
SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL CHILD POVERTY REPORT 2021/22 AND ACTION PLAN 2022/23

Report by Director - Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

29 September 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

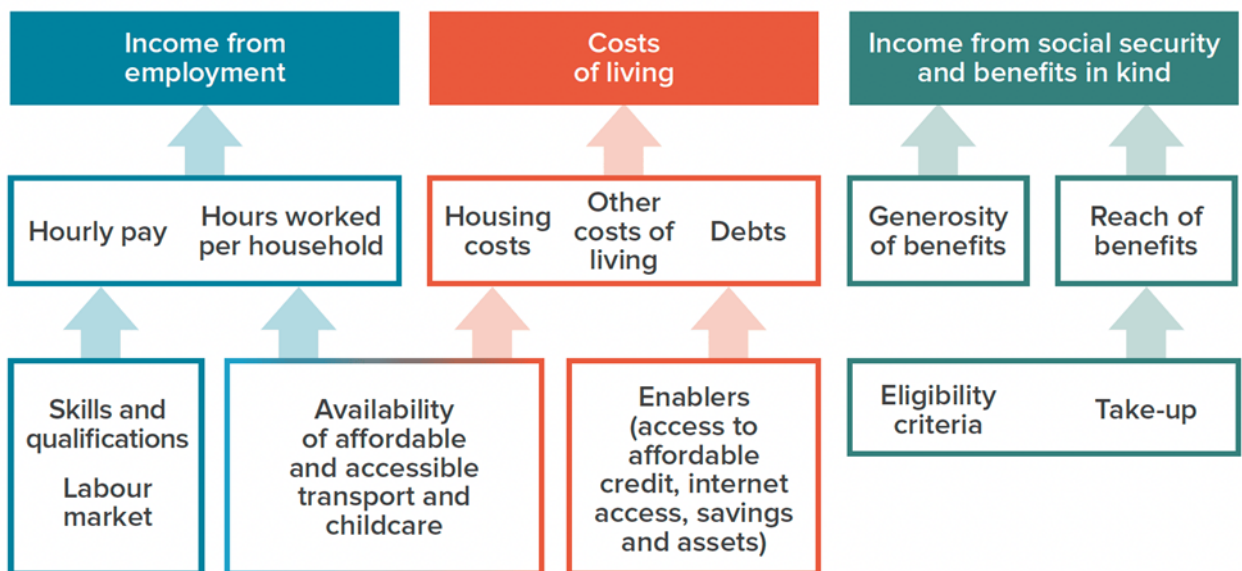
- 1.1 This report presents the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report for 2021/22 and Action Plan for 2022/23 (Appendix 1) for endorsement before submission to Scottish Government.**
- 1.2 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report and an Annual Progress Report.
- 1.3 This report provides Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Government with an update on progress made in the Scottish Borders against activities within the Action Plan for 2021/22 and sets out planned actions in 2022/23.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council endorse the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report for 2021/22 and Action Plan for 2022/23 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 each year. The annual progress report should describe activities undertaken and planned locally to contribute towards tackling child poverty.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The direct drivers of poverty fall in to three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. We remain focused on actions around these themes, as summarised below:



4 NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 Scottish Government’s new tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out 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, through actions in: a strengthened employment offer to parents, connectivity and childcare to enable access to employment and transforming our economy.

Part B: maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs, through actions in: a transformational approach

to people and place, enhanced support through social security, income maximisation and access to warm and affordable homes.

Part C: supporting the next generation to thrive, focused on: best start to life, supporting children to grow and learn and post school transitions.

4.2 The national delivery plan continues to focus on supporting families at greatest risk of poverty. Almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within these six priority family types:

1. Lone parents
2. Families with a disabled child or parent
3. Families with 3+ children
4. Minority ethnic families
5. Families where the youngest child is under 1
6. Mothers aged under 25

4.3 Key funding is set out in Best Start, Bright Futures. Funding is subject to relevant policy development and subject to the agreement of COSLA Leaders.

5 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILD POVERTY IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

5.1 Background Papers

Extensive background papers comprising of progress against actions, new actions, data and case studies were presented to the Community Planning Strategic Board on 8 September 2022. These papers demonstrate the vast range of activity being undertaken across partners to alleviate child poverty, and can be accessed here.

