

Integration Joint Board

Date of Meeting: 15/08/2022

Title of Report: Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-2022

Presented by: David Gibson, Head of Children & Families and Justice.

The IJB is asked to:

- Note the review

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-2022 is the third review of the Child Poverty Action Plan first published in 2019. It is a requirement under the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act that local authorities and health boards jointly produce and publish an annual review of their plan, setting out work being undertaken to tackle child poverty in their region. This action is required up until 2030 and includes key target years of 2023 and 2030 for particular levels of progress to be achieved.

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group, led by Fiona Davies (Chief Officer; Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership) have produced this year's review to reflect the work of its members and others working to tackle child poverty across the region. It reflects a strong children's rights approach and the vision shared vision that:

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.

A child friendly SWAY version of the plan has been created for engaging with children and young people. It is hoped that this will be developed into a One Page Plan, graphic version that will also be of real value in working with children and also adults who might prefer this presentation to reading a long report.

Current Child Friendly SWAY

<https://sway.office.com/od2HbGlR940R2j3u?ref=Link>

2. INTRODUCTION

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 until 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. In 2022 a second delivery plan was published "Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2027".

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)

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. 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.

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. These are all measured after housing costs are deducted.

- 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. DETAIL OF REPORT

In 2019 the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group, a multiagency body was set up 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. Following approval and publication there is an obligation for it to be submitted to Scottish Government.

Local Child Poverty Figures

On the 12th of July 2022 the End Child Poverty coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period to 2020/21, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at local authority level (below 60% median income after housing costs). Figures for Argyll and Bute are as follows:

2020-2021 - 18.8%; a reduction of 1.8% from the 2014-2015 figure of 20.7%

The current review introduces the challenges the year has brought in terms of food shortages, a cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine.

It also notes progress as 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. Also noted is our commitment to #KeepingThePromise and our continued development of a trauma informed workforce.

Adding to this is our commitment to train staff in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. Other positives noted include client gain of £10,165,000 from our advice services, engagement in schools, Hermitage Academy becoming the first high school in Argyll and Bute to receive gold accreditation in UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School programme and the success of the Flexible Food Fund.

It notes that nationally there has been the publication of the Scottish Government's second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, "Best Start, Bright Futures 2022-2026". We state that we approve that it say the 2030 targets require us to work differently – placing an ever greater focus on families and the

places they live. We make the point that rural, remote and island living can have additional challenges and costs that need to be considered. The high and immediate risks to people in Argyll and Bute due to fuel poverty are emphasized as are the mental and physical health costs of poverty.

Reasons for this Child Poverty Review

It is noted that the 2017 the Child Poverty (Scotland) 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 until 2030.

Pupil Voice on Childhood Poverty

The report includes a reflection from a variety of school age young people giving their views and feelings of pupils, these were collected by schools in engagement exercises.

Children's Rights

The report notes that Children's rights are fundamental to all work tackling child poverty and should be reflected in the principles and objectives of all services that support children. This means not only direct services such as education, health and social care but also our political, social and economic infrastructures. When we look at a Strategic Children and Young People's Service Plan from a Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) we expect to see needs and children's rights identified and considered. Local Authorities also need to show that is happening, for example, when a road is planned, street lighting changed or a Commissioning Strategy developed.

The Promise

A key consideration when looking at our work on tackling child poverty in Argyll and Bute must be keeping The Promise. The Promise, launched by the Scottish Government in Autumn 2020 originates in the findings of The Care Review and makes a commitment to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and families, that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential. It demands a multi-agency approach to support shifts in policy, practice and culture across Scotland and make the difference that is required. In Argyll and Bute a strong, multi-agency commitment has been made to delivering on The Promise and that work has continued, despite the considerable barriers raised by the Covid-19 pandemic, EU exit and the current cost of living crisis.

Our Challenge

This area notes the particular challenges faced by Argyll and Bute, with regards to areas such as fuel poverty, the economy, infrastructure and demographics. It includes statistical data. Under sustainability it notes work being carried out in connection with the UK Community Renewal Fund, Island Community Hall Connectivity Project and Rural Growth Deal. Also noted here is work on school clothing banks, free period products and the Food Forum.

Training

One of our commitments for the year 2021 – 2022 was to deliver training, related to understanding and tackling child poverty, for a wide range of staff groups across Argyll and Bute. This was made possible by monies from the Flexible Fund which enabled us to commission the Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group and One Parent Scotland to work with us. A number of training packages were developed and delivered on multiple occasions. The nature and impact of this training is noted.

Key Areas of the Plan:

This section notes key areas of work undertaken in relation to child poverty; they are recorded under the 3 Drivers of Poverty, helping families in other ways and planned future work.

A. Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings

Employability; The Scottish Government's Islands Programme (IP); Skills Development Scotland; Learning HUBS; Council Apprenticeships; Education; Early Years; UHI Argyll and University of the Highlands and Islands.

B. Increasing Income through Benefits

Flexible Food Fund; Client Gain through Advice Activity.

C. Cost of Living

Housing; Fuel Poverty; Social Security Scotland; Free School Meals and holiday Provision; Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum; Good Food Nation and Food Strategy; Bute Advice Service; Free Period Products; School Clothing Banks; The GRAB Trust (Group for Recycling in Argyll and Bute); ReStyle Argyll; LORI; Kintyre Recycling; Re-Jig.

