

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 August 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Present the Local Child Poverty Report 2021 for approval

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress in developing our third Local Child Poverty Action Report be noted;
- (2) that the “step change” approach taken by the Child Poverty Working Group be noted; and
- (3) that the draft Local Child Poverty Report, attached as Appendix 1, be approved for publication

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 maximising the impact of advice services, continued focus on reducing the Cost of the School Day and providing suitable employability support. In addition, the report is cognizant of the impact of the Covid- 19 pandemic and the need to ensure continued awareness of the challenges which may arise for families as a result of this.

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.

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

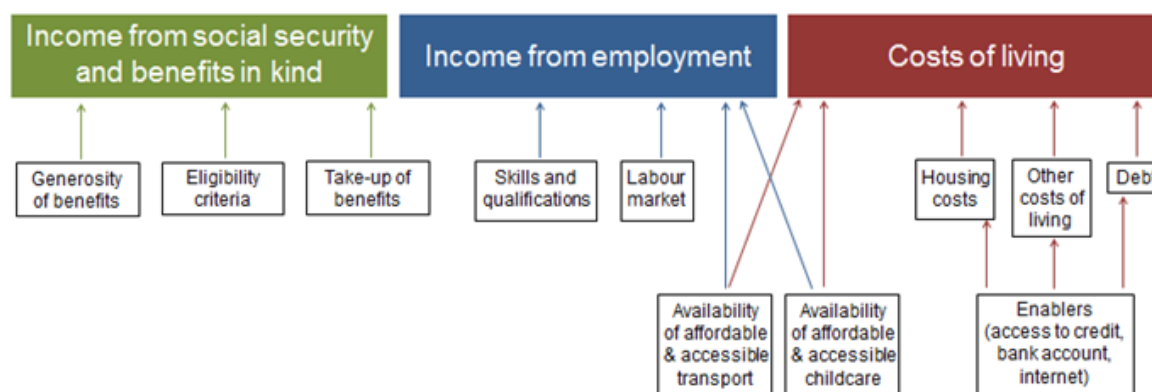
to tackling Child Poverty; effectively a step-change in tackling child poverty. Where local partners are continuing with existing activity, they should be clear about the supporting evidence base indicating its effectiveness.

- 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 Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board meeting on 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. 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 & 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 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).
- 4.3 One area for improvement is the information gathered from those with lived experience of poverty. This has been key in identifying actions for the plan, however, we think we can be much better at supporting partners to engage with families and communities in developing future actions.

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, although this is not a statutory deadline. However, the impact of the COVID-19 has meant that work on the report has been

delayed slightly and will now be published by the end of August 2021. This reclaims 2 months on last year's publication date of October 2020 and is on target for a return to June publication in 2022.

5.2. It is accepted that there will be a longer term negative economic impact as a result of the pandemic further aggravating inequalities. 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 already being faced in reducing child poverty are likely to have increased and require further consideration going forward.

5.3 In attempting to understand the impact of COVID-19, we have established a small Research Sub-group with the main task of sourcing, collating and analysing recent studies and reports on child poverty in general and the impact of the pandemic in particular. The group has only just begun to report their findings and this will be a key feature of our work in the short to medium term.

6.1 The 2021/2022 plan and ongoing activity

6.1. The proposed plan is attached as Appendix 1 and as the third iteration, builds upon the good work of previous years. Continuing to focus on the 3 drivers of Cost of Living, Income from Benefits and Income from Employment, and making use of the data we have and the knowledge and experience of our local families and staff, key action areas have been identified and are outlined in section 6.2. As in previous years, a summary report will also be produced.

6.2. As the planning evolves, we continue to focus on areas for improvement, identified by the working group from reporting upon last year's plan and in identifying unmet need. These are presented within the draft LCPAR and include:-

Chapter 1. Increased income from benefits and entitlements

- ◆ Ensure the impact of advice services are maximised, including better digital support and engagement opportunities and face to face opportunities in communities as appropriate, especially when communicating changes in benefits and entitlements

Chapter 2. Reducing the costs of living

- ◆ Continue developing additional childcare/early learning hours to help parents who are working, or progressing towards work
- ◆ Continue to extend the Cost of the School Day activity in our schools
- ◆ Identifying further actions to support access to affordable transport solutions
- ◆ Providing additional activity to support key targeted initiatives e.g. school holiday programmes
- ◆ Understanding how behaviour change can impact on household income

Chapter 3. Increasing income from employment

- ◆ Ensure that parents, care experienced young people and young people with disabilities have access to appropriate employability support

6.3. We will continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic and any further challenges which may arise to mitigate an increase in child poverty. The Research Sub-group will take the lead in this activity, ensuring that new evidence and research informs our work and decision making. Lived experience feedback from our communities will be a key part of this evidence.

6.4 We will work with the Improvement Service to develop activity to address areas for improvement, step change activity and additionality designed to further mitigate the

impact of poverty on families. It is likely that this may also include developing links with other authority areas where good practice has been identified.

6.5 It is intended that supported improvement activity will begin in September, with sessions facilitated by the Improvement Service and will inform the content of the 2022/2023 LCPAR, as well as the activity of the Child Poverty Working Group in general. Senior managers will be invited to participate in the improvement sessions to support the process and provide high level guidance with identified areas of step change.

6.6 As part of this approach to developing our planning, listening to the voices of families and communities experiencing poverty issues is crucial and will be a feature of our improvement work.

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. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

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

10. Other Implications

10.1. 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 a proactive PR approach will be required.

11. Equality Impact Assessment

11.1. In developing the new LCPAR, a new Equality Impact Assessment will be completed along with a Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment

12. Children's Rights Considerations

12.1 A Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the work to develop the LCPAR.

12.2 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

28 July 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve the Quality of life for everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Focussed on people and their needs; Working with and respecting others; Fair, open and sustainable; Excellent Employer
- ◆ 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

- Executive Committee 16 December 2020

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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