by the Council and the Health Board.
- 3.2 That progress on Child Poverty actions be reported to and overseen by the Community Planning Partnership in order to strengthen links to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires the Scottish Government to:

- Sets out four statutory income targets, to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2030.
- Sets out four interim income targets, to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2023.
- Places a duty on Scottish Ministers to publish child poverty delivery plans in 2018, 2022, and 2026, and to report on those plans annually.
- Places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty.
- Sets out that a statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission will be established from 1 July 2019, with functions related to the child poverty reduction targets.

4.2 The Scottish Government has made a commitment to tackling child poverty. This was marked by the publication of “Every Child Every Chance; the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22”. This document set out the steps to be taken to produce a National Plan and to meet the targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Local Councils and Health Boards were tasked to work together and with other partner agencies to produce local Child Poverty Action Plans. The first plans are to be published by 30 June 2019 and reviewed and updated every year by 30 June annually until 2030 in order to demonstrate progress on key action points and how far poverty has been addressed.

4.3 Guidance has been published by the Scottish Government on what local child poverty action reports must contain. The guidance recognises the strong links to other reporting duties on local authorities and partnerships linked to tackling poverty. These include:

Fairer Scotland Duty - This requires that an authority must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

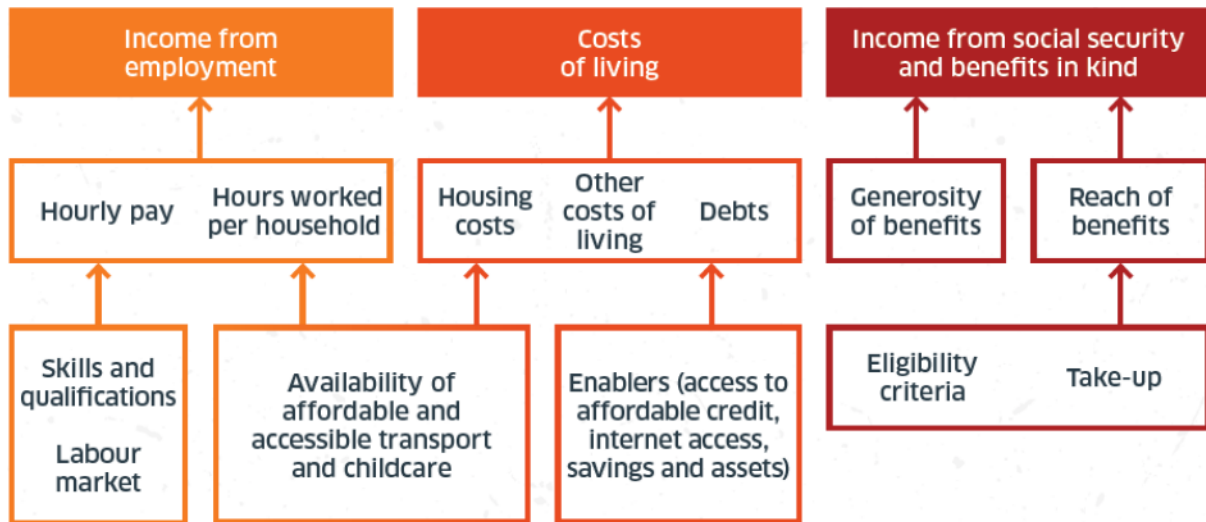
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 - Of particular relevance to the duties under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act are Parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 - The Act requires that CPPs must prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), which sets out the local outcomes the CPP has prioritised for improvement. In carrying out their functions, the CPP is required to do so with a view to reducing inequalities of outcomes which result from socio-economic disadvantage. Our plan is required to articulate how LOIP outcomes are expected to contribute to tackling child poverty, and to set out the range of organisations involved in delivering and planning the activity set out in the report.

Education (Scotland) Act 2016 - The Act requires that education authorities must have due regard to the need to carry out school education functions in a way

designed to reduce inequalities of outcome for those pupils experiencing them as a result of socio-economic disadvantage.

4.4 A local Child Poverty Action Plan is required to focus on the three “Drivers of Poverty” when setting out its intended key actions to address child poverty. These are income from employment and Social Security and the Cost of Living. Whilst these are the focus, we have also included other actions under the headings of “Quality of Life” and “Preventing Future Poverty”.



4.5 The plan must also identify how its actions can particularly support and assist key priority groups. These groups face additional barriers particularly where they live in areas of high material deprivation and in remote rural location. The priority groups are:

- lone parents;
- families where a member of the household is disabled;
- families with 3 or more children; minority ethnic families;
- families where the youngest child is under 1-year;
- mothers aged under 25-years.

