

Local Child Poverty Action Report

Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian



June 2019

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Preface

As Cabinet member for education, communities and economy, and chair of the community planning partnership I welcome the publication of this report on the work of the partners in Midlothian to reduce child poverty. The Community Planning Partnership in its “Single Midlothian Plan”, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, required by the Community Empowerment Act, has 3 continuing top priorities set out in the 2016-19 plan and now carrying forward into the 2019-22 plan. We remain committed to reducing inequalities in outcomes over life in learning, health and economic circumstances. Reduction in child poverty is centrally linked to these goals and it is pleasing to see the shared commitment to this work evident in the annual report and action plan. The duty to deliver falls on the NHS and the Council, but without the involvement of families, communities, third sector agencies and public sector partners, progress cannot be made.

Jim Muirhead – Midlothian Council

In Midlothian tackling child poverty is at the heart of partnership working and is reflected in the priorities of both The Single Midlothian Plan and Midlothian Children’s and Young Peoples Services Plan. This Local Child Poverty Action Plan builds on this commitment and outlines current activity and good practice as well as pointing to changes for the future which can play a part in addressing the root causes of child poverty.

It is clear that public sector and community and voluntary organisations in Midlothian are doing incredible work already to ameliorate some of the worst excesses of poverty in our area. And we have a responsibility to continue to improve what we do. We are committed to ensuring that local public sector decisions and resources target the causes of poverty as all the available evidence tells us that this will make the greatest difference to the life chances of children; but there must be a caution that some of the levers for change exist far from Midlothian. Recent reports from the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the ongoing work of the Poverty and Inequality Commission in Scotland are reminders of the scale of the challenge set by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Act makes stark the fact that the life chances of children brought up in poverty in Scotland are markedly worse than those of children living elsewhere in Western Europe. It is incumbent on local partners to play a part in changing this story. Our local partnerships must use all our assets and talents efficiently, effectively and wisely. But to make a significant improvement, our decisions and policies about child poverty will need to be inventive and aspirational too. This first Local Child Poverty Action Report for Midlothian provides an overview of our current work and signals our priorities for the next few years.

Alison McCallum - Director of Public Health NHS Lothian

Overall purpose and vision

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides the vision for our work in Scotland to ensure that every child has a good start in life with a safe, healthy and happy childhood. Ending child poverty is a central part of making that vision a reality and the Human Rights perspective embodied in UNCRC is central to Scottish Government's decision making and action in this area.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 embodies this approach and sets out Scottish Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2030 by meeting a set of ambitious targets.

In Midlothian our vision reflects this national framework:

'To eradicate child poverty and by 2030 to have made significant progress such that:

- *Less than 10% of our children will be living in relative poverty*
- *Less than 5% of our children will be living in absolute poverty*
- *Less than 5% will be unable to afford the basic necessities of life*
- *Less than 5% of our children will be living in persistent poverty'*

The national Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018 – 2022 Every Child, Every Chance (ECEC) sets out priorities for action to meet these targets grouped around 3 drivers designed to make a 'step-change' in ending child poverty by 2030.

- Reducing the cost of living
- Increasing income from employment
- Increasing income from social security and benefits in kind

The Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) and Midlothian Children's and Young Peoples Services Plan (MCYPSP) as well as NHS Lothian's strategy, Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Lothian's Children and Young people 2014-2020, embody this vision and over the next 3 years will focus the actions of our partnerships on these drivers. This local contribution is important although fundamental change to transform the resources available to families will come from decisions made and resources released at Scottish and UK levels.

This plan outlines the challenge that faces us; the partnership arrangements that are in place; and the actions that are current, planned and identified, which address the 3 drivers.

The Challenge Nationally

The data on child poverty for Scotland as a whole and for Midlothian is stark. Nationally 230,000 children, or one in four are experiencing poverty. In Midlothian 22% of our children are living in poverty. Ref: (Scottish Government (2018) Poverty and Inequality: 2014-17).

The targets set nationally for 2030 are ambitious given where we are now:

- In 2016/17 an estimated 23% of children were in relative poverty (relative poverty is less than 60% of average UK income for the year taking account of the size and composition of the family)
- In 2016/17 an estimated 20% of children were in absolute poverty (absolute poverty is less than 60% of average UK household income for the financial year 2010)
- In 2016/17 an estimated 11% of children were in combined low income and material deprivation (low income is defined as less than 70% of average UK 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)
- In 2012 to 2016 an estimated 11% of children were in persistent poverty (persistent poverty is when a child has lived in relative poverty for three out of the last four years)

Ref: (<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00533142.pdf>)

If current trends are allowed to continue then by 2030:

- An estimated 39% of Scottish children will be living in relative poverty
- An estimated 31.6% of Scottish children will be living in absolute poverty
- An estimated 16.5% of Scottish children will be living in combined low income and material deprivation
- An estimated 15.5% of children in Scotland will be living in persistent poverty

Ref: (Forecasting Child Poverty in Scotland section 3.2

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-forecasting-child-poverty-scotland/pages/3>)

