

Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report 2021/22 and Action Plan 2022/23

DRAFT

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Foreword and Introduction

Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Community Planning Partners recognise the importance of tackling child poverty and share a strategic approach in doing so. We are determined to make a difference to children and families in the Scottish Borders, and this Plan sets out our commitment to them with key actions and priority areas of work to help tackle child poverty.

This report covers progress made in the Scottish Borders against activities within the Action Plan for 2021/22 and sets out planned actions in 2022/23.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out the Scottish Government's statement of intent to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030.

The Act requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report and an Annual Progress Report. The annual progress report should describe activities undertaken and planned locally to contribute towards the child poverty targets set out in the Act.

The Scottish Borders faces significant challenges, for example:

- One in five of our children live in poverty (after housing costs)
- In 2021, the gross weekly full-time workplace based wage in the Scottish Borders was **£96 less** per week than the average level for Scotland, this is the 2nd lowest of the 32 Scottish Local Authority areas. (NOMIS)¹.
- In 2020, **24.6%** of employees (18+) earned less than the living wage in the Scottish Borders.
- The cost of living crisis is now affecting the area with more families struggling to heat their homes or feed their children.

These are serious issues, and, if we are to make a difference to families and children, the actions within this plan must start to address them. We will work with national plans and local plans and strategies as outlined below as we take action throughout 2022/23.

Scottish Government's new tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty. It is a plan for all of Scotland and recognises the contribution that all parts of society must make to deliver the change needed for children and families. This Local Child Poverty Report and action plan aligns to that approach.

The Scottish Borders [Council Plan 2022-23](#) 'Empowered, vibrant communities' outcome contributes to our child poverty work by committing to '*reducing the number of children in poverty; and reduce the impact of living in poverty on families*'. This Local Child Poverty Report sets out actions which will help to meet that outcome. We welcome the inclusion of this commitment in the Council Plan.

The Scottish Borders [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) sets out the way in which the Council and its partners will aim to work together to help reduce poverty across the region.

We recognise that partnerships are key to the achievement of the outcomes we plan for our children, young people and families in the Scottish Borders and thank the Child Poverty Planning Group and the Community Planning Partnership for their contributions to the Plan.

Councillor Caroline Cochrane – Chair of Community Planning Partnership

David Robertson – Acting Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council

Ralph Roberts – Chief Executive, NHS Borders

¹ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

National Context

Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty (the Duty) came into force on 1 April 2018 and places a legal responsibility on named public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay **due regard**' to) how they can **reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions**. This is a complex, multidimensional problem, closely related to poverty. Having less access to resources can mean that individuals fare worse on outcomes including health, housing, education or opportunities to work or train, and these negative outcomes can reinforce each other. Adversity in childhood can have life-long impacts, and growing up in poverty is associated with poorer educational attainment, employment prospects and health inequalities. Therefore it is crucial that public bodies consider the impact that their decisions have on socio-economic disadvantage and the inequality of outcome that both adults and children may experience as a result.

Best Start Bright Futures

Scottish Government's new tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty.

'Successfully tackling child poverty requires our approach to evolve, to focus on outcomes rather than inputs, and to deliver evidence-informed wide ranging action across Scotland, which works together to wraparound and support families. It will require the transformation of our economy, further investment in key infrastructure such as childcare and transport, and provision of the right high-quality support at the right time in order to help families to move out of poverty.'

'No one action in isolation can make the change needed. It is the cumulative impact of action across sectors, by all partners, in all parts of Scotland, which will make the difference for children and families.'

The plan outlines Scotland's offer to families in order to tackle child poverty head on:

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

Part B: maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs

Part C: supporting the next generation to thrive

National Child Poverty Targets

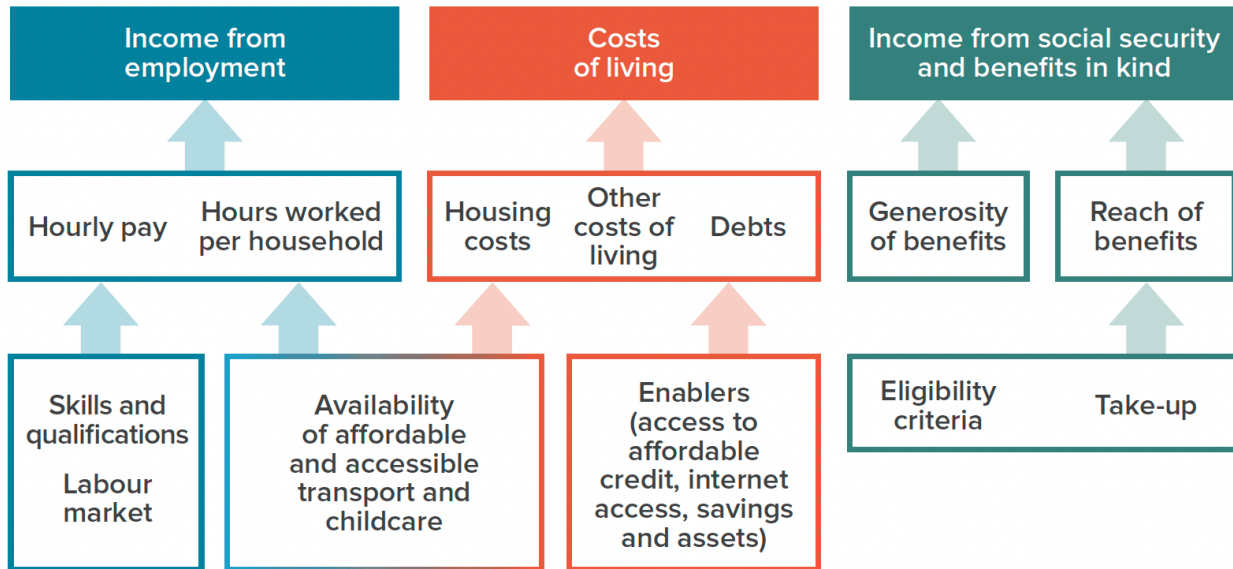
Achieving the targets set out by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 is imperative to improving the lives and outcomes of Scotland's children and young people, their families and wider communities. The interim targets below must be met during the life of the national delivery plan (2023-2026), with final targets to be met by 2030.

Fewer than 18% of children living in families in relative poverty in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 10% by 2030.
Fewer than 14% of children living in families in absolute poverty in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.
Fewer than 8% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.
Fewer than 8% of children living in families in persistent poverty in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.

