
**SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL CHILD POVERTY REPORT 2022/23
AND ACTION PLAN 2023/24**

Report by Director – Resilient Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

29 June 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

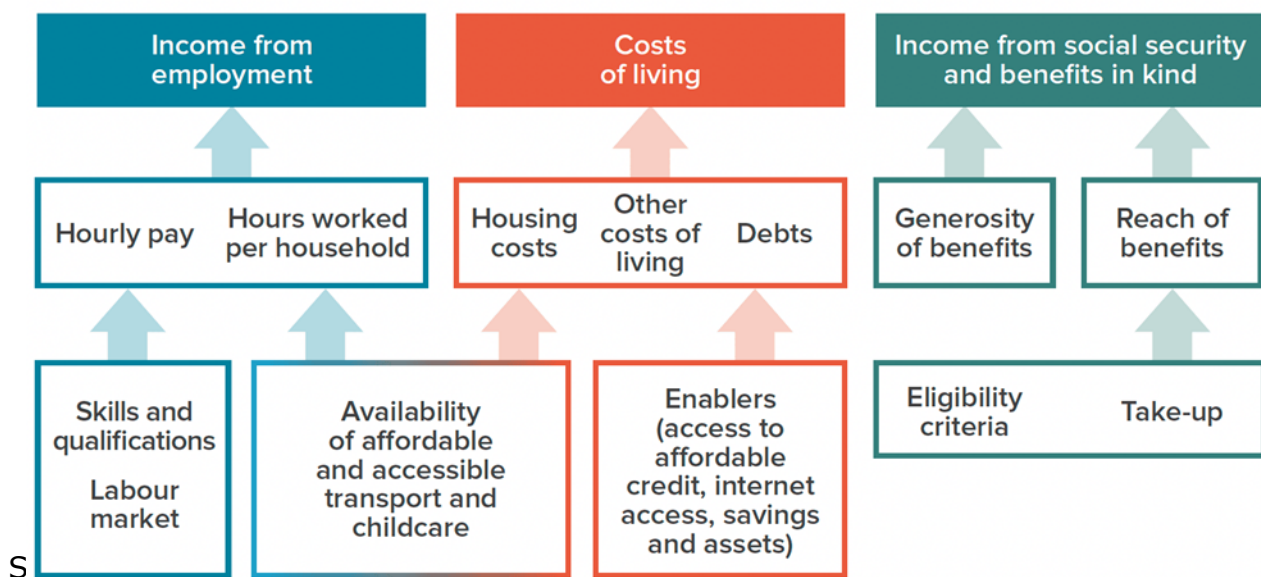
- 1.1 This report presents the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report for 2022/23 and Action Plan for 2023/24 (Appendix 1) for noting before submission to Scottish Government.**
- 1.2 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child 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 2022/23 and sets out planned actions for 2023/24.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council note the Scottish Borders Local Child Poverty Report for 2022/23 and Action Plan for 2023/24 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 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 focuses on: immediate action to support families now; sustained action to create the integrated support that families need to move into work; changing the system to provide the support parents need; and investing long term in both children's outcomes and economic transformation that will create a fairer, more equal Scotland. This Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan aligns with 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:



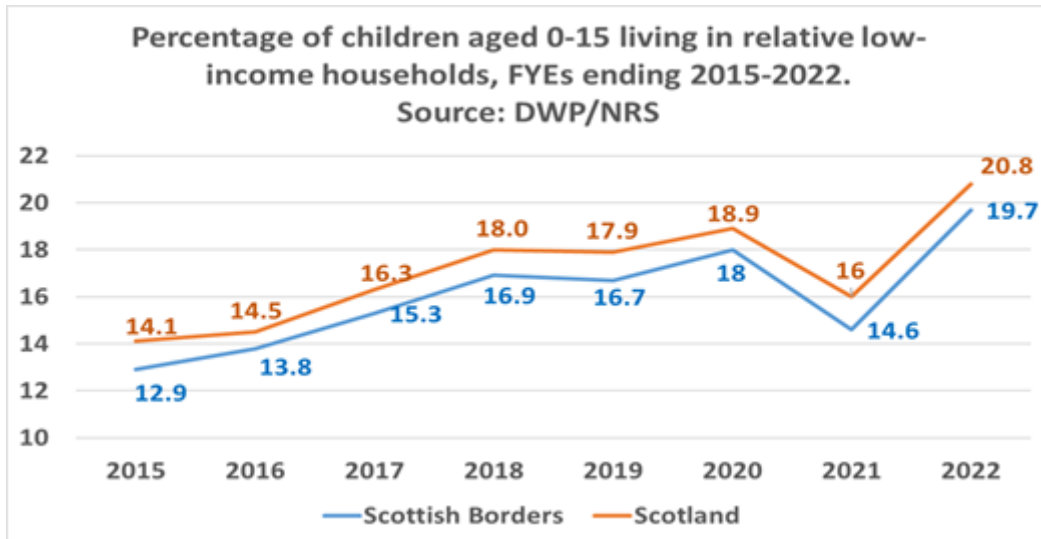
- 3.4 The national delivery plan continues to focus on supporting families at greatest risk of poverty. Almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within these six priority family types:

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

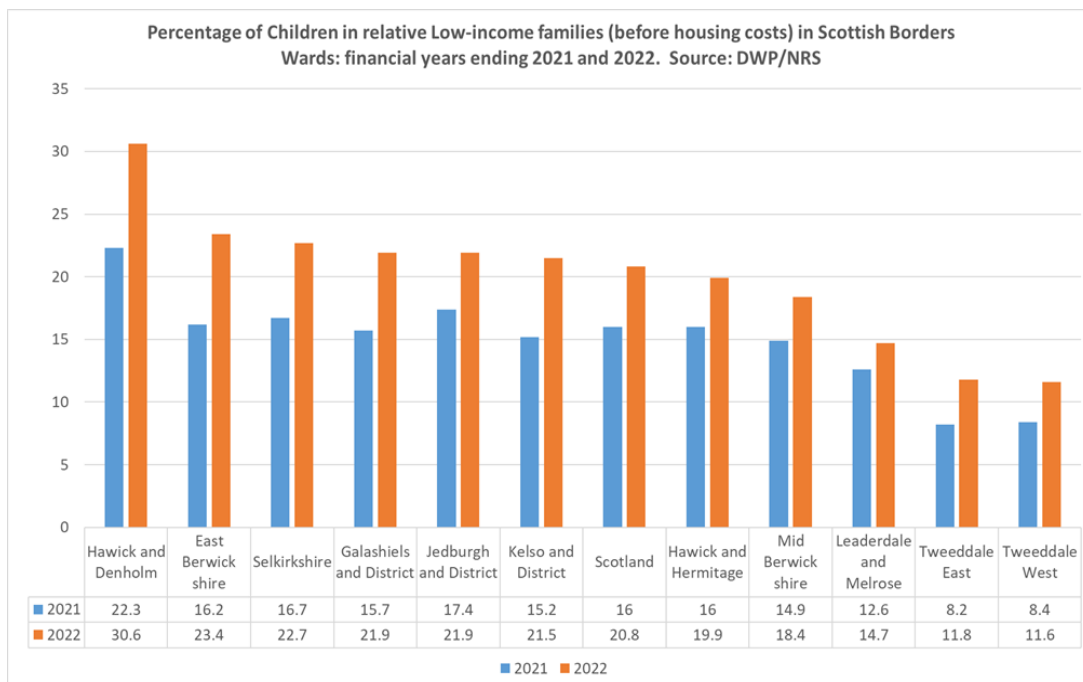
4 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILD POVERTY IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

4.1 Appendix 1A shows a selection of data at local authority level which helps us to monitor child poverty, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups. Significant highlights outlined below indicate the challenge we face in tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

4.2 Our children in low income families (before housing costs) has risen from **14.6%** in 2020/21 to **19.7%** in 2021/22, similar to the trend for Scotland. The rise is likely to be a direct result of the cost of living crisis.



4.3 Percentages of children in low income families (before housing costs) in Scottish Borders Wards ranges from 11.6% in Tweeddale West to 30.6% in Hawick and Denholm.