These figures highlight the ambitious nature of the 2030 targets and partly in response to this the Scottish Government has recognised the need to make significant and rapid progress if the 2030 targets are to be met. They have therefore identified interim targets which must be met by April 2023:

- Less than 18% of children in Scotland living in relative poverty
- Less than 14% of children in Scotland living in absolute poverty
- Less than 8% of children in Scotland living in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 8% of children in Scotland are living in persistent poverty

The Challenge Locally

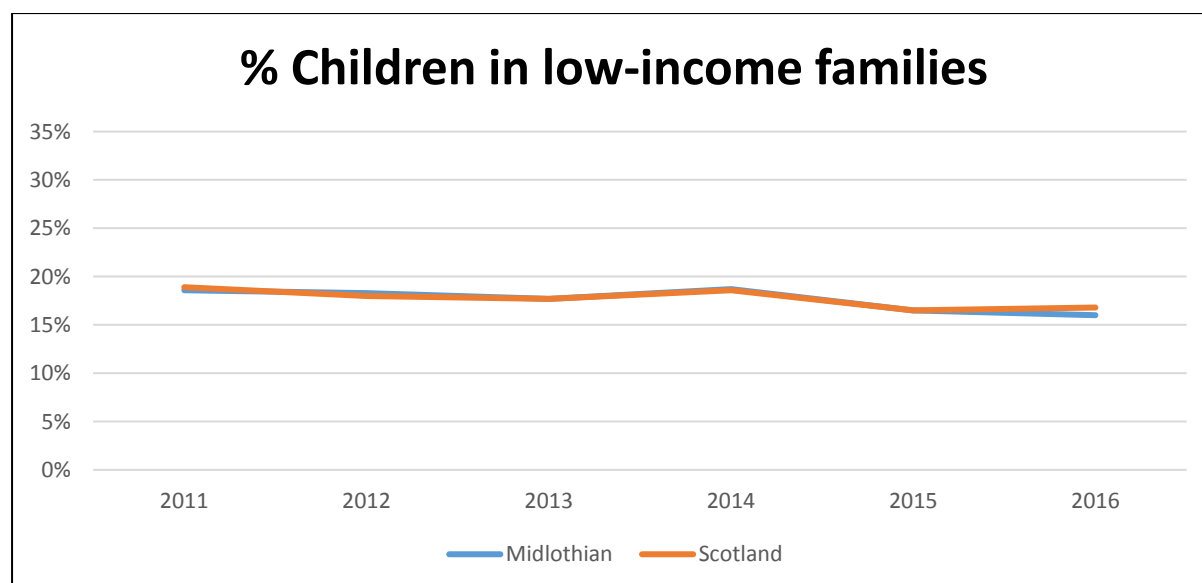
In Midlothian 25% of our children are living in poverty (www.endchildpoverty.org.uk). After housing costs (AHC) is a good guide to the number of households who experience poverty. The cost of housing is unavoidable and essential. People's standard of living is dependent on the disposable incomes they have after paying for their housing.

Table: Child Poverty in Midlothian by Electoral Ward 2013-2018

Ward	Oct – Dec 13	Oct – Dec 15	Jul – Sep 17	17/18
MIDLOTHIAN	21.25%	22.51%	22.04%	25%
Bonnyrigg	19.52%	22.03%	20.64%	20%
Dalkeith	26.63%	26.46%	24.50%	24%
Midlothian East	21.55%	22.51%	23.79%	30%
Midlothian South	23.82%	26.59%	25.58%	26%
Midlothian West	16.78%	15.8%	17.82%	19%
Penicuik	17.90%	21.14%	18.79%	19%

Source: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/>

Chart: Percentage of children (under 16s) living in low income families, 2011-2016, Scotland and Midlothian

