
Tackling Child Poverty 2023 - 2024

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to provide a brief summary of some of the work undertaken by the Council, Health Board and other organisations tackling child poverty across Argyll and Bute.

Key groups involved in coordinating work relating to tackling child poverty continue to be the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Financial Advice and Inclusion Group. Until recently the lead on tackling child poverty was Fiona Davies but going forward this role will be taken by Evan Beswick.

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022 – 2023 was published at the end of 2023 and can be found on the Council’s Challenge Poverty Website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/challenge-poverty>

Most recent child poverty figures were released 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).

Argyll and Bute children in poverty (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%

It should be noted that this year’s national figures will be keenly awaited because The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2023 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The targets for 2023 - 2024 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.

Every year each local authorities Child Poverty Action Plan Report is reviewed by someone from a national assessment team that includes people from the Improvement Service, the Poverty Alliance and SPIRU. Argyll and Bute's last report was reviewed by Becky Hothersall from the Poverty Alliance who said that the report was very good and comprehensive. Three areas for possible improvement were highlighted and these will be addressed in the next report (2023 - 2034) to be written in 2024. These were:

1. Recognizing the unaffordability and lack of availability of public transport in rural areas, more strategic focus on transport as a key enabler of poverty in next year's plan – including reflecting wider work that is happening in the region and linking this to child poverty.
2. Establish greater clarity on the overarching, strategic approach to tackling child poverty in A&B – including stronger linkages between identified strategies and objectives with data; policymaking; and lived experience engagement.
3. Expand pre-existing work on lived experience to a wider range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on parents.

Some key Areas Relating to Tackling Child Poverty 2023 – 2024.

1. **Housing** - Argyll and Bute Council was the first local authority in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency in June 2023. A Housing Emergency Summit was held in November 2023, bringing together 90 partners from public, private, third and community sectors who pledged their support to take action to address the housing emergency.

Partnership delivery planning prioritised the implementation of 39 housing emergency actions aimed at tackling housing shortage. The Housing Summit report can be seen here.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Argyll%20Bute%20Housing%20Emergency%20Summit%20Outcomes%20Report%202024.pdf>

A final version of the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Action will be launched across Housing Summit partners by spring 2024.

Number of households with children and the number of children waiting for a social rented property.

HOME Argyll waiting list	No of households with children under 16	Total No of children
General list	573	1043
Homeless list	60	125
Transfer list	341	701
TOTAL	974	1869

Source: Abrisas (Argyll and Bute's Joint Housing Register) March 2023

2. **Fuel Poverty** - Argyll and Bute Council recognises the impact of fuel poverty on children and families. It sends this message to Government and works with third sector partners like Allenergy to mitigate the impacts.

Argyll and Bute– cost of living crisis case for support; our situational brief.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s189147/Corporate%20cost%20of%20living_4.pdf

It also provides dedicated Council webpages to give people advice on how and where to get help.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/heat-your-home-managing-rising-costs>

3. **Flexible Food and Fuel Fund** - This fund combines grants with advice services. If granted, monies are given for food and fuel; if service users consent to accept advice services input, from the Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy, they can be considered for a further grant. From 14 January 2021 to 31 December 22 the project, has supported 1,627 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £2,353,670. Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy continue to work hard in locating those who could benefit from the funding and look forward to rolling out the project in the next two financial years.
4. **Data Analysis** – work is being carried out try and improve local child poverty data and, importantly, to better identify families requiring advice and support and who may not be claiming their full entitlement of benefits. This work is being led by David Murdoch and Fergus Walker and focuses on the use of a Power BI model and looks at using a number of different data sets including Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals Grants and School Clothing Grants. It is hoped we will be able to identify need at a postcode and School catchment level.

Argyll and Bute achieved a grant of £16,000 from the Child Poverty Action Fund to purchase CACI (Disposable Income figures) data sets to add to the model. Argyll and Bute is also one of three local authorities working with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability), via the Improvement Service. This work is

looking at identifying legal gateways that will allow us to use the identified data for the purpose required, without breaching GDPR regulations. For example, the use of the Digital Economy Act 2017 as the legal gateway for Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax Arrears, is being considered.