- 4.4 In 2022, the median gross weekly pay for full time workers working in the Scottish Borders (workplace based) was **£571.30**. This is **£69.20** less than the **£640.50** for full-time workers working elsewhere in Scotland. This is 89% of the Scottish figure.
- 4.5 There has been a sharp rise in workless family households since Covid-19. This indicates that families in the Scottish Borders are finding it more difficult than ever to find work (or possibly affordable childcare) that suits their circumstances.
- 4.6 The percentage of employees aged 18+ earning less than the real living wage in 2021/22 was **21.7%**. This is notably higher than the Scottish average of **14.4%**.
- 4.7 The table below shows the number and proportion of households in the Scottish Borders receiving Universal Credit compared to Scotland. Overall the Scottish Borders has a lower proportion of households receiving UC (12.9%) compared to 16.1% for Scotland. In the Scottish Borders there were 3,015 households claiming the 'Child Entitlement' or 5.4% compared to 6.5% for Scotland.

Universal Credit Households November 2022 (provisional figures)	Scottish Borders No of Households	% of All Occupied Households	
		Scottish Borders	Scotland
All Occupied Households	55,557		
All Universal Credit Households (UCH)	7,193	12.9	16.1
UCH with Children	3,140	5.7	6.7
UCH claiming Child Entitlement	3,015	5.4	6.5
UCH Lone Parent	2,115	3.8	5.0
UCH with 3+ Children	613	1.1	1.2
UCH with Child Under Age 1	273	0.5	0.5
UCH with Children - Child Disability Entitlement	275	0.5	0.7
UCH with Children - Adult Disability Entitlement	443	0.8	1.0

Source: DWP/NRS

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

5.1 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.

5.2 Progress in 2022/23

Work undertaken to address child poverty in 2022/23 by Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Partners is shown in Appendix 1B. Good progress has been made against actions set out, and are shown in alignment to the national delivery plan [Best Start, Bright Futures](#). Highlights include:

- a) Actions and progress around employability are wide and varied. There continues to be a strong focus on parental employability and employment opportunities for modern apprentices, as well as partnership work on positive destinations, volunteering, and learning and skills development.
- b) Work has continued to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, starting from early learning settings, and a development plan was agreed with Education Scotland to support pupils impacted by poverty to enjoy the same experiences at school as their peers, through a framework to tackle the cost of the school day.
- c) Partners have supported families with benefit checks. Midwives and Health visitors continue to refer expectant and new mothers, and this has resulted in an uplift in benefits of £1.2m in 2022/23.
- d) Foodbanks and larders have been supported and various food projects have continued.
- e) Housing Associations and other partners have operated tenancy sustainment services for those at risk of eviction. Berwickshire Housing Association have a new Tenancy Sustainability Team which provides financial inclusion, fuel and food support, as well as access to mental wellbeing help.

Case studies shown at Appendix 1C provide further in-depth detail of specific projects undertaken in relation to child poverty in 2022/23.

5.3 **Cost of Living Support**

Multi-agency strategic and operational groups continue to meet to respond to the cost of living crisis. A financial support package of £1.2m was established in August 2022 to respond to the needs of communities, and the groups have considered and approved a range of proposals to help families. A range of support was put in place quickly, including a warm clothing payment of £100 to each child entitled to free school meals or clothing grants, approx. 2,695 children have benefitted.

Further proposals have been approved which have directly and indirectly benefitted children and families. For example, YouthBorders managed the Warm and Well: Youth Work Collaborative where £90k was made available to deliver additional youth work activities or enhance provision to keep young people warm and well over winter. The funding was specifically for young people and families experiencing financial hardship, poverty or deprivation. A total of 1,488 young people directly benefitted and 5,756 people indirectly benefitted from this funding (parents, carers, siblings etc).

Further information on support given to help with the cost of living is set out in Appendix 1.

5.4 Breakfast Clubs

Scottish Borders Council - £60,000 has been allocated from the Council's Cost of Living Support Fund, to support the setting up, continuation or provision of a free breakfast club offer across the Scottish Borders. Nineteen schools were successful in their application for funding in addition to one community-based group. Breakfast clubs are now starting up in these settings with support from Public Health, who are offering nutritional advice on how to set up a breakfast club in line with Scottish Government guidelines.

