

Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

Written submission by The Improvement Service, September 2024

Examples and learning from Year 5 local action on child poverty

Background

The document provides an informal summary of key learning from Year 5 (2022-23) in relation to local action on child poverty.

It covers local approaches to LCPAR reporting, how local need is understood and reflected in reports and highlights examples of the actions that are being taken to address child poverty at local level.

The examples of practice provided are by no means exhaustive and provide a snapshot of what is contained in the Year 5 Reports. More in-depth examples of local practice to tackle child poverty area available via the [Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit online directory](#).

Overview of key points

A preventative approach to child poverty

- Analysis of the year 5 report suggests that many areas are taking an increasingly preventative and strategic approach to reporting on action to tackle child poverty. Many LCPARs note that child poverty has become a strategic priority for councils, community planning partnerships, health boards and children's services partnerships and health and care partnerships - embedded across local strategies beyond their Local Child Poverty Action Reports.
- In terms of delivery, year 5 reports suggest that some progress is being made in relation to key aspects of preventing child poverty, including

a) supporting parental/carer incomes through creation of high-quality, well-paid jobs and education opportunities, made accessible through appropriate childcare, transport and housing; and

b) ensuring services are easily accessible, holistic and non-stigmatising - and that they can be accessed by families at the earliest opportunity, averting the need for crisis support.

- Light touch analysis suggests that LCPARs often highlight the importance of levers such as housing, transport, childcare and economic development. However, what is less apparent is how these levers will be used to benefit parents and carers, *in particular*.
- This highlights a need for local and national policy makers to consider how structural, enabling factors - such as economic development, transport and childcare - can better reflect the particular needs of the priority groups and the particular barriers they face. This must involve consideration of the elevated childcare responsibilities of some families (such as lone parents, parents with young babies and those with large families), the specific barriers to employment (such as those experienced by disabled parents, young parents or certain BME households) and the additional costs faced by parents and carers. Otherwise, the availability of opportunities will not be accessible to low income families and there is a risk of widening, rather than narrowing inequalities – as well as having an inherently limited effect on a reduction in child poverty.

A Strategic, partnership approach to tackling child poverty

- There is no shortage of evidence that local partners are working together through a shared commitment to tackling child poverty. LCPARs showcase involvement from the local authority and health board as well as wider community planning partners, the third sector and beyond. Reducing child poverty is increasingly seen as a key priority within Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), Children’s Services Plans and Health and Social Care Strategic Plans. However, while partners are aligned in their overarching goal of reducing child poverty, there is less clarity about *how* this goal will be achieved in a coordinated way, suggesting a need to align medium-term outcomes that sit below the goal of reducing child poverty and carve out clear roles and responsibilities for each partner.

An Evidence Based and Responsive Approach

- LCPARs reflect increasingly sophisticated use of local and national intelligence to better understand the location, depth and nature of child poverty. There is, however, still work to be done in terms of ensuring that data and intelligence is directly impacting local priorities and service delivery.
- Many local areas are using privately sourced data or developing their own models to understand child poverty and unmet need in their own localities. While this is promising, the efficiency of this approach is undermined by the fact that local areas are often working alone to develop their data and intelligence capacity. A more consistent approach across Scotland may be beneficial in many cases.

- One stubborn barrier to using data effectively is the complexity of the rules and legislation governing data protection. Numerous local areas have been involved in discussions with local and national partners about the legitimacy of using locally (and sometime nationally) held data about households to identify and reach out to those at highest risk of income crisis.

The voice of lived experience

- LCPARs highlight increased emphasis being placed on the voice of lived experience, including that of children and young people and – to a lesser extent – parents in the priority groups.
- The current challenge lies in the shift from consultation to co-production and the development of an ongoing relationship between those in poverty and those delivering services. Though there are several very positive examples in the year 5 LCPARs, this does not yet appear to be widespread.

Services Designed to meet the needs of families at risk of poverty

- LCPARs suggest that in some respects steady progress is being made towards designing systems in line with people's needs. A good example is the extent to which 'cash first' approaches have been embraced. This is seen not only through local investment in cash transfers (such as Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Housing Payment etc.) but also through local co-design of systems intended to direct people away from crisis support and towards more sustainable sources of support.
- The Child Poverty Pathfinder work underway in Dundee, Clackmannanshire and Glasgow is testing approaches to joined-up, multi-agency service delivery to tackle poverty at locality level. This approach is, however, not restricted to pathfinder areas, with the majority of reports reflecting a commitment to holistic, intuitive, 'joined-up' service for families. Reports often link this approach to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and UNCRC.

Strategic nature of reports

Analysis of the year 5 report suggests that many areas are taking an increasingly preventative and strategic approach to reporting on action to tackle child poverty. Many LCPARs note that child poverty has become a strategic priority for councils, community planning partnerships, health boards and children's services partnerships and health and care partnerships - embedded across local strategies beyond their Local Child Poverty Action Reports.

Around a third of plans are either updates on multi year poverty strategies or highlight the local area's intention to produce multi-year reports with annual updates going

forward. This is hopefully evident of a longer term, joined up approach to addressing child poverty.

What is clear from the Year 5 reports is that they increasingly show that child poverty is a strategic priority across local strategies and plans, including LOIPS, Council Plans, Children's Services Plans.

Edinburgh's report states that,

"These local targets and the actions needed to deliver them are embedded throughout the strategic plans and governance frameworks of the Council, the Edinburgh Partnership, and NHS Lothian.

This report draws these end 8 poverty actions together into a single plan, refreshed, and updated every year. In doing so, the report aims to provide a single, comprehensive view of the steps being taken across the city in response to the challenge and calls to action set by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission"



The introduction to Glasgow's Year 5 report states that,

"The main focus is to describe work underway to better align our strategic approach to child poverty within the city. This will ensure that we maximise our resources to deliver a preventative and early intervention approach to reduce the scale, and extent to which, children, young people and families experience poverty..."



It is not good enough to simply react to failure demand and the resultant humanitarian crisis. Although ongoing action to address immediate needs will continue to be required, there has never been a more critical time to rethink our approach."

Moray's Year 5 LCPAR is embedded within its Children's Services Plan. It notes that *"the GIRFEC Leadership Group, which is made up of strategic leaders from Education, Health, Social Work, Police and 3rd sector have co-ordinated the production of this plan on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership"*.

