

Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Plan 2019:

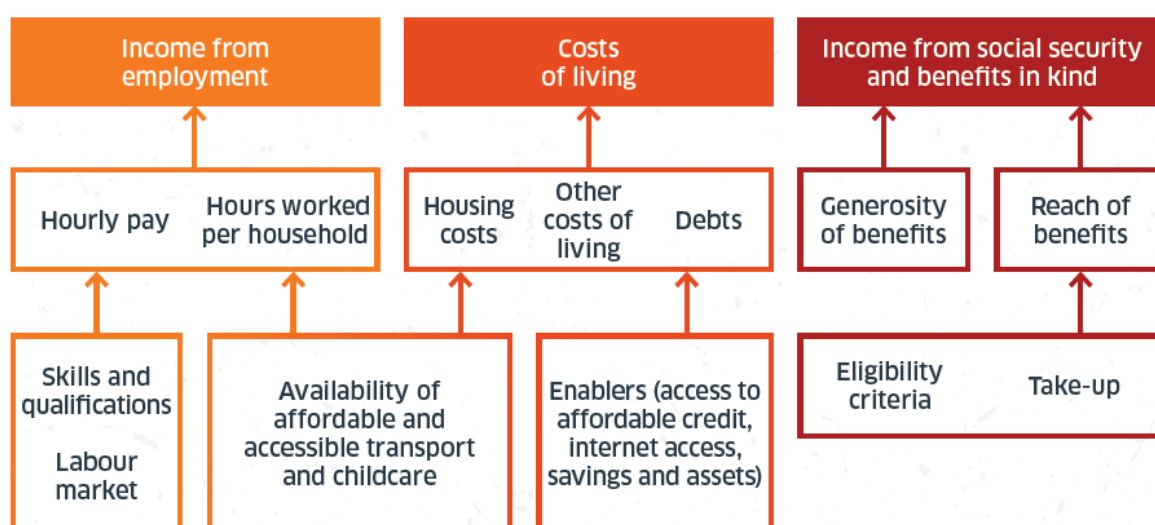
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Introduction:

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out four statutory, income-based targets (all after housing costs), to be achieved by 2030:

- Less than 10% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

The Act also introduces a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report and to review it on an annual basis. The Scottish Government's delivery plan: "Every Child, Every Chance" recognises the importance of income as a factor in creating poverty. Hence they identify the main drivers of poverty as income from employment, income from Social Security and benefits in kind and cost of living.



In our local plan we will seek to look at the issue of child poverty in Argyll and Bute; how this is experienced by our children and young people and how the drivers of poverty are apparent and dealt with in our own area. It is recognised that some of the causes of poverty will be local and some are at a national level. Our focus will be on the local causes, drivers and consequences as affecting positive change in these is within our grasp. In doing so we recognise and accept that:

A local authority's role as an employer, carer, corporate parent, landlord, educator, community leader and funder places it at the heart of its community. In many cases, it is the first port of call for people in crisis, or who are vulnerable. Considered through this lens, the role played by a local authority in tackling poverty cannot be underestimated. (Poverty in Scotland 2016; 205; CPAG 2016.)

We hope to show that there are many unique challenges faced in Argyll and Bute, relating to our geography, demographics and economic base. However we will also identify advantages such as our ability to work together to tackle child poverty and to engage with our communities and our children and young people. Our people are our biggest asset and we will highlight some of the projects and activities that go on within our communities, our third sector and faith communities, to address some of the impacts of deprivation, social isolation and unemployment.

We recognise that actions to tackle child poverty must take a life course approach, looking at the challenges that families face, prior to the birth of a child, early years and childcare, inequalities in health and education and later access to training, employment, housing and positive living environments. The Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN) report 'Polishing the Diamonds'; Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences in Scotland (Sarah Couper and Phil Mackie May 2016), in its conceptual framework looking at the causes, consequences and intergenerational transmissions of ACE's, notes the importance of the context in which the family lives. The NHS Highland, Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 2018 "Adverse Childhood Experiences, Resilience and Trauma Informed Care: A Public Health approach to Understanding and Responding to Adversity" said:

The social context in which families live is a key risk factor for adverse childhood experiences. While it is clear that most children who live in poverty or socio-economic disadvantage are not subject to toxic stress, there is still a strong association between low family income, unemployment, social isolation and increased risk of adverse childhood experiences. Scottish research has found that 24% of mothers in the lowest income quintile had poor mental health in the first four years of their child's life compared to 6% of mothers in the highest income group¹⁵. There is also evidence that poverty is a major contributor to distress, relationship breakdown and conflict within families¹³.

Our Vision:

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.

This is supported by the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 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>

1. The economy is diverse and thriving.
2. We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.
3. Education, skills and training maximises opportunities for all.
4. Children and young people have the best possible start.
5. People live active, healthier and independent lives.
6. People live in safer and stronger communities.

Consultation:

What Children growing up in Argyll and Bute Think about Child Poverty and our Plan:

We felt that it was important when producing a Child Poverty Action Plan to, first and foremost, ask what our children and young people thought. We asked Schools, both Primary and High School, to share the plan with pupils and ask for their views and ideas. We received responses from School Councils in 25% of Schools across Argyll and Bute and were very impressed by the insight, understanding and empathy shown.

“The first thing we liked about the plan was the fact that it exists in the first place and recognises this important issue as being something to work on.”

“Showed us that poverty doesn’t mean you live on the streets.”

“It was good to hear that there are lots of different people working together to help children.”

“We would like to know more about why people need more help in different situations.”

