

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 December 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Local Child Poverty Action Report
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide a copy of the Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020 for information

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Executive Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation:-

- (1) that the content of the Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020 be noted.

3. Background

3.1. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to prepare **Local Child Poverty Action Reports**, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each reporting year.

3.2. The report should describe any measures taken in the area of the local authority during the reporting year and planned measures for the year ahead. These should contribute to the four national income based child poverty reduction targets to be achieved by 2030. These are:-

- (1) Less than 10% of children are in relative poverty;
- (2) Less than 5% of children are in absolute poverty;
- (3) Less than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation; and
- (4) Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty.

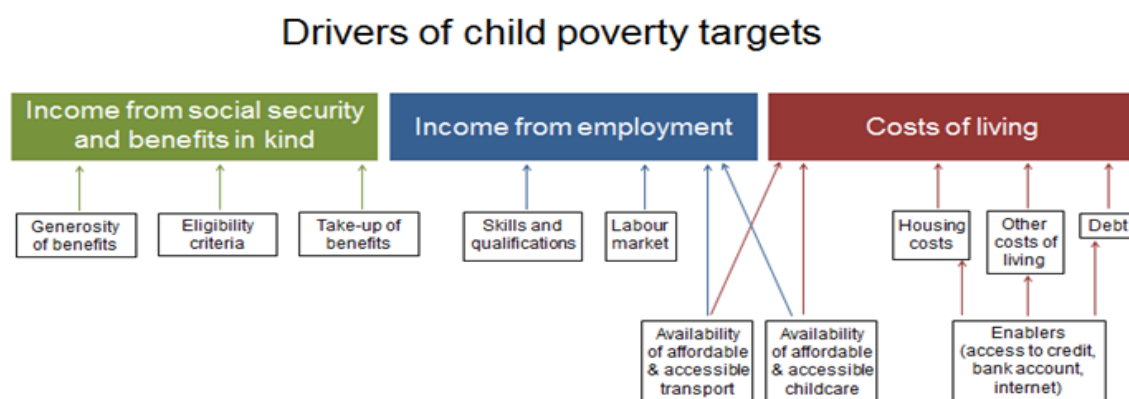
3.3. These national targets cannot all be made available at a council level. The only one which is available relates to the proportion of children in South Lanarkshire in relative poverty - currently sitting at 23%, slightly below the Scottish level (24%).

3.4. The Scottish Government has made it clear that the introduction of the requirement to produce a Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) signals an imperative to undertake new activity and a new approach to tackling Child Poverty; effectively a step-change in tackling child poverty. Where local partners are continuing with existing activity, they should be clear about the supporting evidence base indicating its effectiveness.

- 3.5. The Poverty and Inequality Commission has been tasked by the Scottish Government to provide feedback on all the local action reports. Feedback on the South Lanarkshire LCPAR 2019/2020 was overwhelmingly positive. In addition, the Improvement Service indicated through feedback sessions that they were directing other councils/health boards towards the report as an example of good practice.
- 3.6. South Lanarkshire Council, NHS Lanarkshire and other South Lanarkshire Partnership members agreed at the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board meeting of 6 June 2018 to produce a single Local Child Poverty Action Report recognising that a collective effort would be more effective. A Local Child Poverty Leads group was established to produce the plan. All council departments; NHS Lanarkshire; and Skills Development Scotland are represented on the group. The Voluntary Sector is represented by VASlan; South Lanarkshire CABs; and the Machan Trust. This group has continued to work together to produce the current years LCPAR.
- 3.7. The document has already been scrutinised by both the council and NHS Lanarkshire's Corporate Management Team as well as noted by the CPP Board at it's meeting on 21 October 2020.

4. Scope of the Plan

- 4.1. Child poverty is caused by a complex blend of structural issues relating to macro-economic and political factors governing the labour market, employment and social security. Social factors make particular groups especially vulnerable to poverty, e.g. children, lone parents, disabled people and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. The following diagram from the Scottish Government provides an overview of what its research indicates are the main drivers of child poverty.



