
Local Child Poverty Annual Progress Report 2020/21 and Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan 2021/22

Report by Service Director Customer & Communities

COMMUNITY PLANNING STRATEGIC BOARD

10 June 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

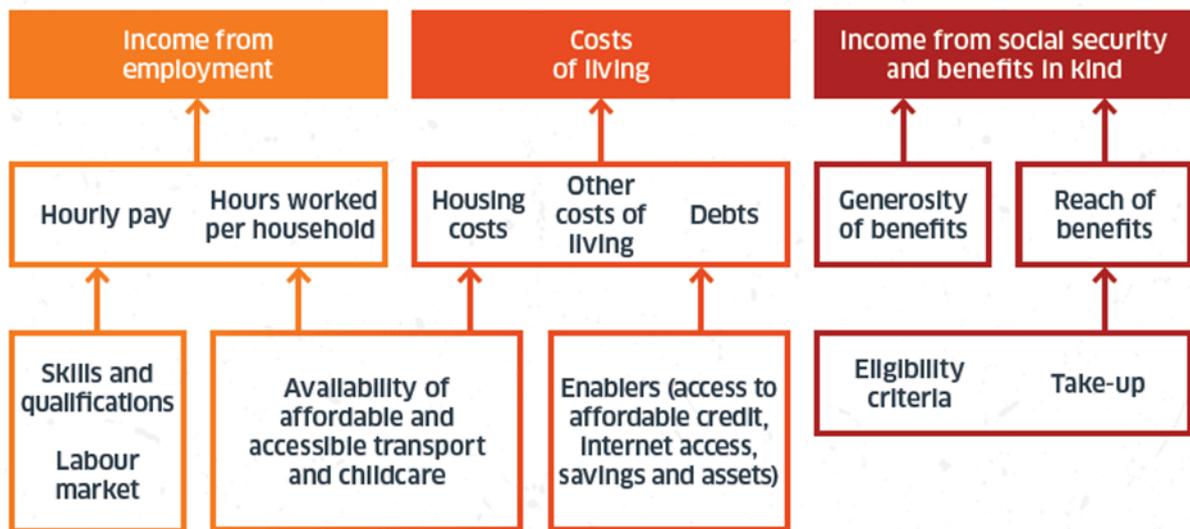
- 1.1 This report presents the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Annual Progress Report for 2020/21 and the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan for 2021/22 for endorsement before submission to Scottish Government.**
- 1.2 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report and an Annual Progress Report.
- 1.3 The Annual Progress Report for 2020/21 is the third Annual Report for the Scottish Borders and provides the Community Planning Partnership and Scottish Government with an update on progress made within the Action Plan.
- 1.4 The Report and Action Plan for 2021/22 provides the Community Planning Partnership and Scottish Government with a Report on Local Child Poverty Actions proposed for 2021/22.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Community Planning Strategic Board:**
 - a) Endorse the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Annual Progress Report for 2020/21 before submission to Scottish Government.**
 - b) Endorse the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan for 2021/22 before submission to Scottish Government.**

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 The Child Poverty Planning Group (CPPG) manages the implementation of the Local Child Poverty Reports and is accountable to the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CPPG is a strategic group with senior multi-agency membership.
- 3.3 The direct drivers of poverty fall in to three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. The relationship of these drivers to wider thematic areas is summarised below.



4 NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 does not specifically define ‘poverty’, instead it uses four income-based targets as measures. <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/child-poverty-scotland-bill>

In March 2021 the Scottish Government updated the measures used to assess child poverty in Scotland¹, Table 1 below shows the results for the most recent two years along with the 2023 and 2030 targets.

¹ The Scottish Government references the Family Resources Survey and Understanding Society Survey in the [publication](#), this is separate to the DWP/HMRC [children in low income families statistics](#).

