



Argyll and Bute Child Poverty

Action Plan Review

2024

2025

Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2024 – 2025

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Foreword

The Scottish Government has clearly stated its intention to tackle child poverty. On 22 May 2024, the First Minister, John Swinney MSP, set out the priorities that would underpin the work of the Scottish Government and reaffirmed its commitment to address child poverty, saying.

My first priority is to eradicate child poverty—not tackle or reduce child poverty but eradicate it. That will be the single most important objective of my Government and my Cabinet, because child poverty stunts the progress of any nation, and it stands in the way of social justice and economic growth. My Cabinet will do everything in our power—including listening to and working with members across the chamber—to achieve our aim.

Despite actions taken both nationally and locally in Scotland, we know that we have not yet delivered on this ambition. 2023 - 2024 figures were released in June 2025, by the End Child Poverty (ECP) coalition. The annual analysis by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University looks at local poverty rates after housing costs, which is seen as a more accurate assessment of disposable family income. The constituency Argyll and Bute and South Lochaber, shows a rate of 22.1%; the previous year was 23.5% so a small reduction can be seen. For the same period the Scottish rate of relative child poverty was 23%.

Danny Dorling in his Book “Seven Children; Inequality and Britain’s Next Generation” 2024, noted that:

In the seven most recent years surveyed by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2014 – 2021, child poverty has risen faster in the UK than in any comparable country worldwide. (1)

In Argyll and Bute, we acknowledge these barriers to lifting children out of poverty. For us, they are added to others more specific to our area, including the cost of living in our remote, rural and island places, the cost and challenges of travel, housing shortages, wages lower than the national average and the need to address employment opportunities.

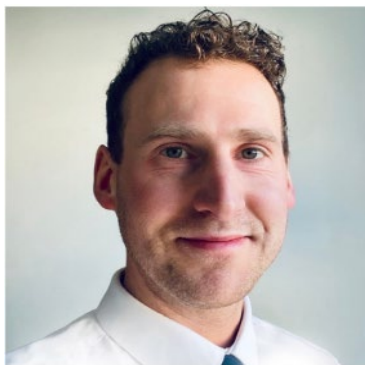
Despite all of this, the task of combatting child poverty remains a top priority and is coordinated by our Child Poverty Action Group and the Financial Advice and Inclusion Group. These groups, with leadership across the HSCP, Council and NHS Highland, bring together, departments, organisations and partners to tackle child poverty.

In all of this we listen to the voices of our communities and children and young people. We work with them to ensure their rights are respected. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 makes these clear including the right to food, a decent standard of living and a safe home (article 27); the best interests of the child to be paramount in all actions affecting them (article 3) and the right to be heard (article 12).

We want to take this opportunity to thank the staff across our respective organisations, and also our partners across the statutory, independent and third sectors for their tireless work in tackling child poverty. That partnership is key. Finally, we want to thank the people of Argyll and Bute, without whose support for each other no progress would be possible.

Our vision remains

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.



Evan Beswick

Chief Officer

Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership and
Chair Child Poverty Action Group



Pippa Milne

Chief Executive

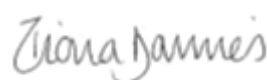
Argyll and Bute Council



Fiona Davies

Chief Executive

NHS Highland



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 2017 Act set four targets, which the Scottish Government committed to achieving by 2024 - 2025 and 2030; these are all measured after housing costs are deducted.

The targets for 2024 - 25:

- 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.

Targets for 2030:

- 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).

However, despite good intentions and efforts both locally and nationally, child poverty is still very much with us, albeit at a significantly lower rate than England and Wales.

Annual statistics published today show that compared with the previous year's statistics, relative child poverty in 2023-24 reduced from 26% to 22% in Scotland while absolute child poverty fell from 23% to 17%. UK Poverty statistics published today show levels of relative child poverty at 31% and absolute child poverty at 26%.

Scottish Government, 27/03/2025

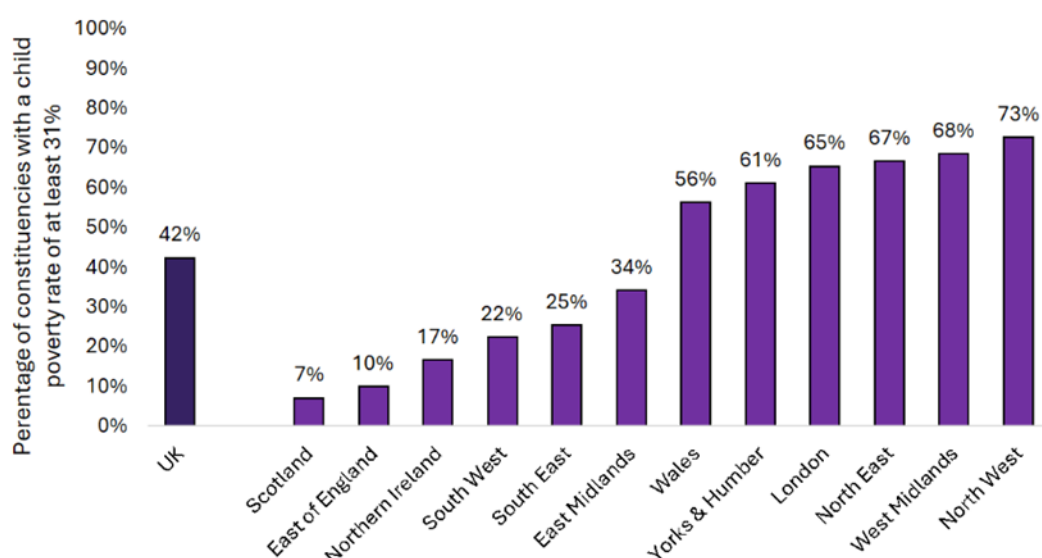
[Child poverty in Scotland falls - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

Child poverty rates in Scotland (24%) remain much lower than those in England (30%) and Wales (29%) and are similar (if slightly higher) than in Northern Ireland (23%). This is likely to be due, at least in part, to the Scottish Child Payment. This highlights the effect benefits can have in reducing poverty. (2)

This picture is reflected in 2023 – 2024 figures released in June 2025, by the End Child Poverty (ECP) coalition. The annual analysis by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University looks at local poverty rates after housing costs, which is seen as a more accurate assessment of disposable family income. The constituency Argyll and Bute and South Lochaber, shows a rate of 22.1%; the previous year was 23.5% so a small reduction can be seen. Figures for Scotland also show improvement and reflect the impact of the Scottish Child Payment and mitigation of the two-child cap.

A chart showing percentages of constituencies where at least 31% of children are in poverty across the UK in 2023 to 2024. Scotland has the lowest rate at 7%, the highest at 73% is the Northwest of England.

Figure 3 Percentage of constituencies where at least 31% of children are in poverty, by country/region: 2023/24



Source: End Child Poverty estimates of local child poverty rates, AHC (2025)

Research tells us that certain groups are overrepresented in terms of child poverty, these include:

- three or more children in the household.
- Households with a disabled member.
- Households with children under the age of 1.
- Minority ethnic households.
- Single parent households.

- Households where the mother is under the age of 25.

Where one or more of these factors exist within a household, the probability of child poverty being present increases. However, these groupings do not cover all the family types at higher risk of poverty, with nearly one in ten children in poverty living in households with none of these characteristics. As well, not all families in these groups live in poverty.

Geographical factors are also important when looking at child poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation point out commonalities that connect rural areas:

The main drivers of poverty vary across different geographies – a greater reliance on renting and higher costs of housing are substantial drivers in larger cities in particular, while lower rates of employment, with fewer employment opportunities alongside a greater concentration of employment in lower paid roles and sectors, are more significant drivers of poverty across many post-industrial and coastal areas. (3)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025) UK Poverty 2025

Rurality is an important factor and one which is key to tackling child poverty in Argyll and Bute. A research Project commissioned by the Scottish Government and carried out by Loughborough University, found that, because of specific additional costs, it is more expensive to reach a minimum socially acceptable standard of living in remote rural Scotland, than in other more urban areas. For remote rural areas, in 2023, this “uplift” figure was 14%, as it was for island places. (4)

Dr Jayne Glass looked at existing research and data and asked the question, where were the knowledge gaps? Dr Glass gave an overview of the factors that can make living in poverty, and addressing child poverty, particularly challenging in remote, rural and island locations. (5)

- Income from work and earnings.
- Volatile and unpredictable rural incomes.
- Limited access to training and skills development.
- Reliance on private vehicles.
- Lack of local and flexible childcare.
- Rural gender pay gap.
- Costs of living.
- Higher levels of fuel poverty in remote rural and island areas.
- Additional minimum living costs in remote rural and island areas (add 15-30%).
- Unaffordable housing and/or poor housing condition.

The importance of employability factors in rural areas is clear. In Argyll and Bute, the percentage of people employed in low pay sectors in 2023 was 33.3% as opposed to the Scottish average of 28.8% (Annual Population Survey 2023). When looking at earnings for that residence based and working full time, in Argyll and Bute, 2024, for male workers, it was £702.9 per week as opposed to the Scottish average of £740. For female workers it was £645.4, as opposed to the Scottish national average of £701. (Nomis).

However, having one parent in employment is often not enough to avoid poverty. In Scotland, six in ten children in poverty live in households where someone is working, and increasingly, only having two parents at work protects against the risk of poverty.

Children in Argyll and Bute appear to experience a higher level of in-work poverty; 71.2 percent of children of low-income families live in a household where at least one adult is working (6)

This demonstrates the importance of employability measures and the planned economic developments from the Rural Growth Deal. The Rural Growth Deal (RGD) is a 10-year programme that will deliver £70 million of investment to develop Argyll and Bute's economic potential into a successful future for the area. It is hoped this will generate at least 300 jobs, support business development and attract more visitors to the area. Importantly, it will also look to address key housing shortages that hinder such development.

Many of the causes and impacts of child poverty in Scotland's remote rural and island places are known. In Argyll and Bute, we work to address these and make a difference for our children, young people and families. Key to this is working with partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors, with businesses and with our communities. This report shows some of the ways in which we do that.

Child Friendly Version of the Plan

Children and young people are currently working with a Graphic Artist to update the existing graphic, plan on a page version of our Child Poverty Action Plan. This coproduced version will be accessible to children, young people and adults who prefer a more condensed / graphic presentation of the elements of this plan. The graphic plan will be published alongside the main version of the plan.

Integrated Impact Assessments

The council is committed to carrying out impact assessments both to meet our legal obligations and as a matter of good practice.

Impact Assessments:

- help officers to **check** they have considered implications and impacts which may arise from their proposals.
- help officers to **show** they have considered implications and impacts.

- help people interested in potential impacts to **see** impacts have been considered, and how.
- **enable better / more informed consultation and engagement** around proposals while they are still in development.
- **enable better scrutiny** around decisions as potential impacts are made more explicit and transparent.

Argyll and Bute Council reviewed its combined impact assessment process in 2024 and launched a new process and online tool in March 2025.

The council's Impact Assessment Tool has been adopted for use by the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership.

The new Integrated Impact Assessment brings together five impact assessment frameworks into a single process. These relate to equality, the Fairer Scotland Duty, Islands Communities, the Consumer Duty, and Children's Rights and Wellbeing.

Work to include Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) has been carried out as part of the council's activities relating to the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As children's rights and wellbeing should be considered not only in the context of proposals targeted directly at children and young people but also proposals which may indirectly affect them, proposals from all parts of the council must be screened to check whether a full assessment of impacts relating to children and young people needs to be carried out.

In line with Scottish Government's approach to CRWIAs, our tool impact includes assessment relating to:

- The United Nations on the Convention of the Child's articles, and
- The eight wellbeing indicators which are key components with in the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach.

In the course of the tool's development, we ran the text and questions relating to CRWIAs past our UNCRC Incorporation Group and took advice from the Improvement Service.

We will be assessing the tool over summer 2025 to monitor its usability and effectiveness.

Data and Child Poverty

In Argyll & Bute our council's Welfare Rights Team makes a real difference in outcomes for families by helping them maximise their uptake of available benefits grants and allowances, securing Client Financial Gain in excess of £4 million per year. However, they're very dependent on existing referral channels such as through social work and education, i.e. cases where there's "known" unmet need. There's a perennial risk that we're missing some households that don't come to light through these channels. Hence a lot of our focus is on trying to utilise data to identify

households where there's as yet "unknown" unmet need; those at risk of falling through the cracks.

So, the value to us of having data on families in receipt of Universal Credit and Scottish Child Payment is essentially the same regardless of which benefit they are in receipt of – if these families are known to us, we can:

- Check if they have already had a referral for support, such as through social work. If they have not, then...
- We would make contact with them to look to maximise their uptake of other benefits, grants and allowances, especially Council Tax Reduction, School Clothing Grant, Disability Benefits, etc.
- We would also help to ensure they are making their claims at the correct rate, e.g. have they applied for Disability Benefits at the correct level, etc.

* There is a data governance challenge with a lack of legal gateways through which we could justify direct outreach to households. Working with the Improvement Service and Scalable Approach to Vulnerability Via Interoperability (SAVVI) has been extremely valuable in better understanding the legal constraints around this type of data reuse. In the short term though if we can obtain this data at some sort of aggregated level by location then it would at least allow us to consider targeted outreach say to specific schools where the data suggest, in aggregate, concentrations of unknown unmet need. We hope to achieve more going forward, in terms of being able to use legal gateways to allow us to identify unmet need and approach families directly. If we could increase the current rates of Client Financial Gain by say 15-20% by working with families who would otherwise be missed for lack of referral, but whom we've found through data sharing by DWP/SSS, then this would be a measurable and impactful outcome.

Taking Action on Rural Poverty (TARP)

TARP, set up by the Poverty Alliance, came about as a result of poverty awareness training undertaken as part of Argyll and Bute Council's child poverty action plan. It aims to

- build on the Child Poverty Action Group's work to strengthen infrastructure within A&B for lived experience to be included in decision making.
- support collaboration and networking amongst organisations that work to combat poverty or support their communities with the cost of living.
- using learning from these aims, work with local stakeholders to test and learn about locally appropriate ways to reduce the costs of rural living.

