

**Child Poverty Report 2021-22**  
& Action Plan 2022-23



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath



# Contents

<b>Foreword and Introduction</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>What is Child Poverty?</b>	<b>x</b>
National context and scale of the challenge	x
The local picture: data and governance	x
<b>Understanding Inequalities – Our Approach</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>How we're tackling child poverty in North Ayrshire and future actions</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Future North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Summary of actions for 2022-23</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Summary of Performance Indicators</b>	<b>x</b>



North Ayrshire  
Community Planning Partnership



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Air a Tuath

# Foreword and Introduction

**In North Ayrshire we are fully committed to becoming a fairer and more equal society. Our shared strategic approaches shape everything we do and we focus our work on tackling inequalities and creating a society where no one lives in poverty, where the economy is inclusive and where everyone has the same life chances to live fulfilling and healthy lives. Our ambition is shared by all our Community Planning Partners and is demonstrated in our partnership working and joint commitment to the priorities and actions outlined in this report. Our multi-agency partnership approaches are recognised as a key strength in North Ayrshire.**

Our new annual Child Poverty Action Plan is key to our commitment to mitigating the current and lasting impacts of the pandemic and to demonstrating our determination to reduce child poverty in the longer term in a climate of a cost-of-living crisis with rising food and fuel costs.

This plan should be considered as a development of previous plans and therefore includes updates on the incremental work we are engaged in as well next steps in that journey.

Notable achievements this year include further progress in our cost of the school day work and collaborative approaches to continue to address the poverty related attainment gap. Innovative ways of tackling the rising cost of home energy for residents have been developed, funded by the Council's investment fund. Innovative employability initiatives continue to be developed with partners, including health visitors and the third sector. The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) continues to innovate in relation to the Pan-Ayrshire

Infant, Children and Young People's Transformational Change Programme Board (ICYPTCPB) which provides the partnership vehicle to support and improve the health and social outcomes for infants, children and young people in Ayrshire and Arran.

However, the stark reality is that child poverty is still increasing in North Ayrshire. To accomplish any of our aspirations we need a step-change in how we work address it. As a result, we will this year establish a new board in North Ayrshire to tackle child poverty, chaired by the Leader of the Council and supported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran (NHSAAA), the HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning partners. This approach will reflect proposals in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan and lead to a more effective whole system approach to our work. It will ensure residents are involved in holistic ways of working, which will reduce the complexity of support available for our children, young people and their families.

**Claire Burden**  
CEO, NHSAAA

**Marie Burns**  
Leader of North Ayrshire Council

**Craig Hatton**  
CEO of North Ayrshire Council



## What is Child Poverty?

The Child Poverty Action Group (Scotland) defines poverty as follows:

“Child poverty means growing up in families without the resources to ‘obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities’ which are the norm in 21st century Scotland (Townsend, 1979). Children are considered to be living in poverty if they live in households with less than 60% of median household income. This is the key measure used by UK and Scottish Government.”



From the latest figures (2019-20) a family is considered as in poverty if, after housing costs, they are living on:

# £333

**Less than £333 a week or £17,400 a year** for a single person with children aged between five and 14 years.

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# £450

**Less than £450 or £23,400 a year** for a couple with children aged between five and 14 years.

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## What are the effects of child poverty?

Experiencing child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children. For example, Scottish Government [statistics](#) show:

# 61%

**Of low-income families with children in Scotland can't afford** to make regular savings of £10 a month or more.

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# 51%

**Report that they don't have a small amount of money** to spend each week on themselves.

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# 10%

**Can't afford to have friends of their children visit** for tea or a snack once a fortnight.

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## National context and scale of the challenge

### Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty is an overarching strategic duty on public bodies (including local authorities). It has interactions with the Equality Act 2010; Scotland Act 2016; and came into force on 1 April 2018. The Duty requires that: *“An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.”*

### Local Child Poverty Action Plans and Reports

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report, as soon as practicable after the end of each reporting year.

### Scottish Government’s Delivery Plan

The Scottish Government has [published](#) its second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan due under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, outlining actions for the period 2022-2026:

*“Best Start, Bright Futures sets out how partners will work together to deliver on Scotland’s national mission to tackle child poverty. It is not solely a plan for the Scottish Government, it is a plan for all of Scotland, recognising the contribution all parts of society must make to deliver the change needed for children and families.”*

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 to 2026 \(March 2022\)](#)



- **Part A** focuses on providing the opportunities and support needed to enter, sustain and progress in work – including a new employability offer to parents and improvements to the support structures needed including through childcare and transport.
- **Part B** focuses on maximising the support available for families to lead dignified lives and meet their basic needs – actions include a transformational approach to people and places, social security and income maximisation and delivery of warm and affordable homes.
- **Part C** focuses on supporting the next generation to thrive – delivered through a range of interventions underpinned by GIRFEC, the Promise, tackling the poverty related attainment gap, and through investment in the Young Person’s Guarantee.



## Child Poverty Targets

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set out four measures of relative poverty and statutory targets for Scotland to reach by 2030. This establishes Scotland as the only part of the UK with statutory income targets on child poverty.

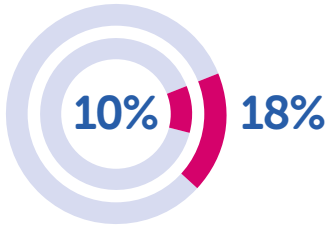
Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 to 2026 sets out the following updated ambitious targets for reducing child poverty:

“In large part due to the actions we have taken to date, together with those set out in this plan, using current projections we anticipate that around 17% of children will live in relative poverty in 2023, with over 60,000 fewer children living in poverty since the Act was passed in 2017. Whilst economic modelling cannot precisely account for what may happen, particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, inflation rises and increasing international instability, we anticipate on the basis of current information that over 50,000 fewer children will live in absolute poverty compared to 2017, with around 16% of children projected to live in absolute poverty in 2023. However, as the impact of the economic situation becomes clearer, this Government will continue to consider further actions required over the lifetime of this plan to achieve these targets, to support families, and break the cycle of child poverty.”

Best Start, Bright Futures:  
Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))

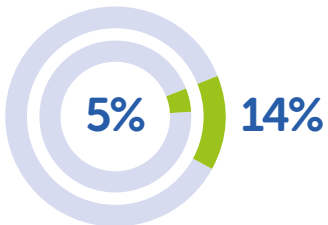


## Figure 1: National Child Poverty Targets



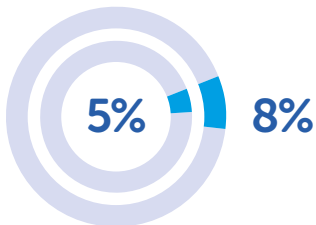
**Fewer than 18% of children living in families in relative poverty in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 10% by 2030.** This means fewer than one in ten children living in households on low incomes by 2030, compared to the average UK household.

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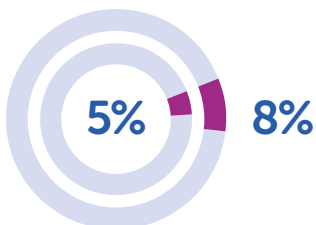
**Fewer than 14% of children living in families in absolute poverty in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in low income households where living standards are not increasing by 2030.

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**Fewer than 8% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% 2030.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in low income households where living standards are not increasing by 2030.

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**Fewer than 8% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% 2030.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in low income households where living standards are not increasing by 2030.

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Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))

## National Context

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports:

“Around one in five people in Scotland live in poverty after taking account of housing costs and this figure has been rising since 2011–14. Deep poverty (a household with less than 50% of the median income adjusted for a household size) followed a similar decline between 1998–01 to around 2009–12 but has steadily increased since then. Deep poverty has now reached similar levels to those found 20 years ago with 14% of people in Scotland well below what is needed to make ends meet.”

[Poverty in Scotland 2021 |](#)

[Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(JRF\)](#)



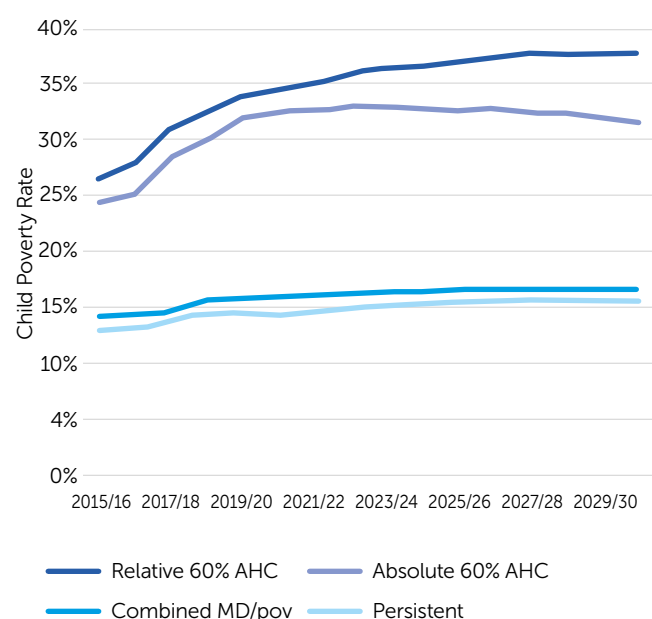
In 2017–20, for all children in Scotland, each of the current poverty measures sat at more than double their 2031 target.

In 2017–20:

- Almost one in four children were living in relative poverty (After Housing Costs) (target is fewer than one in ten)
- More than one in five children were living in absolute poverty (target is fewer than one in twenty)
- 13% of children lived in material deprivation (target is fewer than 5%).

Persistent poverty is measured over a different timeline but in the period between 2015–19, 16% of children in Scotland were trapped in poverty for at least three in four years, more than three times the target of fewer than 5%.

**Figure 2:**  
Projected Child Poverty Levels  
2015/16 to 2030/31



The chart above (Figure 2) shows the projected trend of child poverty for each target. By 2030/31, it is estimated that 38% of children will be in relative poverty, 32% of children will be in absolute poverty, 17% of children will be in combined low income and material deprivation and 16% of children will be in persistent poverty. The key reason for these projected rises is the impact of welfare reform, primarily the benefit freeze and the two children limit on tax credits.

The Scottish Government recognises that in the context of these projections the child poverty reduction targets within the Act are ambitious. However, Scottish Ministers are clear that in the current environment, which threatens to make many families worse off, there is a strong case for intensive action at national and local level to tackle child poverty.

### Who is affected?

The Scottish Government identified a number of groups most at risk of child poverty in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018).

These are children living in:

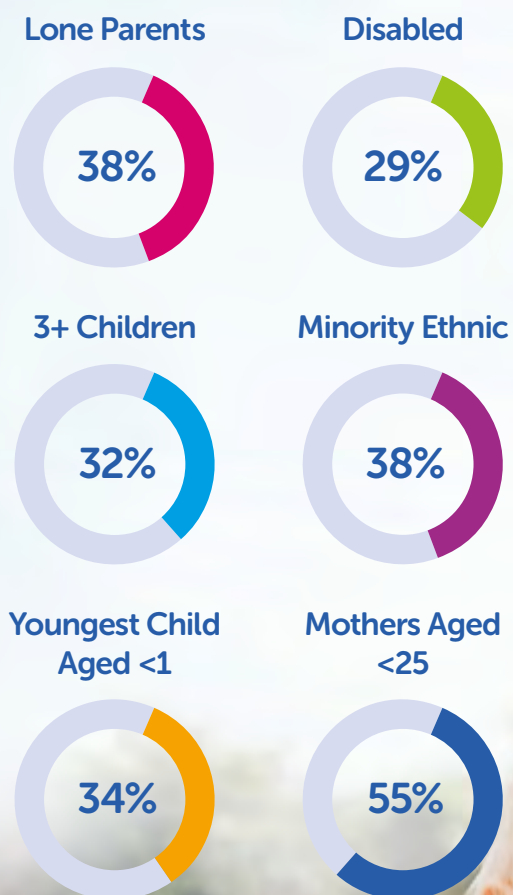
- Single parent households;
- Households where an adult and/or child is disabled;
- Households with three or more children – large households;
- Minority ethnic households;
- Households with a child under one year old; and
- Households where the mother is under 25 years of age.