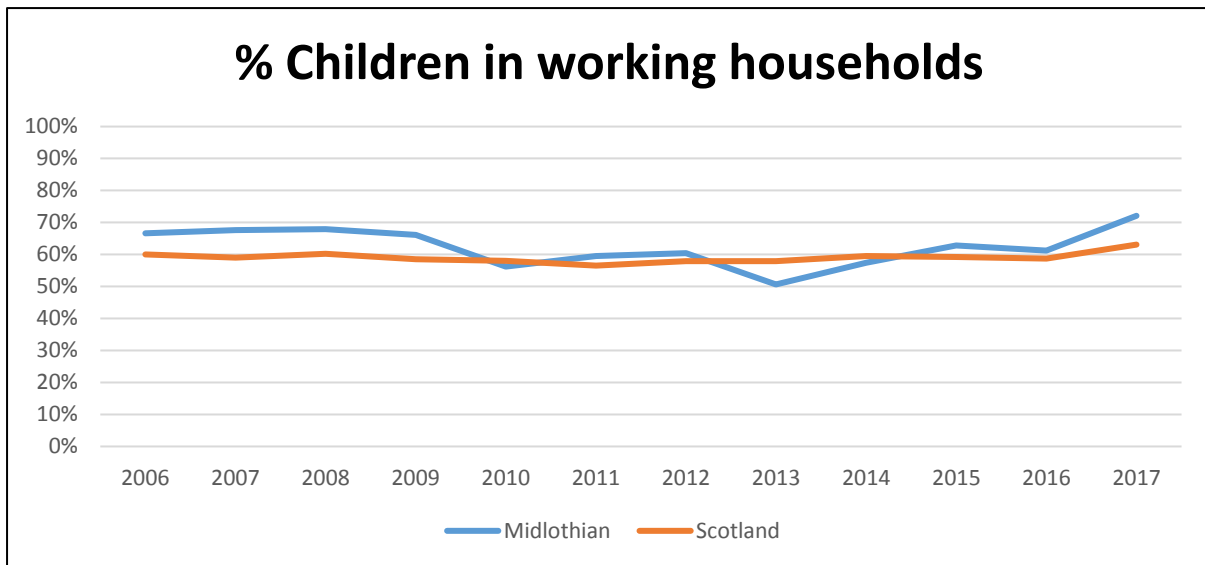


Source: HMRC, Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure

This chart shows the proportions of children under 16 living in families either in receipt of out-of-work (means-tested) benefits *or* in receipt of tax credits, where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of UK median income.

Administrative data sources on benefits and tax credits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are used in the calculation of this local measure.

Chart: Percentage of children (under 16s) who live in households where all over age 16 are working



Source: ONS, Workless households for regions across the UK

This chart shows the proportions of all children under 16 who live in households that contain at least one person aged 16 to 64, where all individuals aged 16 and over are in employment. These statistics are taken from the Annual Population Survey (APS) and cover calendar years.

Please note that changes year-on-year are fairly volatile in a number of local authority areas due to sample size. The overall trend should be considered rather than individual data points.

An early priority next year will be to look at data requirements for future reporting.

Governance arrangements



In Midlothian the Single Midlothian Plan is the overarching strategy to influence and guide the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership to work together to tackle the following top priorities:

- Reduce the gap in learning outcomes
- Reduce the gap in health outcomes
- Reduce the gap in economic circumstances

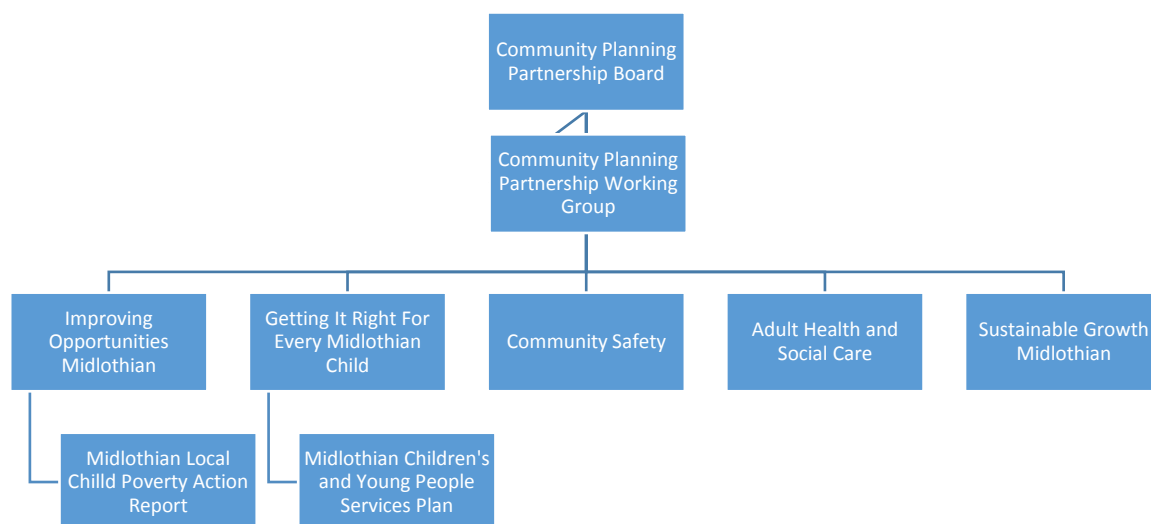


Figure 1: Midlothian Community Planning Structure

Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian have been charged with drafting this first Local Child Poverty Action Report and have worked closely with other partners from the third sector, represented on the Child Poverty Working Group.

In response to the three priorities the five themes of Community Planning aim to achieve specific medium term outcomes by the end of 2019/20. The Local Child Poverty Action Report will be reported through the Improving Opportunities for the People of Midlothian (IOM) theme. This theme encompasses anti-poverty work, lifelong learning, employment, equalities and health inequality. Child poverty is a direct result of adult poverty, so it is this theme of the CPP which is taking the lead. NHS Lothian is a partner in this thematic group.

The Improving Opportunities Midlothian outcomes are:

- Reduce poverty levels in Midlothian
- Midlothian residents are successful learners and young people go on to positive destinations when they leave learning
- Reduce health inequalities and improve the health of people in Midlothian
- The public is informed and engaged in service development and delivery

NHS Lothian is a partner in Midlothian's Health and Social Care partnership. Health and Social Care Partnerships have a duty to contribute to reducing health inequalities as one of the National Health and Wellbeing outcomes.

