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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

27<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## Cabinet

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**Title:** Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24

**Purpose:** To consider and approve the Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24.

**Recommendation:** That Cabinet agrees to publication of the Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24 provided at Appendix 1 and its submission to the Scottish Government.

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## 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire currently has the second highest rates of child poverty in Scotland at 29.2%. This means that over 7,000 of our children, young people and their families may be struggling to access everyday essentials including food, clothing and transport. These figures are the most recent available and relate to 2022/23.
- 1.2 In June 2023, Cabinet approved our Child Poverty Plan 2023-26, a joint plan with our partners. Key actions from this plan are led by our Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board. The Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24 at Appendix 1 is the first annual update on activity.
- 1.3 Under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, we have a statutory duty to jointly publish a local child poverty action report with NHS Ayrshire and Arran. The report needs to meet particular criteria, including how we are seeking to reduce child poverty and describe any income maximisation measures taken to support particularly vulnerable groups. Under the legislation the report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable following year end.
- 1.4 The vulnerable groups are known as the six priority family groups and are outlined in the Scottish Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26 "[Best Start, Bright Futures](#)". They are:
  - Lone parents
  - Families with three or more children
  - Families where the youngest child is under 1 year old
  - Mothers aged under 25 years
  - Households with someone with a disability
  - Minority ethnic families

1.5 We continue to focus our resources on targeting these six priority groups and measuring the impact of our interventions. The report at Appendix 1 sets out activities undertaken by the Council and partners during 2023/24 to tackle child poverty and the areas of focus for 2024/25 for approval for publication and submission to the Scottish Government.

## **2 Background**

2.1 Addressing child poverty is an extremely complex and challenging issue. It is essential that we work with our partners in the public, private and third sectors and directly with our communities to create interventions that are informed by experience and delivered in trusted spaces with dignity.

2.2 Our Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-26 was therefore developed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board and is based on lived experience captured through a series of mini-enquiries with communities. The resulting activities are co-designed and delivered with partners and communities across North Ayrshire.

2.3 Our Council Plan's vision is 'a North Ayrshire that is fair for all'. Within the 'Wellbeing' priority particularly we look to address child poverty, though, due to the complexity, activity is included across all four priorities. In addition, Community Wealth Building is woven throughout our Council Plan to help support a sustainable path out of poverty for our residents.

2.4 This Child Poverty Progress Report at Appendix 1 contains progress on activities undertaken across our services and partners. This has been captured through the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board including a partners' workshop in March 2024.

2.5 Public Health Scotland in partnership with the Improvement Service provided feedback on all local authority child poverty plans published in 2023. This feedback has been used to help shape our reporting approach for 2023-24. Overall feedback on our activity and report was positive, with Public Health Scotland particularly interested in the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board approach.

2.6 The report covers a large range of activities progressed to address child poverty in North Ayrshire during 2023/24. These are focused on the three main drivers of poverty – income from employment, cost of living and income from social security and benefits in kind. Some of the key activities include:

- During 2023/24 our Money Matters Team supported residents to access £20,081,590 in financial gains from 5,739 referrals.
- The Child Poverty and Early Intervention Fund has allocated:
  - £50,000 to support our No Wrong Door initiative. In addition, we secured £78k from Scottish Government's Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund to progress work on North Ayrshire's Single Shared Assessment (NASSA) project. This will improve access to services and support a whole system approach to addressing residents' needs.