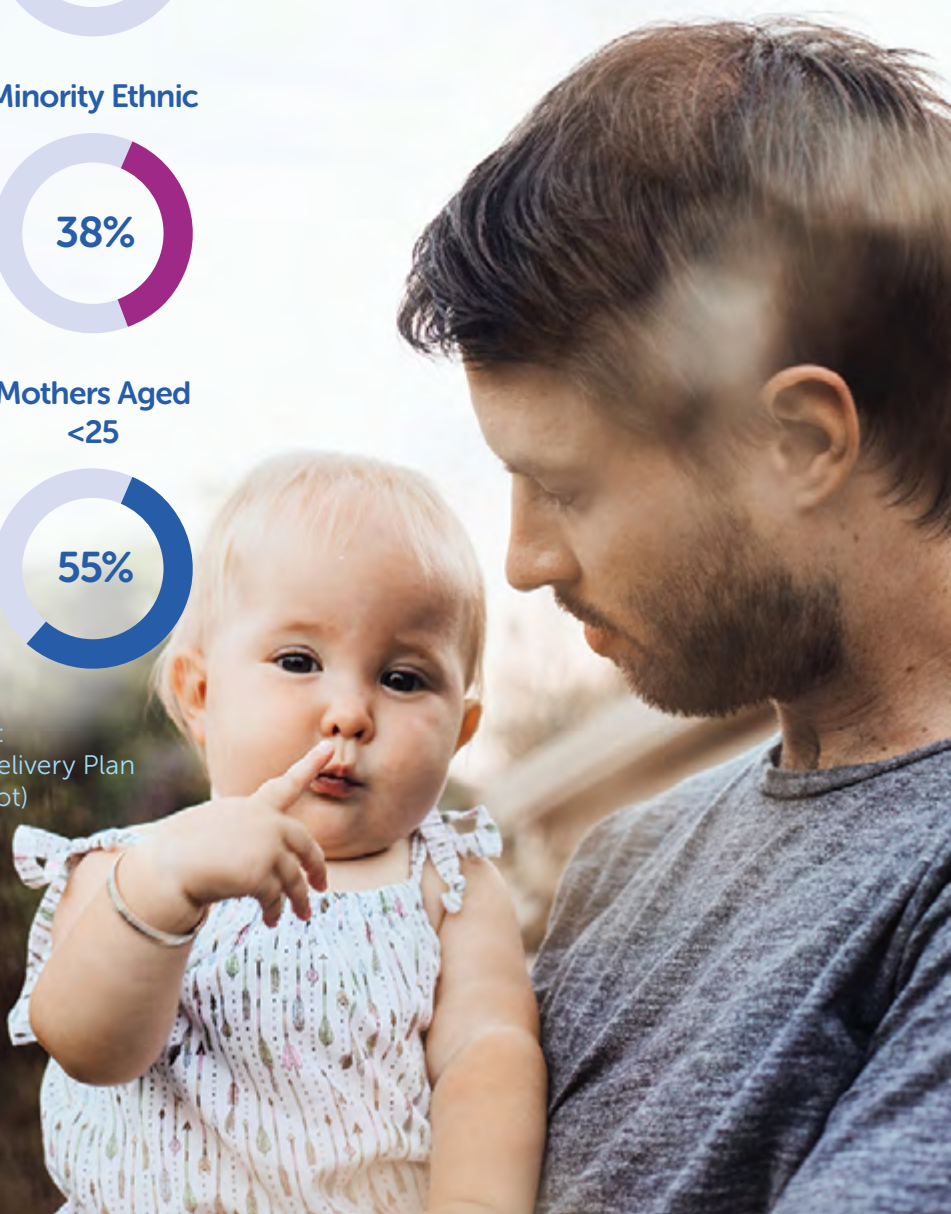
Figure 3 below shows the proportion of children living in poverty in Scotland by the priority group status of their household.

### Figure 3: Priority Groups

The priority groups are households with children that are known to be at high risk of poverty. These groups have been identified by the Scottish Government using available data, but we know this does not cover all groups at higher risk of poverty.



Best Start, Bright Futures:  
Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan  
2022-2026 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))

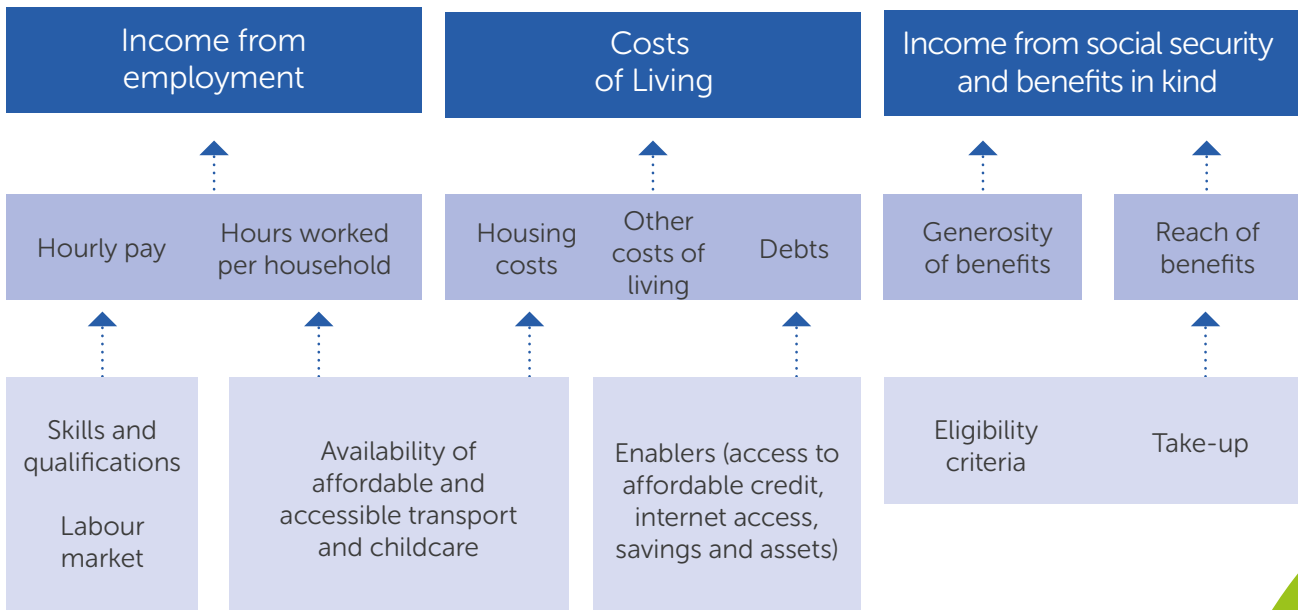




## What are the drivers of child poverty?

The direct drivers of poverty fall into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. Our plan is based on these three themes.

**Figure 4:**  
Direct Drivers of Poverty



Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))



## What causes child poverty in Scotland?

According to CPAG Scotland:

Child poverty is caused by a range of factors which work together and result in inadequate household resources. Factors which contribute to insufficient income include:

- Inadequate income from employment
- Inadequate income from social security benefits
- Living Costs

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Poverty in Scotland 2021 report highlighted that being in a household where no one is working is one of the biggest risk factors of being in poverty – and support for people on low incomes is often fragmented and very difficult to access.

In-work child poverty rates are closely linked to the number of adults in work in the family and their hours of work. Child poverty rates are very low for children in families where two parents are at work, with at least one in full-time work. Families with a single earner or with only part-time workers experience much higher poverty rates. Children in lone-parent families have high poverty rates, even when their parent works full time. In lone-parent families working full-time poverty has risen from 13% in 1996/97 to 22% in 2018/19. Between 1998/99 and 2010/11, the child poverty rate in lone-parent families working part-time more than halved from 52% to 22%. It has since risen back to 41%.

Low-income families receive a greater proportion of their overall household income from welfare payments meaning earnings growth has reduced overall impact and may explain why rates of in-work poverty have increased in recent years. Alongside this, changes to UK benefits systems have negatively impacted low-income families, including freezes to working-age benefits and tax credits and the introduction of Universal Credit.

## The Local Picture: Data and Governance

### North Ayrshire Strategic Context

Figure 5 below shows the links in our Children's Services Planning approach and how tackling child poverty is governed in North Ayrshire.

### Figure 5: North Ayrshire Children's Services Planning Dashboard

#### Children's Services Planning 2022

National Performance Framework

Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022-30

North Ayrshire  
Council Plan

North Ayrshire Health  
and Social Plan 2022/30:  
Caring Together

NHSAAA Strategic Plan  
in Development:  
Caring for Ayrshire

Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-23  
(annual publication with new three-year strategy 2023-26)

North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2020-23  
(published every three years)

Children's Rights Report 2020-23  
(published every three years)

CLD Strategic Plan 2022-25

Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy 2021-25  
(published every four years)

HSCP Children's Services Plan

Annual Education Plan 2022-23

Scottish Attainment Challenge Strategy 2022-26

## Poverty in North Ayrshire – what do we know?

High levels of inequality exist in North Ayrshire, particularly poverty and the associated effects this has. North Ayrshire is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland. Deprivation levels are significantly higher than the Scottish average. The latest 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) highlighted continuing levels of deprivation in North Ayrshire. 52 of our 186 SIMD data zones now fall within the 15% most deprived in Scotland. 39,139 people live within these deprived areas representing 28.8% of North Ayrshire's population, significantly above the Scottish average.





## Local Poverty Related Indicators

### Local child poverty indicators (After Housing Costs) 2019/20

New data on child poverty was released in May 2021. This [new estimate, by Loughborough University](#), is based on Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) data but is based on family income levels, after housing costs. The data only covers the age group of 0 to 16-year-olds.

The data shows that an estimated figure of over 6,200 children (27.9%) aged 0-16 years have been living in poverty in North Ayrshire in 2019/20. When comparing local authority areas in Scotland, North Ayrshire has the second highest level of child poverty after housing costs of any area in Scotland (27.9%) and is higher than the national average of 24%. North Ayrshire has seen a 3.1 percentage point increase in child poverty levels since 2014/15, above the Scottish percentage point increase (2%).

### Other Local Poverty Indicators

Further analysis of local data available to us provides deeper insight into our local context. The information is displayed below.

The main issues highlighted in terms of employment are more 'lower paid' jobs, higher underemployment levels and higher unemployment compared to Scotland as a whole. In terms of benefits, there are higher levels of out of work benefit claims.

For other related issues that impact on people's lives, we have higher levels of children looked after by the authority, higher rates of children admitted to hospital due to asthma and higher levels of domestic abuse incidents.

### Context

- After housing costs, child poverty in North Ayrshire for 2019/20 was 27.9%

(this corresponds to approximately 6,200 children). This is 0.8-percentage points higher than the previous year, and 3.1-percentage points higher than 2014/15. For context, the 2019/20 rate for Scotland was 24.3%.

- We have the lowest employment rate in Scotland (64.9%). The employment rate for North Ayrshire decreased by 1.5-percentage points since the previous data release (Jul 2020-Jun 2021).
- We have the 2nd highest unemployment rate (5%) in Scotland. However, the unemployment rate is down by 0.2-percentage points since the last data release.
- Our economic inactivity rate (29.7%) is the highest in Scotland and the 13th highest in Great Britain.
- There are 27,000 economically inactive people in North Ayrshire and 56,000 economically active people, a ratio of 1 to 2.5 (at a Scotland level the ratio is 1 to 3.6).
- We have the 3rd lowest male employment rate in Scotland (65.3%) (the Scottish rate is currently 75.7%).
- We have the 2nd lowest female employment rate (65.4%) in Scotland (Scottish rate is 70.6%).
- The number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, as a percentage of the working aged (16-64 years population) is 5%. Though only 0.1-percentage points below pre-Covid-19 levels (Oct 2020-Sep 2021 vs Jan 2019-Dec 2019); a significant caveat is that our economic inactivity rate is 4.6-percentage points higher than pre-Covid-19 levels. This may be due to lack of opportunity locally leading to people exiting the labour force or may be linked to concerns about returning to in-person work due to Covid-19.

## Figure 6: Local data overview

Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	Source
% of households managing well financially (2019)	49%	56%	Local Child Poverty Dashboard (www.gov.scot)
% of children in working households (Jan-Dec 2020)	57.4%	63.1%	ONS
% of children in low-income families (2019-20)	24.3%	16.8%	Local Child Poverty Dashboard (www.gov.scot)
% of employees (18+) earning less than the Living Wage (2021)	11.7%	14.4%	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, (www.gov.scot)
Underemployment of 16+ population (%) (2020 Q1) (Statistics.gov.uk)	9%	7.1%	Scottish Government
Employment Rate (Oct 2020 to Sept 2021)	66.3%	72.9%	ONS (www.nomisweb.co.uk)
Unemployment Rate (Oct 2020 to Sept 2021)	5.3%	4.2%	ONS (www.nomisweb.co.uk)
Limiting long-term physical or mental health condition (ALL) (2019)	27.40%	25.90%	Scottish Government Scottish Surveys Core Questions (www.gov.scot)
Age of first-time mothers – 19 and under (% of all first-time mothers) (2016/17-2018/19) (Statistics.gov.uk)	12.4%	6.6%	Scottish Government
Number of children referred to the Children's Reporter	372	-	SCRA

The percentage of households managing well financially in North Ayrshire has reduced from 62% in 2018 to 49% in 2019 (most recent data available), while nationally this has increased by 1% point. Similarly, the percentage of children in working households has reduced from 62.4% in 2018 to 57.4% at the end of 2020. In contrast, the percentage of employees earning less than the Living Wage has reduced from 16% in 2019 to 11.7% in 2021, a greater improvement than nationally (16.9% to 14.4% for Scotland).