NHS Lothian is also a partner in the delivery of Midlothian Children's and Young People's Services Plan, which is produced by the Community Planning Partnership's Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child board, another of the five thematic governance groups of the Community Planning Partnership, which has oversight of key priorities for child poverty around addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences, improving attainment and closing the attainment gap.

The Local Child Poverty Action Report will be presented and signed off by the Community Planning Partnership Working Group and Board and by the NHS Lothian Strategic Planning Committee then passed to the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

Reports to the Improving Opportunities Midlothian partnership will be copied to the Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child Board and collaboration ensured through the CPP working group whose remit includes a duty to reduce and remove "silo" working within delivery of the Single Midlothian Plan.

Within Midlothian Community Planning Partnership quarterly outcome reporting is undertaken to measure performance and impact through the Local Authorities Performance reporting system, Covalent. The actions from the Local Child Poverty Action Report will be included in the future reporting requirements. Both the Midlothian Getting It Right For Every Midlothian Child and Improving Opportunities Midlothian thematic groups and NHS Lothian gather information on outcomes and indicators that are relevant for the three child poverty drivers. The process of pulling this together into a robust set of indicators that can measure progress on addressing the three child poverty drivers and the six priority groups needs to be coordinated nationally.

Additionally the Local Child Poverty Action Report is linked to NHS Lothian's health inequalities strategy that is currently being updated and which will provide the strategy of NHS Lothian's role in reducing inequalities and reducing child poverty.

Child Poverty Working Group

The Midlothian Child Poverty Working Group was established in 2017 and is chaired by Midlothian Council. The group is currently made up of Midlothian council officers from Communities Team, Lifelong Learning and Employability, Welfare Rights and Children and Families. NHS Lothian Health Promotion team, the local Citizens Advice Bureau and third sector partners; Midlothian Sure Start, Homelink, Mayfield and Easthouses Development Trust are also represented.

The working group is strong in the areas of practitioner engagement, information sharing and the co-ordination of activities that reduce or mitigate child poverty. However in compiling this Local Child Poverty Action Report the group has become aware of the need to broaden its vision and extend its influence in taking forward effective action on the 3 child poverty drivers, especially in relation to priority groups. Engaging strategically with such areas as procurement, housing, transport and economic development will be crucial. In addition there is recognition that direct engagement with families with direct experience of poverty is essential in setting priorities for the future. A review of the membership and priorities of the Child Poverty Working group will therefore take place in the coming months.

With this in mind an early action will be to work with the Poverty Alliance to roll out the Get Heard Scotland programme which seeks to bring together local politicians and policy makers, service providers, community organisations and families experiencing poverty to identify the changes needed to make a step change in eliminating child poverty. A planning and awareness raising session for Community Planning partners, community organisations, elected members and service providers will take place in June followed by 5 community conversation sessions throughout the rest of the year. The community conversations will be held across Midlothian, facilitated and reported by the Poverty Alliance, and will make a contribution towards ensuring people experiencing poverty can have a real and meaningful say in the policies that affect their lives.

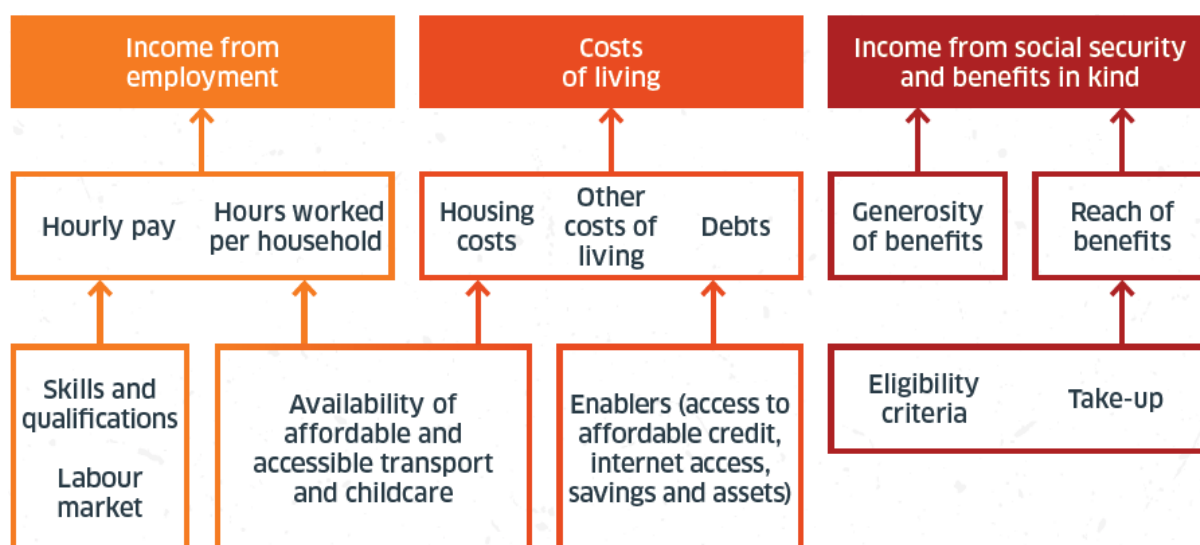
Working together

At a regional level Midlothian is represented at the Lothian Leads Roundtable discussions, chaired by the Improvement Service. These discussions involve partners from the NHS and Scottish Government and allow local authorities to discuss progress on the Local Child Poverty Action Report and an opportunity to share good practice.