5. **Employability Measures** – The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership believes that supporting people to gain employability skills and good employment opportunities helps to increase household incomes and reduce poverty. The importance of this key area of work is also recognised by the Scottish Government and they are funding Employability Child Poverty coordinator roles situated within each of the 32 Local Authorities. This role will provide an additional resource to support the delivery of commitments set out in Best Start Bright Futures (Scottish Govt. Tackling child poverty delivery plan) by ensuring alignment between Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport. Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership is in the process of recruiting a Coordinator to work alongside employability partners and child poverty leads.

The Partnership employs a range of measures to increase employment and hence reduce poverty. These include: No One Left Behind and the Parental Employability Scheme.

6. **Transport Poverty** – This is a major concern in Argyll and Bute where many people live in remote, rural and island areas. The consultation work for the new ABOIP identified transport infrastructure as the top priority for the majority of people asked. Transport poverty can restrict employment and education, divide families and communities and increase health concerns. More requires to be done in this area.
7. **Advice Services** – Effective advice services are key to tackling child poverty and ensuring that people have the information they require to claim their full benefit entitlement, manage debt etc. Figures on client gain demonstrate how successful this area of activity is in Argyll and Bute. 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 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as £10,849,000.
8. **Islands Strategic Group** – Argyll and Bute is part of this group organised by the Scottish Government. It met in October 2023 to look at issues relating to child poverty; these included: the cost of living crisis, transport, migration issues and labour shortages, island fuel poverty and the lack of child care. Argyll and Bute is part of the work taking place to develop a National Islands Plan.
9. **Infant Food Insecurity – Infant food insecurity has been identified as an issue of concern in Scotland.** The SLWG on Infant Food Insecurity produced a leaflet to advice people with new babies or expecting a baby, on where to get help if they were experiencing infant food pressures. 1,000 copies of this have been printed and sent

out to: Health Visitors, Midwives, School Nurses, Allenergy, Bute Advice Centre and the Council's Welfare Rights Team, Social Workers. Allenergy and Bute Advice have conducted training with Health Visitors etc. in the use of the new leaflets and advising service users. A similar leaflet has been created for the use of School Family Liaison Officers and training provided. We are now looking at possible pathways to provide emergency cash or voucher options to purchase baby formula.

10. **Training** – Argyll and Bute is continuing its efforts to train staff to be poverty aware and able to support people. An example is the continued roll out of Money Counts Training to staff across Argyll and Bute. This is a 45 minute awareness session, for anyone who may feel less confident and experienced about discussing money worries, but may be in a position to have a brief conversation with individuals and signpost on. This session is targeted at anyone from health, education and social care staff; 3rd sector workers and volunteers; warm place volunteers and anyone who may be able to start a brief conversation about money worries.

The session aims to:

- Increase understanding of poverty and its impact;
- Increase confidence to ask about money worries;
- Increase knowledge of support services for money matters.

Another example would be the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) are delivering a webinar on island child poverty on the 21st of March for rural Social Workers and others, speakers will be Colin Gilmour (Health Improvement Head, Western Isles) and Councillor Angus McCormack (Western Isles) and Mandy Sheridan for AB. IRISS are also holding an online conference in May for Social Workers, one of the topics here will be Rural Child Poverty.

11. **Engagement** – Since developing our first Child Poverty Action Report in 2019 engagement has been done in a variety of ways; through engagement with School Councils, Youth Voice and other groups; through engagement and information sharing via networks like Living Well; through media campaigns throughout the year and particularly during Challenge Poverty Week and through the production of aids like the graphic version of the plan (Plan on a Page).

UNCRC Implementation work has resulted in a £53,000 grant from the UNCRC Innovations fund to be spent in 2024 with conducting face to face engagement events for children and young people across Argyll and Bute about their rights. This engagement work can include engagement on child poverty.

Lack of a budget to develop group consultation with lived experience people has always been a difficulty in local engagement on child poverty. However this year the Poverty Alliance have funds to develop a project called "Taking Action on Rural Poverty" which will work with a recruited lived experience groups in Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute to:

- Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.
- Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.
- We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

Our local Child Poverty Action Group will be working with the Poverty Alliance in this endeavour and hope to be able to build on this work in coming years.

