
LOCAL CHILD POVERTY REPORT AND ACTION PLAN 2020/21

Report by Service Director, Customer & Communities

COMMUNITY PLANNING STRATEGIC BOARD

19 November 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **This report presents the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan for 2020/21 for endorsement before submission to Scottish Government.**

1.2 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report. This Report for 2020/21 provides the Community Planning Partnership and Scottish Government with a Report on Local Child Poverty Actions proposed for 2020/21.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Community Planning Strategic Board endorse the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan for 2020/21.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out the Scottish Government's statement of intent to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030. Local Authorities and Health Boards are required to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Report (including an Action Plan) and subsequently an Annual Progress Report by the end of June each year.
- 3.2 Following implementation of the Act, the first Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan was submitted to Scottish Government in June 2019 for 2019/20. This Report and Action Plan for 2020/21 is the second such report and is due to be submitted to Scottish Government following endorsement.

4 SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT FOR 2020/21 (Appendix 1)

4.1 National Context

- (a) According to the Scottish Government publication "Persistent poverty in Scotland 2010-2018", **17%** of children in Scotland were in persistent poverty after housing costs between 2014 and 2018. This compares to **15%** in 2013-2017, so the national position is getting worse.
- (b) The most recent national child poverty statistics, published in March 2020, relate to the period from April 2018 to March 2019 and show that there is still a lot to do to achieve the ambitious targets set for 2030.

4.2 Covid-19 and implications for Child Poverty

- (a) It is likely that some children and families will experience poverty for the first time due to a loss of income caused by temporary or permanent job losses as a result of the pandemic, whilst families already living in poverty may see their issues deepening.
- (b) As a direct consequence of Covid-19, there will be an impact on the drivers of child poverty such as a rise in the number of children in workless households, delays to claiming benefits if families do not own digital devices, increased costs of heating and electricity causing fuel poverty, and food insecurity if there is no income to buy food.
- (c) Key issues identified as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have been translated into priority actions in the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Action Plan for 2020/21 and are shown in Appendix 1(a).

4.3 Local Context

- (a) In 2018/19, the percentage of children in the Scottish Borders living in poverty below 60% median income after housing costs was **23.9%**. The figure for 2014/15 was **21.6%** so the percentage

point change (2015-19) is **2.3%** which shows a deteriorating position. This is before the impact of Covid-19 is taken into account, and this is likely to make the situation worse.

- (b) Scottish Borders average earnings in 2019 for full time workers only are £462.30 a week. This is lower than the Scottish average of £543.30 and is the 7th lowest out of the 32 Scottish Local Authority areas.
- (c) 31.4% of households lived in 'Fuel Poverty' in the Scottish Borders, compared with 27.3% in Scotland in 2019.
- (d) 7.8% of households are in 'Extreme fuel poverty' in the Scottish Borders, compared with 7.6% in Scotland.
- (e) Specific themes are highlighted to show the multi-agency approach taken in the Scottish Borders, including priority actions in Housing, tackling digital exclusion, fuel poverty and food poverty. Further details are shown in the Action Plan in Appendix 1(a).

5 2020/21 ACTION PLAN - Appendix 1(a)

5.1 Contributions have been made to the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Action Plan 2020/21 by Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and a range of partners. The Plan is organised into categories and indicates the partners involved, the poverty driver, how the impact of the action will be assessed and the intended beneficiary and/or target group of the action. A broad range of activity is shown in the Action Plan which is designed to help alleviate child poverty in different ways through various services and organisations.

Highlights of the Action Plan include:

- (i) The launch of an intensive family support service through the City Region Deal for families who are geographically isolated from existing services.
- (ii) Supporting the reduction of costs of the school day by facilitating and contributing to school uniform swaps and clothing banks
- (iii) Participating in Scottish Government's Youth Guarantee by the offer of an opportunity of an appropriate study programme for all school leavers who apply to Borders College
- (iv) Launch a Money Worries App designed to signpost people to appropriate supports and benefits
- (v) Deliver the Early Years Pathway Project to improve access to benefits information, advice and support for early years families
- (vi) Continue to deliver the Housing needs and aspirations of young people five year action plan
- (vii) Provide holiday programmes and clubs for children and young people (including those with additional special needs) which include the provision of food
- (viii) Work with Scottish Government on the Connecting Scotland Programme to deliver digital devices to help families get online

- (ix) Address food insecurity for individuals and families through fareshare and other food distribution schemes
- (x) Continue to establish breakfast clubs in schools to ensure that children and young people start the school day having had something to eat

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) Risks associated with this report relate to the deepening problem of child poverty as a result of COVID-19. Families already experiencing poverty before COVID-19 are likely to face further difficulties and new families will be identified as in poverty.
- (b) The 2020/21 Action Plan and Report focus on the impact of COVID-19 to ensure that an appropriate response is made to the unprecedented challenge facing the Local Authority and Health Board.

6.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no economic, social or environmental effects of this proposal.

6.5 Carbon Management

There are no effects on carbon emissions as a result of this proposal.

6.6 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this proposal.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments will be reported at the Community Planning Strategic Board.

Approved by

Jenni Craig
Service Director, Customer & Communities **Signature.....**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
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Background Papers:**Previous Minute Reference:**

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