

# Local Child Poverty Action Report

Year 7  
(2024/25)



November 2025

# Contents

- Foreword..... 3
- Executive Summary..... 4
- Strategic Context ..... 6
- What does our data tell us?..... 7
- Child Poverty Indicators ..... 11
- Progress 2024-25 – High Level Summary ..... 20
- Progress 2024-25 - Detailed..... 23
- Case studies..... 34
- Appendix 1 -Plans for 2023-27 ..... 41
- Appendix 2 – Logic model..... 48

## Foreword

Child poverty is not just a statistic. It is a daily reality for nearly 5,000 children living in Midlothian (25% of all children living in Midlothian). It limits potential, shapes future health outcomes, and deepens inequality. Every child deserves the chance to grow up healthy, safe, and with hope, yet too many face barriers that no young person should endure.

This report, our seventh annual report, sets out progress in delivering our collective action plan which is our commitment to delivering our aim that no child or household will be living in poverty in Midlothian. The data presented in this report shows the distribution of child poverty and the unequal burden carried by certain communities. Early disadvantages shape life trajectories and influence educational attainment, health and long-term wellbeing.

Our partnership brings together our communities, the third, public and private sectors to deliver targeted support, community-driven solutions, and investment to address cost of living challenges at a local level. Working together in education, health, and family wellbeing we aim to create lasting change. Our approach recognises that tackling child poverty is a foundation for a fairer, more prosperous society.

There is more we can do together to make our goals of providing responsive and preventative support to children, young people and families a reality. Coordinated action can shape outcomes for the better and this report aims to provide an underpinning for shared decision-making.

If you want to hear more about the work of the Child Poverty Working Group or want to get involved contact [CLL@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:CLL@midlothian.gov.uk)

Derek Oliver  
Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships (Acting)  
Midlothian Council

Susan Webb  
Director of Public Health  
NHS Lothian

## Executive Summary

### Outcomes achieved in 2024-25

This report describes work that has been undertaken to address child poverty across Midlothian in 2024-25, highlighting areas of impact.

- The commitment of Midlothian Council Cost of Living Task Force to finance both preventative and mitigation supports for local people on low incomes. Including the funding of trusted cash first partners, Virtual Expert Response Advice (VERAs) devices which allow residents to have the autonomy to access information on support services available to them and to put in their own referral for income maximisation support, additional income maximisation support, funding for the Midlothian Pantry Network Coordinator and operating warm and welcoming hubs in local communities.
- Community researchers have been trained in ethnographic techniques to capture lived experience feedback from Midlothian residents
- We have continued to provide person-centred help to address barriers to work for parents through our Parental Employability Service.
- Financial wellbeing pathways have been strengthened across Health Visiting, Midwifery and the Family Nurse Partnership service to maximise income and address infant food insecurity.
- Our Family Wellbeing Service has continued to provide holistic support to help deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families.
- There has been an increased awareness of child poverty and routes to support amongst Midlothian based workers.
- We have carried out a review of equitable access to income maximisation, welfare rights and debt advice.
- There has been focused communications to promote the uptake of Free School Meals, Clothing Grants, Educational Maintenance Allowance and National Entitlement cards.
- Community Wealth Building Activity led by Economic Development/Business Gateway Midlothian included:
  - Community support sessions for individuals to learn about self-employment as a career pathway or to increase household income from existing activities such as hobbies and side hustles.
  - Support to school pupils to develop an entrepreneurial mindset as a preventative step post school.
  - Promote Fair Work First to employers supported by Business Gateway Midlothian.
  - Support to social enterprises that provide employability and wellbeing support to Midlothian residents to ensure sustainability and growth.

## **Key areas for development in 2025-26**

- Support work to develop a national suite of key indicators to inform child poverty actions going forward and the production of a dashboard
- Implement the actions identified from the review of equitable access to income maximisation, welfare rights and debt advice.
- Work with the community researchers to theme their findings and report back to Midlothian Community Planning Groups and work with them to co-produce local solutions to the barriers to addressing child poverty. The researchers will be supported to look at models of lived experience to ensure the long-term sustainability of embedding the voice of lived experience in community planning.
- Strengthen our consideration of actions addressing the risk factors between housing, homelessness and poverty.
- Investigate the relationship between in-work poverty, childcare and responsive parenting/positive attachment.
- Strengthen connections between child poverty and community wealth building/anchors programmes of work.
- Ensure children and young people's voice is heard and influences the plan.

## Strategic Context

This Local Child Poverty Action Report (LCPAR) 2024-2026 provides an update of actions taken locally to prevent, reduce and mitigate the consequences of child poverty in Midlothian, and outlines our future plans. It should be read alongside the Midlothian Employability Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2025<sup>1</sup> which contains actions specific to income from employment.

Our 2023-27 Single Midlothian Plan<sup>2</sup> outcomes are:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- No child or household living in poverty
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

Within the Community Planning structure, the Child Poverty Working Group will continue to be responsible for delivery of the annual Local Child Poverty Action Report. The reports will be approved by NHS Lothian and Midlothian Council prior to submission to the Scottish Government.

The Child Poverty Working Group reports to the 'Midlothian will work towards reducing poverty' thematic priority group of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Actions contained within the Child Poverty Action Plan (2023-27) sit across, and are taken forward by, the CPP thematic groups.

The Child Poverty Working Group will continue to:

- develop and drive forward the Midlothian Child Poverty Action Plan;
- identify gaps and develop solutions to prevent and mitigate the impact of child poverty in Midlothian;
- ensure the voices of those with lived experience of poverty are heard;
- ensure publication and dissemination of the Child Poverty Action Report;
- monitor the progress of actions in the Midlothian Child Poverty Action Report and support implementation of these where required; and
- ensure key messages in relation to child poverty and the LCPAR are communicated to groups and networks across Midlothian.

---

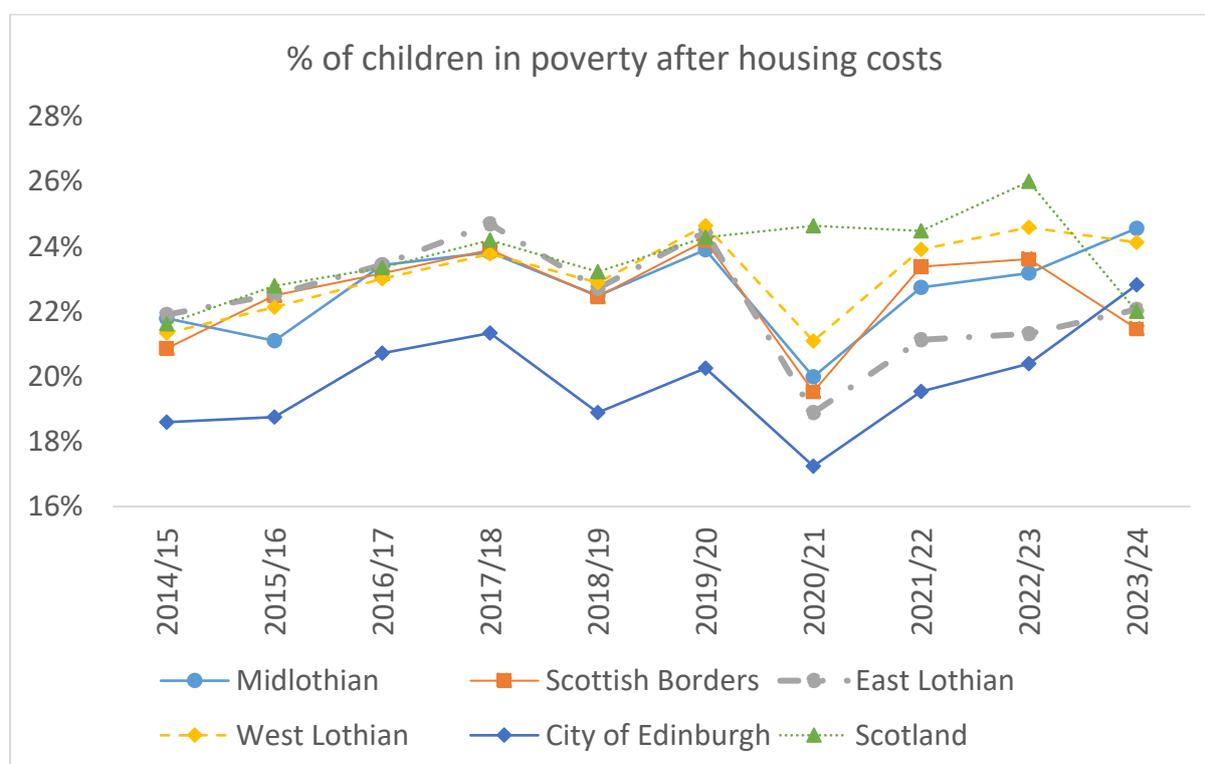
<sup>1</sup> [Jobs and vocational training | No One Left Behind Operating Plan \(PDF\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200284/your\\_community/214/community\\_planning\\_in\\_midlothian/2](https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200284/your_community/214/community_planning_in_midlothian/2)

## What does our data tell us?

In 2022-25, available data sources were examined to establish the picture of child poverty in Midlothian and to help us monitor the picture over time. This includes children living in low-income families by school catchment area and children living in poverty (after housing costs). Further work was ongoing with the Improvement Service and national partners during 2023/24 and 2025 has seen the development of a national child poverty dashboard led by Public Health Scotland incorporating an agreed set of indicators for poverty informed by local work in Midlothian. This will be available in December 2025 to support work going forward.