4.6 The Plan sets out our vision (which is identical to that already contained in the Council’s broader Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-2022) as:

“We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a difference.”

4.7 In producing our first Child Poverty Action Plan, we considered it crucially important, first and foremost, to ask what our children and young people thought.

This links to the first objective of our main Anti-Poverty strategy which stated that we should “listen to people and families experiencing poverty and make sure their voice is heard”. We asked Schools, both Primary and High School, to share the draft plan with pupils and ask for their views and ideas. We received responses from 25% of the School Councils across Argyll and Bute and were very impressed by the insight, understanding and empathy shown. Their insights have been used to guide our plans.

- 4.8 The plan sets out what we will do to tackle and raise awareness of child poverty and our intended outcomes. In summary these are to work effectively with our partners to reduce poverty; to increase the level of awareness and understanding of the drivers of poverty; to develop links to key groups and consult with stakeholders; for our plan to be a live document responding to changing needs; to respect the rights of relevant groups and be based on the tenets of equality and human dignity; and for our plan to reflect the participation and consultation of those most affected, particularly children and young people.
- 4.9 The plan sets out in some detail what are the challenges and advantages of growing up in Argyll and Bute. This provides a detailed picture of our geography, demography and community. Key areas covered include population trends, areas of deprivation and current child poverty levels of 20.4%, employment, education, health, disability, social isolation, housing, fuel poverty and transport. It also highlights the wonderful work done by some of our community bodies which support children, young people and families which is a great strength of our area.
- 4.10 The plan summarises key actions already in progress under the 3 drivers of Income from Employment; Costs of Living; and Income from benefits. It also sets out new activities planned through the Rural Growth Deal; auto-enrolment to increase uptake for free school meals and school clothing grants; work on holiday hunger; Changing Lives Initiative supporting families with children with ADHD; Life Changes Trust supporting care experienced children and young people and the work on supporting children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Much more details on each of these actions is set out in the appendix which follows the template for recording actions set out in the national guidance. The appendix also contains additional baseline information on child poverty in Argyll and Bute and a full report on the consultation that took place with children and young people.
- 4.11 The plan has been put together on a collaborative basis led by the chair of the Welfare Reform Working Group (now Financial Inclusion and Advice Group) which includes representation from the various Council Services (including Education; Revenues & Benefits; Housing; Money Advice; Welfare Rights); the Health & Social Care Partnership; DWP; all main Registered Social Landlords; Carr Gomm; SDS. Going forward, this group is now being strengthened as it is now chaired by an Elected Member who is the Policy Lead for Communities, Housing and Gaelic. It would benefit from closer involvement with the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Works elsewhere has shown that the most effective groups working on the poverty agenda are those which formally report to their CPP and this model is recommended for the future.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS:

5.1 A draft Child Poverty Action Plan and associated information document is presented for consideration. The Plan will facilitate meeting the new legal requirement to present an annual report jointly with the health board on local child poverty actions and contributes to meeting the Council's agreed objectives of reducing poverty. It is hoped that this plan will provide a sound baseline and focus for future work to reduce child poverty in Argyll and Bute, and bring partners together in this endeavour. It is also recommended that progress on this plan is reported through the CPP going forward, which will strengthen links to the LOIP.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy: The Child Poverty Action Plan supports the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and its 6 long term outcomes that in Argyll and Bute: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-and-government/community-plan-and-single-outcome-agreement>
- 6.2 Financial: The plan is based on existing financial resources contained in Council budgets.
- 6.3 Legal: The Child Poverty Action Plan meets the obligation placed on the Council and Health Board by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, to produce a local report by 30 June annually.
- 6.4 HR: No staffing changes proposed.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland The strategy supports the Fairer Scotland Duty
- 6.5.1 Equalities: The strategy strongly supports equality and diversity and respects the Protected Characteristics of: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Sec 149 (7) Equality Act 2010).
- 6.5.2 Socio Economic Duty The 3 main drivers around which the Plan is formed of income from employment, costs of living and income from benefits link strongly to this duty.
- 6.5.3 Islands The plan specifically references duties under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018
- 6.6 Risk: These proposals reduce the risk of lack of communication and integrated working between the relevant agencies, which could lead to a waste of resources and a failure to make progress.
- 6.7 Customer Service: These targeted interventions provide a focus to identify service delivery and support to children and families experiencing poverty and deprivation.

Appendix

1. Child Poverty Action Plan and accompanying information document

Background documents:

Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-2022 Policy & Resources Committee 24 May 2018

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