- 4.2. The Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) is expected to provide background/contextual information; governance and reporting arrangements and a progress and action plan which is organised around the three child poverty drivers above. Key data is highlighted throughout the plan and has been used to inform the actions set out for 2020/2021. In addition, the information gathered from those with lived experience of poverty has been key in identifying future actions and will continue to be a main focus for the partners in delivering and improving upon these.

5. Impact of COVID-19

- 5.1. In normal circumstances, the expectation would be that the LCPAR would be published by the end of June each year. However, the impact of the pandemic has meant that work on the report was delayed and as a result, the report was published in late October 2020. Guidance was sought from the Scottish Government in April 2020 to ensure that this was acceptable.
- 5.2. As well as the short term impact upon capacity to produce the report, it is accepted that there will be a longer term negative economic impact as a result of the pandemic. This is likely to not be felt equally across society; the impact will be particularly severe for those who are already on low and fixed incomes, suffering from poorer health and in insecure work. Therefore, the challenges which were already being faced in reducing child poverty are likely to have been increased by the pandemic and this requires future consideration as the situation becomes clearer over the rest of the 2020/2021 year.

6. The 2020/2021 plan

- 6.1. A copy of the plan is attached as Appendix 1. Partners have been asked, where possible, to provide a baseline and target for their measures. This will ensure that reporting upon progress is accurate and can identify where there is still a need for further action. Partners have also identified resources to ensure that the measures can be delivered upon in the current year.
- 6.2. Key improvement areas were identified from reporting upon last year's plan, and actions against these are presented within the current plan. These are:

Chapter 1. Increased income from benefits and entitlements

- ◆ Continue to embed financial wellbeing assessments in health and other wider health and wellbeing assessments
- ◆ Ensure the impacts of the combined advice services are maximised, including better digital support and engagement opportunities and face to face opportunities in communities as appropriate

Chapter 2. Reducing the costs of living

- ◆ Continue developing additional childcare/early learning hours to be accessible and help parents who are working or progressing towards work
- ◆ Tests of change intended to improve the uptake of free school meals
- ◆ Supporting local digital hubs to continue providing low cost and critical access to online job search and benefit applications
- ◆ Making better use of data to understand what is behind Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) refusals and what is driving families to apply, as well as increasing partner knowledge of SWF criteria
- ◆ Identifying further actions to support access to affordable transport

Chapter 3. Increasing income from employment

- ◆ Continue to consider how we impact on child poverty through maximising community benefits from procurement and economic growth
- ◆ Ensure that parents and young people with disabilities have access to appropriate employability support

- 6.3. An ongoing action for the year will also be to continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic and any further needs which may arise to mitigate an increase in child poverty. As part of this, listening to the voices of those with lived experience is key to the development of the LCPAR. During the remainder of 2020/2021, partners have agreed to hold informal discussions with the families they support about the challenges they are facing and the ways in which they can be assisted to overcome these. This information will help to form a basis for developing the actions needed in future years.
- 6.4. Initial positive feedback has been received from the National Coordinator for Child Poverty reports based within the Improvement Service, indicating a good use of data and a clarity as to the impact and expectations around Covid. Full feedback is expected once all reports have been submitted and reviewed.
- 7. Employee Implications**
- 7.1. There are no immediate employee implications arising from this report.
- 8. Financial Implications**
- 8.1. Any financial implications will be met within existing budgets.
- 9. Other Implications**
- 9.1. The LCPAR continues to be a point of local and national scrutiny. This could have positive and/or negative impacts on perceptions of the council and proactive PR approaches will be required.
- 10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**
- 10.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability or the environment in terms of the information contained within this report.
- 11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**
- 11.1. There is a requirement to carry out an equality impact assessment and an initial assessment has been undertaken. Indications are this will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age; disability; race and sex.

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

17 November 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Vision: -Improve the Quality of life for everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Council Values:-Focussed on people and their needs; Working with and respecting others; Fair, open and sustainable; Excellent Employer
- ◆ Council Objectives :-Support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration; Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth.

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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