Drivers of Child Poverty

The direct drivers of poverty fall into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. We remain focused on actions around these themes, as summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Drivers of child poverty

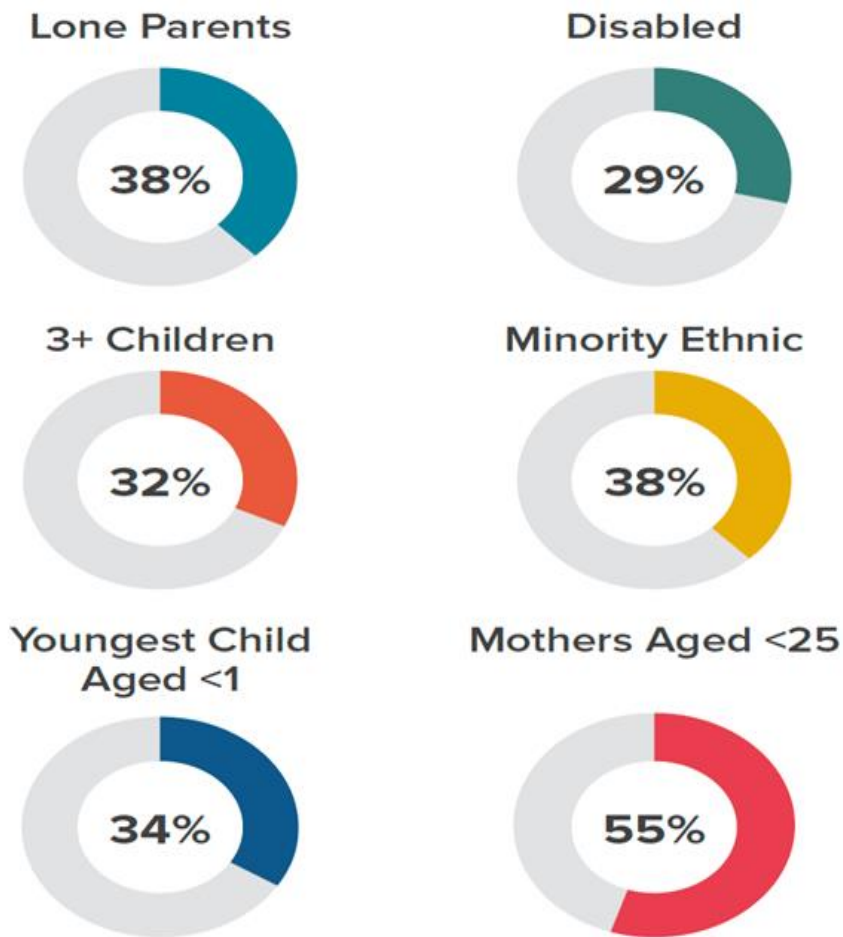


Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Families at greatest risk of poverty

The national Child Poverty Delivery Plan continues to focus on supporting the six priority family types. Almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within these six priority family types. These groups are set out below (Figure 2), with each more likely to experience poverty than all children in Scotland (24%) and households which do not have any of the priority family characteristics (10%). We remain focused on actions to help these families.

Figure 2 – Priority families with children in relative poverty:



Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Local Context

Child Poverty Data for the Scottish Borders - what do we know?

The headlines below show that we face significant challenges in the Scottish Borders.

- Our children in low income families (before housing costs) has dropped from 18.2% in 2019/20 to 14.7% in 2020/21, similar to the trend for Scotland.
- 1 in 5 children still live in poverty (after housing costs) in the Scottish Borders
- The percentage of children living in relative low income families ranges from 7.9% in the Tweeddale West Ward to 23.0% in the Hawick and Denholm Ward.
- 29% of adults in the Scottish Borders had no savings as at 2019. This is before the Covid-19 Pandemic and the current cost of living crisis.
- In 2021, 25% of employment in the Scottish Borders was in 'lower paid' occupation

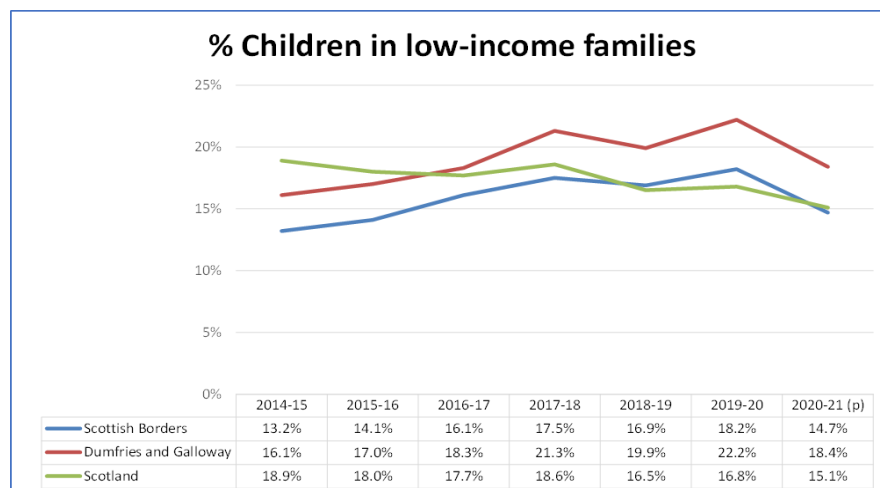
Scottish Government produces a [dashboard](#) that provides a selection of data available at local authority level to help monitor child poverty and its drivers locally. These indicators do not measure child poverty directly in the same way as the indicators used for the national targets, but they can be used to understand the local context and how that might be changing.

The information shows the results for the Scottish Borders with comparison to Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland. The comparison to Dumfries and Galloway allows for a South of Scotland perspective on child poverty.

Appendix 1(a) shows more detail, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups.

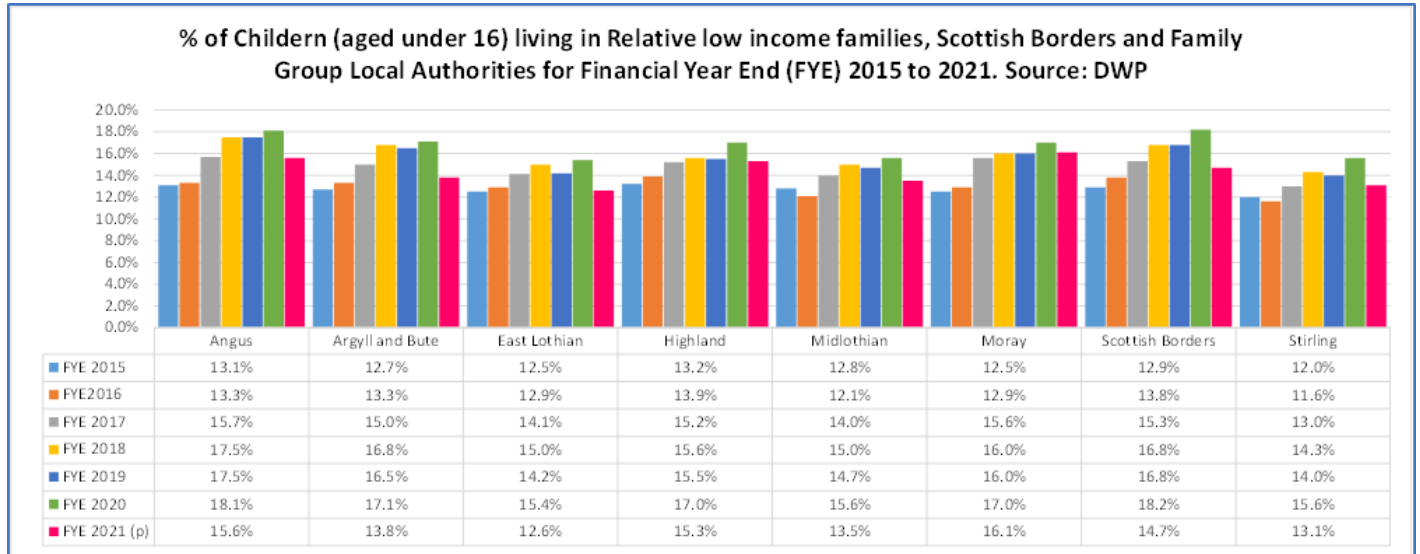
Children in Low-Income Families

According to DWP/HMRC the proportion of children in low-income families (before housing costs) has increased from 13.2% in 2014-15 to 18.2% in 2019-2020 for the Scottish Borders. For the financial year 2021, **14.7%** of children in Scottish Borders were living in relative low income families, slightly lower than 15.1% for Scotland. This is a significant fall since the previous year (18.2%) and is the lowest since 2016.