"Links have been made with the other local strategies and plans whose scope is either broader than children, young people and families e.g. the Community Learning and Development Plan or they have a thematic focus such as the Community Safety Strategy and Moray Alcohol and Drug Partnership Strategy."



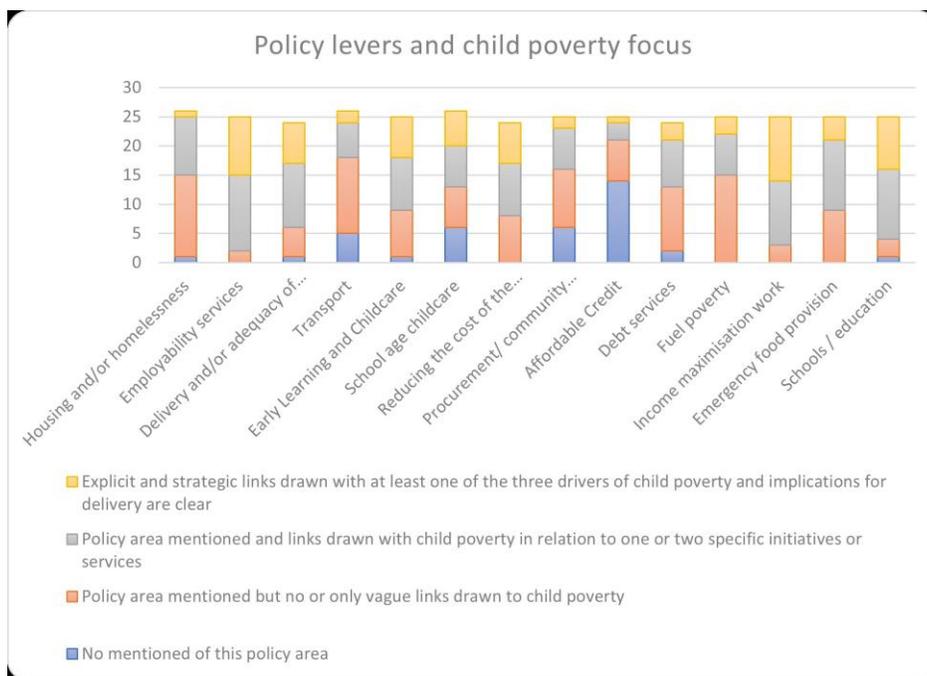
Shetland's year 5 report clearly links child poverty to other strategies and areas of work, including the Community learning and Development Strategy, Keeping the Promise, the Climate Change Strategy, the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, PES-F, links with the SFRS through Home Fire Safety Visit. Tackling child poverty is also clearly embedded across the Children's Services Plan and Shetland's Partnership Delivery Plan. It is expressly noted that Shetland wants to align its plans to ensure coordination between strategy and delivery.



Stirling's Year 5 Report aims to establish a more strategic, whole systems approach to tackling child poverty which will be reported on in 3-year cycles going forward. Under each driver (and an additional 'whole systems' heading) the report sets out a review of evidence, a list of current action, gaps and new ways of working. The report concludes by identifying key areas/activities to be included in the three-year plan.



A preventative approach



While local authorities and their partners have had to mitigate the impact of deepening poverty in conjunction with the cost of living crisis, there appears to have been a simultaneous focus on long term preventative approaches to tackling poverty. For example, community wealth building and economic development appear to be better represented across LCPARs. LCPARs often highlight increasing recognition of the importance of enablers such as housing, transport, childcare and economic development.

What is less apparent is how these levers will be used to benefit parents and carers, *in particular*. In relation to housing, the creation of employment opportunities, transport for example - there it will be necessary to draw out how the specific needs of those in priority groups (i.e. those with elevated childcare responsibilities and/or specific barriers to employment) are being understood and addressed. Otherwise, the availability of

those opportunities risks widening, rather than narrowing inequalities – as well as having an inherently limited effect on a reduction in child poverty.

Several examples of interesting preventative interventions are highlighted below.

Community Wealth Building

Renfrewshire

In Renfrewshire is committed to maximising Community Benefits through procurement activities by including specific Community Benefit Clauses and targets within procurement contracts. These cover payment of the Living Wage as well as targeted employment and training opportunities. Fair work practices in areas such as zero hour contracts and worker representation are also scored. Community Benefits are targeted to child poverty priority groups and evaluated as part of the tendering process and monitored on a quarterly basis.



Orkney

In February 2023, the Partnership held a workshop to consider the scope for CWB to add value to local development plans and initiatives. Potentially, CWB might also help to resolve such longstanding issues as market failure in the meat supply chain, residential care and **nursery provision**. CWB has since been adopted as a guiding principle in both the Orkney Community Plan 2023-30 and the Council Plan 2023-26.



South Lanarkshire

The Council worked with the housing developer (CCG Homes), to provide an enhanced package of community benefits throughout the construction period of properties, which included the provision of jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities for local residents.

North Lanarkshire

The report highlights a commitment to ensure that wealth is generated, circulated and retained in communities and localities. The council is currently mapping further areas of development. Hopefully there will be a Community Wealth Building Commitment Statement early in 2024 whereby any relevant projects, programmes of work strategies and action plans must demonstrate how Community Wealth Building principles and approaches are applied.



East Lothian

Work to develop a community wealth building approach is being progressed in East Lothian. STANTEC have been commissioned to support this progress with East Lothian Council and community planning partners. A diagnostic will be undertaken to understand how CWB is currently positioned in strategic activity across the county which will inform the East Lothian Local Economic Strategy.

One of the outputs will be to develop a CWB charter which will outline the contribution and commitment by all the key anchor institutions in the area.