In the past year we have:

- developed and consolidated a citizens' panel of people with experience of living on a low income and/or with high costs due to their rural location.
- Panel members have participated in 12 sessions, exploring their experiences and priorities; learning about local support and providing a lived experience perspective to inform the work of partners including the Council's Revenues and Benefits team, Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface and Citizen's Advice Bureau.
- We have also held joint sessions with our sister panel based in Aberdeenshire. These have been convened to respond to timely national issues of interest. Individual panellists have also participated in regional and national events including meeting with the First Minister during Challenge Poverty Week to discuss the "Best Start, Bright Futures" plan, and contributing to national panels such as the Trussell Trust's new Scotland-wide lived experience group.
- We recently co-reviewed our progress and aims and over the next year the panel's focus will be on seeking opportunities to engage with and influence decision-making by agencies around local food costs, community resilience and tenant rights.
- We have established quarterly networking and learning events, focused on topics of interest identified by local organisations and public sector partners and co-hosted with the TSI.
- Our quarterly events include updates and opportunities to share news and practice, and they have been well attended with extremely positive feedback. In the coming year we will continue with this successful model.
- Following extensive stakeholder engagement and based on prioritised by the citizens' panel, we have developed a test of change project in collaboration with ALLenergy. Poverty Alliance will provide funding and support. In dialogue with clients of their Affordable Warmth Service, ALLenergy and their partners will act as delivery partners to
 - explore the realised and potential cost savings to social tenants from moving to renewable energy (heat pumps with or without solar panels and battery storage).
 - generate specific information and support to ensure tenants gain the maximum benefit from their renewables.

The funding agreement is now in place and over the next year we anticipate the research element of the project will be completed; resource development and project evaluation will be underway. To ensure learning from the panel, network and test of change would best be integrated into strategic planning, TARP has a local oversight group including representation from Argyll and Bute Council and Argyll and Bute TSI. Updates and opportunities are shared via the local Child Poverty Action Group and Financial Inclusion and Advice Group, as well as Community Planning Partnership's

Area Community Planning Groups (the latter when possible) and by occasional newsletter to a mailing list of over 140 contacts.

Other collaborative activity:

- TARP's project team works closely with the Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network to integrate social justice more comprehensively into ABCAN's climate work across the region, and vice versa. Argyll and Bute Development Officer, Becky Hothersall, has joined ABCAN's steering group and over the next year will participate in work focused on food security and community resilience.
- The Poverty Alliance is building a broad coalition of organisations under the banner "Scotland Demands Better" including a national demonstration and march in October 2025.

Child Poverty and Mental Health

When planning to address child poverty it is important to consider the 3 drivers of poverty: income through employment, income through benefits, and the cost of living. Beyond that, it is equally important to tackle the impacts, which can harm individuals and families. The ongoing stress and anxiety caused by living in poverty and trying each day to pay the bills and provide for your children, cannot be underestimated. Children are not immune to this as they witness their parents struggle and live with the knowledge that they cannot have the things that their peers take for granted.

- [Mental Health Foundation - mental health and poverty statistics](#)
- [Child Poverty Action Group - Priced Out of School.](#)

Added to this are the pressures of not having any resources in reserve if things go wrong or wear out. Across the UK in 2023 - 2024, The proportion of families with less than £1,500 in savings was 48%, which was the same as last year. Twenty per cent of families reported that they had no savings, and a further 10% said they had less than £100. (7)

A growing body of evidence, mainly from high-income countries, has shown that there is a strong socioeconomic gradient in mental health, with people of lower socioeconomic status having a higher likelihood of developing and experiencing mental health problems.

- Children and adults living in households in the lowest 20% income bracket in Great Britain are two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems than those in the highest.
- In 2004, evidence from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey found that the prevalence of severe mental health problems was around three times higher among children in the bottom quintile of family income than among those in the top quintile.

- Analysis of data from the Millennium Cohort Study in 2012 found children in the lowest income quintile to be 4.5 times more likely to experience severe mental health problems than those in the highest, suggesting that the income gradient in young people's mental health has worsened considerably over the past decade.

Mental Health Foundation

The Mental Health Foundation points out that employment status is linked to mental health outcomes, with the unemployed or economically inactive having higher rates of common mental health problems than those employed. However, mental health is also impacted on by low paid and insecure employment. (8)

Housing can also be a factor and those on housing benefit are more than twice as likely to have a common mental health problem than those not receiving it (35.1% vs 14.9%). (9)

Action For Children - how children are affected by poverty

However, it is the effect of poverty on parents' and children's mental health that continues to have the largest impact and accrues throughout all of childhood, thus intensifying mental health problems for both parents and children over time. (10)

Having the right kind of services and early intervention will help to mitigate the stresses and mental health impacts of poverty.

There are a number of services in Argyll and Bute that help to address and improve mental health and wellbeing, for children, young people and families, whatever the cause.

1. A new free service from Argyll and Bute Council, in partnership with Exchange Families is available for parents and carers to help support their child. A range of support, workshops and resources will be on offer to help better understand common issues and learn how you can help.

Exchange Families offers support for parents and carers with concerns about the wellbeing of their children. They provide specialist guidance to families worried about their young people. The organisation helps adults to help their families through workshops, resources, guidance and advice.

There are workshops (in person or on-line) with practical strategies for parents and carers to support their children and young people, covering a range of areas: anxiety, neurodiversity, low self-esteem, self-harm, low-mood, bereavement, family break up. Workshops available to book thus far are:

- Workshops - Age 4-7 - Promoting confidence and self-esteem in young children
- Workshops - Age 8-11 - Building confidence and self-esteem in children

- Workshops - Age 12+ - Techniques for preventing anxiety and panic. Stress management techniques for supporting teens
- An online Mental Health Hub - Living Well in Argyll and Bute

[Exchange Counselling | Mental Health Service Provider](#)

2. Our children, their nurturing education (OCTNE) is the authority wide education strategy that brings together nurture, adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed practice. This makes a significant contribution to the development of a trauma responsive education workforce. The strategy ensures that children and young people will have access to wellbeing programmes and supports to enhance prevention and early intervention while providing more specialist support where required.

The continued support of 58 establishments, including 52 schools and 6 Partnership Providers, through the OCTNE journey has enabled sustained growth in nurturing environments.

3. Rollout of Trauma Informed and Trauma Skilled training has been offered to child and adult services this session. An additional ~120 staff have attended an in-person training since January. Another cohort of Transforming Connections training for trainers will take place in June, and all trainers now have access to a team's channel, with a view to continuing to roll out a programme of training over the coming year.

4. Best Beginnings

Argyll & Bute Infant Mental Health Service, Best Beginnings launched in Spring 2022 and works to support early relationships between babies and their carer's. There is an ongoing training programme offered to professionals, volunteers and students by the Infant Mental Health Practitioner.

5. Family Nurse Partnership

In April 2024 the Family Nurse Programme began to be rolled out across Argyll and Bute; it commenced in the Bute and Cowal area. This programme is established in many parts of the World such as the United States, Australia and Norway. In Scotland it has been successfully working in areas like Greater Glasgow and Clyde for several years. This is a preventative, educational behaviour programme that is run by Nurses and Midwives who have received training in skills that include motivational interviewing, agenda matching and the use of tools such as "Partners in Parenting Education" (PIPE).

The programme works with mothers to be who are 21 years old and under; work will begin with participants as early as possible in the pregnancy and continue

until the child's second birthday. Co-working will take place with Midwives and when the child is born, programme staff will take the place of the Health Visitor until a planned handover to them when the child is two years old. This will be for first time mothers and will offer additional support and learning opportunities that they would otherwise not be able to access. The programme focuses on empowering the mother and listening to her needs and views as well as offering support, signposting to other agencies that will assist her and giving her skills to better care for her baby. FNP the person-centred, preventative intervention programme offered to young first-time mother is now being rolled out to include Mid Argyll Kintyre and Islay.

6. Kooth

We now offer a free online mental health and wellbeing resource to all 10–18-year-olds in Argyll and Bute. Kooth offers a wide range of help, with a no-wait, no-referral service so any young person can reach out for support, whenever they need it. Read more about how to access Kooth

[Kooth – A new mental health and wellbeing tool for children and young people](#)

7. Counselling in Schools

School counselling services continues to be available across the authority. Approx. 700 pupils accessed over the past 12 months. 83% of young people and 81% of primary-aged children completing support reported positive clinical outcomes. This is further supported by positive parent feedback, with 100% of parents feeling more confident in supporting their child's emotional and developmental needs and 94% observing positive changes in their child's wellbeing.

8. Planet Youth

Planet Youth is an Iceland-originated framework with the aim to improve young people's health, wellbeing and relationships. To achieve this aim parents, carers, schools, communities and organisers work together. Argyll and Bute is one of the six local authorities who piloted the framework in Scotland. In 2023 a survey was conducted during school hours among Year 3 and Year 4 students of five selected schools in Argyll and Bute. As part of this, the participants were asked to rate their mental health status. The majority, 38% (n=286), of respondents rated their mental health as 'good to very good', 28% (n=210) rated it as 'acceptable', 28% (n=208) rated it as 'bad to very bad'. 5% (n=40) of participants did not answer the question. Planet Youth work with children and young people to provide activities and engagement that improves their wellbeing and reduces their likelihood of drug, alcohol use and other negative behaviours.

9. Family Liaison and Health & Wellbeing Officers

Family Liaison and Health & Wellbeing Officers have been further supported in a network created to offer opportunity for career long professional learning (CLPL) and to further strengthen the work they do and impact they are making. Evidence around their impact is strong. They are making a real difference to our most vulnerable pupils and their families through a wide range of support. Partnership work with Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy for FL/HWB Officers led to co-creation of a 'Help Leaflet' signposting families to available supports. This has been distributed to all schools with a FLO/ HWB Officer.

10. Let's Grow Kids UK

Work with parents in Argyll and Bute during the perinatal period and until a child's third birthday. All staff at LGKUK, (a third sector organisation) are trained in perinatal and infant mental health and infant nutrition. Providing one to one targeted support, they work alongside families helping them to navigate their way through the pressures of family life. Their core programme lasts for 16 weeks, and a parent can stay with the team for as long as they need or until their youngest child is 3. Let's Grow Kids UK use a combination of several parenting programmes including Solihull, Adult mental health and family programmes such as WRAP and support clients to access specialist services such as Bute Advice.

Let's Grow Kids UK have a tiered system for accessing professional support within the team as well as general wellbeing assistance. Every introduction is triaged, and each parent is allocated the most appropriate professional to work with. We have 3 tests of change ongoing in addition to our core programme. These are

- Working with Dads
- Working with parents of children with ASN during their Nursery/School transition year
- Working with parents with poor mental health by providing Psychotherapy sessions (this work is being delivered in partnership with University of Strathclyde)

[Let's Grow Kids Website](#)

11. The HELP Project (Dunoon and Rothsay)

This project helps young people with housing, debt and benefit advice, employment and wellbeing issues. Referral criteria are between the ages of 16-25-years, homeless, at threat of homelessness or care experienced. It offers a range of wellbeing supports, including parenting groups and life coaching.

[Help Project Website](#)

Help Project Email: info@help ltd.org.uk

Help Project Phone: 0800 121 4990

12. Home Start Lorn

Home-Start Lorn has been supporting families with young children throughout the whole of the Oban and North Argyll area, including the outlying villages since 1988 and on the Isle of Mull since 2016. Through our home-visiting volunteers we offer a unique service providing practical and emotional support to parents/carers with one or more children under 5.

Contacts

Phone 01631 566749

Email: homestartlorn@btconnect.com

Home-Start Lorn

13. Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface: Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund has been awarded for another two years – this will be years five and six of the fund. Argyll and Bute has been awarded £285,765.57 for each of the two years. The Fund 'is to be made available to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population. Specifically, the Fund aims to:

- Tackle mental health inequalities through supporting a range of 'at risk groups.
- Address priority issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide prevention and poverty and inequality with a particular emphasis on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and support to those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Support small 'grass roots' community groups and organisations to deliver such activities.
- Provide opportunities for people to connect with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise communities.

The Fund has a strong focus on prevention and early intervention and aims to support grass roots community groups in tackling mental health inequalities and address priority issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide prevention and tackling poverty and inequality.

The Promise and Whole Family Support

The promise, made by the Scottish Government following work done by the Independent Care Review, to care experienced children and young people is built on five foundations: family, voice, care, people and scaffolding. They show what's important for any child to grow up loved, safe and respected. You can find out more about The Promise here:

[The Promise – gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

Coupled with this was the vision and Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support to promote consistent standards across Scotland which will help to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families. In Scotland, Family Support is broadly understood to be a range of services to help families meet their individual needs. The aim is to improve families' wellbeing by providing advice and support to enable them to avoid crisis.

The Scottish Government provides grant funding to the Argyll & Bute's Children's Partnership through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF). The money is designed to support work towards the Promise through innovative practice initiatives.

Projects which are supported through this fund include

- The Family Placement Team recruited two extra staff to do initial and full assessments on Kinship Carers.
- The Throughcare and Aftercare Team recruited two extra staff to work with young people during their care and aftercare journey.
- The Care Experience Health Team was further developed. This allowed for the CAMH's Team to have formulation meetings with staff from the three residential children and young people's houses (Shellach View, East King Street and Dunclutha).
- A Trauma Coordinator has been appointed, and this is proving to be a key post in helping to further develop the trauma informed approach that all our staff are trained in.
- Developing the joint work between the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Education to support families of children exhibiting emotional distress has proven to be very successful. A Head Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People has been appointed and works across schools.

Residential Children's Houses 2024 - 2025

Work has been undertaken to further develop training for staff in our residential children's houses. The impact of this training has supported achieving positive destinations for the young people who had been supported to transition to independent living. One house has recruited qualified social workers, colleagues from education and throughcare services. Having a suitably qualified workforce we can consider early intervention in the community to target support to families and provide a response to young people whose needs may be more complex.

Staff teams within the Houses have been trained in Therapeutic Theory training by CALM, along with Therapeutic Care Giving training facilitated by CAHMS care experienced team. There is progress in the number of practitioners trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP).

Family Placement 2024-2025

Recruitment of foster carers is a national problem. We get more inquiries from prospective adopters than people interested in fostering, but it would appear this mirrors the national picture. We continue to work to recruit more foster carers.

Continuing care arrangements with previous foster or kinship carers has been strengthened with the decision to retain a supervising social worker from the family placement team to work alongside the carers post conversion to continuing care providers, offering support to them in this new role of helping the young person transition to independence when ready; this will include annual reviews.

We have updated Kinship policy and procedures and taken most work associated with kinship into the family placement team. This has led to a quicker initial assessment when children go to stay with kin, as well as a smoother transition from Interim to permanent kinship arrangements. Kinship Carers have had opportunities to meet up with foster carers and adopters at joint events.

Going forward, we will develop our review process for kinship carers that will ensure we know the circumstances of all kinship carers and the children they care for, including those no longer involved with a child's social worker.