Child Poverty Measures For Scotland	Previous Statistics	Latest statistics	2023 target	2030 target
% of children in relative poverty	23% (2018/19)	26% (2019/20)	18%	10%
% of children in absolute poverty	20% (2018/19)	23% (2019/20)	14%	5%
% of children in low income + material deprivation	12% (2018/19)	12% (2019/20)	8%	5%
% of children in persistent poverty after housing costs	15% (2014-2018)	16% (2015-2019)	8%	5%

Table 1 - Source: <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/cpupdate.html>

4.2 In spring 2021 the Scottish Parliament unanimously supported the UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Bill – which places a duty on public bodies to respect and protect children’s rights in all the work that they do. The Bill also says that public authorities must not act in a way that is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements. Most directly the UNCRC says that children and young people:

- Have a right to the best health possible, this includes adequate and nutritious food (article 24)
- Have the right to social security and for this to be fully realised (article 26)
- Have the right to a standard of living that allows them to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially (article 27)

4.3 The relationship between Child Poverty and the emerging impact of Covid-19 at a national level is shown in Appendices 1(a) and 2(a). Some stand-out observations include:

- One in five households with dependent children report serious financial difficulties
- In-work poverty is more prevalent, driven by underemployment ie. Not working as many hours as a person would like with low pay adding to the issue.
- The number of hours worked in Scotland reduced as a result of the pandemic. Mean hours worked per week reduced from 32 at the start of 2019 to 25 by June 2020.
- Emergency protections have assisted in the short term, but long term issues include those out of work and redundant, lack of job vacancies, dwindling savings, increased debt, threats of eviction = pulling more households into poverty.
- Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grant applications were 46% higher in the first quarter of 2020-2021 than in the same quarter of the previous year.

- The Covid-19 pandemic halted construction, resulting in the 50,000 affordable homes (incl 35,000 social homes) becoming unachievable by May 2021.
- One quarter of adults reported being very or somewhat worried about affording enough food for themselves or their households.
- The shift towards digital learning has impacted different groups in different ways. Online learning is a benefit for students who have fluctuating health conditions, but poses a challenge in making learning accessible for disabled students.

5 LOCAL CONTEXT

5.1 Local Child Poverty Annual Progress Report 2020/21

The Local Child Poverty Annual Progress Report for 2020/21 is shown in Appendices 1 and 1(b). Good progress has been made against the actions set out despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Highlights include:

- Services have adapted working practices to enable them to continue to offer food, support, employment opportunities, digital devices and many other initiatives, as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions
- The Borders Additional Needs Group continued to provide weekly Additional Support Needs (ASN) Youth Groups to 14-19 year olds to support the transition out of education and enhance employability opportunities for ASN young people.
- The Community and Learning Development (CLD) service switched their support to parents to online, telephone, and one to one outdoor meetings so that they could continue to help with issues raised such as provision of free school meals, looking after children's needs whilst shielding, domestic abuse and many others.
- The Parental Employability Support programme has already had success with 35 referrals since October 2020, with some parents already gaining employment.
- Monetary gains for those claiming benefits increased in 2020/21 despite a lower number of referrals due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Youth work holiday programmes were delivered, despite reduced capacity and opportunity due to Covid-19, and were enhanced by online activities, including cooking workshops.
- The Connecting Scotland programme supported vulnerable people online, helping 382 families, 65 care leavers and 34 other vulnerable people.
- The Borders Housing Network secured £450k from the Scottish Government's Social Housing Fuel Support Fund. This allowed the four housing associations to support those in fuel debt.