“It should be easier for people living in poverty to get the help they need and for the shame to be removed. People should feel comfortable asking for help without others judging them. This could be in the plan – educate people who are lucky enough so that they don’t see poverty as the people’s fault. It could happen to anyone.”

“We think the home school link thing could be used to fund healthy eating and cooking classes not just in the high school but maybe in the smaller communities, if possible. We think looking at venues for things to take place in is important.”

“We would really like to see something about transport for pupils on the plan. Some pupils work because they have to earn money and cannot if we have to pay to use the service buses. Could we use our school bus transport entitlement even if it is in the evening, weekends or school holidays? The same goes for accessing the summer holiday sport activities for example, could this be looked on as a part of the school transport thing because we think people might sign up more?”

“We think something should be done to support families who access free school meals during the school holidays – vouchers? Boxes of food supplies?”

“Really cold in Argyll so free heating please.”

A full copy of the consultation is appended to this plan. As promised to the children and young people, their views will be listened to and considered in the development of this plan going forward. The group who will be responsible for reviewing and developing this plan will seek to feedback to our children and young people at least once a year and be open to listening to new ideas that they might come up with.

What will we do to Tackle and Raise Awareness of Child Poverty?

1. We will look at the drivers of Poverty (income from employment, cost of living, income from social security and benefits in kind) and see how they impact on child poverty in Argyll and Bute. We will ask the questions, what are we doing, and what can we do better and differently.
2. We will engage with people, through a number Advisory and Support Groups. We will support and advise those in poverty and raise awareness of issues that relate to the causes of poverty and deprivation. For example via C.A.B.; ABAN (Argyll and Bute Advice Network); Money Skills Argyll, Bute Advice Centre, ALLenergy, Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights Officers, Carrgomm, Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and the HELP Project.
3. We will ensure that the Fairer Scotland Duty, part one of the Equality Act 2010, informs our decision making in a clear and transparent way and that all our strategic decisions have due regard to:
 - eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the 2010 Act;
 - advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (as defined by the 2010 Act) and persons who do not share it;
 - fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
4. We will ensure that our plans support the fulfilment of the articles in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and that our children are respected, listened to, have adequate standards of living, are supported in their development and achievement and that all we do is in the best interest of our children and young people.
5. We will ensure that the duties laid out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 are fulfilled and our Schools function in a way designed to reduce inequalities of outcome for those pupils experiencing them as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. We will demonstrate that our Schools are aware of the impacts of poverty and work with parents and children to alleviate them.
6. We will take into account our duties under the Island Scotland Act 2018 and consider the impact of our strategies, policies and service provisions on the populations of 23 inhabited islands of Argyll and Bute. We will ensure that our Island Community Impact Assessments have a focus on the issue of child poverty.
7. We noted earlier in this plan that the experience of poverty is often much wider and more complex than just having a low income, with some people experiencing a range of disadvantages that extend beyond just not having enough money. We understand that many people that we might describe as 'living in poverty' do not consider themselves to be living in poverty, or don't associate with words like 'poverty' at all. Hence we need to encourage

people to use available services, supports and advice and see this as their right. We need to deliver services and advice in a way that will respect dignity and encourage independence.

Our Services and Stakeholders will:

- Ensure that our staff understand the nature of poverty and are aware of its causes and impacts.
- Ensure that our staff use positive, person focused language when dealing with people who are experiencing the effects of poverty.
- Ensure that our strategies and plans incorporate ways of increasing resilience and independence in people.

Intended Outcomes for the Plan:

1. That child poverty and its impacts will be reduced in Argyll and Bute and that we will meet the Scottish Government's targets. We will achieve this by having a Poverty Strategy Group that includes Council and Health Managers, Education, Third Sector Partners and Business interests. Progress will be measured through the achievement of the targets in our plan.
2. That all partners in Argyll and Bute will work effectively together to ensure that no child or family is overlooked or goes unsupported.
3. That staff in the Council, Health Board, Health and Social Care Partnership and partner agencies have an understanding of the drivers of poverty and its impacts on people they may be working with. This will be achieved through cascading the work of the Poverty Strategy Group to our workforce and partner agencies. The Poverty Strategy Group will consider what staff training is required in terms of awareness raising.
4. That our plan and the decisions relating to it are discussed and agreed at a strategic level and consultation takes place where appropriate. The Child Poverty Strategy Group will have links to other key groups and consult with stakeholders when necessary.
5. That the plan is reviewed at least annually and is an active document that responds to the changing picture of child poverty in Argyll and Bute over time. The results of the review will be shared with stake holders and the public.
6. That the plan respects the rights of relevant groups and is based on the tenets of equality and human dignity;
7. That the plan will be a product of participation and consultation. Consultation will take place with children, young people and with community groups.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Growing up in Argyll and Bute:

Argyll and Bute is an area of outstanding natural beauty that offers much to children and families, in terms of quality of life. However there are challenges that impact on the factors that Health Scotland state are the social determinants of health: childhood experiences; housing; education; social support; family income; employment; our communities and access to health services. Some of our children and young people do experience poverty and deprivation and rural and island communities face additional challenges in terms of access to services and employment opportunities. Fuel poverty is an important factor in Argyll and Bute as is access to good and affordable housing. It is our task to recognise and tackle the challenges whilst creating opportunities for all groups and individuals in areas such as education, training, employment and personal development.

