

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	24 August 2022
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:-

- ◆ update the Committee on the local work to address Child Poverty and seek approval for the new Local Child Poverty Action Report

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress and improvement work being carried out around the Local Child Poverty Action Report be noted;
- (2) that the content of the draft report, and its publication, be approved; and
- (3) that the ongoing work on areas of improvement and the intention to create a 3 year Strategy in 2023 be supported.

3. Background

3.1. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced a new requirement for local authorities and relevant health boards to prepare Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPAR) as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each reporting year. beginning in June 2019.

3.2. The purpose of the LCPARs is to describe any measures taken in the area of the local authority during the reporting year and planned measures for the year ahead that seek to address and mitigate child poverty. These are organised around the 3 drivers of Cost of Living, Income from Benefits and Income from Employment. Actions are identified using local data, the lived experience of families and the expertise of partnership staff. Key actions for this year include:-

- ◆ Extending the model of Routine Enquiry used by colleagues in NHS Lanarkshire to increase income from benefits in families they support.
- ◆ Addressing the increase in household costs and in particular the price of increase in gas and electricity prices.
- ◆ An integrated approach to parental employability and supporting a 'next steps' aspiration for parents.

3.3. The work described in the reports is expected to contribute to the 4 national income based child poverty reduction targets to be achieved by 2030.

- (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

(4) Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

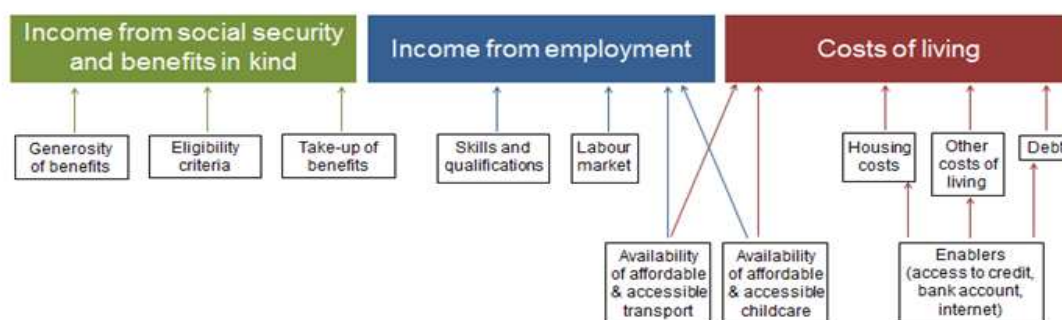
It should be noted that the achievement of these targets, however, is not entirely within the control of local partners given the primary drivers of poverty which are related to macro economic trends which cannot be heavily influenced by local control measures. The Poverty and Inequality Commission have identified in their recent scrutiny of the National Child Poverty Delivery Plan that the national actions which have been committed to there, and in particular the increase of the Scottish Child Payment to £25 per week, will help with progress to meet the targets, however they also highlight a need for specific and urgent action to address the cost of living crisis, and for progressive revenue-raising measures in order to fund greatly enhanced social protection measures at a national level in order to achieve all targets.

- 3.4 The Scottish Government made it clear that the introduction of the requirement to produce LCPARs 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, tasked by the Scottish Government provide feedback on all the LCPARs. Feedback on the South Lanarkshire LCPAR for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 was overwhelmingly positive. In addition, the Improvement Service indicated through feedback sessions that they were continuing to direct other councils towards our reports as an example of good practice.
- 3.6 South Lanarkshire Council, NHS Lanarkshire and other South Lanarkshire Partnership members agreed at the CPP Board meeting of the 6 June 2018 to produce a single LCPAR, recognising a collective effort would be more effective.
- 3.7 The Child Poverty Working Group was established in late 2018 to produce the plan. This group has continued to meet to ensure that the work around the plan remains relevant and focussed on the key actions to address child poverty in South Lanarkshire.

4. Progress to date

- 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 & 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.