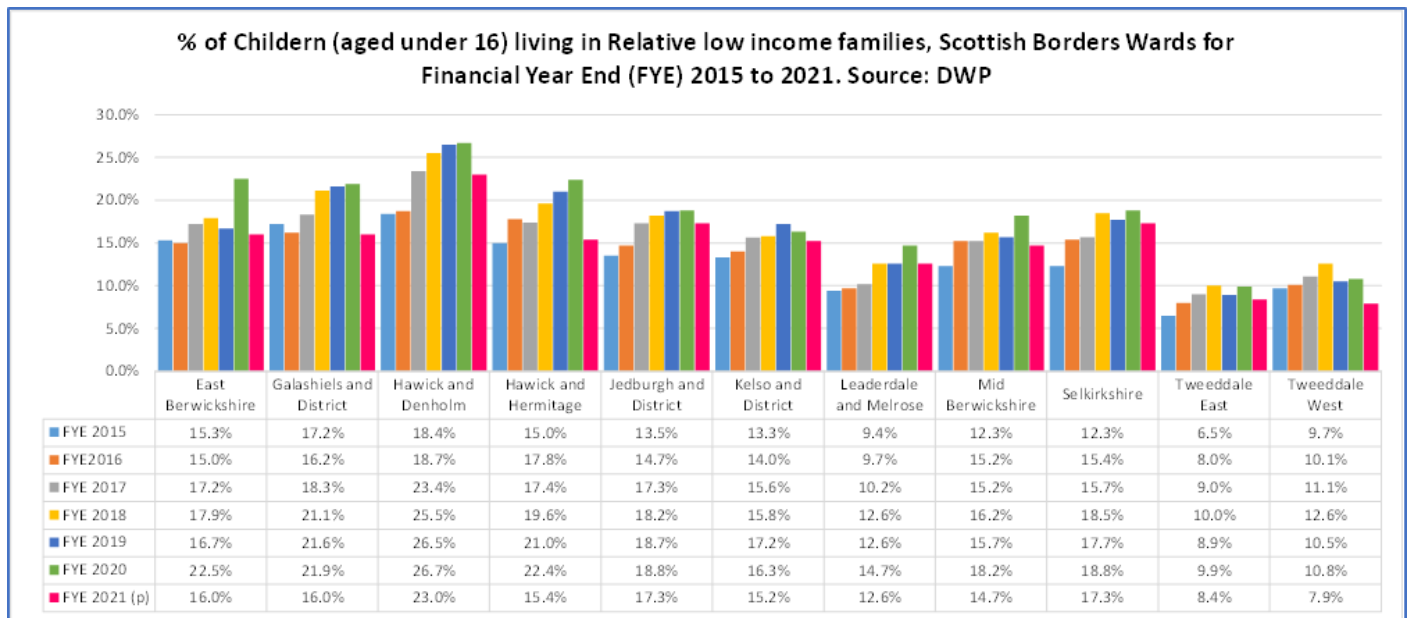
Source 1: DWP/HMRC children in low-income families local measure (before housing costs)

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) publication “[Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)” provides information at local authority and ward level. The Scottish Borders is in a benchmarking group with seven other Scottish Local Authorities. The graph with table below show the proportion of children in Relative low income families FYE 2015 to 2021. It should be noted all areas had a lower proportion of children in Relative low income families in 2021 compared to 2020.



Source 2: *Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

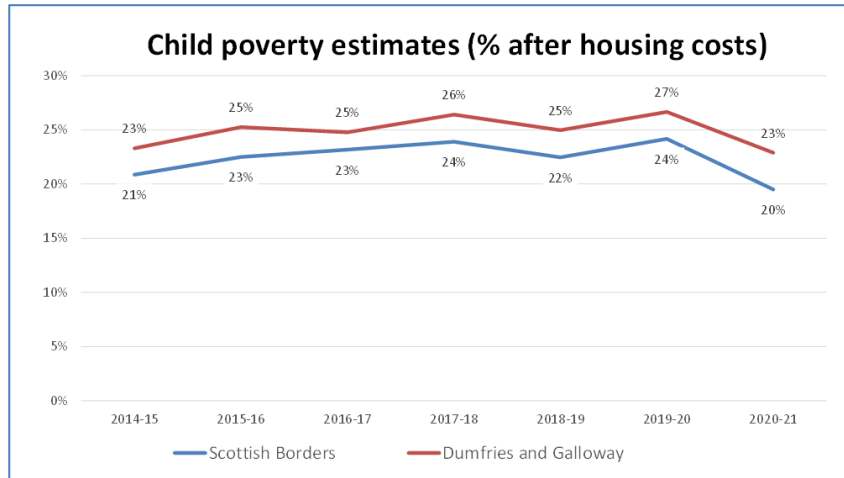
Within the Scottish Borders the percent of children (aged under 16) living in Relative low income families ranges between 7.9% for Tweeddale West compared to 23.0% for Hawick and Denholm for FYE 2021. The graph with table below show the proportion of children (aged under 16) living in Relative low income families for each ward in the Scottish Borders between FYE 2015 and 2021.



Source 3: *Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

Child Poverty Estimates after housing costs

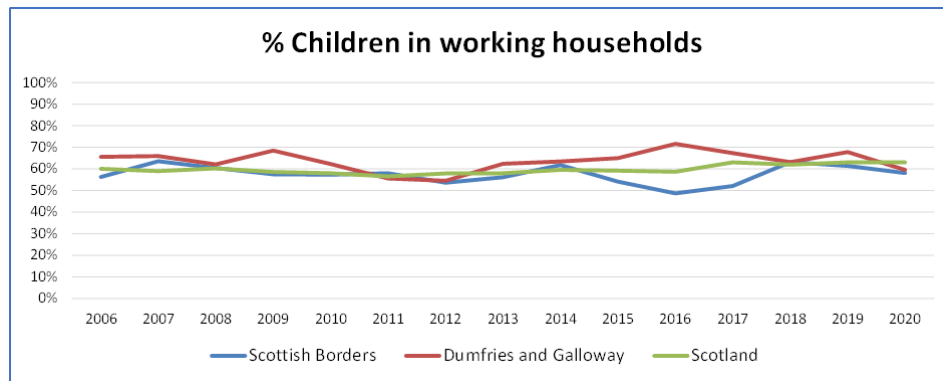
The End Child Poverty Coalition produce child poverty estimates (after housing costs) at local authority level. The trend in the Scottish Borders is similar to Dumfries and Galloway. In 2020-21 the proportion of children living in poverty (after housing costs) was the lowest in seven years, although 1 in 5 children still live in poverty.