D. Helping Families in Other Ways

Infant and Perinatal Mental Health Services; Youth Work Education Recovery Learning Programme; What are Carers Centres and MAYDS doing to support Young Carers in Argyll & Bute?; Transforming Responses to Violence against Women and Girls; Free School Meals Delivered by Drones; Universal Pathway Quality Improvement Collaborative Financial Inclusion Practicum (UPQIC); Flexible Fund.

E. Other Planned Work

Rural Growth Deal; Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund (LACER); Child Poverty Group.

4. RELEVANT DATA AND INDICATORS

On the 12th of July 2022 the End Child Poverty coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period to 2020/21, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at local authority level (below 60% median income after housing costs). Figures for Argyll and Bute are as follows:

Date	Number of Children in Poverty	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	2808	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	2325	18.9%	-1.8%

This positive change reflects the Scottish Government investment in the new Scottish child payment, other Social Security payments and a range of other measures. It also reflects the impact of a range of local measures taken to tackle

child poverty and its impacts, which are noted in this report. Scotland has the lowest rate of child poverty amongst countries of the UK at 21%, followed by England at 29% and Wales at 34%.

Whilst this is positive, particularly given the cost of living crisis; Argyll and Bute does have some significant challenges. Although it has a lower percentage of workless households than the national average (14.7% opposed to 18.1% - Jan-Dec 2020), average gross weekly pay rates are lower (553.6 opposed to the national average of 595). Hence the numbers of children in low income families remains a concern.

Children in Low Income Families

	Argyll and Bute	Scotland
2017 - 2018	17.3%	18.6%
2018 - 2019	16.7%	16.5%
2019 - 2020	17.2%	16.8%

In addition the level and nature of fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute makes families particularly vulnerable at the moment given the rises in fuel costs. Recently, revised Scottish Government figures show that fuel poverty is now estimated to be 43% higher than in 2019. This means that in the Argyll & Bute and Highland regions, fuel poverty is likely to be approaching 50% and extreme fuel poverty, probably almost 30% of all households – and further significant price increases seem likely yet to come. Particular local innovations, such as the Flexible Food Fund, are attempting to tackle this, offering grants and client advice.

Fuel poverty is not equally distributed throughout Argyll and Bute but rather more marked in some housing market areas. For example Figure 1 shows that Bute has 41-50% of the population in fuel poverty whereas Cowal has less than 20% in fuel poverty.

Work is being carried out nationally to look at improving data looking at child poverty in rural places. Workshops have taken place led by the Improvement Service and some of the suggestions for taking this forward include:

- Establish a multi-disciplinary working group on Tackling Child Poverty through Innovation in Data and Intelligence, chaired by IS/COSLA/academic partners to include, for example, relevant local authorities and health boards, relevant academics (Scottish Public Policy Exchange, SPIRU, Codeclan, Data Lab, Research Data Scotland, SPIRU), representatives of the Information Commissioner and those with insight/expertise as to private sector use of data sharing legislation. Local government representatives should include those in leadership roles (SOLACE etc.) those with data and analytical expertise, GIS professionals and child poverty policy and delivery leads.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This review fulfils the obligation, from The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, for local authorities and health boards to deliver jointly an annual review of their Child Poverty Action Plan. Links with other local authority reporting

duties on tackling child poverty include: Fairer Scotland Duty, Islands (Scotland) Act 2018; Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; Education Act 2016; Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

This Child Poverty Action Plan links to: the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Children and Young People's Services Plan and the Children's Rights Plan. Overarching this, children's rights and tackling child poverty should be a consideration in every Council plan and strategy.

6. GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Impact

The report notes a forecast financial impact on families and wellbeing and may risk a subsequent financial impact on organisations as the wider and longer term impacts of poverty are felt.

6.2 Staff Governance

No issues specific to this paper.

6.3 Clinical and Care Governance

This report is governed through a multi-agency strategic group seeking to work together to deliver national policy and alleviate poverty. This report is submitted to the IJB for note and to the Council for approval.

7. PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY

This is supported through the strategic group.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An EQSEIA and a CRWIA have been carried out in relation to this Child Poverty Action Plan Review. No negative impacts were noted and positive impacts seen in terms of the work noted in this review.

9. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION PRINCIPLES COMPLIANCE

Data protection principles have been adhered to.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT

The reviewed plan shows a range of planned work to address child poverty; it is noted that the latest child poverty figures for Argyll and Bute show a reduction of 1.8% to 18.9% (below 60% median income after housing costs). However recent events such as the impacts of EU Exit, the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis have placed more families into financial crisis and made it less likely that the Scottish Government's child poverty reduction targets for 2023 and 2030 will be met.

11. PUBLIC & USER INVOLVEMENT & ENGAGEMENT

The Child Poverty Action Group has a Communications and Engagement Subgroup which looks to inform and consult on issues relating to child poverty. Group members share information regarding work in the area of child poverty and also what resources and supports are available for people requiring them. A range of networks and media sites are used to achieve this. Key events, such as Challenge Poverty Week are used to raise awareness of child poverty

and the work going on to tackle it. Engagement with children and young people is being developed via schools, youth groups and young carers groups.

12. 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 Page 5 4 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.

13. DIRECTIONS

Directions required to Council, NHS Board or both.	Directions to:	tick
	No Directions required	x
	Argyll & Bute Council	
	NHS Highland Health Board	
	Argyll & Bute Council and NHS Highland Health Board	

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