The number of children referred to the Children's Reporter has reduced each year since 2015/16 and has reduced by 47.5% in the most recent three-year period.

### North Ayrshire Inclusive Economy Dashboard

North Ayrshire Council is recognised as a sector leader in Scotland and the UK in defining and implementing an inclusive economy. The ongoing Community Wealth Building approach provides a practical means to achieving an inclusive and wellbeing economy in North Ayrshire.

This Inclusive Economy Dashboard has been developed to measure social, economic and environmental wellbeing in North Ayrshire. It uses publicly available statistics to track progress of an inclusive and green economic recovery and renewal. The Inclusive Economy Dashboard draws from the Doughnut Economics tool which proposes an economy with a social foundation we cannot fall below and environmental limits that should not be exceeded.

Key findings of the April 2022 update of the Inclusive Economy Dashboard, subject to caveats associated with Covid-19 data irregularities, are:

- Child poverty and positive destinations (data for 2019-20) are causes for concern, as they may be worsened still due to the impact of Covid-19.
- There has been a strong improvement in the youth (16-24 years), and overall benefit claimant counts.
- Employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity all show strong negative trends.
- Earnings and Living Wage data saw significant improvement.
- The Equality and Older Years categories showed notable improvement.
- The Place and Business categories showed varying trends per indicator.

**Figure 7:**  
 Inclusive Economy Dashboard:  
 April 2022 Update



**Note:** The model shows domains with RAG ratings applied by North Ayrshire trends. The RAG rating applied is: an yellow zone that shows indicator change on the previous period within +/-2%, a red rating that shows a negative change greater than +/-2%, and a green rating that shows a positive change greater than +/-2%.



## Figure 8: RAG status of Inclusive Growth Dashboard indicators

### Our Socio Economic Foundation:

Domain	Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	North Ayrshire change on year	Notes
<b>Early years</b>	Percentage of children achieving their developmental milestones at the time the child starts primary school	83.3% (2019-20)	85.7% (2019-20)	2.5%pts (+3.1%)	North Ayrshire is 2.4%pts behind the Scottish rate, however, showed a year-on-year improvement of 2.5%pts.
<b>Childhood</b>	Literacy and numeracy attainment gap between most and least deprived at P1,P4, P7 combined	19.6%pts (2018-19)	18.7%pts (2018-19)	N/A (trend data unavailable)	The North Ayrshire rate is 0.9%pts lower than the Scottish rate.
	Percentage of children living in poverty (after housing costs)	27.9% (2019-20)	24.3% (2019-20)	+0.8%pts (+3%)	The North Ayrshire rate is 3.6%pts higher than the Scottish level.
<b>Young Adult</b>	Youth claimant count rate (claimants aged 16-24 as a proportion of the population of area aged 16-24)	6.2% (Dec-21)	4.0% (Dec-21)	-4.2%pts (-40.4%)	The North Ayrshire rate is 2.2%pts higher than the Scottish level, however, it has declined by 4.2%pts on the year.
	16-19 year old participation rate	90.1% (2021)	92.1% (2021)	-0.5%pts (-0.6%)	The North Ayrshire level is 2%pts lower than Scotland's.
	Percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations	92.4% (2019-20)	95.0% (2019-20)	-1.6%pts (-1.7%)	The trend data is potentially of concern; it may reflect the effects of Covid-19.
<b>Working Years</b>	Percentage of households in fuel poverty	27.8% (2017-19)	24.4% (2017-19)	-0.5%pts (-1.9%)	Although the data is trending in the right direction, it lags the Scottish rate by 3.4%pts.
	No or low qualifications (up to NVQ2)	38.0% (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)	30.6% (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)	-0.9%pts (-2.3%)	North Ayrshire's rate is 7.4%pts higher than the Scottish rate.
	Percentage of working age population in employment (Employment Rate)	66.3% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	72.9% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	-2.6% (-3.8%)	In North Ayrshire, there are roughly 2,700 fewer people in employment compared to this time last year.

Domain	Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	North Ayrshire change on year	Notes
<b>Working Years</b>	Percentage of working age population not in employment (Unemployed Rate)	5.3% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	4.2% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	+0.6%pts (+12.8%)	Despite increasing on the year, the North Ayrshire rate is comparable to pre-Covid-19 level.
	Economically inactive (People who are neither in employment or unemployed)	29.7% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	23.9% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	+2.4pts (-8.8%)	North Ayrshire's rate is the highest in Scotland (13th in UK), highest rate since Jul 2011-Jun 2012.
	Claimant count rate (claimants as a proportion of population of area aged 16-64)	5.7% (Dec-21)	4.0% (Dec-21)	-2.6% pts (-30.5%)	A strong recovery over the year, however, still 1.7%pts above the Scottish level.
	Percentage of those earning less than the Living Wage	11.7% (2021)	14.4% (2021)	-4.2%pts (-26.4%)	North Ayrshire is 2.7%pts below the Scottish level.
	Gross Weekly Pay (median earnings for employees living in the area)	£625.70 (2021)	£622.00 (2021)	+4.6%	Comparable level between North Ayrshire and Scotland with a solid trend.
	Gross Weekly Pay (median earnings for employees working in the area)	£597.20 (2021)	£622.40 (2021)	+1.7%	The North Ayrshire figure is 4% below the Scottish level.
	<b>Equality</b>	Female Employment Rate	65.4% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	70.6% (Oct 2020-Sep 2021)	+1.8%pts (+2.8%)
Equality Act Core or Work-Limiting Disabled		49.9% (2021)	49.1% (2021)	+2.9%pts (+6.2%)	North Ayrshire's rate is 0.8%pts above the Scottish level.
<b>Older years</b>	Healthy life expectancy: Female (at birth)	56.3 (2017-19)	61.9 (2017-19)	+0.5%	North Ayrshire's rate is 9% below the Scottish level.
	Healthy life expectancy: Male (at birth)	58.5 (2017-19)	61.7 (2017-19)	+2.1%	North Ayrshire rate is 5% below the Scottish level.

## North Ayrshire's Economic Resilience

Analysis by the Fraser of Allander Institute shows that around 11% of businesses in North Ayrshire are in the hospitality sector, this is the second largest number across all Scottish local authorities (Argyll and Bute have the highest concentration at roughly 13%). Areas with higher than the national average concentration in hospitality are particularly reliant on tourism, which made them more vulnerable to the economic impacts of Covid-19. At a Scotland level economic output in this sector is estimated to have recovered to around its pre-Covid-19 levels.

Encouragingly, in North Ayrshire's largest sector in terms of economic output (GVA), manufacturing, economic output at a Scottish level is estimated to have recovered to around its pre-Covid-19 levels. The manufacturing sector accounts for 26% of economic output (GVA) and 11.5% of employee jobs in North Ayrshire.

The North Ayrshire economy faces major structural challenges that require significant national and local investment, policy change and innovation, and strategic long-term approaches to address them. Despite sectoral strengths in manufacturing, North Ayrshire has a low job density, faces a weak labour market, as well as evidence of certain groups within North Ayrshire being particularly excluded from the labour market.

We understand that at this time we need to focus even more on reducing child poverty. Both the Fairer Scotland Duty and the requirements of the Child Poverty Act will remain at the heart of our decision making, to ensure we provide support to those most in need.

## Local Plans and Policies

### Community Planning and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

We recognise that high levels of inequality, particularly poverty, exist in North Ayrshire. In our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2022-30, we continue our focus on child poverty. This is in response to very concerning local trends in child poverty levels.

We have three priority areas:

- Wellbeing
- Work
- World

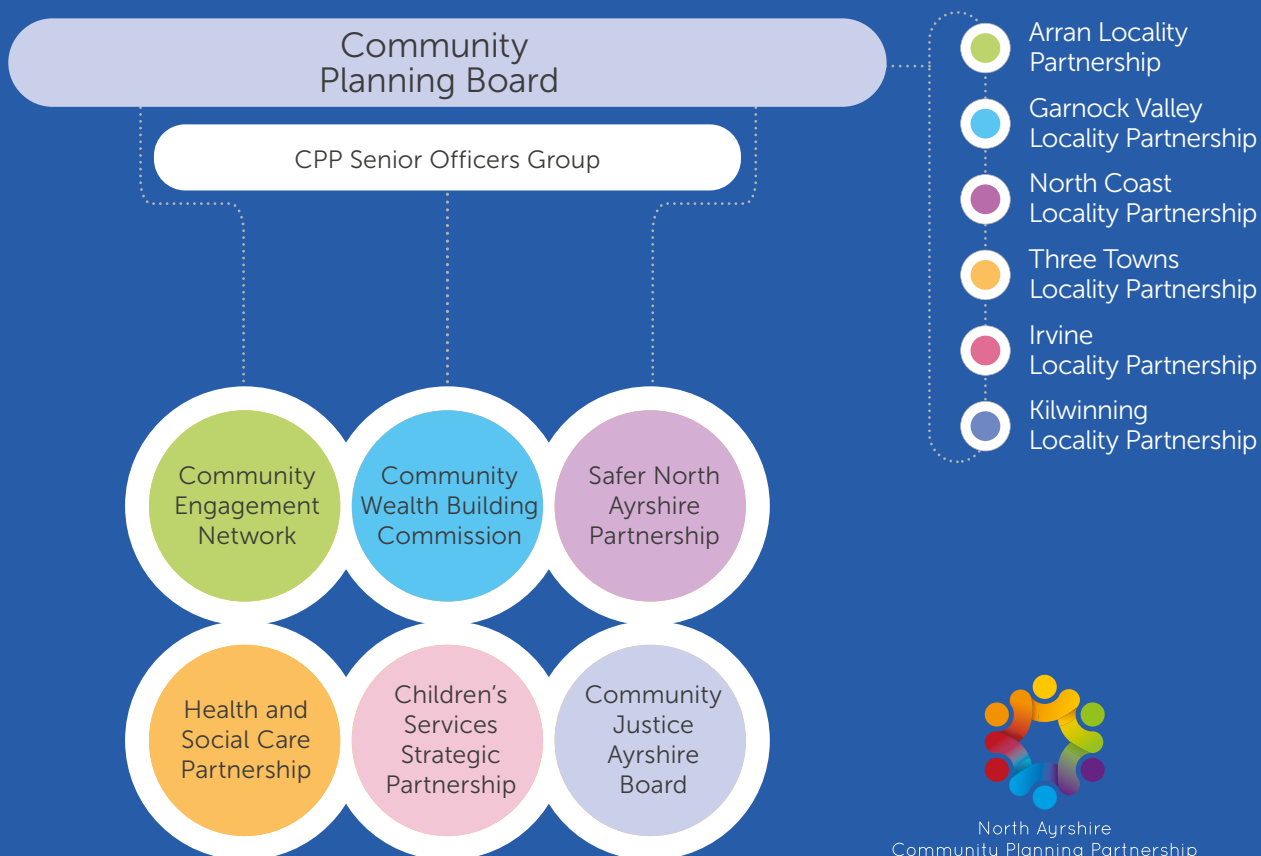
Our cross-cutting themes influence our approach to these priorities:

#### **1. Building stronger communities –**

empowering communities to increase control over their lives, being supported to do things for themselves and having their voices heard in the planning and delivery of services.

**2. Prevention** – being proactive to avoid negative outcomes and early intervention in existing issues to mitigate their future impact. These do not operate in isolation. We draw from a range of partner plans to support these priorities. Our six Locality Partnerships alongside our Connected Communities Service are fundamental to ensuring that plans are built on lived experience.

**Figure 9:**  
Community Planning Structure in North Ayrshire



**Figure 10:**  
North Ayrshire Localities



### North Ayrshire Council Plan

The 2019-24 North Ayrshire Council Plan was approved in June 2019. The plan, titled 'North Ayrshire: A Council that is Fair for All,' describes the vision, mission and priorities. It sets out a strategic approach which is focused on making North Ayrshire a fairer and more equal society. North Ayrshire Council is determined to tackle inequalities and create a society where no one lives in poverty, where the economy is inclusive and where everyone has the same life chances to live fulfilling and healthy lives.

The plan has three strategic priorities linking all the work the Council does, including in partnership:

- **Aspiring Communities:** This priority focuses on a society where everyone, has the same life chances to grow, prosper and have fulfilling and healthy lives.

- **Inspiring Place:** This priority focuses on an enterprising, vibrant and sustainable environment, appealing to investors, attractive for visitors and a place where our residents are proud to live and work.
- **A Council for the Future:** This priority ensures our Council is forward thinking – motivated to transform and improve the services we provide for our communities, through innovation and a strong voice nationally.