Source 4: End Child Poverty Coalition child poverty estimates (after housing costs)

Children in Working Households

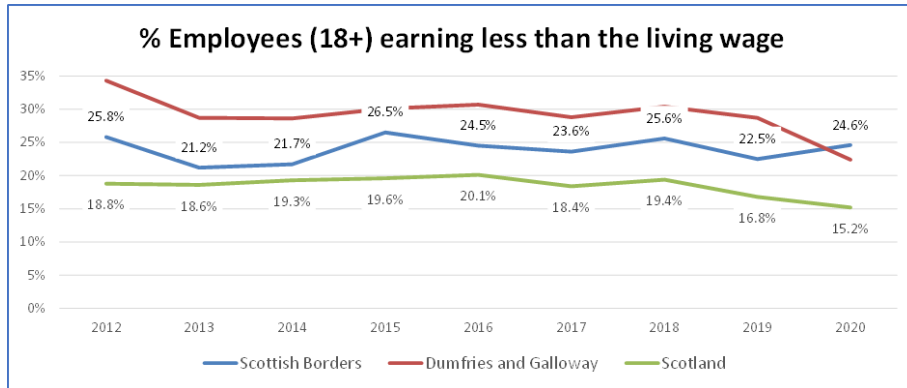
The proportion of children in working households in the Scottish Borders is consistently similar to the level for Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway.



Source 5: ONS Annual Population Survey, household economic activity status

Employees (18+) earning less than living wage

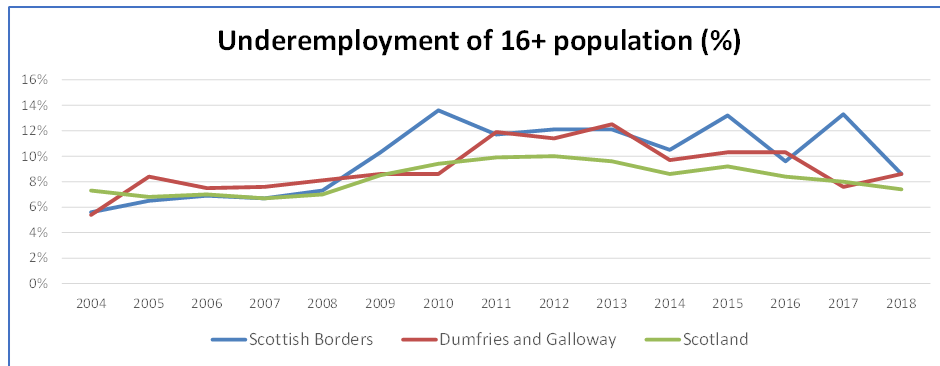
In the Scottish Borders the proportion of employees (18+) earning less than the living wage has been higher than the level for Scotland. In 2020, 24.6% of employees (18+) in the Scottish Borders earned less than the living wage, compared to 15.2% in Scotland (a difference of 9.4%).



Source 6: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Underemployment of 16+ population

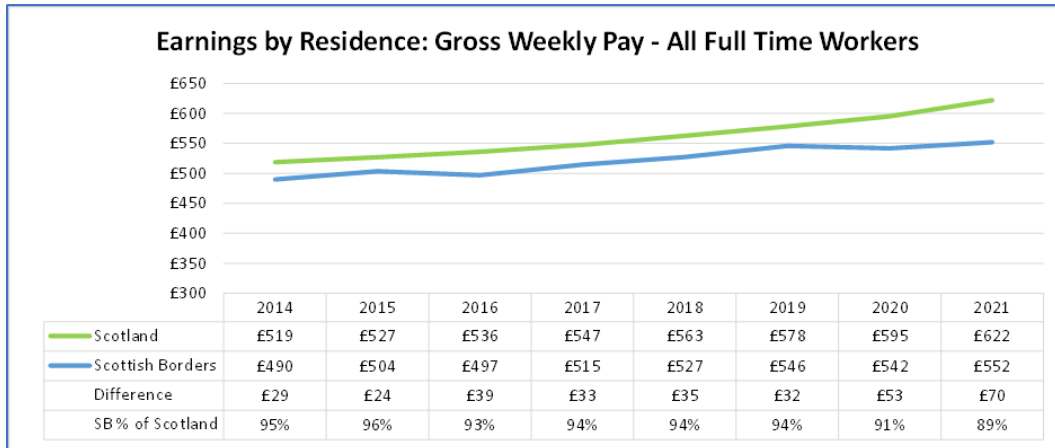
The proportion of 16+ population that is underemployed in the Scottish Borders has been above the level for Scotland since 2009 and has fluctuated.



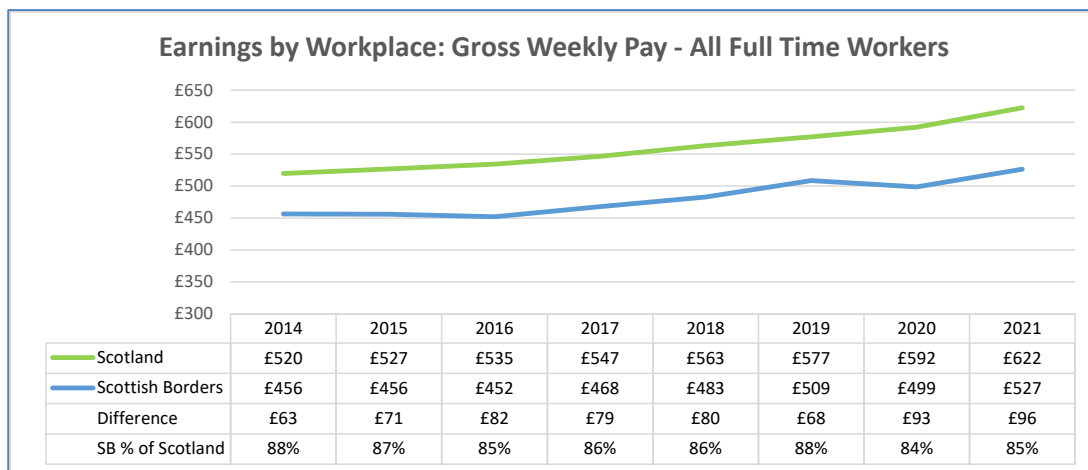
Source 7: ONS Annual Population Survey

Earnings

The earnings by residence and workplace in the Scottish Borders have consistently been below the level of Scotland. In 2021, the earnings of a full time worker was £70 less per week for residence based (where people live) and £96 less per week for workplace based (where people work). The gross weekly full-time workplace based wage in the Scottish Borders is the 2nd lowest of the 32 Scottish Local Authority areas. (NOMIS)²



Source 4: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings



Source 5: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earning

² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

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 was created to work 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 is a tool to help inform the Local Child Poverty Action Plan. The SB CPI is a summary of four components:

- Children in Low Income Families (**CiLIF**) – Source is [DWP/HMRC](#).³ Relative low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. The SB CPI uses the most recent available year's data, currently there is a one year lag e.g. the SB CPI 2021 uses the CiLIF data for 2020-21.
- Free School Meals (**FSM**) – Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Free School Meals of all pupils in the area for the school year.
- Clothing Grant (**CLG**) - Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Clothing Grant of all pupils in the area for the school year.
- Educational Maintenance Allowance (**EMA16+**) – Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils who are aged 16 or older (before 01 March of school year) who receive Educational Maintenance Allowance.