We plan to introduce Family Group Conferencing, which will make the initial exploration for kinship carers more robust and allow a full discussion including family members who can't take on the care of a child full time but can support another family member to do so. The Family Placement Team will undertake assessment, training, support and review of supported lodgings providers. It is hoped that this will increase the options for young people leaving Care, this will be a joint venture with the Throughcare team.

United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

In October 2023 the Argyll and Bute UNCRC Implementation Group applied for a grant from the Scottish Government, CORRA Foundation led, UNCRC Innovations Fund. This was set up to give Councils the funds to embed children's rights in their area following the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. The bid was successful and £53,000 was awarded to achieve the following objectives.

1. In coproduction with children and young people, create a series of celebratory events that inform children, young people and their parents and carers about children's rights and the new act.
2. Create an awards scheme that, in coproduction with children and young people, will encourage embedding of children's rights into the work of the Council and its partners.
3. Create materials that can be used going forward to increase awareness of children's rights in Argyll and Bute.

All these outcomes were achieved; key things to note in the work of this project include:

- 17 events took place that celebrated children's rights and informed children, young people and parents / carers and staff about the new act. In total 2475 children and young people were directly involved with events and the coproduction of new materials for use going forward.
- An awards scheme was commenced, and children and young people have helped to design badges and plaques that will be used in the scheme.
- Two children's rights workshops were held for parents, carers, staff and other interested adults.
- Children and young people have been involved across Argyll and Bute, from our islands, rural places and towns. This has included those from early years, primary and high schools and young people not in school. The range of communities and groups included has been extensive and includes refugee and asylum-seeking children and young carers.
- Material created for future work in this area include small libraries of children's rights / inclusive and LGBTQ books in several schools including Tobermory and Rothesay high schools. Pens provided with the books that will read aloud, allowing children and young people to share them with parents where English may not be a first language etc. A new LGBTQ+ flag designed by children and young people, a graphic version of the children's rights plan, a graphic poster for early years settings and parents that signposts to information about relevant rights and resources and has a QR code which directs people to a Council webpage on resources for parents with babies and young children. A film created by Young Carers about their challenges and the importance of their rights. A variety of materials from individual events that will be visible to children and those in communities going forward, for example bags, fridge magnets, t-shirts and mugs.

All of this combines with key elements like informed leadership, impact assessments that encompass children's rights, a child friendly complaints procedure, coworking with youth and community groups, the creating of child friendly documents, and the provision of training for staff. Going forward we will keep children's rights and voices at the centre of the Council's work and recognise that they must be respected if we are to effectively tackle child poverty.

The Plan

A. Increasing income From Employment and Earning

1. Employability

Delivery of the **Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)** continues within the broader context of the **No One Left Behind (NOLB)** policy direction.

Eligible participants must have the right to live and work in the UK and are:

- Lone Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- Parents with a disability or families who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a disabled child
- Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have 3 or more children
- Parents from a minority ethnic background who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- Parents who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty and have a youngest child
- Parents who are aged <25 who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty
- Other low-income parents, i.e. kinship carers who are unemployed or experiencing in work poverty.

The main objectives/expected outcomes are to support the delivery of the Scottish Government's Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) to offer a flexible and user-based model of employability support for the parental groups identified in Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026,

through appropriate support focusing on intensive Key Worker support.

Low-income families are supported to increase their income through work, both through supporting parents to access paid employment and in helping those in lower paid jobs to progress to higher paid employment. Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team and Third Sector partner Inspiralba (lead of a large consortium across Argyll and Bute) deliver intensive in and out of work employability support to parents, including person centred support to upskill, apply for jobs, gain progression whilst employment, money advice, health support, motivational support, complete accredited training, etc. Bute Advice and Allenergy are key partners within Inspiralba's consortium helping to assist parents to maximise their household income and reduce fuel costs.

The Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership (ABEP) identified lack of childcare as a barrier to work for parents. In response, our Third Sector partner InspirAlba developed a pilot programme to support parents through the process of becoming registered childminders utilising the Child Poverty funding. The pilot recognised that whilst support was available to access childminding, additional coaching and support would enable parents with limited confidence and on a low income to pursue this career and progress into self-employment. All parents who enter the childminding programme are supported by an Employability Coach to build confidence; coordinate training including Paediatric First Aid and Food Hygiene and guide them along their journey. The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) provide specialist support, including the 'Childminding Induction Programme' and Argyll and Bute Council's Early Years Team assist with area specific advice. Bute Advice provide specialist benefit advice, and an experienced local Childminder offers additional mentoring. Assistance with set up costs, including purchase of toys, equipment and minor adaptations to the home to ensure Care Commission Compliance is also available. InspirAlba ran the pilot in 2023/24, of the 5 parents who commenced, 4 of which are now in business and the 5th secured a post with Social Work. Due to the pilot's success a further 4 places were offered in 2024/25, all of which were filled and are doing extremely well working towards becoming fully qualified childminders. When operational these childminders will help to tackle the shortage in childcare in the rural communities of Islay, Tighnabruich, Ford and Tarbert. It is planned a further 2 places will be available in 2025/26.

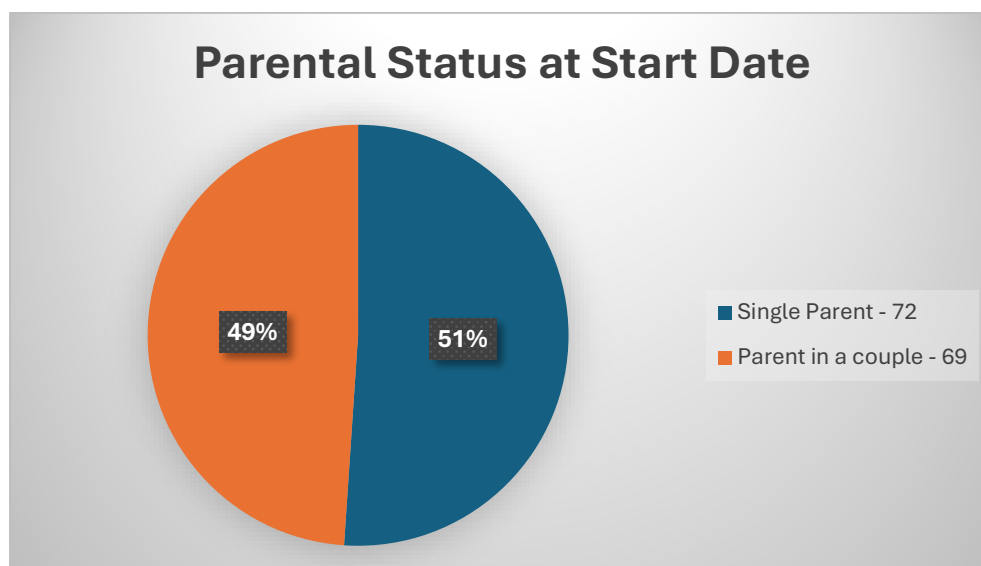
The ABEP also recognised specific gaps relating to family poverty (supporting parents with creative cookery skills for nutritious family meals and access to the hospitality sector). InspirAlba worked in partnership with Fyne Futures to devise a pilot programme. A programme was created to support parents to develop skills, confidence and accreditations to test trade as childminders, which will increase capacity for this gap. As with the childminding this pilot was also successful with further places being available in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Parental Welfare Fund is aimed at parents receiving support through the PESF who successfully secure employment. Applications are welcomed by Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team. These monies help with the transition to work and can alleviate any worries. The fund offers up to £1,000 payable over the first 13 weeks of employment. [Further information on the Parental Welfare Fund](#)

Funded by the Scottish Government a Child Poverty Co-Ordinator was recruited in June 2024 by Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team. This post provides critical additional resource within Argyll and Bute Council to support the delivery of commitments set out in the Scottish Government's policy intent of 'No One Left Behind' and 'Best Start Bright Futures', by ensuring alignment between the Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership and wrap-around services that support parents' transition or progression within work, such as childcare and transport. The original postholder has since left however a replacement commenced the role in May 2025.

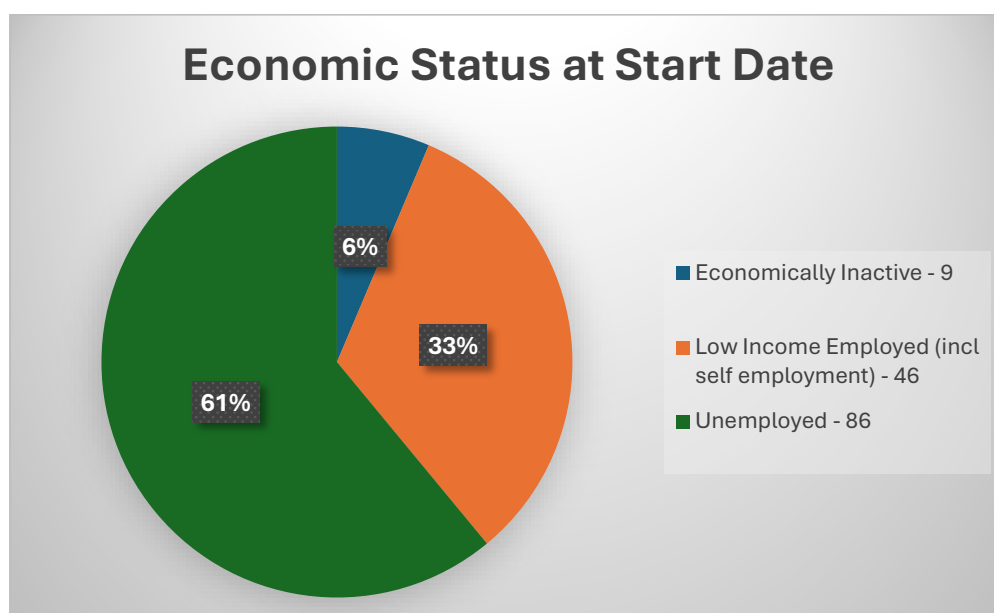
During 2024/25 a total of 141 parents commenced support under PESF/NOLB

A Pie Chart showing parental status at start date. 49% (69 people) were a parent in a couple. 51% (72 people) were single parents.



* Please note the above figures are based on parents who have engaged for the first time in 2024/25 and not those who are restarts to the service.

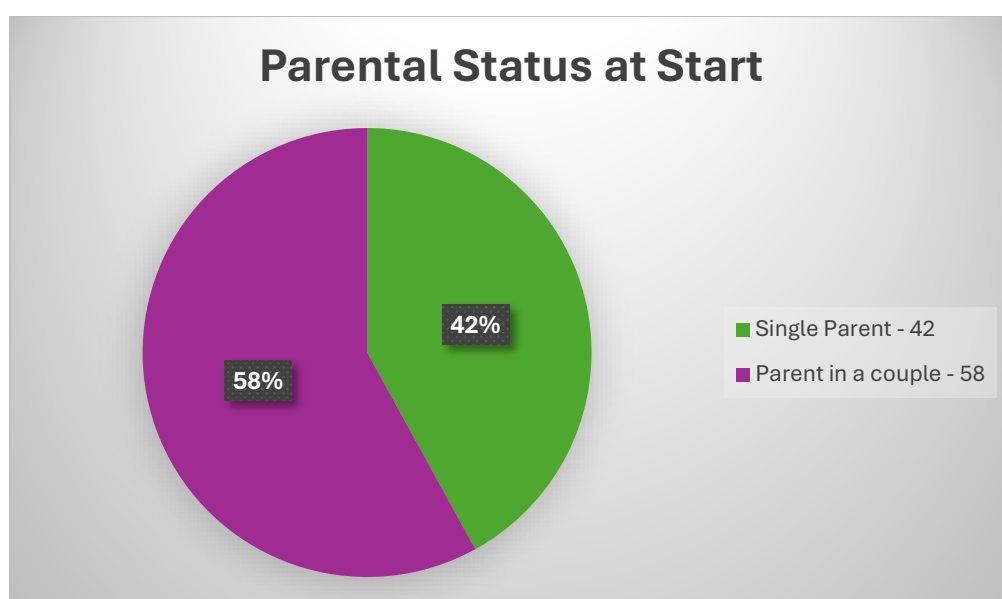
A Pie Chart showing economic status at the start date. 61% were unemployed (86 people), 33% were low income employed (including self-employed) (46 people) and 6% (9 people) were economically inactive.



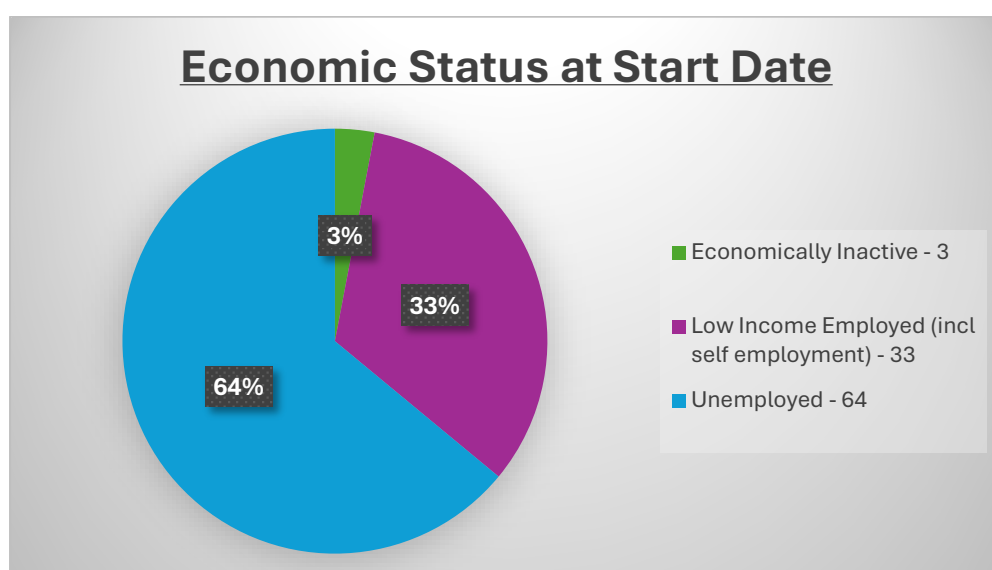
Of these 141 parents, 64 advised at the outset of support they had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

In addition to the 141 parents who joined the PESF Service in 2024/25, a further 100 parents still being supported at 31st March 2024, were carried over to continue support in 2024/25.

A Pie Chart showing parental status at start. 58% (58 people) were parents in a couple, 42% (42 people) were single parents.



A Pie Chart showing economic status at start date. 64% (64 people) were unemployed, 33% (33 people) were low income employed (including self-employed), 3% (3 people) were economically inactive.



