

Management Committee

Date: 22/06/2022



Child Poverty

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the CPP Management Committee with information relating to child poverty work, the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021 – 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

The CPP Management Committee are asked to:

- Note the work taking place to address child poverty locally
- Note that the Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021 – 2022 will be completed by the end of June but will then require to be approved by the Council and IJB publication and sending to the Scottish Government.

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 2018-2022” which set out the national measures taken to address the issue and this too has been reviewed annually. On 24th March 2022 the Scottish Government published: “Best Start” Bright Futures; Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 – 2026.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/documents/>

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 Argyll and Bute Children's Rights Report 2020 – 2023 will require to be re-viewed next year and Brian Reid will lead a multi-agency Children's Rights Group to do this and to look at actions around embedding the UNCRC into Argyll and Bute's policies and procedures.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-2022 also requires to be addressed and decisions made as to the way forward. Discussions are currently taking place. It should be noted that there is no single decision on this from local authorities; some have set aside the wider Anti-Poverty Strategy in favour of the Child Poverty Action Plan; others have unified the two and still others have worked on both using overarching key objectives. The Improvement Service have stated this decision is a matter for local choice, as long as the statutory obligations to report on child poverty work is met.

It is noted that the Child Poverty Action Plan and the Children's Rights Report 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, EU Exit, the cost of living crisis, food chain issues and the war in Ukraine.

- 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.

It is noted that there is a delay this year in annuals figures from End Child Poverty, they state: *We aim to release our child poverty statistics every year around May time. However, this year they will be slightly delayed due to a delay in receiving the data from the government upon which these statistics are based. We are aiming to release these statistics in early July.*

Local child poverty rates, After Housing Costs

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)

<https://data.gov.scot/poverty/2022/persistent.html>

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. This role has now passed to Fiona Davies.

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 2020. The second review 2020 – 2021 was completed and published with a short delay and the 2021 – 2022 review should be completed and published by the end of August.

5.0 Conclusions

The current Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021 – 2022 (still to be published) 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, The Promise, Pupil Voices, and Training. 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.

Examples of Work Taking Place.

- **Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)**

To date 47 parents across the 6 target group have signed up to receive support from our two PESF Engagement Workers, of these parents:

- 32 (68%) were unemployed and 11 (32%) low income employed on commencing support.
 - 9 of the 32 unemployed have now ceased support. All 9 are in a positive destination, 8 in employment (89%) and 1 has moved into full time education (11%).
 - 2 of the 11 employed have now ceased support, 2 (100%) of these parents have experienced an increase in their household income.
- **Training** - Working with The Poverty Alliance, One Parent Families Scotland and The Child Poverty Alliance we put together a broad range of **training events** for our multi-agency staff group and others. Some 220 professionals and our elected members received poverty awareness training and we were impressed by the insights that participants shared with us. Other courses ran on topics such as Single Parent Poverty Awareness; Benefit basics in Scotland; Payments for children in Scotland and Supporting low-income families.

In addition to the commissioned training events there has been the delivery of Money Counts Training. The Money Counts Level 1 awareness session was co-developed by the Highland Money Counts Partnership including the Trussell Trust, NHS Highland, Highland Council and Social Security Scotland, in partnership with the Independent Food Aid Network and Nourish Scotland. It has been adapted for Argyll and Bute and is currently delivered by Heather McAdam from NHS Highland and Mags Todd from A&B Council. The sessions also raised awareness of the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) Argyll and Bute **Worrying about money? Leaflet** and encouraged participants to use this when discussing money issues with clients. The Council has worked with a

number of organisations to get this leaflet out widely to those who may need it in this time of cost of living crisis; this included putting the leaflet out with Council Tax Bills

- **Greener Development and Sustainability:**

We are committed to creating green jobs and businesses within a low carbon economy and giving young people the skills they need to become involved in this work. Examples of this include successful projects put forward to the UK Community Renewal Fund by Argyll and Bute, including the West Coast UAV Innovation Logistics and Training Hub, and Curriculum Development for STEM Hub Projects.

Also, being considered under the Scottish Government's Islands Programme (IP); is the Island Community Hall Connectivity Project – which would enhance digital connectivity to allow access to superfast broadband. Community Halls and Centres would operate a new hybrid-meeting model and act as community digital hubs.

Another example, being developed as part of the Rural Growth Deal, is creating a Low Carbon Economy. This includes exploring options for the decarbonisation of Islay using a 'whole systems' approach that will consider power, heat and transport as well as placing the needs of the individual and business consumer at its centre to ensure that future energy systems are sustainable and support inclusive economic growth.

In addition there are other areas of work, such as providing free period products, developing school clothing banks and the Food Forum that offer an opportunity for poverty actions and sustainability to be more closely aligned in a way that helps to tackle stigma while enabling dignity and choice for those in need.

