

## **Child Poverty and Local Child Poverty Action Reports:**

**Child poverty means** growing up in families without the resources to ‘obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities’ which are the norm in 21st century Scotland (Townsend, 1979). Children are considered to be living in poverty if they live in households with less than 60% of median household income. This is the key measure used by UK and Scottish Government. (CPAG). In recent figures the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020v2 noted that Argyll and Bute contained 10.4% of the 20% most deprived Data Areas in Scotland and 11.2% of the 20% most income deprived data zones. **Data from the charity “End Child Poverty” last published in May 2019, estimated Argyll and Bute as having 20% of children living in poverty** (All poverty rates are calculated on an after housing costs basis. Households are living in poverty if their household income [adjusted to account for household size] is less than 60% of the median household income).

**In 2017 the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act** came into force as an attempt to put in place measures that would reduce the concerning increase in child poverty, both on a national and local level. To evidence the need for such action the Scottish Government commissioned research which found that by 2030/31, if no action was taken, it was estimated that 38% of children would be in relative poverty, 32% of children would be in absolute poverty, 17% of children would be in combined low income and material deprivation and 16% of children would be in persistent poverty. The key reason for these projected rises was seen as the announced UK Government cuts, primarily the benefit freeze and the two child limit on tax credits.

**The 2017 Act set into in law four targets relating to ending child poverty**, which the Scottish Government committed to trying to achieve by 2030. The targets for children living in households in Scotland are that:

- less than 10% of children live in relative poverty (relative poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the year taking account of the size and composition of the household);
- less than 5% of children live in absolute poverty (absolute poverty is less than 60% of average household income for the financial year beginning 1 April 2010);
- less than 5% of children live in combined low income and material deprivation (low income is defined as less than 70% of average household income for the year, material deprivation is when families are unable to afford three or more items out of a list of basic necessities);
- less than 5% of children live in persistent poverty (persistent poverty is where a child has lived in relative poverty for three out of the last four years).

These are all measured after housing costs are deducted. The Act also sets out interim targets which are to be met in the financial year beginning 1 April 2023.

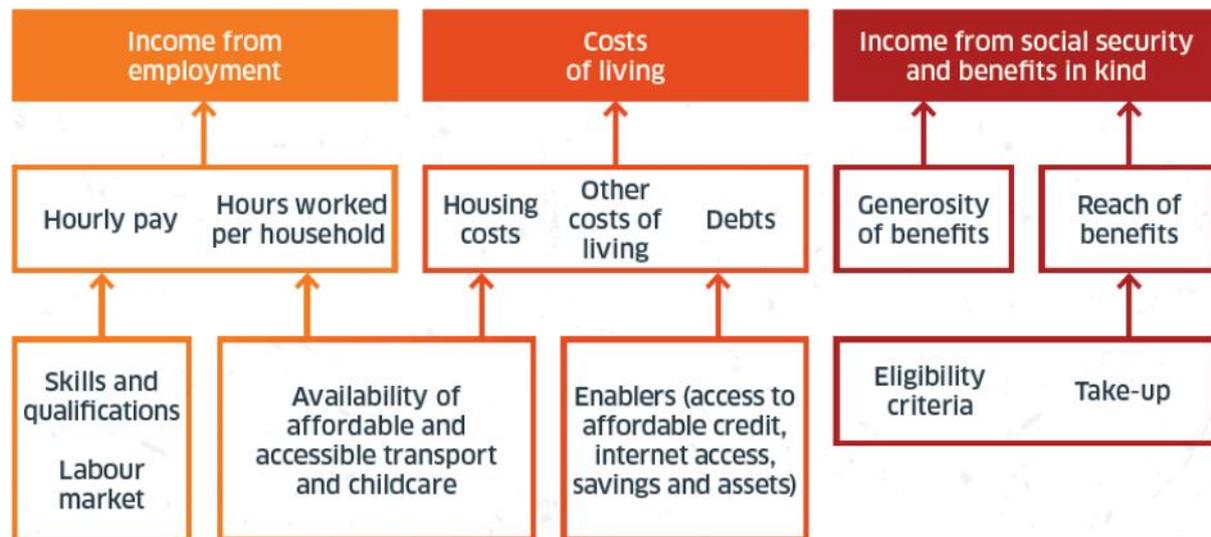
The Scottish Government produced its national Child Poverty Action Plan and, in June 2019, all 32 Scottish Council areas produced their own local Child Poverty Action Plans. Local action plans, as with the national one, were based primarily on identifying measures to combat the three drivers of poverty and also to address the impact and experience of poverty on for children and families.

