

Integration Joint Board

Date of Meeting: 15/08/2022

Title of Report: Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-2022

Presented by: David Gibson, Head of Children & Families and Justice.

The IJB is asked to:

Note the review

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2021-2022 is the third review of the Child Poverty Action Plan first published in 2019. It is a requirement under the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act that local authorities and health boards jointly produce and 21(t)28(y)63()-409(A)-20(ct)28(.05 re)-6(n)56(d)-6()-3

both on a national and local level. The Act introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report and to review it on an annual basis until 2030. The Scottish Government publishes a national child poverty report, "Every Child Every Chance" which sets out the national measures taken to address the issue and this too is reviewed annually. In 2022 a second delivery plan was published "Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2023".

Of particular relevance to the duties under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act are Parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Part 1 requires public authorities to publish, as soon as practicable after the end of each 3 year period, a report of what steps it has taken in that period to secure better or further effect within its areas of responsibility of the UNCRC requirements. Of particular relevance to the issue of child poverty are the following articles:

Article 3 (best interests of the child)

Article 6 (life, survival and development)

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)

Article 26 (social security)

Article 27 (adequate standard of living)

The Child Poverty Action Plan and the Children's Rights Report are closely linked and should in turn be linked to key Council and Health Board strategies and plans, for example the Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020 – 2023. It should be noted that child poverty and children's rights are issues

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

places they live. We make the point that rural, remote and island living can have additional challenges and costs that need to be considered. The high and immediate risks to people in Argyll and Bute due to fuel poverty are emphasized as are the mental and physical health costs of poverty.

Reasons for this Child Poverty Review

It is noted that the 2017 the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare

Key Areas of the Plan:

This section notes key areas of work undertaken in relation to child poverty; they are recorded under the 3 Drivers of Poverty, helping families in other ways and planned future work.

A. Increasing Income from Employment and Earnings

child poverty and its impacts, which are noted in this report. Scotland has the lowest rate of child poverty amongst countries of the UK at 21%, followed by England at 29% and Wales at 34%.

Whilst this is positive, particularly given the cost of living crisis; Argyll and Bute does have some significant challenges. Although it has a lower percentage of workless households than the national average (14.7% opposed to 18.1% - Jan-Dec 2020), average gross weekly pay rates are lower (553.6 opposed to the national average of 595). Hence the numbers of children in low income families remains a concern.

Children in Low Income Families

	Argyll and Bute	Scotland
2017 - 2018	17.3%	18.6%
2018 - 2019	16.7%	16.5%
2019 - 2020	17.2%	16.8%

In addition the level and nature of fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute makes families particularly vulnerable at the moment given the rises in fuel costs. Recently, revised Scottish Government figures show that fuel poverty is now estimated to be 43% higher than in 2019. This means that in the Argyll & Bute and Highland regions, fuel poverty is likely to be approaching 50% and extreme fuel poverty, probably almost 30% of all households – and further significant price increases seem likely yet to come. Particular local innovations, such as the Flexible Food Fund, are attempting to tackle this, offering grants and client advice.

Fuel poverty is not equally distributed throughout Argyll and Bute but rather more marked in some housing market areas. For example Figure 1 shows that Bute has 41-50% of the population in fuel poverty whereas Cowal has less than 20% in fuel poverty.

Work is being carried out nationally to look at improving data looking at child poverty in rural places. Workshops have taken place led by the Improvement Service and some of the suggestions for taking this forward include:

- Establish a multi-disciplinary working group on Tackling Child Poverty through Innovation in Data and Intelligence, chaired by IS/COSLA/academic partners to include, for example, relevant local authorities and health boards, relevant academics (Scottish Public Policy Exchange, SPIRU, Codeclan, Data Lab, Research Data Scotland, SPIRU), representatives of the Information Commissioner and those with insight/expertise as to private sector use of data sharing legislation. Local government representatives should include those in leadership roles (SOLACE etc.) those with data and analytical expertise, GIS professionals and child poverty policy and delivery leads.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This review fulfils the obligation, from The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, for local authorities and health boards to deliver jointly an annual review of their Child Poverty Action Plan. Links with other local authority reporting

duties on tackling child poverty include: Fairer Scotland Duty, Islands (Scotland) Act 2018; Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; Education Act 2016; Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

and the work going on to tackle it. Engagement with children and young people is being developed via schools, youth groups and young carers groups.

12. CONCLUSIONS

The current Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2020 – 2021 sets out the current situation in terms of child poverty in Argyll and Bute and makes particular reference to areas such as children's rights, sustainability and the challenges facing our island communities. The plan sets out work that has been happening to address child poverty in Argyll and Bute and some Page 5 4 plans for actions going forward. This will be led by Fiona Davies and the