### Percentage of children living in poverty (after housing costs), 2014-24<sup>3</sup>



Source: [Child Poverty Statistics 2025 - End Child Poverty](#)

It is estimated by End Child Poverty that in 2023-2024, 24.6% of children in Midlothian (4,984 children) were living in relative poverty after housing costs. This is an increase on the rate from the previous year (23.2%). The rate of Child Poverty throughout Scotland is 22%.

<sup>3</sup> [https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Child-Poverty-AHC-estimates-2015-2022\\_final.xlsx](https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Child-Poverty-AHC-estimates-2015-2022_final.xlsx)

Our focus remains on longer-term trend data, which displays an increase from 21.8% in 2014/15 to 24.6% in 2023/24. Caution is advised when interpreting year-on-year changes in local areas. Due to sampling issues during 2021/22 related to the Covid-19 pandemic, additional caution may be required in interpreting these statistics.

*To estimate the percentage of children in poverty figures, researchers at Loughborough University developed a method using administrative data on rents for local authorities, combined with household-level data from the [Understanding Society](#) longitudinal survey to estimate the relationship between housing costs and the relative risk of being in poverty before and after housing costs. This information is used to adjust the 'before housing costs' statistics for local authorities.*

### The extent of child poverty across Midlothian

Data zones are geographical areas with approximate household populations of 500 to 1,000 people. Intermediate zones are created by combining Data Zones to produce areas with a population of between 2,500 and 6,000.

We have provided data on the 5 intermediate zones with the highest percentage of children in poverty. This data should be interpreted with caution as there can be variation within intermediate zones and intermediate zones do not always fall into expected settlement boundaries. For example, Dalkeith is the intermediate zone with the highest percentage of children in poverty, 28.1%. but the datazone with the highest percentage (35.6%) sits within the Thornybank Intermediate zone. The Thornybank Intermediate zone as a whole, however, is 16.6%. The full statistics can be accessed (<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/is-community-planning-outcomes-profile/>).

It is important to note that the methodology for these statistics has very recently been updated. It now takes into account Scottish Child Payment Claims. It assumes that every family eligible for SCP claims it i.e. that the take-up rate is 100%. This contrasts with the published SCP take-up rates for Midlothian which is 90%. These statistics are helpful to provide local and small area insights and comparisons of the proportion of children in low income, before housing costs. The change in methodology means the statistics are not directly comparable with the predecessor of these statistics used in previous LCPARs.

Intermediate zone area	2024/25 projections from CPOP
Dalkeith	28.1%
Easthouses	26.3%
Gorebridge and Middleton	25.1%
Penicuik East	24.1%
Mayfield	20.0%

### Number of children living in poverty (after housing costs), 2014-24<sup>4</sup>

Midlothian is the fastest growing local authorities in Scotland. This growth places increased demands on services which aim to tackle poverty. Between 2018 and 2028, the number of households in Midlothian is projected to increase at a faster rate than the rest of Scotland. The Midlothian population increased from 89,637 in 2017 to 98,260 in 2023. The mid-2024 estimated population of Midlothian is 99,880. Of the 2023 population, it is estimated 18,544 are in the 0–15 age bracket<sup>5</sup> with around 1,000 Midlothian families each year facing the financial challenges of a new baby. It is estimated that in mid-2024, there were 18,731 people in the 0-15 age bracket. The table below displays the numbers of children aged 0-15 years who are living in households with incomes (net of housing costs) that are below 60% of the UK median income.

**Table - Number of children living in poverty (0-15yrs)**

	Midlothian	Scottish Borders	East Lothian	West Lothian	City of Edinburgh
2023/24	4,984	4,388	4,949	9,166	19,644
2022/23	4,592	4,937	4,679	9,440	17,907
2021/22	4,590	4,963	4,765	9,364	17,339
2020/21	4,180	4,445	4,390	8,723	16,142
2019/20	4,583	5,292	5,589	9,326	17,980
2018/19	4,385	4,683	5,195	8,435	16,222
2017/18	4,339	4,966	5,058	8,987	17,911
2016/17	4,337	4,984	4,933	8,871	17,706
2015/16	3,922	4,941	4,730	8,622	16,102
2014/15	3,952	4,562	4,606	8,280	15,624

### [Child Poverty Statistics 2025 - End Child Poverty](#)

There are high levels of income deprivation affecting children and young children spread throughout Midlothian. 25% of Midlothian children are living in income deprived households in 2023/24. This makes Midlothian one of the top ten local authorities with the highest child poverty rates in Scotland. The increased number of children living in poverty in Midlothian correlates with a population swell in the under-15 years and working age populations.

In Midlothian, 11% of families receiving child benefit had three or more children (1,190 families). This provides an estimate of large families living in Midlothian. It is lower than the Scottish average which is 12% (HMRC Publications). Larger families (those with three or more children) are affected by the two-child limit to Universal Credit if the third child was born on or after April 6, 2017. (Source: DWP/HMRC).

<sup>4</sup> [https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Child-poverty-AHC-2015-2024\\_final.xlsx](https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Child-poverty-AHC-2015-2024_final.xlsx)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/council-area-data-sheets/midlothian-council-profile.html>

The population of people from an ethnic minority background in Midlothian is also growing. Census data from 2022 shows that 11% (2,280) of people aged 24 and under are from a minority ethnic background. This increases to 13% for people aged 16 and under (2,985). The 2022 Scottish Census includes everyone who is not white Scottish/ white British in the ethnic minority category. This includes some ethnic groups that were in the White category on the census form such as Irish, Polish, Gypsy/Traveller, Roma and Showman/Showwoman.

It is recognised that people from ethnic minority backgrounds may be disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis and that people born overseas may be particularly vulnerable to poverty in terms of:

- entitlement to support through the benefit system
- vulnerability to the consequences of labour market or health changes where such entitlement is less
- unfamiliarity with sources of financial and other assistance available to them.

## Child Poverty Indicators

The following information provides local context on the three drivers of poverty:

- income from employment
- income from social security/benefits in-kind
- cost of living

Child poverty exists within a complex system of causes and while it is unlikely that local actions will impact high level national statistics, focusing on local data related to the three evidence-based drivers supports a coherent and clear framework to prioritise local action. This ensures we are targeting the outcomes of highest local priority and focusing on the most significant local challenges.

### [Income from employment](#)

#### Working population

The economically active population in Midlothian was 46,900 which was 79.7% of the total working age population in July 2024 – June 2025 ([Office for National Statistics, 2024](#)). This is higher than in Scotland, 76.9%. In 2023/24:

- 67.7% of children in relative poverty lived in a household where at least one adult worked. This is similar to the proportion in Scotland which was 66.3% ([DWP benefit statistics](#)).
- 59.1% of all children living in relative poverty were in lone parent households (DWP Stat Xplore).

#### Earnings

In 2024 full-time workers in Midlothian (by place of residence) earned on average £741.30 per week (Office for National Statistics, 2024). This is similar to the Scottish earnings per week of £740.0. Female full-time workers in Midlothian (by place of residence) earned on average £90.60 less per week than the overall Male full time employee average figure in 2024 (Office for National Statistics, 2024). This same figure for women was:

- £57.70 less in 2022
- £112.90 less in 2020
- £57.00 less in 2018.

#### Employment

The public sector is the biggest local employer: Midlothian Council with 3,990 employees (Midlothian Profile, 2024/25) and NHS Lothian with over 700 employees working in the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (Midlothian HSCP Workforce Plan, 2022-25).

This highlights the importance of Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian’s role as Anchor institutions supporting access to fair work.

Between April 2019 and June 2024 employability funded programmes from Scottish Government supported a variety of local people to move towards and enter employment, 546 of whom were parents (Midlothian Employability Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2025). These funds are co-ordinated by Local Employability Partnership (LEP) of which Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian are part. The Edinburgh City region also supports many jobs for commuters from Midlothian (Midlothian Profile, 2023/24).

#### Out of work benefits

In September 2024, 2.3% of Midlothian residents (1,375 residents), were receiving out of work benefits<sup>6</sup>. This included a greater number of female than male claimants; 750 and 625 respectively.

#### Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods are a collection of payments which provide parents or carers who get certain low-income benefits or tax credits with financial support during pregnancy and the key early years of a child's life. There is a single application form that enables an individual to apply for any relevant Best Start Grant Payments - Pregnancy and Baby Payment , Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment as well as Best Start Foods - a recurring four weekly pre-paid card payment which can be used towards the cost of purchasing healthy foods including fresh, dried, tinned and frozen items.

