

Local Child Poverty Action Report – Year 2

Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian



April 2021

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Foreword

This second annual report on the actions we are taking in Midlothian to address child poverty is being published during unprecedented times. For more than a year, our residents and services have been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in ways that could not have been predicted, and the longer term impact is not yet known. Undoubtedly, the crisis has hit families who were already living in, or on the edges of poverty hardest, and addressing the drivers of child poverty will be a prominent feature in our recovery planning. The crisis response to Covid-19, such as the provision of food vouchers and fuel payments, coupled with investment in digital infrastructure, will be outlined in our Year 3 reporting.

This report highlights the steps that we have taken towards reducing poverty for families in Midlothian and how we will take forward learning and actions to ensure that good practice is embedded within our services. Actions to address child poverty sit within our community action plans, and are primarily contained within Improving Opportunities Midlothian (IOM) and Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child (GIRFEMC) thematic plans. The Midlothian Child Poverty Working Group has identified a need for strategic direction and ownership of planning to tackle family poverty that brings these actions together with those contained in Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian service plans. This will be a priority area for action in the coming year.

Positive steps have been taken to improve access to income maximisation advice for families, with the Aim Hi project now firmly embedded in each of the Sure Start centres. This service has built a reputation as a provider of reliable and trustworthy advice and support that extends beyond accessing improved income to improving confidence and community connections. We have additionally commissioned an income maximisation worker within Children's Services, with a view to increasing household income, addressing fuel poverty and supporting parents into work. Within our Communities and Lifelong Learning Team we have introduced the Parental Employability Support Fund that will use a person-centred, intensive key-worker model to support parents in priority groups by addressing barriers to employment and tackling in-work poverty.

In 2019 we took part in 'Get Heard Scotland', a programme coordinated by the Poverty Alliance and funded by the Scottish Government as part of *Every Child Every Chance*, the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. Community discussions with people affected by poverty helped us to understand what is going well and what is not going well for them, and most importantly what needs to change. The findings of these discussions are summarised in this report and will be used to inform planning that addresses child poverty going forward.

Introduction

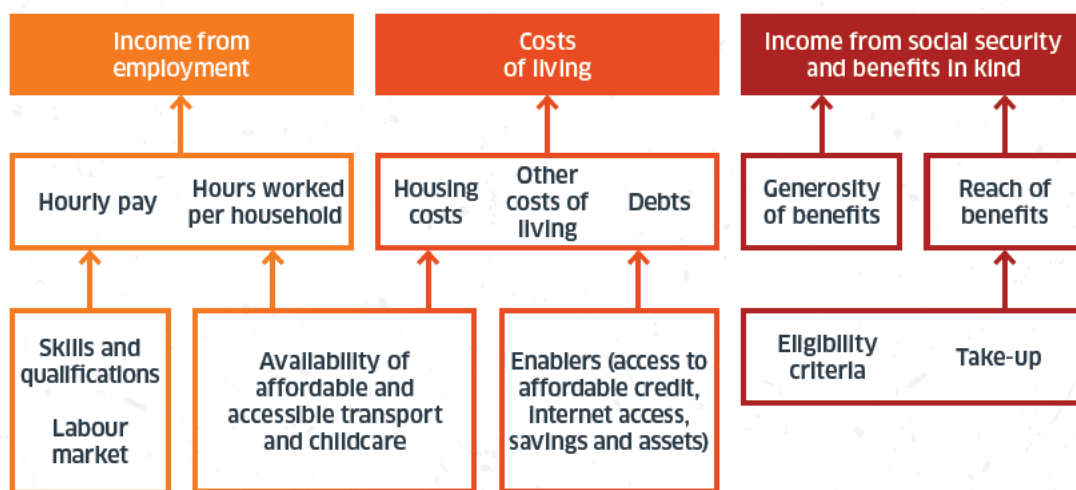
The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 places a duty on Local Authorities and NHS Boards to jointly develop and publish an annual Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR). The first Midlothian Child Poverty Action Report was published in 2019 and detailed the challenge both nationally and locally, and the steps that would be taken in Midlothian, to tackle child poverty.

In Midlothian our vision is 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**

We committed to work towards our vision by taking action to impact the three drivers of child poverty:

- Increasing income from employment
- Reducing the costs of living
- Increasing uptake of social security and benefits in kind.



Midlothian Picture

Research recently published by the End Child Poverty Coalition shows that levels of child poverty have risen in nearly every Scottish Local Authority since 2014/15 once housing costs are taken into account. This is before the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic is taken into account which is likely to make the situation worse.

The following table illustrates the % of children in Midlothian living in poverty, below 60% median income after housing costs. Child poverty rates for neighbouring local authorities and for Scotland as a whole have been included for context.

Area	2014/15	2018/19	% point change 2015-2019
Midlothian	22.8%	23.2%	0.4
Scottish Borders	21.6%	23.9%	2.3
East Lothian	22.3%	23.3%	1.0
West Lothian	21.7%	23.7%	1.9
City of Edinburgh Council	18.8%	19.5%	0.7
Scotland	22%	24%	2.0

Within Midlothian there is considerable variation in child poverty rates across Local Authority Wards, with 2018-19 figures ranging from 11% to 35%.

Ward	2018/19
Penicuik	14%
Bonnyrigg	11%
Dalkeith	35%
Midlothian East	23%
Midlothian South	26%
Midlothian West	11%

Source: End Child Poverty local child poverty estimates - www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/

SIMD 2020 Data

Midlothian is recognised as the fastest growing local authority area in Scotland. As such, we recognise that pockets of deprivation may become 'hidden' within SIMD data, due to the rapid expansion of new housing developments and reclassification of datazones. Overall the average decile hasn't changed much, 5.29 in 2020 from 5.20 in 2016.