North Ayrshire Council uses these priorities to target resources. Everyone within the Council is determined to tackle inequalities and create a society where no one lives in poverty, where the economy is inclusive and where everyone has the same life chances to live fulfilling and healthy lives.

[North Ayrshire Council Plan \(north-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](http://north-ayrshire.gov.uk)





### Child Centred Council

North Ayrshire became the first Child-Centred Council in Scotland, putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do and making sure that we give our young people the best possible start in life.

## NHS Ayrshire and Arran

NHS Ayrshire and Arran continues to work in partnership to reduce the impact of poverty on children's lives. The Health Inequalities Impact Assessment Tool was developed and work to promote the use of this alongside increasing awareness of child poverty amongst NHS staff is an ongoing priority.

The Pan-Ayrshire Infant, Children and Young People's Transformational Change Programme Board (ICYPTCPB) provides the partnership vehicle to support and improve the health and social outcomes for infants, children and young people in Ayrshire and Arran and provides a strategic view across Ayrshire for children's health and social outcomes and health inequalities.

The focus of the group is prevention and early intervention and the role it has to play in improving child health outcomes, breaking the cycle of health inequalities in Ayrshire and Arran. It proposes ways of encouraging all agencies to work together to offer infants, children and young people the best start in life and realise their full potential. This begins before birth and continues through the early years of life, school years and transition to adulthood supported by the national practice model, 'Getting it Right for every Child' (GIRFEC). The work of the Board is intrinsically linked to the vision of Caring for Ayrshire and with the individual at the centre of care.

Other strategies which tie in to reducing child poverty include Caring for Ayrshire, the Community Wealth Building Pledge signed by NHS, the Employability Strategy, Population Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the tobacco, oral health and sexual health strategies. NHS have continued to prioritise improving health information and health literacy to support our most vulnerable families in obtaining, communicating, processing, and understanding health information and services.

## North Ayrshire Children's Services Plan 2020-23

Our Children's Services Plan 2020-23, currently under review, was launched by our North Ayrshire Children's Services Strategic Partnership in October 2020. This Plan details how North Ayrshire Children's Services Strategic Partnership aims to give our children the best start in life and to make North Ayrshire the best place in Scotland to grow up. To ensure our plans link together to tackle Child Poverty, we have a number of priorities which relate to our ambition to address poverty and equality. They focus on working with parents and carers to build capacity, enabling them to provide the most positive start for their child and improve their future life chances.

Our Children's Services Strategic Partnership provides the strategic governance for our Children's Services Planning and this includes the Child Poverty Action Plan.

[North Ayrshire Children Services Plan 2020/2023 \(nahscp.org\)](http://nahscp.org)

## Children's Rights

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1st September 2020 and was passed unanimously on 16th March 2021. The main purpose of the Bill is to bring the UNCRC into Scots law.

The Bill aims to ensure that:

- Children's rights are respected and protected in the law in Scotland
- Public authorities are legally required to respect and protect children's rights in all the work that they do.

In 2020 we published our Children's Rights Report which demonstrates our commitment to the articles of the UNCRC and delivering them through The Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, which



encompasses eight Wellbeing Indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included). GIRFEC recognises that all children are unique and that each child should be helped to reach their full potential. Our Children's Rights approach will ensure that children's rights continue to be at the centre of our Children's Services Planning, including our Child Poverty Action Plans.

The Third Sector Interface TSI Delivered training in partnership with Children in Scotland across local organisations and partners around the new UNCRC Bill to ensure children's rights are respected and protected. [Our Children's Rights Report is published online.](#)

### Scottish Attainment Challenge

In February 2015, the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund was launched. This initiative aims to provide targeted support to increase the educational attainment and outcomes of children in Scotland's highest concentrated areas of deprivation. An allocation of £120m was allocated directly to schools in the form of the Pupil Equity Fund to support schools to use additional resource to target a reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap. Pre-pandemic, North Ayrshire had made significant demonstrable progress in reducing the gap. Every council area also benefits from Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and 95% of schools in Scotland have been allocated funding for pupils in P1-S3 known to be eligible for free school meals. For every child that is registered, the school receives £1,200 in addition to their normal budget to support our children and young people. A refreshed framework for SAC and PEF has been introduced in 2022. This policy's mission is to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

### Inclusive Growth

We worked with the Scottish Government to develop and pilot our "inclusive growth diagnostic". The main purpose of the diagnostic was to see how economic growth could benefit all our residents by identifying any barriers, such as access to transport as well as opportunities. Our North Ayrshire Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified job density, health and skills as key issues that the Council and partners need to tackle if we are going to achieve an inclusive economy. This significant piece of work gives us the information we need to prioritise actions, such as investing in a supported employment programme to help more disabled people access and sustain employment. The diagnostic has been rolled out across Ayrshire and is central to the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

### Ayrshire Growth Deal

The Ayrshire Growth Deal was signed in November 2020 and secures £251.5 million worth of funding to help realise Ayrshire's potential as a world-class business region for the aerospace and space, energy, tourism, manufacturing and engineering industries, and reaffirms our commitment to the region and the collective desire to support ambitious plans for renewal and long-term sustainable growth. The aim is to marry business growth opportunities to employment progression, developing the future workforce and community development, ensuring all our communities and residents benefit from economic growth.

## Community Wealth Building

Together with our Community Planning partners, we launched our first Community Wealth Building Strategy for North Ayrshire. The result will be a more resilient local economy with more diverse businesses and well-paid jobs for our residents. Key to this approach is partnership working and we are working alongside the CPP and wider regional partners to deliver inclusive economic outcomes that will benefit all our residents. Community wealth building is key to tackling poverty and deprivation.

## Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach

In September 2020 our Covid-19 Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach was agreed. We are using our economic levers across the Council and our new economic model of Community Wealth Building to develop a Green New Deal for North Ayrshire. We are using our capital investment to accelerate our recovery and wider regeneration of our area, at the same time as tackling climate change. We are supporting our existing businesses and social enterprises to rebuild, diversify and become more resilient, green and inclusive. We are supporting our communities who have lost their jobs or are in insecure work and encourage community entrepreneurship.

The twin priorities of a North Ayrshire Green New Deal to build back better, fairer and greener are to:

- Ensure an inclusive economic recovery and renewal by delivering our Community Wealth Building mission; and
- Ensure a green economic recovery and renewal focussed on achieving our net zero carbon ambitions through the creation of sustainable infrastructure and regeneration projects and creating fairer jobs.

## North Ayrshire Fairer Food

As part of our Community Wealth Building Strategy, we have established our North Ayrshire Fairer Food approach to ensure that demand for emergency food provision is reduced and that residents can access affordable and nutritious food. The Community Support Hubs act as brokers who can signpost to local food provision. Using a community wealth building approach, third sector organisations provide low cost or free food to local people who need it with local businesses being partners in this. Working with the North Ayrshire Foodbank and a range of community partner organisations, networks of community fridges, larders, community shops and food coops have been developed to ensure a more sustainable approach to food with dignity. [See section below for further information.](#)

## Cost of the School Day

Poverty can have a lasting impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing as well as the significant and persistent gap in attainment from lower and higher income families. Education can represent a route out of poverty, but crucially only if children and young people can access education as fully and equally as possible. The cost of the school day has been and will continue to be a major priority for us. In 2020 we established a working group comprising of Elected Members, young people, parents, head teachers and staff of educational establishments, senior officers from the Council and HSCP, CPP partners and officers. North Ayrshire has previously participated in work with Public Health and Young Scot to develop local approaches to Cost of the School Day, providing a sound basis for the current work, with excellent practice in schools being contributed to the working group deliberations.

## Case study:

### Lived experience and empowered young people

**Members of the Garnock Valley Youth Forum have been looking at ways to reduce the cost of the school day. It was identified that they would create a dignified and youth led, community-based provision to support young people and families to reduce the cost of the school day and reduce personal and family carbon footprints.**

The group, with support from staff, were able to identify a venue, sources of funding and personnel to design, create and manage a community based uniform swap shop.

The group has changed the use of a room within Kilbirnie Youth Project and renamed the programme, "The Once Loved Uniform Shop."

The group will continue to promote and manage the provision and with support of staff encourage public use of this project.



**What they say:**

"I feel as if I am doing something for local families as well as doing something to help save the planet."

"Great to be doing something worthwhile, love coming here and feeling part of something special."

"Very excited about taking this idea forward and making real changes."



# Understanding Inequalities

## Our Approach

Inequalities in individual outcomes are directly linked to wider socio-economic inequalities in society.

The distribution of power, money and resources has a direct influence on environmental influences such as:

- Availability of health enhancing work
- Access to good quality and affordable housing
- Social and cultural experiences
- Transport
- Education and learning opportunities
- Availability and quality of services.

While there will be some fundamental causes of poverty which are out with the control of North Ayrshire CPP, there are many areas where an impact can be made. In order to be most effective, interventions need to be taken at all three levels:

- Undo the fundamental causes;
- Prevent the wider environmental influences; and
- Mitigate the individual experiences.

As well as needing to ensure that our approach intervenes at all three levels described above, research also demonstrates that a combination of approaches across three areas of the population is essential to effectively tackle inequalities.

These three approaches are:

**1. Targeting** – targeting the worst off in society;

**2. Enhanced** – reducing the gap between groups; and

**3. Universal** – reducing the gradient across the population.

Our Action Plan reflects these approaches where relevant. Our Action Plan approach is developed in order to ensure clear links to our LOIP and to reflect the above approach. This, our fourth annual Action Plan, builds on the work done to date, develops some of the existing work, and introduces new actions. Our key actions have been identified and included in the following sections of the report. [Our key actions have been linked to and summarised in Appendix 1.](#) We have included actions where the greatest impact will be made, taking into account scale and pace.

The six priority groups (lone parents; families where a member of the household is disabled; families with three or more children; minority ethnic families; families where the youngest child is under one year old; and mothers aged under 25 years) have been considered in developing our Action Plan. They will continue to be a focus as part of the development of our future actions.

## Case study:

### Police Scotland Youth Volunteers

**Our Police Scotland Youth Group has now been running for three years. We recruit from ages 13-15 years and the young people are able to stay in the programme until 18 years old.**

The initial induction programme consists of learning drill, how to pull their boots, radio procedure, rank structure, phonetic alphabet and uniform standards. We celebrate their progress in a passing out parade which their family can attend. After this milestone, they can volunteer at community events such as marshalling community walks/runs, assisting at fetes/galas, stewarding at events like the fireworks, giving out wristbands to children at busy events and raising money for charity.

At the moment we have 18 young people, with a maximum of 25 places available. We recruit a mixture of young people, from those who are excelling in school to those who might need some extra support such as additional support needs or care experienced backgrounds to try and support wider achievement and offer opportunities to that might not ordinarily be available.



33%

We aim to ensure 33% of our volunteers are those requiring support.

50%

However this is currently around 50% for our groups in North Ayrshire.

## Lived Experience of Poverty – Fair for All Commission

Lived experience is known to be the most valuable consideration when addressing such complex and challenging areas as child poverty. By creating a shared insight of lived experiences, we not only begin to understand how to tackle real life issues, we also gain knowledge of how to measure whether a positive impact is really being made.

Our North Ayrshire Fair for All Commission consists of:

- **Community Commissioners** – representatives of our communities who have knowledge of poverty and insecurity.
- **Civic Commissioners** – representatives from a wide range of policy areas including universities, public services, health services and businesses.
- **Fair for All Commission Officer** – provides support to the Commission.

The four key themes identified are:

- Poverty and Health
- Poverty and Housing
- Poverty and Benefits
- Poverty and Cost of the School Day.

The Commission also agreed that the theme of stigma was cross cutting and affected all four themes. It explores the causes of the issues raised through the stories shared by the Community Commissioners, the unintended consequences on communities of policies, procedures and decisions and what possible changes or improvements can be made.

## Poverty Impact Assessment Approach

In 2020, we introduced Child Poverty Workshops for senior managers across the Council, Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Ayrshire and Arran. This was designed to bring senior managers together to look at actions through a poverty lens and to encourage consideration of any poverty implications of their work. The session also facilitated partnership working and discussions. The event included the Fairer Scotland Duty, including the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, our Financial Inclusion Referral Pathway and Rights Based Approaches. Feedback from the event was very positive and this has subsequently been embedded in our CPP and child poverty work.

## Facilitating Multi-agency Working

A key theme in North Ayrshire is our strong partnership and multi-agency working approaches. In April 2022 we held our latest partnership Child Poverty Workshop. This regular session facilitates our partnership and multi-agency working and allows connections to be made. This way of working informs our plan and brings the content into focus for all services. Feedback from the sessions have been positive.



# How we're tackling child poverty in North Ayrshire and future actions

(Please read in conjunction with the previous Child Poverty Report 2020/21 and Action Plan 2021/22).