- £61,322 to remove school meal debt.
  - £50,000 to explore initiatives to support travel for training and employment. This includes an innovative pilot to support parents who cannot afford driving lessons to help them into employment.
  - £50,000 committed to the provision of computer equipment for our communities to tackle digital exclusion.
  - £20,000 to explore sustainable childcare provision (following a mini-enquiry in 2023).
  - £20,000 for our targeted Active Schools programme, removing barriers to access.
- To date over 7,000 households have engaged with energy advice and c.£600k has been disbursed through Emergency Support payments for households struggling with high utility bills as part of the Council's Energy Smart programme.
  - Led by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board, our Council and our partners including NHS Ayrshire and Arran and our Third Sector are working very closely to share resources and co-deliver services. For example, through delivery of the Multiply Project with CHAP, community food provision, our "Step Into" employability programmes and various poverty related Community Investment Fund projects.
  - 130 families are benefiting from increased household income as a parent has been supported into employment by our services.
  - Real lived experience remains at the heart of policy and activities. A Parent Group has been established in Employability and a Champion's Board network of over 30 care experienced young people has been developed. This is in addition to established approaches such as our Joint Cabinet (attended by 110 young people).
  - Active Schools' extracurricular clubs are free of charge across all school settings, supporting over 9,000 young people across the last year to be active.
  - Cabinet approved the extension of our free school meals. This will provide a healthy mid-morning snack for all primary school children and availability of ambient food on a temporary basis during 2024/25. This links to the next phase of national expansion of free school meals to those in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment in 2025.
  - 20,037 young people have a valid Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) in North Ayrshire. This represents 90% of the estimated population of 11 to 25 year-olds in the area.
  - An interactive map showing all food with dignity sites in North Ayrshire has been established to better direct residents to support.

- We continue to actively work to process claims as quickly as possible. As at February, £1,301,497 had been provided through Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants, a total of 4,642 awards.

2.7 The key areas of focus for 2024/25 include the following:

- We will carry out a self-assessment exercise during 2024-25 to further develop our Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board approach.
- We will continue the development of our No Wrong Door approach, working with our partners and communities to ensure our residents are able to access the support they need as effectively as possible.
- We will progress our Financial Inclusion Strategy to more effectively support our residents across services and partners.
- We will further improve our data gathering on the six priority families to better target our resources.
- Working in partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran we will develop an Infant Food Poverty care pathway in North Ayrshire which will include a process for the safe provision of infant formula in emergency situations.
- We will continue to develop the Community Planning Partnership website as a hub for community information.
- We will continue to explore the potential for a community transport pathfinder following ongoing survey work and a Transport Needs Analysis.
- We will continue to develop our work on improving out of school care provision.

2.8 There is still a great deal of work to progress in order to address child poverty in North Ayrshire. Our central focus remains on working with our partners and communities to ensure our residents' experiences inform our approach, we can learn from each activity and then further improve outcomes to ensure North Ayrshire is fair for all.

### **3 Proposals**

3.1 That Cabinet agrees to publication of the Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24 provided at Appendix 1 and its submission to the Scottish Government.

## **4 Implications / Socio-economic Duty**

### **Financial**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Human Resources**

4.2 There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report.

### **Legal**

4.3 This report meets our statutory obligations under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 The activity outlined within the Progress Report at Appendix 1 actively seeks to improve the socio-economic outcomes for North Ayrshire residents.

### **Climate Change and Carbon**

4.5 There are no climate change or carbon implications arising from this report.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 The Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report 2023-24 directly demonstrates activity that contributes to our four Council Plan priorities.

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 A range of activity was undertaken with partners during 2023-24, as outlined in the report at Appendix 1, which contributed to our Community Wealth Building approach in particular the 'fair employment' pillar.

### **Consultation**

4.8 Members of the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board including NHS Ayrshire and Arran, TACT, Arran CVS and the HSCP contributed to the content of this report.

Aileen Craig  
Head of Service (Democratic)

For further information please contact **Isla Hardy, Senior Manager (Policy, Performance and Democracy)**, on 01294 324035 or email [IslaHardy@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:IslaHardy@north-ayrshire.gov.uk).

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# Child Poverty Action Plan Progress Report

## 2023-24

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# Welcome

Welcome to our progress report for 2023-24. Currently, North Ayrshire has the second highest percentage of children living in poverty across local authorities in Scotland. This report outlines how we are working with our partners together to find sustainable routes out of poverty for our children and their families. We will explain the main activities we are undertaking to address child poverty as set out in our Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-26.

