



Towards A Fairer Aberdeenshire

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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INTRODUCTION

The Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Annual Report offers a clear strategic direction for supporting its at-risk residents. Key initiatives such as the Cash First Project, signal a data-driven, broad-based approach. Emphasising coproduction of policies with those with lived experience and ensuring support even for off-grid households indicates an inclusive, grassroots strategy. With a focus on strengthening partnerships and enhancing access, especially in rural areas, Aberdeenshire is forging a path where every resident, regardless of socio-economic background, is poised to succeed.

The Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Partnership was set up by the Community Planning Partnership to coordinate strategic development across partners in order to:

- Improve the lives of disadvantaged people across Aberdeenshire.
- Utilise the funding to address poverty holistically.
- Reduce the number of households living in poverty.
- Prevent households falling into poverty.
- Enable children to live poverty free in adult life.
- Improve the wellbeing of people living in poverty.

Aberdeenshire is a large rural area therefore it is not only equality we are focused on but equity especially those that are living in rural and remote communities along with those that feel unable to access support and services.

This report will outline progress made throughout 2023, outcomes achieved, challenges faced, highlight good practice, how resources have been allocated and future areas of development.

The initiatives highlighted in this report provides a comprehensive roadmap for Aberdeenshire's future. By addressing these key developmental areas, Aberdeenshire is positioning itself to be a region where every resident, irrespective of their economic status, can thrive.

Definition of Poverty

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.

The Tackling Poverty & Inequalities partners have agreed to use the definition from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) when describing the work within Aberdeenshire.

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.

Policy Context

The Scottish Government has made commitment to reducing poverty & inequalities across Scotland. The work around tackling poverty spans a number of policy areas. To ensure positive outcomes are achieved for those who are at risk of or are living in poverty or experiencing inequalities it is important that there is an integrated approach around the policy landscape. The main duty associated with this agenda is The **Fairer Scotland Duty** which came into force on 1 April 2018.

This duty places a legal responsibility on named public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-public-bodies-easy-read-version/>

Drivers of Poverty

The Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan - Bright Start, Bright Futures highlights 3 main drivers of poverty:

- Employment: Income from parents' work and earnings is insufficient to lift them from poverty.
 - Household costs: The costs of living that households must cover are too high.
- Social Security: Income from Social Security has been cut back significantly, particularly for families with children.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/>

Aberdeenshire's Approach

Over the last 12 months the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the rising cost of living has had a further impact on those who are at risk of or are living in poverty. Those within the priority families and with protected characteristics are being adversely affected. As a partnership this has been recognised and further focus has been taken to target those most effected.

In Aberdeenshire our approach to tackling poverty focusses on early intervention and prevention. Tackling the root causes of poverty and building people's capabilities through income maximisation, employability and promoting positive life chances.

A partnership approach is vital in ensuring opportunities and services are accessible and relevant. This agenda is complex however there are streams which have been developed and are linked together to ensure better outcomes for all.



Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA)

Health & Wellbeing



AVA allocates and manages the Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund with just over £640,000 to share with eligible community organisations and groups across Aberdeenshire. The overarching aim of the Fund is to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population, with a particular focus on:

- Tackling isolation and loneliness.
- Addressing mental health inequalities.
- Supporting local groups and organisations to deliver support activities.
- Providing opportunities for people to connect with each other.
- Supporting recovery.

After applications were assessed, 58 projects were funded through the grant scheme. Successful applications were varied in their nature but they all clearly linked to the aims and priorities of the fund. Some examples are –

- A local Men's Shed started to offer access to a warm space and a free hot meal one day a week. The space offered opportunities for socialising and connections to be made. One grateful beneficiary told the organisers 'this is the only day in the week I don't have to go to bed by 4pm'.
- A Dementia support group received funding to expand a 'carers break' service to a new area. These sessions allowed carers to have a break from their responsibilities with one beneficiary saying, 'you wouldn't believe how much of a difference this makes to mum coming along each week, she is so happy when she comes home'.
- An Autism related peer support group received funding to run a short pilot programme of support technique learning sessions for parents or carers. The feedback from this pilot enabled the group to successfully apply for NHS funding to expand the availability of the sessions.
- A support group for older people with debilitating health conditions received funding to restart support meetings with accessible transport being provided. For some people attending this was their first trip out of their house since the lockdown. 20 people regularly attend the meetings with many in their 80s and 90s.

Partnership Approach to Priority Areas

Health & Social Care – Healthy Eating Active Life (HEAL)

The HEAL Strategic Partnership Group aims to support people living in Aberdeenshire to have a healthy weight. The group have adopted a ‘Whole System Approach’ (WSA) evidence-based method to identify and focus on action that will make healthy eating and active living possible and achievable for Aberdeenshire communities.

The partnership is led through public health and a small team have engaged with local communities and partners to develop 35 HEAL actions - <https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/HEAL-ACTIONS-2023-2026.pdf>

Partners are supported to contribute to these actions through the monitoring framework -

<https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/HEAL-Action-Monitoring-Framework-2023-2026-1.docx>

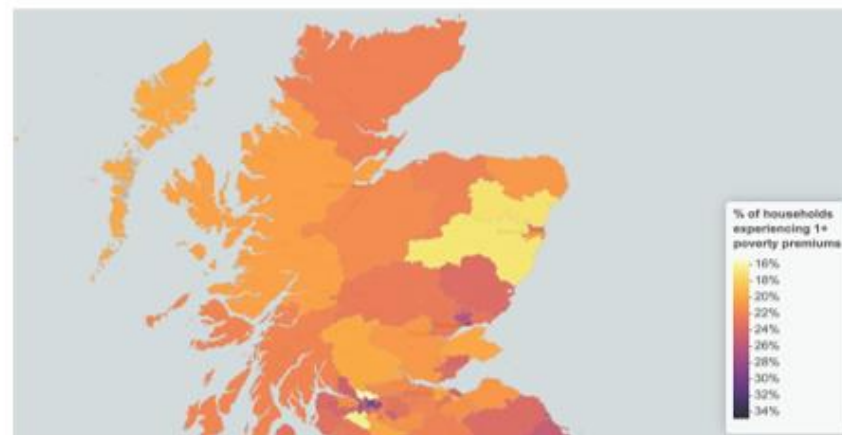
These actions link into the Fair Food Partnership agenda and supports low income households to improve their health and wellbeing outcomes.