NHS Lothian's Public Health Directorate have established a child poverty working group bringing together representatives from public health, health promotion and strategic planning to coordinate NHS input across the four local authorities. Further structures will be set up, with representation from the wider system, as required to support this work.

Making a step-change: focussing on key drivers and targeting ‘at risk’ groups.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and its delivery plan, Every Child, Every Chance has set ambitious targets, provided evidence based drivers and identified families most at risk of child poverty. This framework enables us to direct our work effectively to make a ‘step-change’ towards eradicating child poverty by showing the main issues that underlie the three main factors influencing child poverty.



Making an impact on these drivers for child poverty, as this diagram illustrates, will mean changing what we do and who we work with.

Scottish Government has highlighted the evidence that shows that the priority groups identified below are at high risk of child poverty. Most are in work but unable to find jobs with sufficient rates of pay or length of hours to move out of poverty. These groups are not mutually exclusive of course.

- Lone parents – 36% of children in relative poverty
- Families where a member of the household is disabled – 30% of children in relative poverty
- Families with 3 or more children – 30% of children in Scotland in relative poverty
- Minority Ethnic families – 37% of children in relative poverty
- Families where the youngest child is under 1 – 32% of children in relative poverty
- Mothers aged under 25 – 44% of children in relative poverty

In Midlothian we are ready to strengthen our partnerships and focus our activity to play our part in eradicating child poverty. In this report we provide some detail on how we intend to do this.

Current, planned and future activity in relation to the Drivers:

This logic model provides an overview of the link between our current and planned activities, the 3 child poverty driver/outcomes and our aim of eradicating child poverty.

Aim	Primary Outcomes by 2030:	Secondary Outcomes:	Actions :
<p>Today in Midlothian almost a quarter of our children (22%) are growing up in poverty. Our vision is to eradicate child poverty and by 2030 to have made significant progress such that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fewer than 10% of our children will be living in relative poverty • less than 5% will be living in absolute poverty • less than 5% will be unable to afford the basic necessities of life • less than 5% should be living in persistent poverty 	<p>Costs of living are reduced</p>	<p>Costs of the following reduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities (including internet) • Participation in education • Housing costs (rent, council tax etc.) • Debt accrual and debt payments • Household consumables • Leisure, sports, arts • Transport costs 	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of the school day • Changeworks (energy costs reduction) • AimHi <p>Future/planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit union
	<p>Income from employment is maximised</p>	<p>Parents have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable transport • Access to affordable childcare • Good quality employment opportunities (well paid, family friendly) • Increased qualifications and skills • Opportunities to upskill and gain qualifications • Support to progress to higher paid and more hours • 	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLC living wage employer • Sure Start (family centres) • Homelink (family support) <p>Future/planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Futures • More Living Wage employers • Intensive Family Support Service (City Region Deal Employability Programme) • Procurement/community benefit clauses
	<p>Income from social security and benefits in kind is maximised</p>	<p>Families have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of benefits has increased • Eligibility for benefits has widened • Increased awareness of eligibility • Improved access and admin to benefits • Increased uptake of benefit 	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AimHi • Healthy Start • CAB • Free School Meals eligibility matching exercise <p>Future/planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Start (financial support) • Midwife/Health Visitor referral

Current actions and initiatives

Driver: Costs of living are reduced

Action / project	Partners	Funders	Timescale
Cost of the school day	MC – Communities Team, Education and CPAG	Midlothian Council Scottish Government Community Choices	Aug 2018 – June 2019
Changeworks – looking at utility costs and fuel efficiency	Sure Start Changeworks	Health Improvement Fund NHS Lothian	
Outreach Family Opportunities Coordinator	Home Link Family Support	Midlothian Council Volant Charitable Trust	Current to Mar 2022

Driver: Income from employment is maximised

Action / project	Partners	Funders	Timescale
Midlothian Council Living wage employer	Midlothian Council	Midlothian Council	Ongoing
Activity Agreements	Midlothian Council Skills Development Scotland	Scottish Government	Ongoing
Lifelong Learning and Employability Job Clubs	Midlothian Council	Midlothian Council	Ongoing

Modern Apprenticeship – opportunities in Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian	Midlothian Council NHS Lothian	Skills Development Scotland	Ongoing
Increase uptake of Good Time to be 2 places	Midlothian Council and Early Years Providers	Midlothian Council	Ongoing