Rather than indicating what they wish to apply for on the form, applicants provide details about themselves, their partner, all dependent children, and any details about their pregnancy and expected children. When the application is processed, Social Security Scotland determines which elements of Best Start Grant the client is eligible to receive and makes a payment to the client to cover all applicable elements. Social Security Scotland will also determine whether the client is eligible for Best Start Foods.

Applications and payments for Best Start Grants and Best Start Foods in Midlothian from 2018/19 – 2024/25 are detailed below

#### **Table - Best Start Grants and Best Start Foods applications 2018-2025**

---

<sup>6</sup> [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

	Applications for Best Start Grant - Pregnancy and Baby Payment	Applications for Best Start Grant - Early Learning Payment	Applications for Best Start grant - School Age Payment	Applications for Best Start Foods	Total Midlothian applications
Number	3,675	2,965	2,220	5,950	9,550
Total value	£759,944	£628,671	£655,028	£1,082,078	£3,125,722

**Table - Best Start Grant & Best Start Foods applications 2018-25**

	Applications received	Applications processed	Applications authorised	Applications denied	Applications withdrawn
2018-19	355	325	230 (71%)	90 (28%)	5 (1%)
2019-20	2,275	2,120	1,510 (71%)	530 (25%)	85 (4%)
2020-21	2,260	2,135	1,505 (70%)	600 (28%)	30 (1%)
2021-22	1,755	1,755	1,200 (68%)	400 (23%)	155 (9%)
2022-23	1,605	1,650	1,090 (66%)	510 (31%)	50 (3%)
2023-24	1,080	1,260	710 (57%)	520 (41%)	30 (2%)
2024-25	895	875	550 (63%)	315 (36%)	10 (<1%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,225</b>	<b>10,120</b>	<b>6,795</b>	<b>2,965</b>	<b>365</b>

(Source: [Social Security Scotland - Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods statistics to 30 June 2025](#))

#### Scottish Child Payment

On 9 November 2020, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Scottish Child Payment. At the beginning of the application process, individuals can choose to make a joint application for Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. If they choose to do this, the applicant completes one application form for all these benefits.

To make it easier for families to access the support they are entitled to, Social Security Scotland began, on 28 November 2022, to award Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment automatically to eligible families in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. These awards, made to individuals who are in receipt of Scottish Child Payment and who have an eligible child within the relevant Early Learning Payment or School Age Payment application window, happen automatically without the need for a new application.

Scottish Child Payment is intended to provide regular, additional financial support for families already in receipt of qualifying benefits to assist with the costs of caring for a child. From launch to March 2025, 7,940 applications were received for Midlothian, of these 7,885 were processed and 6,345 authorised<sup>7</sup>.

**Table - Scottish Child Payment Applications 2020-2025 (data published June 2025)**

Financial year	Total applications received	Total applications processed*	Applications Authorised	Applications Denied	Withdrawn applications	Value of payments
2020-2021	2,010	1,555	1,440 (93%)	90 (6%)	25 (2%)	£69,780
2021-2022	1,060	1,325	1,000 (76%)	295 (22%)	30 (2%)	£1,072,030
2022-2023	2,835	2,770	2,380 (86%)	360 (13%)	25 (1%)	£3,648,845
2023-2024	1,040	1,235	840 (68%)	365 (30%)	30 (2%)	£8,179,785
2024-2025	825	810	565 (69%)	240 (29%)	10 (1%)	£8,792,271
TOTAL	7,770	7,695	6,225 (80%)	1,350 (18%)	120 (2%)	£21,762,711

*\*Applications are processed once a decision has been made to authorise or deny, or once an application is withdrawn by the applicant*

#### Young Carer Grant

Young Carer Grant is a yearly payment of £390.25 for young carers in Scotland. To be eligible for Young Carer Grant, carers must be 16, 17 or 18 years old and have been caring for 1-3 people for an average of 16 hours a week for at least the last 3 months. Young Carer Grant is paid once a year, up until the age of 19yrs.

<sup>7</sup> [Social Security Scotland - Scottish Child Payment statistics to 30 June 2025](#)

**Table - Young Carer Grant applications 2019-2025 (data published June 2025)**

Financial year	Total applications received	% of total applications received	Total applications processed*	Authorised applications and % processed applications authorised	Value of payments
2019-2020	30	2%	25	20 (85%)	£6,600
2020-2021	65	2%	70	45 (65%)	£13,409
2021-2022	75	2%	70	40 (59%)	£12,323
2022-2023	85	2%	75	40 (49%)	£12,012
2023-2024	95	2%	90	55 (63%)	£19,777
2024-2025	110	2%	110	80 (70%)	£29,211
All time	460	2%	440	280 (63%)	£93,333

Source: [Social Security Scotland - Young Carer Grant: high level statistics to 31 March 2025](#)

*\*Applications are processed once a decision has been made to authorise or deny, or once an application is withdrawn by the applicant*

#### Job Start Payment

Job Start Payment is a payment to help young people in Scotland between the ages of 16-24 who have been out of paid work and receiving a low income benefit for six months prior to finding employment. This payment could help with the costs associated with the transition into employment after a period of time out of paid work. It's a one off payment of £314.45 or £503.10 for a young person with children.

**Table - Job Start Payment Applications 2020-2025 (data published June 2025)**

Financial year	Total applications received	Percentage of total applications received	Total applications processed*	Authorised applications and % of processed applications authorised	Value of payments
2020-2021	30	1%	30	10 (32%)	£2,550
2021-2022	90	1%	85	30 (36%)	£8,585
2022-2023	20	1%	15	5 (33%)	£1,201
2023-2024	25	1%	30	10 (32%)	£2,374
2024-2025	15	1%	15	5 (24%)	£2,684
All time	180	1%	175	55 (32%)	£17,394

Source: [Social Security Scotland - Job Start Payment statistics to March 2025](#)

*\* Applications are processed once a decision has been made to authorise or deny, or once an application is withdrawn by the applicant*

### Child Disability Payment

Child Disability Payment provides money to help with the extra care and mobility costs that a child or young person living with a disability might have. On 22 November 2021, Child Disability Payment launched nationwide to all new applicants living in Scotland.

**Table - Child Disability Payment Applications 2021-2025 (data published June 2025)**

	Applications Received	Applications Processed*	Applications authorised
July 2021 - Dec 2021	70	10	5
July 2021 - Dec 2022	600	390	320
July 2021 - Dec 2023	1,130	915	750
July 2021 - Dec 2024	1,760	1,570	1,205
July 2021 - June 2025	2,085	1,850	1,405

Value of Child Disability Payments by financial year 2021-2025	
Financial Year	Value of payments
2021-2022	£64,530
2022-2023	£4,897,290
2023-2024	£10,234,980
2024-2025	£12,512,800

Source: [Social Security Scotland - Child Disability Payment: statistics to 30 June 2025](#)

*\*Applications are processed once a decision has been made to authorise or deny, or once an application is withdrawn by the applicant*

### Clothing grants and Free School Meals

Midlothian Council provide children from low-income families with free school meals (FSM), and money to help towards buying school clothes. An award provides a pupil with one free meal each day they attend school and a BACS payment to cover holiday periods.

**Table – Free School Meal Registrations**

	2020/21	2020/21	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
	No.	%								
Primary	624	14	489	14	367	16	458	19%	401	18%
Secondary	636	12	707	13	743	13	936	15%	892	16%
Special	50	57	57	61	102	100	30	45%	27	40%
Total	1310		1253		1212		1424		1320	

(Source: These figures are taken using census information from September each year)

In 2020/21, universal FSM was provided for P1-P3.

In 2021/22, universal FSM was provided for P1-P4.

In 2022/23 - 2024/25, universal FSM was provided for P1-P5.

Clothing grants	2018/19	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Primary	£125,280	£165,490	£171,900	£163,530	£163,320
Secondary	£60,890	£128,380	£129,060	£136,650	£142,500
Special	£1,060	£4,290	£4,320	£4,920	£5,280
Total	£187,230	£298,160	£305,280	£305,100	£311,100

Clothing grants are now paid at:

- £120 for primary pupils (£100, 2018/19)
- £150 for secondary pupils (£100, 2018/19)

#### Pupil Equity Funding

All our schools and settings continue to evidence how they are using their Pupil Equity Funding to address barriers to learning. This session this has been further informed by greater analysis of a range of data relating to poverty, attainment, achievement, wellbeing and attendance. 100% of primary and secondary schools have identified narrowing the attainment gap target with their approaches to Literacy and Numeracy.

Transfers from PEF budgets to school funds have significantly increased over the past 3 years as follows: 2023/24 - £74,576, 2022/23 - £39,721, 2021/22 - £3,381. The majority of the increase is due to consideration of the 'Cost of the School Day', which has involved some schools establishing Hardship Funds within their school fund which is funded by PEF, or schools widening the access of school trips to families that would otherwise not be able to pay using PEF.

In order to ensure that PEF interventions are sustained beyond 2026, headteachers collaborate in trios to drive forward school improvement. They discuss and share PEF interventions, fostering best practice and enhancing strategic planning across schools. Information is captured in the tracking period reviews.

See Case Study 4 for more on evaluating our practice.

#### Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund is one of the key benefits administered by Midlothian Council. Crisis Grants may help residents who are in crisis because of a disaster, such as a fire or flood, or an emergency such as losing all their money or having to visit a sick child in hospital. Community Care Grants may help residents who are about to leave care to live on their own in the community, or to help those who are struggling to provide a safe and

secure home for their family. There are limits to the number of applications that can be made for both funds. Allocations for 2021/22 to 2024/25 are detailed below.

**Table – Crisis Grants**

	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
Paid	3,953	56.6%	4,083	52.4%	3,377	50.0%	3,840	53.5%
Declined	118	1.7%	165	2.2%	64	0.95%	127	1.8%
Refused	2,908	41.7%	3,542	45.4%	3,311	49.0%	3,201	44.7%
TOTAL	6,979		7,790		6,752		7,168	
Value	£452,499		£450,850		£378,671		£421,090	

**Table – Community Care Grants**

	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
Paid	483	33.7%	490	33.6%	419	32.8%	461	34.1%
Declined	121	8.4%	21	1.4%	6	0.47%	88	6.5%
Refused	830	57.9%	946	64.4%	851	66.7%	802	59.4%
TOTAL	1,434		1,457		1,276		1,351	
Value	£353,094		£449,088		£525,372		£450,710	

In line with national trends, crisis grant applications have more than doubled since 2013/14, with a rapid increase in 2021/22 which continued in to 2022/23, reduced in 2023/24 and has then risen in 2024/25.

A significant proportion of applications for crisis grants in Midlothian are repeat applications and the Scottish Welfare Fund does not remove all financial pressure from applicants. As part of a planned review of equitable access to welfare and debt advice for Midlothian residents, we aim to ensure ongoing provision and support is available to assist residents to reach a less financially pressured level.

#### Homelessness

The number of households who applied to Midlothian Council for homeless assistance during 2024/25 reduced by only 2%. This remains a significant increase in applications in comparison to the period between April 2018 and March 2023. The table shows that the proportion of applications from households with dependent children has remained relatively unchanged in each of the last three years.

It is thought the higher number of homeless presentations over the last two years is partially linked to the limited number of other affordable housing options in the area. Midlothian continues to have the fifth highest average house selling price in Scotland.

Although the average selling price in Midlothian fell by around £4,000 in 2024 this remains 40% higher than the 2014 average (Source: [House price statistics - Registers of Scotland](#))

**Table - Number of homeless applications**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total homeless applications	496	441	579	742	725
% of households with dependent children	40%	36%	47%	48%	47%
% of households with no children	60%	64%	53%	52%	53%

In previous Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTP) Midlothian Council highlighted a sizeable increase in the number of homeless applications from males who are single parents (a 143% increase in 2022/23 and a further 34% increase in 2023/24). During 2024/25 the number of presentations from this group reduced by 16% compared to 2023/24, although this remains a 167% increase since 2021/22. Meeting the temporary accommodation needs of this group continues to be challenging, with 63 placements in unsuitable accommodation during 2024/25. The Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) places a legal duty on the Council to move anyone placed in unsuitable accommodation within seven days. During 2024/25 Midlothian Council breached this order on six occasions.

It is important to recognise that women and children are more likely to require assistance as a result of domestic violence. The number of people seeking homeless assistance as a result of domestic violence or other violence in the household increased from 79 on 2023/24 to 86 in 2024/25. 67 of those applications were from female households, 39 of which had children.

In addition to this we have noticed that the number of presentations due to a landlord taking action due to rent arrears or mortgage default increase from 18 to 36, the majority of these being from the private rented sector.

## Progress 2024-25 – High Level Summary

Complete	4	On target/ongoing	18	Off target	0
----------	---	-------------------	----	------------	---

Part A: Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work		
Midlothian Outcomes	Time frame	2024/25 Update
Increased uptake of eligible 2-year-old childcare places.	Medium	On going
The review of local childcare report will inform childcare provision and plans to increase provision.	Medium	On going – review undertaken but recommendations still to be implemented.
Increase the uptake of tax-free childcare.	Short	Complete
Provide person-centred help to address barriers to work for parents through our Parental Employability Service, including health, money advice and motivational support.	Medium	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action

Part B: Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs		
Midlothian Outcomes	Time frame	2024/25 Update
Equitable income maximisation and debt advice is available across Midlothian.	Medium	On target
Current signposting information to income maximisation services and Cost of Living supports is included in communications with Midlothian residents.	Short	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action

<b>Staff working across NHS and HSCP services have the knowledge and awareness of child poverty and support to support income maximisation.</b>	Medium	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action
<b>Increased awareness of child poverty and routes to support amongst Midlothian Council staff and Trusted Partners.</b>	Short	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action
<b>Our Family Wellbeing Service will provide holistic support to help deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families and ensure best use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.</b>	Short	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action
<b>All school staff will be trained in Cost of the School Day.</b>	Short	Ongoing – multi-year action
<b>Schools are supported to undertake a Cost of the School Day audit.</b>	Short	Ongoing – multi-year action
<b>Indicators of child poverty in Midlothian are further developed, leading to the production of a more robust data set to inform future targeted interventions.</b>	Medium	On target
<b>Improve effectiveness, consistency and impact of PEF funding in closing the poverty related attainment gap.</b>	Medium/long	On target
<b>Increase the uptake of free school meal registration and school clothing grants for eligible pupils.</b>	Short	Ongoing – multi-year action
<b>Increase the uptake of Education Maintenance Allowance.</b>	Short	Ongoing – multi-year action

<b>Part C: Supporting the next generation to thrive</b>		
<b>Midlothian Outcomes</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>2024/25 Update</b>
<b>Midlothian School Uniform Guidance published.</b>	Short	Complete
<b>Data is used to understand the number of families where parent's income is just slightly above the Scottish Government threshold for free school meal entitlements for pupils.</b>	Medium	Complete
<b>Strengthened financial wellbeing pathways across Health Visiting, Midwifery and Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) teams to maximise income and address infant food insecurity.</b>	Short	Complete
<b>Reducing child poverty is embedded in Children's Rights planning and delivery across Midlothian.</b>	Medium	Ongoing
<b>Increase the uptake of the Young Scot National Entitlement Card for under 22s.</b>	Short	Ongoing – achieved in 24/25 but multi-year action
<b>Increase the uptake of Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment.</b>	Short	Ongoing – multi-year action
<b>Lived Experience Panel actively inform the priorities and associated actions within the LCPAR.</b>	Medium	On target

## Progress 2024-25 - Detailed

During 2024-25, we have continued to work in partnership to address the drivers of child poverty and key actions that have been taken are presented below.

Part A: Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work

- Strengthened employment offer to parents
- Connectivity and childcare
- Transforming our economy

Part A: Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strengthened employment offer to parents</li> <li>➤ Connectivity and childcare</li> <li>➤ Transforming our economy</li> </ul>		
Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	2024/25 Update
<p><b>Increased uptake of eligible 2-year-old childcare places.</b></p>	<p>Create a working group, including education and health, to develop the information that is required to increase uptake and ensure we can plan strategically to meet children’s needs.</p> <p>Midlothian now have access to birth information by cluster from Health, still to get access to information on young children’s needs etc to be able to identify entitled two-year-olds.</p>	<p>Eligibility of two-year-olds for funded early learning and childcare (ELC), where the Improvement Service (IS) is being an intermediary between the DWP and HMRC and councils. IS receives data from DWP and HMRC on households who meet the statutory, income-related criteria for eligibility for funded ELC for two-year-olds. IS will then pass the name and address of the parents/carers to councils so they can send a letter asking if they wish to apply.</p> <p>Progress update: Work is still underway to understand whether the council wide data sharing agreement will allow this project to continue.</p>

<p><b>The review of local childcare report will inform childcare provision and plans to increase provision.</b></p>	<p>Collate information on all out-of-school childcare providers across Midlothian, recording their operating hours, location, contracts and let charges.</p> <p>Review and report on the local authority's QA arrangements (where we have funded places).</p> <p>Review our approach to collating and analysing data on out-of-school childcare provision.</p> <p>Liaise with our Parent and Learner Liaison Officer to carry out a Council-wide consultation on out-of-school childcare provision.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation carried out in October 2024 highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is not enough OSC service provision in Midlothian to meet current demand.</li> <li>• there is a particular lack of OSC services for children with complex additional needs.</li> <li>• some parents find the hours offered by OSC services do not fit their working pattern, leading to reducing or adapting their working hours to be able to access childcare. This has an impact on income and career progression.</li> <li>• for some parents, the costs of out of school childcare are not affordable. This is not limited to parents on the lowest incomes.</li> </ul> <p>Midlothian Council are for additional resource to take forward the next steps of the review.</p>
<p><b>Increase the uptake of tax-free childcare.</b></p>	<p>Work with health to promote tax-free childcare.</p> <p>Promote uptake of tax-free childcare to working parents.</p> <p>Audit and review registered childcare providers on the scheme.</p> <p>Proactively promote take up campaigns signposting registered tax-free childcare providers.</p>	<p>During 24/25 work was undertaken to proactively promote the uptake of tax-free childcare. During 25/26 we will review the promotion and gather evidence on the difference this has made to families.</p>
<p><b>Provide person-centred help to address barriers to work for parents through our Parental Employability</b></p>	<p>Key work support for parents</p> <p>Delivery of community-based learning opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 24/25 the Parental Employability Support Team (Communities Lifelong Learning and Employability) supported 477 Midlothian parents in</li> </ul>