Poverty Alliance – Rural Premium

Aberdeenshire is one of Scotland’s 14 rural authorities and is defined as ‘mainly rural’. We are the fourth largest geographical local authority in Scotland. The economy of rural Scotland is both similar to, and tightly integrated with the economy of urban Scotland. However distinct differences, often related to distance and scarcity, remain between urban and rural economies. These differences may contribute to an even greater level of inequality particularly for low-income households.

The term Poverty Premium has been around for a number of years and it is used to highlight that those in poverty pay more for services and essentials such as food and housing. This is due to the limited options people face if they are living in poverty. There is a higher number of people on pre-paid meters for their electricity and gas, households pay more for credit, insurance, more likely to get charged for accessing their own money and are unable to take up savings from switching to cheaper options for household bills including insurance. The information below demonstrates the additional costs low-income households face in different areas of Aberdeenshire.

What does this all look like in Aberdeenshire?



Banff and Buchan

Total cost of poverty premium: £ 3,732,955
% of households experiencing any premium: 20.9%

Prepayment meter premium: £ 459,323
Non-standard billing premium: £ 729,067
Non-switching premium: £ 1,295,928
Area-based insurance premium: £ 368,903
Single item insurance premiums: £ 397,073
Access to money premium: £ 51,580
Higher-cost credit premium: £ 431,081

Average cost to households in poverty: £ 429

West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine

Total cost of poverty premium: £ 2,559,588
% of households experiencing any premium: 17.0%

Prepayment meter premium: £ 216,868
Non-standard billing premium: £ 650,605
Non-switching premium: £ 952,084
Area-based insurance premium: £ 38,888
Single item insurance premiums: £ 347,745
Access to money premium: £ 41,212
Higher-cost credit premium: £ 312,186

Average cost to households in poverty: £ 393

Gordon

Total cost of poverty premium: £ 2,910,810
% of households experiencing any premium: 17.2%

Prepayment meter premium: £ 228,770
Non-standard billing premium: £ 705,054
Non-switching premium: £ 1,108,216
Area-based insurance premium: £ 87,040
Single item insurance premiums: £ 402,196
Access to money premium: £ 44,903
Higher-cost credit premium: £ 334,630

Average cost to households in poverty: £ 397

SIMD data doesn’t give us an accurate understanding of where people are experiencing poverty in rural and island Scotland or of people’s experience of poverty.

Income based measures do not take account of the higher cost of living in rural and island Scotland (the ‘rural premium’): The minimum cost of living in rural Scotland is between 15% to 30% higher than urban areas of the UK.

A partnership has been developed with the Poverty Alliance to explore what the Rural Poverty Premium looks like in Aberdeenshire. The project will work with local people and partners to identify the challenges and support new projects that address rural poverty. This project will also link into the development at an area level and the outcomes and learning will inform national policy.

Partnership Approach to Priority Areas

Aberdeenshire's Employability Partnership

The partnership provides a joined-up approach to providing a range of employment services and opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals living in both urban and rural areas of Aberdeenshire to enable citizens to enter, sustain and progress in the labour market.

The partners have developed a strategic plan which has been informed by lived experience local network and use local data and metrics to inform decisions on locality need and interventions. No One Left Behind has given the local employability partners greater scope to tackle the needs that they are aware of in the local dimension: a Service Standards Framework is being devised alongside work on developing a Customer Charter, to ensure quality of delivery. The plan can be found using this link –

<https://employmentconnect.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Aberdeenshire-LEP-3-Year-Plan-Overview-002.pdf>

The partners including the Employment Support Team, within Aberdeenshire Council, have supported 1,671 clients resulted in **184** clients entering employment, **7** entering self-employment, **1** entering a Modern Apprenticeship, **34** into Volunteering, **29** into accredited training and **36** into Further or Higher Education.





Aberdeenshire's Employability Partnership

Case Study 1

JB is LTU, has lived life doing the bare minimum to get through the day. He's engaged consistently in counselling sessions where we've explored his past a lot and made sense of his childhood trauma. Since the sessions began, he's now been able to accept and engage in support from the housing department, has cleaned up his house and resolved long term problems such as living without heating for 8 years!

He's not at the end of the process yet, but definitely moving toward it, we're currently exploring future hopes and his purpose in life. He's considering doing some voluntary work soon to reduce isolation and 'step back into the real world'.

Case Study 2

D was made redundant, aged 60, from a knitwear factory in April 22. He had only had three previous jobs and his last role was for 34 years. As his job was unique to that workplace he was low in confidence and very negative about the future.

He had served an apprenticeship and worked as a Greenkeeper for 6 years in the 1980's so we looked at Seasonal Landscaping posts. D was hesitant and concerned that his fitness levels were not good enough for the role and felt that his experience was outdated. After some coaching and assisting with his application he was selected for an interview, however this didn't go well as his negative attitude came through and it was clear that we needed further work with interview skills.

D then picked up a temporary retail/warehousing post for 6 months with a local charity and this proved a turning point; he could see that he could actually fit in to another role. After he was paid off in December 22 the next round of Seasonal Landscaping posts were advertised for 2023 season. After helping D to apply again and discussing interview skills with him again he was successful in gaining a post in another town. Initially he was quite negative as it involved travelling by bus and he'd have preferred to work locally. D completed his contract, which was extended by 2 months, and on meeting with him again he was keen to apply for the same post again and preferred to travel to the post he had. He has found out that he has been successful again and hopes to start work again in two weeks' time. He has a much more positive approach and has gained so much from working within the landscaping team.