**The Government guidance also asked that the Local Child Poverty Action Reports gave consideration to specific groups:**

- Lone parents
- Families where a member of the household is disabled
- Families with 3 or more children

- Minority ethnic families
- Families where the youngest child is under 1
- Mothers aged under 25.

**Income through employment, income through benefits and the cost of living.**



**Local Child Poverty Action Plans must also link with other key plans including:**

- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.
- Fairer Scotland Duty: This is an overarching strategic duty on public bodies (including local authorities). It has interactions with the Equality Act 2010; Scotland Act 2016; and came into force on 1 April 2018.
- Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
- Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

In 2020 local authorities are also required to produce a “Children’s Rights Report” and on 01/09/2020 the First Minister announced that a UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child) Incorporation Bill as part of Scotland's 2020/21 Programme for Government.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.  
[https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\\_united\\_nations\\_convention\\_on\\_the\\_rights\\_of\\_the\\_child.pdf?\\_ga=2.174658018.1999023234.1593702630-61273816.1593702630](https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.174658018.1999023234.1593702630-61273816.1593702630)

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; in child friendly language**  
<https://sites.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

**In Argyll and Bute's first Child Poverty Action Plan, published in June 2019, we set out our vision as:**

*We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is a shared responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a difference.*

**The Plan 2019:**

[https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/child\\_poverty\\_action\\_plan\\_0.pdf](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/child_poverty_action_plan_0.pdf)

We consulted with children and young people, via School Councils and this demonstrated that children and young people are concerned about child poverty and want to be involved in tackling it and to be consulted. It is intended that this engagement will be continued and increase going forward. The Covid19 crisis has disrupted this and work on the plan during 2020. The Scottish Government delayed the release of their own Child Poverty Delivery Plan review "Every Child Every Chance" until August 2020 and local authorities were not required to produce local reports by June but do need to produce an annual review of their original plans by the end of 2020.

### **Why is it so important to Commit to Tackling Child Poverty?**

Experiencing child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children. For example, Scottish Government statistics show:

- 61% of low-income families with children in Scotland can't afford to make regular savings of £10 a month or more.
- 51% report that they don't have a small amount of money to spend each week on themselves.
- 10% can't afford to have friends of their children round for tea or a snack once a fortnight.

### **We also know that:**

- Children from higher income families significantly outperform those from low income households at ages 3 and 5. By age 5 there is a gap of ten months in problem solving development and of 13 months in vocabulary (Source: JRF). The Growing up in Scotland study recently found that there is still a gap in language ability between more and less advantaged children as children reach the last years of primary school. This is the case regardless of whether the gap is measured with respect to family income, area deprivation or the parent's level of education. (Source: GUS)
- Three year olds in households with incomes below £10,000 are two and a half times more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000 (Source: Donald Hirsch).
- There are strong links between the experience of child poverty and poor mental health. Some studies suggest that children living in low-income households are nearly three times as likely to suffer mental health problems than their more affluent peers (Source: JRF; Audit Scotland).
- Children from lower income households are also more likely than children from more affluent households to experience behavioural and emotional problems. (Source: University of Edinburgh)

(Child Poverty Action Group)

Conclusion:

Addressing child poverty in Scotland got off to an enthusiastic start in 2018 - 2019 with the Scottish Government and local authorities producing carefully considered but nevertheless optimistic plans

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/pages/3/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-first-year-progress-report-2018-19/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-second-year-progress-report-2019-20/pages/3/>

You will see from the Argyll and Bute plan that we have been part of that and work has been undertaken in areas such as employability; advice services and income maximisation, automation of benefits like free school meals and school clothing grants, Housing Policies that support the vulnerable, procurement policies that support equalities and community development; addressing fuel poverty, work by key 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners in tackling the impacts of poverty, Skills Development Scotland improving employability skills; Colleges and Universities offering additional supports to those facing challenges; development of the Food Consortium and the Digital Connections Project delivering devices to help people get online and connected.

Covid19 and the economic impact of the measures that needed to be taken to keep people safe, will certainly have a serious impact on child poverty and see rates rise, perhaps considerably. In addition we don't yet know what the effects of Brexit will be at the end of this year; whatever the longer term picture, it can safely be said that there will be short term economic disruption during transition. In light of this the Child Poverty Group in Argyll and Bute, led by Joanna MacDonald, will continue to engage with all partners to build on the work that has been done and achieve positive change.

Mandy Sheridan