[Agenda for Community Planning Strategic Board on Thursday, 8th September, 2022, 2.00 pm - Scottish Borders Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

5.2 Child Poverty Data for the Scottish Borders

A selection of data is available at local authority level which helps us to monitor child poverty, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups. We have chosen to show the data with comparison to Dumfries and Galloway as well as Scotland. The comparison to Dumfries and Galloway allows for a South of Scotland perspective on child poverty. Highlights include:

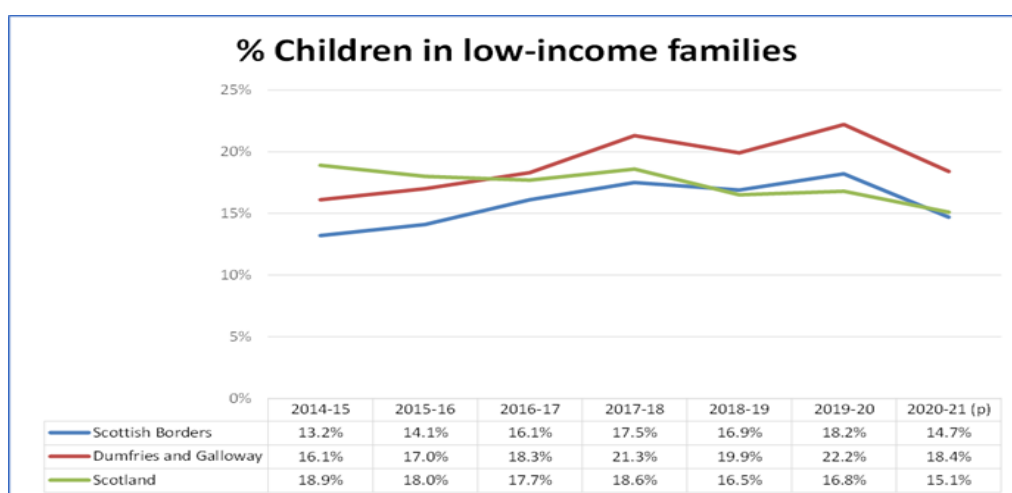
- a) Our children in low income families (before housing costs) has dropped from 18.2% in 2019/20 to 14.7% in 2020/21, similar to the trend for Scotland.
- b) One in five children still live in poverty (after housing costs) in the Scottish Borders
- c) The percentage of children living in relative low income families ranges from 7.9% in the Tweeddale West Ward to 23.0% in the Hawick and

Denholm Ward.

- d) 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.
- e) The cost of living crisis is now affecting the area with more families struggling to heat their homes or feed their children
- f) 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.
- g) In 2021, 25% of employment in the Scottish Borders was in 'lower paid' occupation.

5.3 Children in Low Income Families in the Scottish Borders

- (a) 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)

- (b) The UK Government introduced a £20 uplift to Universal Credit (and some other means tested benefits such as Tax Credits) from April 2020 to help people on a low income through the Covid pandemic. The Scottish Government also introduced the Scottish Child Payment in February 2021. It was a £10 payment payable to low income families with a child under 6 years of age. These two changes contributed to a reduction in child poverty in Scotland over the financial year 2020/2021.
- (c) The £20 Universal Credit uplift was withdrawn in October 2021 which is likely to have a negative impact on child poverty levels over the whole UK for 2021/2022.
- (d) The Scottish Child Payment increased to £20 per week in April 2022. It is also due to be extended to children under 16 years of age by the end of 2022 and the amount will increase to £25 per

week. This means that a low income family with three children under 16 could receive £75 per week when the changes are introduced. This is likely to have a positive impact on child poverty levels in Scotland for 2022/2023.

5.4 The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index

- (a) 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). The SB CPI provides an indication of child poverty levels based on four components - Children in Low Income Families (**CiLIF**), Free School Meals (**FSM**), Clothing Grant (**CLG**) and Educational Maintenance Allowance (**EMA16+**).
- (b) The table below shows the results for the Scottish Borders from 2017-2021:

| 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% |

- (c) 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.