Data released by End Child Poverty in June 2023 shows 29.2% of our children in North Ayrshire lived in poverty during 2022-23 (most recent figures available). This means over 7,000 of our children, young people and their families may be struggling every day to access essentials such as food, sanitary products, clothing and transport - limiting their ability to live to their full potential. The impact this can have on the health and wellbeing of our young people and their families is both immediate and longer term.

Strong leadership to address child poverty is essential and we have developed a robust governance framework to ensure a clear direction. The Leader of our Council chairs the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board. The aim of the board is to coordinate and where possible direct action across our Council, Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, third sector partners and our communities. Our Executive Directors for our Council's Communities and Housing Directorate and our Education Service are strategic leads for cost of living and child poverty respectively – though activities and responsibilities stretch far beyond these directorates and across our partners. Together this shows how addressing child poverty is being driven at the most senior level across partners.

This commitment can be found in [Our Council Plan 2023-28](#), which has addressing child poverty and embracing community wealth building at its core. The aim remains “A North Ayrshire that is fair for all” with our mission “to improve the lives of our people in North Ayrshire”.

The [NHS Ayrshire and Arran \(NHSAA\) Delivery Plan 2023-26](#) recognises the challenges faced through inequalities “particularly as a result of poverty”. It recognises the need to work together to support health and wellbeing, while supporting the wider economic benefits for our communities. Additionally, NHS Ayrshire and Arran is one of nine anchor institutions who contribute to our Community Wealth Building Commission, led by our Council.

Our activities are shared throughout our other strategic documents, including the Community Wealth Building strategy mentioned above, Children's Services Plan, The Promise, Children's Rights, Education Service Improvement Plan 2023-26 and our Community Learning and Development Plan.

It is essential that our residents can clearly see what work is being done to address child poverty and scrutinise our activity. As a result, this report is written for our residents in what we hope is an engaging and accessible format.

Rather than detail every operational action in a list, progress can be read through the “Progress So Far” section of this report and no objective or action can be viewed in isolation. A summary of the status of each of our key actions and performance indicators can be found in the final pages of this report.