Client Gain through Advice Activity:

Once again Advice Services across Argyll and Bute have managed to make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are struggling. The table below shows the client gain from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as **£10,165,000**.

Organisation	2021/2022 (£)
Bute Advice Centre	1,866,000
Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights	2,729,000
ACHA Welfare Rights	4,192,000
Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau	1,068,000
ALlenergy	310,000
TOTAL	10,165,000

- **Fuel Poverty / Energy Efficiency**

Minimising all families' energy consumption will require existing homes to be retrofitted with measures to improve the fabric of the building and increase energy efficiency. Consequently, the building will require less energy to reach a comfortable temperature. Reducing the heating demand in homes will contribute to lower heating bills and hence help to alleviate child poverty. The Local Housing Strategy outlines the tools and programmes to improve Argyll and Bute's energy efficiency.

Since 2020, Argyll and Bute Council has supported ACHA with their Warm Homes Project. £1million is funding external wall insulation to private homes in mixed tenure blocks. This supports ACHA's broader programme where they are installing over 1,000 air source heat pumps across Argyll and Bute. ACHA has also secured Scottish Government Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding to pilot a demonstrator project.

ALlenergy had 1237 clients registering in the year Apr 21 – Mar 22 with a significant increase over the winter months as prices went up and the weather became colder. ALlenergy is a registered referral partner with Fuel Bank Foundation. Through the Fuel Bank Foundation, prepayment meter vouchers and bulk heating fuel deliveries can be accessed. In the period April 21 – March 22, 773 prepayment meter vouchers were accessed to a total value of £33,108, supporting 950 adults and 597 children in Argyll and Bute, whose households were close to or already using the emergency credit facility on their electric and/or gas meter, or had already self-disconnected. 36 bulk heating fuel deliveries (oil, coal, firewood) were also secured worth around £9,000 in total, direct to households who could not afford heating fuel deliveries.

- **Affordable Housing** - Often, a family's most significant monthly expense is their rent/mortgage; providing more affordable homes will alleviate a critical driver that pushes families into poverty. The first objective of the Local Housing Strategy is to provide an adequate supply of affordable homes. In 2021/22 there were 289 households with children under 16 rehoused via HOMEArgyll, out of a total of 733 RSL allocations, amounting to 39% of the total RSL allocations that year. In total

this equates to 467 children rehoused in a permanent secure and affordable home.

There are 924 families with children under 16 on the HOMEArgyll waiting list as of April 2022, out of a total active waiting list of 2,991 (31%). This amounts to 1,766 children in total in housing need.

- **Flexible Food Fund** - At the end of April 2022, after just under 16 months there has been 1,007 families supported and the combined total client gain is £1.325 million meaning that the average client gain per household is £1,315. In addition the team are managing a debt portfolio of £174,000 across all claimants where they continue to negotiate with creditors to reduce the arrears of individuals and families receiving support.
- **The Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum** continues to operate as a mutual support service for food banks across Argyll and Bute. Bute Advice Service provides the coordination role, bringing the forum together as a collective of independent organisations. The Council supports the initiative which is a network through which existing independent food-banks, food waste and community food initiatives can share experience, advice and ideas. Their work is closely linked to the Council's Cost of Living and financial inclusion work, and officers meet with representatives of the Community Food Forum on a regular basis, providing support as required.

Argyll and Bute Council are represented on the Scottish Government's Working Group tasked with developing ways of ending the need for Food Banks in Scotland.

- **Free Period Products** - In November 2021, Argyll and Bute Council appointed a Project Lead – Period Products to ensure that the consultation, launch, roll out and compliance required by the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021 was achieved. Argyll and Bute is the first Local Authority area to specifically recruit a post to support this work. During the early part of 2021, the post holder undertook considerable consultation to develop a Statement on Exercise of Functions, a brand identity and a provision and launch plan, with consultation being done with both young people and adults across communities.
- **School Clothing Banks** - We have great engagement between schools and community groups in Campbeltown where the Council is working with the schools, Kintyre Recycling Limited Shopper Aide to implement a school clothing bank to cover 6 primary schools and a secondary school in South Kintyre. There has been positive engagement in both Dunoon and Rothesay and it is anticipated that Sustainable Use School Clothing Banks will be setup by June 2022 in all of these areas.

6.0 Implications

Strategic Implications	
Consultations, Previous considerations	
Resources	
Prevention	
Equalities	

For more information, contact

References

Appendices:

Appendix 1

Links to Argyll and Bute's Child Poverty Action Report 2019, the 2019 / 2020 and the 2020 – 2021 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

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Unknown/final_child_poverty_action_plan_review_2020-2021.003.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.