Financial Inclusion Partnership



Financial exclusion affects some of the most vulnerable individuals and families. Research has shown that those living on low incomes, and experiencing forms of disadvantage, are most likely to be affected by financial exclusion.

It is unacceptable that the most vulnerable in our communities should face additional costs to access basic services. The impact of Covid, annual storms and the current climate of the rising cost of living is likely to reduce income in already financially struggling households. Evidence shows that there is an increase in working poor and clients that have no longer the financial resilience to cover essentials such as food and energy bills.

This Partnership has been developed to ensure people can access the relevant advice, information and support enhancing their quality of life through a range of client focused services. Targeting the most vulnerable, disadvantaged groups and individuals, the partnership will develop joined up services which will be accessible across Aberdeenshire, increasing income, reduce stigma, improve health and wellbeing.

Aims

- Improve integration of services to reduce duplication, client trauma and maximise impact of services.
- Improve services which will increase income, reduce people living in poverty and improve their health and wellbeing and enhancing their quality of life.
- Empower individuals, families and the community to identify barriers to access services and develop them that meet their needs.
- Reduce the number of individuals and families living in poverty in Aberdeenshire.
- Raise awareness of forms and drivers of poverty such as Fuel Poverty.

This partnership supports a Cash First approach and was key in securing £200,000 from the Scottish Government to continue to develop that approach in Aberdeenshire. The Cash First Project will allow the partnership to review our referral processes, try new ways of working and ensure local voices are at the centre of any new developments. This project will be in place until March 2026.

This partnership also has developed a training group who have delivered and produced a number of training sessions covering a range of topics – Worried About Money, Gambling Awareness & Welfare Rights all of which can be accessed through the training calendar -

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/v8PzBFn6nVZlm8Cb?ref=Link>

Partnership Approach to Priority Areas
Fair Food Aberdeenshire



Fair Food Aberdeenshire (FFA) believe everyone should have access to affordable and healthy food no matter where they live or how much they earn. The partners take a rights-based approach would like to see access to nutritious food as a basic right. Food is a vital resource to everyone and changing the way we think about food can play a key role in transforming communities. This partnership give the opportunity to look at the whole agenda such as diet related ill health , food waste, food systems and how we can reduce inequalities, increase employment and contribute to climate change.

The partnership has developed a sustainable food plan which is broken down to the following priorities –

Governance & Strategy

Food Security

Food Culture

Food For the Planet

Food Economy

Catering & Procurement.

The partnership has been awarded the Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award for all the work that’s been carried out in the last 2 years.

To access the food plan, food map and a keep up to date with projects and events please use this link –

<https://www.fairfoodaberdeenshire.co.uk/>

Local Projects

Banff & Buchan

Priority Area – Food Insecurity

Fraserburgh & District Men's Shed have supported 25 older men to develop confidence and skills through delivering cooking classes. Energy saving equipment, recipes and store cupboard ingredients have also been bought to ensure they can cook at home resulting in an improved diet. For those that are new to cooking and recently bereaved it has increased their health & wellbeing, cooking skills and reduce isolation.





Local Projects
Buchan

Priority Area – Financial Inclusion

Aberdeen Foyer Financial Inclusion Team works across Buchan to meet the needs of Foyer clients. The team supports individuals to break the cycle of poverty and crisis intervention by enabling them to recognise the root causes of crisis & develop the financial literacy skills and coping strategies required to maximise their income, self-manage their finances, and build resilience. This service provides intensive 1:1 sessions for individuals who are in crisis, including support with benefit applications and food/fuel poverty. The team have supported 61 people with income maximisation services with a client financial gain of £113,932.42.

Case Study

TS is single but shares caring responsibilities for their daughter with ex-partner. The ex-partner was claiming Child Benefit, Scottish Child Payment & child element via Universal Credit but her circumstances changed, and she was no longer eligible to claim those benefits.

After a benefit check it showed client may be eligible to make the claims, assistance was provided for this. At the time of client being referred by work coach he was only in receipt of standard Universal Credit and struggling financially as he had the child 4 days per week which was increasing when his ex-partners hours at work increased. The client was awarded the child element under Universal credit which helped with the relationship between the couple as there was often tension around finance. A referral was also made to the employability team as he is actively seeking work. Ongoing support is in place to establish what hours would work best between the parents to make it work for their child.

Local Projects
Formartine



Priority Area – Children & Young People

Rainbow Rogues is based in Ellon and provide support for families of pre school children who have an additional support need and /or a disability. This organisation secured financial support from Tackling Poverty & Inequalities through the Cash First Project. The funding was to support families to address the pressing issues arising from the rising cost of living, especially in the context of those facing economic challenges during the winter months. These families cannot reduce their energy bills due to the essential life sustaining equipment their children may require. The funding supported 30 families with additional finance, advice and ongoing support to ensure the health and wellbeing of their families were not diversly effected by the financial challenges they faced at that time. 100% of those who were supported reported that the financial support stopped them from getting into additional debt to meet their basic needs.

" the heated blanket stoped us being cold at night & increased our health & wellbeing. "

<https://rainbowrogues.org.uk/>

Priority Area – Health & Wellbeing

Aberdeenshire Council’s Housing Service identified that an increasing number of their clients required support to improve their Health & Wellbeing. The service employs 2 Health & Wellbeing officers who improve outcomes for those who are not in receipt of support services and may be suffering from mental ill health. This service is client focused ensuring those involved can access the support they need ,when they need it which can be housing, employability, health, welfare rights/ financial and wellbeing support. The post has supported 59 clients with 27 no longer requiring support as they have now secured opportunities and services resulting in sustained positive outcomes.

