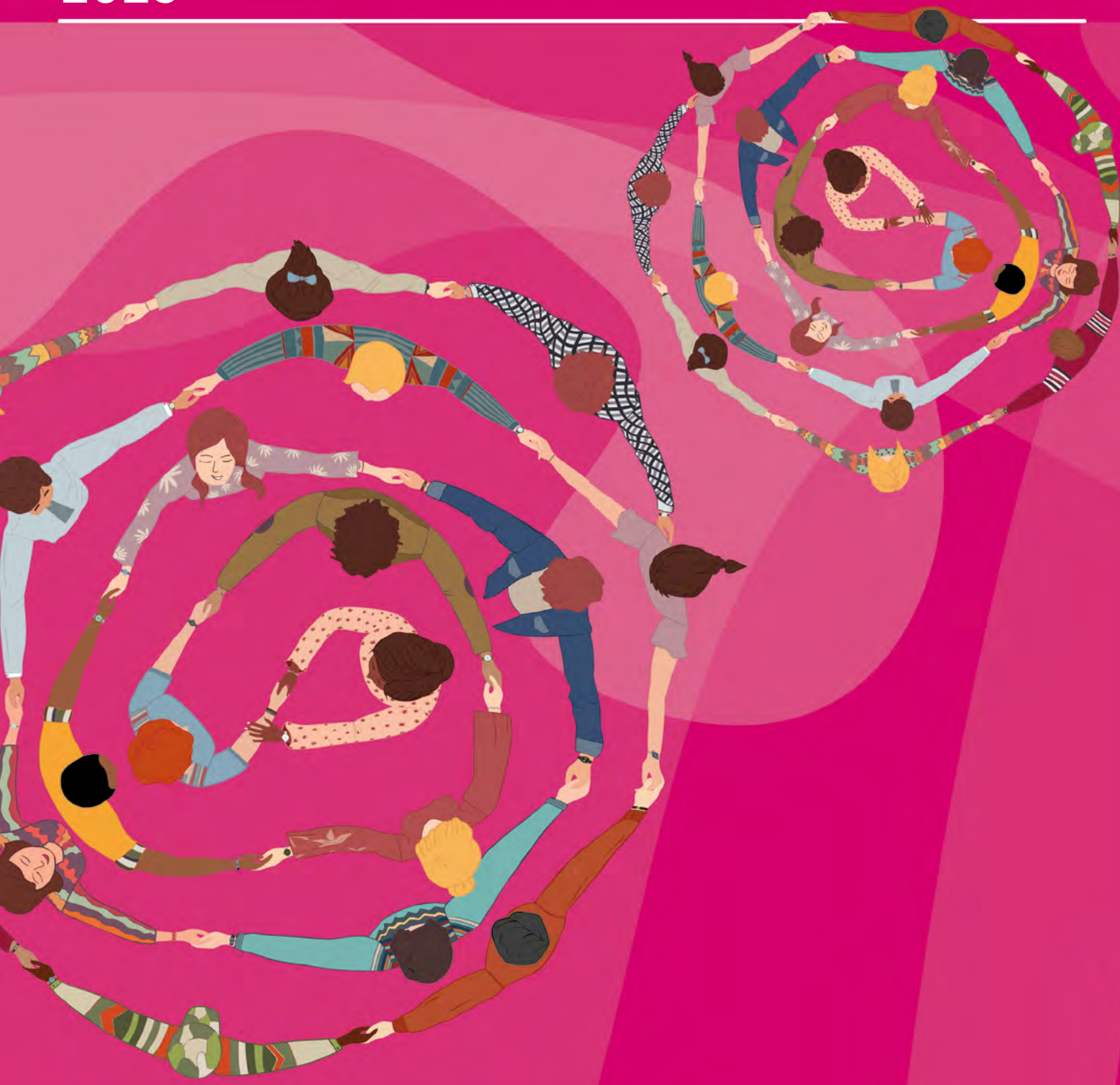

North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan

2023



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Introduction

Addressing child poverty, in the context of the current cost of living crisis, is one of the key priorities for North Ayrshire. Figures released by [End Child Poverty in Scotland](#) in July 2022 indicate there are 5,394 or 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire living in poverty, which is the second highest level of Child Poverty in Scotland.