Of the 115 datazones covering Midlothian only 11 of these datazones are in deciles 1 and 2, this is down from 13 in 2016. Dalkeith now has 3 zones within decile 1 covering the areas of Woodburn, Lidl and the Centre, this is an additional decile 1 zone from 2016.

Reporting

This progress report provides an update on the actions that we have taken to reduce child poverty in Midlothian during the year 2019-20. The report details work that was undertaken during the period April 2019 – March 2020 and encompasses some of the immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Covid response work that has taken place from April 2020 onwards will be presented in the 2020-21 report, due for completion in June 2021.

Governance

Our 2018-19 report highlighted the need to review the membership of the child poverty working group in order to take forward effective action on the drivers of child poverty, particularly in relation to priority groups.

Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Board agreed that all partners will focus for the 3 years from 2019 until 2022 on how they can contribute to the following outcomes:-

- Reduced inequalities in the health of our population
- Reduced inequalities in the outcomes of learning in our population
- Reduced inequalities in the economic circumstances of our population

Working towards these outcomes will help us to tackle child poverty through the actions contained in our Service Plans. Opportunities for strategic engagement with areas such as procurement, housing, transport and economic development continue to be viewed as crucial to further developing this work.

Embedding strategic ownership and the development of actions to address child poverty in Midlothian will be a priority action in the year 2019-20.

Self-Assessment

To ensure a collaborative approach to tackling child poverty a self-assessment session with Midlothian Community Planning Partners was planned for May 2020. The session was to be led by the Improvement Service with the support of NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) and aimed to identify strengths and areas for improvement in relation to our work to tackle child poverty (particularly around development and delivery of our Local Child Poverty Action Plan and Report). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the session had to be postponed and will now be held during 2021-22. The background fact-finding questionnaire for the session is available in Appendix 1.

Local Child Poverty Action Plan Update 2019-20

The progress that has been made against the actions identified in our 2018-19 report to reduce child poverty is detailed in the tables below. The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a focus on immediate response activity to assist families and communities, and has resulted in the postponement or re-evaluation of some of our plans for this year. The effects of Covid-19 on child poverty are yet to be fully understood, however we are now well-placed to take stock of our progress and plan ahead.

Costs of living are reduced		
Action	Progress	Future plans
Changeworks – advice and support for families to address utility costs and fuel efficiency – Aim Hi Project	<p>70 families were assisted this year by ‘Heating and Eating’ workshops and one-to-one support. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 home visits • 14 applications for Warm Home Discount • 5 families added to fuel supplier’s priority register • 4 families helped to clear debt from fuel supplier’s hardship fund. <p>£15,424 Financial savings to families from energy saving advice. 7,407.50kg total carbon savings.</p> <p>A progress report is presented in the Case Study Section of this report (page 17).</p>	<p>The Aim Hi project has been awarded a further year of funding to March 2022. Face to face work with families has been suspended from March 2019 due to Covid-19, however families continue to be supported by phone, email and online.</p> <p>Support for priority groups will be a priority in plans for expansion of the reach of this project.</p>
Review of Pupil Equity Fund	<p>Since 2017/2018, Midlothian schools have made use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to support pupils affected by poverty and their families. Schools have an increasing understanding of poverty and its impact on health and learning outcomes as a result of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and PEF. Almost all schools have used PEF to provide health and wellbeing interventions, recognising the need to support pupils’ readiness to learn. This has included a focus on attendance and exclusions. Head teachers report that this is having a positive impact and data demonstrates reduced exclusions for the primary and secondary sectors. Some schools</p>	<p>Further engagement with Education colleagues to identify examples of good practice.</p> <p>Review of poverty awareness training across sectors.</p>

	<p>have used PEF to tackle equity issues such as costs related to the school day. A number of schools have also used PEF more directly to raise the attainment of pupils most affected by poverty and close the poverty-related attainment gap. For the most part this has involved targeted interventions. PEF clinics led by the attainment advisor have supported schools in their approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.</p>	
<p>Homelink Outreach Family Opportunities Coordinator recruited to support families to access benefits, housing, energy and debt advice to make real and sustainable changes.</p>	<p>24 Midlothian families, with 59 children, have been supported to address debt, fuel poverty, benefits and housing issues. 60% of those families supported were single parent families. All 24 families have been offered fuel/energy advice in partnership with Changeworks and the Energy Saving Trust and the co-ordinator is now a registered super user for Home Energy Scotland.</p> <p>20 families have been supported to attend appointments with community services, Health and Social Work and through the support of the Family Opportunities Co-ordinator 59 children have received food, clothing, learning resources, birthday cakes and Christmas presents. The Co-ordinator has also accessed grants for furniture and white goods to improve the home environment.</p>	<p>The post is funded for 2 more years from 20-22.</p> <p>During the pandemic the focus will be on continuing to support families with their immediate needs- mostly accessing food and money and assisting families with educational materials to help support children not accessing school.</p> <p>Additional offer: 23 families supported to maximise their income 6 families supported to minimise their outgoings 5 families supported in to training/employment opportunities</p>