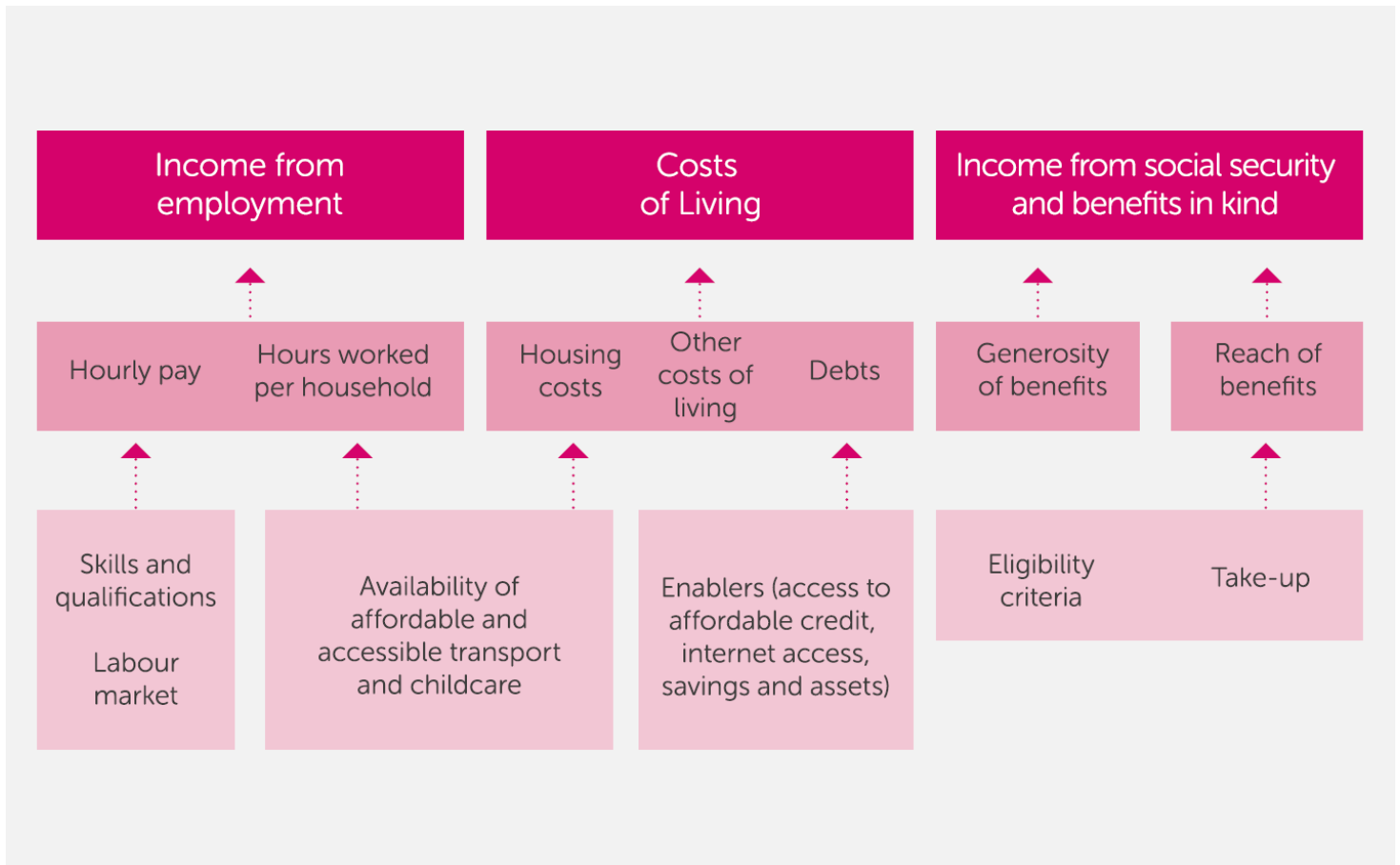
We hope you are reassured by the progress we are making. Child poverty in North Ayrshire is one of the largest and most complex challenges we face and we are aware there is more to do. However, through listening to our residents and working together with our communities and other partners, we really will achieve a North Ayrshire that is fair for all.

**If you require help with the cost of living, please visit our dedicated [Cost of Living webpage](#) or call 01294 310000.**



## The Key Drivers of Child Poverty

As stated in the Scottish Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26 “[Best Start, Bright Futures](#)” the three main drivers of child poverty are income from employment, costs of living and income from social security and benefits in kind.



This report examines how each of these areas is being addressed in North Ayrshire. Due to the complexity of the issues faced, it is common for the areas to overlap. As a result, a holistic or ‘360 degree’ approach is required to make a true sustainable impact for the benefit of our young people in North Ayrshire.



The six priority groups / families outlined in the Scottish Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26 “Best Start, Bright Futures” are:

- Lone parents.
- Families with three or more children.
- Families where the youngest child is under 1 year old.
- Mothers aged under 25 years.
- Households with someone with a disability.
- Minority ethnic families.

We are working to improve how we are measuring progress and targeting these specific families across our Council, NHSAA and other partners.

# Progress so far

## Overall Activities

Our North Ayrshire Tackling Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board is chaired by the Leader of our Council. Members of the board responsible for delivery in their areas include North Ayrshire Council's Executive Directors from Education, Communities and Housing and Place Directorates; Health and Social Care Partnership; North Ayrshire's Third Sector Interface; and NHSAA.