12. Warm Spaces - The Third Sector Interface have been key in setting up warm spaces and supporting their member organisations. Their focus is on supporting the health of community groups and their capacity to respond to the cost of living crisis. The goal is to create a comprehensive directory that encompasses public, private, health, and voluntary sectors. This directory will serve as a guide for those seeking warmth and companionship during the colder months

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

**[Community Planning Partnership
Management Committee]**

[HSCP]

[10th of April 2024]

[Tackling Child Poverty 2023 - 2024]

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report aims to provide a brief summary of some of the work undertaken by the Council, Health Board and other organisations tackling child poverty across Argyll and Bute.

Key groups involved in coordinating work relating to tackling child poverty continue to be the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Group and the Financial Advice and Inclusion Group. Until recently the lead on tackling child poverty was Fiona Davies but going forward this role will be taken by Evan Beswick.

Work that helps to tackle child poverty goes on in a wide variety of setting and agencies across Argyll and Bute; the Scottish Government plan “Best Start Bright Futures”

published in 2022 sets out three areas of focus: income through employment; income through benefits and the cost of living. A further focus to be considered is supporting people and mitigating the impacts of poverty. Our local Child Poverty Action Group does not manage all of the actions and interventions under these headings but rather tries to act as an information sharing and coordinating group that also brings the work together into an action plan report, which is a legal requirement by the Scottish Government. In fulfilling this role the group is sometimes able to bring people together to come up with new and innovative ways to tackle poverty; the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund is a notable example of this as is the work done on Infant Food Insecurity.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the content of the report and the actions being carried out across Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2022 – 2023 was published at the end of 2023 and can be found on the Council’s Challenge Poverty Website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/challenge-poverty>

This document noted the challenge of reducing child poverty levels at a time of cost of living crisis, a war in Ukraine and the remaining aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and leaving the European Union.

Most recent child poverty figures were released 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).

Argyll and Bute children in poverty (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%

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others note that Scotland has the lowest child poverty rate in the UK due to key factors including greater access to affordable social housing, the Scottish Child Payment and other local and national initiatives.

It should be noted that this year's national figures will be keenly awaited because The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set four targets relating to ending child poverty, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2023 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The targets for 2023 - 2024 are:

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Every year each local authorities Child Poverty Action Plan Report is reviewed by someone from a national assessment team that includes people from the Improvement Service, the Poverty Alliance and SPIRU. Argyll and Bute's last report was reviewed by Becky Hothersall from the Poverty Alliance who said that the report was very good and comprehensive. Three areas for possible improvement were highlighted and these will be addressed in the next report (2023 - 2034) to be written in 2024. These were:

- Recognizing the unaffordability and lack of availability of public transport in rural areas, more strategic focus on transport as a key enabler of poverty in next year's plan – including reflecting wider work that is happening in the region and linking this to child poverty.
- Establish greater clarity on the overarching, strategic approach to tackling child poverty in A&B – including stronger linkages between identified strategies and objectives with data; policymaking; and lived experience engagement.
- Expand pre-existing work on lived experience to a wider range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on parents.

Some key Areas Relating to Tackling Child Poverty 2023 – 2024.

4.2 – Housing - Argyll and Bute Council was the first local authority in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency in June 2023. In October 2023, the Council launched two surveys asking for views on housing from the community and businesses. In total, the Council received 688 responses to the community and 72 responses to the workforce survey, indicating that most of the respondents (92%) felt their communities were negatively impacted by the housing shortage. A Housing Emergency Summit was held in November 2023, bringing together 90 partners from public, private, third and community sectors who pledged their support to take decisive and bold action to address the housing emergency.

Of concern includes:

- 3,290 people on the housing waiting list, 8% more than last year.
- 253 households classified as homeless, 15% more than last year, and 127 currently in temporary accommodation.
- In 22/23, 811 new social rented tenancies were created and this is still a little lower than pre-pandemic. In 2022, there were 4 applicants per tenancy created.
- 5% less social rented stock than the Scottish Average.