Income from employment is maximised		
Action	Progress	Future steps
Review of Living Wage accredited employers	No progress	Carry forward to Year 3
Increase uptake of Good Time to be 2 ELC places	The numbers of enquiries and spaces allocated have increased in the last year and an additional 26 children received discretionary placements to ensure that we reached vulnerable families that were not necessarily economically disadvantaged. Children also received more funded hours. From January 2020, children are able to access 1140 hour placements.	Continued promotion of places and links to family and adult learning.
Positive Futures – supporting families to access well-paid and sustainable local employment	40 families undertook IT Training/support. 4 parents moved into social care employment 14 parents moved into childcare employment 3 parents moved into additional employment opportunities 10 families engaged with Job Centre Plus 26 adults supported to volunteer	The project was granted a 6 month extension to the programme with a renewed aim of creating an evidence based pathway to move families from poverty into sustainable employment in 'caring communities'. Learning from this model will be captured and materials launched nationally.
Together for Positive Change Intensive Family Support Service - Barnardos	A new service supported by Capital City Partnership and the City Region Deal, working in partnership with Midlothian Council. Providing practical, emotional, welfare and employability support to help families develop confidence, resilience and remove of barriers to work. The project aims to meet the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved parenting confidence and improved family relationships • Improved money management skills • Housing situations stabilised, and tenancies maintained • Access to education, training, employment • Support to access health services/supports for improved physical and mental health 	In the year 2020-21 the project aims to engage with 7 families, supporting 21 individuals (adults & children), resulting in 1 adult entering Further Education, 4 adults gaining new employment, and 2 young people achieving an education, training or employment outcome.

Income from social security and benefits in kind is maximised

Action	Progress	Future steps
Income maximisation advice and support in Midlothian Sure Start centres – Aim Hi project	<p>255 advice sessions were carried out this year, resulting in 62 families being better off by a total of £119,248.</p> <p>Clients reported additional benefits of feeling: less stressed, more in control, less isolated and more confident.</p> <p>A progress report is presented in the Case Study Section of this report (page 17).</p>	<p>The Aim Hi project has been awarded a further year of funding to March 2022. Face to face work with families has been suspended from March 2019 due to Covid-19, however families continue to be supported by phone, email and online.</p> <p>Support for priority groups will be a priority in plans for expansion of the reach of this project.</p>
Midwife/Health Visitor referral pathway to welfare advice	A working group from Public Health, Midlothian Sure Start, Health Visiting and Midwifery developed a suggested referral process from Health Visitors and Midwives to Midlothian Sure Start and Aim Hi. Initial conversations took place to extend the process to include referrals from the Family Nurse Partnership. Authorisation and implementation of the pathway was paused at the start of 2020 due to Covid-19 response work taking priority.	The plans will be reviewed and updated, following which a request for authorisation of the information sharing process will be submitted to NHS Lothian.
Increase uptake of Best Start Grants and Best Start Food Payments	<p>Best Start Food Payments (BSFP) replaced Healthy Start Vouchers in November 2019.</p> <p>2,800 applications were received between 10 December 2018 to 31 May 2020 for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods in Midlothian.</p>	NHS Lothian are conducting research in 2020-21 to identify the existing knowledge of frontline health practitioners on BSFP, and will work with Community Midwifery to support them to engage with families around BSFP.

<p>Work with Revenues and Integrated Service Support (ISS) to achieve aim of automation of free school meals and clothing grants</p>	<p>Application form was simplified and if the family circumstances do not change the claim rolls forward without having to reapply.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council proposal to introduce an “apply once” system so that on contacting the council the person/family is assessed for all areas – free school meals, council tax reduction etc. This will involve data sharing agreements and redesign of systems.</p>
<p>Embed welfare advice in NHS settings</p>	<p>The Scottish Government Healthier Wealthier Children Fund has been used to establish a welfare advice service based in the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Lothian. A 2 year funding contract was awarded to Community Health and Advice Initiative (CHAI) commencing in January 2020. A progress report is presented in the Case Study Section of this report (page 15 – 16)</p>	<p>Work will be undertaken to ensure the embedding of this service in 2020-21 and to identify further opportunities and requirements for welfare advice across NHS settings in Midlothian.</p>
<p>Affordable Credit – review of access to Credit Unions and the feasibility of extending this service</p>	<p>The pilot was undertaken but there was no real uptake. Feedback from Midlothian residents was that they were not keen as difficult to access funds (app doesn’t allow you to withdraw and there is no local branch).</p>	<p>Not continuing priority.</p>

Listening to the voices of lived experience

Listening to the voices of people with lived experience plays an important part in developing our poverty strategy in Midlothian. In 2019 we took part in 'Get Heard Scotland', a programme coordinated by the Poverty Alliance and funded by the Scottish Government as part of *Every Child Every Chance*, the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. We wanted to find out, through discussions with people affected by poverty in our local communities, the things that are going well, not going well, or need to change for them to feel supported. Midlothian was one of the key geographical target areas for the programme in 2019-20 due to its higher than average levels of child poverty, the rurality of many of its communities, and the region's industrial past.

Get Heard Scotland discussions took place in the areas of Gorebridge, Woodburn, Penicuik, Bonnyrigg and Mayfield, with around 41 people in total taking part. The discussions were facilitated by the Poverty Alliance and took place in partnership with services and organisations including: Midlothian Sure Start, Gorebridge Community Trust and Midlothian Council's Home School Practitioner's Project. Consultation was also carried out with military families living in the Penicuik area and Newbattle Community Nursery.

Three key questions structured the conversations:

- What is currently working well for people on low incomes?
- What is currently not working well for people on low incomes?
- What needs to change?

We themed the responses to the discussions, interviews and questionnaires so that we could understand the issues raised by the people who took part, and consider actions that can be taken to improve support for people living in poverty. A summary of the findings is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

Poverty Profile – Local Authority level data on child poverty

A poverty profile has been developed to allow us to track and report on progress.