Housing

Fife

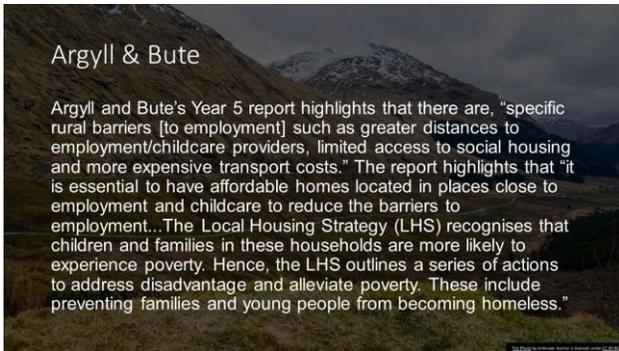
Fife's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) has supported the council to mitigate the Benefit Cap. The Scottish Government provided additional funding to councils from January 2023 for Discretionary Housing Payment to mitigate the Benefit Cap. LIFT identified 96 households in Fife that were being affected by the cap. These households were written to by Fife Council's Benefit Assessment Team to invite them to make an application for their housing costs to be met. 83 of these households have since had their housing costs met – 97% are households with children and 65% are lone parents. 31 households had backdated amounts paid out totalling over £31,000.

Fife's Ending Homelessness Together Board undertook a review of case notes and identified about 200 families and 450 dependent children and noted mental and/or physical health issues as a common theme and characteristic with mental health issues being most prevalent. Many of the families are lone parent households and there are numerous large families with three or more children (as noted within the profile of homeless applicants above). There is a commitment in the report that the Housing team will be working to improve housing access for families with children through Whole family wellbeing team.



Argyll & Bute

Argyll and Bute's Year 5 report highlights that there are, "specific rural barriers [to employment] such as greater distances to employment/childcare providers, limited access to social housing and more expensive transport costs." The report highlights that "it is essential to have affordable homes located in places close to employment and childcare to reduce the barriers to employment..The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) recognises that children and families in these households are more likely to experience poverty. Hence, the LHS outlines a series of actions to address disadvantage and alleviate poverty. These include preventing families and young people from becoming homeless."



Glasgow

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) Housing and Welfare Hub within GCC Housing Services (Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability (NRS), provides a wide range of services to support vulnerable families living in the city's PRS. The key services provided by the hub include:

- Preventing homelessness and the sustainment of tenancies of families living in the PRS;
- Improving the condition of housing and addressing safety critical problems;
- Identifying interventions that ensure the income of families can be maximised;
- Providing welfare rights advice and support to families to ensure that they receive the correct benefits that they are entitled to; and
- Working with partners to tackle child poverty and address health and social care issues.

Overall, the Hub takes a holistic approach when assessing the needs of families including housing options, property condition, tackling socio-economic and health issues and welfare rights. 70% of those receiving support are families with children.



Childcare



Shetland

Shetland's work in relation to childcare is noteworthy in that it has clearly been responsive to parental demand. In response to parents identifying a short fall in flexible childcare the council supported a campaign to recruit and train childminders. There are now an additional two childminders operating on Shetland. A parental survey also found an issue with school age childcare and three Out of School Care clubs were established as a result. The council is now working to respond to parental concerns about cost.

Aberdeenshire

The role of childcare has been identified as an important pillar of the approach to addressing child poverty in Aberdeenshire.

A tender has been developed with partners and those with lived experience to commission a review and research project which will be delivered in 2023. The outcomes will inform a Childcare strategy which will support working families going forward.

The council also plans to develop a childcare, sector-based training programme to address the challenges faced by providers with recruitment and retention of staff.

They will also pilot a childcare training academy targeting a rural setting which will also deliver wrap around childcare for those with primary age children.



Glasgow

First Steps into Early Learning and Childcare supports unemployed or under skilled parents to gain skills, qualification, and employment to become Pupil Support Assistants/Child Development Officers within GCC schools and nurseries.

Participants with children attending GCC and Partnership nurseries are trained at college/training centre to achieve SVQ L2 Social Services (Children and Young People Award) whilst volunteering at a nursery. Once they achieve this, they can decide to go for a guaranteed interview with GCC for a Support for Learning Worker post or continue their studies and volunteering until they achieve SVQ L3 and are then offered a guaranteed interview for Child Development Officer roles. Staff from Education Services (Early Years) support the parents and the admin for the project.





Dumfries and Galloway:

D&G is developing local pathways for parents to train, learn and equip themselves with the accreditation, skills and facilities needed to increase the number of childcare providers in our rural areas, building on partnership working with the Scottish Child Minding Association as part of the Scottish Rural Childminding Partnership Project

It is also working with the Scottish Child Minding Association to help identify and register local individuals for the growing Rural Childcare Programme in Dumfries and Galloway. To date one candidate is operating locally. Two pending eligibility checks and two live enquiries (there have been other enquiries that have not progressed)

Transport

Renfrewshire

National Entitlement Card - Approximately 79% of those young people eligible in Renfrewshire have a Junior or a Young Scot National Entitlement card and free bus travel as part of the U22s Free Bus Travel Scheme saving families money on transport costs.

Barriers to accessing the card have been removed by setting up easy application processes with trusted verifier organisations who support young people who are more likely to experience poverty including social work, Home Link, young homeless charities, supported residential units, those in employability programmes, and young migrants and refugees.

Renfrewshire have removed the need for them to collect documentation and pay for a passport photo in order to apply for their card. Instead of families having to pay for required proofs to apply, (e.g. full birth certificate extracts), we will use their school record instead to verify their details, simplifying and poverty proofing the process.



East Lothian

East Lothian are working with the Workforce Mobility Project of the Edinburgh and South-East City Region Deal to better understand how public transport meets the demands of the local workforce and employers. More information to the model is available [here](#).



Income Maximisation

As can be seen from the table above, income maximisation is touched upon in all published reports, with particular consideration given to the needs of families with children. Increasingly, access to advice and referral pathway are being embedded in a wide range of settings including accessed by families including GPs practices, early years setting, social work and employability services, with a 'whole family' support ethic increasingly apparent.

Work of the Child Poverty Peer Support Network in the past year has highlighted - in particular - the success of embedding advice and referral pathways in education settings.

Examples of joint working and co-location to maximise uptake of advice among families were present across the vast majority of reports.

Fife

Early years income max project coming 2023/24. Building on the success of the Financial Inclusion Referral Pathway, Fife Council Education Service is introducing an income maximisation project within Early Years. This will involve training Early Years Officers and Pupil Support Staff to have conversations with parents and carers about money issues and how they can get better access to support. A data process has been set up to capture information from the pilot. The pilot will run in 5 schools across Fife.