5.2 Local Covid-19 Challenges

The impact of Covid-19 at a local level is yet to be fully understood, however it is likely that children, young people and their families who are already experiencing hardship may be affected further. Early observations include:

- Unemployment figures in the Scottish Borders rose from 1755 in December 2019 to 3505 by December 2020. The unemployment figures in the Scottish Borders based on the Claimant Count detailed in the Office of National Statistics, NOMIS Report, as at 30 April 2021 was 3615.
Source: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)
- Within the Scottish Borders 7300 workers were furloughed as at 28 February 2021. The provisional number of furloughed workers in the Scottish Borders as at 31 March 2021 was 6300.
Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020#furloughing-by-local-authority-and-parliamentary-constituency-at-31-october-including-gender-breakdown>
- Couples on benefits of £281 per week with two children after housing costs were £120 per week short of the 60% median income poverty level of around £400 per week. In order to surpass the poverty line each parent would need to work 22 hours per week at minimum wage or have their benefits increased by 40% if unemployed. (The Scottish Child Payment per week for aged 6 and under increased benefits by an average of 5%).
- With the closure of schools and the impact of losing sight of children and young people, hidden poverty and the pressures pushing families into greater need have been highlighted. On reopening the pressures to provide school uniforms increased.
- £350,000 in hardship and discretionary funding to students was delivered by Borders College.
- Third sector youth organisations provided support to 253 young people with food parcels and through significant contributions from community based youth groups: including Cheviot Hub, TD1 Youth Club, Rowland's, Tweeddale Youth Action and Connect Berwickshire. Collectively an estimated 10,000 food parcels were dispersed to households.

5.3 Children in Low Income Families

Table 2 below shows the proportion of children in Relative and Absolute low income families for the financial years ending (FYE) 2015 to 2020. Note that there has been a greater change in the Scottish Borders compared to Scotland for both relative and absolute. The table also shows the figures for Dumfries and Galloway, showing the challenges for the South of Scotland Region.

Type	Area - Type	FYE 2015	FYE 2016	FYE 2017	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020 (p)	% Change
Relative	Scotland	14%	15%	16%	18%	18%	19%	4.5%
	Scottish Borders	13%	14%	16%	18%	17%	18%	5.2%
	Dumfries and Galloway	16%	17%	18%	21%	20%	22%	6.0%
Absolute	Scotland	14%	14%	13%	15%	15%	16%	1.3%
	Scottish Borders	13%	13%	13%	14%	14%	15%	1.6%
	Dumfries and Galloway	16%	16%	15%	17%	16%	19%	2.2%

Source: DWP / NRS

Table 2 - Source: [Annual Official Statistics on the number of children living in low income families across the UK for financial years ending \(FYE\) 2015 to 2020](#)

Relative low income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year.

Absolute low income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year in comparison with incomes in financial year ending 2011.

Further details are shown in Appendix 2 including a comparison of Local Government Benchmarking Authorities and the percentage of children living in relative low income families broken down to Ward level.

5.4 The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index

The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index (SB CPI) provides additional insight into Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders. The SB CPI works alongside the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD provides a way of looking at deprivation in an area, covering the whole population and does not specifically reflect child poverty. The SB CPI provides an indication of child poverty levels based on four components - Children in Low Income Families (**CLIF**), Free School Meals (**FSM**), Clothing Grant (**CLG**) and Educational Maintenance Allowance (**EMA16+**).

Table 3 below shows the results for the Scottish Borders for 2017 to 2020

SB CPI Components / Year	For SB CPI 2017	For SB CPI 2018	For SB CPI 2019	For SB CPI 2020
Children in Low Income Families - CLIF (DWP) ^	19.8%	21.8%	20.6%	22.5%
Free School Meals - FSM (SBC)	10.0%	10.4%	11.6%	15.7%
Clothing Grant - CLG (SBC)	14.6%	15.1%	15.2%	18.1%
Educational Maintenance Allowance 16+ - EMA16+ (SBC) *	8.2%	6.2%	3.8%	16.0%

The full Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index is shown in Appendix 1(d)

5.5 Student Poverty: Borders College

Poverty amongst the student body is an ongoing concern further impacted due to the ongoing Covid-19 health pandemic and the resulting enforced restrictions. Further pressure came during the early part of 2021 when already financially stretched students found themselves back in a second lockdown. During this period students were finding meeting the costs for heating due to the winter weather, along with additional food bills as dependents or siblings normally in school were at home, particularly difficult. We also saw a second wave of need for IT/Digital support as the demand on home broadband systems and existing equipment increased due to home schooling and other household members working from home.

