

Child Poverty: Parental Employment Inquiry

Submission by Perth and Kinross Council

14 September 2022

Information about your organisation

Perth and Kinross Council covers 12 wards and it employs around 6,000 people. Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership has developed a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (2017–2027) which sets out an ambition to “Create a confident, ambitious and fairer Perth and Kinross, for all who live and work here” and five strategic objectives. These provide a robust strategic planning approach which underpins the objectives of the Children Poverty Act.

Strategic Objectives

- *Giving every child the best start in life.
- *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens.
- *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy.
- *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives.
- *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

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?

The Skills and Employment Initiatives team at Perth and Kinross Council deliver the Futures for Families initiative which is partly funded by the Scottish Government under the Parental Employment Support Fund. This is aimed at families seeking work, as well as looking to progress in work or find better employment which is supported by the Elev8 Employment and Training Grant. All clients receive support from a Key Worker who helps to develop a training and skills action plan, taking all their circumstances into consideration.

The eligibility criteria for this programme are those with families, in particular, the six priority groups who are at most risk of poverty. The programme considers all elements of an individual’s employability, particularly any barriers which could hinder their access to work.

Recent SLAED return indicators for 2021/22

- OP4 - Number of People that have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities
- Parental Employment Support Fund - 57
- Young person Guarantee (YPG) ERI (Employment Recruitment Incentive) 21/22 - 62
- YPG - 105
- Employment Support Team - HSCP - 172

- No One left Behind (NOLB) Adult - 48
- NOLB Wage Incentive - 12
- Kickstart - 30
- ESF Employability Pipeline - 113
- ESF Social Inclusion - 22
- Rural Employment Incentive - 24

OC13 - Number of People that have Progressed to Employment as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities

- Parental Employment Support Fund - 8
- Young person Guarantee (YPG) ERI 21/22 - 62
- YPG - 23
- Employment Support Team - HSCP - 8
- No One left Behind (NOLB) Adult - 20
- NOLB Wage Incentive - 12
- Kickstart - 6
- ESF Employability Pipeline - 23
- Rural Employment Incentive - 22

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

Many of the employability provision throughout the council link and work well as a joined-up approach to ensure every participant and employer that accesses services receives end to end support. we also have a Child Poverty Strategy working group meeting quarterly to drive forward the Child Poverty Strategy, Work Streams are

Workstream 1 - Income from Employment

The Skills & Employment Initiatives Team assist parents and young people by

- Supporting them to become job ready through training and skills development and
- by securing employment through job matching and job finding services.

We provide a frontline service where experienced and highly skilled key workers who have extensive knowledge of the local jobs market work closely with clients and employers.

We offer a holistic service which is tailored to the individual needs of our clients and this often reaches beyond employability services to link in with housing and welfare rights and mental health services.

Parental Employment Support - 1:1 Keyworker support, training grants and childcare costs.

Employer Recruitment incentives, training grants to unemployed through Skills Passport and Skills Academies i.e., HGV, Digital, Get into Care and Green/STEM

Workstream 2 - Reducing the Cost of Living

Workstream 3 – Income from Social Security and Benefits In-kind

The Welfare Rights Team and Perth Citizen's Advice Bureau work together to ensure that the residents of Perth & Kinross have access to advice and information about their welfare benefit entitlements, representation at benefit appeal tribunals and money advice.

Workstream 4 – Breaking the Cycle

This is a new Workstream proposed by the Child Poverty Working Group, and it will focus on the Child Poverty Strategy's aim to enable parents and children to

- Reduce the negative effects of living in poverty for children and families
- Enable children and families to prepare themselves to live a life free from poverty.

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

Perth and Kinross is a geographically large council region, with larger concentrations of people living closer to the centre of Perth, as well as smaller town populations stretching up towards the border with the Highlands Council region. However, Perth and Kinross is not recognised as a rural area, despite pockets of the council region experiencing issues that are characteristic of a rural area.

Many of the rural areas operate on a low-wage economy and the seasonal nature of the work available makes it difficult to sustain employment. The hospitality and care sectors are some of the largest in Perth and Kinross, however, offer little flexibility for families due to long working hours and unsociable shift patterns.