<p><b>Service, including health, money advice and motivational support.</b></p>	<p>Delivery of qualifications Support for work placements</p>	<p>building confidence, gaining qualifications, and securing or progressing into meaningful employment, 289 of these parents are new to the service this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99 parents entered employment, self-employment, MA or progressed in employment</li> <li>• 154 parents have successfully achieved a total of 347 accredited qualifications, including Mental Health and Wellbeing, SIA, REHIS, Health and Safety, Digital Skills and recognised beauty industry qualifications.</li> <li>• 99 parents have gone on to secure employment in sectors such as education, security, healthcare, administration, and retail.</li> <li>• 8 parents started FE/HE</li> <li>• 21 Long Term Unemployed paid work placements within public and TSI in which 17 secured employment (80%)</li> <li>• Through a range of workshops, one-to-one coaching, training opportunities and community partnerships, the team has helped parents overcome barriers and move closer to their career goals—proving that support at the right time can be life-changing.</li> <li>• There has been a focus on in work support and supporting parents to get higher paid jobs and securing more hours.</li> </ul>
---	---	--

**Part B: Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs**

- Transformational approach to people and place
- Social Security
- Income Maximisation
- Warm affordable homes

Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	2024/25 Update
<p><b>Equitable income maximisation and debt advice is available across Midlothian.</b></p>	<p>A review of access to income maximisation, welfare and debt advice will be commissioned, with a primary focus on child poverty priority families. Recommendations for improvement will be shared with community planning partners and an implementation plan developed to shape future provision.</p>	<p>An implementation plan development session was held with key Community Planning Partnership stakeholders in Sept 2024. The resulting implementation plan has been agreed at the Child Poverty Working Group and Strategic Poverty CPP group with three key areas of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish a Strategic Welfare Rights Planning Group</li> <li>• re-establish the Welfare Advice Forum</li> <li>• build on existing training &amp; referral pathways work</li> </ul> <p>All actions are progressing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Community Planning Strategic Welfare Rights Group has its first meeting programmed for June 2025.</li> <li>• the Welfare Rights Forum has its first meeting programmed in April 2025.</li> <li>• partnership work continues to be developed on training and referral pathways.</li> </ul>

		We are building an overview of provision in Midlothian and are working towards a co-ordinated approach to commissioning, reporting and assessing need and impact.
<b>Current signposting information to income maximisation services and Cost of Living supports is included in communications with Midlothian residents.</b>	Review the correspondence issued from Midlothian Council's Revenue's Team. Work to provide information about income maximisation services and Cost of Living supports in communications regarding Scottish Welfare Fund applications, rent arrears, council tax arrears and school meal debt.	The Council continues to promote the online cost of living supports information and has redesigned the webpages to make them more accessible. Staff from Revenues Team have been holding drop in sessions across the county to enable residents to access in person support. These sessions have been most successful when offered in conjunction with another service/activity like when a pantry is open.
<b>Staff working across NHS and HSCP services have the knowledge and awareness of child poverty and support to support income maximisation.</b>	Roll out of training, awareness-raising, and information to support referrals to advice services.  A programme of training and awareness-raising will be designed and delivered to priority staff groups (working directly with people and families).	An automated referral process is live between Midwifery and Penicuik CAB. There have been 31 accepted referrals with a client financial gain of £28,778 since May 2024.  A safe email process was approved for Health Visitors and Family Nurse Partnerships to refer to Penicuik CAB in April 2025.  An Infant Feeding Insecurity pathway is in draft form. It requires final clarification and sign-off by partners in coming weeks.
<b>Increased awareness of child poverty and routes to support amongst Midlothian Council staff and Trusted Partners.</b>	A programme of training and awareness-raising will be designed and delivered to ensure that all Midlothian-based workers are trained by 31/3/25 and outcomes of training are evaluated.	Continue to work closely with Trusted Partners to identify local trends and areas of need. Level 1 Trama Training offered to all partners and at least 20 partners trained to date.

<p><b>Our Family Wellbeing Service will provide holistic support to help deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families and ensure best use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.</b></p>	<p>Create dataset to measure the impact of the Whole family Wellbeing Fund on the 6 priority families.</p>	<p>The FWS have developed a data set to better understand and measure the impact of our use of Whole Family Wellbeing Funds in reaching the 6 priority family groups.</p> <p>In 2025 to date, the service has supported families in all 6 of the priority groups, particularly children impacted by disability (household that includes a disabled person) and children from lone parent families.</p> <p>The team are typically working with families from the highest areas of multiple deprivation in Midlothian and are working to ensure that, where entitled, families are accessing key supports such as free school meals and school clothing grant.</p> <p>As part of our effort to reduce child poverty, Children’s Services fund three income maximisation projects including one dedicated to the Family Wellbeing Service. The Project Worker works directly with families to increase household income and reduce debt. There has been an increase in families reached by the projects and financial gains for individual families continue to be significant. Since 2021 the income maximisation projects in Children’s Services have collectively generated over £1,213,000 for 365 individual families.</p>
<p><b>All school staff will be trained in Cost of the School Day.</b></p>	<p>By the end of the 24/25 school year all school staff will have completed the COSD module.</p>	<p>On-going, Head Teachers and schools accessing the COSD Toolkit and engaging Parent Councils to work in partnership. Lots of innovative work, focus for next year to look at opportunities for sharing good practice.</p>

<p><b>Schools are supported to undertake a Cost of the School Day audit.</b></p>	<p>Midlothian schools, working with pupils and parent councils, will identify all the costs associated with their pupils attending and taking part in education.</p>	<p>On-going, Head Teachers and schools are accessing the COSD Toolkit and engaging Parent Councils to work in partnership. To be the focus of Primary HT meetings next session.</p>
<p><b>Indicators of child poverty in Midlothian are further developed, leading to the production of a more robust data set to inform future targeted interventions.</b></p>	<p>Data will be complemented with local needs assessments and targeted actions towards the greatest need. The data set will support local partners to identify priorities to address the 3 drivers of child poverty and monitor progress towards prioritised actions.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council and NHS Lothian have been part of the working group testing the new Public Health Scotland dashboard which will allow the interrogation of data to support the drivers of child poverty and support the development of our future action plan.</p>
<p><b>Improve effectiveness, consistency and impact of PEF funding in closing the poverty related attainment gap.</b></p>	<p>Schools work collegiately to share effective strategies to closing the poverty related attainment gap. <i>(what has actually made the difference to closing the gap?)</i></p>	<p>New arrangements in place to review impact of PEF in improving outcomes for children and young people; Education Scotland Attainment Adviser provides a quarterly report on PEF spend and impact on performance measures; The strategic evaluation of all Attainment Scotland Funding is monitored via the Excellence and Equity Board chaired by the Education Chief Operating Officer. This Board appears to be operating well, has appropriate representation and is receiving appropriate monitoring information on all aspects of Attainment Scotland Funding; Internal audit has carried out a review of the use of PEF funding in line with funding criteria “An appropriate framework has been provided to allow Midlothian’s schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their PEF interventions. Support is provided by the Quality</p>

		Improvement Managers and the Scottish Government's Attainment Advisor. CECYP and Strategic Equity Funding have been appropriately allocated to be utilised by the Council in line with the aims of the funding."
<b>Increase the uptake of free school meal registration and school clothing grants for eligible pupils.</b>	P1-5 families will be targeted to ensure registration for FSM, clothing grants, milk and holiday food entitlements.	On-going – this issue was also highlighted through the community research project and information gathering is underway on the internal processes and the application process.
<b>Increase the uptake of Education Maintenance Allowance.</b>	Awareness-raising with High School pupils and families of EMA entitlement.  <i>Look at EMA through attendance group and % of who have applied for EMA and are eligible but don't receive it due to non attendance. What are the barriers? Speak to recipients. Review of EMA process.</i>	Over 2024-25 there was an increase in young people applying for EMA from 77 in January up to 109 in June. Schools have been publicising EMA during S5 PSE to ensure there is awareness of the payments and understanding of the process. Further work is to be completed to include EMA application information in course choice booklets.  Our data shows that the numbers of young people missing EMA payments due to attendance is very low. Responsive and targeted work in schools is having an impact and the new attendance codes that came into effect in January 2025 allow for positive attendance to be recognised for those learners on adapted timetables.  Attainment data shows that young people receiving EMA are going on to achieve at National 3,4,5 and Higher level.