Our Places:

Argyll and Bute is the second largest local authority in Scotland at 690, 899 hectares. It is also the third most sparsely populated area with only 13 people per square kilometre or 0.13 per hectare compared to the Scottish average of 0.70 (Mid-Year 2017 Population Estimates. It covers almost 9% of the total Scottish land area (Census 2011). The area's population of 86,810 (National Records of Scotland's 2017 Mid-Year Population Estimates,) live within an area stretching from Helensburgh and Dunoon along the Clyde, Loch Lomond to the East, the Mull of Kintyre to the south, Atlantic Islands to the west, and the Sound of Mull and Appin to the north. Nearly half of Argyll and Bute's population (48.4%) live in areas classified by the Scottish Government as 'rural' while 17% live on islands. 80% of Argyll and Bute's population live within 1km of the coast. Argyll and Bute has 23 inhabited islands (Census 2011), more than any other local authority in Scotland. The physical geography of the area has restricted development of the road network in the area and leads to high levels of reliance on ferries for travel.

Areas of Deprivation:

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016 identified ten data zones in Argyll and Bute as being in the 15% most overall deprived data zones in Scotland. These ten are all located in towns (Helensburgh, Dunoon, Rothesay, Campbeltown and Oban). 56 of Argyll and Bute's 125 data zones (45%) are amongst the 20% most geographic access deprived data zones in Scotland. The Council area is divided up into four Administrative Areas, which are frequently used for service planning within the area. These are: Bute and Cowal; Helensburgh and Lomond; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands and Oban, Lorn and the Isles.

Rates of children poverty, after housing costs, are highest in South Kintyre, Cowal, Dunoon and the Isle of Bute.

Data generated in January 2018 from the End Child Poverty organisation has shown that there are 3106 children (20.4% of children) living in poverty in Argyll and Bute. Some areas of Argyll and Bute have much higher levels of poverty than others, and we often call these 'deprived neighbourhoods'

as a result of area-based measures of poverty such as the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMDs). However, we recognise that there are people living in poverty in all of our communities, and therefore we challenge the view that poverty can solely be determined by where you live.

The results for Argyll and Bute from the SIMD 2016 shows:

- 4 data zones in the 10% most overall deprived data zones
- 11 data zones in the 20% most overall deprived data zones
- 9 data zones are in the 20% most income deprived data zones.
- 6 data zones are in the 20% most employment deprived data zones
- 6 data zones are in the 20% most health deprived data zones
- 10 data zones in Argyll and Bute in the 15% most overall deprived data zones.
- 8 data zones are in the 15% most employment deprived data zones.
- 12 data zones are in the 15% most health deprived data zones.
- 41,738 people live in the 53 data zones (38%) that are amongst the 15% most access deprived data zones.
- 13 of Argyll and Bute's data zones – more than 10% – are in the 1% most access deprived data zones.

Our Households:

There were estimated to be 41,040 households in Argyll and Bute in 2016, with an average household size of 2.06 people, lower than the Scottish average of 2.16 people. Between 2016 and 2026, the number of households in Argyll and Bute is projected to increase from 41,040 to 41,531. This is a 1.2% increase, which compares to a projected increase of 6.4% for Scotland as a whole

There were estimated to be 2,179 households with one adult and 1 or more children in 2016 and this is projected to increase to 2,311 in 2026 (+6.1% change). The number of households with 2+ adults and 1 or more children is projected to decrease over the same time period from 6,393 in 2016 to 5,426 in 2026 (-15.1% change).

In 2018 there were 24% of employees (aged 18 plus) in Argyll and Bute in receipt of less than the minimum wage; this is particularly concerning for lone mothers. In 2015 – 18 the relative poverty rate after housing costs, in Scotland, was higher for lone mothers (39%, 60,000 lone mothers each year) than for other single working-age adults. (Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2015 – 2018; Scot. Gov.). In addition, in Argyll and Bute single mothers living in rural and island areas are less likely to have access to full time, well paid work; work that is available is often seasonal in nature. Because of the same factors of rural and remoteness availability of childcare, and the cost of this, can also be more of an issue.

The Argyll and Bute Parent and Family Support Strategy 2017 – 2020, recognises that households with children, particularly those experiencing additional pressures, may require coordinated support targeted at an appropriate level.

Our Population:

Argyll and Bute was estimated to have a population, in 2016, of 87,130. 19,129 (22%) were aged 0-21 and 14,122 (16%) were aged 0-16. The overall population of Argyll and Bute is projected to decrease by 2% between 2016 and 2022. The largest decrease in young people (26 %) is within the 17-21 age group. The number aged 0-4 are projected to decrease by 5%, 5-11 to decrease by 4%.

Argyll and Bute has smaller numbers of ethnic minority children and young people than is the Scottish average; however there are still significant numbers. 283 pupils spoke another main language at home (other than English, Gaelic, Scots, Doric or Sign Language). Polish and Arabic were the most common languages other than English; 214 pupils identified English as an additional language of which 154 were not competent in English. It is known that People in ethnic minority households account for 4% of the general population in Scotland, but they make up 7% of all people in poverty and 10% of all people in working poverty (What Do we know About in Work Poverty in Scotland: Interim Findings; Scot.Gov. Communities Analysis Division, Feb 2019).

Education:

There are ten secondary schools, seventy seven primary schools and one school for pupils with complex additional needs in Argyll and Bute. In 2018 Argyll and Bute Schools were above the current national performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations in all four of the national measures; National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. 17.2% of primary school children and 26.3% of secondary schools children are identified with additional support needs (ASN) in Argyll and Bute, which is neither particularly high nor particularly low compared to other local authority areas. In 2017 the percentage of children in Argyll and Bute registered for free school meals was 12.4, as opposed to the national average of 15.6%.