## Monitoring of this plan

This report requires agreement and monitoring by the Community Planning Partnership. Reporting is linked to other strategic groups as required. This ensures consistency in reporting across all our plans and strategies. We report thematically on our progress every six months to the Community Planning Partnership to ensure we are achieving our ambition of a fairer and more equal society. In 2020 it was agreed that the Child Poverty Action Plan and Report would be included within the governance of the Children's Services Strategic Partnership. This ensures we have aligned Children's Services Planning and that children, young people and their families continue to be at the heart of all we do.



## Section 1:

# Maximising Income from Employment

## Background

In 2016-19, 65% of children in poverty were living in working households, confirming that employment is by no means a guaranteed route out of poverty (Source: [Scottish Government](#)). In 1997 -2000, the figure was 43%. While employment may be rising, changes to the quality and nature of work (such as insecure work, underemployment and low wages) have driven up in-work poverty. (Source: McKendrick, J. et al, 2014. Poverty in Scotland).

Households in which no-one is in paid employment are most likely to experience poverty. Common barriers to work include a lack of suitable employment opportunities, a lack of suitable childcare, caring responsibilities, ill health, disability and employer discrimination. (Source: [Child Poverty in Scotland CPAG](#))

In 2021, JRF looked at the impact on child poverty of moving parents in workless households into work and increasing parents' working hours (Birt and Milne, 2021). They identified that this would lift 60,000 children out of poverty, reducing the child poverty rate in 2023/24 to 17%. (Source: [Poverty in Scotland 2021 | JRF](#))

## Review of actions during 2021-22

### Bringing new and better jobs to the area: Fair Work

- As part of work with the Community Wealth Building Commission and Anchor Institutions, a **regional Fair Employment workstream** was established with agreement that Ayrshire College would act as lead organisation.
- A baseline survey of employment **practices and policies for the Community Wealth Building Anchor Institutions** involved in the workstream was completed in November 2021.

- An action plan for the workstream is currently being developed and Fair Work audits/actions will be created for members. Businesses will be supported to become living wage employers, sign up to disability confident and consider creating modern apprenticeships.
- Leading by example, the **Third Sector Interface has encouraged third sector organisations** to become living wage employers.
- A **Living Wage supplement was applied to the Kickstart programme** to support payment of the living wage.
- Activity under the Fair Work pillar has been stronger than expected with **31 businesses engaging** in support via Fair Work principles.
- We have had **600 of our young people progressing to employment through Kickstart** with North Ayrshire Council's Gateway creating 300 of these jobs.
- There is a focus by **Police Scotland on supporting fair employment and procurement** and they are exploring how best to contribute within the confines of national structures.

## Employability Support

- In 2021/22 over 1,100 unemployed people were supported by the Employability and Skills team with over 500 progressing to employment.
- We are running several employability programmes which work with families. A joint approach with HSCP supports parents with in-work poverty. These are based around the Scottish Government's **Parental Employability Support Funding** programme. This is resulting in volunteering opportunities and 100% reporting increased confidence levels in terms of literacies and the challenges they face in terms of "professionals" involvement in their life.



- We have recruited two posts to support Youth Employability programmes focusing on the **Youth Guarantee** and ensuring that participation does not impact on the family income.
- 12 young people took part in **week-long intensive employability programme** with professional skills workshops, gaining qualifications and linking in with positive destination routes.
- The **Youth Work Education Recovery Fund** enabled a programme which included employability, outdoor learning and mental health and wellbeing. 1,523 young people were engaged from relevant SIMD areas.
- A partnership between Service Access (HSCP) and Community Learning has led to the development of the **Innovative Employment Programme** which creates an opportunity for parents and carers involved with the Rosemount Project who are on low income and who have lost employment and training opportunities due to the pandemic to participate in person centred employment and training programmes.
- The Council created the **Care Academy** in partnership with Health and Social Care Partnership. A total of 32 parents completed the Academy with 25 of them gaining employment with the Council.
- The Council continues to support **work placements** as they become available for a variety of different key groups.
- **We Work for Families** in particular via Health Visiting teams link strongly with the Council. "We Work For Families," delivered by the Lennox Partnership, is a key partner of the universal Early Years' service, supporting parents/carers to overcome the barriers to training, education and employment. **Health Visitors and Family Nurses** have referred around 650 individuals since early 2018. Recently, support has extended to included low-income households and well as those who are unemployed and new pathways with social work colleagues have also been developed.
- **Literacy and employability** programmes have restarted in four out of six localities, including on-line versions with participants being provided with devices, dongles, training and support to participate at a level that is appropriate for them, with group and one to one support.
- **ESOL programmes for New Scots** currently offer a range of programmes aimed at young New Scots. These include Duke of Edinburgh Award (DoE) groups for young New Scots women and men where they meet weekly to develop important life skills through a range of activities, for example football, dancing, drama. These groups are being supported by New Scots Locality Link workers. Our Young New Scots are also being supported through DoE and matched with volunteers, for example a local photographer to learn new skills based on their interests.
- **Positive Steps with Partners** is a structured development programme for individuals that have been developed by The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) (part of the North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface) in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Community Action Team. The programme helps people develop skills and gain practical work experience. In addition, participants gain accredited qualifications. Participants complete a programme of development modules before commencing a placement with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Community Action Team.

- The Ayrshire Community Trust (part of the North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface) provides placement opportunities for **volunteers within TACT** to support the development of employability skills. Several people who volunteered at TACT have secured employment within the organisation.
- The **Police Scotland Youth Volunteering scheme** in North Ayrshire builds life skills, enhances confidence and provide a supportive platform for the young people to move on to the next stage in their lives. It seeks to support care experienced young people in this programme to contribute to achieving better outcomes for them.
- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Youth Volunteer Scheme gives our young people who are aged from 12 to 18 years the opportunity to learn new skills and contribute to a safer Scotland. By participating, our young people gain a really good understanding of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and develop skills to help them actively contribute to their communities.
- TACT Digital (The Ayrshire Community Trust) has a particular focus on digital media and communications, utilising innovative technologies to provide services that benefit the third sector and support communities to fulfil their potential. TACT Digital provides volunteers with opportunities to develop their digital skills through supported learning and working collaboratively on funded projects.
- The **EQUAL Programme** within the Council continues to support parents, young people and people with disabilities into employment. It works in partnership with other services to identify employment opportunities and support our residents. We have worked with 135 people with a disability during 2021/22 with 34 progressing to employment so far as a

result of the support provided by the Equal Programme team.

#### Procurement (North Ayrshire Council)

- A **Connected Leadership session on Community Wealth Building (CWB) and Procurement** was held in May 2021 to educate managers on procurement as key feature of CWB. A total of 27 managers participated in the session.
- We participated in an **Ayrshire Meet the Buyer event** in April to promote upcoming procurement opportunities and support our local business base to tender for public sector contracts.
- A process for enhanced interaction between **Procurement and Business Development** services has been agreed and implemented and which allows deeper market and locality engagement before commissioning of work.
- We spent a significant proportion (15%) of the Council's **food budget** on local businesses to support Community Wealth Building.
- We are committed to the **Soil Association's Food for Life** programme which also requires local spend to retain this accreditation.
- We have further developed our approach to **community benefits**, focussing on the needs of our communities at the tendering stage. This is directly benefiting local groups and organisations.

## Case Study: We Work for Families

**Shona lives with her partner and three children and were identified as a low-income household.**

The main barriers faced by Shona included long term unemployment, lack of work experience, poor mental and physical health alongside a lack of confidence. She felt isolated and seldom left the house due to her mental health issues.

After meeting Shona the Lennox Partnership were able to start building her confidence, encouraging her to attend an appointment with SALUS, who support returning to work. An action plan was agreed, including counselling and hypnotherapy.

Working with "We Work for Families," they were able to build a rapport with one-to-one appointments. After a six-week course with We Work for Families was completed, Shona was able to identify goals she felt able to pursue.

Wanting to work with children, Shona was accepted to study at college and successfully completed a Social Services Children and Young People SCQF at level 6, even being awarded the student of the year award.

However, before she could progress further, the country entered our first Covid-19 lockdown period. Isolation affected her motivation to further her education and instead Shona focussed on progressing into work. She was referred back to SALUS from We Work for Families and participated in a 12-week course held remotely. She was then able to apply for a HNC in Childhood Practice and with help from We Work for Families she was able to secure a computer to help with her studies.

Whilst studying she was also able to gain part-time employment. Following interview preparation from We Work for Families she has been working for six months as a cleaner at a local nursery, where she has recently been asked provide support as nursery practitioner during lunchtimes.

Throughout her three-year journey with We Work for Families Shona has progressed from being isolated at home with no real goals or purpose to building confidence to receiving support for physical and mental health, progressing her education and securing sustainable employment.

"I am still amazed every day with the things I have been able to achieve. Throughout lockdowns I felt myself beginning to struggle with my mental health again. We Work for Families were there and arranged time for me with SALUS which was an amazing support throughout that period."



## Areas of Focus for 2022-23

- We will continue to progress the **regional Fair Employment workstream** action plan.
- We will continue to **support school leavers and their families** into the world of work and further/higher education to secure positive and sustained destinations, for example through the Youth Guarantee.
- We will **support parents to progress to or improve employment** to increase household incomes and reduce child poverty, for example through the Innovative Employment Programme.
- We will complete the roll out of our **literacy and employability** programmes.
- We will roll out our Digital Growth Fund for businesses.
- We will support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme.
- We will create new Skills for Life work placements.
- We will progress Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs).
- The **Equal Horticulture Intermediate Labour Market programme** will continue to support families where disability is a factor.
- The Ayrshire Community Trust will develop a strand of **mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project**. The project will have volunteer mentors who will support new referrals, supporting them to attend volunteer interviews and placements helping mentees to overcome worries and fears and helping to increasing confidence in individual abilities and be more included in their communities.
- **TACT Digital** will develop the project's potential in relation to wellbeing, tourism and heritage and digital skills – by developing and delivering digital participation programmes that help individuals and communities reach their potential.
- CPP partners, notably Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue, will continue to build relationships with the Champions Board, Education and other partners and further support activity in relation to **care experienced** young people to ensure that they are active contributors in Corporate Parenting.
- **Police Scotland** are building on the excellent work already carried out by Campus Officers in school by identifying other ways that they can provide mentor support and enhance life **skills for school leavers**. This will be extended to include young people who have already left school or further education.
- **Police Scotland** will work with partners over the coming three years to conduct focussed activity with individuals who have **a foundation of recovery** and support them into employment or other positive destinations. They have identified an Inspector to lead on this work and engagement has already begun with partners.

## Figure 11: Maximising income from employment performance indicators

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Percentage of working age population in employment	69.7%	70.2%	69%	66.3%
Percentage of people earning less than the living wage (LGBF)	24.3%	16%	16.2%	16.2%
Percentage of learning disability service users accessing employment support activities	23.88%	23.84%	0%	25.69%
Number of weeks employment through using Community Benefit clauses	2,093	2,864	2,882	Data Pending
Number of Modern Apprentices recruited by North Ayrshire Council, who are care experienced or disabled	-	10	8	6
Cumulative number of unemployed disabled residents supported into employment	-	18	18	34
Gross weekly earnings – Workforce based	£563.60	£550.10	£599.00	£625.70
Number of jobs created by businesses in North Ayrshire supported by Business Development.	555	524	163	358
Employment rate Percentage (women)	64.4%	65.5%	64.2%	65.4%
Employment rate work limiting disabled	44%	49.2%	46.7%	49%
Women's median gross weekly pay	501	518	596	Data Pending
Participation Rate for 16-19 year olds (per 100)	90.53%	90.56%	Data Pending	Data Pending
Youth employment rate	60%	58.3%	55.6%	53.2%
Percentage of Unemployed People Assisted into work from Council operated/funded Employability Programmes (source LGBF)	16.97%	20.1%	9.06%	Data due Feb 2023
Number of employed modern apprentices recruited to North Ayrshire Council	87	54	40	44



## Section 2

### Maximising Income from Benefits

#### Background

Despite being intended, at its most basic, as a safety net against poverty, many families in receipt of social security benefits are living below the poverty line. Nearly three quarters of households with children in which no-one works experience poverty. Furthermore, ongoing welfare reforms are a major contributing factor to the dramatic increase in child poverty which is projected for Scotland.

The interaction of the factors above means that children in households with certain characteristics are at greater risk of experiencing poverty. For example, [Scottish Government statistics](#) show that:

# 39%

Of children in single parent households live in poverty.

---

# 30%

Of children with a disabled family member live in poverty.

---

# 31%

Of children living in households where there are more than two children live in poverty.