Local Projects

Garioch

Case Study: Ms A

Background

Ms A was staying in a private rental property and had been referred to the Options team because her property was in very poor condition and substandard. The property had no running hot water, no waste pipes for doing washing, mould and dampness throughout the property and infested with rats.

The Link worker received the referral from the Options Officer who was concerned about her mental health and the property condition. A home visit was organised, and Ms A explained that the passing of her late husband had lead to her feeling very isolated in the property. The property had also been broken into, so she was struggling to sleep due to not feeling safe in her property. A discussion took place about where Ms A could get additional support. Ms A agreed to be referred to the mental health improvement and wellbeing service and they offered support with coping strategies to improve her mental health. The Worker also assisted Ms A to attend her GP surgery and speak to the mental health nurse. At the appointment Ms A was prescribed Anti-depressants and gets a follow up call fortnightly from her surgery to see how she is doing.

Outcome

Ms A was assisted by the worker to access her GP and get prescribed medication to assist with her mental health. Ms A was allocated a sheltered housing property. A follow up referral was done to refer her for general housing support to help her settle into her new tenancy and she was assisted to access foodbanks and local services. Ms A said to the mental health link worker she cannot believe she now has heating and hot water and can have as many showers a day as she wants. She has also been linked in with other services in her community and attends the regular events in the sheltered housing complex.

Local Projects

Kincardine & Mearns

Priority Area – Fuel Poverty & Housing

SCARF deliver a range of support packages to people living in Aberdeenshire which reduce their fuel debt and their ongoing energy costs. Scarf's Income Maximisation Officer will carry out a structured assessment of each individual household's circumstances and establish the level and type of support required to provide an immediate positive intervention if necessary and long-term positive outcomes to reduce fuel poverty.

Low-income households will be given support to top up their pre-paid meter and shopping vouchers as part of the Heat and Eat project. The project has supported 284 clients with advice and finance support.



Local Projects

Marr

Priority Area – Employability

Barnardo's Works deliver the Rural Steps project which undertakes a range of employability work with young people in West Aberdeenshire, specifically targeting Huntly, Alford and Strathdon. This course is tailored to the clients needs and includes work experience, delivery of skills course and 1-1 support. This project targets young people furthest from the work market who are living in a rural area. Over the last year 24 young people have been supported to enhance their employability resulting in 7 securing employment or work placements, with local employers.

Case study

'A' secured a new work placement in a childcare setting for care experienced young person. Supported the young person to gain child protection qualifications and working with children qualifications via ALDO. As the employer is funded via Aberdeenshire Council, they are happy to accept these qualifications and offered them a post within their setting. The young person can now develop a career in childcare/early years.

Barnardo's Works
engage ■ train ■ qualify ■ employ

Transport

We know that issues around transport contribute to the rural poverty premium in Aberdeenshire. A number of consultations and engagement has been undertaken over the last few years and when local people and communities are asked about barriers they face, transport is highlighted as one of the top 3 reasons why people can't access services, access childcare, take up employment or training and access affordable food. There is recognition that over the past 12 months there has been a number of reports and consultations taken place around the affordability and accessibility of public transport however the lived experience forums and network identified it as the area which requires closer inspection.

“The situation is more complex for people on low incomes living in rural areas. People in rural areas drive more frequently than those in urban areas. The issue of ‘forced’ car ownership has been identified in both rural and urban but is particularly pronounced in rural areas where lack of public transport means that people can be forced into running a car even if it puts real pressures on their budget”

Caroline Hastings, TP&I project officer was tasked to lead on a project to gain an understanding of all the work going on across Aberdeenshire and beyond. The findings would be pulled together in a report which can be use as a point of reference and evidence of the impact and action around rural transport. A desktop review was carried out along with gathering information from local and national events. The most important evidence came from conversations with families and individuals directly impacted by the inequalities of rural transport.

“Rights-based - evidence shows that people on low incomes are significantly more dependent on public transport to enable them to exercise their rights. For people in rural areas – in particular disabled people – these transport barriers to accessing human rights are even more pronounced. As well as determining access to employment and education opportunities the lack of suitable transport has a detrimental effect on people's ability to achieve the highest standard of physical and mental health. Difficulties in accessing health services was one of the issues that came up most frequently. A survey of disabled people looking at transport in rural areas found that hospitals were the most difficult services to access from a rural area”.

Transport continued

This report highlights ongoing issues experienced by many and very little inclusion or the recognition for ongoing participation for those impacted by the decision-making process. The landscape of national and local strategy, policy and action plans is cluttered and complex with lots of evidence of need and highlighted priorities but very little evidence of delivering what is being asked for and making a difference to people's lives through affordable, accessible, and reliable transport. Poor passenger transport links and service provision do not encourage people to move away from car use if they have access to one. Services are not provided locally in many areas and there is the need to travel for work, education, community connection, affordable food, and childcare. There are a number of recommendations within the report which the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities strategic group will consider and discuss with the wider partnership. The full report can be found using this link -

<https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Aberdeenshire-Transport-May-23-Jan-24-Final.pdf>



Allocating Funding

Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Group allocated £50,000 to empower local parents and young people to invest in community groups and organisations across Aberdeenshire that will benefit young people, families and the wider communities.

Aberdeenshire Youth Rights Committee agreed that they would fund projects that met the at least one of the following priorities –

- 1.To empower young people of Aberdeenshire to have a voice in their community.
- 2.To improve mental and/or physical health in young people.
- 3.Put on free activities for the young people – indoors or outdoors. Day trips, life skill workshops, escape days, adventure activities etc.
- 4.To help young people express their creative side. E.g. arts & crafts, music, gardening, dancing.

The young people agreed to fund 16 projects, the total investment in 2023/24 was £12,768.20 to increase free activities. These projects benefited 478 young people across Aberdeenshire. The remainder of the funding is to be used to deliver a range of youth led events in 2024. These events will look at transport, cost of the school day, impact of stigma and the actions which can be taken at a local, shire and national level.