Driver: Income from social security and benefits in kind is maximised

Action / project	Partners	Funders	Timescale
AimHi (access to income maximisation advice and support in 6 Sure Start Centres in Midlothian)	Sure Start CAB Changeworks	NHS Lothian	2018 – 2021
Midwife/health visitor referral pathways	NHS Lothian AimHi	NHS Lothian	Developing and ongoing
Healthy Start Vouchers	NHS Lothian	NHS Scotland	To be replaced by Best Start
CAB Outreach Services	CAB	Midlothian Council	Ongoing
Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network	Networking organisation	Midlothian Council	Ongoing
Midlothian Council Welfare Rights Team	Midlothian Council	Midlothian Council	Ongoing
Working with Revenues and Integrated Service Support (ISS) to look at an eventual aim of automation of free school meals and clothing grants.	Midlothian Council	Midlothian Council	Ongoing

Planned and Future Activity:

The projects and activities outlined in the tables above are not exhaustive and those included emphasise the commitment in Midlothian to focus on the 3 drivers which will make an impact on child poverty by 2030. Many of these projects are ongoing, and where relevant, the projects timescale has been included in the table.

In this section we focus on major new projects starting this year – some of which address multiple drivers – and those strategic areas of development in relation to each driver which must be addressed if we are to make the step change needed to meet the targets outlined in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

Driver: Reducing the cost of living

Housing costs are a major component of household expenditure and ensuring access to good quality, affordable housing is therefore a key part of preventing child poverty and improving life chances. The top priority of Midlothian's Housing Investment Plan 20/19 to 20/23 is to increase social housing significantly by providing 1000 new council houses. In addition, 25% of all new-build private development sites must be affordable housing. In the coming year we will be seeking to proactively engage colleagues in the housing field in the child poverty agenda, building not only on the strong commitment made in the Investment Plan but also on such initiatives as repair and energy efficiency projects etc.

Access to affordable and efficient transport is a vital part of not only reducing the cost of living but also enabling people to obtain and sustain quality employment that can take them out of poverty for the long term. This is particularly important in Midlothian where rural poverty is a significant issue. 2019/20 will see the inclusion of transport planning and development colleagues in the discussions about how improved access to affordable transport can be achieved.

Credit Unions can provide access to affordable credit that enables families to plan their financial lives more effectively and significantly reduce outgoings. Working with Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network, the Community Planning partners will conduct a review of access to Credit Unions in Midlothian and explore the utility and feasibility of extending this service.

Driver: Income from employment is maximised

Positive Futures is major new Hunter Foundation funded multi agency employability project, led by Midlothian Sure Start and including Midlothian Council and Penicuik Citizens Advice Bureau as partners. It aims to provide comprehensive support to families to enable them to access well paid and sustainable employment locally. In addition to working with families the project will promote access to employment opportunities in the expanding child care sector.

Midlothian Council has been successful in securing resources from the Edinburgh and SES City Region Deal Integrated Regional Employability and Skills Programme to establish an intensive

support programme over 8 years from 2019/20 to support priority families in areas of persistent unemployment and entrenched poverty in Midlothian. The programme will take a whole family, holistic approach in order to tackle intergenerational disadvantage, raise attainment levels, and reduce the numbers of young people leaving school with no destination and increase employment levels. As such this is a medium to long term piece of work aiming to address all 3 drivers of child poverty with priority groups.

Midlothian Council is already a Living Wage employer and a case study of their approach is included in this report. In addition NHS Lothian employs all staff on a minimum of the Living Wage. At present, NHS Lothian is exploring accreditation as a living wage employer. A review of Living Wage accredited employers in Midlothian will be undertaken in 2019/20 with a view to assessing the utility and feasibility of encouraging local employers to become accredited.

Another major initiative has been the Pupil Equity Fund which was designed to close the poverty related attainment gap. It is therefore designed as a long term initiative to enhance young people's educational opportunities and reduce poverty in the long term. This has provided a flexible source of funding for schools and there is evidence in Midlothian that it is being used for a wide variety of purposes. 2019/20 will see a review of the Pupil Equity Fund with a view to ensuring its effective use in the future.

Midlothian Council's involvement in modern apprenticeships has already been outlined in current activity. In addition, NHS Lothian has a clear plan of increasing early career and apprenticeship opportunities to provide an entrance into employment and has embedded the apprenticeship scheme in the organisations workforce strategy. Key employability programmes such as working with the Princes Trust and Project Search are also integrated into workforce strategies and career development routes. 2019/20 will see an assessment of how Community Planning partners can work together to maximise these opportunities for young people locally.

Community Planning Partners will discuss the utility of promoting Community Benefits (such as local employment, living wage rates etc.) to address the drivers of child poverty in their procurement activities. This can be achieved through the inclusion of specific clauses within procurement contracts known as Community Benefit Clauses. Community Benefit Clauses are contractual requirements which deliver wider benefits in addition to the core purpose of the contract. These clauses can be used to build a range of economic, social or environmental conditions into the delivery of contracts. The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and European Procurement Directives enable public bodies to include Community Benefits in the procurement process, in certain circumstances. Similarly the importance of promoting good quality and sustainable employment opportunities locally will be investigated initially by bringing colleagues with a remit for economic development into discussions about addressing the child poverty drivers.