Of these 100 parents carried over to continue support in 2024/25, 48 advised at the outset of support they had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

A total of 97 parents exited the PESF service in 2024/25: 32 commenced employment thus having a positive impact on their household income. Of these job starts, 18 (56.25%) entered self-employment being the ideal option to accommodate their family circumstances. A further 5 parents commenced volunteering, 4 moved into further/higher education and 35 completed accredited training.

All PESF programmes continues to be available to continuing parents and new start parents in 2025/26. As an alternative to PESF and NOLB, unemployed parents also have the choice to receive support from the following employability options should they decide this support best meets their needs:

UKSPF Work Placements and Training delivered by Argyll and Bute Council's Employability Team. Both interventions funded by the UK Government.

Work placements offer the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge to assist with moving into future employment:

- 4, 13 or 26-week duration
- 16 or 30 hours per week
- Real living wage paid
- Up to £100 per person work clothing allowance
- Training can be funded on an individual basis
- Each participant will have a dedicated Employability Support Worker to assist with job search, interview skills, in work support, etc

A total of 10 unemployed parents (1 single parent/9 parent in a couple) completed a work placement in 2024/25. Of these 1 reported a disability or long-term health condition at start date. A total of 7 parents have moved into employment and 3 are currently job seeking.

Training monies are also available to apply for full or partially funded accredited training. The aim is to:

- Assist those who are unemployed move into work
- Help those in low-income employment (earning up to £17,000 per annum) to upskill/retrain to enable them to apply for higher paid positions

A total of 42 parents (21 lone parent / 21 parent in a couple) accessed the training intervention in 2024/25. Of these parents 7 were low income employed, 7 low-income self-employed, 26 unemployed and 2 economically inactive.

To date 9 parents who were previously unemployed have secured employment, 1 previously unemployed is now self-employed, 2 low income employed and 2 low income self-employed have increased their earnings as a direct result of the training, 1 low income employed remain in their current post and is seeking new employment, 4 have advised they no longer wish to undertake the approved training, 3 are job

seeking and 5 have disengaged and are uncontactable. The remaining 15 parents are still undertaking training.

UKSPF Work Placements and Training interventions continue to be available in 2025/26.

Parental Employability Support Successes

Case Study 1

M is a Ukrainian Refugee and a single parent with 2 children. She was referred to Argyll and Bute Council's PESF Engagement Worker by the Resettlement Team.

M was unemployed for over 6 months, her main barriers to employment were childcare, transport and English not being her first language. M was desperate to find part time employment to fit around school hours. Along with the help from an interpreter, M's PESF Engagement Worker supported her to complete a CV, look for employment, complete applications and go through mock interviews. She was also supported to attend her Job Centre appointments as she was lacking in confidence to attend alone. Through handing out her CV to hotels, M was offered a permanent job, 20 hours a week which fits around her children and still gives her time to study English. M's Engagement Worker supported her to complete all the necessary documentation to accept the position. M was able to apply for the Parental Welfare Fund which has been a great help with clothing and travel to and from work.

Out with employability support, M's Engagement Worker supported her to apply for a school clothing grant and look for local holiday clubs/activities for her children during the school holidays.

M is happy in her employment, in the future once her English improves, she would like to study.

Quote from participant:

'Thank you very much for your help. I admire your kindness and professionalism.'

Case Study 2

B and has 2 children, 1 is only 9 months old. She self-referred as she heard about the programme through a friend who had also benefitted from the programme.

B had just started a mobile nail business when she fell pregnant with her youngest. She was building some clientele and going to peoples' houses. Once she had her baby she was keen to get set back up again. She hoped to look into the possibility of having a shop to work from as this would give her the flexibility for childcare which was one of the biggest barriers.

B wanted to be able to expand her business and increase her income, she also wanted assistance with cash flow and business help to see if having a shop in town would be

viable. InspirAlba were able to help B through the process of taking on a lease for a property, provide some basic equipment and support with a cashflow analysis. They then referred her on to Business Gateway for further support and grant assistance.

B has now been operational for 10 weeks. She is fully booked with clients and has been successful in sub-letting a chair within her premises to another local person.

Case Study 3

J is a single mum of 28 with a young daughter aged 6 months at the beginning of contact. She struggled to find work due to the lack of public transport. J did not have access to a PC and her mobile phone was outdated making access to vacancies and online openings for employment and electronic applications a huge challenge.

The importance of face-to-face meetings with J proved valuable for social interaction and a better understanding of both her domestic situation alongside the challenges faced in seeking employment. Initially a laptop was purchased and an updated mobile phone, creating a fairer opportunity for J to approach employers and to have a wider look at local possibilities. This was met with a hugely grateful response from J, giving her an added positive outlook to her future.

A driving Theory test was organised and J passed with a score of 96%, this boosted her confidence enormously. This has been followed by driving lessons with a local Driving Instructor. She has concentrated very well on her driving lessons and is considered ready for her up-coming practical test date. J looks forward to with great excitement, recognising the life-changing possibilities this could bring.

J's indicated she would like to train as a massage therapist, but she believed this may not be possible due to her circumstances. She was open to other training offered, including a Paediatric First Aid course which she completed over a 2-day training weekend, with an extremely positive attitude and found the course of great value.

She also attended one of InspirAlba's Creative Cookery sessions. All attendees received a multi cooker and ingredients starter pack, which has been hugely appreciated and given an access to greater diet ideas and nutrition for J and her young daughter. She has been able to begin to introduce new foods and home cooked meals.

Feedback from J's successful completion of the 2-day Paediatric First-Aid course was extremely positive. She was a valued member of the course, with excellent interaction and involvement. J was a positive member of the Creative Cookery session, supporting others with ideas and an upbeat and friendly attitude for successful completion.

J received support to apply for jobs and after a successful interview, has now secured her 'dream job' as a trainee Massage Therapist in a nearby town.

Quote from participant:

"Learning to drive has given me confidence in myself and my abilities. In the long term, once I pass my test, it will open up so many opportunities for me such as driving to work and going for fun days out with my little girl. The freedom I will gain through driving is limitless."

Plans Ahead

To continue to play an active role in contributing to the reduction of child poverty in Argyll and Bute by marketing all employability support available to encourage parents to sign up to whichever support best meets their individual needs.

The receipt of the 2025/26 Offer of Grant from the Scottish Government on 31st March 2025 was much welcomed. This has allowed the Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership (ABEP) to discuss delivery priorities utilising the funding allocation available. As a result, the Parental Employability Support Fund continues to support unemployed and low income employed parents.

The Parental Transition Fund will also continue to be available in 2025/26 to provide financial assistance to parents in the first 3 months of employment.

The Employability Team has secured additional UK Government funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to offer unemployed residents of Argyll and Bute pre-employment support, training and work placements. Training will also be available to those in low-income employment who hope to upskill to enable them to apply for higher paid job opportunities. All interventions will continue to be available from April 2025 to March 2026.

[Full details of all support currently available to assist parents to increase income through earnings](#)

2. Skills Development Scotland Argyll and Bute

School Service Offer - Our careers advisers work in partnership with every state secondary school in Argyll and Bute, delivering career guidance to enable young people from S1-S6 to develop their Career Management Skills via a range of groupwork and 1-1 coaching conversations. We work closely with our partners within the school to identify young people who are considered to be most at risk of not making a positive progression from school, helping those young people to develop their career management skills and move onto education, employment or training when they leave school. From 1 June to 31 December 2024, we delivered **3,484** Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for **2,418** school pupils through a mix of group and one-to-one sessions.

[What We Do - Scotland's Career Service](#)

School Leaver Cohort 23/24 - 796 young people left school during the 23/24 school cohort and our team worked hard over the summer months to follow up those who had left to ensure support was offered. The December 2024 Interim Participation Snapshot showed that of the 3,250 16–19-year-olds in Argyll & Bute **93.7%** were in education, employment or training and personal development.

Post School Service Next Steps – Our service supports young people aged 16 – 18 (extended to 26 for care experienced young people) who are unemployed, helping them to build up their career management skills and move on to and sustain a range of options as appropriate: Training programmes, employability support, education and employment. From 1 April to 31 December 2024, we delivered **372** Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements for 243 post-school customers through a mix of group and one-to-one sessions.

Post school service: adults & PACE - Working in partnership with a range of partners to support local hubs helping unemployed adults to develop their career management and employability skills and move into employment. In Argyll & Bute our advisers have worked closely with the employability partnership (DWP & CLD) to deliver support via our local community venues format.

PACE: Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) is the Scottish Government's initiative dedicated to responding to redundancy situations. Through providing skills development and employability support, PACE aims to minimise the time individuals affected by redundancy are out of work. PACE brings together 24 organisations, together with the Scottish Government to provide free and impartial advice, guidance and support for individuals affected by redundancy.

PACE support is available to **all individuals** affected by redundancy.

Advisers have extensive experience of dealing with redundancy situations and can:

- Help with CV's, job search, applications, and interviews.
- Advise on benefits, staff may be entitled to
- Provide information on learning and training opportunities.

PACE support is delivered using a variety of delivery methods including Face to face, PACE Helpline, through webinars and enhanced online resources. From 1 April to 31 December 2024, we supported **8** employers and **64** individuals dealing with redundancy.

Visit www.redundancyscotland.co.uk for more information or call 0800 917 8000 to speak to an adviser.

My World of Work- Our website provides trustworthy, expert information and advice and it's free to access for people at any stage in their career. The site is designed to support people of all ages and stages, with activities and tools to help them identify the opportunities open to them. Our school, post school and PACE career coaches have been supporting Argyll and Bute customers by sign posting them to my world of

work for opportunities and developing their career management skills. Parents and schools have been using this service to support pupils with their career journey. Find out more at www.myworldofwork.co.uk

Local Employability Partnership: Skills Development Scotland (SDS) supports the **Local Employability Partnership (LEP)** in Argyll and Bute by aligning skills and careers services with the region's child poverty priorities.

This includes:

- **Targeted support for parents and carers** through the *No One Left Behind* strategy, helping them access training, apprenticeships, and sustainable employment.
- **Collaboration with local partners** to deliver integrated, person-centred employability pathways that reflect Argyll and Bute's rural challenges and sectoral opportunities.
- **Contributing to key local priorities** such as increasing income from employment, reducing the cost of living, and supporting early years and whole-family wellbeing.
- **Embedding The Promise and trauma-informed practice** in service delivery, ensuring support is inclusive and responsive to families facing disadvantage.

3. UHI Argyll and University of the Highlands and Islands

Student enrolment and achievement has improved slightly in the academic year 2024-25 although it has remained a very challenging times for learners. More than 40% of learners now present with some level of learning need or disability, requiring more support arrangements or course adjustments being put in place to help learners to succeed. The greatest rise in support needs has been around mental health, increased numbers of students with neurodivergent conditions, and general social anxiety. The college Mental Health Counsellor has been working at capacity but so far has been able to keep waiting lists down to no more than two weeks.

The college has worked on changing some of the course delivery patterns to attempt to make the courses more accessible to students – fitting around school hours, offering shorter courses of 11 or 17 weeks rather than 34 weeks, building course work around projects rather than units, leading to a more holistic style of learning.

Cost of living support continues to be a key activity. Students are supported to access any relevant funding that they are eligible for and students who have remained on benefits have been supported with one-off uplift payments. SAAS and the Student Loan Company have increased loan amounts as well as providing a Special Support Loan of £2400 for full time Higher Education students. These measures appear to have been successful as fewer students have applied for college Hardship and Discretionary funds in the year 2024-25. Students are able to apply for the long-term loan of a college laptop for the duration of their course so that they can access online learning on more suitable devices.

Over this current year the college has worked in developing a trauma informed approach. This is an ongoing activity to ensure that the ethos is embedded across the college.

Looking forward to the next academic year we will:

- Continue to develop our support for Care Experienced students, Student Carers and Estranged students.
- Continue to develop our curriculum to better meet the needs of our learners and the communities we serve
- Provide more opportunities for work based learning and Modern Apprenticeship courses.

4. Education

Early Years

We continue to deliver a paid childcare service model on three of Argyll and Bute's rural island communities and are now looking to extend this into two urban areas in response to the needs of working parents. As we are acutely aware that we have areas where rurality can exacerbate parental difficulties in accessing paid employment, we hope to support parents back into work and/or training. As such, this service prioritises parents who require the childcare to attend work rather than another reason. Increased levels of collaboration centrally have produced an infographic overview of how children's rights are supported in a multiagency approach across Argyll and Bute. This has been shared with all ELC settings supporting workforce understanding of rights-based practices in relation to community services. Parents also have access to this information, supporting them to access services which support their children.

We have continued to develop and review our Career Long Professional Learning Offer (CLPL) approaches to ensure outcome-focused improvements in planning which will support children's developmental progress, especially those most at risk of diminished outcomes as a result of the poverty-related attainment gap.

Our ASN locality networks continue to attract participation and practice sharing across localities. Feedback shows this is developing our workforce understanding of strategies to support children with additional support needs.

16% of ELC settings received blocks of focused literacy interventions by EY excellence and equity leads, targeting children's listening skills. Data, in relation to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, was used to identify which groups of children were targeted to receive these play-based interventions. In all settings, children's listening skills improved as a result of the intervention, with almost all children's skills progressing at pace, as evidenced through tracking and monitoring

data. Practitioner feedback gathered demonstrates increased confidence by almost all staff involved to continue delivering the focused intervention independently, leading to improved literacy attainment within this curriculum organiser for all children within the settings involved.

4% of ELC settings received blocks of focused numeracy interventions by EY excellence and equity leads, targeting the five principles of counting. Data, in relation to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, was used to identify which groups of children were targeted to receive these play-based interventions. Observation and tracking data showed that 100% of children engaged in the project improved their understanding of number and counting and qualitative data from parental feedback reinforced this evaluation. In all 3 settings, practitioners reported that their understanding of teaching number concepts and counting had increased, and all were confident in their capacity to continue this work independently.

Our collaboration with health colleagues to deliver parental information sessions via community 'buggy walks' has increased, and we now have regular sessions in almost all mainland, urban towns. Parental engagement continues to grow in relation to numbers of parents attending regular sessions, and feedback shows the sessions are delivering early support for parents in the areas of dental health, speech and language development and parental mental health.