The content of the poverty profile will be reviewed by the Child Poverty Working Group in the year 21/22 to assess the availability and use of the data.

Code	PI	Baseline	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20		Data Source
			Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
CP.01	HMRC - % Children in low-income families	18.6%	16%						HMRC, Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure
CP.02	End Child Poverty - Estimates of children in poverty	21%	N/A	24%	25%	23%			End Child Poverty, Children in poverty estimates
CP.03	% Households managing well financially	45%	60%	56%	60%	58%			Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey - Local Authority tables
CP.04	% Children in working households	66.6%	61.2%	72.1%	72.4%	74.1%			ONS, Workless households for regions across the UK

Code	PI	Baseline	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20		Data Source
			Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
CP.05	% Employees (18+) earning less than the Living Wage	0.175	0.17	0.14	0.16	0.15			ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Scotland analysis
CP.06	Underemployment of 16+ population (%)	4%	10%	7%	7%	8%			Regional employment patterns in Scotland
CP.07	% Adults with no savings	15%	N/A	20%	N/A	20%			Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey - Local Authority tables
CP.08	% P4-P7 pupils registered for free school meals	20.3%	17.8%	16.2%	15.3%	14.9%			Scottish Government, Healthy Living Survey
CP.09	Employment in "lower paid" occupations	27%				27%	31%	29%	ONS, Annual Population Survey

Code	PI	Baseline	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20		Data Source
			Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
CP.10	Median full-time gross weekly earnings	6.2%				6.2%	8.2%	1.2%	ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
CP.11	Jobs density	0.62		0.62	0.63	0.62			ONS, Jobs density dataset
CP.12	% Adults reporting a limiting long-term physical or mental health problem - household with children	11%	5.7%	7.8%	13.4%				Scottish Government, Scottish Surveys Core Questions
CP.13	% Single parent households	7%	8%	9%	5%	4%			Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey
CP.14	% Large family households	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%			Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey

Code	PI	Baseline	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20		Data Source
			Value	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
CP.15	Children (under 16) - Population estimates	19.1%	19.1%	19.1%	19.3%	19.4%			NRS, Mid-year Population Estimates
CP.16	% Children (under 16) by SIMD16 quintile	11%				11%			SIMD16
CP.17	Age of first time mothers - 19 and under (% of all first time mothers)	16%	11%	10%	8%	5%			ISD, Age of First Time Mothers
CP.18	Non-white minority ethnic - % of total population				2.8%	3%			Scottish Government, Scottish Survey Core Questions

Case Study 1 - NHS Lothian – Royal Hospital for Sick Children Welfare Advice Service

In Lothian, the Scottish Government Healthier Wealthier Children Fund has been used to establish a hospital based welfare advice service at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children (RHSC) in Edinburgh. This service will benefit families experiencing poverty across the four local authority areas within Lothian and complement the existing welfare advice provision within the adult hospitals. Having a hospital based service promotes access for those families who may struggle to engage with community based services and/or who may find they are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of their child's illness or hospital stay.

The commissioning process for this new service was started in late summer 2019 and the funding specification and tendering process went live in October 2019. A number of bids were received from various national and local service providers. A multidisciplinary funding panel met in December 2019 to review and assess the bids in line with NHS Lothian procurement processes. Consensus was reached and a final funding decision made. The two year funding contract was awarded to the Community Health and Advice Initiative (CHAI) who are an experienced Edinburgh based welfare advice service provider. The contract officially commenced on 20th Jan 2020 and an NHS Lothian Link Officer was appointed to support and monitor project activity.

The service offers free, independent, confidential and non-judgemental advice across the hospital (inpatient and outpatients) and includes support on issues such as income maximisation, benefit entitlement, debt, employment and housing. This not only supports vulnerable families at a time when they may be experiencing additional stress with a child in hospital, but also supports the work of clinical staff and lessens the burden on them potentially freeing up time.

The welfare advice service is fully embedded within the RHSC. The service aim is to provide advice to families who, for several reasons including personal barriers, long stay in hospital, caring responsibilities etc, are unable to access mainstream advice services. The welfare adviser works alongside hospital staff to ensure support is provided to families in need. Families can self-refer as well as being referred by hospital staff.

The initial phase of project development involved the recruitment and training of a welfare adviser to work full time on the project and establish contacts across the hospital. Links were made with nurse managers, social work, discharge planning and other support services.

The project has committed to providing 40 appointments per month and they anticipate 150 families a year will receive advice and support. It was acknowledged from the outset that during the initial project development phase, this was unlikely to be achieved.

To the end of March 2020, 3 families had received advice from the project. Even at this early stage, it is apparent that the cases being referred are incredibly complex with housing issues being a predominant feature. It is too early to report on any financial gain.

The Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in March 2019 seriously impacted CHAI's ability to develop and deliver the project in the hospital but they have continued to raise awareness, encourage referrals and conduct appointments by telephone.

Although still early days, this service has been welcomed by families and staff across the Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

Case Study 2 - NHS Health Improvement Fund – Aim Hi project

The *Access to Improved opportunities in Midlothian for long term Health Improvement* project (Aim Hi) received continued funding in the year 2019-20 from the NHS Health Improvement Fund. The project is a collaboration between Penicuik Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), Changeworks and Midlothian Sure Start and provides advice to families to help them increase their income and decrease expenditure. The project has continued to develop since its' commencement in 2018 and the workers have developed relationships in the community to become a friendly a trusted face. Parents and families have universally indicated a positive experience of the service, gaining improvements to both their income and their wellbeing.

