

Meeting: Integration Joint Board

Date of Meeting: 30/08/2023

Title of Report: Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022 - 2023

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

The group is asked to:

- Note the annual review of the Child Poverty Action Plan.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022-2023 is the fourth review of the Child Poverty Action Plan first published in 2019. It is a requirement under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 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.

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 in a time of cost of living crisis. It reflects a strong children's rights approach and the 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 graphic version of the plan has been created as a "Plan on a Page" and this has been used in schools and other settings to inform children and young people about the plan.

This has been very successful and not just with this group but also with many adults who prefer a more graphic, easy read version. Media posts have helped to highlight this. This plan version has been created in different colours in order to easier access for those with particular needs.

This was one of the ideas that came from co-production with children and young people and demonstrates the importance of engaging in this way. A QR code on the plan links people to a Council web page that has information on benefits, advice services, housing etc. The Plan on a Page was placed in a number of health and other settings alongside the Money Worries leaflet.

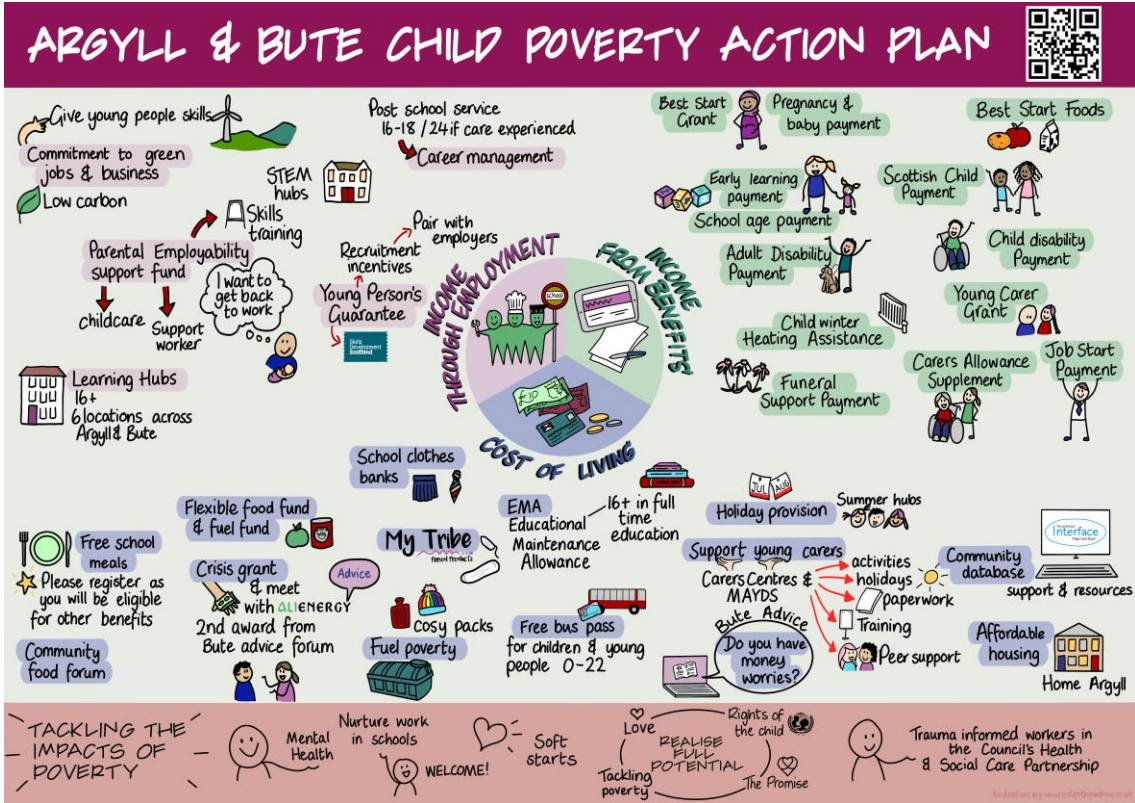


Figure 1 Argyll & Bute Child Poverty Action Plan on a page

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.

On 24th March 2022 a second tackling child poverty delivery plan was published” Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026”. A number of commitments made in this plan can be seen in the key elements of our local plan, for example a strengthened employment offer to parents and connectivity and childcare to enable access to employment. Other important actions included increasing the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) and working with local authorities to mitigate the Benefits Cap.

In addition the Child Poverty Action Plan (both local and national) are closely linked to children’s rights. Article 4 of the UNCRC introduces the concept of ‘progressive realisation’ in relation to economic, social and cultural rights such as the rights to nutrition, clothing and housing. This means there must be progress made over time towards the full realisation of children’s rights. Other key articles relating to child poverty would include:

- 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)

Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report every 3 years on the steps they have taken in that period to secure better or further effect of the requirements of the UNCRC. An updated Argyll and Bute Children's Rights Report will be published this year and reflect the Child Poverty Action Plan.

The Child Poverty Action Plan is also referenced in the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2023 – 2026. 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.

Linking the Child Poverty Action Plan to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP) is important and Argyll and Bute is currently developing its next Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which will be a ten year plan running from 2024 to 2034. During consultation that took place, financial inclusion was seen to be one of the top four themes.

The Plan also links 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.

Similarly under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 provisions require relevant authorities, including local authorities, to have regard to island communities in carrying out their functions. To comply with this duty, relevant authorities must make arrangements to review their policies, strategies and services and either prepare an Island Communities Impact Assessment where that is required (see below), or otherwise assess or take appropriate steps in relation to the policy, strategy or service in question.