South Lanarkshire

Evidence of moving Income Maximisation work beyond Midwifery, HV and FNP services, to provide routine enquiry support within other services such as the Integrated Community Children's Nursing Team, Locality Family Hubs and neonatal and children's wards where required may be of interest to other areas.

The report highlights the expansion of Income Maximisation work within school settings to include Larkhall area in addition to Rutherglen.



Renfrewshire

£140,000 of Fairer Renfrewshire funding has been allocated to pilot the new dedicated family advice service, which will be established within Advice Works, providing a team of income advisors who will develop relationships and proactive referral routes with Council services and partners, including:

- existing services and referrals routes for families such as Healthier Wealthier Children and Families First.
- key emerging policy and service areas focussed on holistic support for families such as Parental Employability and Whole Family Wellbeing.
- early years and primary school settings, complementary to the advice service for secondary schools being designed with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. In particular, exploring how the service can work alongside school office staff to address issues such as school meal debt more proactively.
- developing relationships with community and voluntary sector organisations providing support for families, with a particular focus on reaching the child poverty priority family groups.

Glasgow

The Family Finances Key Worker's Approach supports parents with a low household income to increase their income through employment and to improve financial capability. This is achieved through the provision of an intensive 1-1 mentoring service that takes a flexible whole family approach. Eligible parents are paired with a mentor who will work with them for as long as they need, and at a time and place that is most suitable for the family, supporting them to access the right services and at the right time. The parents, together with their mentor complete an initial HNA and action plan, this is designed to identify any barriers to progression, parents are then supported to access any support services that will overcome barriers to learning, training and employment opportunities. Type 1 and Type 2 financial support is also provided, this ranges from budgeting support and guidance through to welfare rights and debt advice and resolution. The campaign will focus on the Govan area and eight nurseries that accommodate eligible 2 places as well as a wider offer across all eligible 2 places in Glasgow. Working with HSCP to create a referral pathway to Glasgow Helps for support under the 3 main tackling poverty drivers. Education have identified about 50 families that are eligible for support.

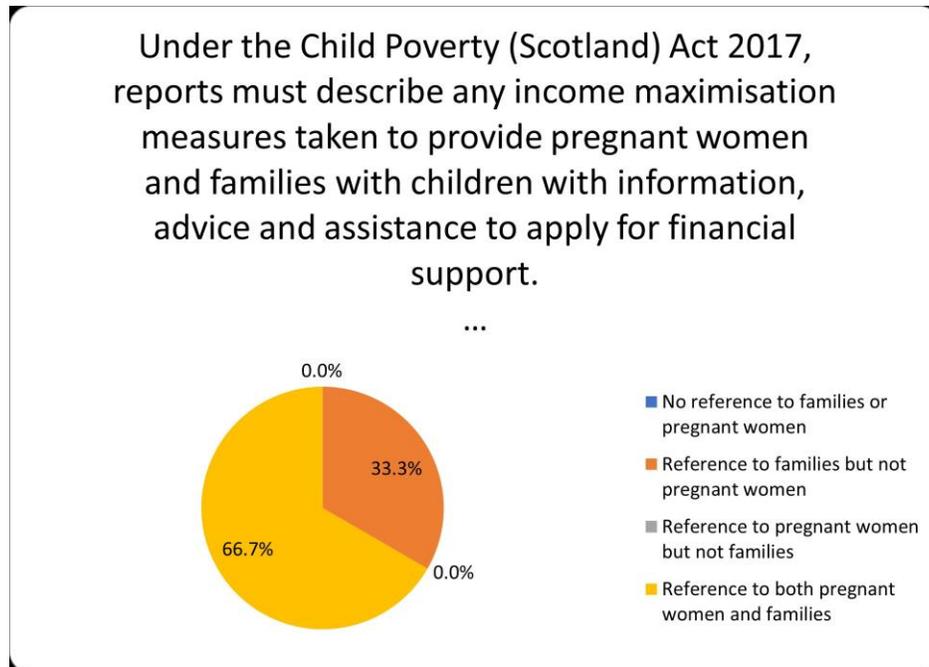


North Lanarkshire

The Tackling Poverty Team have been delivering poverty awareness sessions to a wider range of teams within the council/CPP including social work, health and addiction services. This not only raises awareness of poverty but provides an opportunity to explore developing referral gateways with each specific service. This not only helps make services more aware of the needs of low income families but opens up the possibility of income maximisation. A good example is the Infant Minds Matter programme which is a multi-disciplinary team supporting infant mental health including psychiatry, psychotherapy, mental health nurses and Early Years practitioner. The team received poverty awareness training and are establishing a referral pathway.



One area of slight concern is that - despite it being a statutory requirement under section 13 of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, 33% of reports made no reference to what is being done to ensure pregnant women in particular are being targeted with information and advice.



Ways of Working

Year 5 Reports suggest that - in some respects - steady progress is being made towards designing systems in line with people's needs. A good example is the extent to which 'cash first' approaches have been embraced. This is seen not only through local investment in cash transfers (such as Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Housing Payment etc.) but also through local co-design of systems intended to direct people away from crisis support and towards more sustainable sources of support.

In addition, the focus on families' needs is also being strengthened by learning from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and its emphasis on prevention and early intervention. Strong links are being drawn between poverty reduction and the avoidance of wider

family crisis. Reference to child poverty as a violation of children's rights is also increasingly common through the reports.

Wider work is also underway at both local and national level to better understand what a person-centred approach to service delivery in relation to child poverty looks like. The Child Poverty Pathfinder work underway in Dundee, Clackmannanshire and Glasgow is demonstrating the benefits of a joint approach to tackling child poverty at locality level. This person, centred, holistic approach is also evident across the majority of Year 5 LCPARs.



Clackmannanshire

Safeguarding through Rapid Intervention (STRIVE) - a multi-agency, public sector team designed to rapidly deliver better outcomes for the most vulnerable residents of Clackmannanshire, through integrated working. STRIVE considers the public service system as a whole and not as a collection of separate parts. It is a team of multi-service professionals working together from the earliest opportunity, to improve the existing system of safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

STRIVE is made up of core partners from Clackmannanshire Council Housing Service, Money Advice, Children and Families, Education, Health and Social Care Partnership Scottish Fire and Rescue and Alloa Police Services.