The table below shows the results for the Scottish Borders for 2017 to 2021

Child Poverty Index Component / Year	SB CPI 2017	SB CPI 2018	SB CPI 2019	SB CPI 2020	SB CPI 2021
Children in Low Income Families - CiLIF (DWP) – specifically calculated for SBC CPI with one year lag	19.0%	20.7%	20.5%	22.0%	18.0%
Free School Meals - FSM (SBC)	10.0%	10.4%	11.6%	15.7%	15.4%
Clothing Grant - CLG (SBC)	14.6%	15.1%	15.2%	18.1%	18.0%
Educational Maintenance Allowance 16+ - EMA16+ (SBC)	8.2%	6.2%	3.8%	16.0%	10.0%

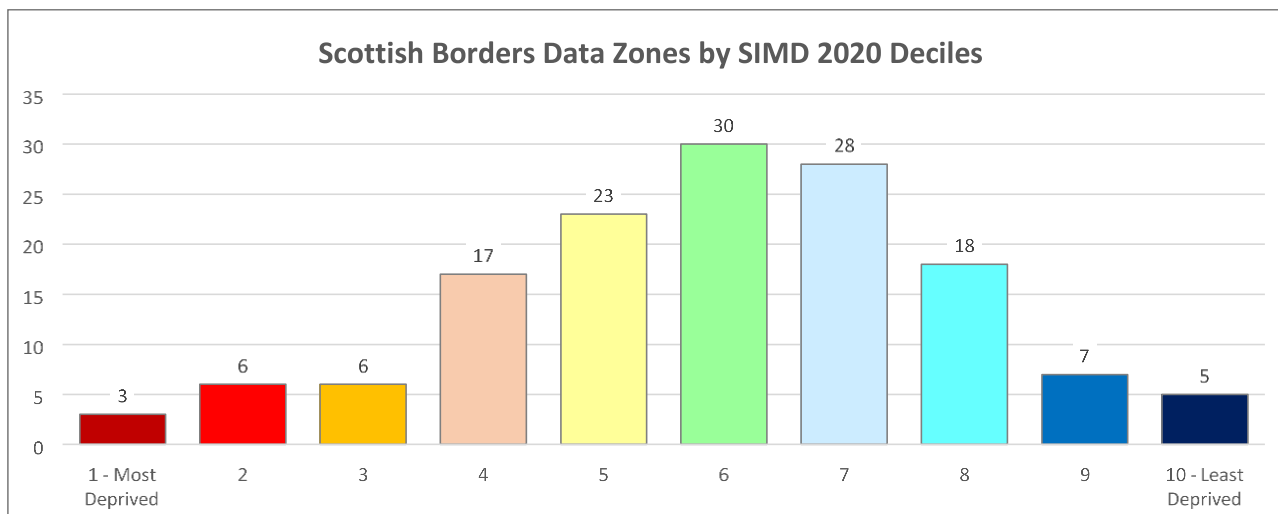
The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen in both the 2020 and 2021 results. Although the proportion of children living in low-income families for the 2021 index is lower compared to the 2020 index, the proportion receiving free school meals and clothing grant are similar.

³ The calculation of proportion of Children in Low Income Families for the purpose of the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index differs to 'official statistics' due to the availability of the data from Stat-Xplore. The children in Stat-Xplore are defined as dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training. (Not just those aged under 16 – unable to group into age bands). The figure for all children is then expressed as proportion of those aged 0 to 15 as published by NRS. It is recognised that this calculation is imperfect, but practical for the purpose of the SB CPI.

Comparing Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index 2021 to SIMD 2020

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a good tool for identifying overall deprivation, however, it is not poverty specific, or child focused. The SB CPI is a tactile index created to enable better insight into child poverty within the Scottish Borders. This is a basic comparison between SIMD2020 Decile and SB CPI Score.

The graph below shows the count of the 143 data zones in the Scottish Borders by the SIMD 2020 Decile.



What are we doing about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders?

Tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders is governed through the Community Planning Partnership. A Child Poverty Planning Group consisting of Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and other key partners, meets periodically to discuss the local approach as well as any national developments such as the new national delivery plan.

The Community Planning Partnership has oversight and approval duties associated with the Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan but delegates the delivery of it to the Child Poverty Planning Group.

Local Plans outlined below all make a contribution to tackling child poverty too.

Council Plan

The Scottish Borders [Council Plan 2022-23](#) 'Working together – improving lives', was approved in February 2022. It sets out their strategic framework for action until March 2023. 'Empowered, vibrant communities' outcome contributes to our child poverty work by committing to 'reducing the number of children in poverty; and reduce the impact of living in poverty on families'.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Scottish Borders [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) sets out the way in which the Council and its partners will aim to work together to help reduce poverty across the region and recognises that Child Poverty is included in this aim.

Integrated Children and Young People's Plan 2021-23

The [Integrated Children and Young People's Plan](#) sets out the strategic approach to supporting children and young people within the framework of the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership. A

priority of this plan is ‘keeping children and young people safe’, and a theme associated with that is addressing child poverty. The following extract from the theme shows what is planned. *‘Partners will understand the impact of child poverty of life chances, in particular on educational attainment, health, and child protection outcomes of children and young people. Echoing national research, there is an association within the Scottish Borders between poverty and child abuse health outcomes and neglect. Poverty is only one factor, but perhaps the most pervasive. The Partnership will plan and deliver services in ways which promote equity and where possible challenge the root causes of poverty and deprivation. Actions and activities associated with this Plan will seek to maximise family income and their available resources and deliver services in a way which is free from stigma or discrimination’.*

Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership – Priority themes

The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership have agreed four priority themes to support communities over the next year. The four areas of action agreed are:

- Enough money to live on
- Access to work, learning and training
- Enjoying good health and wellbeing
- A good place to grow up, live in and enjoy a full life

These areas of action will be developed into a work plan and will support our child poverty agenda.

Children’s Rights

Our [Children’s Rights Report 2021-2023](#) reports on the steps we have taken to fulfil the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Consultation with children and young people was undertaken in preparation of the report to ensure they have a say about matters that are important to them. As well as feedback about their rights, other responses included: digital connectivity, free public transport, activities for young people and mental health assistance. All of these issues are reflected in the actions set out in the Child Poverty Action Plan.

The 2021/22 Action Plan Progress Report

Good overall progress has been made against the actions set out in the 2021/22 Action Plan. This is shown in detail in Appendix 1(b), and demonstrates the wide range of activities undertaken to help alleviate child poverty in the Scottish Borders. Highlights include:

Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 families have engaged with the Intensive Family Support Service over the year. As a result, 5 adults have entered employment. • Live Borders recruited 20 members of staff to assist with the ‘Get into Summer’ programme. • Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber (SBSEC), working with Community Jobs Scotland, supported 9 young people into employment
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of the school day work continues in schools with examples of uniform recycling, swap shops for dance/prom clothing, and free access to stationery • A pilot project in Hawick, Selkirk and Galashiels has taken place, focusing on data literacy to close the poverty related attainment gap
Information and advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of clients assisted in the year by Citizens Advice Bureau in the Scottish Borders was 4,327. The total financial gain relating to these clients was approximately £3.5m. • TD1 have delivered their ‘Early Steps’ Programme which supported 20 young parents throughout the year. The programme used a youth work approach to re-