6 WHAT WE ARE DOING ABOUT CHILD POVERTY IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

6.1 Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan

Appendix 1 provides details of the range of activities and actions being carried out across the Scottish Borders to alleviate child poverty by Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and key partners.

Various local plans also make a contribution, including the Scottish Borders Council Plan 2022-23, the Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Integrated Children and Young People’s Plan 2021-23, our Children’s Rights Report 2021-23 and the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership Priority Themes.

6.2 Anti-Poverty Strategy – Cost of Living Support

Scottish Borders Council approved a report at their Council Meeting on 25 August 2022 on support for the Cost of Living crisis. A financial support package of £1.2m has been established along with strategic and operational multi-agency groups to respond to the needs of communities. An immediate allocation of a warm clothing payment of £100 will be made to each child entitled to either free school meals or clothing grants. This will benefit around 2350 children in the Scottish Borders.

<https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s67382/Item%20No.%207%20-%20Cost%20of%20Living%20Crisis%20Response%20Report.pdf>

6.3 2021/22 Highlights

Good progress has been made against actions set out to tackle child poverty in 2021/22 by Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Partners. Highlights include:

- (a) 20 families have engaged with the Intensive Family Support Service over the year. As a result, 5 adults have entered employment.
- (b) 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.
- (c) The Borders Housing Network dispersed funds to Housing Associations in the Scottish Borders to support tenants in fuel debt
- (d) Summer Activity camps averaged 80% occupancy with 62% of places free of charge for targeted children and young people.
- (e) £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.
- (f) 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.

6.4 2022/23 Actions

Services, Partners, and other relevant organisations have contributed to the 2022/23 Action Plan. A broad range of activity is set out in the Action Plan which is aligned to the national delivery plan [Best Start, Bright Futures](#). Highlights include:

- (a) Ensure funded Early Learning Childcare (ELC) is free at the point of delivery for parents.
- (b) Run summer camps and volunteering for young people, allowing parents to be able to work a full day.
- (c) 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.
- (d) Continue to encourage partners, local employers and suppliers to adopt the real living wage

- (e) Develop a plan to transform whole family support services using funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- (f) Review and update the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in order to prevent families from becoming homeless.
- (g) Continue to offer modern apprenticeship opportunities across a range of services.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Significant funding is attributed to tackling child poverty within the national delivery plan and our children and families will benefit as a result. Budgets and funding are detailed in Appendix 1.

7.2 Risk and Mitigations

(a) Risks associated with this report relate to the deepening problem of the cost of living crisis. Families already experiencing poverty before the cost of living crisis are likely to face further difficulties and new families will be identified as in poverty.

(b) Progress is outlined to alleviate child poverty in the Scottish Borders, and actions set out for 2022/23 show the response being made to the unprecedented challenge facing the Local Authority, Health Board and other partners due to the cost of living crisis.

7.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

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

7.4 Sustainable Development Goals

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

- a) Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms** – local action is reported in both the 2021/22 Annual Report and the 2022/23 Action Plan which contribute to this goal.
- b) Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture** – local action is reported in both the 2021/22 Annual Report and the 2022/23 Action Plan which contribute to this goal. Actions focus on access to food as well as food growing initiatives.
- c) Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages** – activities are outlined which contribute to healthy lives e.g. 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.
- d) Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all** – the Scottish Attainment Challenge provides schools with funds to design programmes to close the poverty related attainment gap. The cost of the school day is

constantly under review. The No One Left Behind project ensures that all children have a positive destination.

- e) **Goal 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all** – housing tenants are supported with energy debt, given money advice and budgeting tips. Affordable homes are built and planned for tenants, and vulnerable groups are identified and supported with specific issues.
- f) **Goal 8 - 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.
- g) **Goal 10 – Reduce inequalities** – local action is reported in both the 2021/22 Annual Report and the 2022/23 Action Plan which contribute to this goal. Actions aim to identify and tackle poverty and exclusion.

7.5 **Climate Change**

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

7.6 **Rural Proofing**

There are no rural proofing implications contained in this report.

7.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

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

7.8 **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.

8 **CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), 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
Director Resilient Communities

Signature

Author(s)

| Name | Designation and Contact Number |
|------------------|---|
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Background Papers: n/a

Previous Minute Reference: Community Planning Strategic Board 08.09.22

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