		Further work will be done on tracking attainment over time to include Foundation Apprenticeships.
<b>Increase the uptake of the Young Scot National Entitlement Card for under 22s.</b>	Midlothian Council CLLE, Library Services and partners will work together to promote the uptake of the NEC Cards.	As at March 2024 72% of secondary pupils (61% in 2023) and 42% of primary pupils (35% in 2023) had been issued with NEC entitlement cards.
<b>Increase the uptake of Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment.</b>	NHS Lothian, Midlothian HSCP & Social Security Scotland will work together to promote Best Grant Grants, Best Start Foods & Scottish Child Payment to eligible parents.	Being actioned and reported through Strategic Poverty Group and recognised the need to link into the Strategic Welfare Rights Group.
<b>Lived Experience Panel actively inform the priorities and associated actions within the LCPAR.</b>	Establish a lived experience panel to gather views of local residents and directly influence the LCPAR.	13 community members were trained in ethnographic research approaches and carried out over 60 interviews. The feedback has been analysed and the key findings have been collated in a report that's been presented to the Child Poverty Working Group and Partners. Work is underway to theme the findings against the drivers of child poverty to incorporate them into the next action plan.

**Part C: Supporting the next generation to thrive**

- **Best Start to Life**
- **Supporting Children to Learn and Grow**
- **Post School Transitions**

Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	2024/25 Update
<p><b>Midlothian School Uniform Guidance published.</b></p>	<p>Establish a short-term working group that involves school learners to develop poverty-proof school uniform guidance.</p>	<p>School Uniform Guidance <a href="#">School uniform and clothing guidance 2025</a> has been developed and issued to school to implement. Throughout the next year the implementation of the guidance will be monitored, including the uptake and feedback parents and children and young people.</p>
<p><b>Data is used to understand the number of families where parent’s income is just slightly above the Scottish Government threshold for free school meal entitlements for pupils.</b></p>	<p>Analysis of school meal debt and report to be produced – target 16/2/24.</p> <p>Findings presented to and discussed by the cost of living taskforce, interventions decided upon and allocated to appropriate officers/services and organisations to undertake – target 31/3/24</p> <p>Interventions actioned from when the schools return in April 24 until the end of term at the end of June 24. Outcomes reported back to the taskforce.</p> <p>An analysis of school meal debt has been undertaken using data from ParentPay. In March 2023, Midlothian Council adjusted school meal debt, however, there are several families who had previous debt written off that are beginning to accumulate school meal debt in 2024. The profile of the debt does not reflect the schools in</p>	<p>Working with CAB to develop advice and guidance that schools can deliver to families in need of Income Max support as identified by high levels of school meal debt. The idea being that schools will be able to directly refer or encourage families to self-refer to Income Max support via the existing Project Worker aligned to Family Wellbeing Service but without the need for referrals for wellbeing support to minimise time it takes for families to receive support and reduce any barriers to accessing it. This is still a work in progress and hasn’t been launched with schools yet but we aim to have this in place by Oct/Nov 25.</p> <p>Considering setting a specific level of debt but also asking schools to use their discretion in thinking about previous patterns of payments for families e.g. is the debt accrued and schools know that families pay this off in a lump at points in the year, etc</p>

	the areas of deprivation. Agreed pilot for 24/25 to offer Income max to families with school meal debt over £X.	
<b>Strengthened financial wellbeing pathways across Health Visiting, Midwifery and Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) teams to maximise income and address infant food insecurity.</b>	NHS Lothian, HSCP and advice providers will work together to ensure quick and easy referral routes from perinatal services to income maximisation support. Emergency pathways to alleviate infant food insecurity will be developed.	Automated Midwifery referrals from TRAK to Penicuik CAB (31 accepted referrals so far and client financial gain £28,778) since May 2024.  Safe emails approved. Health Visitors and FNP are now able to refer to Penicuik CAB via email since April 2025.  Draft SBAR and process re Infant Feeding Insecurity established, required final clarification and sign off by Cost of Living Taskforce in coming weeks.
<b>Reducing child poverty is embedded in Children's Rights planning and delivery across Midlothian.</b>	All schools & settings demonstrate a commitment towards taking a child's rights-based approach by having an action plan for their school around how they are going to take forward poverty-related action.  Work with Pupil Parliament and Midlothian Youth Parliament to ensure children and young people's voice is heard.	The Community Planning Partnership Single Midlothian Plan 2023-27 sets out the Partnership's commitment to realising the children's rights approach to all of our work and making sure that we embed the principles of the UNCRC.  The focus for 24/25 was to carry out more information raising sessions, particularly with a focus on poverty, the feedback from this is yet to be collated.

## Case studies

### **Case study 1 - Involvement of people with direct experience of poverty**

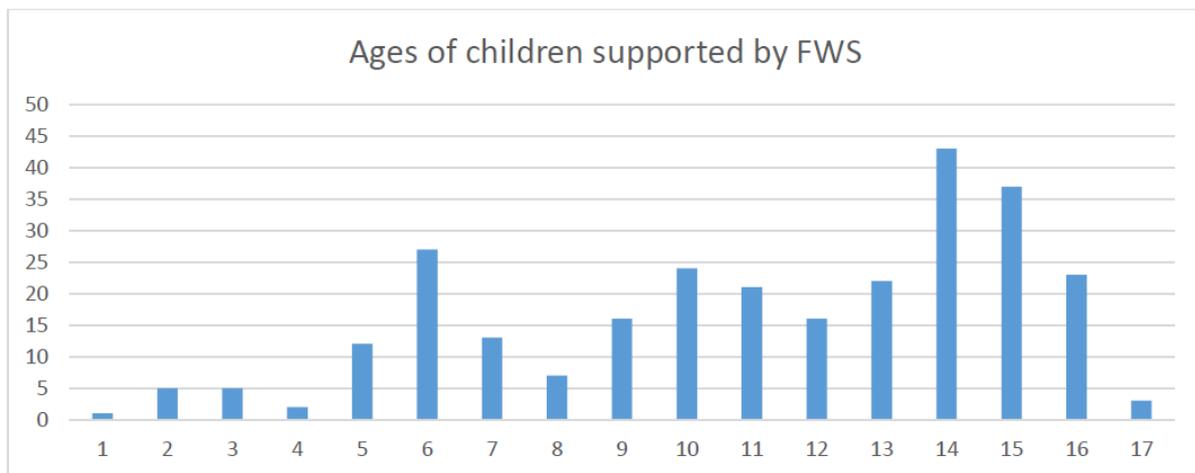
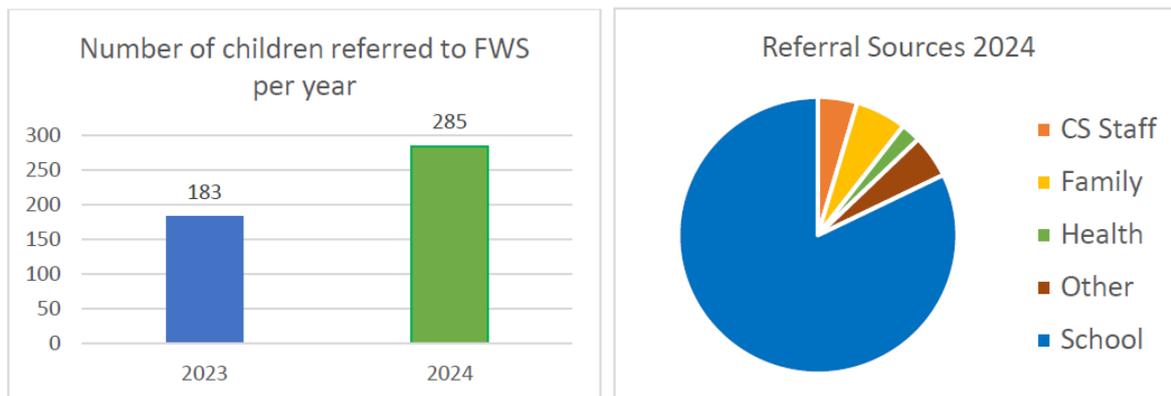
Midlothian Surestart, in partnership with Midlothian Council, were successful in an application to the Child Poverty Accelerator Fund. The project was funded from January 2024 to March 2025 with a focus on training and supporting community members to become researchers. This ethnographic style peer research initiative aimed to explore the lived experiences of families affected by child poverty in Midlothian and to influence local and national policy and systems, through community-led insight and recommendations.

The primary objective was to gather rich, qualitative data from families experiencing poverty, particularly those in priority groups. This has been achieved through the co-design and implementation of a peer research model involving 13 trained community researchers—each a parent with lived experience of poverty. Over the course of the project, 62 in-depth stories were collected, ensuring representation across diverse demographics, including lone parents, families with disabilities, immigrants, and those experiencing in-work poverty.

The project also committed to producing a comprehensive report to inform strategic action. The abridged final report, *Our Voices*, provides robust qualitative insights into the root causes and impact of child poverty, with a number of recommendations for action at National and local level. These findings have been shared with local decision makers, who have been involved in the project throughout. An action plan from the learning is being taken to the Child Poverty working group and early opportunities to make change e.g. share the qualitative experiences with newly qualified teachers, in progress. Work is also ongoing in respect of developing a lived experience panel.

## Case study 2 - Family Wellbeing Service

The number of children and young people referred to the Family Wellbeing Service has increased by 56% from referral numbers in 2023. The team has also grown over the correlating period, with an additional two children's practitioners recruited to the team in 2024, to support workload and enable the team to increase the number of children and young people they can work with.