	engage the young parents, develop their skills and support them into employment and volunteering.
Housing and energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Energy Scotland processed approximately 6,600 interactions from households across the Scottish Borders in 2021/22. • The Borders Housing Network dispersed funds to Housing Associations in the Scottish Borders to support tenants in fuel debt. The average energy debt for SBHA tenants is £787. Berwickshire Housing utilised £32k for immediate payment to energy suppliers on behalf of their tenants. • SBHA completed a successful pilot in Hawick (Wellbeing Framework) to assess tenants against a series of risk factors to determine what supports/interventions were required to ensure tenancy sustainment. The framework was rolled out to all new SBHA tenants from January 2022.
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 10,500 visits were made by children and young people to Live Borders 'Get into Summer' activities. Activity camps averaged 80% occupancy with 62% of places free of charge for targeted children and young people. • 5,021 young people participated in third sector youth work as at May 2022 and 18 third sector youth organisations were involved in the distribution of winter hardship funds reaching 549 young people in 274 households.
Digital exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 730 laptop loans were issued to students at Borders College to support and enable their learning during the academic year 2021/22
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £85k from the Council's Financial Hardship Fund was dispersed to local foodbanks/Fare Share, food growing projects, community cafes and Low & Slow Pilot Project. • Over 50 families are being supported by the SBSEC on a weekly basis with food and clothing • Work in schools continues to support families impacted by poverty, including food parcel deliveries to ensure children will have at least 2 nutritional meals per day.
Financial inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG) provided 75 Additional Support Needs (ASN) families with free summer respite camps • Scottish Borders Council issued £45k of supermarket gift cards directly to individuals and services in crisis from the Financial Hardship Fund. • There were 510 referrals for financial inclusion of mothers and pregnant women from the Health Visitor and Family Nurse Partnership, resulting in £1.25m in gains.
Money worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 408 new debt cases presented to the CABx in 2021/22.

As well as the progress shown in Appendix 1(b), case studies are shown in Appendix 1(c). These case studies provide valuable insight into the work of various Partners across the Scottish Borders.

Budgets and Funding

Significant budgets and funding are attributed to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders. Table 1 below sets these out for 2022/23.

Budget/Funding	2022/23
Crisis grants	£125,000
School clothing grants	£367,800
Free sanitary products in schools and workplaces	£94,000
Educational Maintenance Allowance	£335,814
Pupil Equity Funding	£1,923,695
Strategic Equity Fund	£225,440
Summer 2022	£208,377
Child Bridging Payment	£706,000
Care experienced Children and Young People Fund	£153,600
Whole Family Wellbeing Fund	£668,000

Table 1 – Budgets and Funding in 2022/23

The Cost of living

The cost of living crisis is now gripping the country as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, economic uncertainty and war, as well as rising energy prices, inflation and the cost of goods and services. Many residents of the Scottish Borders are likely to be struggling to make ends meet for the first time, whilst those already in poverty are likely to be experiencing deepening issues.

Funding support from Scottish Government for the cost of living crisis is ongoing and is dispersed through a multi-agency Financial Hardship Group who make decisions based on evidence of need, demand and lived experience.

Funds provided to date include:

- a) A Financial Insecurity Fund, to support those in financial hardship of which an initial £330k was available for food and financial insecurity. A further £330k was made available in November 2021, with extended criteria to allow different approaches to be undertaken.
- b) Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) - £1.724m allocated to SBC to help support local economic recovery and further support to low-income households

The Financial Insecurity Fund has paid for the following:

Existing third sector food networks & supermarket gift cards - £82k	FareShare Food Outlets – depot, staffing and transport - £38k
Hardship payment to families - £100k	Connecting Borders Digital Project - £75k (matched by SoSE to £150k)
Warm & Well Scheme - £100k	Child Payment Bridging Payments - £26k
Clothing Grant Scheme - £117k	Inclusion Fund - £121k

Examples of support provided by this Fund:

1. Collaborative working with CABx, Changeworks & Home Energy Scotland to identify fuel poverty, co-ordinating referrals, advice and support

2. Partnership Co-ordinators recruited – 315 vulnerable people assisted, achieving £564k in financial savings so far including £350k for those in fuel poverty
3. Energy credit vouchers via Changeworks to tackle energy debt being issued & becoming a Fuel Bank partner
4. Assisting and supporting individuals to access benefits and funding enabling them to manage better in future
5. Officers working together to provide individual holistic support, mitigate hardship and relieve exceptional pressure
6. Digital devices including digital champions to support & assist

Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) has paid for the following:

One off payment of £150 to our lowest income families (7,700 households) - £1.155m	Payment of £100 to each child entitled to free school meals - £0.222m
Scotland Loves Local Scheme - £0.030m	Further support to businesses (currently being discussed, with report due back to Council after summer) - £0.317

Further detailed profiling work is being undertaken to consider known data gaps, but all of the above will enable SBC to continue to respond to future funding allocation in an efficient and timely way.

Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion actions help families to maximise their income and benefits.

Scottish Borders Council offer a range of different Financial Inclusion services and are involved in several different work streams with a variety of partners. A Partner Financial Inclusion Practitioners Group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss and agree actions to help families and referral processes are in place if required.

Financial inclusion support is provided in a number of ways:

- Direct support for families in crisis e.g. Provision of supermarket gift cards, grant payments, summer programmes, Christmas parcels
- Benefits check service to ensure that families are claiming all they are entitled to
- Referral pathways e.g. Health visitors and family nurse partnerships
- Discretionary funding awards e.g. Borders College helping students in financial hardship
- Awareness campaigns to encourage take up of specific benefits e.g. Scottish Welfare Fund
- Signposting to other benefits e.g. Best Start Grant, Scottish Child Payment

A case study set out in Appendix 1(c) shows the work of the Welfare Benefits Team in Early Years. There were in excess of 500 referrals to this service in 2021/22 which represented a 35% increase from the previous year. As a result, client total gains were £1.25m.

Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership

The goal of the Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership (LEP) is to support people into fair, sustainable jobs. Employment and Employability services are crucial to supporting families to fight poverty by enhancing their earning position. The LEP is committed to providing an effective and relevant range of provision based on need and demand and ensuring that the right support is in place for those who rely on these services.

The LEP oversees the allocation of funding from the Scottish Government and the delivery of No One Left Behind and monitors these projects to ensure they meet their required outputs and outcomes. It is acknowledged by the LEP that the best and most effective way out of poverty for people is through employment. This is done through an evidence based approach by utilising all available evidence to co-produce an all age employability support service that is person centred, more joined up, flexible and responsive to individual needs.

Food Conversations

Significant engagement work has been undertaken during the pandemic to support and grow existing food networks across the Scottish Borders, with funding being provided to assist with both short and longer term solutions. As a result of this work and the sharing of information across the network, new partnerships have been developed and different operating models have been adopted – cook clubs, slow cooker projects, food and financial inclusion assistance leaflets and other community connections have been and continue to be made with a range of partners.

Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was established to promote equity in education by ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. It is underpinned by the National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child. It focuses on improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Reducing educational inequity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap is a long term strategy which aims to impact on societal culture and thinking. In November 2021 the Cabinet Secretary announced the expanded mission statement, included below, of the refreshed SAC.

‘To use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap’.

Scottish Borders Council has been part of the SAC since 2015 and receives funding through the Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) Fund, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), the Schools’ Programme Fund (up until 2021/22) and the Strategic Equity Fund from 2022/23.

In the Year 2021-22, Scottish Borders Council received £2,484,555 across all funding streams.

Two schools featured as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Schools’ Programme – Burnfoot Community School and Hawick High School, receiving funding totaling £173,525.