The Board administers the £1.2m Child Poverty and Early Intervention Fund. The following funding has been allocated to date:

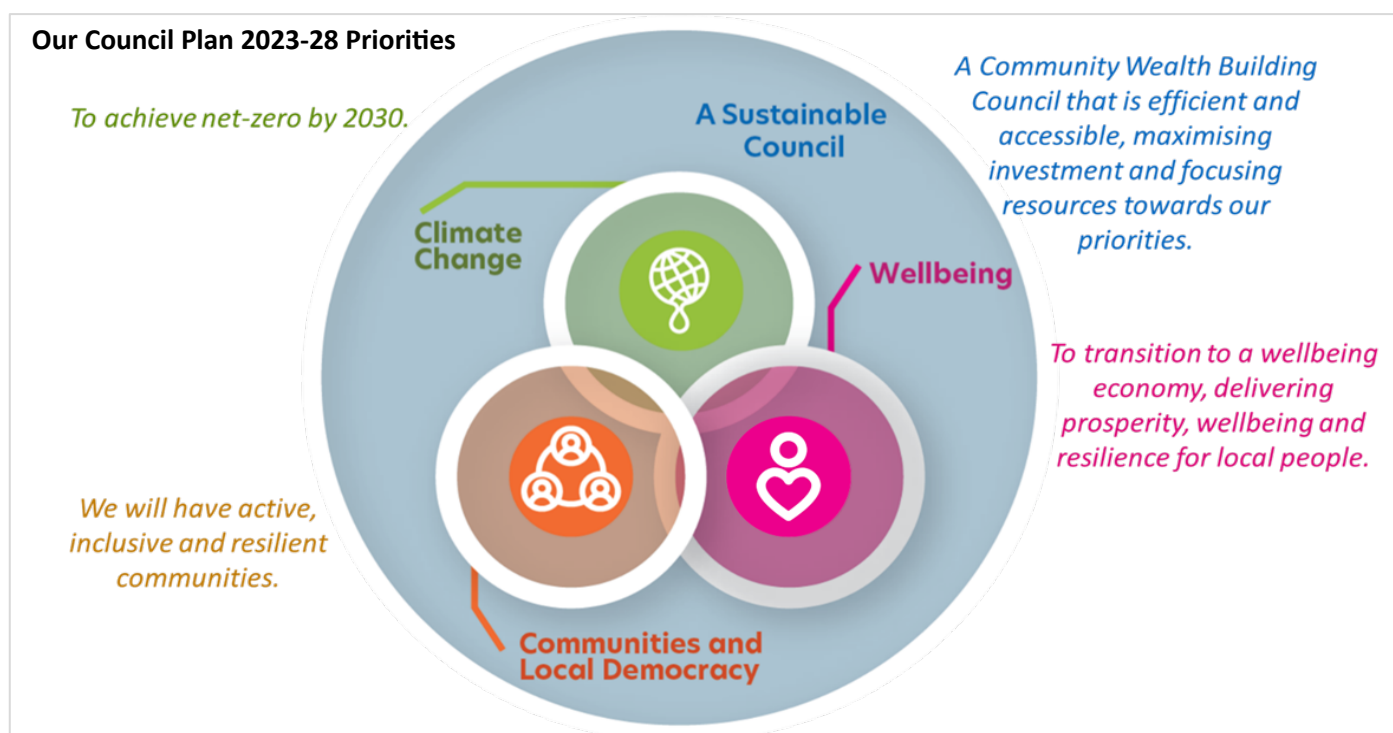
- £61,322 to remove school meal debt.
- £50,000 committed to the provision of computer equipment for our communities to tackle digital exclusion.
- £20,000 to explore sustainable childcare provision (following our mini enquiry in May 2023).
- £50,000 to explore initiatives to support travel for training and employment.
- £20,000 for our targeted Active Schools programme, removing barriers to access.
- £50,000 to support our No Wrong Door initiative.

In addition, the Board secured £78k from Scottish Government's Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund to progress work on North Ayrshire's Single Shared Assessment (NASSA) project.

### Our Council Plan 2023-28

[Our Council Plan 2023-28](#) was approved by Council in June 2023 and prioritises supporting wellbeing and community democracy (addressing child poverty and supporting children's rights).

Our young people were consulted to help us co-design the Council Plan priorities during its development. Performance is captured in our [six monthly magazine style reports](#) published on our website. The priorities all interlink and are displayed in the diagram below.