Borders College - Since January 2023, the College has committed to offering students a free breakfast and this will continue for the remainder of the academic year alongside the regular drop-in 'Wellbeing' cafes.

5.5 Get into Summer 2022

Through the summer holiday period of 2022 (4 July – 16 August 2022), Live Borders worked in partnership with Scottish Borders Council and other key providers to deliver the "Get into Summer" programme. Scottish Government allocated funding to provide an enhanced/new summer holiday provision that allowed children from low-income families to be more fully engaged in opportunities through the holiday period. The funding allowed Live Borders to deliver a comprehensive programme of sport, physical activity, and cultural opportunities and continued to offer free places for identified children through discount codes and in some instances, making whole offers free of charge.

Activities included; a variety of holiday camps in all school clusters (multi activity and sport), a Family Activity Pass for families referred by professional staff, free cinema access for targeted groups and individuals, a range of museum and galleries activities, library workshops, and a partnership disability camp with a local third sector group (Borders Additional Needs Group).

Further details are set out in Appendix 1.

5.6 2023/24 Actions

Community Planning Partners and other relevant organisations have contributed to the 2023/24 Action Plan as shown in Appendix 1E. 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) Employability actions include working with parents to signpost them for help with childcare to enable them to gain employment, partners working together to increase skills and the likelihood of young people impacted by poverty achieving a positive destination, and employability training and learning opportunities to support young people and parents into employment.
- b) Education services will continue to use Strategic Equity Funding to narrow the poverty attainment gap in pedagogy, curriculum development and learning and teaching assessment.

- c) Tweeddale Youth Action will signpost specialist support, including mental health and drug and alcohol services to young people attending youth club
- d) Scottish Borders Council's Homelessness Team will support families to secure settled, mainstream housing as part of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- e) Borders College will continue to offer students a free breakfast, supermarket vouchers, lunch/breakfast bars and provide regular drop-in 'wellbeing' cafes.
- f) Partners will continue to provide School Holiday Programmes.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

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

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) Risks associated with this report relate to the level of child poverty across the Scottish Borders and the difficulties caused by the cost of living crisis.
- b) Appendix 1B outlines the progress made to alleviate child poverty in the Scottish Borders, and actions set out for 2023/24 (Appendix 1E) show the response being made by the Local Authority, Health Board and other partners to address issues going forward.

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An integrated impact assessment has been carried out for this report and is shown in Appendices 2 and 3. 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:

- a) **Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms** – local action is reported in both the 2022/23 Annual Report and the 2023/24 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 2022/23 Annual Report and the 2023/24 Action Plan which contribute to this goal. Food conversations are continuing and contribute to actions from the Anti-Poverty Action Plan. Cost of Living

funding support has been awarded to the Cyrenians Group who are providing food larders and cook clubs across the Scottish Borders.

- 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 such as 'Get into Summer' with Live Borders. 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 No One Left Behind project ensures that all children have a positive destination. Specific 'core' stretch aims are submitted to Scottish Government, annually for improving outcomes for all while closing the poverty-related attainment gap. SBC Education Improvement Plan 2022-2023 sets out key strategic improvement priorities for our schools and settings.
- 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. Collaborative working continues with CABx, Changeworks & Home Energy Scotland to identify fuel poverty, co-ordinating referrals, advice and support.
- 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. Scottish Borders Council is committed to encouraging the wider adoption of the real Living Wage by partners, local employers and suppliers. Scottish Borders Council has also included Modern Apprentices within the commitment to being a Real Living Wage employer going forward.
- g) **Goal 10 – Reduce inequalities** – local action is reported in both the 2022/23 Annual Report and the 2023/24 Action Plan which contribute to this goal. Actions aim to identify and tackle poverty and exclusion. The Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out ways 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.

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 Acting Chief Financial Officer, 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

Author(s)

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Janice Robertson	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager, 01835 824000

Background Papers: n/a

Previous Minute Reference: Community Planning Strategic Board 08.09.22
Community Planning Strategic Board 08.06.23

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 0SA, 01835 824000, jrobertson@scotborders.gov.uk