Driver: Income from social security and benefits in kind is maximised

The Scottish Government's Best Start Grants have been launched, and from summer 2019 the Best Start Vouchers will be introduced to replace Healthy Start Vouchers. Maximising uptake of the best start grants and best start vouchers through its Midwife and Health Visitor teams (who

have all been trained in Best Start) will be part of NHS Lothian's contribution to increasing income from social security and benefit in kind for residents of Midlothian. In addition these routine contacts will be used as a referral route for families needing welfare advice linking in to the Aim Hi project which is the subject of one of our case studies in this report.

Embedding welfare advice in NHS settings will continue to be developed, building on the partnership between NHS Lothian and Citizens Advice Bureau. Specialist services at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and Western General Hospital will be continued and a new service at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children established – all are relevant for Midlothian citizens.

The efficacy of welfare advice services commissioned by Midlothian Council from Citizens Advice Bureau as well as those provided by their in-house team will continue to be monitored and evaluated and changes made in the light of changing need. Together these services achieved over £7 million additional income for Midlothian residents in 2018/19 by offering advice and support at appeals, mandatory reconsiderations and tribunals. The Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network, which brings these agencies and other partners together to jointly plan and deliver, provides a sound platform for future development.

Midlothian Council's Integrated Service Support will continue to work with other local authorities to see how revenues software can be linked up to enable automation of free school meals and clothing grant payments.

The devolution of benefits and the establishment of Social Security Scotland provides an opportunity for local partnership and influence which will be of increasing importance as more benefits are devolved.

Case Studies

Four case studies are included in this report in order primarily to illustrate in more detail some of the current work in Midlothian which is addressing the three drivers. The first, Reducing the Cost of the School Day is relevant mainly to reducing the cost of living driver; the second explores Midlothian Council's experience as a Living Wage employer and how this can increase incomes locally through employment; while the third, AIMHI, is a partnership project providing specialised advice and support through Sure Start family centres to increase income mainly from benefits.

The fourth case study, Newbattle Learning Community Summer Sport, Food and Fun programme is included because it is an exemplar of good practice in terms of projects which are designed primarily to mitigate the effects of child poverty rather than address the drivers. It shows how those working closely with families experiencing poverty on a daily basis are well placed to respond in a timely and effective way that is both empowering and sustainable.

Case Study - Cost of the School Day

“The experience has brought everyone together to look at one specific problem – poverty – and to see how we can work together to get better outcomes for children”.

(Head teacher, Midlothian Council)

In 2018 Midlothian Council were successful in their application to the Scottish Government Community Choices fund to support children and their families to deliberate and decide on projects that reduce the cost of the school day. The project brought together the theory and practice of Cost of the School Day with that of participatory budgeting with the aim to reduce inequalities for low income families and to increase democratic literacy. The 11 primary schools in the targeted areas were allocated funding to test interventions and projects were developed by children aged 8-12 and parents in each of the schools. Through the process 2,639 people voted and 62 projects were successfully voted on. Projects varied from homework clubs and free snacks to cultural events.

As part of the evaluation head teachers recorded that “child poverty and inequality was an existing issue within their school but the Cost of the School Day/Participatory Budgeting process had put it at the forefront and provided a focal point for new thinking and understanding about the complexities experienced by children and families”. It was also noted that “children’s awareness has increased about the impact of poverty, and it has helped develop their understanding, and they are able to talk about it with others – which is the first time for some children”.

Case Study - Midlothian Council as a Living Wage employer

Midlothian Council is the largest employer in Midlothian, as well as being one of the smallest but fastest growing local authorities in Scotland. Our vision is that Midlothian is 'A Great Place to Grow'.

In 2015 the national pay agreement committed local authorities to link starting salaries to the real Living Wage. Whilst some local authorities simply applied the uplift as a supplement, Midlothian Council embraced the philosophy of the real Living Wage and became an accredited Living Wage Employer in 2016. Our vision underpinned by our commitment to the real Living Wage, resulted in organisational transformation that all of our employees could relate to and the necessary culture change to deliver the best possible services across our communities.

For example, introducing the real Living Wage into our reward structure has helped to narrow the gender pay gap and has reduced employees' reliance on premium rate overtime to make ends meet. This has allowed staff to achieve a work life balance that is right for them. As a result, this has enabled staff to participate in lifelong learning, in turn opening additional career and promotional opportunities. Paying the real Living Wage has also had a positive impact on local businesses and our economy as most frontline employees who have benefited from the changes are resident in Midlothian.

Development of policies to put our people at the core of the organisation has helped support employees to be more engaged and motivated at work. These positive changes were supported and championed by the entire leadership team at Midlothian Council, and were subsequently presented at a COSLA/Society of Personnel and Development Scotland Living Wage Seminar. This prompted contact from other local authorities interested in learning from our success and the example we set as a real Living Wage Employer.