We are lucky to have strong partnership working across North Ayrshire partners to deliver a range of interventions and supports to help children and families. This includes North Ayrshire Council's Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board, which includes NHS Ayrshire & Arran; North Ayrshire's Third Sector Interface; and (HSCP) North Ayrshire's Health and Social Care Partnership. This Board is supported through a three-year £1.4m Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living fund that was allocated by the Council in the 2023-24 budget.

Engaging with North Ayrshire residents and listening to the experiences of people impacted by poverty underpin our approach to co-producing actions to tackle this issue. To support this work a series of mini-enquiries took place to inform plans. These focused on key issues such as employability, food, childcare, rural & island communities, and a 'no wrong door' approach within North Ayrshire.

This summary report provides an overview of a sample of actions that have taken place between April 2022 – March 2023 to address Child Poverty in North Ayrshire.

We have made a significant impact on the lives of our families through our joint work to date and we are committed to intensifying our efforts over the next phase of our work through our ambitious Child Poverty strategy for 2023-26.

Councillor Marie Burns

Leader of North Ayrshire Council

Craig Hatton

Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council

Claire Burden

Chief Executive of NHS Ayrshire and Arran

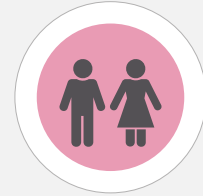
Local context



In 2021/22, **29% of children in North Ayrshire are living in poverty**. 24.7% in 2020/21. (End Child Poverty in Scotland, July 2022)



North Ayrshire currently has the **second highest levels of child poverty in Scotland**. (End Child Poverty in Scotland, July 2022)



North Ayrshire has a total population of 134,220 people, where **47.5% are male and 52.5% are female** (NCR Scotland, 2021)

4.4%

Over the next 10 years, the population of **North Ayrshire is projected to decrease by 4.4%** with the average age of the population projected to increase. (NCR Scotland, 2021)



23.3% of North Ayrshire's population is aged over 65. (NCR Scotland, 2021)

9.7%

9.7% of people live in the least deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile with 40.9% living in the most deprived SIMD quintile.



North Ayrshire has the **7th lowest employment rate in Scotland**, which has improved by 8.7% since the previous data release. (NOMIS)



The North Ayrshire rate for **benefits claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%**, which is significantly higher than the Scottish average of 3.3%.



North Ayrshire has **significantly higher levels of youth unemployment at 6.4%** (youth claimant count), the 2nd highest rate in Scotland and is significantly higher than the Scotland average rate of 4.1%.

50.4%

50.4% of children were in working households in North Ayrshire in October 2022 in comparison with Scottish average of 60.9% (ONS, 2022)



11.7% of employees (18+) were earning less than the Living Wage (2021) compared to the Scottish average of 14.4% (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (www.gov.scot)

North Ayrshire: Leadership of Tackling Child Poverty

At its meeting on 7 June 2022, Cabinet agreed to the creation of a **new Tackling Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board chaired by the Leader of the Council** and supported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran, the North Ayrshire HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning Partners.

The Board is developing the **North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26** to maximise learning and guidance from the Scottish Government's National Plan '**Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026**'. The Board has already demonstrated that one of its key strategic priorities is to ensure greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design.

With the escalation in cost of living concerns this board now also oversees the Council's response to the current cost of living crisis. The board is chaired by the Council Leader. The strategic approach to the themes in relation to child poverty and cost of living are agreed by the Board and explored in conjunction with Community Planning, third sector partners and residents through a series of innovative mini enquiries.

North Ayrshire Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board: Terms of Reference

- 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.

We've listened to partners and residents and focused on how we improve the whole system through a "No Wrong Door" approach – how public services and partners can all be responsible for ensuring that we make the right support available.

North Ayrshire: Leadership of Tackling Child Poverty (continued)

The Cost of Living themes are as follows:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Energy Advice and Support |
| 2 | Food, Clothing and Essentials |
| 3 | Finance and Benefits |
| 4 | Children and Families |
| 5 | Health and Wellbeing |
| 6 | Business and Community including transport to work |
| 7 | Support for Communities |
| 8 | Employee Wellbeing |

We need to continue to work more closely with communities – and as a result we've also created our Community Planning Partnership Wellbeing Alliance – where a North Ayrshire wide approach to early intervention and prevention activities are led by KA Leisure and partners. This enables people to have access to support and opportunities to improve their health as close to home as possible.