This issue is exacerbated by the provision of public transport in Perth and Kinross, which tends to operate less frequently and at inconvenient times. This is a significant barrier to accessing employment, as individuals are restricted to the jobs within their area if they cannot make a journey to find more flexible and better paid employment further afield. The issue of transport also extends to families who need to access childcare. These are areas which the Future for Families initiative supports their clients to try and overcome.

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

More emphasis needs to be on supporting parents with children to take up employment opportunities that will fit with their family life and cost of living crisis, there needs to be flexibilities on grant funding eligibility of costs i.e., more to support childcare costs, childcare and family friendly working hours, to attract parents into these opportunities. Many sectors that offer employment opportunities are within Hospitality or care, however many are unsociable hours, low paid or require travel to work and outwith reasonable public transport links. The employment landscape needs to be more flexible to attract uptake.

Local Employment Partnerships need to conduct and evaluate current gaps, pockets of need and address these when commissioning service provision to support all but in particular those target groups that would fall within the Child Poverty strategy groupings.

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

We have a joined-up approach but there is still a lot of room for improvement in the wider sense. More collaborative working is required.

PKC are going through a transformation under the P&K offer, and consultations with staff has commenced on what do we do, what can we do better and what can we stop doing.

Within P&K we have many working groups i.e. Digital Participation Working group, Child Poverty Strategy Working Group,, Local Employability Partnership, Targeting Pockets of Need, Climate Change working group, Get into care Pathway etc, all great however there needs to be a more cohesive approach with the right people in the right groups to ensure best practice, shared knowledge and areas of need are identified and addressed quickly e.g., identifying funding streams that can be utilised that would benefit our citizens, employers and communities, would also ensure best value of public pound achieved and reduce risk of duplication.

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

The Local Employability Partnership needs multi-annual funding opposed to year-on-year funding in order to implement the second Child Poverty Delivery Plan. We cannot continue to fund small community partners and keep a consistent approach within teams and staffing levels if money is year-on-year, with the threat of recalling unspent money.

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?

Perth and Kinross Council commissioned research on the lived experience of families affected by poverty. The report was published in November 2021 and provided crucial insight to help evaluate our approaches to child poverty and helped to evolve the Children's Scorecard which is used to monitor child poverty outcomes.

- This research indicated that to support employability amongst the priority groups there needs to be additional support in place to help with childcare. All parents were aware of entitlement, but availability did not always align with their needs. Often parents were paying to access provision or paying extra to make up additional hours beyond their entitlement. This was negatively impacting their ability to access work.
- Accessing transport in rural areas of Perth was cited as a problem due to availability and cost and reported the necessity of having access to a car. However, even for these families having a car is a significant cost of their money and time due to the distance covered when accessing work and childcare.
- Another finding from the lived experience research was that effective cross-referral work and integration amongst services can produce positive outcomes for families, as they were supported through any issues before they became acute. Adopting this type of holistic approach amongst services would ensure that clients have the best chance of succeeding in employment.

In June 2022 Perth and Kinross Council held an event which brought together colleagues from PKC, the Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS, Third Sector and colleagues from the Scottish Government. Several of the key issues indicated by parents in the Lived Experience Report were also cited by frontline workers with experience of working with these families.

- In order to increase access to childcare it was proposed that further provision of breakfast clubs, afterschool care and wrap around care places be made available to provide more affordable, flexible childcare solutions for families.
- Attendees also recommended that there should be greater cooperation with local employers who pay the Living Wage by providing them business support, stimuli and incentivisation packages to ensure parents have access to more stable employment options.
- There was also an emphasis on transport and the need to develop a plan which concentrates on connecting rural communities to places they work, shop and learn.

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?

Skills and Employment Initiatives team have a Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF) project "Futures for Families" funded Through the Scottish Government No One Left Behind Programme. The project supports Employed and Unemployed parents to gain employment or progress into employment, the project also offers training grants and initial childcare costs of up to £3,000.

The project is fantastic and has already supported those parents within the target groups opportunities that a year ago would have been out with their reach. one example is a parent registered on the project for support and had the confidence to apply for posts within Perth and Kinross Council, one of those posts was for the Young Person Guarantee Support Assistant, and was successful, within 7 months, she then applied for one of our PESF key worker post due to internal progression and started in August 2022 and is thriving, so a great example of lived experience.

Due to demand, we are in the process of recruiting for an additional 2 keyworker posts, however due to Year-on-Year funding, the project is struggling to attract candidates to apply due to short fixed term contracts.