We have identified 495 children in our area who should be eligible for school clothing grants of £100 each p.a. and who currently (April 2019) are not receiving an award. It is proposed that we automatically award and pay school clothing grants to their parents for the new school year starting August 2019. It is harder to identify everyone who should be eligible for free school meals. Every child in P1-P3 gets these but for older children, it is based on entitlement of the household to various state benefits, capped at varying income levels. We have identified at least 109 children not receiving these who should be eligible for them, and we will encourage families to take these up. We have also identified other families who are not on passported benefits but who might well be eligible and we will work with these families to encourage take-up. We are working hard to extend online payment for school meals to all schools as this helps families to be confident that others won't be aware of who in their community gets free school meals – preserving dignity.

The Skills Development Scotland, 2018 Annual Participation Measure Report, summary for Argyll and Bute notes that 94.2% of 16 to 19 year olds were participating in education, training or employment compared to 91.8% nationally.

It is also worth noting that School exclusion rates for looked after children in Argyll and Bute is 29.9% as opposed to the Scottish national average of 94.3%. This reflects the success of a Corporate

Parenting Board led strategy to work quickly and in a multi-agency manner, to prevent and resolve School exclusions for looked after children and young people.

Access to education and transport can play a big part in the lives of children and young people living in our rural and island places. Some young people have to reside away from home in School Hostels in order to attend High Schools; these are based in Dunoon and Oban. Most only see their families at weekends and holidays when they are assisted by subsidised fares. There is an awareness that this can sometimes contribute to difficult childhood experiences such as a sense of loss and separation.

Health:

The Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership have the shared vision that “People in Argyll and Bute will live longer, healthier, independent lives.” The 9 National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes describe what people can expect from the HSCP; perhaps the most important of these is:

Our children and young people have the best start in life, are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. The life chances for children and young people and families at risk are improved.

The health picture is encouraging in many ways in Argyll and Bute; life expectancy is 77.3 for males and 81.2 for females, both of which are higher than Scotland as whole. Alcohol related hospital stays and childhood obesity are ranked lower than the Scottish average (ScotPho 2016). Dental screening in primary 1 and 7 school years provides an estimate of the percentage of children with no obvious decay experience. This was 80% of P1 and 85% P7 children in Argyll and Bute in 2016/17, both were statistically significantly 'better' than National average. Also the Paediatric Dietician is working to train education staff to deliver 'good to go' healthy eating programme in all schools across Argyll and Bute.

In addition Police Youth Liaison Officers conduct a Rolling Programme to engage with young people across Argyll and Bute, on topics such as drugs, mental health awareness, hate crimes, cyberbullying, keeping safe and Choices for Life. Also “Active Schools” design and deliver specific target group developments to create inclusive programmes that include child healthy weight, disability, teenage girls, non-participants of physical education and health inequalities.

However, the research evidence is strong that growing up in poverty has detrimental impacts on cognitive development and that the length of time spent living in poverty exacerbates these detrimental impacts, with children living in persistent poverty displaying the worst cognitive development. (Impacts of Poverty on Children and Young People; Morag c. Treanor; Jan. 2012.) Hence Health and Social Care partners in Argyll and Bute must look to identify and address these impacts, throughout the life course of the child.

Disability:

In Argyll and Bute we are aware of the 5 ambitions of the national plan for a fairer Scotland for disabled people and will endeavour to fulfil these through a range of policies and strategies.

- Support services that promote independent living, meet needs and work together to enable a life of choices, opportunities and participation.
- Decent incomes and fairer working lives.
- Places that are accessible to everyone.

- Protected rights.
- Active participation

In 2017, CPAG and the RCPCH surveyed paediatricians about the impacts of poverty. More than two-thirds said that poverty and low income contribute 'very much' to ill-health among their patients, and almost half believe this has worsened in recent years. Paediatricians stated that:

"Constant concern about finances and housing conditions affects families of children with long term conditions; they face difficulty in dealing with treatment as they are preoccupied with other issues."

"Overcrowding makes looking after difficult children with learning difficulties or autism next to impossible."

The impact of poverty on child health; Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health; 20.04.2018.

Argyll and Bute Housing Consortium Housing policies encompass the difficulties and requirements of disabled persons and include plans to build more disability friendly housing and grants to adapt private sector housing. Housing is a key factor to addressing the impacts of childhood poverty and some of the causal factors in relation to physical and mental well-being.

Social Isolation and Social Deprivation:

Social Isolation can be a symptom of poverty and deprivation and act to prolong its existence. Some young people can feel stigmatised and experience low self-esteem. Research published by the Department of Health outlined that children in the poorest households are 'three times more likely to have a mental illness than children in the best-off households (Saving Lives: Our healthier nation, Department of Health, 1999). Argyll and Bute's Employability Team recognises such difficulties and offers additional supports for young people, such as self-esteem building and goal setting; through the Fair Start Initiative.

Poverty and social isolation can also mean that when young people come to seek employment they lack the social networks that can assist them in this process. An example of actions to mitigate against this in Argyll in Bute is "Active Schools" run by Live Argyll. This provides sports activities and clubs throughout the region and will often provide activities within communities as well as schools. Poor transport links can create barriers to social inclusion, whereas effective transport links can benefit social cohesion. This is a particular issue in the rural and island places in Argyll and Bute. "Live Argyll" source agreements with local transport providers like West Coast Motors to provide free transport home after activities.

