

REPORT TO MARR AREA COMMITTEE – 16 APRIL 2024

TACKLING POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES – ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This report updates Committee on progress made delivering the priorities and outcomes of the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership Group, including the Local Child Poverty Action Report which supports the Aberdeenshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority 'Reducing Poverty'.

1.2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Acknowledge and support the progress made in tackling this agenda and provide comments on the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Annual Reports. The final draft reports along with comments from Area Committees will be reported to the Communities Committee on the 6th June 2024.

1.2.2 Identify any specific local concerns which the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership could be asked to consider, as part of the development of further plans;

1.2.3 Provide comments on the future of the Aberdeenshire Information and Advice Framework. Comments from Area Committees will inform the future model which will be agreed at Communities Committee on the 6th June 2024.

2 Decision-Making Route

2.1 The Scottish Government has an explicit commitment to ending child poverty through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 ('the Act') which outlines a statutory requirement to reduce the number of children who live in poverty. The Act also places a statutory duty on Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare and submit, to the Scottish Government, an annual "Local Child Poverty Action Report" ('the Action Report') that identifies what action has been taken in the previous 12 months and those actions that will be taken in the future to reduce child poverty.

2.2 The most recent Local Child Poverty Action Report has been developed alongside Community Planning partners, most notably with NHS Grampian, which has the joint statutory duty with Aberdeenshire Council to produce the Action Report. This report can be found in Appendix 2.

2.3 Reducing poverty is one of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities which is led by the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group, chaired by Amanda Roe, Buchan Area Manager. The Action Report contributes to the LOIP priority.

- 2.4 On 5th September 2019, the Communities Committee approved the Aberdeenshire Information and Advice Delivery Framework, which is funded and supported by the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership. When approving the Framework, the Communities Committee agreed that Area Committees would be informed of progress in relation to delivery of the Framework as part of the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Annual Report - "Towards a Fairer Aberdeenshire 2023" which can be found in Appendix 3.
- 2.5 In 2021, as part of the commitment from Aberdeenshire Council to reduce poverty and inequalities, a reserve of £3.5 million was secured to support this agenda. This funding is non-recurring, as a reserve, it is not time limited. On the 14th October 2021 Communities Committee, the policy committee which has responsibility for Tackling Poverty and Inequalities, approved a strategic framework for investment. On the 28th March 2024 the updated framework was presented and approved by the Communities Committee. The framework can be found in Appendix 4.
- Food Insecurity
 - Fuel Poverty and Housing
 - Rural Poverty including, transport.
 - Financial Inclusion
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing
 - Employability
 - Children and Young People
- 2.6 This report has not been considered by the Area Committees previously.

3 Discussion

- 3.1 On the 24th March 2022, the Scottish Government published the second version of the Tackling Poverty Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 - 2026, Best Start Bright Futures. The plan builds on the foundations of Every Child, Every Chance and continues to focus on the three drivers of child poverty. The plan also continues to highlight the six priority family groups.
[Supporting documents - Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-petitions/consultations/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-to-2026/)
- 3.2 The Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership was set up by the Community Planning Partnership to coordinate strategic development across partners. Poverty is technically defined as when a person's household income (adjusted for the size and composition of the household) is less than 60% of the UK average income. However, poverty is much more than just low income. The factors that generate poverty are wide-ranging and encompass many aspects of day-to-day life such as health, housing, educational attainment, employability, and access to services.
- 3.3 The Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership have adopted the Joseph Rowntree Foundation definition of Poverty which is –

Poverty is when your resources are well below your minimum needs. Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.

3.4 The approach to tackling poverty focuses on early intervention and prevention – tackling the root causes and building peoples’ capabilities through income maximisation, employability and promoting positive life chances. The priorities of the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership are:

- Reducing the number of children / people living in poverty;
- Preventing children / people falling into poverty;
- Enabling children to live poverty free in adult life; and
- Improve the wellbeing of people living in poverty.

3.5 The most recent Child Poverty figures from the UK government national statistics for 2022 estimates 8799 children under 16 living in poverty across Aberdeenshire. Data source - <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

In Marr 1,625 children were living in Poverty in 2021/22. The table below highlights those children 16 and under living in absolute and relative poverty. The number of children and young people living in poverty in working households is 1,193.

Area	Absolute	Relative	Total
Huntly, Strathbogie and Howe of Alford	407	490	897
Banchory and Mid Deeside	107	195	302
Aboyne, Upper Deeside and Donside	193	233	426

A breakdown of the data used can be found in Appendix 5

3.6 One positive project that has been developed with young people in Huntly is a life skills project that covers how to improve mental health, secure employment, money and budgeting and developing positive relationships. The project is targeted at those who have left school and supports 8 to 10 young people each week. This is a partnership project between Barnardos, Gordon Rural Action and TP&I young engagement worker.