Primary/ Secondary Education

Education Officer for Scottish Attainment Challenge continues to support schools in their planning for Pupil Equity Funding allocations to ensure robust, targeted interventions are in place to help close the poverty related attainment gap. Proportionate visits and supports are made to all establishments in receipt of PEF and work continues to ensure these spends lead to quality impact in improved outcomes for learners and families most affected by the poverty related attainment gap. Schools have been supported in measuring this impact and its sustainability for accelerating progress. Case studies of effective practice have been produced and shared, giving schools the opportunity to learn from each other in a model of self-sustainable improvement.

New Lead Officer for data has worked with officers to refresh data packs produced for schools. The development of new school dashboards is assisting schools in analysis of data in a more accessible way with the ability to filter more effectively for children and young people in their settings experiencing / at risk of poverty. Education Management team continues to work closely with Head Teachers to support the analysis of attainment data. Stretch aims set for 23-24 were met in Literacy and Numeracy (P1, P4, P7) Targets set for pupils at SIMD Q1 were met in Numeracy and were within 2pp in Literacy. This reduced the poverty related attainment gap between the lowest and highest SIMD Quintile pupils by a further 2.41pp in Numeracy from the previous year (2023). Due to

increased attainment in SIMD Q5 pupils, the poverty related attainment gap between the lowest and highest SIMD Quintile pupils in Literacy slightly increased by 1.02pp from the previous year (2023).

PEF spends over the last 4 years evidence an encouraging **upward trend** in overall investment spend, rising from 63% investment in 2021/22 to 84% investment in 2024/25

Staffing remains the biggest investment of PEF within our schools. (87% of PEF schools committing to additional staff). The largest proportion is spent on Pupil Support Assistants (44 in post) who are working with targeted groups of pupils with identified gaps in learning to support increased progress in attainment. Additional teaching staff have also been recruited by some schools to target this type of intervention (17 in post) Progress and Achievement data and progress towards stretch aims point to improvements. Another significant proportion is allocated to FL / HWB Officers (19 in post).

Four Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) have also been appointed centrally to support the development of the Single Point of Access. With 1 FLO per locality area, this will help ensure a more equitable provision across the local authority. This is in addition to the FLOs who have the specific remit to support our care experienced young people or employed through PEF. Evidence around their impact is strong and features within a Scottish Government case study. They are making a real difference to our most vulnerable pupils and their families through a wide range of support. A research study will be undertaken between August-December 2025 on the work of our FLOs to identify the support areas which derive the greatest impact on our children and young people. This will be used to inform consistency and future planning.

Partnership work with Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has resulted in a number of schools further examining the cost of their school day. This is leading to strategic planning within those schools to consult with their community to plan and implement strategies to reduce the associated financial pressures facing families. A number of schools participate within CPAG's national Cost of the School Day Voice network. This ensures the issues associated with rural poverty are better represented.

An authority information leaflet will be shared with all schools in June 2025 which can be used to let families know about financial entitlements.

Liaison is taking place with Social Investment Scotland in relation to a financial inclusion pilot. This is with the aim of ensuring that every child leaves school with a bank account. We are working with them to consider piloting this in a secondary school where there is limited access to a bank. We are keen to

ensure that we are addressing some of the barriers that young people may have in accessing a bank account in our rural and island areas.

£5000 has been earmarked from SEF funding for a participatory budgeting (PB) project to benefit pupils experiencing poverty. Project planning for this is being taken forward to explore a pilot PB project with all the island schools on Islay in 2025/26.

28% of our schools currently provide a Breakfast Club. 95% of these are offered as a universal provision (open to all) and in over a third (38%) they also work with identified families to target the offer. 71% of the provision is funded through PEF with staffing and catering supplies being the highest committed spends. A third of the schools have been able to access additional community funding to support their provision. (33%) Over half of the schools' evidence impact in improved attendance (62%) and engagement in learning (67%) as a result of their Breakfast Clubs and all schools (100%) would like to continue their provision as a long term and sustainable feature for their establishments.

The recent announcement from the Scottish Government on 'Bright Starts' grants will give individual schools the opportunity to bid for this additional funding to either provide a new Breakfast Club or to augment / sustain current provision.

Professional learning has been offered to all education staff, considering education priorities alongside council wide priorities. An expanded Equity Network has enabled a wider reach beyond FLOs and HWBOs to all interested education staff.

Run in partnership with HSCP colleagues, Money Counts training was a new addition to the Education Career Long Professional Learning calendar in 24-25.

CLPL	Roles within Education	Number of attendees
Equity Network - CPAG	Family Liaison Officers Health and Wellbeing Officers MCR Pathway Coordinators Headteachers Education Support Officers	5
Equity Network – Breakfast Clubs	Family Liaison Officers Health and Wellbeing Officers	8
Equity Network – Cost of the School Day	Family Liaison Officers Health and Wellbeing Officers	12

CLPL	Roles within Education	Number of attendees
	Headteachers and senior leaders in schools	
Equity Toolkit	Family Liaison Officers Health and Wellbeing Officers Headteachers Education Support Officers	6
Planning for Impact in PEF	Headteachers and senior leaders in schools	19

Argyll and Bute remain committed to ‘Keeping the Promise’ for our care experienced children and young people (CECYP). Our Care Experienced Education Team consists of a Virtual Head Teacher and four Health and Wellbeing Family Liaison Officers. At any one time, there are approximately 300 CECYP across our authority education settings. We also support young people who are hosted out-with our authority, both in mainstream and specialist settings. CLPL opportunities are supporting staff at all levels to better understand the needs of our CECYP. Comprehensive training such as Keeping the Promise and Designated Manager training is supporting an increased awareness of CECYP needs and how best to support this cohort. This has resulted in an authority wide commitment, including our Chief Officers Group, to continue to work towards Keeping the Promise and having high aspirations for our CECYP. This is demonstrated by CECYP voice being reflected in ‘Our Children Their Future – Thriving Together.’

Ensuring our CECYP have all they require to thrive and achieve their potential, remains a key priority for the council. Education Service actions and data shared with both the Community Services Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board, has been received positively with endorsement given for the work to continue. The funding from the Scottish Government’s Scottish Attainment Challenge CECYP Fund is demonstrating clear effectiveness with progress for our CECYP that align to our outcomes, as evidenced by our data.

Enhanced scrutiny and awareness of our CECYP is showing a very good impact on National 4 qualification pass rates. In 23-24, we maintained a 100% pass rate for Level 4 Literacy, Application of Mathematics – 15.5% above the national average. 72% of learners who presented for Higher/Advanced Higher achieved grades A – D, 32% achieved grades B – C. Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) data for P1, 4 and 7 evidence three-year positive progress since 2021. CECYP attainment has increased in every area and the attainment gap between CE and no-CE pupils has reduced (whilst non-CE pupils continue to improve).

Effective partnership working through Corporate Parenting Board attendance and wider Education Service continues to be refined, enhancing the support available to

our CECYP considering their post school destination. The positive impact of this work is evidenced by 94% of CECYP leaver obtaining a positive destination and 83% being in a sustained destination (2023-24).

CECYP Primary attendance in 23-24 was 91.5% and secondary 80.8%. Authority wide policies and effective training such as Maximising Attendance, OCTNE, RRS and We Promise is leading to earlier intervention to support CECYP attendance. This is resulting in personalised attendance support targeted CECYP, including multi agency approaches to offer whole family support. Pupil voice evidences the positive impacts on wellbeing and inclusion

Strategic commitment and prioritising of GIRFEC, The Promise and OCTF has led to greater awareness across settings of the positive impacts of bespoke approaches, early intervention and trauma informed approaches. This has resulted in a year-on-year decrease of exclusion since 2020. As a result of this commitment, zero CECYP were excluded in 2023 – 24. As at May 2025, zero CECYP have been excluded in the 2024-25 academic session.

As part of our involvement in the testing phase of Scottish Government's draft framework '*Improving the Educational Outcomes of CECYP*' (soon to be finalised) we have developed key measures focused on attendance, exclusion, attainment and post-school destinations. In addition, we have identified local outcomes related to the enhancement of professional learning, which collectively support and strengthen our ongoing improvement efforts.

The Addressing Non-Attendance (ANA) procedures have been further strengthened by engagement with Education Scotland's Quality Improvement Programme (QIP) on Addressing Non-Attendance. We will be developing our approach to attendance by sharing the learning from that have been developed from ANA and the QIP. Attendance stretch aims will remain a discussion as part of Education Managers Quality Improvement Visits.

In August 2024, Argyll and Bute Council extended its partnership with MCR Pathways to add Rothesay Academy to the existing MCR programmes at Oban High School, Dunoon Grammar School and Hermitage Academy.

MCR Pathways is a national charity which seeks to improve the wellbeing and life chances of Care-Experienced or otherwise disadvantaged or vulnerable young people through its mentoring programme, which matches such young people in S3-S6 with volunteer adult mentors for weekly meetings of one hour.

The programme brings proven, measurable improvements in attendance, inclusion, attainment and achievement, as well as increasing self-confidence and wellbeing in young people. In each school, the Council employs an MCR Pathways Co-ordinator,

who works to recruit mentors, match identified young people with mentors and prepare identified young people in S1 and S2 for being matched with a mentor in S3. At the end of its second year of implementation, the MCR Pathways programme continues to be highly successful. All targets for recruiting mentors and successfully matching mentors to young people have been exceeded, and the feedback from young people, mentors and schools has been extremely positive. Across the four participating schools, 112 S3-S6 young people are being mentored weekly, and 90 S1/S2 pupils are working towards mentoring in S3.

The next steps for MCR Pathways in Argyll and Bute involve the further extension of the programme to Campbeltown Grammar School, Tarbert Academy and Lochgilphead High School. To overcome logistical and funding challenges, innovative approaches to finance and delivery are being put in place or explored. These include sponsorship by local business partners and the development of a hybrid model of delivering the programme in partnership with Developing the Young Workforce and Skills Development Scotland.

Over school session 2024/25, Argyll and Bute Council has further developed and extended its programme of Flexible Learning Plans (FLPs).

An FLP is an intervention within Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) which provides a bespoke and fully personalised curriculum to vulnerable young people in S4-S6 who are at risk of disengaging with education. Such disengagement can be the result of any number of factors, including mental health, neurodiversity and poverty-related home circumstances. In conjunction with the young person, parents/carers, employers or Further Education and any other appropriate agencies, schools plan an individualised timetable for each young person, focusing on achievement in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing, which runs in conjunction with learning activities outside of school for an agreed portion of the week. The external element most frequently comprises work placement relevant to the young person's chosen vocational pathway, or a relevant, appropriate further education course.

2024/25 has seen a 10% increase in the number of FLPs, with 41 in place across all secondary schools. As a result of training and rigorous quality assurance, schools' skills and capacity to construct appropriate, impactful FLPs for young people has also increased. Evaluation shows that FLPs revitalise engagement with education for disengaged young people and are supporting the young people most at risk of a negative post-school destination into productive and fulfilling participation in employment or further training.

Argyll and Bute Council has maintained its commitment to UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Programme; we have signed a MOU to ensure that we continue to develop this work beyond the March 2025 Scottish Government funded period.

We have ensured that 21 out of 22 schools that were inactive, are now accredited and expect the last remaining school to be accredited by the end of June 2025. We are currently on target to meet our goal of having 100% of our schools Rights Respecting Accredited. Since February 2024, we have increased Silver accreditations from 11 to 29 and Gold accreditations from 5 to 9. The development of Rights Respecting Schools Award continues to be important in connecting our school communities with local and global child poverty issues. An example of this would be the work that has been led by pupils in a Primary School on the cost of the school day. In taking a rights-based approach to education, schools have been developing or embedding pupil voice structures within their setting. This was particularly evident in a recent consultation on the Education Strategic Vision and Values with “Equity” being a high priority for our learners to see included in the revised document.

Argyll & Bute’s Youth Voice Group continue to discuss issues that align with the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Plan. Commercial Services attended one of these meetings on invite from the group who wanted to discuss the cost of school meals and the provision of fresh fruit.

Education has continued to be supported by the Alcohol and Drug Partnership to participate in Planet Youth. We had progressed this work from engagement with 2 secondary schools in 2021 to 5 secondary schools in 2023. In September 2025, we will have all 10 secondary schools engaged in the survey. This work, in partnership with colleagues in Public Health, is developing protective factors for young people with the intention of reducing risk factors. Staff that has been secured through grant funding have helped develop community engagement and awareness of the Planet Youth approach. Through this work, Dunoon have re-established a youth group in the area, making a safe social space accessible for young people. Data gained through the survey is shared with other services to help inform improvements. The ADP have also funded third sector organisations to provide the ADP School Support Services across aArgyll & Bute secondary schools. This provides support for young people who may be affected by drug or alcohol misuse (directly or indirectly). The service also supports the delivery of aspects of the health and wellbeing Curriculum as well as increasing awareness with parents/carers.

Smoke Free Me Drama (P7 Production) and You Are Not Alone Drama Productions have continued to be delivered to Argyll & Bute Schools. Changes to the performances were put in place this academic year based on evaluative feedback from all stakeholders. This supported the introduction of vaping as a theme and ensured that delivery of the You Are Not Alone performance was brought done to S2. We are currently working with our partners in health to plan for the introduction of the Daniel Spargo Mabs performances and workshops. A programme of staff and parent workshops will support this development. There will also be a parent/carers workshop

that is to support those with children with an additional support need. The impact of this new programme will be evaluated.

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme has continued to be developed across our secondary schools. The Programme is a mentor-based programme that addresses gender-based violence. This work continues to be an important part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Project. Over the academic year 24/25, we have taken the number of secondary schools trained from 7 to 10. This has ensured that we met our ambitious target having staff trained in all secondary schools in Argyll & Bute. We have also developed our training staff team, taking this from 2 to 4 staff trained to deliver staff training and a further 4 trained for the newly introduced Primary and ELC training. Over the next year we will be delivering training to Primary and ELC. The work continues to bring together engagement from partners such as ADP School Support Services, Police Scotland and Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis. We will be looking to develop this work further by connecting this to the new iteration of the anti-bullying policy and increasing engagement in Equally Safe registered schools.

Partnership working is an important aspect of our curriculum delivery. We are currently exploring a pilot programme with the Financial Inclusion for Scotland Associate. The aim of the programme is to improve financial inclusion for young people by maximising the opportunity that they have to secure a bank account before they leave school. We will be taking a data informed approach to identifying a pilot school(s) for the programme considering aspects such as rurality, SIMD, ease of access to banks/banking hubs and post 16 destinations.

B. Increasing income Through Benefits

1. Benefits

The Benefits Team supported people in 2024-2025 with the following grants.

Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 there were 748 awards paid out to the value of £88,171.

Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grants

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 there were 790 applications made, and 386 awards paid out to the value of £460,964.