Mini-Enquiries

Our key commitment is to ensure that residents' needs and views inform our approach to child poverty and cost of living interventions has been strengthened by the introduction of a range of innovative mini enquiries, which have become a key part of our Participation Strategy. Under the leadership of the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board, to date we have explored the following themes, agreed partnership action plans and are progressing the associated actions, which form part of the ongoing child poverty strategy:

- No Wrong Door
- Employability
- Food
- Childcare
- Place-based
 - Arran
 - Cumbrae

Two place-based mini-enquiries have been concluded on Arran and Cumbrae to align with the Scottish Government Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund. Further locality mini-enquiries are planned for August 2023.

This local focus on child poverty reinforces the data and priorities which have emerged from the thematic discussions and utilises the social capital in our communities to help address the significant inequalities that exist in our communities in North Ayrshire.

We need to continue to work more closely with communities – and as a result we've also created our Community Planning Partnership Wellbeing Alliance – where a North Ayrshire wide approach to early intervention and prevention activities are led by KA Leisure and partners. This enables people to have access to support and opportunities to improve their health as close to home as possible.



North Ayrshire Priorities

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.

The North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership recently refreshed the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan). The Partnership Plan has an overarching focus on reducing inequalities through partnership working and has three key priorities. These are:

Wellbeing

Reduce inequalities by targeted support to improve individual, family and community health and wellbeing by addressing inequalities and enabling community wellbeing.

Work

Address the causes and effects of poverty through a strong local economy and skills base by increasing employment, developing volunteering and providing better support for young people to develop the skills they need to play a strong role in our local economy.

World

Work more closely and effectively together to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change by working together to increase active travel and carbon literacy with our organisations and communities.

There are several targeted outcomes within the Partnership Plan that focus on reducing inequalities and improving the wellbeing of children, young people and families through partnership working. These include a focus on financial supports, employability and health and wellbeing.

North Ayrshire Priorities (continued)

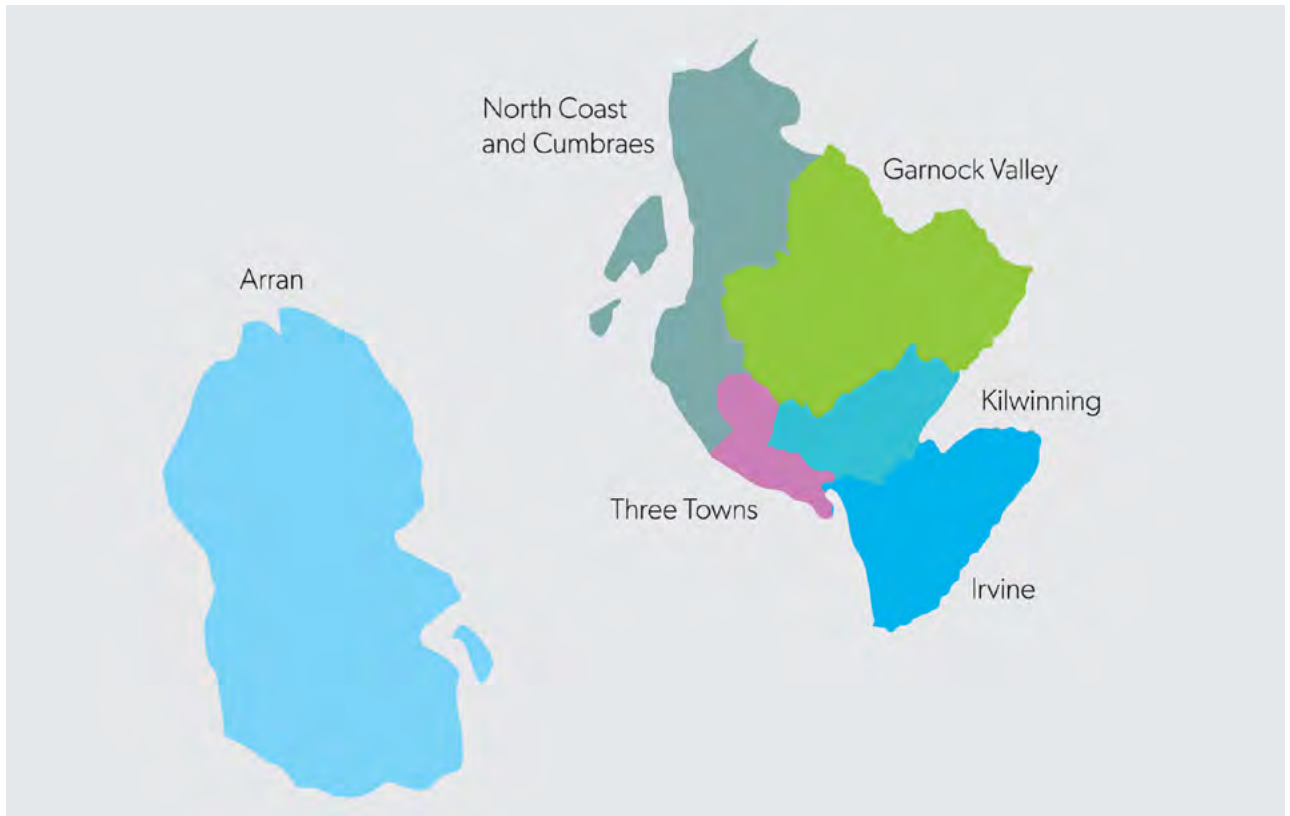
Our cross-cutting themes influence our approach to these priorities:

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.



North Ayrshire Priorities (continued)



Our Locality Partnerships are the means by which we fulfil duties under the Community Empowerment Act to have locality arrangements. There are six Locality Partnerships in North Ayrshire which cover the whole local authority, based on targeted responses to inequalities supported by the social capital of our wider communities.

In the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Survey on Local Outcomes Improvement Plan Report, 3rd February 2022, the overall priorities relating to supporting children and to the local economy were most likely to appear in respondents' top three priorities (this being the case in 57% and 51% of cases respectively). The supporting children priority received the highest share of respondents' selections for the top overall priority (35%). The priorities relating to reducing poverty and to supporting communities then sit slightly below this, with 36% and 35% respectively placing these in their top three priorities.

North Ayrshire Priorities (continued)

What did North Ayrshire residents say?

We asked local people to rank 9 statements. While all are important for North Ayrshire we wanted to know which areas we can do better on, and where we can make the biggest impact as a local partnership.

- 1 Supporting children to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can reach their full potential
- 2 Creating a local economy where people can access good jobs with fair pay and conditions
- 3 Reducing poverty

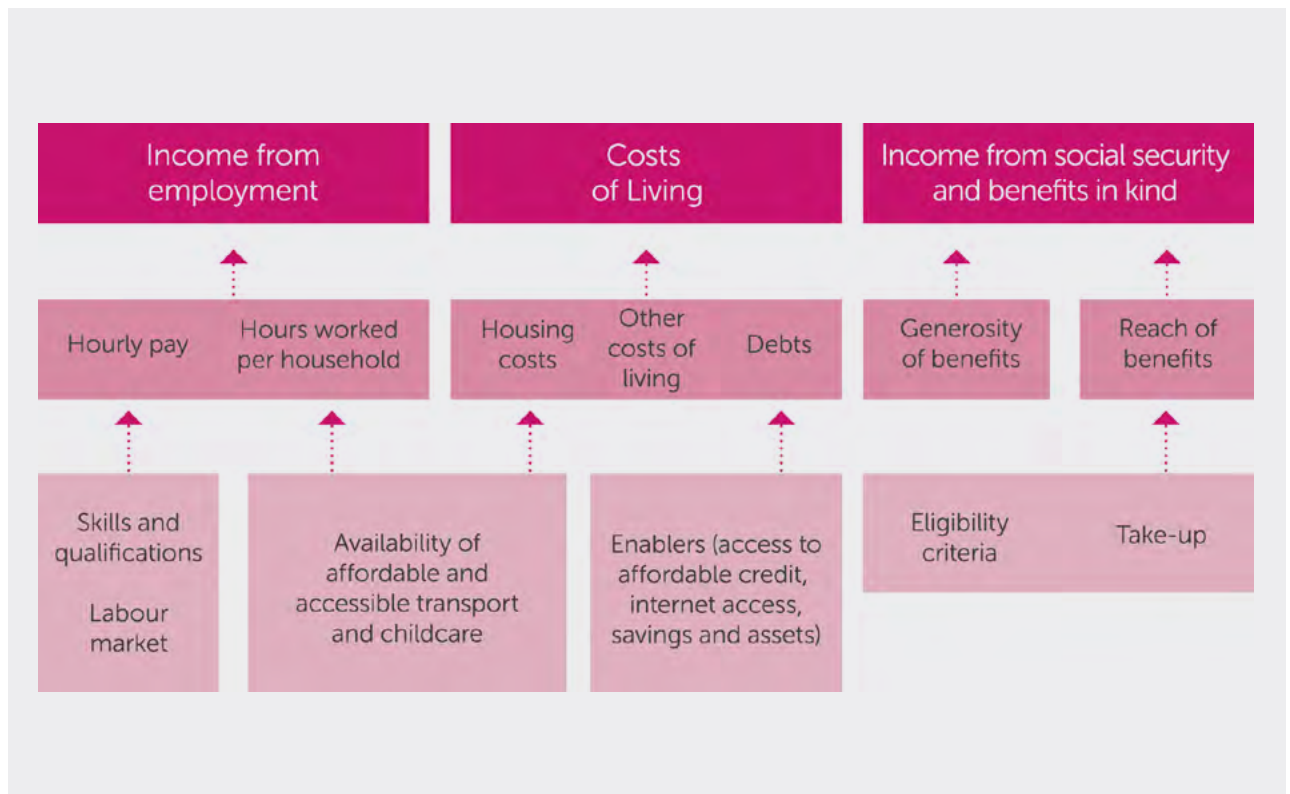
Understanding the needs, circumstances and aspirations of people living in North Ayrshire

