
Child Poverty

This report contains updates requested following the report submitted to the committee in June of this year.

1. Progress on the multi-agency group to be led by Brian Reid to support the review of the Argyll and Bute Children's Rights Report 2020-23 and to embed the UNCRC within the Local Authority's policies and procedures.

A meeting of the UNCRC SLWG took place on 17th August 2022 and was well attended. The agenda included discussion of the Rights Respecting Schools work and achieving accreditation under this scheme. Rosie MacKay also noted local geographical challenges to supporting schools with this work and the need for it to be a sustainable development.

In addition, Rosie advised she and Laurie Black were looking at equality and diversity and links to UNCRC. Mags Todd reported she was engaged with young carers and the setting up of an online group to be called "Having a Voice"; this to enable engagement and coproduction with this group. Sharon Erskine advised the Youth Advisory Group that assisted with the Children and Young People's Service Plan may also be a pathway for engagement / coproduction with regards to UNCRC issues. There was discussion around School Councils and Brian Smith and Rosie MacKay will look at this pathway.

Sharon Erskine discussed an Audit Tool that she and some third sector organisations had used to look at ensuring policies aligned with the UNCRC. It was agreed that this would be looked at in more detail by the UNCRC short life working group, with regards to use by the Council / other organisations; training and communications relating to this would need to be discussed.

It was also noted in this meeting that it is frequently asked when Argyll and Bute is going to get a Children's Rights Officer. Brian advised that the group could look at raising this issue with SMT.

It was discussed that the Argyll and Bute Children's Rights Report required to be reviewed and updated in 2023; best approach to this will need to be decided. Current report is written using the Cluster approach to the articles and work relating to them, as are many local authority reports but there are other possible approaches that could be considered.

The need to look at the Council and other organisations complaints procedures was raised and in particular the importance of ensuring that complaints procedures were child friendly. Brian confirmed he would ensure that Iain Jackson was sighted on this issue. Josh Barnham; ISE Reviewing Officer (Project Lead for Child Friendly Complaints) | Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, is currently working on this issue and his first monthly update is as follows:

Child Friendly Complaints- update July 2022

Ensuring children's rights and needs are met by public service complaints procedures in Scotland

The SPSO is being funded by the Scottish Government to develop child-friendly complaints approaches and procedures as part of model complaints handling procedures. On 25 April 2022 we launched our two-year project to develop and implement new guidance for public bodies within our jurisdiction.

Children and young people are users of a wide range of Scottish public services, including those such as schools, children and families social work, and health visitor services. Many of these focus on their wellbeing, health and development. Children have the right to complain if they are unhappy with those services.

The SPSO are developing guidance that will cover complaints about public services:

- made by children and young people themselves
- made on behalf of children and young people with their permission (e.g. by their parents, carers or third-party advocates), and
- concerning children and young people (e.g., made by their parents, carers or third-party advocates without permission or input from children and young people).

Project aim

Co-design and implement a public sector complaints service that meets children's rights and needs, working in co-operation with children and young people, public bodies, and wider stakeholders

It is important that complaints handling processes both enable children and young people to exercise their rights, and ensure those handling complaints hear and respect children and young peoples' views and voices. Taking a co-design approach that hears those voices from the outset is critical to this.

Processes also have to work in practice so we will also be drawing on the experience of the people who provide services to children and who manage complaints processes as part of the co-design approach.

Timescales

We will be running design workshops with a wide range of stakeholders including groups of staff from a variety of organisations and sectors over the next few months. It would be great if your organisation were involved (details below).

When this engagement is complete, we will launch a formal consultation. This is likely to be towards the end of 2022, with a view to laying the guidance before the Scottish Parliament and implementing the new guidance on 1 April 2023, aiming for compliance by 1 April 2024.

The Scottish Government are also funding us to develop training materials and resources for public bodies to use to support implementation. More on this as the project progresses, but this will be our key focus in the second year of the project.

If you want to be part of the co-design of the new procedures, or if you have any questions about the project, please contact us by emailing CSA@spso.gov.scot. You can also reply to this email.