Total Programme Funding

For the scheme was £458,284 which resulted in overspend of £90,850, this was met by the Council to enable continued support to vulnerable claimants.

Flexible Food and Fuel Fund

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 the Council paid out £109,920 in grants to householders with food and fuel insecurity and successfully referred them for support to advice agencies for further support. The advice agencies were able to support 965 families achieving a combined client gain of £1.357 million in income maximisation through increasing benefit entitlements.

Discretionary Housing Payments

As of 31 March 2024, our spent and committed amount of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) was £0.968m out of a budget of £1.069m. The Council have a duty to pay DHPs to anyone on the benefit cap and looking at ways to automate DHP awards. A review of the DHP policy is being carried out and a new policy will be presented to the Council later this year.

Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund

In 2024/25 the Council received an allocation of £145,000 to support Island Communities from the Scottish Government.

The funds were spent as follows:

- Scotland Loves Local Cards – 1,256 cards issued in December value of £95. These cards were issued to Council Tax Reduction recipients on our islands. The money on the cards can be spent in a range of local shops. Food Banks - a grant of £16,000 was given to each of the 4 Community Food Organisations (Islay Foodbank, Bute Oasis, Tiree Food Project, and Mull and Iona Community Trust).
- Free School Meal Top Ups – 100 eligible pupils received payments of £1.60 per day for the school year from August 2024.

2. Social Security Scotland, Argyll and Bute

Headlines

Over 200 stakeholders in Argyll and Bute get regular communication/updates

There is excellent collaboration with stakeholders to get information out to clients using a range of tools including an increasing amount of social media releases. All of these are available on our website.

[Stakeholder Resources](#)

Total invested in Argyll and Bute (to Dec 2024) through benefits and grants to lowest income families:

£ 72,321,543

Best Start Grant Early Learning and School Age Payments are paid automatically to parents and carers who already receive Scottish Child Payment so no need to apply for this. Early Learning and School Age payments stats fluctuate depending on time of year (enrolment).

[Social Security published statistics.](#)

Apply for our benefits - Social Security Scotland - mygov.scot

or by calling our Freephone number on 0800 182 2222 (open from 8am – 6pm).
Support to claim our benefits is available – just ask for Local Delivery.

Our organisation currently provides 15 benefits

3. Welfare Rights Update 2024-25

Achievements

In 2024-25 we have dealt with 1,219 clients generating a total financial gain of **£5.4 million** and increase of over 1 million from 2023-24

It should be noted this “client gain” is not just a figure. The support provided by Welfare Rights makes a significant impact on individual’s lives. For example, it may mean being able to put heating on, keep a car running, replace a broken appliance etc.

Continued engagement with partners and community groups to reach more clients

The team gained Scottish National standards for Information and Advice Providers accreditation.

Challenges 2024 - 25

Increased demand for benefit and income checks. It’s expected many clients will continue to experience hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis with fuel costs being a major factor.

Likely increase in number of clients approaching us for help with the Universal Credit managed migration process as the DWP are now in the process of transferring over the most vulnerable group of clients who typically need more support.

Priorities 2025 - 26

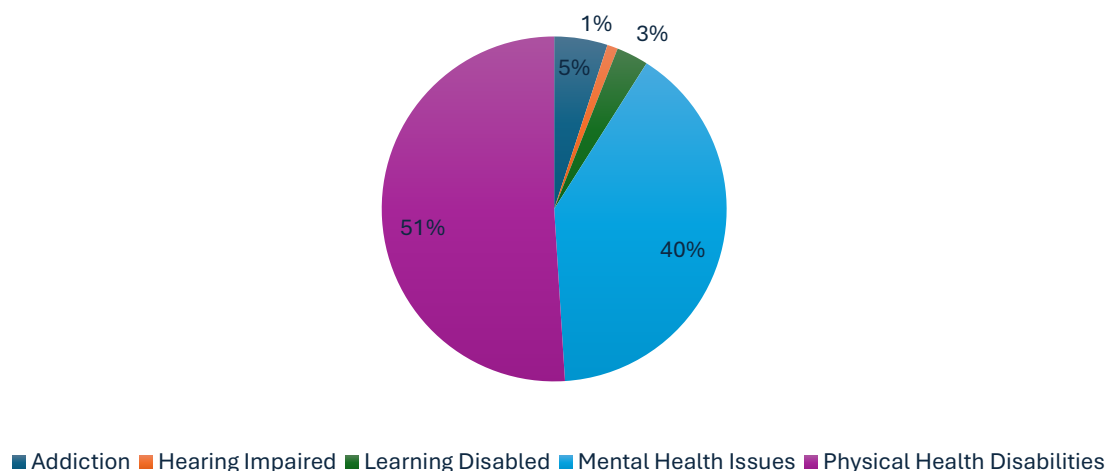
- Continue to promote and deliver a quality and consistent Welfare Rights Service to residents of Argyll and Bute.
- Ensure that the residents of Argyll and Bute are not missing out on their entitlement to both UK and Scottish Government administered benefits and other related help.
- Provide an enhanced Welfare Rights Service for people affected by cancer.
- continue to work closely with NHS colleagues and the improvement Service to develop Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships (WAHP'S) in Argyll and Bute.
- Ensure the service is able to deal with the probable increase in demand for assistance due to the continued roll out of UC managed migration and the roll out of further Social Security Scotland benefits such as Pension age Disability Payment, Scottish Adult DLA and Carer's Support Payment.
- Increase the profile of the service particularly in remote island communities and hard to reach groups.
- Engage effectively with partners and local community groups
- Explore data sharing opportunities in order to identify local vulnerabilities and engage with hard-to-reach clients.

4. Bute Advice Centre

Bute Advice Centre has been incredibly busy supporting communities across Argyll and Bute to access £2.45 million from April 2024 – March 2025 (inclusive). Our mission statement dictates that our priority is to “relieve poverty and distress”, this we endeavour to do across the projects we deliver. Many of the client we support have a disability.

A Pie Chart showing that 469 disabled clients were supported across April 2024 - March 2025. 51% of these had physical health disabilities, 40% had mental health issues, 5% had addictions, 3% had a learning disability and 1% were hearing impaired.

469 Disabled Clients Were Supported Across April 24/March 25



19 Carers were supported to claim £15,763.04 of grants.

From April 2024 – March 2025 advisers supported disability benefit claims totalling £947,302.34.

Advisers prioritise ensuring that households with children have access to child specific benefits, including Best Start, Scottish Child Payments, Child Benefit, Pregnancy & Baby Payments, Education Maintenance Allowance and Free School Meals. These claims resulted in a client gain across the year of £60,385.51.

Bute Advice Centre are proud to be part of the award-winning Flexible Food and Fuel Project that has a stand-alone gain of £4.5million across the term of the project, supporting many families since January 2021. In addition to the face to face and telephone advice sessions available to clients, staff also take part in events across the region that support engagement.

Elizabeth Officer, Welfare Rights Adviser, has been attending ARC on a regular basis in Dunoon to help support those suffering from addiction and their loved ones with welfare rights issues.



Ross Semple, Student at Glasgow Caledonia University, supported the delivery of Digital Literacy Lessons in the summer of 2024, helping small groups to use tablets to engage with loved ones, set up internet banking, and use social media. Gifting each participant their own tablet at the end of the 6 introductory lessons, through the Good Things Foundation.

Paul Toop, Welfare Rights Adviser, has also played a major role in providing SIM cards/vouchers for mobile phones, helping alleviate digital poverty through the Good Things Foundation.

Heather Buchanan, Senior Welfare Rights Officer and Colum Buchanan Welfare Rights Adviser have regularly visited the Bute & Cowal area to support individuals requiring home visits and providing information sessions to community groups.

Promoting the ACHA Welfare Rights service and the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund.



Manager, Julie Semple, visited Oban for the Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP) event supporting the Gypsy & Travelling Community where several partner organisations came together to highlight services. Additionally visits to local foodbanks took place, along with the Community Food Forum meetings. Bute Advice Centre enjoy working in close partnership primarily with Inspiralba, Fyne Futures, Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), Argyll & Bute Council, ALLenergy and Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau (ABCAB.)



Additionally, Bute Advice Centre took part in Poverty Awareness events in conjunction with Poverty Alliance locally and at government level and engaged with Migration Policy Scotland. Our plans include continuing collaborations with our trusted partners and broadening the scope of the work we do. Over the coming months we will be delivering community group sessions across the region highlighting ways to make budgets spread further including homemade cleaning recipes, growing your own fruit, veg and herbs, baking our daily bread and a host of other suggestions. We have engaged four new members of the team and look forward to an exciting new year.

C. The Cost of Living

1. Housing

In their Best Start, Bright Futures – Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026, the Scottish Government state that.

We will place the prioritisation of tackling child poverty at the heart of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme

There is a wide range of activities and actions being undertaken by the Council Housing Service and external partners which can help address levels of child poverty

Housing Emergency

In July 2023, Argyll and Bute Council recognised the challenges facing the provision of adequate housing stock within its area by declaring a Housing Emergency, the first local authority in Scotland to do so. In addition to national trends and pressures common across Scotland, unique factors such as geographic isolation, the high number of island communities, dispersed communities, exacerbated the challenges for the housing system in Argyll and Bute. Following a multi-partner Housing Summit, an Action Plan was developed to help deliver improved affordable housing provision in Argyll and Bute. A series of metrics have been agreed to help measure progress annually, including the number of homeless applications helping to put one measure of housing related poverty at the heart of the housing emergency response.

Scottish Government Housing Bill

The Scottish Government's new Housing Bill is presently at stage 2 of its passage through parliament. Amongst the proposals in the Bill are powers to implement rent control areas. This would place a duty on local authorities to assess rent levels within their area and give powers to the Scottish Government to implement rent controls in areas of concern. There would also be limits on when, and by how much, rents can be increased in these areas.

The Bill will also extend duties relating to the prevention of homelessness to social landlords, and a range of public agencies.

Housing Need and Demand Assessment

Argyll and Bute Council are undertaking preparatory work for their 2026 Housing Need and Demand Assessment which includes undertaking a Household Survey across the whole area. The survey will include specific questions in relation to child poverty, to gain a better understanding of the pressures that local households with children are experiencing. The outcome of the survey will feed into the development of the next Local Housing Strategy and identify future priorities

Number of children in housing need in Argyll and Bute

As of March 2025, 3,069 households were on the HOMEArgyll Common Waiting List. 2,120 of these households were in housing need, and of these, 697 (33%) were households with children, with a total of 1,375 children in housing need.

Waiting list figures show that of the 909 households with children, 697 (77%) are considered to be in housing need. 54 of these households (encompassing 104 children) are on the homeless list.

Affordable Housing Supply

Affordable housing is key to tackling child poverty in Scotland. By pursuing an ambitious strategic new build programme in Argyll and Bute, the Council and its RSL partners are committed to a Green Standard which delivers high quality, energy efficient homes, helping to reduce overall housing costs for its tenants. The following actions are being undertaken in Argyll and Bute to increase the supply of affordable housing:

- **New Builds** – In Argyll and Bute, in 2024-2025, 42 new energy-efficient homes were built due to Argyll and Bute's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).
- **Community Housing Network** – Housing Services has established a Community Housing Network to enable Community Housing Trusts and Community organisations to obtain the support they require to deliver affordable housing to their communities, and to share experiences and learning. Mull and Iona Community Trust, for example, are working with the Council to deliver worker housing on Mull with infrastructure improvements being supported by the housing element of the Rural Growth Deal funding.
- **Buy Backs** - The council and HOMEArgyll partners hope to increase the number of homes they are able to buy back from the private sector through the "Argyll and Bute Buy Back Initiative". This initiative has been promoted both by the Council and RSLs. During 2024/25, 14 private homes have been acquired and added to the affordable rented stock.

- **Short-Term Let Legislation** – The Scottish Government considered that introducing the legislation will increase the supply of homes available for local residents. In 2022-2023, applications for Short-Term Letting Licences commenced in Argyll and Bute, with the legal obligation to obtain a licence coming into force in 2023-2024. As of March 2025, 3,494 applications for short-term let licences have been received.
- **Supplying homes in the right places and homes for workers** – The Scottish Government Action Plan to address depopulation recognises the importance of housing for workers in addressing a range of linked social issues such as depopulation, employment and child poverty, stating that

“Secure and sustainable employment helps lift families out of poverty.”

High house prices in remote rural and island communities, coupled with an “additional minimum living cost of 15-30%” can prevent the recruitment and retention of staff, especially those on lower levels of pay such as child-care workers. This is evidenced by the range and detail of support and interactions the Council has with developers of housing projects in remote and island locations.

Thus, the links between employment and housing can be fundamental in offering opportunities to avoid falling into poverty.

Through the Argyll and Bute SHIP programme, the Strategic Housing Fund (SHF), and the Community Housing Network, Argyll and Bute Council in 2024/25 have supported the development or provision of new homes in a variety of remote or island locations. Additionally, the Council has recently approved measures to allow the SHF to support housing feasibility studies undertaken by local community groups, thus offering financial support to some specific perceived community needs.

An additional Empty Homes Officer post which is jointly funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), with a focus directly on bringing empty and ineffective homes back into use specifically for HSCP staff. This enables easier recruitment of staff within the HSCP, thus supporting service provision for local communities.

The Rural Growth Deal will also increase the number of homes available for workers. The housing element of the Rural Growth Deal is £3m. Two projects are being taken forward, the project in Bowmore, Isle of Islay will focus on housing for sale for principal occupation, and the one in Tobermory, Isle of Mull will provide accommodation for workers.

- **Supporting Young People**
A lack of affordable housing opportunities for young people leaving the family home, or seeking employment in rural communities, can often press young people into unsuitable, insecure temporary arrangements such as sofa surfing or staying

with friends. These insecure and precarious housing arrangements can easily result in homelessness.

Housing Summit surveys showed that a lack of affordable housing opportunities was a common concern with 64% of respondents stating that *“Young people are leaving my community due to a lack of housing options.”*

This concern has also been reflected in interactions with local communities seeking to identify local housing solutions to perceived local problems. Through its Community Housing Assessment Tool (CHAT) the Council Housing Service has been supporting communities in Arrochar and Dalavich to assess local housing needs. In both cases, lack of housing opportunities for young people, coupled with an ageing population, has been a major concern.