In developing this plan we were influenced both by the feedback from local people on what they think the key issues are as well as a range of statistics and analysis. This included a Strategic Needs Assessment written by Public Health Scotland which is available on our website.



North Ayrshire Priorities (continued)

There is a strong evidence base that helps us to understand the 'drivers' of child poverty, which are the reasons why families with children are in poverty. Scottish Government's '[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#)', which sets out ambitious targets to reduce child poverty in Scotland, promotes the direct drivers of poverty as falling into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living, and income from social security. This summary report provides an overview of progress made against actions linked to each driver.



1. Maximising Income From Employment

Action for 2022-23	Progress
<p>Support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprentice (MA) Programme, including young people with a disability and who are care experienced.</p>	<p>Over a 3-year period, 151 new MAs were recruited, achieving the Council's set target. The MA programme supports the Council's future workforce planning programme, successfully recruiting local people to gain work experience and a qualification.</p> <p>In 2021-22, North Ayrshire Council, as a corporate parent and a Disability Leader, recruited 24% (compared to the national average of 13.3%) young people with a disability and 6% (compared to the national average of 2%) who were care experienced to their MA Programme.</p>
<p>Support parents to progress to or improve employment.</p>	<p>A Parental Employment Manager has been appointed to ensure the greatest possible impact of our work through the Parental Employability Support Fund and other initiatives.</p> <p>Our Skills for Life model has been extended to include paid work experience within the Third Sector and has supported over 120 unemployed people to secure employment.</p> <p>The We Work for Families (WWFF) partnership offers person-centred employability support to parents/carers who are unemployed or on low income and supports individuals to overcome barriers to training, education and employment and works alongside the individual for the duration of their employability journey.</p> <p>Since April 2022, 78 parents/carers have been referred to We Work For Families. Since 2017, over 800 parents/carers have been referred for employability support.</p> <p>We currently fund We Work for Families as our specialist employability support for parents who have had referrals exclusively from Health Visitors. We are extending these pathways to support parents accessing 1,140 early learning and childcare hours.</p> <p>We are also working with Employability and Ayrshire College to offer apprenticeships to existing staff and are currently progressing Hospitality qualification and we have around 12 people interested in this training opportunity.</p>

1. Maximising Income From Employment (continued)

Action for 2022-23	Progress
Develop mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners employability project.	<p>NAC's Employability Team is working closely with The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) to deliver a Positive Pathways programme specifically for parents to access volunteering to develop work experience using the Steps Programme to build confidence.</p> <p>TACT, one half of North Ayrshire's Third Sector Interface, employ two sessional Project Mentors to work alongside the Positive Steps Team. They have one Project Mentor delivering our Cooking on a Budget Programme, working with 15 individuals.</p> <p>This support comprises of support with budgeting and nutritional advice, as well as teaching basic cooking skills. Positive Steps are keen to continue to develop this role and are looking to implement Mindfulness Sessions soon.</p>
Support access to employment in families where disability is a factor.	<p>The Equal: Supported Employment programme helps people with disabilities or long-term health conditions in North Ayrshire get back into work. The focus on getting people involved in something they enjoy, so they learn other skills like communications skills while having fun. Equal currently has 124 active clients, has helped 26 clients into work so far this year and has referred 70 onto additional services.</p>

1. Maximising Income From Employment (continued)

Case study:

We Work For Families

Jane, a lone parent, registered with We Work for Families in November 2021, after making a self-referral from one of our outreach days. Jane lives in an area recognised as deprived in the SIMD in a single adult household, has a long-term physical condition, is long-term unemployed, a primary carer of three children in a private let, has children under 18 and is the primary carer of child with a disability.