- 6% second homes (0.9% average in Scotland (highest level of second homes ownership in Scotland)).

Partnership delivery planning prioritised the implementation of 39 housing emergency actions aimed at tackling housing shortage. The Housing Summit report can be seen here.

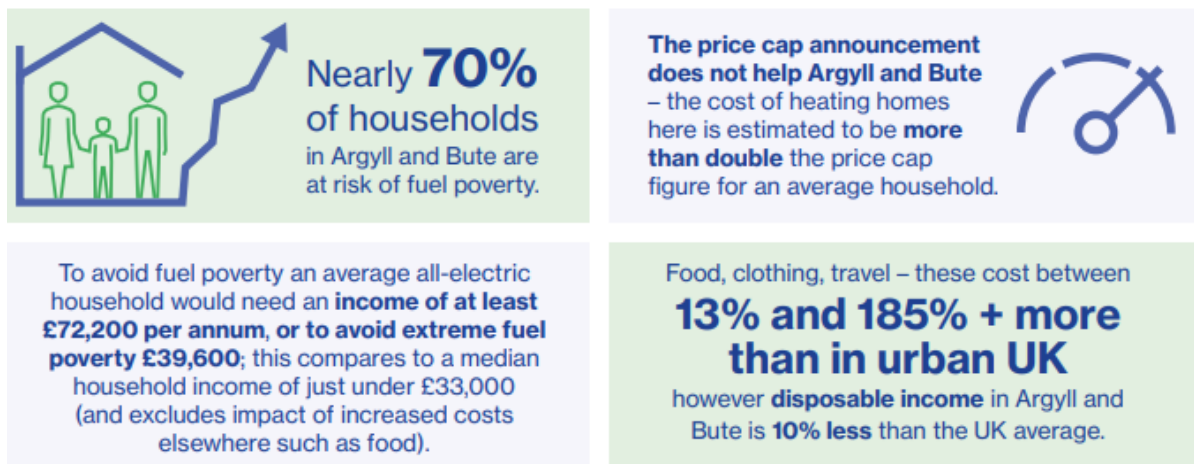
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A final version of the Argyll & Bute Housing Emergency Action will be launched across Housing Summit partners by spring 2024.

4.3 Fuel Poverty –

Argyll and Bute – cost of living crisis case for support; our situational brief.

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Argyll and Bute Council recognises the impact of fuel poverty on children and families. It sends this message to Government and works with third sector partners like ALLenergy to mitigate the impacts. It also provides dedicated Council webpages to give people advice on how and where to get help.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/heat-your-home-managing-rising-costs>

The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund is a key support to a large number of people in fuel poverty. Work is being done by our housing partners and others to improve our housing stock and provide grants to home owners to improve insulation levels etc.

4.4 Flexible Food and Fuel Fund - This fund combines grants with advice services. If granted, monies are given for food and fuel; if service users consent to accept advice services input, from the Bute Advice Centre and ALLenergy, they can be considered for

a further grant. From 14 January 2021 to 31 December 22 the project, has supported 1,627 households who are suffering from food and fuel insecurities in Argyll and Bute, with a combined client gain of £2,353,670. Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy continue to work hard in locating those who could benefit from the funding and look forward to rolling out the project in the next two financial years.

When applications are made for the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, applicants are also matched against entitlement for other grants for consideration. Where people are claiming Council Tax Reduction and do not appear to be claiming other grants that they may be entitled to, they are contacted to make them aware of this. People are reminded through Schools, media posts etc. that even though their child may automatically now be getting free school meals as a universal offering, they should still put in their application as it makes them eligible for other benefits.

4.5 Data Analysis – work is being carried out try and improve local child poverty data and, importantly, to better identify families requiring advice and support and who may not be claiming their full entitlement of benefits. This work is being led by David Murdoch and Fergus Walker and focuses on the use of a Power BI model and looks at using a number of different data sets including Council Tax Reduction, Free School Meals Grants and School Clothing Grants. It is hoped we will be able to identify need at a postcode and School catchment level.