3.7 Partners working is key to deliver positive outcomes for those living across Aberdeenshire. They work together to support individuals, families and low-income households. The report “Towards a Fairer Aberdeenshire 2023” has been

developed to outline the impact of this partnership work. One project that has had a positive impact on a targeted community is outlined below -

Reminiscence Project - Older people

The North East Local Association (WEA) delivered 5 face-to-face Reminiscence Courses for elderly and vulnerable people in 5 sheltered housing - Ballater, Banchory, Inch, Rhynie and Torphins.

The project aims are –

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness through increasing social interactions.
- Provide mental stimulation
- Improve health and wellbeing through increasing social connections and confidence.

Over 50 residents participated in this programme which reduced isolation, improved wellbeing and gave staff and carers a better understanding of those they care for. Those who took part had positive feedback –

‘Nice to have a laugh and fun as I don’t get out much.’ ‘Oh yes, it gets the brain going’.

“We meet and talk to people we may not normally be in conversation with.”

‘I get to see more of the other residents; great opportunity to come together’.

- 3.8 The Information and Advice Delivery Framework has been implemented over the last few years with Money Advice and Welfare Rights Workers linked into Foodbanks, Progress In Dialogue, Housing Service and GP Practices. A rural Outreach Worker covers the Aboyne, Ballater and Strathdon areas. Training has also been delivered to the Income Maximisation team within Gordon Rural Action.

The contract for the community-based services was awarded to Kincardine and Mearns Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) who lead the Aberdeenshire CAB Consortium. The contract started on the 6th January 2020 and after a review, was extended for a further 24 months. The consortium development provides online support and an Aberdeenshire free phone helpline. The existing contract ends on the 4th January 2025.

On the 28th March 2024 Communities Committee agreed that Area Committees should be consulted on the future of the Information and Advice Framework. This Committee is being asked for its views on the options outlined in Appendix 6. The views will then be presented to Communities Committee on the 6th June 2024.

- 3.9 Over the last 12 months 1,387 clients have accessed Information and Advice Services in the Marr Area. Income maximisation has been challenging throughout the last 12 months however for those clients in Marr the framework has secured approximately £663,802 client financial gain. The main issues that clients are receiving support for are benefits, debt, housing, energy debt and support with the rising cost of living.

4. Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 The work and outcomes delivered through the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities partnership helps delivery of all of the council priorities.

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Learning for Life Health and Wellbeing
Our Environment	Climate Change Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economic Growth Infrastructure and public assets

Specifically, it supports the outcome to 'Improve the life chances of people at risk of falling into poverty, or already living in poverty.

4.2 The activities and outcomes delivered through the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership, helps deliver against the CPP Local Outcomes Improvement Plans, Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan and links with a range of strategies including Criminal Justice, Housing, Transport and Economic Development.

This report helps deliver against Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan Priority of Promoting Wellbeing / Resilience – Addressing Inequality / Child Poverty which over arches the strategic priorities. It also delivers on the LOIP Priorities, Reducing Poverty and contributes to the Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyles actions.

4.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		x	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland	IIA attached as Appendix 1		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 1		
Climate Change and Sustainability		x	
Health and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 1		
Town Centre First		x	

4.4 No staffing implications have been identified and it is anticipated that the ambitions set out in the new Child Poverty Action Plan will be met from within existing resources, where necessary there will be changes to the way in which services are delivered at no additional cost to partner organisations.

Funding opportunities such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are being used to secure additional funding for the Information and Advice framework.

In addition, the Scottish Government's Delivery Plan, 'Best Start, Bright Futures', highlights a range of funding opportunities which will come onstream during the life of that plan. One of these areas is the Cash First Fund and the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership has secured £200,000 through to 2026 to continue to develop the cash first approach.

4.5 An integrated impact assessment was carried out in 2021 and is attached in Appendix 1. This assessment still reflects the current work being undertaken and there is still a positive impact as follows –

- The work which is delivered and monitored through the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership aims to maximise income and improve employability for people on a low income and can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage, which helps meet our aims under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- The children and young peoples' rights and wellbeing implications are likely to close the inequalities gap and support improved quality of life, which may contribute to children and young people living a poverty free life in adulthood.

4.6 The following risk has been identified, as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP007 – Social Risks, changes in population Poverty and Social Inequality [Corporate Risk Register](#)

The following risk have been identified through the Business Services Directorate risks: BSSR001 - Our young people have improved life chances

- Difficulty in sourcing data to report KPIs
- Challenges in sourcing sustainable funding streams

[Link to risk register page on website](#)

The integrated approach taken in developing the new Child Poverty Action Plan will ensure improved data collection and sustained outcomes through partnership resourcing.

5 Scheme of Governance

5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

5.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B1.2 of the List of Committee Powers in the Scheme of Governance, as it relates to the Committees' powers to consider, comment on, make recommendations to Services and any other appropriate Committee on any matter or policy which impacts its Area.

Rob Simpson
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Annette Johnston, Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Coordinator
Date 4th April 2024

List of Appendices –

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment.

Appendix 2 – Draft Local Child Poverty Action Report

Appendix 3 – Draft “Towards a Fairer Aberdeenshire 2023 / 24”

Appendix 4 - Framework for investment 2024/25

Appendix 5 – Local data

Appendix 6 – Information and advice framework options.