Since leaving school Jane has only worked for two months in a work placement in 2007. She left to have her eldest son and has been his registered carer since due to his disabilities. She has good

communication skills and no problems with her literacy. She had internet and the use of her smart phone but did not have access to a device to complete online training so We Work for Families were able to provide a chrome-book through Connecting Scotland.

“Having the chrome book made it easier to complete online training. I was excited that I could do this from my home and didn't need to go anywhere to do it. I am so pleased that I have some qualifications that can be put on my CV”.



1. Maximising Income From Employment (continued)

At the time of registration Jane was keen to work towards gaining employment after her youngest son went to school (August 2022). We Work for Families has supported her by having calls and keeping in touch through WhatsApp, and this has increased her confidence as she worked through the employability toolkit in preparation for August 2022.

“At first I didn’t really know too much about the programme but when Tracey explained it to me, I thought this is something that could help me”



Jane has since completed numerous on-line modules in Care using her chrome-book and has gained accredited qualifications, which have been added to the CV that We Work for Families help to create. We Work for Families discussed with Jane that childcare would be required if she were to gain employment outside of school hours. Jane said she would be happy to look into using a childminder to care for the children but ideally wanted to work during school hours.

Actions for 2023-24 can be found at appendix 1.

2. Maximising Income From Benefits

Action for 2022-23	Progress
<p>Top up the child bridging payments for 2022 school holidays.</p>	<p>The scheduled summer Child Bridging Payment of £130 was increased to £230 (additional £100 payment by North Ayrshire Council) and eligibility for the £100 payment was extended to low-income families of children of pre-school age.</p> <p>Feedback indicates that the timing and value of the payments has made a real difference to families, especially as school holidays and colder weather impact on household bills. The recent increase in the Scottish Child Payment has been implemented and therefore the purpose of the bridging payment has ended.</p>
<p>Improve access to services via “Accessing our Council” and by engaging with our residents.</p>	<p>North Ayrshire customer service team has been increasingly focused on spending time supporting families to make online applications for benefits or support. This includes Early Learning and Childcare placements, access to Best Start grants and following up with issues relating to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) or Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>Automation has been used successfully for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) which allows information regarding income received from DWP to be automatically input to the Council Tax system and calculate the CTR award. In addition, improvements have streamlined the Council’s top 15 online services to improve the online journey of customers.</p> <p>The recent launch of the new customer online account ‘My NAC’ uses the national My Account system to authenticate customers and will offer a simple and secure way to access a range of Scottish public services online. The new account will also allow customers to see the status and history of all their cases as well as access their existing Council Tax and Housing Rent Online accounts.</p>

2. Maximising Income From Benefits (continued)

Action for 2022-23	Progress
Review North Ayrshire Council and HSCP financial inclusion services.	<p>North Ayrshire Council has agreed a new Financial Inclusion Strategy that reflects the impact of the current economic situation on our services and prioritises an immediate response to meet the needs of people in our communities in 2023-24. The interim plan for 2023-24 will focus on bringing together the main local authority and HSCP-funded welfare rights and debt advice service. Over the next year, a full consultation process will be undertaken with the public and key stakeholders, along with a detailed mapping and analysis of local financial inclusion services provision. Through this process, the strategy will be reviewed and refreshed for 2024-28, and a longer-term, cross-sector delivery plan put in place encompassing wider financial inclusion services.</p> <p>We revised our Financial Inclusion pathway in June 2022 considering the cost of living crisis. The revised pathway now considers benefits advice; debt advice; energy advice; and employability. Health Visitors are now asked to consider financial inclusion/poverty in the same way as Gender Based Violence and take an approach of "routine enquiry" with all families. Many families we are supporting have no experience of navigating the benefits system or in claiming for support. Since April 2022, 160 families have been referred directly for support and a significant more signposted to agencies linked to benefits, debt, and energy bills.</p>
Establish child/family poverty as a priority area within child health assessments.	<p>In June 2022, Universal Early Years Services reviewed and refreshed the Financial Inclusion Pathway which was introduced in 2019. The Pathway has now been extended to include support for debt advice and employability, as well as continuing to provide pathways for benefits and energy advice. The revised Pathway was launched through a Protected Learning Session for all North Ayrshire health visiting and school nursing staff. During 2022/23, 154 referrals were made to a range of services including We Work For Families, SALUS, Money Matters, CHAP, Better Off North Ayrshire, Home Energy Scotland, CHA Lemon Aid.</p>