Since inception, the project has delivered 377 income maximisation client contacts, helping families with 1165 issues. 255 advice sessions were delivered in the current year, culminating in a total of 62 families being better off by £119,248. From commencement of the project in 2018, 78 families are better off by a total of £209,091. Clients have also reported feeling less stressed, more in control, less isolated and more confident, with comments including *"I have found CAB input helpful and easy"* and *"I found using the service helpful and will keep the link going"*.

Changeworks 'Heating and Eating' workshops and 1:1 support helped 70 families in the current year, providing advice and practical resources about food and energy efficiency. For example, parents who attended the workshops received an advice pack, information on food waste top tips, and those who have gas central heating were offered radiator panels. 16 families received at least one home visit this year. An additional 14 clients were assisted to apply for Warm Home Discount, 5 were added to their fuel suppliers' priority service register, and 4 had part of their debt cleared following successful applications to their fuel suppliers' hardship fund. Feedback from parents who attended the workshops consistently stated that they found the sessions helpful and that they had a better understanding of how to use energy at home and how to reduce food waste. Comments included, *"I always just use the same ring on my cooker - I didn't realise that wastes money! I'll match up my pots to the ring size in future"*, *"I'm going to try turning my room thermostat down - I probably won't even notice!"* and *"I didn't realise kettles were so expensive"*. The total financial saving to families in the current year from energy saving advice was £15,424, and the total carbon saving for the year was 7,407.50kg

To further the reach of the project, links have been established with both a Young Mum's group and a Dad's group, helping the workers to support more families at risk of poverty who may find it difficult to access the help that they need. Over and above the immediate gains, the project has provided added value by helping parents to feel more connected to their community and more able to participate in community activities. The project has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with face-to-face meetings being suspended from March 2019, however the workers have responded quickly to continue their support to families by phone, email and online.

Future Plans

Development of Child Poverty Action Plan

Actions relating to child poverty are contained within the various thematic community planning action plans, particularly Improving Opportunities Midlothian (IOM) and Getting It Right for Every Midlothian Child (GIRFEMC), and within Midlothian Council and NHS service plans. The Child Poverty Working Group has highlighted a requirement for a poverty action plan that brings all this work together to provide strategic direction to address poverty.

Income Maximisation Worker – Children’s Services

In order to contribute the action in the Children’s Services plan 2020-21 (“Deliver the actions in the child poverty plan to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty Act”) and to contribute to other areas of the LCPAR, Midlothian Children’s Services will be commissioning an income maximisation worker who will be employed and managed by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB).

This worker will undertake income maximisation assessments for families where children are on the child protection register or who are Looked After and Accommodated (LAAC). This is with a view to increasing household income, leading to a reduction in poverty which in turn will have a positive impact on family functioning and parental capacity to meet the needs of their children. The worker will also have a wider remit to support parents back to work and to address fuel poverty.

Funding for the post has been agreed initially for one year and will be reviewed following an annual impact evaluation.

Parental Employability Support – Communities and Lifelong Learning

The Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) key workers started in October 2020 and are working with a person centred, intensive, key worker model that is focussed on engaging with the education and upskilling of priority groups. Priorities include lone parents, minority ethnic parents, parents with a disability/families who have a disabled child, parents aged under 25yrs, parents with children aged under 1yr, and parents with 3 + children. 65 % of the referrals will be to support parents who are employed on low incomes to tackle in-work poverty, address barriers and upskill while in work. 35% of the referrals will be to support parents not yet in work to address barriers to work and allow progress towards employment.

Together for Positive Change, Intensive Family Support – Barnardos

This service aims to work with families where there are multi-generational barriers to education and employability. The service will offer focused and intensive support packages to families who are identified as being at a stage of making change with the right supports. The service will work in partnership with Midlothian colleagues to identify potential beneficiaries.

Lived Experience

The Child Poverty Working Group will use the actions identified by participants of the Get Heard Scotland local conversations to inform planning that addresses child poverty going forward. Further engagement with families affected by poverty, particularly those within priority groups, will be included in our Child Poverty Action Plan.

Looking forward to Year 3 (2020-21)

The period covered by the Year 3 report will include our response to the Covid-19 pandemic which has been one of the most challenging times both economically and socially. Families in, or at risk of falling into poverty have been most adversely impacted. Investment in digital infrastructure and the provision of food vouchers and fuel payments has featured heavily in our response. As we enter the pandemic recovery period we recognise that this is a crucial time to take stock of our work to date, identify and understand the impacts of the pandemic, and evaluate our future plans to reduce poverty across Midlothian.

Appendix 1 – Planned self- assessment questionnaire

Under the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#), local authorities and territorial health boards have a duty to produce joint annual local child poverty action reports every year.

These reports should describe actions taken in the past year – and planned future actions – to tackle child poverty and contribute to national targets to significantly reduce child poverty by 2030.

The hope is that the production and implementation of these reports will help bring about a ‘step-change’ in action to tackle child poverty by encouraging a strategic, preventative approach focusing on the underlying drivers of child poverty (income from employment, income from social security and the cost of living).

[Guidance](#) produced by the Scottish Government in 2018 gives an overview of how reports might be produced and what they might contain.

Midlothian’s first child poverty action report was published in June 2019 and is [available here](#). **We would ask you to re-read the report before filling out the following questionnaire.**

The self-assessment questionnaire and workshop

With support from NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research unit (SPIRU), the Improvement Service is supporting Midlothian to reflect on local action to tackle child poverty.