The Local Voices Forum agreed that they would fund projects that would deliver free activities and improve the health & wellbeing of children, young people, families and the wider community. The wellbeing fund allocated £12,698 to 13 community-based groups which will support 444 children/young people, 135 families and 88 individuals.



Outcomes & Impact



- **1243** people have enhanced their employability skills through targeted training programs, work experience and delivery of supported employment schemes.
- **12,704** households have been supported to reduce household costs.
- **23,482** individuals and their households have been supported through the range of services, opportunities and projects funded through Tackling Poverty & Inequalities.
- Through specialist pathways **1193** clients and their families have been supported to secure additional financial support.
- **401** local voices have been involved in over **15** developments including focusing on transport, reducing the need for foodbanks, reducing stigma and developing tools, training and policies for a range of partners including NHS Grampian.
- **9917** clients accessed information and advice services with a client financial gain of **£6,598,608**



Next Steps

Cash First Approach: This remains an area of ongoing development and Aberdeenshire has secured funding to support this area of work. The Cash First Project aims to provide support for individuals at risk of or experiencing financial. The importance of robust partnerships in this domain cannot be understated. By fortifying these relationships and enhancing referral pathways, the need for crisis intervention can be substantially reduced, creating a more preventative approach.

Co-production of Policies with Lived Experience: There's a growing emphasis on the co-production of policies, services, and opportunities. Engaging with individuals who have firsthand experience of poverty ensures that policies are not just theoretically sound but practically effective and grounded in real-world challenges. A framework of participation is being developed with those local experts. A number of new panels will be developed to support and develop the work around the Rural Poverty Premium and the Cash First Project.

Enhanced Access in Rural and Remote Areas: Aberdeenshire's diverse geography means that some residents live in rural and remote areas. Improving their access to services is critical to ensure that these services are not only reflective of local needs but are also inclusive, leaving no resident unsupported. To reduce barriers for these communities and increase accessibility the recommendations from the Transport Report and the Rural Childcare model will be actioned through the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic group and the wider partnership it represents.

<https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/TPI-ekosgen-Provision-of-Rural-Childcare-Research-and-Model-Review-Report-30-01-2024.pdf>

Budget Allocation Priority Area , Organisation & geographical spread	Progress Update & Outcomes
Children & Young People	
Homestart Consortium The 3 Homestart cover all of Aberdeenshire	An allocation of 15K for each of the 3 Homestarts was agreed to cover the impact of the rising cost of living and build capacity. The funding supported 108 families and the recruitment of 21 volunteers. Reduced waiting lists – 100% to be seen within one week of referral. Increased volunteers/employability skills – 50% increase in volunteer recruitment and therefore volunteers going through ongoing training and initial volunteering preparation course. Increased positive well-being for families – 90% families will report improved mental health and self-esteem, or that they are feeling less isolated. Reduce the development deficit which children have experienced post pandemic. – 81% families will feel better able to support their child(ren)’s development. Increased household income – 61% families will report being better able to manage their budgets
Homestart NE Service is delivered across Buchan and Banff & Buchan	To support parents with children under 5 to buy food, essential goods and reduce fuel costs. Over the winter period 45 families were supported to access energy advice and financial support. The funding was used for those households that had children under 2 and those that had medical conditions that required a higher usage of energy.
Homestart Garioch Service is delivered across Garioch and Formartine area.	To support parents with children under 5 to buy food, essential goods and reduce fuel costs. Over the winter 62 families were supported to access energy advice and financial support to meet the increase in energy costs.

	<p>One family had her tank of oil stolen. She had no money to replace it. She couldn't afford home insurance. She has a child with bad asthma and needs a warm dry house. The funding allowed a quick response for those family not only in crisis but to reduce that risk.</p>
<p>Sailing Trust Summer Programme 2023 Service is delivered in Peterhead</p>	<p>The funding delivered 4 weeks of summer holiday sailing for 48 children living in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty. This project supported working families and encouraged children and young people to develop new skills and confidence A Monday night session has been developed to operate over the winter to keep contact with the young people who they have worked with. Food is given to those that attend and a chance to build positive relations with peer leaders and tutors</p>
<p>Youth Poverty Engagement Projects: The Space – Peterhead Wellbeing Project –“ Mind Yur Heed” - Huntly, Kenmay, Kintore, Peterhead Aberdeenshire Youth Rights Committee (AYRC) – Across Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>2 Youth Poverty Engagement Workers are now employed through TP&I to engage with young people using a rights based approach resulting in coproduction of services & opportunities.</p> <p>The Space is a project led by young people in Peterhead which is now open and being used by a range of young people including unaccompanied young adults, those out with education and those in work.</p> <p>This project has been developed by young people who are struggling with transition into adult hood. The session covers Money, Budgeting, Employability, Health and wellbeing. Its being piloted in 4 communities after which it will be reviewed by the young people and rolled out to other areas.</p> <p>AYRC is a youth led group that represents young people across Aberdeenshire. The groups explore issues that affect them and the co-produce tools and sessions that will benefit all young people. They have developed a Poverty & Inequalities workshop that has been delivered to 11 youth groups and events.</p> <p>In 2024 they are focusing on increasing free activities for all young people , addressing stigma and reducing the cost of the school day. The young people were allocated funding through the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Reserves which they used to set up a funding stream for young people. In the first round they funded 16 projects and awarded £12,768.20 to increase free activities for young people across Aberdeenshire. These projects will benefit an additional 478 young people across Aberdeenshire. The second round will be opened in 2024.</p>