2. Maximising Income From Benefits (continued)

Action for 2022-23	Progress
<p>Prioritise income maximisation and the transfers of claimants from Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to Scottish Adult Disability Payment and Legacy Benefits onto Universal Credit.</p>	<p>The merger of the Money Matters and the Welfare Reform and Advice Team has now commenced with options currently being explored to develop and improve existing services. In the short term, the priority is to maximise capacity to meet the increasing demand for welfare rights advice services with several options currently being explored, including the development of referral pathways across the sectors to manage demand. The Money Matters team generated over £18.4m in financial gains for North Ayrshire residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits with 5,823 combined enquiries and referrals in 2022-23 compared to 4,958 in 2021-22.</p> <p>Welfare Rights support was also provided in a range of community settings including schools and GP surgeries. Financial gains of £468,550 were generated for North Ayrshire families through welfare right support provided across secondary schools. A Welfare Rights service was also delivered in partnership with nine GP surgeries which resulted in financial gains of over £945,000.</p>

2. Maximising Income From Benefits (continued)

Case study: Money Matters

Our Welfare Rights Officer assisted a family with three children, two of whom were disabled. They were in receipt of tax credits, income from one parent who worked, carers allowance and Scottish Child Payment. We were able to carry out a benefit check and assisted them with income maximisation as well as a grant for energy debt they had:

- We assisted to make a Universal Credit claim which was awarded at £866.04 per month after earned income deduction (tax credits were only £50 per week)
- An award of Council Tax Reduction for 22/23 £387.31, CTR for this year of £498.16.
- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) for 1 bedroom at £48.58 per month
- A £1700 grant was awarded for energy.

The tenant had also got into rent arrears as her partner was off sick from work for a few months and can't believe the difference it has made to them by getting a benefit check and is surprised she gets all this as her husband was back to work at time of the benefit check.

**Overall achievement:
Increase of £714.62 per month
and one-off amount
of £2,585.47 in total**

There is also ongoing income maximisation pending for Child Disability Payment for one child and Universal Credit (UC) work capability assessment with expected award of £1,205.56 per month bringing total monthly increase to £1,920.18.

Actions for 2023-24 can be found at appendix 1.



3. Reducing Household Costs And Mitigating The Effects Of Poverty

Action for 2022-23	Progress
<p>Deliver additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by fuel poverty</p>	<p>North Ayrshire Council has secured £2.2m for the Energy Smart Scheme over the past year with a further £254,000 allocated to the youth Council in the March 2023 budget. The key objective is to support residents of North Ayrshire through the cost of living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions and providing local employment opportunities as part of the programme.</p> <p>There are three elements of the Council's Energy Smart Programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The launch of a partnership with the Energy Agency to signpost households to free and impartial advice through the Home Energy Scotland helpline. The partnership was launched on 19 September 2022 and 1,991 North Ayrshire households have received energy advice since that date to help lower their bills. 2. The creation of a £450,000 fund to offer one-off emergency support payments towards energy bills for low-income families. To date, the Council has supported over 1,300 households facing pressure from rising utility bills through the Emergency Smart Emergency Support scheme. 3. The creation of a £1.726 million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills. The initial phase of support launched in January 2023, targeting low-income households who may be eligible for top-up loft insulation. The second phase of support is in the process of being procured and will offer a wider range of energy efficiency measures and is anticipated to launch in June 2023. In addition, we have also provided 900 LED bulbs to the 14 food larders to help reduce energy consumption in homes.