You are being asked through the following short questionnaire to consider what the strengths and weaknesses of Midlothian’s approach have been to date. The workshop on Friday 8th May will provide an opportunity to consider where improvements might be made in future.

The Improvement Service will draw together findings of both the questionnaire and workshop to produce a short improvement plan highlighting local priorities for action.

1. Understanding Local Need

National Guidance on [Developing Local Child Poverty Action Reports \(LCPARs\)](#) suggests that Local Child Poverty Action Reports should build on an understanding of child poverty locally. It also encourages local partners to involve those with lived experience of poverty in understanding need and informing decision making.

Having read Midlothian's LCPAR, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- **The report gives the reader a clear understanding of rates and location of child poverty in Midlothian.**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **The report gives the reader a clear understanding of the reasons that child poverty persists in Midlothian**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **The report clearly and meaningfully reflects the views those with lived experience of poverty in Midlothian**

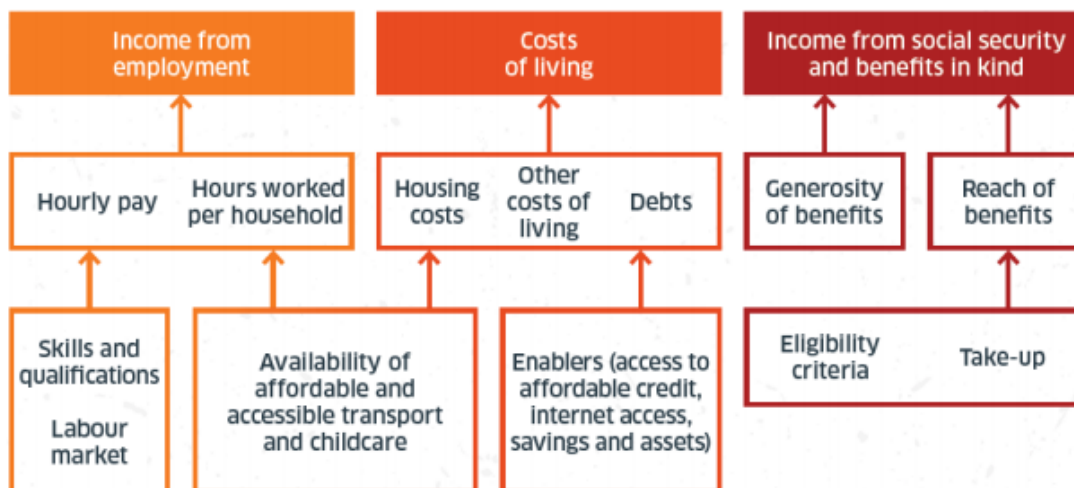
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

Please provide details of where the CPP is performing well in relation to Understanding Local Need

Please provide details of how the CPP can improve its approach to Understanding Local Need

2. Using a Wide Range of Policy Levers

National Guidance and analysis by the Poverty and Inequality Commission suggests that local action to tackle child poverty should incorporate actions across a wide range of services and policy areas in order to have the biggest impact on rates of child poverty. Listed areas include economic growth, employability, transport, income maximisations advice, automation of benefits, childcare, the affordability of housing etc.



Local partners are also encouraged to take long term preventative actions as well as those intended to mitigate the impact of poverty.

Having read Midlothian's LCPAR, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- **Midlothian is focusing on the right actions in order to tackle child poverty**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **Action to tackle child poverty in Midlothian employs a suitably wide range of policy levers**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **An appropriate balance is struck between actions which might reduce child poverty in the medium to long term (promoting access to employment, job creation) and those which might be described as more short term, crisis interventions (such as emergency food provision)**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **The report identifies new or improved actions that will contribute towards a step change in action to tackle child poverty locally**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

Please provide details of where the CPP is performing well in relation to using a wide range of policy levers

Please provide details of how the CPP can improve its approach to using a wide range of policy levers to tackle child poverty (whether that is improvements to existing activities or new areas for activity)

3. Understanding Our Progress

While local partners are not expected to prove that they have reduced child poverty at the local level by 2030, there is an expectation expressed in the guidance that local partners will establish ways to check that local actions are having a positive impact over time.

Having read Midlothian's Local Child Poverty Action Report, to what extent would you agree with the following statements?

- **Midlothian's Local Child Poverty Action Report has clearly stated aims / objectives**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **There are suitable indicators in place that will help establish whether progress is being made that might contribute to tackling child poverty**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **Actions described in the plan are being appropriately monitored and/or evaluated to understand the impact they are having**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **There are clear and appropriate mechanisms of accountability and oversight for the actions in the report? (i.e. there a group or body clearly tasked with overseeing progress)**

Please provide details of where the CPP is performing well in relation to Understanding Our Progress

Please provide details of how the CPP can improve its approach to Understanding

4. Ways of Working

The 2018/19 LCPAR was developed by Midlothian Child Poverty Working Group which 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. The group also has members from 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).

Having read Midlothian's LCPAR, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

The structure currently in place to develop and implement the local plan

- **Involves those with a statutory duty to develop a local Child Poverty Action Report (the local authority and relevant territorial health board)**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **Involve people at a sufficiently senior to influence strategic change where necessary**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **Includes representation from an appropriate range of relevant council departments (with consideration given to the range of policy levers that might be relevant)**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

- **Includes representation of a wide enough range of CPP partners**

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

Please provide details of where the CPP is performing well in relation to Ways of Working

Please provide details of how the CPP can improve its approach to Ways of Working

Appendix 2 - Get Heard Scotland Feedback

1. ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

What is working well?