Drivers of child poverty targets



- 4.2. Of the above drivers of child poverty, maximising income from benefits and measures to reduce the costs of living are vital to mitigate financial hardship however in themselves will lift households out of poverty in a sustainable way. The third driver focusing on employment and providing households with an income based on fair work principles has however the potential of making that sustainable change. The most recent unemployment claimant figures for South Lanarkshire as at June 2022 were 6,665 claimants. This represents the lowest figure, not just since the start of the pandemic, but is historically low. We are also aware of significant labour shortages across a range of sectors including a number of roles in the council and wider public sector which indicates there is an opportunity that has not existed to this extent previously to make greater inroads into this poverty target than before. The approach to employability may however need to innovate to focus on the capacities of applicants and subsequent development in skills in role rather than traditional employability training which has focused on what cannot currently do.
- 4.3. We set out to ensure that the LCPAR provides background information, a progress report on South Lanarkshire activity and an action plan (currently organised around the 3 child poverty drivers).
- 4.4. Data published by the Child Poverty Action Group on 12 June shows that child poverty in South Lanarkshire fell from 21.5% in 2014/2015 to 19.6% in 2020/2021. In real terms this represents 1,180 children less living in poverty locally. Overall, this is the 7th largest percentage decrease out of the 32 Scottish local authorities, and the largest number of children in any authority. Despite this, there is much work still to be done.

5. The 2022/2023 LCPAR and Next Steps

- 5.1. Throughout the last year, the partnership writing group has worked with the Improvement Service to take a fresh approach to identifying local areas for improvement. This work has been supported by the Council's Corporate Management Team, and in particular the Director of Health and Social Care.
- 5.2. The draft report is attached as Appendix 2 and continues to build upon the good work of previous years. This year, we have taken a different approach to writing the report and focused on what would make it live and relevant for families living in South Lanarkshire. As a result the document is shorter and more focused on case studies and examples. The detailed monitoring of actions over the past year which had previously appeared as part of the report are now included with this paper as Appendix 3 in order to allow for scrutiny. The main priorities for the forthcoming year are presented in Appendix 4, with an emphasis on improvement areas, such as routine enquiry, parental employability and cost of living issues.
- 5.3. We recognise that the cost of living crisis will have an impact on all families in South Lanarkshire, and particularly on those already struggling with lower incomes. This is an area which the partnership group continues to monitor and develop actions around throughout the year. Monitoring includes the work of research and data sub groups who identify trends and interesting practice to present to the partners. The challenge which is being faced is not underestimated.
- 5.4. With the publication of the Scottish Government's new Child Poverty National Delivery Plan for 2022 to 2026, Best Start Bright Futures, the possibility of becoming a national pathfinder became available. South Lanarkshire has expressed an interest in this and a decision is expected around August 2022 as to which areas will be identified as pathfinders.
- 5.5. One issue which has been identified by many local authorities is that producing a yearly plan can be challenging when designed and delivering complex pieces of work. With this in mind, the partners have discussed the creation of a 3 year strategy in 2023, with an annual

update report on progress. This meets the requirements of the legislation, allows for longitudinal development of activities to meet outcomes, and reflects the timescale of the national delivery plan. With this in mind, we are seeking approval to take this approach to planning and monitoring work going forward.

5.6. Listening to the voices of families and communities experiencing poverty issues is a crucial feature of our work around children and families, and we continue to develop our approaches to this. We have been in discussion with the Poverty Alliance who are seeking funding from the Scottish Government to work in partnership in the development of a 'mini public' approach in South Lanarkshire. This 'Panel' model from the mini public would be used to generate proposals that would inform our approach to addressing child poverty. The mini public would also serve as the basis for establishing a longer term approach to engagement focusing on low incomes and poverty.

5.7 Whether this is successfully funded or not, we continue to plan better ways to engage with families and ensure their voice is at the heart of our planning for future activity.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no immediate employee implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Any financial implications will be met within existing budgets.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

8.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

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 its partners and proactive PR approach will be required.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

10.1. In developing the new LCPAR, a new Equality Impact Assessment has been completed along with a Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment. These are attached as Appendix 5 and will be published on the website along with the LCPAR.

11. Children's Rights Considerations

11.1 A Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the work to develop the LCPAR.

11.2 The work to engage children, young people and families in developing the plan is central to our continuing commitment to the UNCRC and in particular the following Articles:-

- ◆ **Article 6 (life, survival and development)** every child has the right to be kept safe from harm, the right to be alive, survive and develop through life
- ◆ **Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)** every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
- ◆ **Article 13 (freedom of expression)** every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law
- ◆ **Article 27 (adequate standard of living)** every child has the right to a safe place to live, food and clothing

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

15 July 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs

Priorities

- ◆ We will work to put people first and reduce inequality
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Our children and young people thrive

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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