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(Source: [Child Poverty In Scotland – CPAG](#))



## Review of actions during 2021-22

### Income maximisation and improving access to information and advice about benefits

- The Council have been distributing winter aid funding directly to families to tackle fuel and clothing poverty and administered the Scottish Government **child bridging payments**.
- Additionally, as well as administering the low-income pandemic payments, the Council has engaged with our vulnerable families regarding Covid-19 isolation grants and supporting families to access services.
- The **Money Matters Team generated over £17.5m** in financial gains for our residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits.
- Money Matters received 4,432 enquiries in 21/22 via their **Advice Line**. This included referrals from Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), NHS, Council employees and the [website](#). It ensures our most vulnerable residents have support to check their entitlements and ensure they are **receiving their legal rights to benefits**.
- Whilst the number of Appeal Tribunals contribute to drop throughout the UK, the Money Matters Team continues to have a high success rate, with **78% of appeals successful** for service users.
- Training of HSCP, NHS and Council employees continued with eight workshops delivered regarding Universal Credit and Benefits for Children and Families.
- Money Matters began a two-year pilot with North Ayrshire Council's Communities and Education Directorate in August 2021, delivering a **Welfare Rights service in seven secondary schools**. The first six months focussed on establishing the project in the schools but also resulted in over 50 referrals – **generating £38k in financial gains to families**.

- Partnership work with North Ayrshire Foodbank and Fairer Food Network continues and with the easing of Covid Restrictions, arrangements are being made to deliver a **welfare rights service in the Foodbanks**.
- We embarked on a two-year financial inclusion demonstrator project 'Better Off Hub' in October 2020. It is based on the creation of a Public Social Partnership with the third sector. The **Better Off Hub** delivers vital financial advice services in a new holistic way, focussing on the individual's needs. Ultimately it is expected to build capacity by addressing the causes of financial issues and reducing future demand on services. The proposals align with Community Wealth Building ambitions and support our economic recovery. A total of 183 people from the Three Towns engaged with Better Off North Ayrshire during 2021-22. Of them, 35% were from vulnerable families, with supported families including a total of 64 children.

### School Clothing Grant, Education Maintenance Allowance and Other Grants/Benefits

- We have completed the **automation of Council Tax Reduction**, which has increased team capacity to process applications for other areas such as free school meals and clothing grants.
- **Education Maintenance Allowance Data Matching**: Each year North Ayrshire Council cross references our existing Free School Meals applicants with data from our benefits system to identify all those who meet the qualifying criteria. They then contact parents and carers to advise them to go online, check and confirm their details and complete or renew their application. This digital process ensures that benefits are awarded as quickly as possible to those families who need them.



## Health Visiting in North Ayrshire

- In 2019, Public Health and Money Matters developed a North Ayrshire **financial inclusion pathway** based on a national pathway, which was implemented for the **Health Visitor and Family Nurse staff** in North Ayrshire. Universal Early Years (UEY) is in the process of updating this pathway in order to reflect the range of partners available to support families with money advice (benefits, debt and income maximisation) and energy costs and to better reflect the needs of staff. There will be a briefing session for all UEY staff at the end of June 2022 to update them on the new additions to the pathway.



## Case Study: Money Matters

**A family of EU nationals with three children including their new-born baby was referred to Money Matters. Their only income was from the father working part time. The family had no other income and had lived off savings.**

Once a Benefit Check had been completed, the family was advised to claim Universal Credit in addition to child benefit as the family would pass the Habitual Residence Test because the father was working.

The initial Universal Credit claim was refused, however we advised them to reclaim and Universal Credit has now been awarded.

In addition, Money Matters advised on their entitlement to: Scottish Child Payment for the youngest two children; Best Start Baby Grant; Early Learning Grant; School Clothing Grant; and council tax reduction.



**£2,181.50**

By claiming their entitled benefits, their income almost tripled from £778 per month to £2,181.50 per month.

**£24,000**

The total yearly financial gain is over £24,000 for this young family and provides many opportunities for their future.

## Areas of Focus for 2022-23

- The Council will propose to **top up the child bridging payments** for summer and October 2022 holiday periods.
- Further development of the Council's Transformation Workstreams, "**Accessing our Council**," focusing on easier and more effective access to Council services. This will include improvement to online and telephone access, further automation of benefits and, using lessons learned from the pandemic, improve local access through face-to-face services via locality hubs.
- **Financial inclusion services will be reviewed** to maximise effectiveness.
- **The HSCP will refresh the North Ayrshire Financial Inclusion Pathway for Health Visitors and Family Nurses:** working towards a joined-up approach between maternity services, health visiting and school nursing to support families with consistent, up to date and reliable information in relation to financial inclusion/income maximisation. This includes a **new referral pathway** in addition to Money Matters and Home Energy Scotland (May 2022).
- In relation to maternity services, NHSAA are building on the good work already in existence with Midwives and Maternity Care Assistants (MCAs). Recommendations of the **cost of pregnancy report** will be used to identify areas of improvement and create an action plan.
- NHSAAA will establish child/family poverty as a priority area within **child health assessments**, ensuring robust pathways are in place which meet the needs of our children, young people and their families.
- NHSAA will be monitoring the uptake of the **Young Patients Fund** and considering how to maximise its use.
- We will continue to prioritise income maximisation and the **transfers of claimants from PIP to Scottish Adult Disability Payment and Legacy Benefits onto Universal Credit**.
- We continue to programme **awareness raising session for employees** on available supports and updates in relation to relevant benefits for children and young people (June 2022).
- Money Matters will participate in a two-year **Scottish Government pilot project Accessing Advice Services from nine GP Surgeries** in North Ayrshire which will commence in June 2022.
- The Sustainability team will create **two new posts for tackling fuel poverty** from May 2022, providing advice on how to minimise costs for energy with the aim of helping tenants pay their fuel bills.



## Figure 12: Maximising Income from benefits performance indicators

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Primary)	87.5%	82.72%	63.79%	66.17%
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Secondary)	75.45%	61.49%	44.87%	51.11%
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (New Claims) days	8.51	7.38	8.89	9.45
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (Change of circumstances) days	10.46	7.63	7.59	9.24
Speed of Processing (Council Tax Reduction) new claims (days)	28.28	24.96	19.05	25.59
Speed of processing (Council Tax Reduction) changes of circumstances (days)	7	5.8	5.13	5.95
Number of Crisis Grants Paid	4,579	3,856	3,539	2,460

## Section 3

# Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty

## Background

Price rises have outpaced wages recently, putting pressure on low-income households. Many of these are essential costs, such as food, energy and transport. As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) outlines, the poorest fifth of households spend twice as much of their income on food and fuel compared with households in the top fifth of income.

In addition to this, low-income households often pay more for essential goods and services (the 'poverty premium'). As a Bristol University study notes, the poverty premium is due to a range of factors:

- 1. Demand-side factors.** These relate to the needs or preferences of low-income consumers.
- 2. Supply-side factors.** These reflect how markets shape the choices available and impose additional costs on consumers.
- 3. Compounding factors.** These are issues such as digital exclusion and geography." (Source: [What causes child poverty in Scotland? CPAG](#))

Our young people tell us a great deal about how we can help to mitigate these factors. The importance of our young people's voices in decisions that relate to them directly links with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the strategy was co-produced and co-designed with our young people. The approach embeds the culture of 'Nothing about us without us' through its robust structure, ensuring that young people's views are heard through a

number of platforms, activities and events. Over the last year this has included 12,749 young people being actively involved in youth participation and citizenship. Young people are currently engaging in the digital strategy, mental health provision and support, alcohol and drug education and the cost of the school day. Action reports on key findings from young people provide an iterative process to ensure the delivery of the changes young people want to see.

## Review of actions during 2021-22

### Scottish Child Payment

- In 2021/22 Money Matters advised/assisted 87 families claim Scottish Child Payment with 75 awards made in 21/22, which resulted in **financial gains of over £80k to families with children under six years old (£80,819.58)**.
- In the run up to the launch of Scottish Child Payment an exercise was conducted in partnership with the Health and Social Care Partnership Children and Families teams to **contact all eligible families open to Children and Families Team** to ensure they had made a claim.

### A Green New Deal for North Ayrshire

- North Ayrshire Council approved the **development of two solar PV farms** to reduce North Ayrshire's carbon footprint and help us to become one of the first local authorities in the country to reach net-zero carbon emissions within the next decade. Together the solar farms will see almost two thirds of our Council's energy needs provided through the Council's own renewable energy production. They will reduce our CO2 emissions by over 850 tonnes per year. They will help reduce fuel poverty and, through community benefits associated with the installation, will provide funding for local community projects.



- North Ayrshire Council approved the third Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS) 2021-2023. The Strategy takes account of emerging intelligence and new technology opportunities and provides a roadmap of actions to achieve net-zero carbon status across North Ayrshire by 2030. Our strategy contains seven workstreams, each with actions which have been developed into a roadmap illustrating how net-zero carbon status will be achieved by 2030 and include **Affordable Warmth and A Green Economy**,
- As part of an ongoing commitment to tackle fuel poverty, we have **retrofitted solar PV to 500 domestic properties**, saving approximately £188k annually and 6,400 tonnes of carbon over 20 years.
- As part of the most recent Council budget, North Ayrshire Council approved plans to invest £1.7m in an **Energy Based Community Support Model** which will provide sustainable support during the cost-of-living crisis: Support will include energy and broader low carbon advice and funding to support energy efficiency improvements.

#### Housing and support for tenants

- The **North Ayrshire Housing Registered Partners are prioritising kinship care** in their letting policies.
- The Council's **short-term accommodation consists of houses or flats** as opposed to hostels. We know that early intervention is incredibly important in avoiding homelessness. If homeless does occur, we try and ensure that temporary accommodation is only used short term.
- We continue to provide wraparound support to those who experience homelessness.
- Our Welfare Reform Advice Team staff and Housing Support Team staff undertake an

income maximisation assessment for every household for which they work and where appropriate will assist citizens to access benefits they are entitled to. They continue to support 5,000 of our 13,000 housing residents on universal credit.

#### North Ayrshire Food System

- Our Fairer Food Network has grown from eight Fairer Food locations to thirteen. New larders have opened in Irvine, Stevenston, Saltcoats and Beith since the last report, with further openings in Kilbirnie and Springside due in 2022. Membership has grown rapidly in 2021 as the rising cost of living and the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed more and more households into situations of food insecurity. **Over 1,200 residents (reaching over 900 school age children) from across North Ayrshire are registered members** of Fairer Food locations and this number is expected to continue to grow over the next 12 months
- As the network has continued to grow, the **offer to its members** has evolved. For example, the Village Larder at West Kilbride Community Centre has secured funding to run a 'Larder Lunches' programme, which will engage members in cooking classes and social activities based around the offer in the larder. Cranberry's Community Larder in Kilwinning is working in partnership with CHAP and Riverside Housing Association to provide drop in benefits and tenancy advice to their members. Local people using the Fairer Food Network are now beginning to take up volunteering opportunities within their local larder or shop, building a sense of ownership and getting valuable experience to support job applications and rebuild confidence as we progress through the pandemic.



- The Irvine Youth Forum continues to provide the Saturday morning breakfast club and Grub Club to community members. The young people and community volunteers work together to ensure food with dignity is part of their community programme, as well as access to a range of other services and support.
- The Family Learning Team in North Ayrshire Council has delivered and supported a range of **Family Food Programmes** across a number of schools. 19 families received food, cooking utensils and recipes delivered to their home. Another 20 families have come together to cook and then eat together.
- Eglinton Community Garden is a **collaborative of agencies** that work to provide a range of therapeutic activities for community use and directly supports several client groups such as learning disabilities, mental health issues, ex-offenders, older people, veterans and people experiencing drug and alcohol problems. It provides all members of the community with learning opportunities related to gardening, growing food and cooking. It enables individuals to learn new skills, tools and coping mechanisms and promotes positive changes in health, diet and lifestyle.
- **Legislation relating to food made available during the school day** changed on 8th April 2021. This means that food made available via the catering teams, tuck shops and Education led projects will comply with new legislation. The changes are designed to ensure our children and young people have access to the healthiest and most nutritious food throughout the school day.
- During the new school year (2021/22), we introduced a **new pre-order system for school meals** across primary and secondary schools. This has a home order facility and for primaries, it also has an in-classroom ordering system. This encourages conversations with pupils on food, how it is sourced and encourages children to try new menu items to widen their palates.
- The **Easter Holiday Meals and Activity programme** moved from being school based to working more closely with our community partners within our Fairer Food System network. This included those accessing support through our community larders and pantry model.
- We are actively working across Council services **to analyse debt accruing from non-payment of school meals**. The objective is to introduce support interventions where required to assist families in the provision of school meals, for example, assisting them to apply for free school meals or benefit from information regarding other benefits or financial support available

### School Meals

- We have **extended universal free school meals (UFSM) to Primary 4 and 5 children** and are working on the future provision for Primary 6 to 7. This is expected to greatly increase uptake. Currently the UFSM for Primary 1 to 3 is around 80% and, if replicated across the other year groups, would represent a significant increase in children accessing healthy and nutritious food during the school day. This is likely to have an impact on local employment by increasing the number of jobs with local suppliers.