	The Youth Engagement Workers have supported 311 young people to have a voice and develop a range of opportunities.
<p>K&M Youth Clubs</p> <p>Service covers Stonehaven , Portlethen and Laurencekirk</p>	<p>The funding was to support 3 youth clubs covering Stonehaven, Portlethen and Laurencekirk. The Outcomes are -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 3 Youth Clubs ➤ 310 Youth Members ➤ 22 Adult Volunteer Members ➤ 7 Youth Volunteer Members ➤ 101 Sessions delivered (202 hours) ➤ 6,372 Attendances ➤ 12,744 Youth Social Engagement hours
<p>PAMIS</p> <p>Making a more inclusive society.</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>PAMIS project supports families who have children or young people with a range of needs to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and secure employment through developing skills & experience. • Ensure families and partners can access Information ,Advice and Advocacy Services. • Improve Health and wellbeing of people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). • Ensure Emotional Support for family carers is available. <p>16 young people with PMLD participated in opportunities and 30 family members and carers supported.</p>
<p>Aberdeenshire Council Children Services Child Protection Advocacy Worker</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>The funding will improve outcomes for those who children and young people who are involved within the Child Protection system through establishing independent advocacy service. This service has been co-produced with children and young people with lived experience. Recruitment of staff has started and the project will be further developed through 2024.</p>
<p>Rainbow Rogus</p>	<p>To support families with children who have a disability to address the pressing issues arising from the rising cost of living, especially in the context of those facing economic challenges during the winter months. These families can not reduce their energy bills due to the essential life sustaining equipment their children may require.</p> <p>30 families have been supported with additional financial support, advice and ongoing support.</p>

<p>Services delivered in Ellon and surrounding communities.</p>	
<p>Health & Wellbeing</p>	
<p>Quarriers Epilepsy Community Outreach Project. Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>This outreach service supports partners, GP, employers and services to increase their knowledge around epilepsy resulting in improved support for their clients. Through the last 12 months they have directly supported – 142 people with epilepsy have received either one-to-one or family support, empowering them to maximise their health and life chances through needs led support based on their individual goals and ambitions. 7 carers have also been supported to increase their confidence to cope with their caring role 14 people with epilepsy to secure and sustain employment.</p>
<p>Aberdeenshire Council Housing Service Health & Wellbeing Officer Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>The funding is used to support a post within housing which will improve outcomes for those who are not in receipt of support services and may be suffering from mental ill health. This service is client focused ensuring those involved can access the support they need ,when they need it which can be housing, employability, health, welfare rights/ financial and wellbeing support. The post has supported 59 clients with 27 no longer requiring support as they have now secured opportunities and services resulting in sustained positive outcomes.</p>
<p>WEA Reminiscence project Services covers Ballater, Banchory, Inch, Rhynie and Torphins.</p>	<p>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. Over 50 residence participated in this programme which reduced isolation, improved wellbeing and gave staff and carers a better understanding of those they care for.</p>
<p>Lived Experience Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire Local Voices Well-Being Fund</p>	<p>Using funding from TP&I the Lived Experience Local Voices group developed a Wellbeing funding. They allocated funding to 13 community groups / organisations with a total of £12,698. This funding is to be used to support community groups to improve the health and well-being of children, young people, and their families through delivering a range of activities and support at a local level. It is anticipated that 484 children , 75 families and 108 adults will benefit from these projects. The funding prioritised afterschool activities for children over the age of 7, focusing on children learning various life skills.</p>

	The other area they focused on was mental health support groups to help tackle loneliness and isolation. Activities for older teenagers and young adults being priority.
Community Collective Community Living Room Service is delivered in Stonehaven.	The project was developed in October 2023 the concept is it's a Community Living Room which is a home from home. A warm, comfortable space to make social connection and develop community spirit. Food is a key element of social connections and every week over 132 people enjoy a hot meal, breakfast or lunch. The project has 30 volunteers and have had a range of partners popping in for a chat around issues that local people have raised. Young people from Carron hill School and Mackie Acd have supported through using it as a learning environment and designing promotional leaflets and materials that are accessible to all.
Apex Church Service is delivered in Peterhead.	To deliver a warm space for local people in Peterhead where they can get support with food, advice and reduce social isolation. This project delivered 200 winter gift box with warm clothing to keep clients warm and reduce energy costs. Along with the winter gift boxes 200 meals were distributed to those using the warm space.
AOG Fraserburgh Service delivered in Fraserburgh.	To develop a community cafe for local people in Fraserburgh where they can get support with food, advice and reduce social isolation. The café distributed 200 food parcels and gave families the opportunity to eat out at the café at no cost to them. The project supported 180 households to address Food Poverty.
Heath & Social Care Service delivered in Peterhead and surrounding areas.	The Winter Wardrobe Appeal is a donation-based project which relies on the community giving their preloved clothes a new lease of life. The project is coordinated by a local Area Coordinator who works with families and individuals who have problems associated with drugs and alcohol, including lone-parent families and families with young children or where the parents are themselves young. The team covers the whole of north Aberdeenshire; however, this project is mainly focused on Peterhead and surrounding areas. The project provided winter clothes and accessories to 40 people, cost effective appliances to 15 families and supplied around 50 people with miscellaneous items like LED lightbulbs, blankets and draught excluders to help keep their homes warmer and reduce energy bills.
Digital Inclusion	
Digital Inclusion	The Digital Assistant post supports the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities partnership to promote activities and the work through social media platforms including pod casting.