It is recognised that social isolation can be a factor even before a child is born. A survey conducted by the charity Family Action found that one in three mothers in low income households lacked support networks to help them through pregnancy and are unaware of the services available to help them with depression; (Mahadevan J., New mums lack support to cope with isolation and depression; 2012). Other studies have shown that maternal depression can impair early child development; hence social isolation can contribute to the transmission of disadvantage across generations and contribute to health inequalities across the life course.

In Argyll and Bute these disadvantages are recognised and the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2017-2020 makes it a strategic priority to support vulnerable women during pregnancy and the post-natal period. Also Support Workers are being provided within a Community Hub Model. There is a Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Pathway Strategy to ensure that our vulnerable young people receive the additional support they need. The Health and Social Care Partnership also provides parents with access to "Incredible Years" and "Triple P" parenting classes and works with Book Bug to provide opportunities for both parents and young children to interact, learn skills and become less socially isolated.

Housing:

Housing is an issue that contributes to child poverty and the availability and nature and costs of housing impacts on the cost of living of individual households and the wider economy. A good housing environment can make a difference to the experiences of children, young people and their families. Households with children living in homes that fail the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) are 46.3% in Argyll and Bute as opposed to the Scottish average of 41.6% (2014 – 16). This is recognised in the Local Housing Strategy Annual Report 2017-2018 and in order to facilitate positive change the council restructured services in 2017/18, bringing Housing together with Planning and Regulatory Services under the single department of Development & Infrastructure.

Through its Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) the Council is attempting to provide more affordable housing for rent. The SHIP partners delivered 75 new affordable homes in 2017/18, bringing the cumulative two-year total up to 229 and therefore exceeding the two-year target of 220; and delivering 42% of the 5 year target.

Partners in Home Argyll are attempting to increase and improve the stock of social housing; it also works with private landlords and home owners to improve housing conditions. Attempts are made to maintain rents at an affordable level; ACHA for example rents at 3.8% below the national average for Registered Social Landlords. In addition the Housing consortium is working to ensure that appropriate accommodation is offered to families with children. There are currently no children placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and such a move is only considered in cases of extreme emergency.

Fuel Poverty:

Fuel Poverty is a factor that affects many families in Argyll and Bute and one that must be considered when looking at the picture of child poverty. The Scottish Government definition of fuel poverty is:

A householder is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would require to spend more than 10% of its income on all household fuel use. If over 20% of income is required, then this is termed as being in extreme fuel poverty.

Research has shown that growing up in a cold home is linked to an increased risk of depression and anxiety. (Green G, Gilbertson J. Warm front: better health: Health impact evaluation of the warm front scheme. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Regional Social and Economic Research; 2008).

The Scottish House Condition Survey 2017 estimates that approximately 48% of households in Argyll and Bute are in fuel poverty; against a Scottish fuel poverty rate of 30.7% - and is ranked in the top five most fuel poor Local Authority areas in Scotland. Additionally, the SHCS identifies that 16% of

Argyll and Bute are in extreme fuel poverty, compared to the Scottish rate of 9% - which again is ranked in the top five most extreme fuel poor Local Authority areas in Scotland.

Addressing fuel poverty is a priority in Argyll and Bute. Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) The EESH was introduced in 2014 and reviewed in 2017. It aims to encourage landlords to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland; and supports the Scottish Government's vision of warm, high quality, affordable, low carbon homes and a housing sector that helps to establish a successful low carbon economy across Scotland. The national target is for all eligible RSL properties to be fully compliant by 2020. In 2018 over 86% of the RSL stock in Argyll & Bute met the standard (excluding exemptions).

Income and Employment:

Argyll and Bute's economy is predominantly service-based. Over 83% of employee jobs in the area are provided within the service sector. (ONS Business Register and Employment Survey 2017). In 2017, 33.3% of employee jobs in Argyll and Bute were in 'public administration, education and health'. This compares to 30.2% for Scotland and 26.4% for Great Britain (NOMIS). Average gross weekly pay for full-time workers in Argyll and Bute is £565.60. This compares to a Scottish average of £657.80 and a British average of £688.20 (Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2018, residence-based analysis. Figures relate to the median earnings for employees living in the area).

Working poverty is a particular concern in Scotland and the majority of the working-age population in relative poverty, now live in working households. 59% in 2014 - 17 compared to 48% in 1996 – 1999 (What Do we know About in Work Poverty in Scotland: Interim Findings; Scot.Gov. Communities Analysis Division, Feb 2019).

Although unemployment rates have reduced in Argyll and Bute, within the population of unemployed adults the highest number of claimants can be found between ages 25 to 49. It is interesting to note that between 2007 and 2017 Argyll and Bute was one of two local authorities where the employment rate increased for men only. (Regional Employment Patterns in Scotland; Annual Population Survey 2017; Scottish Govt.)

Some key industries, such as tourism and food and drink report difficulties in recruiting sufficient trained staff and it is a concern that the projected drop in the young population may hinder business growth and make it more difficult to attract new businesses to the area. This in turn might result in less opportunities for the young people in Argyll and Bute. Our plan demonstrates that measures are being taken to address this and to offer young people the right training to match them to available jobs.

Transport:

The busiest ferry route in Scotland in terms of passengers and vehicles carried is the service between Gourock and Dunoon. The route is operated by Western Ferries which carried 1,341,000 passengers in 2016. There were 608,000 cars carried on this route and 33,800 commercial vehicles and buses in 2016 (Scottish Transport Statistics 2017). Ferries operated by Argyll and Bute Council carried 150,000 passengers in 2016 (Scottish Transport Statistics 2017). There are 2,581 km (1,617 miles) of roads in Argyll and Bute, 4.6% of Scotland's total road network (Scottish Transport Statistics 2017). There are 14 railway stations in Argyll and Bute: Cardross; Craigendoran; Helensburgh Central; Helensburgh Upper; Garelochhead; Arrochar and Tarbet; Ardlui; Bridge of Orchy; Dalmally; Loch

Awe; Falls of Cruachan; Taynuilt; Connel Ferry; Oban. There are some internal flights, for example to islands such as Tiree and Coll.