"A Great Place to Grow" extends beyond our employees. Fair working practices are embedded into the award criteria for all appropriate council contracts, encouraging and supporting the whole supply chain to pay the real Living Wage. We proudly display our Living Wage accreditation on all our recruitment material, encouraging our supply chain to make steps towards achieving accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation. A key focus for us has been the low paid care sector where our commitment to the Living Wage has enabled Midlothian and our partner providers to champion, promote and develop good career opportunities for all care workers in the community. Midlothian Council are committed to continuing to champion the real Living Wage and hope that more employers in Midlothian and beyond will join the growing Living Wage movement too.

Case Study - Aim Hi

The **Access to Improved opportunities in Midlothian for long term Health Improvement Project (AIM HI Project)** is a partnership project between Penicuik Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Changeworks, and Midlothian Sure Start. AIM HI is an Income Maximisation project funded by the NHS Health Improvement Fund. Partners hold complementary expertise/experience in tackling child, fuel and food poverty.

The service is delivered through a combination of face to face sessions and workshops delivered in the supportive environment of the six Sure Start Centres and aims to help families gain control of their finances and provide the stability to enable them to consider long term plans.

A CAB Project Worker provides money and benefits advice, including income maximisation, budgeting advice, advice and assistance with multiple debt issues (including housing debt) and help and assistance with checking benefit entitlement, completing benefit applications and challenging benefit decisions.

Changeworks delivers fuel poverty and food poverty support by employing an advisor to target people at risk of fuel or food poverty to increase their income and decrease expenditure through better management of their energy and food bills. The Changeworks Advisor empowers people to better understand and manage their energy costs, bills and meters; communicate confidently and effectively with energy suppliers; find the best energy tariff; prevent energy debt, or know how best to manage it; make food costs go further and reduce food waste.

Feedback to the CAB through surveys shows that after receiving advice clients report improved finances, increased wellbeing and feel better able to cope. By removing financial stress and increasing confidence clients of the service will feel more able to participate in activities. Midlothian Sure Start provides a range of supportive activities across their six centres designed to develop skills and confidence for parents and carers. The supportive collaborative approach of the project maximises resources and allows families to overcome the barriers that make it hard for them to move out of poverty.

As a consequence of their involvement with the project families feel more confident and have the financial stability to consider taking up other activities. Through the AIM HI project families feel empowered and they are able to access training which can improve skills and employment opportunities either through volunteering, through training provided at the Sure Start Centres or supported routes to training providers and employment.

Case Study – Newbattle Learning Community Summer Sport, Food and Fun Programme 2018

The Head Teachers in the Newbattle Learning Community apportioned part of their £810,000 Pupil Equity Funding to employ the NLC Home School Practitioner staff team and the Empowering Families Partnership. This has led to a wide range of holistic supports being offered to our most disadvantaged families in 2 of our priority areas Mayfield/Easthouses and Gorebridge addressing 3 priority areas: parental engagement/family learning, health and wellbeing/ emotional and mental health, attainment with a focus on literacy.

In March 2018, the Head Teachers and partners in the Newbattle Learning Community agreed to pilot a Summer Programme of Sport, Food and Fun activities for children who qualify for free school meals. 84 children and 56 families attended a full programme of sport activities and creative arts but the core element to the programme was food.

Following discussions with parents and partners, a wide range of interventions were planned. Health and Wellbeing sessions were delivered to families resulting in signposting, advice and income maximising opportunities, these included discretionary school clothing grants, free school meals applications, haircuts for children and parents, referral to clothing banks, Good2B2 sign up, library membership, Active Choice enquiries. Relationships with Home School Practitioners were key; the approach taken with families started with where they were at and what mattered to them.

Reducing inequalities requires close links with families, schools and the community and an understanding of their strengths and needs. Over the past year the Newbattle Learning Community have been working in collaboration with a range of delivery partners in the local community to engage and support children and families beyond the school gate and throughout school holiday periods.

Central to the success of the programme has been the quality nurturing relationships built between the HSPs, families and partners. The programme shows how the Newbattle Learning Community developed and coordinated a package of supports and range of interventions delivered across the Midlothian Council Directorates and third sector partners. The core element to the programme was food, eating, learning about foods and cooking together however sport and fun provided great opportunities for play, exercise and family time. The range of supports helped address the wider pressures faced by families on low incomes including finances, parenting, parental mental health and social isolation. Parents told us they enjoyed spending time playing outdoors as it lifted their mood, decreased stress levels and improved sleep patterns.

The programme is a work in progress and on its own is not going to improve the lives of children living in poverty overnight. However it provided an opportunity to listen to impartial feedback from families, volunteers and partners. Sustaining and developing this type of programme requires commitment and engagement from partners to improve co-ordination, reduce gaps and duplication and is essential to minimise the challenges faced by reduced budgets and increased need.

Further information

Aim Hi - <https://www.changeworks.org.uk/projects/aim-hi>

A good Time to be 2 - https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/news/article/1705/a_good_time_to_be_2_-_is_your_child_eligible

Changeworks - <https://www.changeworks.org.uk/projects/warm-and-well-midlothian>

End Child Poverty - <https://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/>

Home Link Family Support - <https://www.homelinkfamilysupport.org/>

MFIN - <http://www.mfin.org.uk/>

Midlothian Sure Start - <http://www.midlothiansurestart.org.uk/>