© Clackmannanshire Council 2019



North Lanarkshire

The report draws strong links with children's services and - in particular delivery of the Promise. This is reflected in links being drawn between the Tackling Poverty Officers Action Group and the Children's Services Partnership structures, with members from each group represented on the other.

Both are focused on ensuring families and children don't exist in silos. Whole Family support is also a prevalent theme. The report highlights that "Research has shown there is a relationship between poverty and longer-term negative outcomes for children (Lewer et al. 2019) and that while the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect is complex, studies have also shown that financial support and increased income lead to lower levels of child maltreatment (Brewster et al. 2016)". This is used to highlight the importance of advice and a cash first approach to underpin wider work to promote child and family wellbeing.



West Dunbartonshire

Strong commitment to taking a more holistic and joined up approach to tackling child poverty. "we are working in West Dunbartonshire to establish an integrated approach to service delivery wherever possible. This would encompass a coordinated effort across numerous sectors to address child poverty. By leveraging different sectors and services and fostering partnerships between them, we can achieve more holistic and impactful results."

Inverclyde

Inverclyde is an Early Adopter to implement an Affordable Out of School Childcare service delivering a whole systems approach to create a person-centred provision. This involves collaboration with several local stakeholders (p.4). The whole-system and partner collaboration approach taken in relation to childcare is also being developed in other service areas, including early years and substance use (p.9).



Shetland

The Anchor Project, which provides whole family, person centred support brings together the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, PEF, Parental employability support and money advice. It also takes a whole family approach (focusing initially on the parent). There are no eligibility criteria, but uptake is disproportionately high among the priority groups (79%)



Inverclyde

Inverclyde also espouses applying UNCRC principles to child poverty policy and in particular ensuring that the views, feelings and wishes of children and young people are considered, and taken seriously in all matters affecting them (p.4)



East Lothian

The Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA) functions as a tool to understand the impact of decisions in relation to poverty children's and human rights. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been reviewed to ensure it incorporates the Children's Rights Impact Assessment. A training programme will be established to ensure staff are aware of, understand and effectively use the IIA process



No Wrong Door

- **GLASGOW:** The Pathfinder is piloting a practical 'No Wrong Door test of change' model in the city, aligned to the relaunch of Getting it Right for Every Child. This will create joints across a currently complicated array of services that operate with limited partnerships to connect families into additional support. Using a No Wrong Door approach will provide improved access to person centred, holistic support, underpinned by a strong network of services that operate collaboratively to ensure that, no matter where somebody first interacts with 'the system' in the city, they receive 'the right support, in the right place, at the right time'. More simply 'when you engage with one of us, you get the best of all of us'. This includes examining how data is used and shared across services
- **ABERDEENSHIRE:** The partnership's focus in the coming years will be on building a 'No Wrong Door' approach to supporting families, including collocating services in rural locations



The priority groups

Evidence tells us that the six priority family groups at highest risk experiencing child poverty. Scottish Government guidance suggests that effective reporting on priority families might include,

- Awareness of the presence of priority groups in your local area
- Understanding of the unique barriers and needs associated with each priority group
- Attention to intersectionality, i.e. the compounded effects of belonging to more than one priority group
- Description of how priority groups specifically are supported by an action/service
- Input from people belonging to the priority groups
- Data – quotes, figures etc. – as evidence of a measure's effectiveness



Analysis of the year 5 reports suggests that the priority groups are being considered to varying degrees.

While the majority of reports make reference to the fact these groups are at heightened risk of experiencing poverty, detail is not always provided as to how the needs and circumstances of these groups have been understood or reflected in terms of decision-making, service delivery or understanding impact. There are, however, many excellent examples of policies and services tailored round the specific needs of those in the priority groups.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh has developed a new Children's Partnership Plan that commits to informing service commissioning with a poverty lens, and ensuring that new commissioned work with children, young people and families should seek to establish systems for the collection of data relating to the Scottish Government's six priority family groups in order to provide better information on how well services are reaching families most likely to be living in poverty.

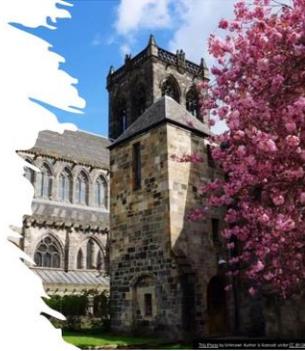
The report also highlights [research](#) on poverty/gender and poverty/bme status, highlighting interesting statistics in relation to both e.g. BME groups are 2.5 under-represented in uptake of employability programmes. This has informed delivery of programmes specifically aimed at BME households such as the Whole Family Equality Project.



Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire's approach to employability is very focused on the priority groups. Parents are able to access all LEP commissioned provision however, some specific programmes have been developed for unemployed and underemployed parents including:

- Enable's 'Progress for Parents' service has been designed specifically for parents who are disabled and/or have disabled children to support progress into and within work.
- Barrow's 'First Steps to Work' is an innovative employability programme for Parents and Kinship Carers who are unemployed or on a low income.
- Home-Start's 'Empowering Parents' programme targeted to families within Child Poverty priority groups to build their confidence and resilience as a first step towards considering life goals and ambitions.
- West College engages and supports student parents to maximise progression towards employment. They offer person-centred help for parents to address their barriers to work, including childcare advice and assistance and English language support.



NHS GG&C

NHS GG&C Aim to understand families experience and impact of poverty for families with a child with a disability around the 3 key drivers of poverty. Plans to convene a Steering Group, scope out and commission research into needs of families with children and a disability in NHSGGC are underway. This research will identify themes and make recommendations for progress.



Glasgow

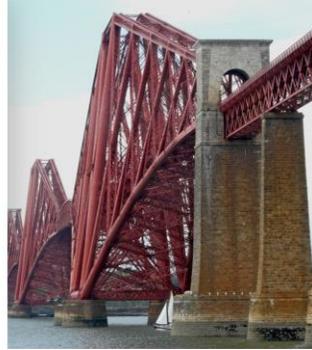
Young Parents Support Base has been operating since 2010 and is a city-wide resource based at Smithycroft Secondary school with outreach support for young parents across Glasgow.

It forms part of a wider strategic approach to supporting young parents in Glasgow which includes key partners such as Health, Social Work, Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) and third sector agencies.