The requirement, in many rural and island places in Argyll and Bute, to have a car to get to work, schools, shops, health and other services, can impact on the cost of living for some families and lead to a greater degree of deprivation.

Projects and Communities:

This part of Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Plan highlights some of the work done by our communities, third sector and faith communities to help tackle the causes and impacts of child poverty, isolation and deprivation. It is not inclusive by any means but does show the commitment within our communities to include and support children, young people and families. This work is not part of major Council and Health Board plans and actions but does deserve to be recognised; such work does make a difference to a large number of children and families in our area.

Food Banks in Argyll and Bute

There are a number of Food Banks in Argyll and Bute and they all work to support people experiencing poverty and deprivation. It is notable that each one of these organisations works with service users to signpost them to other agencies and supports, when necessary. It is also notable that everyone has noticed an increase in service use since the roll out of Universal Credit. Some island and remote rural areas will not be within easy access of a Food Bank.

Oban

Their only food bank is called New Hope. This is a private charity; their organisation assists people that have been signposted to them from Carr Gomm, Help, and C.A.B. etc. They provide food parcels to people and also meals throughout the day. When they attend New Hope, the workers there sit down to gather information about their situation, and if needed they refer them to relevant organisations – Carr Gomm, Job Centre, Homeless, and Addiction team etc. The genre of people using this facility is across the board – working people, homeless people, people with addictions, families, individuals and the elderly. They have noticed a significant increase/demand for food parcels/hot meals since the full rollout of Universal Credit. People are not coping with the 4 week payments, not budgeting etc.

Campbeltown

There is only one food bank in campbeltown; a local charity run organisation staffed by local volunteers. Users of the food bank can self-refer and there is no limit on how many food parcels a person can receive, Referrals can also come from organisations such as Social Work and Health Services. Users are issued with food parcels which contain dry and fresh food, toiletries etc. and rely heavily on donations. They work with Tesco who provide them with 'fair share' which means they can provide fresh bread, milk etc. to users. When users attend this foodbank they are given advice and assistance from the volunteers who can refer them to other agencies. They have noticed a significant increase in users since the roll out of Universal Credit.

Dunoon

There is a drop in food bank available in Dunoon. They do not have a referral service and people can go there if they require a parcel. The Social Work Department also has limited stores that can be obtained if the food bank is closed.

Helensburgh

The food bank in this area is called Helensburgh and Lomond food bank. They are a local charity run by volunteers which rely on donations from the public; they offer food and toiletries. They assist with individuals and families experiencing food poverty; no referral needed and there is a drop in service. When users attend this food bank they are offered advice and assistance and are signposted to further agencies that can help them further. This food bank has had an increase of 35% from the end of last year in users

Rothesay

This areas food bank is called the Bute Oasis Food Bank; this charity run shop. Downstairs is a shop which offers furniture, clothes etc. which is donated by the public and upstairs is a food bank. Any money they receive for the furniture/clothes goes towards the shops overheads. Once these are paid, the staff then go over to Dunoon and purchase food from the supermarkets to take back to the food bank. Users can attend the food bank 6 times however if they hit this trigger a referral then gets made to Bute Advice. When people attend the food bank, they get advice and assistance from the volunteers who can refer them for further assistance to Social Work, local Housing Associations, Carr Gomm and Help Ltd. Users attending this food bank over a wide range of types, mainly those affected by Universal Credit. For people who have been granted tenancies, they try and help them with furniture.

Restyle Argyll:

ReStyle Argyll was the third re-use and repair hub to open in Scotland, and followed the launch of Blythswood Care's Highlands's hub in 2015 and the Edinburgh Remakery last year.

Not only does it allow people to access good-quality, safety-certified second-hand furniture, household goods and bikes online from reliable retailers and from out with their own communities, it also gives remote and island-based social enterprises Fyne Futures, of Bute; the GRAB Trust in Lorn and Oban; Kintyre Recycling; and Islay and Jura's Re-JIG access to a regional customer base for the first time. Such projects that assist people to furnish and refurbish their homes at a low cost, help to ensure that children have access to adequate resources. This addresses the cost of living poverty driver.

The Help Project in Dunoon and Rothesay:

The Project works with those aged 16 to 25 and hence deals with young parents as well as other young people. It is clear that their success is, in part based on a number of key factors including the availability of activities and one to one staff time to assist young people to increase their confidence and self-esteem in order to allow them to more fully take advantage of other areas of help on offer (housing, Independent Living, work experience, employment opportunities and parenting classes). Networking with other organisations, employers and individuals in the council and elsewhere, is also a valuable part of this project's work. This increases the scope of the project and maximises the benefits seen from their budget and partnership with the council. Signposting to other organisations; ensuring that young people are assisted and supported to make these connections rather than simply being told that the services exist.

