
Child Poverty

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the members of the Community Services Committee with information relating to child poverty work, the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2020 – 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

The members of the Community Services Committee are asked to

- Approve the Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2020 – 2021 (see Appendix 3) (Agenda Item 8)
- Note that the Child Poverty Action Plan Review will go to the IJB on 16/06/2021 and CPP on 30/06/2021.

3.0 Background

1. In 2017 the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act came into force as an attempt to put in place measures that would reduce the concerning increase in child poverty, both on a national and local level. The Act introduced 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 through to 2030.

The Scottish Government publishes a national child poverty report, “Every Child Every Chance” which sets out the national measures taken to address the issue and this too is reviewed annually.

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 2014**. Part 1 requires public authorities to publish, as soon as practicable after the end of each 3 year period, a report of what steps it has taken in that period to secure better or further effect within its areas of responsibility of the UNCRC requirements. Of particular relevance to the issue of child poverty are the following articles:

- Article 3 (best interests of the child)
- Article 6 (life, survival and development)
- Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)
- Article 26 (social security)
- Article 27 (adequate standard of living)

Hence the Child Poverty Action Plan and the Children's Rights Report are closely linked and should in turn be linked to key Council and Health Board strategies and plans, for example the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020 – 2023. It should be noted that child poverty and children's rights are issues not limited to Children's Services or the HSCP but are a wider responsibility that Council departments and partners need to be cited on.

The Plans also link to the **Fairer Scotland Duty**. This is an overarching strategic duty on public bodies (including local authorities). It has interactions with the Equality Act 2010 and Scotland Act 2016; and came into force on 1 April 2018.

The Duty requires that: "An authority to which this section applies 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."

In ensuring that this obligation is met, Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments (EQSEIA's) must be carried out when new plans and strategies are being developed. Children's rights obligations call for a similar process to be carried out and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA's) to be completed. Work is currently taking place in Argyll and Bute to integrate these two assessment documents into one process.

2. The 2017 Act set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2030. The targets for children living in households in Scotland are that:

- less than 10% of children live in relative poverty (relative poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the year taking account of the size and composition of the household);
- less than 5% of children live in absolute poverty (absolute poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the financial year beginning 1 April 2010);
- less than 5% of children live in combined low income and material deprivation (low income is defined as less than 70% of average household income for the year, material deprivation is when families are unable to afford three or more items out of a list of basic necessities);
- less than 5% of children live in persistent poverty (persistent poverty is where a child has lived in relative poverty for three out of the last four years).

These are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The Act also sets out interim targets which are to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2023 and these targets now represent a challenge given the impact of Covid19.

- Less than 18% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 14% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 8% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 8% of children are in persistent poverty

3. Child Poverty Figures for Argyll and Bute:

Data from research by the charity “End Child Poverty” in October 2020, which includes the child poverty data published by the Department for Work and Pensions in March 2020 and housing cost data from the Valuation Office Agency and income data from the Understanding Society survey found the following.

Children Living in Poverty below 60% median income before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC) in Argyll and Bute.

2014/2015 AHC – 20.7%

2018/2019 BHC - 17.3%

2018/2019 AHC – 23.4% - (3056 children)

New Scottish Government figures for Argyll and Bute released on 19/05/2021:

2019/2020 AHC - 23.3% (3000 children)

Figures to be released next year will reflect the impact of the pandemic economic impacts of EU exit and are likely to be higher.

4.0 Detail

In 2019 the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group was formed to oversee the implementation of the local Child Poverty plan, review it annually and find ways to best use existing resources and develop new initiatives. Members of the group included Councillor Currie, Senior Managers from the HSCP, Employability, The Food Group, Education, Benefits, Advice Services, Housing and the Third Sector; the Lead on child poverty work was taken by Joanna MacDonald, Chief Officer for the HSCP.

The Covid19 pandemic and the first lockdown prevented meetings for a period as group members were called away to other work but were continued later in the year. This was reflected across Scotland and the Government’s review of the Every Child Every Chance Report was not released until August. Local area plans were also delayed and Argyll and Bute completed theirs in November. However the Scottish Government wanted to get reviewing back on track, hence there will be a shorter time between reviews this year, with the next being required by the end of June or as soon as possible after this date. The second review report 2020 – 2021 will go to the Community Services Committee on 10/06/2021, the IJB on 16/06/2021 and the CPP on 30/06/2021. Following approval and publication there is an obligation for it to go to Scottish Government.

5.0 Conclusions

The current Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2020 – 2021 sets out the current situation in terms of child poverty in Argyll and Bute and makes particular reference to areas such as children’s rights, sustainability and the challenges facing our island communities. The plan sets out work that has been happening to address child poverty in Argyll and Bute and some

plans for actions going forward. This will be led by Fiona Davies and the CPAG group; training, engagement and data analysis are key issues for the coming year.

For more information, contact

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Appendices:

Appendix 1

Links to Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Report 2019 and the 2019 / 2020 Review:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/child_poverty_action_plan_0.pdf

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

Link to Council's Challenge Poverty Website:

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

Link to Argyll and Bute's Children's Rights Report:

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/childrens_rights_report_2020_final.pdf

Scottish Government's UNCRC Guide for Children and Young People

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/un-convention-rights-child-guide-children-young-people-2/>

Appendix 2

Description of measure:

Relative poverty - the proportion of children living in households with incomes below 60% of the median (middle) UK income in the current year.

Absolute Poverty - The number of children living in households below 60% of the median UK income in 2010/11, adjusted for inflation.

Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation - The number of children living in households with incomes below 70% of the median UK income AND going without certain basic goods and services (such as a warm winter coat, a holiday away from home, money to replace worn out furniture etc.).

Persistent Poverty - The number of children who have lived in relative poverty in 3 or more of the last 4 years.