Community-based facilities and activities play an important role in the lives of participants. Local churches and Sure Start Centres were highlighted as two primary examples of community-based facilities that work well to support families and address child poverty. Local churches were said to play a vital role by providing, for example, lunch clubs, second-hand clothing exchanges and opportunities for volunteering. Participants also appreciated community activities that were available for children during school holidays, for example the Sure Start Summer Programme that provides activities and trips at a heavily discounted cost. Such initiatives were said to help ensure that children from families living on low incomes are able to access social and leisure activities. Participants were very supportive of the work of the Sure Start centres. The centres provided support for both them and their children and were important in helping to build the transition from nursery to school for their children. Parents felt that the centres helped their children to build their social skills through their interactions with other children and to prepare them for starting school. The centres also helped to build parents' confidence and resilience, allowed them to meet new people and make social connections. In addition, Sure Start centres provide parents with work and training opportunities, which is especially important for parents who may otherwise face challenges accessing such opportunities. One participant was assisted to undertake crèche-worker training at the centre. The local Sure Start centre was seen as a "lifeline" to families. It not only provides all-year round childcare, but also delivers child and adult therapy, plus courses for parents on topics such as parenting, confidence-building and first aid.

What is not working well?

The feedback about community activities and facilities was not all positive and participants expressed some areas of concern and frustration. There was a lack of accessible activities for children in the 11-16 year age range, with available activities being too expensive for children to participate. Within the Gorebridge area, participants felt that the lack of evening, weekend and holiday clubs and facilities for young people had led to an increase in underage drinking and vandalism. Participants also thought that the closure of the local police station had resulted in more crime, such as theft, burglaries and vandalism. Frustration was expressed at inconsistent levels of help from the police which has caused distrust between residents and the police. While not perhaps directly related to the issue of poverty, this fed into a sense of communities not being prioritised or properly listened to.

The impact of local authority cuts and changes to the way that local authority services are delivered was also a key theme. Some families, particularly those on low incomes, found it more challenging to access support and services, such as the library and leisure centre, after they were centralised to Newbattle High School. On the same theme, the lack of a central community hub in Mayfield made it difficult for residents to know about services and initiatives. Participants said that they found it difficult to know about what was going on and where to go for help or advice. Most of their information came by way of word of mouth and some participants were unaware of the local Development Trusts.

Council cuts were blamed for rubbish lying around after the cessation of regular street-cleaning. This has resulted in some children's play areas becoming unsafe and the image of the area being brought down by rubbish lying around. Residents feel that the onus is on them to organise clean-ups.

What needs to change?

Suggestions that were made to improve the use of community facilities and activities in order to better support people living on low incomes included:

- The development of more activity programmes aimed at children during the school holidays, with these programmes either being free or very low cost
- School facilities to be open for community use during the school holidays
- Additional financial support for youth clubs and other activities for young people outside of school hours
- The establishment of community hubs to act as a central source of information, advice and signposting.

2. EDUCATION

What is working well?

Participants spoke highly of the local Primary Schools, and also of the availability of an English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESOL) class for families whose first language is not English. Free Breakfast Clubs in Primary Schools were cited as a welcome provision that helps to ease the pressure on families living on low incomes.

What is not working well?

The cost of the school day was highlighted as an issue for parents on low incomes, with the cost of school trips being a barrier to participation. School holidays were also cited as a worrying time for some parents due to the lack of affordable things for children to do. Children with Additional Support Needs face particular difficulty during school holidays due to the lack of structure and difficulties negotiating the transitions between school and holiday periods.

What needs to change?

- Cost of the school day
- More affordable things for children to do in school holidays
- Extra support during holiday periods for children with Additional Support Needs

3. CHILDCARE

What is working well?

Parents welcomed the upcoming increase in free childcare hours to 1140, as this will help them to increase their working hours or access further training and education. They also feel that increased hours in nursery will help children's learning and social development. Participants were supportive of additional support for families, such as the 'Good to be 2' project, and community-based organisations such as Sure Start.

What is not working well?

A lack of affordable local nursery and childcare provision in some areas means that families have additional travel costs, or long journeys on foot, to access childcare.

What needs to change?

More affordable local nursery and childcare provision for families is required.

4. EMPLOYMENT

What is working well?

All participants worked, or had worked recently, and spoke positively about how this contributed to their independence and sense of identity. Importantly, parents spoke positively about employers that are supportive and flexible when arranging work patterns to reflect changing family circumstances.

What is not working well?

Insecure employment, zero-hour contracts and low wages were all contributing factors in preventing parents getting work in the local area. Opportunities that are available in Edinburgh

require longer travel time plus additional travel and childcare costs. These factors were thought to offset any advantage to gaining employment further afield.

What needs to change?

Key actions that were identified by participants to improve employment opportunities were:

- Flexible working options, particularly options to work around school hours and to fit with childcare requirements
- Increased local employment opportunities that reduce travel time and associated costs, e.g. fares, childcare
- Employability support for lone parents

5. BENEFITS/SOCIAL SECURITY

What is working well?

Families on low incomes welcomed the Best Start Grant as a source of support at critical points of children's lives. Also welcome was Scottish Government's Baby Box.

What is not working well?

Participants shared many negative experiences relating to the benefits system. These included:

- Universal Credit – loss of income caused by impact of the benefit cap and 2 child limit; 5-week waiting period pulling families into debt; response to varying/irregular incomes with families not knowing how much they will receive from month to month
- Lack of locally-based advice services which are needed to obtain specialist support, e.g. due to the complexities of Universal Credit. Participants reported issues with access to welfare rights and money advice despite the availability of some community facilities, such as CAB advice workers in Sure Start Centres. Many people were unaware of what help is available and rely on internet searching or word of mouth for information.
- Free School Meals evidence requirements, e.g. families are asked to supply paper forms from HMRC and DWP as evidence rather than emails. This is particularly problematic as most claims and correspondence to DWP/HMRC are made and received online
- Delays and stoppages of DLA and DHP causing immediate financial difficulties.