To help mitigate some of the financial pressures, over 500 laptop loans were provided along with data packages to ensure access to appropriate Broadband. In addition significant levels of discretionary and hardship funding was awarded to help with increased living costs exacerbated by the pandemic.

5.6 **Financial Inclusion**

Scottish Borders Council offer a range of different Financial Inclusion services and are involved in several different work streams with a variety of partners. The total gains for the communities in the Borders from this service in 2020/21 totaled £4,237,007.

There are generally good links between all of the organisations undertaking Financial Inclusion work and in most cases referral processes are in place if required. There are concerns about solutions to food poverty and fuel poverty and there is an increasing emphasis on doing more than providing the 'sticking plasters' of Crisis Grants, energy top ups or food parcels. Organisations are encouraging more sustainable long-term solutions e.g., improving energy efficiency, applying for benefits/grants, or signposting to employability services which will increase income and reduce the possibility of a crisis occurring in the future. There is support for some fuel emergencies but there are concerns about the impact when Covid related financial support ends.

5.7 **Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan 2021/22**

Community Planning Partners and members of the Child Poverty Planning Group have contributed to the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Report and Action Plan for 2021/22. (Appendices 2 and 2(b)). Actions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are set out which begin to address the impact on income from employment, job loss, loss of income, income from benefits and costs of living. 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.

6 **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 **Financial**

Actions within the Child Poverty Action Plans are met from existing resources.

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

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.

The 2020/21 Child Poverty Annual Report outlines the progress made to alleviate child poverty in the Scottish Borders, and the 2021/22 Report and Action Plan focusses on the impact of Covid-19 to ensure that an appropriate response is made to the unprecedented challenge facing the Local Authority, Health Board and other partners.

6.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An integrated impact assessment has been carried out for this report and there are no specific implications.

6.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

In considering each of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the following may be considered to make a difference:

- End poverty in all its forms – Local action is reported in both the 2020/21 Annual Report and the 2021/22 Report and action plan which contribute to this goal.
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition – Local action is reported in both the 2020/21 Annual Report and the 2021/22 Report and action plan which contribute to this goal. The 2020/21 Report shows progress made in areas such as cooking skills and recipe cards and reports on food poverty specifically, whilst the 2021/22 Report contains actions planned around food security.
- Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages – activities are outlined in both reports which contribute to healthy lives eg. Summer holiday programmes provided by a range of partners. These programmes offer a variety of different activities including sports, culture, arts, cooking lessons, and often supply food to families to take home.
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – pupil equity funding allows schools to design programmes to close the poverty related attainment gap. Individual plans are drawn up for vulnerable children to ensure they are given the best opportunity to learn. The cost of the school day is constantly under review to ensure that trips and activities are affordable for all children. The Youth Guarantee operates to ensure that all school students applying for college are offered a suitable course to study. Other partners offer volunteering roles which build up confidence in young people so they can apply for jobs later on. Partners offer modern apprenticeship roles to young people furthest from the job market.
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – housing tenants are supported with energy debt and advice is available on the best tariffs etc. Affordable homes are built and planned for tenants, and vulnerable groups are identified and supported with specific issues.
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – the Parental employability scheme provides opportunities for parents to train for roles as well as gain employment. The intensive family support service targets specific families to support them into employment.

6.5 **Climate Change**

There is no impact on climate change as a result of this report.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

There are no rural proofing implications contained in this report.

6.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 **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 report.

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 have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig

Signature

Service Director Customer and Communities

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Janice Robertson	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager, 01835 824000

Background Papers: n/a

Previous Minute Reference: Community Planning Strategic Board 19.11.20
Community Planning Strategic Board 10.09.20

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Janice Robertson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Janice Robertson, Scottish Borders Council, Council HQ, Newtown St.Boswells, Melrose, TD6 OSA, 01835 824000, jrobertson@scotborders.gov.uk