3. Reducing Household Costs And Mitigating The Effects Of Poverty (continued)

Action for 2022-23	Progress
Complete the roll out of free school meals for Primary 6 and Primary 7	<p>£3.9m of Scottish Government funding has been provided in the financial year 2022/23 to support the continued roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) for Primary 4 & Primary 5 children. Uptake of school meals has increased for primary 4 & primary 5 children following the UFSM provision roll out. Scottish Government is also providing a further £570,000 in 2023/24 to begin the roll out of free school meals to all P6 and P7 pupils whose families are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment.</p> <p>Food provision is recognised as an important part of the cost of the school day. The Council's Cost of the School Day (COSD) funding was used last year to purchase reusable water bottles for every pupil across the school estate. This year we introduced a Winter Warmer breakfast from December 2022 until March 2023 in all secondary schools. This provided hot and cold breakfast options free of charge and resulted in over 66,000 breakfasts being served across all nine secondary schools. For pupils unable to access breakfast in school due to school transport, a free snack item was available at morning break..</p>
Introduce new models of provision for free period products across schools and communities.	<p>North Ayrshire Council is proud to be the first local authority in the UK to launch the free provision of period products in schools. We continue to develop and improve this model based on feedback from both our initial and future consultations with school pupils and education leads. Products are available in both primary and secondary school settings in a convenient, dignified and discreet way. Ongoing support will be made available to all children and young people to ensure they have the knowledge and confidence of their entitlement to access a range of products whenever they need them.</p> <p>Period products are available free of charge from all Fairer Food Community Larders in North Ayrshire and can be picked up by existing or new members as part of weekly shopping experiences. Our larder sites are strategically placed across our authority and offer dignified access to a range of products. Citizens can also access a range of products from all council buildings including libraries, halls and centres. Additional targeted approaches are also in place providing key staff such as Community Link workers with period products which can be provided to clients as a quick and direct intervention to combat period poverty. A range of platforms have been used to promote our period product provision which includes signage on a range of Council vehicles and an app.</p>

3. Reducing Household Costs And Mitigating The Effects Of Poverty (continued)

Case study:

Cost of the School Day (COSD)

Work continues to minimise the cost of living crisis' impact on learners across education establishments in North Ayrshire. Loudoun-Montgomery Primary School in Irvine, which is in one of North Ayrshire's highest areas of deprivation, has taken positive steps to remove financial barriers linked to the school day while maximising learning opportunities. The school has considered several areas where the cost of the school day can be addressed such as healthy eating, uniforms, extra-curricular activities, trips, home learning and event days. Some specific actions include recycling and reusing uniforms; promoting unbranded uniforms; providing family and curriculum cooking experiences; providing a healthy breakfast club and morning snack; enabling family learning experiences at home through providing activities and craft materials; and removing or significantly reducing the cost of school trips and charity event days for all families.

St Winning's Primary School in Kilwinning, where almost half of all pupils are registered for a Footwear and Clothing Grant and 75% of pupils live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) highest deciles 1 & 2, provides another example of positive action taken to reduce the cost of the school day. This includes pupil led championing of the importance of addressing the cost of the school day through attending North Ayrshire's COSD conference and pupil leadership groups. All pupils are members of Pupil Leadership Groups with these groups meeting monthly to discuss ideas and take forward initiatives within the school, including COSD.

Loudoun-Montgomery's Head Teacher Paul Bleakley believes:
"our child centred focus on reducing the cost of the school day enhances our ability to broaden our learners' experiences, deliver a wider curriculum and extend learning beyond the school day. Our focus on ensuring that pupils look and feel their best and the provision of a healthy breakfast, snack and lunch all play a significant part in setting up our children to embrace the learning ahead of them each day."

3. Reducing Household Costs And Mitigating The Effects Of Poverty (continued)

Similar to Loudoun-Montgomery, COSD funding has been used to purchase school uniform and provide a new school jumper for every pupil this year. This follows partnership working with the Parent Council to provide greater flexibility within the school's uniform policy to lower costs for families. This work sits alongside an established Uniform Swap Shop that is available all year round for families to access, with provision of winter jackets, hats, and scarves.

A review of school and extra-curricular activities has resulted in the removal of several financial barriers for families.

This has included making the Christmas Fayre free to access; heavily subsidising or fully funding school trips for families most in need; and the removal of dress up days as this was shown to have resulted in a decline in pupil attendance that could be attributed to creating an unnecessary financial burden for parents and carers. The school continues to link learning to events such as World Book Day but without costumes.

Actions for 2023-24 can be found at appendix 1.