### North Ayrshire Community Book(s)

- We have developed **six locality-based community books** and North Ayrshire wide Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that signpost and guide people in relation to issues such as access to food, prescription delivery, and financial advice.



## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Research has shown that poverty and mental health and wellbeing are closely linked. People living in deprived populations are at risk of worse health, including mental health, than those living in more wealthy communities. It can also mean that people with mental health conditions may experience worse physical health.





Ongoing work includes:

- Support for schools and individual teachers with issues related to children and young people's mental health include the development of a **professional learning resource for all school staff**; the development of a **framework on a whole school approach** to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing; and the development of a '**one-stop shop**' highlighting effective practical resources for school staff to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- **Two education officers** prepare resources and develop the strategic approach addressing the increasingly complex mental health and wellbeing landscape, supporting schools with training, curricular resources and policy.
- North Ayrshire was the first local authority to employ **counsellors in every secondary school**.
- We have recently produced **bespoke resources to support our community mental health and wellbeing strategy** across the Council, HSCP and its CPP and third sector partners.
- The Council continues to work towards our vision of being a nurturing authority through our "**Nurturing North Ayrshire's Recovery**" approach by building emotional resilience in children and develop stronger relationships. Following lockdown, it was found that children who had experienced nurture approaches coped well with the return to school.

## Scottish Attainment Challenge

Under the new Scottish Attainment Challenge model North Ayrshire will receive £1.4m, as opposed to the previous allocation of £5.8m. Scottish Government will use a tapering model over four years meaning North Ayrshire Council grant funding will be reduced by £1.1m cumulatively per annum from 2022-23 until 2025-26.

- The current key workstreams in North Ayrshire's Attainment Challenge have a clear focus on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap:
- **Professional Learning Academy** (focusing on improving teaching and learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy);
- Creating **nurturing schools**;
- Developing and maintaining **good mental health and emotional wellbeing**;
- Support with **family learning**; and
- **Developing our school leaders** to lead the excellence and equity agenda.
- The **Pupil Equity Fund** resources have been targeted specifically to support those most in need and used particularly to mitigate the impact of poverty on educational outcomes for the most disadvantaged learners. Schools will continue to receive £4.17m per annum for the next four years and planning is underway to deliver a range of interventions and supports to mitigate the impact of poverty on pupil attainment.

## Children and Families

- A new partnership was established with **SALUS to support parents/carers with physical or mental health barriers** which may be preventing them maintaining employment.
- **Vouchers** were issued by Children, Families and Justice staff to a number of vulnerable families during the summer of 2021 to allow them to access day trips for their families.
- The Justice Services Caledonian team partnered with Natwest Bank and Safer Lives to distribute £3,000 to **domestic abuse survivors** to support with alleviating costs associated with surviving domestic abuse. These items included purchasing security equipment like CCTV cameras and Christmas gifts for children.
- During the pandemic the Service Access Team realigned their service linking Health and Social Care Partnership staff to all Community Hubs to work in collaboration with Community Development, the Third Sector and volunteers to support vulnerable families at risk of isolation in our communities. This developed a responsive and collaborative approach which continues to enable individualised support, **food and health needs with dignity**, tackle loneliness and support families with managing finances.
- Our Throughcare Team **fund accommodation costs for young people who are undertaking education courses at HNC level and above**. This enables the young person to use their care experienced bursary to cover their other costs and provides the opportunity to concentrate on the course without necessarily looking for part time employment.
- In line with the increase in Universal Credit payments during the pandemic, Throughcare **raised the weekly Care Leaver Payment by £20**. Along with the regular distribution of vouchers for supermarkets and clothing suppliers as well as crediting power supplies, this was a way to try to ensure that our care leavers were able to maintain their homes and meet their basic needs. In addition, the **council tax exemption for care leavers** until their 26th birthday, relieves another financial pressure.

## Case Study:

### Get into Summer 2021

**In North Ayrshire the Communities and Education Directorate was responsible for delivering the aims of Get into Summer Funding provided by the Scottish Government in 2021.**

Due to the limited timescales the local authority team knew they had to work within well-developed local partnerships with service-providers, rather than attempting to create new partnerships or services. They prioritised targeted support to families through pre-existing relationships between the families and Health and Social Care colleagues.

The team wanted families to have the highest assurance that their children were experiencing high-quality and safe activities, delivered by registered care services. The registered childcare settings (out of school care and early learning childcare) were paid to deliver these places, and the services received augmented support from local authority Countryside Rangers and arts workers. This also supported the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy of awarding public contracts to local businesses where possible.

A wide range of partners, including community sports clubs, arts organisations and youth groups, augmented partners' capacity to deliver activities. The Get into Summer funding was pivotal to adding value and, subsequently, enhancing the experience and outcomes for children. North Ayrshire Council boosted its regular programming and the funding assisted in removing barriers to access as well as providing food at events. National partners such as Aberlour and Children First, who are key partners in North Ayrshire, were included and supported delivery across their own locations and client groups.

In terms of a wider offer, the local authority provided activity hubs in libraries and partnered with KA Leisure to deliver activity sessions across leisure settings in North Ayrshire. Transport was provided where needed.

North Ayrshire Council has been developing its 'Food with Dignity' approach since initiating holiday hunger interventions in 2013. This is not solely about feeding children when they are attending events and activities but also makes families aware of the resources that are available in local communities. In the summer of 2021 the local authority worked with these community food groups by providing additional funding and support and promoted the services to families.

In a commitment to the local Community Wealth Building approach, local food suppliers were supported by the Procurement Team to tender for Get into Summer food supply contracts.





## Digital Access

- Our Public Health Teams continue to recognise that many of our most vulnerable groups experience digital exclusion. We will continue to support and prioritise addressing digital inequalities within public health and we will support partners to utilise **digital inequalities impact assessment** moving forward to identify where these may exist.
- Digital inclusion: North Ayrshire Council approved £250,000 in a **Digital Families Fund** to digitally include 1,000 families each year, providing access to devices and connectivity for online learning and activities, enhancing and guaranteeing sustainability of current investment in devices for home use. We ensured the provision of over 1,000 laptops and connectivity solutions to children who need them most (building on the almost 3,000 devices/internet access products issued last year).
- In order to ensure that young people could be digitally connected especially during the pandemic, 265 devices including 54 Chromebooks, 45 laptops and 25 iPads were distributed to **children who are looked after and care leavers**. The devices were supplied by Who Cares?, our Corporate Parenting Team and Community Development in partnership with the Scottish Government Get Connected programme.
- The Family Learning Team continue to work with a range of organisations to improve **digital access for families**. Nine families received iPads, sims and Wi-Fi through North Ayrshire Connected Communities programmes in partnership with Connecting Scotland. Three families benefitted from a residential experience.

- **New Scots families** have also been supported with two devices per household to ensure that all have access to learning opportunities. Many young New Scots are also now participating in distance learning to learn Arabic which ensures they maintain links with their heritage culture.

## Reducing the cost of the school day

- We are exploring what further processes could be **automated** to maximise the number of families who qualify for **Footwear and Clothing Grants/ Free School Meals**, ensuring minimal bureaucracy for the family.
- We are implementing our Cost of the School Day plans to reduce the financial burden placed on families associated with their children attending school. Reusable water bottles have been issued to all learners; schools have invested in a range of clothing, uniform items and other equipment to ensure everyone has what they need for school; **all costs for music tuition and all other curriculum charges have been scrapped**. A scheme focused on assisting with the cost of the senior school prom was established this year. Over 100 new dresses were donated from a bridal shop along with donations from school staff, families, and communities.

## Case study: Cost of the School Day

### Cost of the School Day Spotlight 1: North Ayrshire Council | CPAG

Our 2019/20 Child Poverty Action Plan and Report was published in October 2020. This identified The Cost of the School Day as a key area of focus for 2020/21 onward. The theme of reducing the Cost of the School Day was also identified as a priority by our Fair for All Poverty Truth Commission work and in the Year of Young People legacy action plan recommendations, both of which are our mechanisms for taking account of our residents' lived experience.

### Cost of the School Day Working Group and Policy

A formal Cost of the School Day (COSD) Working Group was established comprising Elected Members, young people, parents, head teachers and staff of educational establishments, senior officers from the Council and HSCP, CPP partners and officers.

We have previously participated in work with Public Health and Young Scot to develop local approaches to Cost of the School Day, providing a sound basis for the current work, with excellent practice in schools contributing to the working group deliberations.

The aim of the COSD Working Group was to further drive forward a whole systems approach to reducing the cost associated with education. With new whole-system commitments from the Council and its community planning, wider community and business partners.

The objective of the COSD working group was to produce a policy that could be used by all schools, services and partners to embed the agreed principles and to develop a high-level action plan to be taken forward in 2021.



## Key Principles and Plans

The COSD Working Group met four times between November 2020 and March 2021. The group identified some key principles that underpin our approach:

- Relationships
- Good communication
- Trust
- Respect
- Thinking it through – intentions and unintended consequences
- Creativity
- Partnerships

The COSD Working Group has been a collaborative process. The contribution from young people, our school representatives

and partners have been extremely valuable in shaping the overall policy. We have had contributions from national experts and external partners including Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland and their support and guidance has been much appreciated.

This will be underpinned by the following:

- We will commit to adopting the Cost of the School Day Toolkit in every educational establishment, supported by partners.
- We will commit to co-designing actions in relation to the COSD with young people, families and partners.

## North Ayrshire Commitments and Actions

Policy and action plan intentions	Our North Ayrshire Cost of the School Day Commitments
Reduce costs related to going to school.	We will take a sustainable, whole systems approach to reduce and poverty proof costs relating to the school day
Increase participation by children, young people and families.	Children, young people and their families will be at the heart of making decisions and designing policies that affect the cost of the school day.
Minimise income stigma and increase inclusive approaches.	Our schools, services and partners will take a reflective, poverty aware and inclusive approach to making decisions that affect the cost of the school day.
Support families.	We will support families to maximise their income and participate in the life of their school.

## Ongoing Investment in our Commitments

As part of the policy development and our budget commitments, it was agreed that there will be a recurring annual investment of £500,000 which will focus on:

# £150,000

**Food:** £150,000 to extend our school and community food network across all schools to support children and families.

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# £100,000

**Clothing and sustainability:** £100,000 for a School and Family Participatory Budget Investment Fund for educational establishments to respond to local needs in relation to school uniforms, outdoor clothing, sports kit and recycling and reuse equipment.

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# £250,000

**Digital inclusion:** £250,000 in a Digital Families Fund to digitally include 1,000 families each year, providing access to devices and connectivity for online learning and activities, enhancing and guaranteeing sustainability of current investment in devices for home use.

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We now look forward to our second authority wide conference, which will be organised and led by our Youth Services and Education teams and the young people who have been central in the development of the COSD policy and action plan.



### MCR Pathways Mentoring Programme

- North Ayrshire Council and the charity MCR Pathways, are partners in a **mentoring programme** in North Ayrshire schools. The programme expanded almost all secondary schools last year. MCR Pathways helps young people, including those who are care-experienced or have experienced disadvantage, to build aspirations and fulfil their potential. Young people are matched with a volunteer mentor who helps them build confidence, overcome challenges, focus on their education and embark on a positive future.

### Childcare Provision

- We have focussed our capital investment on the refurbishment and extension of the existing early years estate and outdoor learning spaces to ensure that **all eligible children had access to 1140 hours of free childcare** per year. All 41 early years classes and centres have benefited from significant enhancements to the learning environment.

### Transport for Young People

- We are supporting children and young people aged 5-21 years to need to apply for a new or replacement National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot National Entitlement Card (Young Scot NEC) to access free bus travel.

### Period Poverty Initiative

- In 2021 the new Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act was passed which sets out the right to free period products for all those who menstruate. This was to **ensure universal and dignified provision for all** and addresses the complex issue of period poverty. North Ayrshire Council was the first local authority to provide free period products in educational settings. We are now consulting as to how we extend this to community venues.

- Our pledge and commitment in North Ayrshire is to **reduce the stigma around periods** and to adopt a collaborative approach with services, third sector organisations and agencies with particular emphasis on addressing the menstruating needs within marginalised communities. We also provide supplies to public buildings, community centres, libraries and leisure centres.

### Areas of Focus for 2022-23

- We will **complete the roll out of free school meals** for Primary 6 and Primary 7 which requires significant capital work as well as additional planning and logistics.
- **Holiday meal provision** will be a key focus to ensure a wide reach into communities.
- **Targeted summer programmes for families will include employability support** and are being developed for summer 2022, based on the good practice designed in 2021.
- We will introduce new models of provision for **free period products** across schools and communities.
- We will **review Out of School Care provision** and provide support to the sector to prepare for the introduction of the Scottish Government policy on wraparound provision.
- We will have a key focus on **homeless prevention** and keeping children out of temporary accommodation.
- We have a keen focus on **vulnerable families** who are tenants and will seek to intervene early to ensure they have the information, support, welfare benefits and services they require.
- We will consider how to **prioritise the retention of the Education Professional Learning Academy**, given the significant impact of this provision and the very real impact of the pandemic on the learning

outcomes of those children and young people most affected by poverty.