This work is complex and different approaches are being tried by various local authorities across Scotland. Argyll and Bute achieved a grant of £16,000 from the Child Poverty Action Fund to purchase CACI (Disposable Income figures) data sets to add to the model. Argyll and Bute is also one of three local authorities working with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability), via the Improvement Service. This work is looking at identifying legal gateways that will allow us to use the identified data for the purpose required, without breaching GDPR regulations. For example, the use of the Digital Economy Act 2017 as the legal gateway for Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax Arrears, is being considered.

4.6 Employability Measures – The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership believes that supporting people to gain employability skills and good employment opportunities helps to increase household incomes and reduce poverty. The importance of this key area of work is also recognised by the Scottish Government and they are funding Employability Child Poverty coordinator roles situated within each of the 32 Local Authorities. This role will provide an additional resource to support the delivery of commitments set out in Best Start Bright Futures (Scottish Govt. Tackling child poverty delivery plan) by ensuring alignment between Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport. Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership is in the process of recruiting a Coordinator to work alongside employability partners and child poverty leads.

Key examples of work carried out by the Employability Partnership include: **No One Left Behind: Tackling Child Poverty**

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/jobs-and-training/helping-people-work>

The main objectives/expected outcomes of this Scottish Government Funding is:

- To reduce levels of child poverty by supporting parents from the priority family groups to increase their income from employment;
- To reduce inequality in the labour market by supporting those further from the labour market to increase their income from employment.
- To maximise the role that employability plays in delivering national and local aims of tackling poverty, promoting inclusion and social justice and creating a fair and prosperous Scotland.

From 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 371 participants commenced support. Of these participants:

- 157 moved into work
- 25 commenced volunteering
- 59 not currently in a positive destination
- 130 continuing to receive pre-work support
-

In 2023/24, delivery of **employability support** is available to 159 participants aged 15 to 67 years by providers from the Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership. This intervention is managed and monitored by the Employability Team:

- InspirAlba is leading a large Third Sector Consortium providing tailored support packages to 130 All Age participants across Argyll and Bute. Working in partnership with MAYDS, Fyne Futures, Centre 81, The Help Project and Oban Youth Café. Allenergy and Bute Advice also provide specialist support in terms of income maximisation, debt and fuel costs.
- Workingrite is delivering in partnership with MAYDS in Mid Argyll, Oban, Lorn and the Isles. 25 All Age participants will be supported within paid, mentored work placements with local small businesses and real opportunities for fair and sustainable employment.
- The Employability Team is continuing to support 4 participants aged 25 plus through an Employer Recruitment Incentive.

Two further interventions are available to 28 parents:

- To address the lack of childminders in the area, a childminder pilot will support 4 parents to transition from benefits to self-employment.
- A budget cookery pilot will engage with 24 parents to enable them learn and gain confidence to cook healthy filling meals on a budget. Skills and training obtained will be transferable to hospitality sector.

The **Parental Welfare Fund** is aimed at parents receiving support through Parental Employability Support/Tackling Child Poverty and who successfully secure employment. It helps with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries.

Up to £1,000 is available:

- £500 at outset of employment
- £250 at week 6 of employment
- £250 at week 13 of employment

Payments can be split and paid flexibly over a 3 month period to suit individual requirements and can fund:

- Timing of salary versus UC payments
- Initial childcare costs and deposits
- Existing debts
- Transport costs
- Clothes for work
- Buying coffees or lunches at work

4.7 - Transport

Transport is noted as an important factor related to child poverty, particularly in remote, rural and island places. In Public Health Scotland's 2024 publication "Transport Poverty: a Public Health Issue" transport poverty is defined as:

the lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life

Transport poverty can affect many aspects of people's lives including employment, inclusion, education and training, family life and health. The Islands Strategic Group has a Transport Forum and the need for improvements in transport and related infrastructure is noted in Council plans. The key discussion points that the Local Authorities would like to focus on are:

- Local authority operated ferry services;
- The lack of resilience in the ferry network and current maintenance issues.