- **Housing vulnerable families who are more likely to be in poverty**

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) aligns with the aims and objectives of the Argyll and Bute Council Child Poverty Action Plan and outlines a series of actions to address disadvantage and alleviate poverty. These include preventing families and young people in certain situations from incurring rent arrears, from becoming homeless, assisting families with a disabled family member and assisting larger families

- **Insecure tenancies in the Private Rented Sector**

Many families live in the private rented sector. This sector is often expensive, and tenancies are less secure, with some families living in this sector being pushed into poverty or even homelessness. This is evidenced by the authors of “Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post 2021”, which stated that the largest proportion of those subjected to formal homelessness assessments in Scotland lived in a private rented property. Scottish Government statistics for 2022/23 show a 74% increase in terminations of Private Rented Sector tenancies due to rent arrears in Scotland, a rate far higher than RSL sectors (21%).

In addition to the homelessness risk, there is a risk that the tenancy will end and that the family will have to move to a new area to find a new home, resulting in children having to move schools. Regularly changing schools can affect children’s attainment and, therefore, their life chances.

- **Homelessness**

The Housing Options service assists households, including families and individual young people in identifying the type of home they need and can afford. This service also helps in reducing the number of failed tenancies, ensuring more tenants can remain in their homes. Preventative engagement with households reduces

incidences of homelessness, which contributes to reducing child poverty and outcomes that are more positive for households.

We have seen a significant decline in the number of homeless children in Argyll and Bute in recent years, from 319 in 2017/18, to 195 in 2024/25, however, this is 6 more children than in 2023/24. In 2024/25, 476 homeless cases were closed, of which 121 involved households with dependent children (amounting to 199 children) and 86 of these households received a positive outcome.

There has been a slight reduction in homeless applications between the 1st of April 2024 and the 31st of March 2025. During that period, 459 homeless applications were made, a decrease of 34 applications (7% down) in the same period in the previous year.

There are currently 244 statutory homeless households waiting for permanent accommodation, with 55 of these households having children in them. Although there has been a reduction in the number of homeless applications there has been a slight increase in the number of children in homeless households from 189 children in 2023/24 to 195 in 2024/25.

Homelessness applications continue to vary by location, with Cowal, Helensburgh and Lomond, and Lorn and the Isles seeing the highest levels of homeless applications.

- **Large households**

The Local Housing Strategy aims to provide families with access to housing that is the right size to meet their needs. Research shows that children who live in overcrowded housing find it challenging to find a place to do homework and study, negatively impacting their life chances and keeps them trapped in a cycle of poverty.

As of March 2025, of those in housing need with children under 16 years, 135 households on the HOMEArgyll waiting list needed a home with four or more bedrooms. This equates to 19% of households with children with a housing need.

Table *: Number of households with housing need, with children in Argyll and Bute by bedroom size in March 2025

Number of households with children under 16	Minimum bedroom size required
312	Two bed
250	Three bed
135	Four+ bed

Source: HOMEArgyll Common Housing Register March 2025

- **Families with a disabled family member**

In Argyll and Bute, considerable work is undertaken to meet the needs of families with a disabled member. In 2024-2025, RSLs built 10 new homes to amenity standards and 2 homes suitable for wheelchair use. A full-time Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) has been employed to work within the housing service to ensure needs are met through the design of new-build housing or by adapting existing public and private sector homes. Children and young people with particular needs will benefit from the bespoke person-centred approach provided by the Housing OT.

Housing condition, energy efficiency and affordable warmth

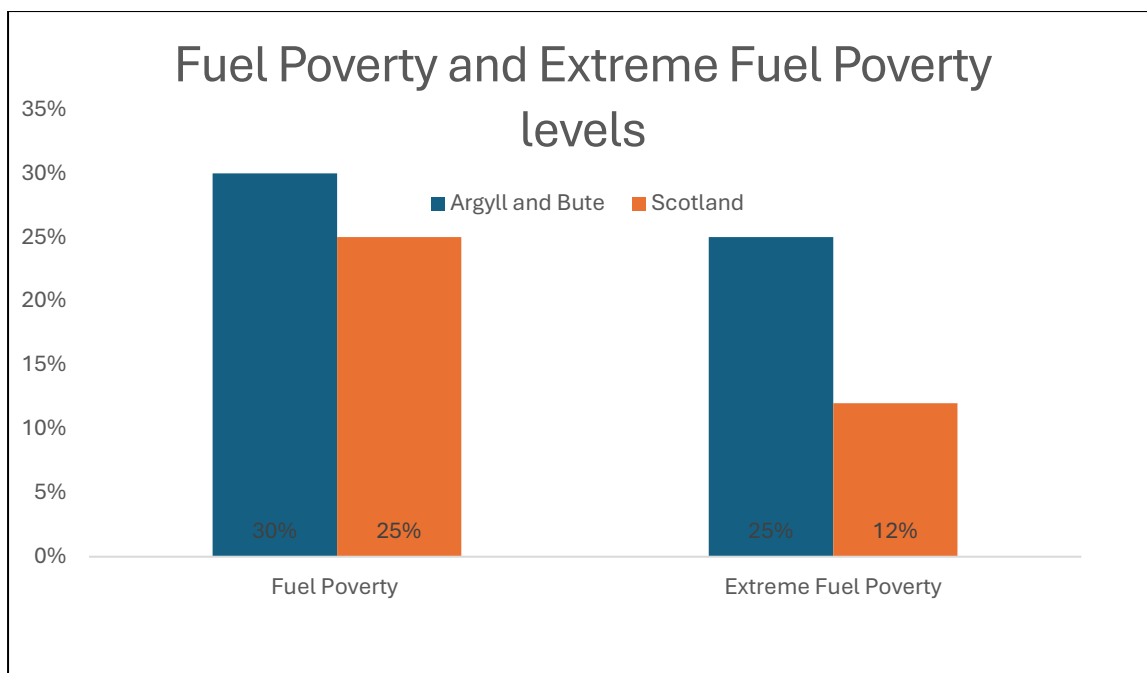
The “Improving our Understanding of Child Poverty in Rural and Island Scotland” report states that:

“fuel costs are known to be a particular contributor to fuel-related poverty in rural and island communities”

The housing condition in Argyll and Bute does not compare favourably with the Scottish average. A higher proportion of homes are in poor condition and fail to meet tolerable standards, mainly due to their failure to meet energy efficiency standards. Living in a cold home has been linked to several health conditions. These conditions often result in children missing school, and this has an impact on their life chances.

Data shows that the average energy demand of homes in Argyll and Bute are 37% higher than the Scottish average, with this then being translated into a similar higher average fuel bill of £1,358 (again 37% higher than the national average). Levels of fuel poverty (30%) and extreme fuel poverty (25%) in Argyll and Bute are also significantly higher than the Scottish average, as shown in the graph below.

A Bar Chart showing Fuel Poverty and Extreme Fuel Poverty Levels in Argyll and Bute compared to Scotland. Fuel Poverty in Argyll and Bute is 30%, in Scotland it is 25%. Extreme Fuel Poverty in Argyll and Bute is 25% and in Scotland it is 12%.



Source; Home Analytics data and Energy Action Scotland

The Council supports discretionary repair and improvement work to private sector properties via the Private Sector Housing Grant. The Council also offers a statutory Scheme of Assistance which can fund housing adaptations.

The Local Housing Strategy outlines a series of actions to reduce energy consumption, such as:

The SHIP Programme- Houses built through the SHIP programme will have even higher insulation levels than the 'Greener Standard' requires. However, new build homes only account for a small portion of the housing stock.

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)- To tackle fuel poverty, the Scottish Government has placed a duty on all local authorities to develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and delivery plan. The LHEES will be a locally led, tailored approach to transitioning to climate-friendly heating sources and ensuring local domestic and non-domestic buildings are more energy-efficient.

The council approved its LHEES in November 2024 and this will be accompanied by an Action Plan which will clarify roles and responsibilities. Homes that are more energy efficient will need less energy to reach a comfortable temperature, lowering heating bills and helping to alleviate child poverty.

Energy Efficient Scotland – Area Based Scheme (EES-ABS) – The Area Based Scheme offers grants for the installation of insulation measures to homes of eligible private owners and private rented tenants throughout all areas of Argyll and Bute. Effective insulation makes homes warmer and in turn helps in the reduction of household fuel costs. The Scheme is financed by the Scottish Government and administered by the Council. Argyll and Bute Council continues to utilise their full grant on an annual basis, regularly approaching the Scottish Government for

additional funds. £2,179,827 was awarded for the EES-ABS programme for 2024/25, with the current programme running until 30th June 2025, and the full amount projected to be spent.

Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH)- Social housing landlords have been carrying out works in their housing stock to improve their energy efficiency. Most homes owned by social landlords now meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH), with most landlords having over 90% of their stock meeting the standard.

Gypsy/Travellers – The Housing Service continue to engage with the community and relevant partners through the Gypsy/Traveller Working Group. The purpose of the Working Group is to:

- Understand the accommodation needs and preferences of Gypsy/Travellers to inform future provision.
- Work with Gypsy/Traveller communities to raise awareness of rights and entitlements.
- Ensure that our public services are responsive to Gypsy/Travellers needs and preferences.
- Provide leadership to tackle racism and discrimination.
- Strengthen community development and engagement.
- Work with Gypsy/Travellers to improve their involvement in national and local decision-making.

2. Allenergy Fuel Poverty & Education Summary (2024–25)

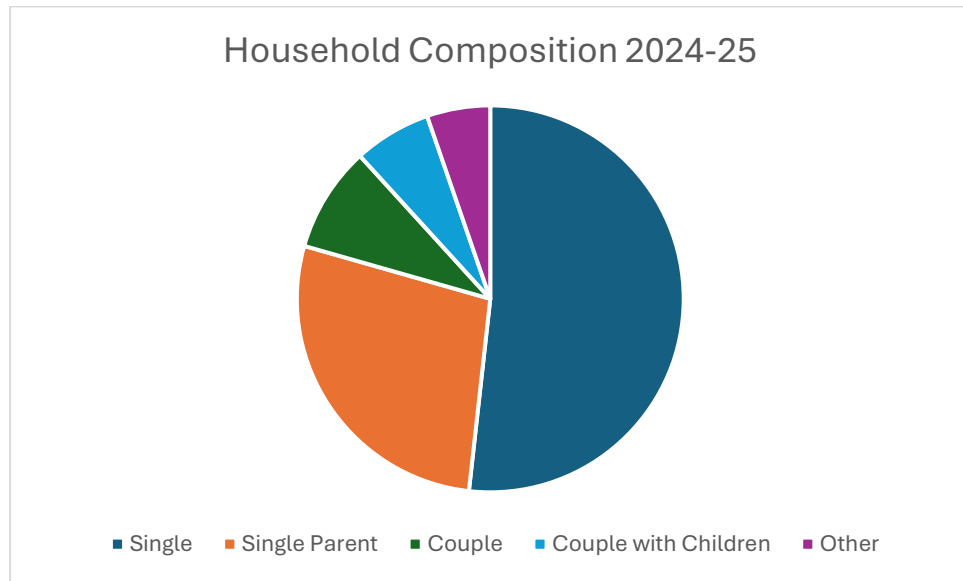
Fuel Poverty Support:

- **Target Area:** Argyll, Lomond and the Islands, with a focus on rural households facing high energy costs due to lack of mains gas, poor housing, and low incomes.
- **Support Provided:** Crisis grants (e.g., prepayment vouchers, direct payments, white goods), energy advice (tariffs, meters, insulation, damp issues), and financial guidance.
- **Client Impact:**
 - Average client gain of **£500** (£200 in crisis funds, £300 in energy savings).
 - In 2024–25, **£72,105** in direct financial support was accessed for clients.
 - Over **£6,000** awarded for white goods to families with children; **£16,000** in prepayment vouchers issued.

- **Demographics:**

- One-third of households helped had children; one-quarter were single parents.
- Concerns continue over high summer energy use, especially among families with children.

A Pie Chart showing the housing composition of those helped. No figures are given but by far the largest group are couples with children, over 50%. About 25% are single parents, about 15% are single people and the rest are noted as other.



- **Challenges Ahead:** End of key funding streams (e.g., Home Heating Support Fund), and the upcoming **switch-off of radio-tele-switch meters** in June 2025, which may disrupt heating for many electric-only households.
- **Partnerships & Outreach:** Collaborated with **Argyll & Bute Council**, **Bute Advice Centre**, and others on the **Flexible Food & Fuel Fund**, which has achieved **£5 million in client gains** since 2020.
- Delivered **online Fuel Poverty Awareness Sessions** to 62 professionals.
- **Education & STEM Engagement:** Delivered **STEM workshops** and attended **career events** in six high schools to promote local career opportunities.
- Hosted **MAKSTEM Fest** with 20+ local employers for S2 students from Campbeltown and Lochgilphead.
- Distributed **P7 STEM career workbooks** to encourage long-term engagement in STEM fields.

- Aims to show young people paths to successful local careers, supporting long-term family and economic resilience in the region.

3. Free School Meals and Holiday Provision

Free school meals support for entitled pupils has remained a key way of tackling the cost of living challenges for families with children. All children in receipt of 1140 hours of childcare in early years' settings receive a free school meal, along with free milk and a healthy snack.

All pupils in P1 – P5 are now entitled to a free school meal, including children in P6 and P7 in receipt of the Scottish child payment. In addition, all children and young people attending our Learning centres receive a free school meal.

Cash payments in lieu of free school meals for those in receipt on the basis of need is currently paid via BACS transfer, at the rate of £2.40 during holiday periods; this is funded by Scottish Government.

Pupil feedback continues to be the basis for the development of school lunch menus, and they continue to meet the Food and Drink in Schools standards. One of the Menu Development Assistant key roles is to work with pupils on menu design. Free school meal uptake remains higher than the Scottish average.

The Catering service has worked alongside Education to roll out cashless catering and online ordering facilities to all schools, so that every child can access a meal in a non-stigmatising way that protects their identity. Through the pre-ordering app, each child should also be able to have their preferred meal every day at lunchtime, while enabling conversations with parents around meal choices to become normalised. The Council's Catering Service continues to hold its Soil Association Food for Life Served Here Award at Bronze level, across all primary and Early Years settings, demonstrating its commitment to providing locally produced, sustainable, ethical and locally prepared food, serving food that's good for pupil's health, for the environment and for the local economy.

The Catering team have been working on producing a food map to identify further opportunities for providing more local food through school meals while supporting community wealth building opportunities for our communities. Food cost inflation continues to put significant pressure on both public sector food provision and on household finances.

Paid for School Meals

The Council is applying the Cosla Good Practice Principles for school meals debt guidance, along with ensuring that discretionary school meals are available for children who need them when circumstances are appropriate.