It is known that the cost of living on islands is 15-30 percent higher and this is a key consideration when looking at child poverty actions.

3. DETAIL OF REPORT

- a) This plan's foreword and introduction note how challenging the year 2022 - 2023 has been with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, E.U. exit and the ongoing war in Ukraine contributing to a cost of living crisis. They also note the work done by the Council and its partners in continue to tackle child poverty.

- b) Engagement and Listening

The coproduction work carried out to create a graphic version of the plan, a "Plan on a Page" is mentioned as is the need for further engagement and coproduction going forward.

c) Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis

This looks at actions taken by the many organisations and departments, brought together by the Financial Inclusion and Advice Services Group, to tackle the cost of living crisis in a coordinated and meaningful way. It notes the actions taken to support people at risk or in crisis due to the cost of living.

d) Data

This looks at some of the key data we use now to look at the impacts of poverty and the 3 drivers of poverty. It goes on to note that The Council is carrying out a project to look at innovative data use to identify unmet need in communities. The project will seek to use Microsoft Power BI to develop better ways of interconnecting data sources, from both inside and outside of the Council, in order to highlight areas of unmet need whilst ensuring that appropriate information governance is maintained, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are followed, etc.

e) Children and Young People's Service Plan 2023 – 2026

This section looks at the CYPSP and notes the alignment with tackling child poverty and supporting the rights of children and young people.

f) Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP)

This looks at the coproduction work done with regards to developing the new ABOIP. It notes the wide range of groups included and the connection to child poverty. One of the 7 themes suggested was financial inclusion and this was seen as being in the top four in terms of importance by participants.

g) UNCRC

This looks at the importance of children's rights to tackling child poverty. It notes that UNCRC Implementation Group will be leading on a plan to implement the embedding of the UNCRC into all areas of the Councils work.

h) Trauma-Informed workforce

This notes the further development of a trauma informed workforce and the implementation of dyadic developmental practice. This is key to having a workforce able to support children and young people who are dealing with trauma, including that related to child poverty.

i) Key Areas of the Plan

This part of the report details the different elements of the plan itself and they are laid out in the following sections:

- Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings:

(Employability, Skills Development Scotland, Council Apprenticeships, Education, Early Years, UHI Argyll and University of the Highlands and Islands).

It had

- Increasing Income through Benefits:

(Client Gain through Advice Activity, Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, The Welfare Rights Team at Argyll and Bute Council, Social Security Scotland, Money Counts Level 1 Awareness Raising Sessions, Community Link Workers, Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships, Cool2talk, Living Well Networks).

- Cost of Living:
(Housing, Allenergy - Fuel Poverty, Free School Meals and Holiday Provision, Good Food Nation and Food Strategy, Bute Advice Centre, Community Food Forum, Free Period Products).
- Helping Families in Other Ways:
(liveArgyll Community Learning, Maternity, Infant Mental Health, Consultation with LGBTQ+ young people, Working with Refugees in Argyll and Bute, Carer's Centres and Young Carers, Transforming Responses to Violence against Women and Girls).
- Other Planned Work:
(Rural Growth Deal).

4. RELEVANT DATA AND INDICATORS

- a) On 5th of June 2023, the End Child Poverty Coalition published the latest local child poverty figures. Their research, covering the period 2021–2022, provides the best available estimates of child poverty at the local authority level (below 60% of the median income after housing costs).

Date	Percentage of Children in Poverty	Percentage Point Change
2014 - 2015	20.7%	
2020 - 2021	18.9%	-1.8%
2021-2022	21.7%	+2.8

These figures should be considered in terms of a pattern over time rather than a small rise in isolation. The national Scottish Child Payment combined with local measures taken will have been key to preventing much higher figures.

b) Argyll and Bute - Children in Absolute Low Income 2021 / 2022

Absolute low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. Income is equivalised to adjust for household size and family composition.

Children aged 0-4	Loner Parents	Couple
Not in Working Families	101	62
In Working Families	128	194
Children aged 5-10		
Not in Working Families	100	54
In Working Families	184	279
Children aged 11-15		
Not in Working Families	84	65
In Working Families	225	230
Children aged 16-19		
Not in Working Families	53	34
In Working Families	153	141

Source – Department of Work and Pensions

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This review notes contribution to the Scottish Governments national Priorities, Single Outcome Agreement, Children’s Rights and delivery of the HSCP strategic plan.

6. GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Impact

This report notes an ongoing cost of living crisis that will continue to put pressure on families and, as a consequence, on those organisations trying to assist them.

6.2 Staff Governance

It would be valuable to be able to repeat staff awareness raising training in 2024.

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 risk of not completing this review would be non-compliance with a Scottish Government designated reporting duty. This report notes that the risk of failing to deliver on the many areas of work currently taking place to support struggling families, would a larger percentage of children in poverty in Argyll and Bute.

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. It also works closely with the Financial Inclusion and Advice Group who also have a communications plan relating to supporting families in the cost of living crisis.

Members of both groups 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 dissemination of this information. 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

This report sets out to show the work taking place across Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty and support families. It also looks to identify the particular challenges and advantages of our geography, demography and economic environment.

It highlights many successes and organisations and people dedicated to ensuring that children in Argyll and Bute do not grow up in poverty.

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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