Activities:

- The project was involved in the Homeless World Cup; this improves prospects and self-esteem for homeless young people in 48 countries.
- Working with young people to achieve and sustain tenancies
- Employability Skills Development.
- Jobs Fair – an annual event where employers are invited and young people can attend.
- Opportunities for All – Helping young people who are perhaps not ready for work to undertake tailored Activity Plans
- Activities and help groups – life coaching, healthy eating, parenting, football, pony trekking, photography, alternative sports etc. It is noted that part of their success lies in always looking for ways in which the young people can continue with these activities once the group has concluded.
- Partnerships – The project connects effectively to a number of local employers and other organisations in order to engage young people and get the best outcomes for them.
- Increasing space – drop in centres in Dunoon and Rothesay / internet café by October. In Rothesay drop in centre is flat above the office, is also being used for parenting and cooking lessons etc.
- Environmental Projects for the community using volunteers / young people – improve the environment and give young people new skills. Won Argyll and Bute Youth Achievement Award.

This project helps young people to address the employment, benefits and cost of living drivers of poverty.

Youth Impact:

Is a new project formed in January 2018 to deliver youth services in Campbeltown. The Youth Impact committee plan to operate from a shop front premises in the town centre of Campbeltown, (which has a population of 4810 and is the largest settlement in Kintyre). The charitable organisation will provide opportunities for young people aged 12 to 25 in the Kintyre area.

Aims:

To act as a base within the local community for young people to engage in positive, informal and educational activities,

Provide advice and support to young people experiencing the difficulties of living independently.

Empower young people to work together in order to improve their life skills and prevent social exclusion.

Encourage young people to gain, develop and effectively use their skills to get into employment or training.

Through improving life and employment skills this project helps young people to address the income and cost of living poverty drivers.

Cowal Starter Pack Plus:

A constituted Group working in Dunoon and Cowal providing starter packs to vulnerable people who have been homeless and are setting up home or who are suffering from poverty and need some basic goods to get started. Referrers include Social Work, Women's Aid and the Help Project. Run by local Christian Churches who collect goods for distribution. This project assists young and vulnerable people to address homelessness and the cost of living poverty driver.

The High Kirk, Dunoon:

This congregation actively connects with vulnerable people through community groups through a range of different initiatives which have included Christmas gifts which have been distributed to HELP and Woman's Aid; a Christmas Tree Festival, following which Christmas trees are distributed to HELP, Cowal Elderly Befrienders and vulnerable people in the local community.

A Knitting Group who have produced hand knitted hats, gloves and cardigans for children of young people working with HELP. Cooking Skills, members of the congregation have provided cooking skills sessions for HELP young people, 'cooking on a budget'. Interview skills – A member of the congregation has provided mock interviews and interview skills for young people who have forthcoming job interviews. One congregation member provided literacy support.

Financial Donations – given by the Church have been used to provide fresh goods: Milk, Bread, and butter when someone is getting a food parcel from the food bank. Clothes from the charity shop for an interview, electricity when it's run out and there are no other sources of funding to help.

Through teaching young people interview skills and household budgeting skills, this group helps to address employability and the cost of living as drivers of poverty.

Key Actions:

Income from Employment:

- Some key industries, such as tourism and food and drink report difficulties in recruiting sufficient trained staff and it is a concern that the projected drop in the young population may hinder business growth and make it more difficult to attract new businesses to the area. This in turn might result in less opportunities for the young people in Argyll and Bute. Our plan demonstrates that measures are being taken to address this and to offer young people the right training to match them to available jobs. For example a Tourism and Food & Drink Industries Workforce Survey.
- School Service Next Steps: Service to support young people aged 16 – 18 (extended to 26 for care experienced young people) who are unemployed, helping them to build up their career management skills and move on to and sustain a range of options as appropriate: Activity Agreements, Employability Fund and other training programmes, education, employment.
- Career management skill are taught in schools in line with local and national frameworks including the Argyll and Bute Skills Framework, Career Standard 3-18 and Developing the Young Workforce. This includes a progression of skills for employability to ensure children are prepared for the world of work, especially for the local area in which they live. 'Career Days' and work experience for secondary school pupils have created links with local businesses to provide learning pathways into a variety of jobs locally, nationally and internationally. Literacy and numeracy support for all pupils especially those identified through Pupil Equity Funding. Close cooperation between Schools, SDS and the Colleges and Universities and guaranteed interviews for care experienced young people at Colleges to ensure equity of access.
- Skills Development Scotland / Care Experienced: Work in partnership with through Care/After Care workers to support young people who are care experienced. Active members of Through Care/After Care local and central forums.
- Develop new businesses and encourage start-ups that will provide additional jobs.
- Job Fairs run by ALLenergy, The HELP Project and ACHA.
- Council / Health Board / ACHA etc. employ Apprentices and encourage companies to do the same via Procurement Policies.
- University of the Highlands and Islands: Argyll College. Student Support Services provide additional learning support for those with learning difficulties; mental health problems; poor School attenders etc. Additional support for those from deprived areas experiencing financial barriers - University of Highlands and Islands / Argyll College (Personal Learning Support Plans; trained support staff; laptops; WIFI access; software; one to one tutoring; other as necessary).