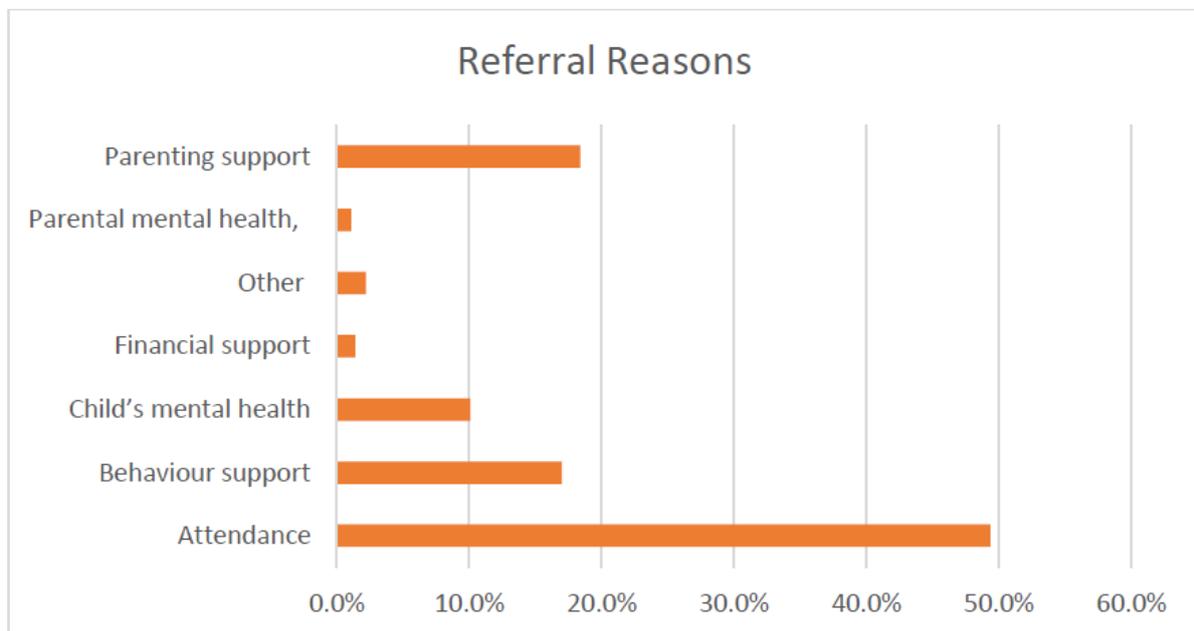
9% of all children referred to FWS were care-experienced, meaning that they had either previously been looked-after by the local authority at home or away from home or were living with adoptive or kinship families.

The team are typically working with families from the highest areas of multiple deprivation in Midlothian and are working to ensure that, where entitled, families are accessing key supports such as free school meals and school clothing grant.

In 2024:

- 52% of children open to the FWS were in receipt of free school meals
- 43% of children open to the FWS were in receipt of school clothing grant.

In 2024 we enhanced our ability to report on reasons for referral. Child’s school attendance is the predominant reason given for a referral to the service and accounts for half of all referrals 49.7% actual .



#### Successes in 2024

- **TATC High School** - TATC High School was launched in June 2024 in response to requests for a more defined referral pathway for young people aged 12+.
- **Single Referral** - To streamline referral processes all services represented at TATC agreed to use one single TATC referral form and stop duplicating processes by using this and then individual services’ referral forms.
- **Calm and Connected Parents** - The FWS supported and hosted a parenting group called ‘Calm and Connected’ alongside colleagues in children’s services based on the principals of Non-Violent Resistance NVR . NVR is a systemic family intervention approach, rooted in civil rights movements, that focuses on changing how parents address challenging behaviours rather than trying to change the child's behaviour, aiming to strengthen parent-child relationships and reduce escalation.

Feedback from the parent carers attending was positive:

I really liked being able to talk to parents in similar situations and talking what has worked and what hasn’t worked

... it made me think carefully about what I need to work on and which behaviour I was most worried about. Thinking about what to focus on gave me some space to think, like permission to let some things go.

Realising that when ‘I lost it’ it also affects the way [my child] communicates with me, and I know that I need to keep working in staying calm myself.

I really have been able to think about how 'worked up I can get' and trying to learn to stay calmer because I can see that [my child] imitates my behaviour. If I am calmer, I know he'll talk to me more calmly. I will keep trying because I know we get stuck in a spiral when we're both shouting and angry.

- **Staff Development/ Neurodiversity** - In response to increasing numbers of children having additional support needs, the FWS joined up with colleagues from children's services and third sector to attend development sessions on understanding and supporting individuals with neurodiversity

### **Impact on attendance**

Of those referred for school attendance in 2024, approximately 65% of children open to FWS have had improved rates of school attendance. It is worth noting that where there has been no positive impact on attendance in 2024, these children are typically active cases remaining open to the FWS for further intervention. Going forward, development of a data dashboard to interact with SEEMIS will enable better tracking and understanding of the FWS on attendance and attainment.

### **Case study 3 – Parental Employability Support**

A parent was referred to the NOLB programme through partnership working with IntoWork. When they first came to our service, they had just had a diagnosis of autism and were struggling to process this late diagnosis but it also made sense to them and their behaviours. They were looking to get a qualification using the applications on a computer as they had no formal qualifications or the confidence to go into a college setting. At that time, we offered an evening class with a tutor who taught PC Passport, and we all felt that this would be a good fit as it was a relaxed atmosphere and in the evening, so would not impact on childcare for their family.

The parent attended the course regularly and successfully completed PC passport and was then no longer working with PES as they already had a NOLB Key Worker at Into Work. A few months later we were approached to ask if they would be able to participate in our LGV training programme, after meeting with them and chatting through the course and expectations it was agreed that they were suitable for this. They were signed up with the relevant forms completed and were looking forward to the training.

As part of their personality the parent likes to have formal written information and they were sent a copy of the GTG Training programme so that they had it all written in front of them. The first part of this journey after the medical is passed and their licence returned from the DVLA is that they work towards the LGV theory test, prior to this they have access to a training application to help them prepare for this. However, the parent struggled with this and after I spoke with GTG they explained they have extra monthly training days where candidates can come in and do the online training but there is someone present who can help answer any queries or to explain anything. This was offered to the parent which they accepted wholeheartedly and attended once a month for a few months to help them prepare for the theory test. They sat this and passed it first time and went on to pass their practical training and test.

The parent attended this weeklong training and practical test which they also passed first time, they were very pleased to have done this and started looking for jobs. I spoke with the parent on the phone, and they had been looking at different roles on job websites. I explained that I had a link with a local employer as it is difficult to get a LGV job in the first year of qualifying due to the insurance, they thought this would be a good idea and I said that I would speak with their Key Worker. They had also tried this route and I explained that I had a direct contact that I could get in touch with and link them in together so that they could attend for interview. This was successful and they are due to start work with them.

The Key Worker then contacted me to ask if we would be able to support the parent with numeracy as they were struggling with all the information around completing the tachograph. We arranged support with the tutor from PC passport as they had built up a relationship with them. They met and talked through what they were unsure of and managed to alleviate some of their worries. They also had some medical concerns that had only just come to light, and I offered to contact the employer directly and speak to them on their behalf which they were happy for me to do. I arranged this and spoke with them, and they were very reassuring and are now aware of the situation and happy to support as much as possible, there is no change at present. I also made them aware of the parent's worries around the tachograph and it was explained that they would get a pack during induction which had a simple explanation of the rules, this is given to everyone at the beginning.

#### **Case Study 4 – Pupil Equity Fund – monitoring and evaluation**

This session an updated Excellence & Equity workbook was included in schools' improvement plans. The attainment advisor and the quality improvement team supported completion of the excellence and equity workbooks to ensure consistency across schools. The excellence and equity workbooks were then reviewed by the quality improvement team who provided feedback to schools and support given to those who needed it. The PEF plans within the workbooks are now updated at designated tracking periods throughout the session to ensure good progress is being made. Tracking periods align with data uplifts and all information is used together to ensure schools are making progress and gathering the impact of PEF. This also ensures schools can adapt or amplify practice as the session progresses to ensure maximum impact. An annual evaluation of PEF is included in the Education Service plan Standards and Quality report.

In May 2024 an internal PEF audit was carried out and noted that; Schools have worked with Financial Services, Quality Improvement Managers and the Scottish Government's Attainment Advisor to develop plans for their PEF budgets. Appropriate financial monitoring information is provided regularly to schools and managers. Relevant Cost Centres and Expense Heads have been established to ensure budgets are monitored as required. A separate cost centre has been established for each school's PEF budget to allow it to be easily monitored and ensure it is distinct from other devolved budgets.

An appropriate framework has been provided to allow schools to evaluate the effectiveness of their PEF interventions. Support is provided by the Quality Improvement Managers and the Scottish Government's Attainment Advisor. Relevant information is provided to schools regarding their current attainment gap compared to prior years and this will be further improved with schools access to Google Data Studio and Looker Studio.