<p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Across the platforms Tackling Poverty & Inequalities have 1,492 followers.</p> <p>The worker has producing a range of interviews with key partners and services to answer questions that local people have requested answers to. These are interviews on topics which those experts with experience has identified as priorities for them such as Housing, Transport, Rural Poverty and Food Security upload to Our Aberdeenshire.</p>
<p>Fuel Poverty & Housing</p>	
<p>SCARF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat & Eat Project • Energy Advisors • Energy Fund <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Scarf's Income Maximisation Officer will carry out a structured assessment of each individual household's circumstances and establish the level and type of support required to provide an immediate positive intervention if necessary and long-term positive outcomes to reduce fuel poverty.</p> <p>Low income households will be given support to top up their pre paid meter and shopping vouchers as part of the Heat and Eat project.</p> <p>The project has supported 284 clients with advice and finance support.</p>
<p>Aberdeenshire Welfare Rights & Money Advice Team</p> <p>Energy Challenge Fund (£100,000)</p> <p>Flexible fund (£100,000)</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>Money Advice & Welfare Rights workers will have direct access to a flexible fund which is accessed to those who do don't meet the threshold for financial support elsewhere.</p> <p>This will reduce homelessness and debt, and increase household income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce personal debt and increase access to financial support. • Reduce fuel poverty • Income maximisation for households. • Increase Health & Wellbeing for those involved in the programmes. <p>The fund has supported 670 households with January & February 2024 having the highest demand especially for those households that require oil to heat their homes.</p> <p>Some households have requested Love Local Cards which they find less stigmatising and also supports the local economy.</p>
<p>Financial Inclusion</p>	
<p>Aberdeen Foyer</p> <p>Financial Inclusion Team</p>	<p>The Financial Inclusion Team works across Garioch, Buchan, Banff and Buchan and Formartine to meet the needs of Foyer clients. The team supports individuals to break the cycle of poverty and crisis intervention by enabling them to recognise the root causes of crisis & develop the financial literacy skills and coping strategies required to maximise their income, self-manage their finances, and build resilience. This service provides intensive 1:1</p>

<p>Service is delivered in Inverurie, Ellon, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff & surrounding communities.</p> <p>Vinery Project</p> <p>Service is delivered in Banff</p>	<p>sessions for individuals who are in crisis, including support with benefit applications and food/fuel poverty. The team have supported 61 people with income maximisation services with a client financial gain of £113,932.42.</p> <p>The Vinery Project based in Banff is a Community Inclusion project around food, financial inclusion, and skills, delivering personal development and employability programmes for young people/adults in the local area who are experiencing multiple and complex barriers to move into good quality, sustainable employment. The project also supports those with long term mental health conditions, substance dependency, social isolation and are disengaged from education. The project has supported 278 individuals to participate in opportunities which reduces isolation, improves wellbeing and their employability. The range of volunteer opportunities supports the continued development of 23 local people.</p> <p>Using a Cash first approach support clients directly ensuring they can secure the essentials over the winter months. The Financial Inclusion Team were able to provide additional support before Christmas to parents who were really struggling, some of whom were in tears when they were awarded the funding. It was tears of relief, as they didn't know how they were going to manage to do anything for Christmas. The team were also able to help the most vulnerable clients with energy top ups and food.</p>
<p>Aberdeenshire Council Criminal Justice</p> <p>Winter Challenge Fund</p> <p>This service is delivered in Buchan and Banff & Buchan.</p>	<p>The service provided 40 winter essential packs for those being released from custody into their own tenancy. These packs contained cost saving cooking appliances (air fryer or slow cooker), food, blankets, gloves, hoodies and a hot water bottles.</p> <p>Everyone accessing this provision had access to a support worker who reviewed their financial situation. They also gave assistance with learning how to cook, using recipes and guidance for use of the appliances. This additional support resulted in positive health and wellbeing outcomes.</p>
<p>Gordon Rural Action</p> <p>This service is delivered in Huntly and surrounding communities.</p>	<p>The Huntly Community Support Hub encompasses 5 main projects: the Advice Service, Baby Bank, Uniform Exchange, Charity shop and The Bikery. These projects offer support, advice, employability, volunteering opportunities and a way to minimise environmental impact on the local area through the encouraging of recycling and reuse. The aim of the Hub is to provide a holistic one stop shop approach to tackling poverty and inequality. The baby bank has supported 97 families, the uniform exchange has supported 25 families with secondary aged and 50 families with primary school age.</p> <p>The hub has supports 188 clients per month and the Client Financial Gain is £209,861.88</p> <p>The funding supplied essential items to support those experiencing financial challenges over the winter, including 50 winter ready boxes which not only supported households in the colder months but prepared them for storms.</p>

<p>No Recourse To Public Funds</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>A member of staff has been appointed to develop a framework to ensure all partners are aware of the process and support available.</p> <p>Support training/raise awareness for welfare rights officers and other staff/partners in relation to immigration to ensure appropriate support for them.</p>
<p>Rural Poverty</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Area Committees, partners, and communities have identify priorities for their communities and are develop a range of opportunities to meet the identified needs.</p> <p>The areas of investment are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food Poverty ○ Access to services for those settlements out with the main towns. ○ Transport ○ Children & young people ○ Link in with existing priorities within local action / community plans. <p>The Garicoh area have already funded A place in Childhood project to develop a 20 minute neighbourhood plan with Inverurie Academy, Port Elphinstone Primary and Kellands Primary schools. This project engaged with 45 children and young people . The 25 young people from Inverurie academy went on to consult with all pupils within their school and also included St Andrews in that engagement. Initial feedback has been positive and the full report and outcomes will be shared once discussed at a local level.</p>
<p>Progress In Dialogue</p> <p>Wellbeing Fund & Lived Experience project.</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>To develop an integrated approach to accessing services to ensure sustained outcomes for those communities least heard.</p> <p>Using a Cash First approach Progress In Dialogue will developing a Wellbeing Fund to support those within the targeted communities. This approach has supported 25 families mainly over the winter period. The feedback from the communities is that everyone is financially struggling therefore they don't want to be singled out for special treatment.</p> <p>12 Community Champions have been recruited from the targeted communities so they can not only give support to their own peers but sharing their lived experience plays a crucial role in the development/influencing of local policies, delivery of local services and co develop / deliver interventions that will empower their communities to achieve sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>8 Gypsy/Traveller Community Champions in Aberdeenshire to meet with the Minister for Equalities ensuring they are also influencing national policy.</p>

