Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill – Call for Evidence

City of Edinburgh Council: Schools and Lifelong Learning

Schools and Lifelong Learning
March 2017

Responses

Q1. Whether you agree that statutory child poverty targets should be re-introduced for Scotland?

Yes. The ambition to remove child poverty is in line with the Council’s own policies to identify and address child poverty in the city.

Latest estimates suggest that just over 20% of children in Edinburgh live in poverty, equating to about 20,000 children, with this figure projected to rise significantly over the next decade. While Edinburgh is recognised as an affluent city, data published by the Centre for Research in Social Policy shows that every Ward in Edinburgh records a child poverty rate, after housing costs, of over 10%.

In response to these challenges, the Council introduced the “1 in 5: Raising awareness of child poverty” project in August 2015. The project aimed to raise awareness and understanding of child poverty and its impact on educational outcomes, explore the cost of the school day, and, examine the impact of poverty-related stigma. A report on the project made 30 recommendations for action to prevent and mitigate the effects of child poverty across the city.

Q2. The appropriateness and scope of the 4 proposed targets.

The Scottish Government proposes that the Scottish targets should be set at the following levels:

- Fewer than 10% of children are in relative poverty
- Fewer than 5% of children are in absolute poverty
- Fewer than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Fewer than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

These are to be met by 2030. As noted above, latest data shows that 21% of all Children in Edinburgh live in relative poverty as at 2014/15. In other words, the targets above relate to an almost halving of current poverty levels. The Council welcomes these targets and agrees with the Scottish Government
that these are ambitious. In order to help put these targets in context, it would be useful to understand what analysis has been carried out to arrive at these levels and whether the level of decline required has been achieved in the past by any international comparator countries.

Q3. Whether interim targets are needed.
Yes. Progress being made towards achieving these targets will be important, especially in the context of significant change. Interim targets could be set to be reported on prior to the ‘delivery plan’ points in April 2021 and April 2026. These will also, as the briefing paper notes, help to maintain momentum and ensure that the measures being introduced are having an impact on children now.

Q4. The proposed arrangements for reporting progress towards meeting the targets and how best to hold the Scottish Government to account
The proposal to set up an independent commission to provide oversight and scrutiny is welcome.

Q5. The responsibility placed on local councils and health boards to make local progress reports.
This requirement will create additional tasks for certain staff and the Scottish Government should make available extra resources to cover this.

Q6. The existing Child Poverty Measurement Framework and its 37 indicators
The development of a wider measurement framework represents a useful way to recognise the multiple and broad effects and causes of child poverty. General comments include

- a concern on the number of indicators included, and a potential lack of connection between actions and measures,
- a concern that a number of the measure presented may not be capable of disaggregation to local authority level. It would assist in supporting community planning activity if the varying experiences of poverty across local authorities could be recognised within the framework
- in line with policies to maximise income for low income households, it would be useful to include measures of uptake of social security payments
- most analysis shows wide variance of experience of poverty by household type. It would be useful to consider measures to track levels or impact of poverty among lone parent households, households with disabled children, or minority ethnic households
- It is noted that the framework includes a major focus on ‘deprived’ areas as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. While this focus on areas of high concentration of low income households is important, the framework should also recognise that in cities such as Edinburgh these areas only account for about half of people living in poverty.

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