The school has a small nursery on-site that can accommodate baby places. The service aims to support young parents (both young women and young men up to the age of 19 years) to attain the best possible start in life for themselves and their children. The service works with young parents who attend mainstream secondary schools, young women who are disengaged from learning but who are of school age and older teenage parents, who have left school.

Fife

- The Making it Work for Families project is specifically targeted to lone parents, o support lone parent, low-income or unemployed families with current, historic or who are considered to be 'at risk of' substance use and who have children in P7, S1 or S2 who are struggling to engage with or attend school. The project is linked to four secondary schools as well as feeder primary schools within the Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth areas. The team takes a whole family support approach to working with families and works with each individual to meet their specific needs.
- Fife Gingerbread, working with One Parent Families Scotland and IPPR (Scotland), to deliver evidence-based recommendations to achieve transformational change to the UK child maintenance system and contribute to reducing child poverty.



Using Data to Understand and Address child poverty

LCPARs reflect increasingly sophisticated use of local and national intelligence to better understand the location, depth and nature of child poverty. Analysis from the national partners suggests that most reports draw on some sources of local and national intelligence. These often – though not always - include the End Child Poverty (ECP) local child poverty statistics, Children in Households with Low Income Data (DWP/HMRC), SIMD data, eligibility for free school meals (FSM), school clothing grants (SCG) and educational maintenance allowance (EMA).

There also appears to be increasing use of DWP statistics to get an understanding of the kind of households (including the priority groups) in receipt of means tested benefits. This is helpful given the geographic granularity of much of this information.

As well as drawing on a wider pool of data, report highlight clear examples of data being used to inform decision making and service delivery. This link between data decision making / delivery is not, however, evidence across all reports and is an area for future improvement.

Data to inform delivery

Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire has used Children in Low Income Households data (DWP/HMRC) to identify two local wards that have seen significant and disproportionate increases in rates of child poverty. These areas will be the subject of data 'Deep Dives' in the coming year.

The deep dive will involve, "pulling data from internal Council as well as external and partner sources to inform decision making and service delivery. While a key focus of this exercise will be the six child poverty priority groups, this exercise will also consider child poverty from a local area perspective—with a particular focus on understanding the drivers of marked increases in child poverty rates in some areas in Renfrewshire."



Aberdeen

Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that schools are better able to identify and support families who are impacted by poverty. School profiles have been overhauled to allow schools to drill down into data sets based on both SIMD quintiles and into groups such as those who are Looked After in order to establish the improvements required as part of school improvement planning. During session 22/23 profiles were further updated to include live data and this will enable school leaders to see the impact of changes in real time.



Glasgow

Glasgow City Council in partnership with the CCI have updated their report based on council tax account information and SEEMIS data. It provides an incredibly granular picture of child poverty and how it has changed over the past 5 years. It shows not only how levels of child poverty have changed, but also gives insight into the depth of child poverty. This is broken down by priority groups and at intermediate data zone level. The report also includes a sections on how this data can and will be used including the following:

- + Targeting school-age childcare across the city
- + Developing employability projects in areas where they're needed most
- + Mapping service funding to families' needs
- + Tendering for services
- + Understanding child poverty around specific school catchment areas would help develop services based in schools
- + Compare child poverty to the uptake of schemes and services such as free travel for under twenty-tuos



West Lothian

West Lothian's year 5 report highlights an intention to focus on concerns identified through data analysis. Lone parents, for example, have been identified as the group most likely to be in receipt of UC. The forward planning section of the report then highlights an intention to "undertake a deep dive into support provided to lone parents".

The report also highlights a decrease in uptake of Young Carer Grant and Job Start Payment as well as a fall in take up of School Clothing Grant and Free School Meals. The report acknowledges that there is no clear reason for this fall and commits to a more proactive approach from the local authority in terms of publicising and promoting uptake.

Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders have developed a Child Poverty Index which has been replicated in other areas of Scotland. The index is a weighted combination of CiLiF data from HMRC, SCG, FSM and EMA data. It provides very granular information rates of child poverty at school catchment level.

There is an example of being used to inform where additional monies were targeted for breakfast club provision in the year 5 report which notes, "£60,000 has been allocated from the Council's Cost of Living Support Fund, to support the setting up, continuation or provision of a free breakfast club offer across the Scottish Borders. Nineteen schools were successful in their application for funding in addition to one community-based group with some areas were targeted based on the Child Poverty index."



There has also been no shortage of innovation in relation to the use of data, much of which has been developed or captured through the Remote, Rural and Island Child Poverty Network. You can watch a short film about their work below.



Year 5 reports also present evidence of new sources of data and intelligence being drawn on to effectively inform our understanding of child poverty at local level. Many of these data sets are privately sources and raise questions about whether there is scope for a 'once for Scotland' approach to data and intelligence.

East Renfrewshire



ERC commissioned data work to understand how the post Covid cost of living crisis is impacting in East Renfrewshire. The work uses a unique set of banking data and identifies 'wellbeing indicators' such as overdraft use, income from benefits and living beyond means. This data is then analysed against 'contextual data' such as family size, receipt of free school meals and use of money advice services. This work is being used to help us understand where the cost of living is hitting the hardest, what household types and factors are potentially financially vulnerable, and this is being used to target resources to support households.

Argyll & Bute

The Council is carrying out a project to look at innovative data use to identify unmet need in communities. The project will seek to use Microsoft Power BI to develop better ways of interconnecting data sources, from both inside and outside of the Council, in order to highlight areas of unmet need whilst ensuring that appropriate information governance is maintained, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are followed, etc. An intended benefit of using PowerBI for this purpose is to allow a large proportion of the report generation process to be automated so that reports can be run and checked more frequently without increasing the reporting burden on council teams. Whilst developing this they will work with the Improvement Service and the Rural and Island Child Poverty Leads Peer Support Network to share ideas and best practice with other local authorities on the same journey.



Fife

Illustration 1. Number of low-income households and children in Fife identified by LIFT, March 2023



Research into Fife Council internal spend found that there is scope to develop a more systemic way to target anti-poverty spending, focused on tangible impact. The report notes, "the use of data is integral to how we target spend and allocate resources, especially given the significant financial pressures public services are currently facing. Our new LIFT system can tell us the number of low-income households in Fife and the proportion of these that are likely to be 'at risk' of their take home income being less than their expected expenditure."