Josh Barnham; ISE Reviewing Officer (Project Lead for Child Friendly Complaints) | Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Note: Since the last meeting of the UNCRC SLWG, the Improvement Service have issued “Supporting Children’s Rights: UNCRC in Scotland; Getting Ready for UNCRC Incorporation Framework: A Practical Resource for Local Authorities in Scotland to prepare for UNCRC Incorporation (Autumn 2022). This guidance will be discussed at the next meeting.

2. Work to integrate Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments with Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments

The need to develop an Integrated Impact Assessment was also discussed by the UNCRC SLWG. Chris Carr advised this was still a work in progress by herself and HROD / Customer Services. It was noted that this is a complex task with the need to integrate Impact assessments / Fairer Scotland Duty / Island Impact Assessments / CRWIA’s and possibly shortly a Human Rights Assessment. There was an added complexity in that all of these are targeted slightly differently. It was highlighted that 17 out of 32 local authorities were currently using some kind of Integrated Impact Assessment. Argyll and Bute have yet to adopt a model but was looking at alternatives. In the meantime, it could be said that there were pockets of good practice in terms of completing assessments; housing for example had done separate EQIA’s and CRWIA’s; Mandy Sheridan had done the same for the Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021 -2022.

Note: The Improvement Service is running a webinar on 03/10/2022 entitled: “Listen, Engage and Have Fun with Child Rights Impact Assessments.”

3. Update on the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-22

The Child Poverty Action Plan has been completed and was presented to the Integration Joint Board on 21 September 2022. It is on track to be published in October. Next year, 2023, may see changes in the plan as it needs to be considered whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy is integrated in some way or remains separate; this strategy runs from 2019 – 2023.

2023 is also the first target date set by the Scottish Government. The targets are:

- 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.

This year work is currently ongoing to create a “Plan on One Page” for children, young people and adults who prefer a more visual Child Poverty Plan. This will include information about the plan but, importantly, will also be a vehicle for lots of advice and information regarding supports, benefits etc. available and how to access them.

4. Update on the Child Poverty Action Group; any other examples of child poverty action-related work which have taken/are taking place.

The Action Group continues to meet with the decision reached to move away from the monthly meeting model adopted during Covid-19 and to move to a two monthly time table. An Engagement and Communications Sub Group has been established and so far, has met once. It is currently looking at clarifying communication pathways and introducing an annual calendar to flag up when certain message types and support information needs to be promoted; for example, supports with fuel debt / hardship in winter months. The group will also be putting out media posts and information during Challenge Poverty Week (3rd - 9th October); there will be a lighting up of buildings in Dunoon and Oban (colour mid blue) on 7th October to mark the week and media posts to go with this event. The banner this year is



Locally there are a number of things happening including looking at ways to better share data in order to ensure people who are entitled to important benefits like the Scottish Child Payment are identified and prompted to apply. Also ensuring the provision of free school meals to primary school children, whilst prompting people to continue to register if they are entitled, despite it becoming universal, as this allows them to claim other benefits. The issue of setting up and / or publicising where warm spaces can be found this winter is also being explored; possibly linking to advice services and promoting of other supports.

The Flexible Food Fund and also the work of third sector bodies such as Allenergy and Bute Advice Service are proving to be key but there are issues with demand for these services being currently much higher. An important "Have You Got Money Worries" book has been produced and is currently being widely distributed, both online and in hard copy. It is also being explored whether the "Money Worries" training programme for staff can be placed onto LEON in order to allow for more coverage. The previously developed course on Child Poverty and Children's Rights remains on LEON for staff.

[Children's rights: The rights of the child and child poverty \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk/childrens-rights-the-rights-of-the-child-and-child-poverty)

Nationally, Audit Scotland have just concluded that longer-term joint planning is needed to address child poverty in Scotland, which has increased since targets were set in 2017.

<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/briefing-tackling-child-poverty>

Also ways of improving data on poverty in remote and rural places is also being looked at as it is becoming very apparent that the cost of living, particularly relating to fuel and food provision is significantly higher in such places.