Transport is clearly a very real concern for people in Argyll and Bute; in the course of the consultation for the new Outcome Improvement Plan the three priorities selected by most people were:

Overall, the top 3 priorities chosen from the 1,978 participants were:

- Transport Infrastructure,
- Housing,
- Community Wellbeing

Planned actions are reflected in the Argyll and Bute Annual Business Plan 2023 – 2024

[Annual Business Plan 2023 to 2024 Final.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

For example:

Reviewing our approach to road repair prioritisation to make the most effective use of resources in the context of budget pressures and to achieve the best possible balance in terms of strategic, operational and member input

Other examples include are looking at the potential of upgrading the walking, wheeling and cycling route between Dunoon and Hunters Quay using funding received from [Sustrans](#). Upgrading the route offers several potential benefits such as:

- Making it easier for people to get to and from local shops and other destinations in Dunoon and Kilmorye
- Improving accessibility of the promenade for more vulnerable people, including disabled people
- Making the area surrounding the route more inviting.

And Active Travel Apps provided by the Council.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/better-journeys>

Also in a March Bulletin the Chief Executive said that

- Strategic transport links and infrastructure plays a huge role Earlier this week, for the first time, our Executive Leadership held a joint management meeting with Transport Scotland. We outlined some of the key challenges Argyll and Bute continue to face and together agreed a number of actions across a number of issues. They include exploring opportunities for joint working on future public transport plans, the A82 and current and future demands for energy for our infrastructure. We look forward to this partnership in practice and securing positive benefits for Argyll and Bute.

Advice services have reported an increase in people having difficulties in meeting the costs of transport to Hospital appointments, often out with the area. "Near Me" remote options are in place for some medical needs and are being developed further, however trips to hospitals on the mainland and in Glasgow are sometimes necessary. For those living on island it is a cost issue coupled with a ferry disruptions issue. There are supports provided by the NHS in these circumstances and the HSCP intend to set up a SLWG looking at how to support people in crisis, such as fleeing from domestic violence; this will include looking at working with transport providers more effectively.

4.8 Advice Services – Effective advice services are key to tackling child poverty and ensuring that people have the information they require to claim their full benefit entitlement, manage debt etc. Figures on client gain demonstrate how successful this area of activity is in Argyll and Bute.

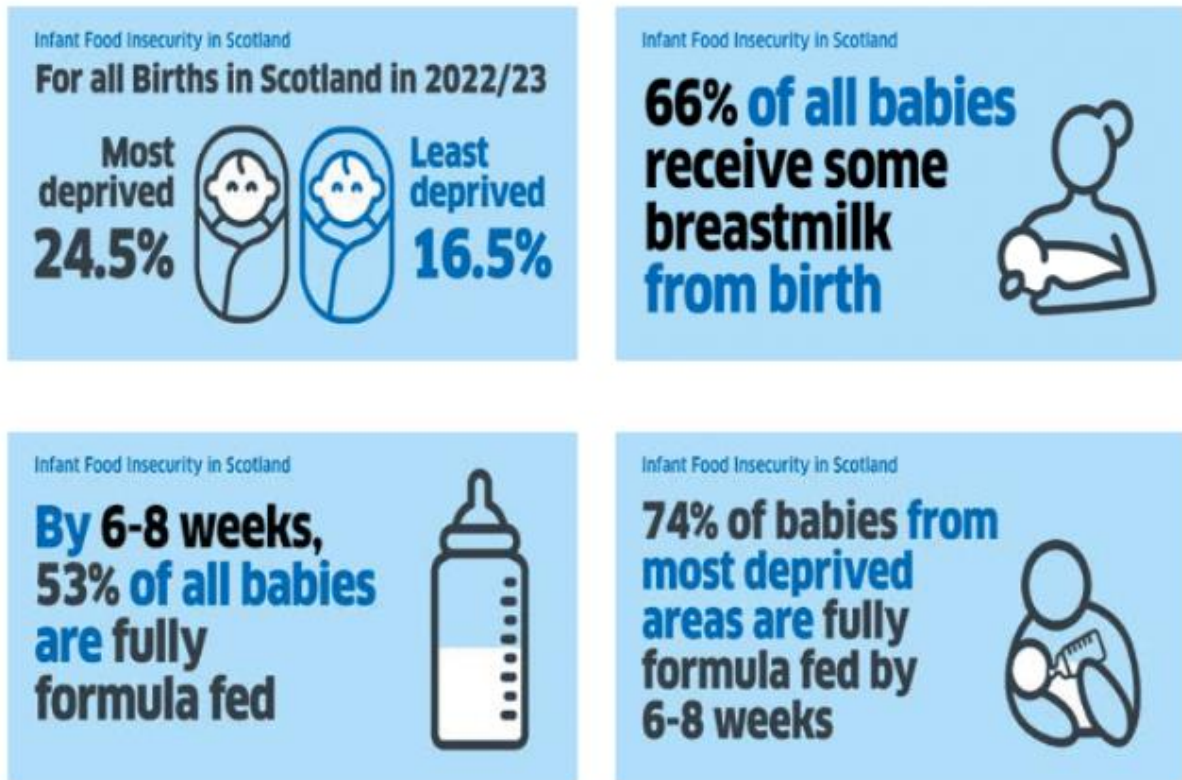
Advice Services across Argyll and Bute have managed to make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are struggling. The table below shows the client gain from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the citizens of Argyll and Bute as £10,849,000.