4. Infant Food Insecurity Pilot

Infant food insecurity has been recognised as a national concern. In 2024 an Argyll and Bute Infant Food Insecurity Group was formed to look at this locally. The following actions were taken:

- A leaflet was created specifically for Health Visitors and Midwives to use to advise parents. Training on the use of the leaflet and offering assistance, was given.
- The leaflet itself was shared more widely, for example to advice services, Food banks and the Third Sector; a thousand in total were printed.
- Following a request from education, another leaflet was prepared for Family Support Officers to use, and training was also given to them.
- A Financial Inclusion Pathway has also been developed.
- A six-month, **Infant Food Insecurity Pilot** was also commenced on the 4th of December and was initially planned to run for 6 months. 60 supermarket gift vouchers, each to the value of £30 were purchased and placed across Health Visitor and Midwifery teams. These vouchers are sufficient for families with an infant to purchase 2 tins of baby formula when they are in crisis and the need is immediate and cannot quickly be met by other means. Third sector organisations can request a voucher for a family by contacting their Health Visiting or Midwifery team. The staff member dispensing the voucher must complete a basic information form.

The following information is being collated:

- What Area is covered by the team giving out the voucher?
- What is the basic family structure? (e.g. two parents, two young children.)
- What is the reason for the crisis? (e.g. benefits late)

No personal data is collected, and families are asked if they are happy for the basic data to be collected.

A leaflet is handed out with each voucher, explaining that this is a limited resource and part of a pilot study and giving information on where to seek advice on benefits etc. Referrals can be made to the Bute Advice Centre, ALLenergy and other services if families are agreeable to this happening. To date 10 vouchers have been given out, two by Midwives and 8 by Health Visitors. Factors contributing to the immediate crisis include no recourse to public funds, homelessness, parents on benefits and struggling to cope, sudden changes in circumstances, disability issues. The pilot will conclude in December, and a report of its findings made.

5. My Tribe Free Period Product Initiative.

My Tribe, Argyll and Bute's free period product initiative, plays a vital role in tackling child poverty by ensuring that no child misses out on education due to

lack of access to essential items. By providing free period products in over 150 community locations and through a user-friendly online ordering system that delivers directly to any household in Argyll and Bute, My Tribe helps ease financial pressures faced by families.

The initiative reaches children where they need it most—inside schools. Period products are made available in every secondary school and more than 30 primary schools across the region. Additionally, the My Tribe Champions initiative empowers students in several secondary schools to lead the conversation around period dignity, fostering awareness and peer support. Most young people access products through the My Tribe website, followed by availability in schools—ensuring discretion and convenience. Technical improvements to the platform have made it even easier for children and families to get the support they need, contributing to wider efforts to combat the effects of poverty on young people's wellbeing and education.

D. Helping Families in Other Ways

1. Public Health

The Argyll and Bute Community Link Worker service

A Community Link Worker is a member of the wider GP practice team that can provide support and advice on many social issues that may be affecting health and wellbeing. They have a wide range of knowledge on local services and community-based groups and activities.

Community Link Workers can help people find the right support and provide them with information on a wide range of social issues that can impact on health and wellbeing, this might include:

- housing issues
- employment and learning
- support groups
- money worries
- physical activity
- long-term conditions
- caring for relatives and friends
- improving emotional wellbeing
- social isolation

The service helps to address child poverty in a number of ways including supporting families who are experiencing financial difficulties, supporting people with health and wellbeing challenges that may have an impact on their financial situation, and through the service being targeted at the areas of highest social deprivation and remote/rural isolation in Argyll and Bute.

Third Sector organisation 'With You' (previously We Are With You) has been commissioned by NHS Highland to provide the Community Link Worker service in Argyll and Bute since April 2022. [Rachel McLean, the team lead for Community Link Workers in Argyll and Bute, introduces the service in the this video](#). Further information on the service is available from - [Social prescribing | NHS Highland](#) and from With You website [Community Links Scotland | WithYou](#).

In 2024/2025, the service began an expansion process so that more people would be able to benefit from this support. This included the recruitment of three additional Community Link Workers and provision of the service to a further 9 GP practices. This takes the total number of GP practices with patients who can benefit from the service to 21. This year also saw an increase in the number of referrals to the service – an increase from 522 in 23/24 to 699 in 24/25.

The top reasons for referrals were mental health and wellbeing, financial advice, housing/essential needs, stress management and loneliness/social isolation.

Those who get support from the service are invited to complete a wellbeing questionnaire. 64% of people who accessed support from the service completed wellbeing data at the start and end of the service; 86.5% of whom showed an improvement in wellbeing.

Patients also provided feedback in the form of quotes:

"I was feeling frustrated by answers of others' to my housing problems, but [the CLW] instilled a confidence I thought I'd lost & was concise & professional in handling the housing issues I had."

'Definitely feel that having the link worker support me and help me find the correct resources has made a huge difference and achieved so much. I am very grateful for the time, effort and compassion that was shown to me and I feel like a lot of people would really benefit from the same experience I had.'

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. 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.

The session helps to promote the Argyll and Bute Worrying about Money leaflet and are delivered jointly by Argyll and Bute and NHS highland

The 'Worrying About Money?' cash first referral leaflet is a straightforward resource both for people facing money worries and support workers. The step-by-step guide identifies which local agencies are best placed to help people maximise income and access any existing financial entitlements. These leaflets are available for many individual local authorities in the UK.

[Argyll and Bute - Worrying About Money?](#)

As well as in English, this leaflet is now available in Gaelic, Ukrainian, Polish and Arabic versions and all are available to download from the website link above. These leaflets are regularly promoted and distributed throughout Argyll and Bute.

In 2024/2025, 5 Money Counts courses were delivered to 33 attendees.

Living Well grants

In 2024-2025, Argyll and Bute HSCP Public Health team administered £23,000 of grants focused on improving health and wellbeing in rural island communities through 'connecting people to community activities.' The aims of the grant programme were:

- Connecting people in communities to the right support.
- Raise awareness of support available within local communities.
- Developing community support for local health, wellbeing and social issues, using collective knowledge, skills or resources within the community.

This fund sought to build capacity within communities for social prescribing, which may often involve addressing child poverty through the same routes as Community Link Workers – i.e. linking people experiencing hardship to support available within both statutory and community services.

Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships

In April 2023, the Scottish Government made funding available to develop Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships (WAHP's) in Argyll and Bute. WAHP's provide access to money and welfare rights advice in health care settings. This is achieved

by embedding welfare advice specialists in healthcare settings through partnership working between local authorities, health boards and GP practices.

Welfare advice specialists provide an effective support service on all matters relating to welfare benefits and entitlements. The overall aim of the service is to ensure that the correct amount of benefit is paid at the correct time and to assist with budgeting skills so that households can pay their bills, heat their homes, and have a better quality of life.

WAHP's provide GP practices with welfare advice specialists who can support patients to improve their financial situation. This initiative aims to address financial insecurity for individuals who may not seek support from other means of welfare advice. Funding was allocated to Argyll and Bute Council for additional resource for welfare advice specialists, for a 2-year remote and rural pilot for five GP practices.

From the start of the initiative in April 2023 to March 2025 the service has had 181 referrals across the five GP practices. Of the patients referred to Welfare rights 47% clients were over 65 years of age and 84% clients had a health condition. The total financial gain from Welfare Rights Intervention for this period was **£693,190**. The initiative has recently been extended for a further year from 01/04/2025 - 31/03/2026.

The pilot has been evaluated on behalf of the Scottish Ministers by the Improvement Service in collaboration with the Scottish Public Health Network. [Welfare and Health Partnerships 'Test and Learn' Programme Evaluation](#)

2. Young Carers

Throughout Argyll & Bute Young Carers are supported in their caring roles to access Young Carer Support from a range of commissioned third sector services; Crossroads Caring for Carers Cowal & Bute, Helensburgh & Lomond Carers Centre, Mid Argyll Youth Development Services (MAYDS) and North Argyll Carers Centre. These supports ensure that Young Carers are able to access Young Carers Statements, developing an action plan of support to meet individual need. Carers Centres and MAYDS can often be in the position to support Young Carers and their families to assist in times of financial need, for example with access to Benefit Advice, AliEnergy, additional funding, Young Scot's Young Carers Package, Young Carer Grant and referrals and signposting to a range of organisations. With systems in place, Young Carers are known to our education colleagues, who in turn can ensure referrals and access to Young Carer support, working closely with the services listed above. Providing space and time for Young Carer Support Workers to visit the schools, provide drop in's, one to one sessions and attend community events in support of Young Carers.

Young Carers in Argyll & Bute have been active participants in Argyll & Bute's Children's Rights illustration, Child Poverty illustration, Youth Voice and in producing a Young Carers and Children's Rights in Argyll & Bute animation.

Working with colleagues we are able to ensure that appropriate and accessible information is shared with Young Carers and their families, such as access to the Argyll & Bute Unpaid Carers Consultation, opportunities for Young Carers as well as Benefit advice, Young Carers Action Day, Carers Week and Carers Rights.

3. Working with Refugees in Argyll and Bute

The Council's Resettlement Team works in partnership with other organisations through the Refugee Programme. Work began in 2015 and began with Syrian resettlement, a UK wide scheme whereby local authorities provided accommodation and support. In Argyll and Bute Syrian families and individuals were found homes on the island of Bute and organisations worked together to provide multi-agency, person centred support. This programme continues today and now includes other nationalities; it has proven highly successful, winning a number of awards, including COSLA Excellence Awards and is seen as a benchmark resettlement programme.

Work with Ukrainian families is different as it is community based but still resettlement led. Support remains multi-agency and person centred. Some 300 plus Ukrainian citizens have been welcomed to Argyll and Bute.

The Council's Resettlement Team provide support for Ukrainians and this has included:

- Housing;
- Interpreters;
- English Lessons;
- Employability support;
- Benefits and Grants;
- Physical and mental health supports and counselling.

Outcomes for people placed across Argyll and Bute are good and provision provided is a notable example of effective multi-agency partnership working.

Since the start of 2024, Afghan families have been resettled in Helensburgh through the Afghan Resettlement Programme. All those who are resettled through ARP scheme benefit from full rights and entitlements through Indefinite Leave to Remain, providing them with the certainty and stability they need to rebuild their life here. The local authority receives integration tariffs over 3 years to provide ongoing integration support. As per all resettlement schemes, support is person centred and multi-agency.

In autumn of 2023 we also reviewed our programme of support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC). These young people have made their way to the UK without parents or guardians and are seeking refugee status from the Home Office. Our new programme of support sees Resettlement and Social Work working together very closely to provide the best possible support for our young people.

4. Pre-loved School Uniform Project

The two-year funded pre-loved school uniform project has come to an end. The project was set up to focus on the reuse of good quality preloved school uniform and the recycling of uniforms that are no longer fit for purpose. Working with schools, community groups, and parent councils across all seven of our main settlements to support Eco-friendly reuse school uniform schemes that cover school uniform for Early Learning Centres, Nurseries Primary and Secondary Schools linked to each school cluster. We investigated, supported and promoted the taking donations of uniform from parents and pupils, ways to launder them and methods of redistributing them as and when they are required.

The project has achieved many of the goals we envisaged and many more that developed during the project in a positive and meaningful way. It also highlighted that more work is needed to keep this momentum moving forward. Much of the work and schemes that are now running will continue into the future, but the work has shown that with a little support and encouragement much more could be achieved.

Here is a link to a Council web page that will give you details of the project report. [School uniform scheme | Argyll and Bute Council](#)

5. Schools Share and Recycle

- Rothesay Academy have a school “shop” where pupils can access not just school uniform items but also Christmas jumpers so that they can be used again, and everyone take part in Christmas jumper events. They also have a “shop” where pupils can access formal wear for the school’s Christmas Dance – the biggest event in the school year that replaces a Prom.
- Gigha Primary school have a community fridge, which they keep fully stocked with fresh items of food. They have been very surprised at the uptake and need to restock very regularly.
- Dalmally Primary School are actively involved with the charity Mary’s Meals – founded in Dalmally. Pupils fundraise and raise awareness. Most of our schools have a Uniform Bank where pupils can access pre-owned items of school uniform. Some extend this to items such as socks and tights.

- Quote from RRSA Silver report for Garelochhead Primary: Children spoke confidently about their involvement and opportunities to participate in many school groups such as House Teams and Garelochhead Guardians. Parents spoke of how proud their children were to belong to these groups. Pupils, staff and parents spoke of the Uniform Swap Shop, with children learning that not everything needs to be bought new. One parent commented, “As a parent, I find that really helpful.”

6. Street Connect



Street Connect is a charity that began in Glasgow in 2013. In Argyll and Bute, it is currently working in Dunoon and hopes to extend its activities to Rothesay shortly. It aims to support individuals struggling with addiction and associated issues such as homelessness and poor mental health. In Dunoon it hands out leaflets and runs a drop in café. On Tuesdays it offers a Support Group and can provide some one-to-one support if needed. People can self-refer, and the charity also receives referrals from churches, professionals and prison welfare.

E. Other Planned Work

Establishing a Dedicated Poverty Prevention Service

Work is currently going on looking to establish a dedicated, multi-skilled Poverty Prevention Team within Argyll and Bute Council to coordinate and deliver early intervention strategies aimed at mitigating poverty across the local authority area. The team will provide a strategic, long-term approach to reducing reliance on crisis services and improving life outcomes for residents, building financial resilience and family prosperity. It will look to:

- Bring departments and roles together to create a unified strategic framework.
- Coordinate funds and try to avoid short term, fragmented funding on key areas increasing impact and sustainability.
- Avoid duplication, missed opportunities for early intervention and achieve savings.

Key Elements of this change will be:

- Core multi-skilled team: Including expertise in welfare rights, housing support, employability, education, and community engagement.
- Dedicated budget: Reducing reliance on short-term grants and ensuring service sustainability.
- Coordinated strategy: Unifying current efforts and aligning with local and national priorities.
- Integrated data use: Identifying at-risk households early and enabling targeted, effective intervention.
- Partnership governance: Involving key stakeholders in health, education, social care, housing, and the third sector.

Alignment with National and Local Priorities

This proposal supports key local and national priorities, including:

- **Argyll and Bute Economic Strategy and Action Plan**
– “People” (p.10) and “Prosperity” (p.22): Focusing on inclusive growth and wellbeing.
- **Community Wealth Building (CWB):**
Aligns with the principles promoted by CLES and supports anticipated duties under the CWB Bill.
- **Argyll and Bute Climate Action Strategy**
– Contributes to climate justice through fairer access to energy support, transport, and sustainable food systems (p.29).
- **Scottish Government’s Child Poverty Delivery Plan and Public Health Priorities:**
Proactive, partnership-based work to prevent poverty and reduce health inequalities

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