<p>Maud Village Trust Just Ask Project</p> <p>Winter Challenge Fund</p> <p>This service is delivered in Central Buchan – Maud and surrounding villages.</p>	<p>The Just Ask project is managed through the Maud Village trust as a community hub where local people can access a range of advice and support. Using a cash first approach the project supported 150 clients to purchase food, blankets , fuel top and ensure they could buy energy saving products.</p>
<p>Employability</p>	
<p>Barnardo Works</p> <p>The service delivers to young people from Huntly, Insch, Aberchirder, Alford and Strathdon.</p>	<p>The Rural Steps project undertakes a range of employability capacity, building work with young people in West Aberdeenshire (Huntly, Insch, Aberchirder, Cornhill, Alford, Strathdon) and includes work experience, delivery of skills course and 1-1 support. This project targets young people furthest from the work market who are living in a rural area. Over the last year 24 young people have been supported to enhance their employability resulting in 7 securing employment or work placements , with local employers.</p>
<p>Rural Childcare Model Review</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>This research was commissioned, and a report presented to the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Group on the 8th December 2023. This report highlights what childcare is currently in place, what the need and demand is, the challenges , gaps in the current provision and the recommendations .</p> <p>The researchers engaged directly with parents/carers, care providers, partners and stakeholders and the recommendations reflect their experience.</p> <p>The report will be used to develop a framework which can support the development of this sector and its workforce to meet future needs across Aberdeenshire.</p> <p>https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/TPI-ekosgen-Provision-of-Rural-Childcare-Research-and-Model-Review-Report-30-01-2024.pdf</p>
<p>Food Security</p>	
<p>Aberdeenshire North Foodbank</p> <p>The funding will be used to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Fraserburgh Foodbank. 	<p>The number of people fed from the Fraserburgh Foodbank is 2507 out of which 482 are children. This is an increase of almost 500 people from the 2022 figures.</p> <p>The highest level of need was in September and December 2023.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntly Food Pod. • Strategic Development Worker. <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire</p>	<p>In Huntly the Food Pod supported 1260 people which was an increase of 278 from the 2022 figures. Both projects saw an increase in working families due to the rising cost of living.</p> <p>The strategic development worker has supported the development of the Fair Food Aberdeenshire partnership which consists of a range of local partners that are working together to reduce food security, food waste and increase access to local produce.</p>
<p>Cfine Connecting with Communities (mobile pantry)</p> <p>Winter Challenge Fund</p> <p>The service delivers to Edzell Woods ,St Combs, Auchenblae, Fettercairn, St Cyrus, Drumlithie, Turriff, Banff, Macduff, Aberchirder, Crimond, Inverallochy/Cairnbulg, and Rosehearty.</p>	<p><i>Connecting with Communities</i> is currently servicing 13 locations across Aberdeenshire - Edzell Woods and St Combs on a weekly basis, and Auchenblae, Fettercairn, St Cyrus, Drumlithie, Turriff, Banff, Macduff, Aberchirder, Crimond, Inverallochy/Cairnbulg, and Rosehearty on a fortnightly basis. This project supports on average 268 households per week.</p> <p>The van supplies affordable fruit , veg, eggs along side free tinned, dried and when available fresh and frozen goods. In addition to food access the project also supplies free period products and a money advice welfare rights service through the Aberdeenshire Money advice welfare rights team and Social Security Scotland. The challenge fund also enabled energy saving products such as slow cookers to be given out to those who are struggling with the rising cost of living.</p>
<p>Garioch Community Kitchen</p> <p>Development of Food Skills</p> <p>Service is delivered in Inverurie and is accessible from the surrounding communities.</p>	<p>The project delivers a range of courses which provide a positive direct impact on both attendees, including children and their families by increasing knowledge, confidence and empowering them to plan and cook healthy affordable meals which will in turn save them money and increase their wellbeing.</p> <p>A range of Lifeskills will also be delivered to young people who are leaving school to ensure they have the skilled required for the next phase of their lives.</p> <p>Over 100 people have attended the range of sessions.</p> <p><i>“ Its helped me get more relaxed in the kitchen when the girls can now help”</i></p>
<p>Area Food Fund</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>This funding is managed by the Area Teams to deliver local projects which supports the wider strategy and respond to local needs. At a local level 67 community projects have been supported through this funding. These include growing projects, increase access to affordable food, cooking projects and reducing food waste. Over 2,360 people have benefited from these projects.</p>

<p>Fraserburgh Men Shed</p> <p>Fraserburgh and district</p>	<p>The project have supported 25 older men to develop confidence and skills through delivering cooking classes . Energy saving equipment , recipes and store cupboard ingredients have also been bought to ensure they can cook at home resulting in an improved diet. For those that are lone households to increase heath & wellbeing , cooking skills and reduce isolation.</p>
<p>Information & Advice Framework</p>	
<p>Community Based Commissioned Services (K&M CAB)</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>The Consortium is made up of the 4 Citizens Advice Bureau's that operate across Aberdeenshire. They have supported 8581 clients with a range of advice and have highlighted the increase in complex cases has resulted in the need for more time per client. The client financial gain over the last 12 months is £5,450,502</p> <p>Review of framework is required as the contract is to be retendered in 2024.</p> <p>Existing contract ends 5th January 2025</p>
<p>Specialist workers within Trusted venues – including a quality assurance post.</p> <p>Service Covers the whole of Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>The Money Advice & welfare Rights team moved to Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Team on the 1st April 2023. The team have developed specialist pathways to ensure those who face multiple barriers can access the advice and support required. The team have supported 1,336 with advice support and advice. The client financial gain is £1,148,106.</p> <p>The training & quality assurance post has delivered 118 courses which supported 407 to develop skills and increase their knowledge of the sector. Additional ESF funding has been allocated until June 2023. UK prosperity fund will be July 2023 – March 2024</p>