Organisation	2022/2023 (£'000)
Bute Advice Centre	2.249
Argyll and Bute Council Welfare Rights Service	4.324
ACHA Welfare Rights	2.690
Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau	0.875
ALLenergy	0.275
Fyne Homes	0.426
TOTAL	10.839

4.9 Islands Strategic Group – Argyll and Bute is part of this group organised by the Scottish Government. It met in October 2023 to look at issues relating to child poverty; these included: the cost of living crisis, transport, migration issues and labour shortages, island fuel poverty and the lack of child care. Argyll and Bute is part of the work taking place to develop a National Islands Plan.

4.10 Infant Food Insecurity – Infant food insecurity has been identified as an issue of concern in Scotland. The Argyll and Bute SLWG on Infant Food Insecurity met on 11th of January and agreed a leaflet to advise people with new babies or expecting a baby, on where to get help if they were experiencing infant food pressures. 1,000 copies of this have been printed and sent out to: Health Visitors, Midwives, School Nurses, ALLenergy, Bute Advice Centre and the Council's Welfare Rights Team. A printable copy has been shared with Social Workers that can be printed off when required by Workers. Rachel McNicol from ALLenergy and Julie Semple from Bute Advice have conducted training with Health Visitors, Midwives and School Nurses in the use of the new leaflets and advising service users. A similar leaflet has been created for the use of School Family Liaison Officers and training provided. We are now looking at possible pathways

to provide emergency cash or voucher options to purchase baby formula.



4.11 – January 2024 - Example of good, proactive practice in health - With the poverty agenda in mind, the health visitors in Helensburgh and Lochside have commenced a weekly drop-in session for parents that will focus on feeding, weaning and providing support, advice and signposting to relevant organisations

4.12 - Training – Argyll and Bute is continuing its efforts to train staff to be poverty aware and able to support people. An example is the continued roll out of Money Counts Training to staff across Argyll and Bute. 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. This is a short, 45 minute awareness session, delivered remotely through Teams for anyone who may feel less confident and experienced about discussing money worries, but may be in a position to have a brief conversation with individuals and signpost on. This session is targeted at anyone from health, education and social care staff; 3rd sector workers and volunteers; warm place volunteers and anyone who may be able to start a brief conversation about money worries.

The session aims to:

- Increase understanding of poverty and its impact;
- Increase confidence to ask about money worries;
- Increase knowledge of support services for money matters.