- Ensure and Effective Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP). This is in place 2017-2020. Roads kept fit for purpose and facilitating main economic areas of tourism, food, forestry, fisheries, farming etc. Inspect, review and assess to manage a policy or pre-emptive repair and development. Assessed against agreed national and local quality standards and outcomes. Further actions are planned to improve the capture of feedback from individuals and communities.
- Argyll and Bute Council Procurement Team will identify the products, services and works Argyll and Bute Council procures that generate the greatest capacity to enhance social outcomes. These include activities such as employment, training, knowledge transfer and environmental outcomes

Income from Benefits:

- Income maximisation and benefits advice – Argyll and Bute Council, ACHA, Bute Advice etc. Aim is to increase the number of people using the services in the three year period 2017 – 2020. In 2018 / 19 Client Gain Statistics for Argyll and Bute show that the financial gains for clients from the use of advice services was as follows:

Citizens Advice Bureau	£681,000
Bute Advice	£1,284,000
Argyll and Bute Council	£2, 200,000
ACHA	£1,560,000
Money Skills Argyll	£460,000
Total	£6.185, 000

- We have identified 495 children in our area who should be eligible for school clothing grants of £100 each p.a. and who currently (April 2019) are not receiving an award. It is proposed that we automatically award and pay school clothing grants to their parents for the new school year starting August 2019. It is harder to identify everyone who should be eligible for free school meals. Every child in P1-P3 (and from August 2020 children in nursery) gets free school meals but for older children, it is based on entitlement of the household to various state benefits, capped at varying income levels. At least 109 children have been identified as not receiving free school meals who should be eligible for them, and families will be encouraged to take these up. Families who are not on passported benefits but who might well be eligible for free school meals have also been identified and we will work with these families to encourage take-up. All schools have the option to offer online payments for school meals and this is being encouraged to mitigate the possibility of identifying pupils on free school meals. Although schools may have different systems in place to pay for school meals they work hard to preserve the dignity of all families.
- Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme – Housing Consortium.
- The Scottish Welfare Fund is a national scheme provided under The Welfare Funds (Scotland) Act 2015 and delivered on behalf of the Scottish Government by all 32 local

authorities. Councils have extensive discretion over how the scheme is provided in their local area. The Welfare Fund is there to provide a safety net to vulnerable people on low incomes through the provision of Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants. In Argyll and Bute information regarding the SWF will be shared via Welfare Advice agencies who will assist applicants. Information leaflets will be made available in a number of settings, including Food Banks.

- Ensure all students are receiving all benefits, bursaries, EMA and grants / student loans to which they are entitled. Also ensure Care Experienced Young People have access to maximum funding / enhanced Bursary University of Highlands and Islands / Argyll College.

Cost of Living:

- Our Housing policies encompass the difficulties and requirements of disabled persons and include plans to build more disability friendly housing and grants to adapt private sector housing. Housing is a key factor to addressing the impacts of childhood poverty and some of the causal factors in relation to physical and mental well-being.
- Addressing fuel poverty is a priority in Argyll and Bute. The national target is for all eligible RSL properties to be fully compliant by 2020. In 2018 over 86% of the RSL stock in Argyll & Bute met the standard (excluding exemptions). Allenergy - providing free specialist affordable warmth advice, home visits, workshops and a portal to a range of other support services. Promoting sustainability, boosting the local energy economy and raising community benefit funds to help vulnerable people in local communities through community energy projects.
- ABC Housing Services, RSLs, Housing Support Providers will work to address the housing needs of families and households with young children, including equalities groups & those with specialist needs and work with partners to encourage affordable rents.
- Promote information and advice on sustainable housing solutions. Encourage RSLs to develop 'Greener Standard' new build homes and upgrade efficiency of existing stock to increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty – Housing Consortium.
- ABAN Network partners including the Council and CAB - Promote the network and ensure that it is promoted throughout Argyll and Bute and reaches those who require advice and service information.

New Activities to prevent, and mitigate, the impact of Child Poverty in Argyll and Bute:

- An application has been made to the Scottish Government for support of / funds for, Argyll and Bute's "Rural Growth Deal". Connecting: our high value and growing business sectors with national and international business markets; our economic local successes with national strategic priorities.

Transport (road/air routes to market)

Digital

Business innovation

Attracting: additional skills, training and learning opportunities; new residents, visitors and business.

Skills, training and education

Accommodation (housing and business)

Places to live, work and visit (community-led regeneration)

Centre of excellence

Growing: doing more of what works; making more of our natural and built resources.

Aquaculture

Tourism

Low carbon economy.

- Auto-enrolment of eligible persons for School Clothing Grants and free school meals. Take this area forward to reach more people eligible.
- To look at the area of holiday period poverty for children and families and scope possible ways to assist.
- Changing Lives Initiative project funded for 2 years to support families & educators of children with behaviours consistent with ADHD.
- Life Changes Trust: Coordinator appointed to run Forums for Care Experienced children and young people. Set up Champions Board for care experienced children and young people / engage them in shaping services for them. Offer grants of up to £500 to young people for thing that would make a difference in their lives and prospects.

Links to Key Documents:

Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 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>

Children and Young People's Services Plan 2017 – 2020:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ICSP>

Argyll and Bute Strategic Economic Development Action Plan 2016 – 20122:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_strategic_edap_-_year-end_2016-17_update_report.pdf

Argyll and Bute's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2022:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/corporate_plan_with_council_priorities.pdf

Roads Asset Management Plan 2017 – 2020:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/roads_asset_management_plan.pdf

Community Learning Partnership Community Learning and Development Plan for 2018-21:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/argyll-and-bute-community-learning-partnership-launch-their-new-cld-plan-2018-21>

Education Plan 2018 – 2019:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/argyll-and-bute-annual-education-plan-2018-19>

Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Argyll and Bute 2017:

https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/media/1208584/argyll_and_bute_local_fire_and_rescue_plan_2017.pdf

Argyll and Bute Local Police Plan 2017-2020:

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/assets/pdf/392813/392817/argyll-bute-local-policing-plan-2017-20?view=Standard>

Argyll and Bute HSCP: Children and Young People's Needs Assessment.

Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland; 31/8/2018