Education Scotland’s Recovery and Progress Report on 2021-22 for Scottish Borders Council identified the following key strengths:

- Partnership working with Community Learning and Development (CLD) and third-sector partners has helped schools deliver successful programmes for the most disadvantaged children and young people, and their families.
- Improvements in outcomes for care experienced children and young people, for example:
 - Increase in attendance and reduction in exclusion rates
 - Increasing attainment in literacy for school leavers

- A higher proportion of Looked After young people living in Scottish Borders achieving qualifications in the Senior Phase than the national average
- Improving trend in the percentage of school leavers entering a sustainable positive destination.
- Improvements in attainment for children and young people living within SIMD quintile 1 (Q1), for example:
 - In literacy, attainment is higher than the national average at third and fourth level
 - In numeracy, attainment has increased at early level
 - In the Senior Phase, overall attainment has increased at SCQF levels 5 and 6.
- Progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, for example:
 - In literacy, at first level the attainment gap has been reduced and at first, third and fourth level, the gap is below the national average.

The Council's Equity and Inclusion Lead will support schools and local authority colleagues in:

- Maximising the impact of the CECYP Fund on improved educational experiences and outcomes for Looked After children and young people through the Virtual School
- Maximising the impact of PEF and Schools' Programme funding in closing the poverty related attainment gap, with a focus on improving the use of data at all levels to inform planning, investing in evidence-based inclusive practices and building on improved outcomes from partnership working.

Attendance rates of children and young people living within SIMD Q1, particularly at secondary level – a joint test of change initiative between the South East Improvement Collaborative and Hawick High School was introduced to improve the attendance of some of the most disengaged young people. This project resulted in a number of change ideas being adopted to support attendance at school ensuring a range of appropriate strategies were in place for targeted young people. These included daily check-ins to support young people to plan for the day ahead and identifying designated places for break and lunch times where young people felt safe and supported. Senior leaders reported improvements to both attendance and how young people felt about coming to school.

The increased attainment gaps in literacy and numeracy in the BGE and Senior Phase - early literacy and numeracy frameworks have been successfully piloted. High quality professional learning opportunities have supported pedagogical approaches to literacy and numeracy and the implementation of the strategies. This has supported consistency in approach and improved outcomes for children. The strategies and resources have been made available to all practitioners through the school house teams' channel. Initial feedback from settings has been very positive and practitioners report improved knowledge and understanding of pedagogy and practice. In addition to creating a shared standard through more robust moderation, the frameworks and supporting strategies are intended to enable stronger transitions between settings and develop stronger partnership between early learning and childcare settings and schools.

The increased gap in the Positive Destination measure between young people who live within SIMD (Q1) and SIMD quintile 5 (Q5) - Partnership work with Scottish Borders Council, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Developing the Young Workforce is planned for targeted work in communities of Galashiels and Hawick to support narrowing the poverty related attainment gap for 2022-23.

Newcastleton Primary School worked in collaboration with Stirches Primary School, as partner schools until Easter 2021. Together they employed a support for learning teacher for an extra day through PEF Funding. The school also worked with Community Learning and Development (CLD) focusing on family learning. Focus of the work targeted individual families to encourage engagement with their child's learning.

Jedburgh Grammar Campus suspended the PEF literacy intervention as a result of Covid-19 and the PEF lead introduced another intervention in response to newly identified needs to support young people with one to one approaches with home learning and technology. Ipads were issued two days before the first lockdown. The establishment was directly supporting young people and their families who were experiencing issues with the technology as well as home learning/ disengagement. This support was maintained until November 2021.

Get into Summer 2021

The Get into Summer 2021 campaign was specifically designed to allow children and young people from all backgrounds to access activities during the summer period and ensure that cost and access were not barriers to taking part and getting involved. The campaign was a Scottish Government-funded initiative to help children, young people and families reconnect and re-engage with their peers, local communities and the environment following a challenging period for everyone due to Covid-19. The Scottish Government allocated resource to national and regional partners, including Scottish Borders Council.

Funding for this programme also came from the Rural Youth Work Collaborative and the Borders Get into Summer Micro and Small Grants Scheme.

Borders Get into Summer has been a significant opportunity to demonstrate the power of grass-root community organisations: highlighting their connections to local people and places and ability to 'make things happen'. As a result, more than 1800 children, young people and their families have valued the opportunity to reconnect, develop friendships, feel included, take the lead, and improve their confidence and self-belief through new experiences, activities, and learning.

The supported activity had a particular focus on children and young people who:

- have had a lack of participation in normal activities during the pandemic
- would benefit from socialising and reconnecting with friends, peers, trusted adults, the wider community, and the outdoors
- live in remote / rural areas, where the range of existing provision could be more limited and geographic barriers to access services may be considerable.

Activities were made available to children, young people, and their families at no cost.

Further information is included in our Case Studies shown in Appendix 1(c).

Scottish Borders Council Children and Families Social Work Service

Evidence suggests that direct and indirect impacts of poverty can both operate separately and also interact with other factors to increase or reduce the chances of abuse and neglect. It is within this sphere that children and families social work focus their day to day interactions and interventions. Children and Families social work (C&FSW) fulfils specific statutory duties to children and young people in the Scottish Borders, primarily contained in the following pieces of legislation:

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007
- Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

C&FSW provides a range of functions and interventions linked to the impact of poverty including:

- an initial response to referrals, investigating concerns that children may be at significant risk of abuse and neglect;
- a comprehensive service for all looked after children, children on the child protection register and those who are at high risk of becoming so;
- work with children affected by disabilities and their families;
- recruitment of and support to foster carers and prospective adopters and assessment of kinship carers;
- residential provision for young people and a satellite unit for young people in transition to independent living;
- support to young people who were previously looked after and;
- specialist assessment and support to young people who have offended and their families.

The statutory role of C&FSW necessitates focusing on those children, young people and families assessed as most in need, supporting them to navigate complex systems which frequently place them in positions of disadvantage, and supporting children and their families who experience poverty to access services or resources that they may not have been able to. Examples include charity applications; sourcing essentials items such as food, household goods, and clothing; the provision of practical support; the provision of funding for utilities such as gas and electricity. Advice is provided by staff within the service to support budgeting on a long term basis, and support is provided to ensure income maximisation and access to correct benefit payments. Where a child is placed with kinship carers, the set up costs to purchase bed, bedding, clothes and other equipment is offered to assist the successful commencement of the placement.

C&FSW also fund childminding where it is assessed to be in the child/family's best interest. Self-directed support, where families have increased choice about the support they receive, is currently primarily focused on children with disabilities, however this is a developing area of practice and Scottish Borders C&FSW will continue to engage with Scottish Government to explore options to extend self-directed support to other families.

Scottish Borders C&FSW also commission or purchase a number of services including:

- Aberlour Child Care Trust are commissioned to provide residential respite and day respite play scheme during school holiday periods for children affected by disabilities, and the Sustain Service for children and young people at risk of becoming looked after.
- Who Cares? Scotland are commissioned to provide an independent advocacy services for children and young people who are within external placements.
- Children 1st are jointly commissioned by C&FSW and the Children & Young People's Leadership Group to provide an Abuse and Trauma Recovery Service for children and young people who have been the victims of abuse.
- C&FSW also make a contribution to Children Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) for hospice care services.
- Purchased services include a number of foster placements from independent providers and placements for children and young people who require intensive support in a residential setting.

Impact of Covid-19

- Additional support has been needed during this time for people who have been on reduced incomes, those who have lost jobs, the increase in food parcels and access to food banks etc. The impact on employment, the impact on mental health which can impact the ability of an individual to access employment but also their ability to access support possibly pushing them further into poverty. Children and families social work services are working to support people experiencing these difficulties.