- We will **review our approach to nurture** across our educational establishments.
- We will consider the **relationship between family learning work and other supports for families** across the Council and within the HSCP.
- We will continue to **prioritise mental health and wellbeing** in schools and communities.
- We will develop plans to mainstream the work being undertaken on a **self-sustaining leadership development model** in Education to support our approach to equity and excellence.
- We will consider how to **align schools' PEF resources** to interventions we have shown to be effective in reducing the impact of poverty on learning.
- We will work on **reducing the cost of the school day** and ensuring we make it as easy as possible for families to receive the financial support they are entitled to.
- We will **recruit UNCRC and Child Poverty leads** to coordinate our work in these areas.
- We will complete our **Digital Learning review** to ensure access to devices.
- **The Positive Steps programme** will develop its mentoring approach and will extend to further partners.
- The **Eglinton Garden project** will extend its approach to include a stronger family focus.



## Figure 13:

### Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty performance indicators

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Out of term school meals – number per annum	21,967	22,914	0	Data Pending
Percentage of households in fuel poverty	26%	28%	28%	Data Pending
Percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as homeless sustained for more than a year	81.48%	84.07%	92.48%	86.92%
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (LGBF)	93.7%	94.1%	94.7%	Data Due Feb 2023
Number of new build Council housing units reaching completion (cumulative)	296	381	437	681
Percentage of respondents who have access to email or internet from home	-	90	-	Data Pending
Percentage of respondents who say that food is available but too expensive	-	10%	-	Data Pending
Percentage of lets to homeless	22.38%	29.97%	57.9%	Data Pending
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year – HRA	3.34%	3.65%	5.46%	6.07%

# Future North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26

Following the publication of the wide reaching [Scottish Child Poverty Delivery Plan 'Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26'](#), we will be working during 2022-23 to fully consider activity at a local level and will develop a North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26 to bring us in line with the national Plan.

It is already clear that the scale of our challenges in North Ayrshire and the activities needed to address these will require effective coordination and governance. As such, we are proposing to establish a new North Ayrshire Child Poverty Board.

The proposed terms of reference of the new North Ayrshire Child Poverty Board are:

- To provide leadership in the development and delivery of the Tackling Child Poverty Strategy for North Ayrshire.
- To oversee the implementation of the Child Poverty Action Plan to tackle the inequalities affecting the outcomes for children and families, with a clear focus on early intervention and prevention and a whole system approach.
- To monitor the Child Poverty Action Plan, including a performance framework linked to the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and the Council Plan, on progress in delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- To advise on and agree an annual report for Cabinet approval and submission to Scottish Government.
- To consult with children, young people and families on the priorities and actions within the plan so that they influence the design and delivery of policies and services.

To promote effective partnership and whole system working and information sharing between services and organisations.

Key strategic areas of work will include:

- Greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design.
- Design of services which are human and kind.
- Workforce planning.
- Creating a “no wrong door” culture to improve access to our services.
- Examining how economic development, transport, skills and childcare provision can combine to break down barriers to employment.
- Access to affordable childcare.
- Greater job quality through Fair Work.
- Accessibility.
- Increased uptake of benefits.
- Further progress in removing financial barriers to education (COSD).
- Whole Family Wellbeing, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- Linking adult and children’s services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty; and
- Improved use of data and performance measures in relation to what the local issues are and what actions need to be taken around child poverty.



## Appendix 1: Summary of actions for 2022-23

### Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment

Proposed Action	Owner(s)	Timescale
Progress the regional Fair Employment workstream action plan.	Economic Development	2022-23
Support school leavers and their families to secure positive and sustained destinations, for example through the Youth Guarantee.	Education SDS NAC Employability Services	2022-23
Support access to employment in families where disability is a factor.	Equal Programme	2022-23
Support parents to progress to or improve employment.	NAC Employability Services Service Access CLD	Ongoing
Establish our Digital Growth Fund for Businesses.	Business Team	2022-23
Support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme.	NAC Employability Services	2022-23
Create new Skills for Life work placements.	NAC Employability Services	2022-23
We will progress Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs).	Economic Development	2022-23
Complete the roll out of our literacy and employability programmes.	NAC Employability Services Connected Communities	2022-23
Develop mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project.	TACT	2022-23
Develop partner support for care experienced young people.	Police Scotland Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS)	2022-23
Develop partner support for people in recovery through mentoring, volunteering and work placements.	Police Scotland Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS)	2022-23

## Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits

Proposed Action	Owner(s)	Timescale
Top up the child bridging payments for 2022 school holidays.	North Ayrshire Council	Summer and October 2022 holiday periods.
Improve access to services via "Accessing our Council".	NAC Transformation team	2022-24
Review North Ayrshire Council and HSCP financial inclusion services.	HSCP	End 2022
Identify areas of improvement and create an action plan from the Cost of Pregnancy report.	NHSAAA	2022-23
Establish child/family poverty as a priority area within child health assessments.	NHSAAA	End 2022
Monitor and improve the uptake of the Young Patients Fund.	NHSAAA	End 2022
Prioritise income maximisation and the transfers of claimants from PIP to Scottish Adult Disability Payment and Legacy Benefits onto Universal Credit.	Money Matters	2022-23
Continue awareness raising sessions and poverty impact assessments training for staff on available supports and updates in relation to relevant benefits.	All partners	Ongoing

## Appendix 1 (cont.): Summary of actions for 2022-23

### Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty

Proposed Action	Owner(s)	Timescale
Deliver additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by fuel poverty.	Sustainability Team Money Matters	From 2022
Complete the roll out of free school meals for Primary 6 and Primary 7.	Facilities Management Education	TBC by Scottish Government
Provide holiday meals for families who need it.	Facilities Management Connected Communities Community Partners	Summer and October 2022
Targeted summer childcare and food programmes for families to include employability support.	Connected Communities HSCP Employability Services	Summer and October 2022
Introduce new models of provision for free period products across schools and communities.	Connected Communities Facilities Management	End 2022
Review Out of School Care provision.	Communities and Education Business Team Employability Service	2022-23
Focus on vulnerable families who are tenants.	Housing WRAT and Housing Support teams	Ongoing
Prioritise the retention of the Education Professional Learning Academy.	Education	2022-2026
Review our approach to nurture across our educational establishments.	Education	2022-23
Review the relationship between family learning work and other supports for families.	Education	2022-24
Prioritise mental health and wellbeing in schools and communities.	Communities and Education HSCP Third sector	Ongoing

### Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty

Proposed Action	Owner(s)	Timescale
Continue to facilitate the North Ayrshire share of the £15 million Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022/23 supported by a multi partner steering group.	TSI North Ayrshire	2022-23
Mainstream self-sustaining leadership development model in Education.	Education	2022-24
Align schools' PEF resources to interventions we have shown to be effective in reducing the impact of poverty on learning.	Education	2022-26
Reduce the cost of the school day.	Communities and Education	Ongoing
Complete our Digital Learning review to ensure access to devices.	Communities and Education	End of 2022
The Eglinton Garden project will extend its approach to include a stronger family focus.	NAC Countryside Ranger Service TACT The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Turning Point Scotland Health and Social Care Learning Disability Team North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership.	End of 2022
Recruit UNCRC and Child Poverty leads to coordinate our work in these areas.	North Ayrshire Council	Summer 2022



## Appendix 2: Summary of Performance Indicators

### Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment

Code & Short Name	2018/19		
	Value	Target	Status
Percentage of working age population in employment	69.7%	64.7%	✓
Percentage of people earning less than the living wage (LGBF)	24.3%		?
Percentage of learning disability service users accessing employment support activities	23.88%	30%	!
Number of weeks employment through using Community Benefit clauses	2,093	1,200	✓
Number of Modern Apprentices recruited by North Ayrshire Council, who are care experienced or disabled			
Cumulative number of unemployed disabled residents supported into employment			
Gross weekly earnings – Workforce based	£563.60	-	⚙️
Number of jobs created by businesses in North Ayrshire supported by Business Development.	555	450	✓
Employment rate percentage (women)	64.4%	-	⚙️
Employment rate work limiting disabled	44%	-	⚙️
Women's median gross weekly pay	501		?
Participation Rate for 16-19 year olds (per 100)	90.53%	-	⚙️
Youth employment rate	60%	-	⚙️
Percentage of Unemployed People Assisted into work from Council operated/funded Employability Programmes (source LGBF)	16.97%	-	⚙️
Number of employed modern apprentices recruited to North Ayrshire Council	87	85	✓

#### PI Status

!	Significantly Adrift of Target	✓	On Target	?	Status Not Available
—	Slightly Adrift of Target	⚙️	Data Only (Target intentionally not set)		

	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
	70.2%	70%	✓	69%	64.7%	✓	66.3%	70%	!
	16%	24%	✓	16.2%	23%	✓	16.2%	22%	✓
	23.84%	30%	!	0%	25%	!	25.69%	25%	✓
	2,864	1,500	✓	2,882	1,500		Data Pending		
	10	10	✓	8	10	!	6	10	!
	18	20	!	18	16	✓	34	20	✓
	£550.10	-	⚙️	£599.00	-	⚙️	£625.70	-	⚙️
	524	450	✓	163		?	358		?
	65.5%	-	⚙️	64.2%	-	⚙️	65.4%	-	⚙️
	49.2%	-	⚙️	46.7%	-	⚙️	49%	-	⚙️
	518		?	596		?	Data Pending		
	90.56%	-	⚙️	Data Pending					
	58.3%	-	⚙️	55.6%	-	⚙️	53.2%	-	⚙️
	20.1%	-	⚙️	Data available June 2022	-	⚙️	Data available June 2023	-	⚙️
	54	50	✓	40	50	!	44	40	✓

## Appendix 2 (cont.): Summary of Performance Indicators

### Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits

Code & Short Name	2018/19		
	Value	Target	Status
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Primary)	87.5%	86.25%	✓
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Secondary)	75.45%	71.25%	✓
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (New Claims) days	8.51	18	✓
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (Change of circumstances) days	10.46	11	✓
Speed of Processing (Council Tax Reduction) new claims (days)	28.28	22	!
Speed of processing (Council Tax Reduction) changes of circumstances (days)	7	4.4	!
Number of Crisis Grants Paid	4,579	-	⚙️

#### PI Status

 Significantly Adrift of Target	 On Target	 Status Not Available
 Slightly Adrift of Target	 Data Only (Target intentionally not set)	

	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Primary)	82.72%	87%	—	63.79%	82.75%	!	66.17%	82.5%	!
Percentage uptake of free school meals (Secondary)	61.49%	74.5%	!	44.87%	61.5%	!	51.11%	61%	!
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (New Claims) days	7.38	12	✓	8.89	12	✓	9.45	10	✓
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (Change of circumstances) days	7.63	10	✓	7.59	10	✓	9.24	9	—
Speed of Processing (Council Tax Reduction) new claims (days)	24.96	26	✓	19.05	26	✓	25.59	26	✓
Speed of processing (Council Tax Reduction) changes of circumstances (days)	5.8	7	✓	5.13	7	✓	5.95	7	✓
Number of Crisis Grants Paid	3,856	-	⚙️	3,539	-	⚙️	2,460	-	⚙️

## Appendix 2 (cont.): Summary of Performance Indicators

### Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty

Code & Short Name	2018/19		
	Value	Target	Status
Out of term school meals – number per annum	21,967	-	
Percentage of households in fuel poverty	26%	26%	
Percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as homeless sustained for more than a year	81.48%	82%	
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (LGBF)	93.7%	-	
Number of new build Council housing units reaching completion (cumulative)	296	296	
Percentage of respondents who have access to email or internet from home			
Percentage of respondents who say that food is available but too expensive			
Percentage of lets to homeless	22.38%	25%	
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year – HRA	3.34%	4.5%	

#### PI Status

	Significantly Adrift of Target		On Target		Status Not Available
	Slightly Adrift of Target		Data Only (Target intentionally not set)		

2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
22,914	-		(Vouchers provided)	-		Data Pending		
28%	25.5%		28%	28%		Data Pending	28%	
84.07%	82%		92.48%	85%		86.92%	85%	
94.1%	97%		94.7%	97%		Data Pending	97%	
381	351		437	755		681	630	
90	85		Data Pending					
10%	7%		Data Pending					
29.97%	-		57.9%	-		Data Pending		
3.65%	4.25%		5.46%	4.25%		6.07%	5.19%	















North Ayrshire  
Community Planning Partnership



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Air a Tuath