What needs to change?

Information and access to benefits and entitlements was a key issue highlighted in discussions.

Actions identified that would benefit participants were:

- Increased awareness and support in applying for benefits, school clothing grants and free school meals
- Help to improve knowledge of entitlements
- Revision of the terms of Universal Credit, e.g. ending 5 week wait for first payment; revision of the repayment schedule for advance payments

6. HOUSING

What is working well?

There were no aspects of housing that were considered by participants to be working well.

What is not working well?

A large proportion of participants were living in social housing and this is reflected in their responses. Issues that were highlighted include:

- Repairs: Participants reported issues with damp, mould and crumbling walls, and having to wait a long time for repairs, or repairs not being carried out at all. One participant told of having to wait so long for a repair that she paid for it to be done by a local tradesman out of her own pocket.

- Fuel poverty: Many participants reported that they lived in older local authority houses that are hard to heat. This is a particular issue for families that are reliant on Universal Credit.
- Availability of suitable housing: This was a particular issue for larger families, with overcrowding reported as a common occurrence. One participant was living with her partner and 3 children in a two-bedroom house.
- Social housing: There is a need for more social housing, with long waiting lists for both local authority and housing association properties. Private lets are unaffordable or inaccessible for those relying on social security. Suitable affordable housing for families is said to be in short supply.

What needs to change?

Key proposals for change that were identified by participants were:

- Investment and prioritisation of social housing
- Additional sheltered housing, which could help to free up larger houses for families
- Increased access to locally-based housing advice services
- Investment from the local authority to make homes more energy efficient and reduce fuel poverty

7. HEALTH

What is working well?

The local GP surgery is accessible and there is a bus that runs directly to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

What is not working well?

There were no reports of things that are not working well in regards to health.

What needs to change?

While supports to deal with mental health issues were important, it was also highlighted that more is required to address the fundamental factors of mental ill-health, such as not having enough money.

8. FOOD

What is working well?

Some examples of food provision were spoken about positively as a way of ameliorating food insecurity in the short-term, e.g. local foodbanks delivering weekly food parcels to families with two or more children during the school holidays.

What is not working well?

Not all families qualify for the food parcels. When accessing foodbanks, some participants spoke of having to travel to another village due to there being no local provision. Some areas do not have a large supermarket and this means that people are reliant on local shops that are more expensive. Getting to a large supermarket in another town requires expensive bus fares and involves practical difficulties such as travelling by bus with buggies and lots of shopping bags. Families felt that food insecurity needed to be tackled in a more meaningful and systematic way.

What needs to change?

While free school meals for children in P1 to P3 are welcome, there needs to be access to free school meals for all children throughout their school years.

More support is needed for families to decrease food poverty, particularly with more help in place for families who are unable to access foodbanks during their limited opening hours.

9. OTHER

Some participants highlighted the cost of broadband and wifi access as a significant burden on families. While all participants had access to home broadband, they felt that people living in poverty had increased living costs to allow them digital access to services, and that some people may miss out. This was a particular issue due to the increasing reliance on online services, such as Universal Credit applications.

A related area of need was said to be the availability of local help and advice with budgeting for families.

From the summarised discussions we identified actions across community, local authority and government levels, that participants told us could help to support families affected by poverty.

Actions identified by participants

- The development of more affordable and accessible activity programmes for children during the school holidays.
- Availability of school facilities for community use during the school holidays.
- Additional financial support for youth clubs and other activities for young people outside of school hours.
- The establishment of community hubs to act as a central source of information, advice and signposting.
- Cost of the school day to be addressed.
- Extra support during holiday periods for children with Additional Support Needs
- More affordable local nursery and childcare provision for families.
- Flexible working options, particularly options to work around school hours and to fit with childcare requirements.
- Increased local employment opportunities that reduce travel time and associated costs, e.g. fares, childcare.
- Employability support for lone parents.
- Increased awareness and support in applying for benefits, school clothing grants and free school meals.
- Help to improve knowledge of entitlements.
- Revision of the terms of Universal Credit, e.g. ending 5 week wait for first payment; revision of the repayment schedule for advance payments.
- Investment and prioritisation of social housing.
- Access to larger houses for families in social housing, e.g. by creating additional sheltered housing to free up housing availability.
- Improved access to locally-based housing advice services.
- Investment in energy efficiency of social housing and reduction in fuel poverty.
- Address the social and environmental causes of mental ill-health, such as not having enough money.
- Access to free school meals for all children throughout their school years.
- Support for families facing food poverty, particularly those who are unable to access foodbanks during their limited opening hours.
- Improved availability of local help and advice with budgeting for families.
- Improved access to affordable broadband and wifi.

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

Best Start Grants and Best Start Foods

[Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 31 May 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Best-Start-Grant-and-Best-Start-Foods-high-level-statistics-to-31-May-2020)

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/>

Midlothian Sure Start

<http://www.midlothiansurestart.org.uk/>

Parental Employability Support

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/1084/jobs_and_training/676/parental_employability_support

Poverty Alliance – Get Heard Scotland

<https://www.povertyalliance.org/get-involved/get-heard-scotland/>

SIMD

<https://simd.scot/#/simd2020>