Data sharing and data governance

In addition to this use of anonymised, statistical data, many local areas have been exploring how they can re-use the personal data they hold to identify and support those likely to be eligible for wider entitlements or supports. Several areas, for example have used data on which households have claimed local benefits to maximise uptake of wider entitlements.

Scottish Borders

The Scottish Borders have increased take up of school clothing grants. They have done this by extending eligibility for School Clothing Grants to include receipt of Council Tax Reduction in eligibility. This was followed by a take up campaign undertaken to identify potential eligible families from data held from other benefits. This check will now take place annually. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction applications also now include applications for free school meals and clothing grants to maximise take up



Dumfries and Galloway

D&G's year 5 report notes that, "Through a continuing joint project between our Financial Wellbeing and Revenues Services and Education Services, we are continuing to identify and target families who are eligible to receive Free School Meals within the region. This process is being completed by cross referencing the families who are registered on our Welfare and Benefits System with those on our Education Systems and then by contacting them to complete a Welfare and Benefit check to ascertain if they would be eligible to receive this additional benefit."



Fife

Fife Council automatically re-awarded School Clothing Grants to over 6,800 pupils in the summer of 2022, and wrote to around 4,300 more families who were identified as being eligible to let them know about their eligibility. Over 12,340 clothing grants were awarded for the year, equating to over £1.6 million for families.



In addition to this, several local authorities and groupings of authorities are engaged in complex internal and external discussions about the legality and legitimacy of re-using personal data to identify and reach families who are either at high risk of financial crisis or not in receipt of their full entitlements. The complexity of the data governance landscape is overwhelming and engagement with this issue is resource intensive.

The IS is working with SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability) and three Scottish local authorities to explore the sharing and reuse of personal data to identify and reach families at risk of financial crisis. If successful, this replicable approach could be an important preventative tool for both local and national government in their work to tackle child poverty and address wider vulnerabilities.

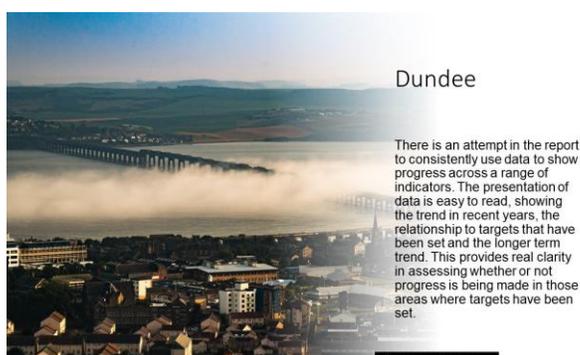
In a process coordinated by the IS, SAVVI has worked with Angus, Argyll and Bute and Inverclyde Councils to guide them through the legal and practical barriers to data re-use and data sharing. You can read a blog about the project [here](#).

Understanding Impact

The majority of reports establish high level shared outcomes, such as a reduction in child poverty by 2030. There is also an attempt by an increased number of local authorities to identify relevant indicators and to track progress over time. Some local authorities are in the process of developing indicators, and others have identified relevant data sources but are yet to develop indicators.

While this is useful, there can be a lack of linkage between the data presented and the policies and practices adopted as a result of the insight gained through the data. As a result, it is difficult to relate the narrative explanation of the activities undertaken to the indicators used to measure progress. In many cases, it is not clear how each indicator relates to a specific child poverty driver and how the figures have changed over time as a result of the work being done.

Similarly, many LCPARs highlight the fact they have developed shared outcomes with local partners around tackling child poverty. However, while partners are aligned in their overarching goal of reducing child poverty, there is less clarity about *how* this goal will be achieved in a coordinated way, suggesting a need to align medium-term outcomes that sit below the goal of reducing child poverty and carve out clear roles and responsibilities for each partner.





North Ayrshire

The report uses a large number of statistics and indicators related to child poverty/ drivers of poverty – included in the body of text. This sets out the context locally but does not draw the link to how these are used to prioritise action. Very strong use of indicators and data has been used to identify need at local authority level.

Inclusive Economy dashboard. Indicators were also used to highlight North Ayrshire's position regarding the 3 drivers of Child Poverty: Income from Employment (Figure 11), Income from Social Security (Figure 12) and Cost of Living (Figure 13).

The North Ayrshire Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified job density, health and skills as key issues that the Council and partners need to tackle these and has resulted in prioritised action (although not clear on any focus on families with children).

Appendix 2 (pg. 68-73) provides a summary of performance indicators which show monitoring of these indicators over time 2015/16 to 2021/22. The table also provides a target indicator which is helpful to see expected progress. The Performance Indicator Status clearly shows whether progress is as expected/on track or whether there are issues regarding these areas of work.



East Renfrewshire

The report also sets out **clear indicators (pg 5) which are accompanied by robust data points, sourced from a range of locations.** This is positive in tracking progress over time.

Similarly, page 31 provides a graphic of outcomes; contributions; and activities.

The voice of lived experience

[National guidance](#) on developing a Local Child Poverty Action Report notes that child poverty policy "*should be developed in collaboration with those with direct experience of poverty and give particular consideration to the experiences and barriers faced by priority family groups who we know to be at highest risk of experiencing child poverty,*"

There is a commitment by almost all local authorities to engage with lived experience and it is done in different ways, for example, through service user feedback, community consultation, anti-poverty task force/commissions, literature reviews, etc. We can also see an increased engagement with children and young people.

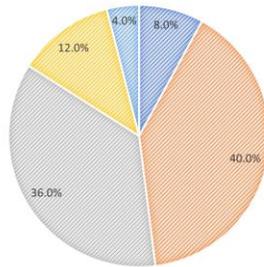
However, despite many excellent examples it appears that engagement generally lacks a strategic approach and clear focus on the priority groups.

Engagement is often done on an ad hoc basis to give people the opportunity to share their views but there is little ongoing dialogue between local authorities and the public. As a result, evidencing of how lived experience influences policy and practice is lacking in most cases.