This session Scottish Government representatives visited several Midlothian schools highlighted as using PEF to improve the outcomes of children and young people impacted by poverty. Visits to Newbattle High School, Dalkeith High School, Woodburn Primary and Mayfield Primary were very positive and the team visiting reported that they were impressed by the wide range of interventions and impacts on the children and young people.

A further visit was made this term by a Scottish Government representative with a focus on the use of PEF to support numeracy attainment and Care Experienced Children and Young People. The Education Scotland rep met with our Equity Education Support Officer and visited Saltersgate Special School. Feedback from this visit was very positive. In session 24/25: 67% of primary schools had an identified Numeracy spend from PEF and 50% of secondary schools had an identified Numeracy spend from PEF. Some examples of this being used in Primary Schools were, Learning Assistant hours for targeted Numeracy Interventions (75% of primaries with an identified Numeracy PEF spend), Principal Teacher hours for targeted Numeracy support, employment of a Raising Attainment teacher, increase or employment of a Support for Learning teacher and additional numeracy resources. In secondary Schools it was used for Principal Teacher Attainment & Achievement, outreach support, Learning Assistant hours for targeted Numeracy Interventions, Numeracy Recovery (with Support for Learning) and Nurture and Ready to Learn interventions.

School impacts show teacher employment (eg Raising Attainment teacher, SfL teacher) on track towards aims by 100% of schools. Learning Assistant employment is tracked as amber for progress towards aims by 20% of schools (due to late recruitment, retention, absence or backfill). Red tracking for progress towards stretch aims in isolated cases (eg training unavailable, retention of an ASG Principal Teacher unavailable due to staffing needs)

**Appendix 1 – Action plan signed off March 2024**

**Plans for 2023-27**

Actions relating to income from employment are largely held within the Midlothian Employability Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2025 which also contains the No One Left Behind Operating Plan. The plan can be found here and should be read alongside this child poverty delivery action plan: [Jobs and vocational training | No One Left Behind Operating Plan \(PDF\)](#)

Examples of actions held here include:

- addressing the current declining childminding workforce by increasing the number of childminders in Midlothian, through a targeted, demographic recruitment campaign.
- helping disabled parents navigating the challenges of securing and retaining and progressing in employment through the ‘Progress for Parents’ service.

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
<p><b>Part A: Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Strengthened employment offer to parents</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Connectivity and childcare</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Increased uptake of eligible 2-year-old childcare places.</b></p>	<p>Following Scottish Government’s review of eligibility criteria for 2-year-old places in 2023, Midlothian Council will work with DWP to identify families in Midlothian with children who are newly eligible and proactively contact these families and work with them to take up their places.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council Education Service</p>

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Transforming our economy</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>The review of local childcare report will inform childcare provision and plans to increase provision.</b></p>	<p>Collate information on all out-of-school childcare providers across Midlothian, recording their operating hours, location, contracts and let charges.</p> <p>Review and report on the local authority's QA arrangements (where we have funded places).</p> <p>Review our approach to collating and analysing data on out-of-school childcare provision.</p> <p>Liaise with our Parent and Learner Liaison Officer to carry out a Council-wide consultation on out-of-school childcare provision.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council Education Service</p>
	<p><b>Increase the uptake of tax-free childcare.</b></p>	<p>Work with health to promote tax-free childcare.</p> <p>Promote uptake of tax-free childcare to working parents.</p> <p>Audit and review registered childcare providers on the scheme.</p> <p>Proactively promote take up campaigns signposting registered tax-free childcare providers.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council Education Services</p>

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
	<b>Provide person-centred help to address barriers to work for parents through our Parental Employability Service, including health, money advice and motivational support.</b>	<p>During 23-24 PESF will support 180 parents.</p> <p>35% entering employment, self-employment, MA or progress into employment.</p> <p>7% progression to HE/FE Training</p> <p>30% will achieve an accredited or work-related qualification.</p> <p>10-15 paid Long term work placements</p> <p>10-15 Employer Recruitment incentives</p>	Midlothian Council CLLE (PESF)
<p><b>Part B: Maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Transformational approach to people and place</li> <li>➤ Social Security</li> <li>➤ Income Maximisation</li> <li>➤ Warm affordable homes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Equitable income maximisation and debt advice is available across Midlothian.</b></p>	<p>A review of access to income maximisation, welfare and debt advice will be commissioned, with a primary focus on child poverty priority families. Recommendations for improvement will be shared with community planning partners and an implementation plan developed to shape future provision.</p>	NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>Current signposting information to income maximisation services and Cost of Living supports is included in</b>	<p>Review the correspondence issued from Midlothian Council's Revenue's Team. Work to provide information about income maximisation services and Cost of Living supports in</p>	Midlothian Council Corporate Solutions

<b>Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions</b>	<b>Midlothian Outcomes</b>	<b>Midlothian Actions</b>	<b>Owner</b>
	<b>communications with Midlothian residents.</b>	communications regarding Scottish Welfare Fund applications, rent arrears, council tax arrears and school meal debt.	
	<b>Staff working across NHS and HSCP services have the knowledge and skills to support increased take-up of benefits.</b>	Roll out of training, awareness-raising and information to support benefits take-up and referrals to advice services. Joint working between Public Health, Midlothian Council, Social Security Scotland and advice services.	NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>Our Family Wellbeing Service will provide holistic support to help deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and families and ensure best use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.</b>	Families will be supported in a way that demonstrably improves outcomes for mothers and babies.	GIRFEC Whole Family Wellbeing sub-group
	<b>Increased awareness of child poverty and routes to support amongst Midlothian based workers.</b>	A programme of training and awareness-raising will be designed and delivered to ensure that all Midlothian-based workers are trained by 31/3/25 and outcomes of training are evaluated.	Midlothian Council CLLE/NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>All school staff will be trained in Cost of the School Day.</b>	By the end of the 24/25 school year all school staff will have completed the COSD module.	Midlothian Council

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
			Education Service
	<b>Schools are supported to undertake a Cost of the School Day audit.</b>	Midlothian schools, working with pupils and parent councils, will identify all the costs associated with their pupils attending and taking part in education.	Midlothian Council Education Service
	<b>Indicators of child poverty in Midlothian are further developed, leading to the production of a more robust data set to inform future targeted interventions.</b>	Data will be complemented with local needs assessments and targeted actions towards the greatest need. The data set will support local partners to identify priorities to address the 3 drivers of child poverty and monitor progress towards prioritised actions.	Midlothian Council Education Service/ NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>Improve effectiveness, consistency and impact of PEF funding in closing the poverty related attainment gap.</b>	Schools work collegiately to share effective strategies to closing the poverty related attainment gap.	Midlothian Council Education Service
	<b>Increase the uptake of free school meal and clothing grant registration for eligible pupils.</b>	P1-5 families will be targeted to ensure registration for FSM, clothing grants, milk and holiday food entitlements.	Midlothian Council Education Service

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
	<b>Increase the uptake of Education Maintenance Allowance.</b>	Awareness-raising with High School pupils and families of EMA entitlement.	Midlothian Council Education Service
	<b>Increase the uptake of the Young Scot National Entitlement Card for under 22s.</b>	Midlothian Council CLLE, Library Services and partners will work together to promote the uptake of the NEC Cards.	Midlothian Council CLLE/ Education and Library Services
	<b>Increase the uptake of Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment.</b>	NHS Lothian, Midlothian HSCP & Social Security Scotland will work together to promote Best Grant Grants, Best Start Foods & Scottish Child Payment to eligible parents.	NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>Lived Experience Panel actively inform the priorities and associated actions within the LCPAR.</b>	Establish a lived experience panel to gather views of local residents and directly influence the LCPAR.	Midlothian Council CPP
<b>Part C: Supporting the next generation to thrive</b>	<b>Midlothian School Uniform Guidance published.</b>	Establish a short-term working group that involves school learners to develop poverty-proof school uniform guidance.	Midlothian Council Education Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Best Start to Life</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Supporting Children to Learn and Grow</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Post School Transitions</b></li> </ul>	<b>Data is used to understand the number of families where parent's income is just slightly above the Scottish Government</b>	Findings will be presented to the Cost of Living Taskforce to consider the provision of discretionary free school meals.	Midlothian Council Education Service

Child Poverty Delivery Plan Actions	Midlothian Outcomes	Midlothian Actions	Owner
	threshold for free school meal entitlements for pupils.		
	<b>Strengthened financial wellbeing pathways across Health Visiting, Midwifery and Family Nurse Partnership teams to maximise income and address infant food insecurity.</b>	NHS Lothian, HSCP and advice providers will work together to ensure quick and easy referral routes from perinatal services to income maximisation support. Emergency pathways to alleviate infant food insecurity will be developed.	NHS Lothian Public Health
	<b>Reducing child poverty is embedded in Children's Rights planning and delivery across Midlothian.</b>	All schools & settings demonstrate a commitment towards taking a child's rights-based approach by having an action plan for their school around how they are going to take forward poverty-related actions.	Midlothian Council Education Service

**Appendix 2 – Logic model**

We are developing a logic model to allow us to track the impact and outcomes of our action plan.