Money Counts Totals

Date of session	Session Number	A&B Attendees	RT	Confidence before	Accumulative average	Confidence after	Accumulative average	Knowledge before	Accumulative Average	Knowledge After	Accumulative Average
2022	8	33	33	6.7	6.7	8.5	8.5	7.1	7.1	8.5	8.5
2023											
22.2.23	1	1	1	4	4.0	6.0	6.0	7.0	7.0	8.0	8.0
07.03.23	2	7	8	6.6	5.3	8.3	7.2	4.6	5.8	6.7	7.4
22.03.23	3	3	11	5.7	5.4	8.3	7.5	4.0	5.2	8.0	7.6
04.04.23	4	2	13	6.5	5.7	7.5	7.5	7	5.7	6.5	7.3
19.04.23	5	2	15	4.5	5.5	7.0	7.4	4.0	5.3	6.5	7.1
17.05.23	Session did not go ahead										
31.05.23	6	3	18	5.4	5.5	8.0	7.5	5.6	5.4	8.0	7.3

Another example would be the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) are delivering a webinar on island child poverty on the 21st of March for rural Social Workers and others, speakers will be Colin Gilmour (Health Improvement Head, Western Isles) and Councillor Angus McCormack (Western Isles) and Mandy Sheridan for AB. IRISS are also holding an online conference in May for Social Workers, one of the topics here will be Rural Child Poverty.

4.13 Engagement – It is important to engage with children, young people and others in terms of the work relating to tackling child poverty. Since developing our first Child Poverty Action Report in 2019 this has been done in a variety of ways; through engagement with School Councils, Youth Voice and other groups; through engagement and information sharing via networks like Living Well; through media campaigns throughout the year and particularly during Challenge Poverty Week; through the production of aids such as the graphic version of the plan (Plan on a Page).

This past year engagement specifically on child poverty alone has been difficult due to other large scale engagement required, for example relating to UNCRC Implementation and to the new ABOIP. However this work in itself has provided feedback and information relating to child poverty. The UNCRC work resulted in a £53,000 grant from the UNCRC Innovations fund to be spent in 2024 with conducting face to face engagement events for children and young people across Argyll and Bute about their rights. This is important because Royal assent has been achieved for the Bill and it is now the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which comes into force in July 2024.

Lack of a budget to develop group consultation with lived experience people has always been a difficulty in local engagement on child poverty. However this year the Poverty Alliance have funds to develop a project called “Taking Action on Rural Poverty” which will work with a recruited lived experience groups in Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute to:

- Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.
- Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.
- We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

Our local Child Poverty Action Group will be working with the Poverty Alliance in this endeavour and hope to be able to build on this work in coming years.

4.14 Warm Spaces - The Third Sector Interface have been key in setting up warm spaces and supporting their member organisations. Their focus is on supporting the health of community groups and their capacity to respond to the cost of living crisis. They have commissioned a “Health of Our Sector” survey on the cost of living and volunteering. Initial key findings are: It is increasingly hard to get volunteers and this mirrors Volunteer Scotland’s research. Increase in travel costs for volunteers travelling to volunteer is an issue. Transport costs are also an issue for those whom organisations seek to help. In remote, rural and island places people may have to be able to put fuel into their cars in order to get to warm places or to food banks.

The TSI are in the process of updating our comprehensive list of Warm Spaces throughout the region where people can gather, stay warm, and connect. These spaces are open to the public or available for organisational meetings to help reduce heating costs.

The goal is to create a comprehensive directory that encompasses public, private, health, and voluntary sectors. This directory will serve as a guide for those seeking warmth and companionship during the colder months.

Warm Spaces

Please follow the link to the Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface for warm spaces in your area. [warmspace locality - Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface \(argylltsi.org\)](http://warmspace.locality - Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (argylltsi.org))

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This brief report gives a snapshot of some of the work being done in Argyll and Bute to tackle child poverty. It is not under the auspices of any one group, department or organisation but is rather recognised as a key action for all. Just as ensuring children’s rights are respected is a duty for everyone, so must tackling child poverty, which is surely a children’s rights issue, concern everyone.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy

Child Poverty Action Plan

6.2 Financial

Costs relating to individual actions. Failing to act would impact on our future generations and economic factors dependent on them.

6.3 Legal

Duties under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and report annually.

6.4 HR

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

6.5.3 Islands

6.6 Climate Change

6.7 Risk

Risk of increasing poverty levels in actions are not taken.

6.8 Customer Service

6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 26 - You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need. Article 27 - You have the right to a good enough standard of living. This means you should have food, clothes and a place to live

Executive Director with responsibility for [HSCP]

Policy Lead [Evan Beswick]

[21.3.2024]

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