Many reports only mention that engagement with lived experience took place, but it is not clear who took part in the engagement, why and what the outcomes were. Despite this, there are numerous excellent examples of meaningful engagement contained within the LCPARs.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

- There is no suggestion that the views of those with lived experience have been sought or considered
- Lived experience has been collected/mentioned but no insight is given as to how policy/ practice has changed as a result
- There are clear examples provided of how the lived experience of people is influencing policy and/ or practice, but only in relation to one or two specific policy areas or services
- It is clear throughout the report how lived experience is influencing both strategic decisions and policy / service delivery
- The views of those with lived experience have not been considered but there is an intention articulated to ensure that this happens in future



Aberdeenshire

The report states that Aberdeenshire's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan has been informed by and is monitored by those priority families who have lived experience of living on a low income. This work is supported by an Aberdeenshire Lived Experience Network (ALEN) which has 18 partners; and has offered 15 opportunities for those with lived experience to be involved in improving services, setting budget priorities, and developing strategies and policies. The ALEN has engaged 608 people, including 250 young people, from priority families. This shows a strategic commitment to engaging with people with lived experience of poverty, and there has been positive reach in terms of the numbers engaged.



The reports highlights that there is no formal mechanisms in place to gather and collate the voices of lived experience. However, the report highlights that the voices of parents and children are continually gathered through ongoing contact and feedback and there are several examples of this throughout the report. One example is the anchor project focusing more on parents than 'whole family' in the first instance as this has been well-received and allows for stronger relationship development in the first instance.

Shetland

A survey of parents also identified Out of School care as a priority, leading to OOS clubs being established. The nature and operation of these clubs was also shaped by parental involvement. Ongoing feedback has identified cost as a barrier which is also being explored.

A survey of parents also resulted in the School Clothing Grant being doubled and eligibility for FSM being brought into line with SCG to allow it to reach more families and to facilitate delivery.

North Lanarkshire

Let's talk: 3 questions is a project whereby school children in primary and secondary setting were asked for their views on three questions:

- How is the Cost of Living impacting you?
- How is the cost of living impacting others in the community?
- What would you like us to do about it?



Key areas for action identified by pupils were expansion of the FSM offer and better/more financial education for pupils. The second of these has been actioned, with the money and finance education module being revamped and delivered across nursery, primary and secondary settings.

It is intended that the project will continue to be at the heart of the council's approach to tackling child poverty. In the coming year they will take a cluster by cluster approach (a cluster is a high school and all the nurseries and primaries that feed into it) to engaging the children and young people.

Overview of key points

A preventative approach to child poverty

- Analysis of the year 5 report suggests that many areas are taking an increasingly preventative and strategic approach to reporting on action to tackle child poverty. Many LCPARs note that child poverty has become a strategic priority for councils, community planning partnerships, health boards and children's services partnerships and health and care partnerships - embedded across local strategies beyond their Local Child Poverty Action Reports.
- In terms of delivery, year 5 reports suggest that some progress is being made in relation to key aspects of preventing child poverty, including
 - a) supporting parental/carer incomes through creation of high-quality, well-paid jobs and education opportunities, made accessible through appropriate childcare, transport and housing; and
 - b) ensuring services are easily accessible, holistic and non-stigmatising - and that they can be accessed by families at the earliest opportunity, averting the need for crisis support.
- Light touch analysis suggests that LCPARs often highlight the importance of levers such as housing, transport, childcare and economic development. However, what is less apparent is how these levers will be used to benefit parents and carers, *in particular*.
- There is a need for local and national policy makers to consider how structural factors - such as economic development, transport and childcare can reflect the particular needs of the priority groups and the particular barriers they face. This must involve consideration of the elevated childcare responsibilities of some families (such as lone parents, parents with young babies and those with large families), the specific barriers to employment (such as those experienced by disabled parents, young parents or certain BME households) and the additional costs faced by parents and carers. Otherwise, the availability of opportunities will not be accessible to low income families and there is a risk of widening, rather than narrowing inequalities – as well as having an inherently limited effect on a reduction in child poverty.

A Strategic, partnership approach to tackling child poverty

- There is no shortage of evidence that local partners are working together through a shared commitment to tackling child poverty. LCPARs showcase involvement from the local authority and health board as well as wider community planning partners, the third sector and beyond. Reducing child poverty is increasingly seen as a key priority within Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), Children's Services Plans and Health and Social Care Strategic Plans. However,

while partners are aligned in their overarching goal of reducing child poverty, there is less clarity about *how* this goal will be achieved in a coordinated way, suggesting a need to align medium-term outcomes that sit below the goal of reducing child poverty and carve out clear roles and responsibilities for each partner.

An Evidence Based and Responsive Approach

- LCPARs reflect increasingly sophisticated use of local and national intelligence to better understand the location, depth and nature of child poverty. There is, however, still work to be done in terms of ensuring that data and intelligence is directly impacting local priorities and service delivery.
- Many local areas are using privately sourced data or developing their own models to understand child poverty and unmet need in their own localities. While this is promising, the efficiency of this approach is undermined by the fact that local areas are often working alone to develop their data and intelligence capacity. A more consistent approach across Scotland may be beneficial in many cases.
- One stubborn barrier to using data effectively is the complexity of the rules and legislation governing data protection. Numerous local areas have been involved in discussions with local and national partners about the legitimacy of using locally (and sometime nationally) held data about households to identify and reach out to those at highest risk of income crisis.

The voice of lived experience

- LCPARs highlight increased emphasis being placed on the voice of lived experience, including that of children and young people and – to a lesser extent – parents in the priority groups.
- The current challenge lies in the shift from consultation to co-production and the development of an ongoing relationship between those in poverty and those delivering services. Though there are several very positive examples in the year 5 LCPARs, this does not yet appear to be widespread.

Services Designed to meet the needs of families at risk of poverty

- LCPARs suggest that in some respects steady progress is being made towards designing systems in line with people's needs. A good example is the extent to which 'cash first' approaches have been embraced. This is seen not only through local investment in cash transfers (such as Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Housing Payment etc.) but also through local co-design of systems intended to direct people away from crisis support and towards more sustainable sources of support.

- The Child Poverty Pathfinder work underway in Dundee, Clackmannanshire and Glasgow is testing approaches to joined-up, multi-agency service delivery to tackle poverty at locality level. This approach is, however, not restricted to pathfinder areas, with the majority of reports reflecting a commitment to holistic, intuitive, 'joined-up' service for families. Reports often link this approach to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and UNCRC.