- Additional funding was made available by Scottish Government to address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the most disadvantaged children and young people; a one-off payment of £200 was provided for each child and young person who is/or was looked after at home, subject to kinship care, foster care, aftercare, or continuing care between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2021; additional payments were made on an assessment-based model, where any child, young person, carer or family was provided with additional funding where their well-being has been impacted as a result of the pandemic.

Delivering The Promise - #KeepThePromise

Just over two years ago the Independent Care Review published [The Promise](#) and in February 2020 the Scottish Government signed up to the actions set out within it. Keeping the Promise requires Scottish Government to work with partners to bring transformational change. The Implementation Plan shares its ambition and works in harmony with the national child poverty plan - [Best Start, Bright Futures](#). Poverty is one of the 5 fundamentals of The Promise and steps must be taken at both a national and local level to alleviate the impact of poverty on families.

“Children growing up in poverty are over-represented on the child protection register and are more likely to be removed from their families...” (the promise)

“There must be significant, ongoing and persistent commitment to ending poverty and mitigating its impacts for Scotland’s children, families and communities...” (the promise)

Scottish Borders Council and Partners recognise the huge potential for transformational change and agree that a shift from crisis intervention to early intervention and prevention is needed. A Plan is being developed to create a Whole Family Support Service with funding received from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund of £668k.

An Intensive Family Support Service, and a one-year ‘test of change’ pilot Family Group Decision Making Service are already in existence and contribute to the delivery of The Promise, and a Scottish Borders Whole Family Support mapping exercise is underway in order to understand the complex landscape further. Other projects which link to this are: the Children and Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing Project and Primary Care Mental Health and Wellbeing Project.

In order for our workforce to understand the implications of The Promise, awareness raising sessions have been delivered as well as new multi-agency Corporate Parenting training-live sessions and e-learning. Links are also now made between SBC and NHS Borders on Trauma-informed Practice.

Student Poverty: Borders College

Poverty amongst the student body is an ongoing concern and continues to be impacted by the ongoing recovery from the global pandemic and now further exacerbated by the increasing costs of living and fuel.

Over the last academic year Borders College has mobilised resources to help support students, and as far as possible, help mitigate some of the additional financial pressures brought about by adjusting to learning remotely, alongside the very real challenge of managing lower incomes in a climate of increasing daily living costs.

Borders College has further rolled out its laptop loan initiative to ensure students who require IT equipment have access to this. In addition, data dongles or funding to boost mobile data packages is in place to ensure access to appropriate Broadband connectivity.

Significant levels of Discretionary and Hardship funding (circa £1.2M) have been awarded from student

support funds, to help mitigate the increased living and fuel costs and to help alleviate some of the hardship difficulties being experienced.

Food poverty remains an ongoing issue. This has been addressed in part, by the issue of supermarket vouchers and grab and go lunch bags to those in need. The student association will play an important role going forward working in partnership with local organisations and supporting access to Fare Share initiatives.

Challenge Poverty Week – October 2021

Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and other partners supported Challenge Poverty Week in October 2021 by highlighting the wide range of information, advice and support that is available to support people experiencing financial hardship. The campaign was publicised through social media channels. The social media plan is shown in Appendix 1(d).

2022/23 Actions

Our 2022/23 Actions, from across a range of Partners, are set out in Appendix 1(e). They have been aligned to Scotland’s offer to families, as set out in Scottish Government’s new tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#). The plan outlines a commitment to working together to deliver differently in order to tackle child poverty head on, and our actions will contribute to that. Table 2 below provides a sample of the work being undertaken in the Scottish Borders.

Part A: providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work	
A strengthened employment offer to parents	<p>Support and enhance the delivery of the Parental Employability Project using funding from Best Start, Bright Futures.</p> <p>The Employability Support service will continue to work in partnership with employers to ensure clients have the best possible chances of securing and sustaining paid jobs.</p>
Connectivity and childcare to enable access to employment	<p>Run summer camps and volunteering for young people, allowing parents to be able to work a full day. Deliver ‘Get into Summer 2022’ as part of Scottish Government’s commitment to childcare and activities for children and young people through school holiday periods.</p> <p>Ensure funded Early Learning Childcare (ELC) is free at the point of delivery for parents.</p>
Transforming our economy	<p>Continue to seek solutions to the workforce challenges for employers and employees in the third sector, where a low wage economy contributes to in-work poverty</p> <p>Work with, and support Additional Special Needs (ASN) young people to better understand their World of Work to overcome the barriers they may encounter.</p>
Part B: maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs	

<p>A transformational approach to people and place</p>	<p>Develop a plan to transform whole family support services using funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund</p> <p>Deliver Scottish Borders Housing Association's (SBHA) Wellbeing Framework to ensure Tenants can access the support and intervention they need to sustain their tenancy by identifying barriers and the correct pathway for support.</p>
<p>Enhanced support through social security</p>	<p>Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) will continue to provide in-house financial inclusion support and signposting to relevant services including child specific welfare support, access to food resources and clothing grants</p> <p>Health visitors will continue to ask about money worries at every contact and refer clients to the Financial Inclusion Team where required</p>
<p>Income maximisation</p>	<p>Extend the eligibility for school clothing grants to encourage take up and link to other benefits such as Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grants</p> <p>CABx continue to offer a benefit check to clients which highlights any eligibility to benefits</p>
<p>Access to warm and affordable homes</p>	<p>Provide fuel poverty support including Borders Housing Network (BHN) distribution of Scottish Government Fuel Support Funding and Fuel Bank vouchers</p> <p>Review and update the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in order to prevent families from becoming homeless</p> <p>SBHA will build 300 homes over the next 7 years</p>
<p>Part C: supporting the next generation to thrive</p>	
<p>Best start to life</p>	<p>Our Early Years Centres continue to lead on a programme of activities with children and families. They focus on family meals, physical activity, practical and emotional support and community connections.</p>
<p>Supporting children to learn and grow</p>	<p>Promote the value of youth work and maximise the number of youth work opportunities available to young people</p> <p>Continue to implement the Equity Strategy to address inequalities in attainment and achievement</p>
<p>Post school transitions</p>	<p>Continue to offer modern apprenticeship opportunities</p>

	<p>across a range of services</p> <p>Delivery of the Young Person’s Guarantee by supporting appropriately aged young people and creating opportunities for them</p>
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Table 2 – Sample of 2022/23 Actions

Conclusion

In accordance with The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Annual Report for 2021/22 describes the activities undertaken and planned locally to contribute towards Child Poverty targets set out in the Act.

It is clear from the Annual Progress Report for 2021/22 that Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders is an important issue which Partners take seriously, as shown by their actions, and we are grateful for their contributions to this report as well as their actions on the ground to make a difference to children and their families.

As well as the progress made in 2021/22, we are pleased to set out actions for 2022/23. The new Scottish Government national delivery plan for 2022-26 demonstrates a clear commitment to tackling child poverty both nationally and locally. This Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan recognises that national commitment and provides an insight into the work that Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Partners all do to play their part.

Working with the Community Planning Partnership, and recognising their contribution through the actions within their four priority themes, we will continue to raise the profile of, and tackle child poverty in the Scottish Borders through 2022/23 and beyond.

Appendices

1(a) - Local Child Poverty Context and Statistics

1(b) - 2021/22 Progress Report

1(c) – 2021/22 Case Studies

1(d) - Challenge Poverty Week 2021

1(e) - 2022/23 Child Poverty Actions