

Child Poverty: Parental Employment Inquiry

Submission by Midlothian Council - LEP and the Child Poverty Working Group

19 August 2022

What employability services are there in your area that currently provide support targeted at parents, particularly parents in the 'priority groups' set out in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan?

- PESF (Parental Employment Support Fund), NOLB (No One Left Behind), YPG delivered through Communities Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLE) Midlothian Council
- Midlothian SureStart
- Intensive Family Support project delivered through Barnardo's
- TRIAGE – delivering on FairStart
- INTOWORK
- Enable

How do these projects link to other relevant services, for example, local childcare providers, local training providers, and local employers?

- The Local Employability Partnership (LEP) allows for information sharing and joint planning. Skills Development Scotland provide localised data on the job market, growth areas etc. The No One Left Behind Delivery Plan pulls together the needs across the county and reduces duplication.
- The PESF service links in with Scottish Child-Minding Association and Early Years in the Council to target support, funding and training.
- Local Employers link in through the Chamber of Commerce.
- Third Sector employability delivery partners are represented at the LEP.
- PESF have a dedicated worker who links in with employers and attends the monthly business surgeries with Business Gateway, DWP, SDS, Economic Development to support businesses to upskill their staff and recruit new staff.

What specific challenges does your local employability partnership face, for example, because of geographic area or levels of poverty?

- Midlothian is the fastest growing local authority in Scotland however funding levels don't yet reflect this level of growth.
- Employment rates in Midlothian are lower than the Scottish average and those seeking employment face multiple barriers to employment and are the furthest away from the job market (homelessness, lack of affordable housing for example).
- There is a skills gap in the high growth - science, data driven innovation, IT etc jobs that require university qualifications.
- Pre covid it was estimated that approximately 50% of residents travelled into Edinburgh for better quality jobs resulting in reduced re-investment in Midlothian.

- Cross county travelling in Midlothian is difficult and can discourage people to work in other areas of Midlothian, particularly at the Midlothian Science Zone as it is situated in the West of Midlothian and is not well served by public transport from within Midlothian. Rural communities in Midlothian have limited public transport opportunities.
- From 2015-2020 child poverty rates in Midlothian increased by 2.1%, from 21.8% (2014-15) to 23.9% (2019-20). 35% of families in Dalkeith Central and Woodburn are living in poverty.
- The most recent SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) data, published in 2020, shows that Midlothian has three data zones in the most deprived 10% nationally, all of which are located in the Dalkeith Ward. Ten data zones fall within the most deprived 20% nationally, a reduction from eleven in 2016.
- Women in Midlothian earn significantly less than the national average.
- The number of young people 18 to 24 in Midlothian on universal credit is higher than the national average.
- In 2020 Midlothian had 2,720 businesses. 89.9% of these (2,445) were small employers, 3.7% medium (100), 6.4% large (175). 44% of the workforce were employed by small business, 40% were employed by large enterprises. Therefore, there is a need to support SME to help their staff up skill in order to progress and get a better paid job.
- Young people in Midlothian traditionally go into employment rather than FE (Further Education) and HE and residents have lower than average qualifications at Level 5 and above.
- There is a lack of suitable venues to deliver employability support.
- IT connectivity across Midlothian, but also for residents to be able to afford digital access and devices to support working from home.

How do you expect employability service delivery in your area will change in response to the second Child Poverty Delivery Plan?

- Support for people in work to not only upskill but to gain higher qualifications.
- Promoting Living Wage
- Respond to the need for improved, available, flexible and localised childcare provision.
- Financial assessment – better to work or not?

How will you integrate the requirements of the Child Poverty Delivery Plan into your broader approach to employability?

- Working with income max services to support with financial planning and debt associated with the rising cost of living.
- Continue to deliver a person-centred approach that identifies and mitigates barriers to employment.

What support does your employability partnership need from the Scottish Government to implement the second Child Poverty Delivery Plan?

- Increase in availability in affordable social housing.

- More investment in income maximisation services.
- A more coordinated approach to funding.
- Long term, sustainable funding.
- Data sharing with Social Security Scotland.

What does your data collection tell you about what is needed in your area to support employability amongst the priority groups set out in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan?

- upskilling and qualifications
- ESOL support
- The need to address barriers for those with no identification, biometric cards etc
- Financial management support
- Access to flexible, affordable childcare
- Support for health and wellbeing, particularly social isolation and mental health
- Support for those with caring responsibilities
- Affordable housing

Is there a suitable project in your area that focuses on people we know are at higher risk of poverty that you think we might be able to visit?

A visit to the PESF Team and service users to look at the value of the holistic, person-centred approach and the impact the procured services are having on the outcomes for Midlothian residents.