Council approved treating care experienced as a protected characteristic in March 2023, with the definition approved by Council in December 2023. As a result, the care experienced characteristic was included within our Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessments for the 2024-25 budget. The particular challenges faced by care experienced people will be taken into account with any policy decisions including budget decisions.

### Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Education Service maintains a focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and enhancing educational achievement for all students. This is evidenced by individual establishment improvement plans, the Education Service's standards and quality report, and service plan.

Schools have been implementing various initiatives and interventions using the Pupil Equity Fund, while local authority support through the Scottish Attainment Challenge has been streamlined. Activities include reviewing the Family Learning Team due to funding reductions and developing a new model for delivering professional learning support via the Professional Learning Academy. Initial feedback suggests that the new Professional Learning Academy model is positively impacting the closure of the poverty-related attainment gap.

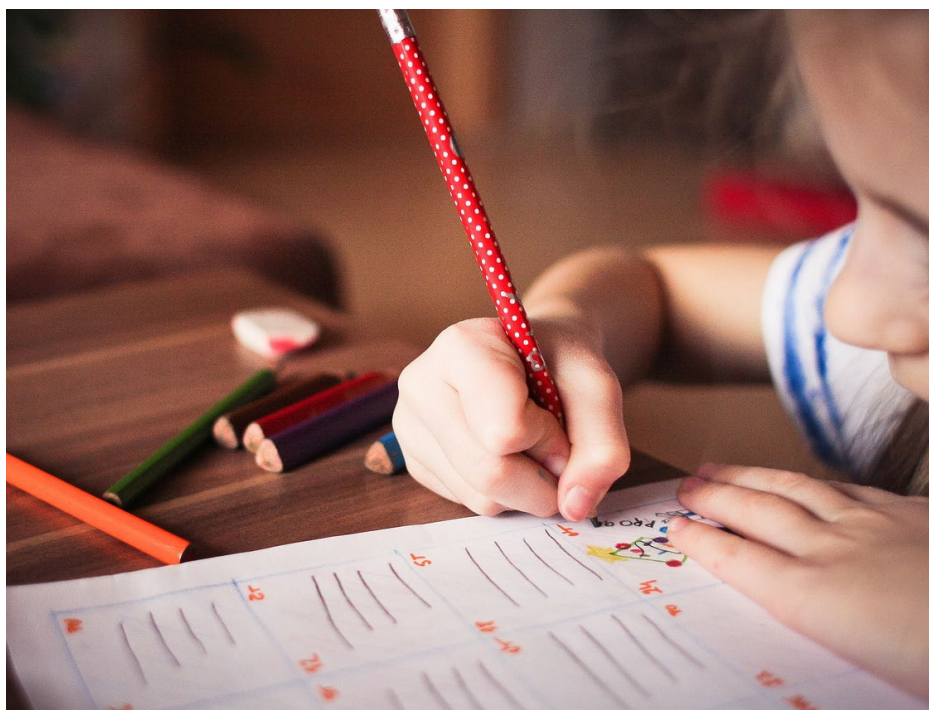
### The Promise

We have developed the Corporate Parenting Steering Group, chaired by an Elected Member and attended by Heads of Service and Senior Managers from across the Community Planning Partnership. This group meets once every three months.

We have also developed a Promise Operational Group (PrOG) that meets every

two months. It is chaired by a Head of Service and attended by frontline managers from across the Health and Social Care Partnership. It is developed to explore how we can improve: data; language and communication; alternative care; and relationships.

We have established a Champions Board network of over 30 care experienced young people to give further opportunities for their voice to be heard including in regard to their care and policies that affect them.



### Overall Next Steps

- We will review and develop our Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessments including refreshing training for Council employees on the UNCRC.
- We will continue to develop the Community Planning Partnership website as a hub for community information.
- We will further improve our data gathering on the six priority families to better target our resources.
- We will carry out a self assessment to further develop our Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board.

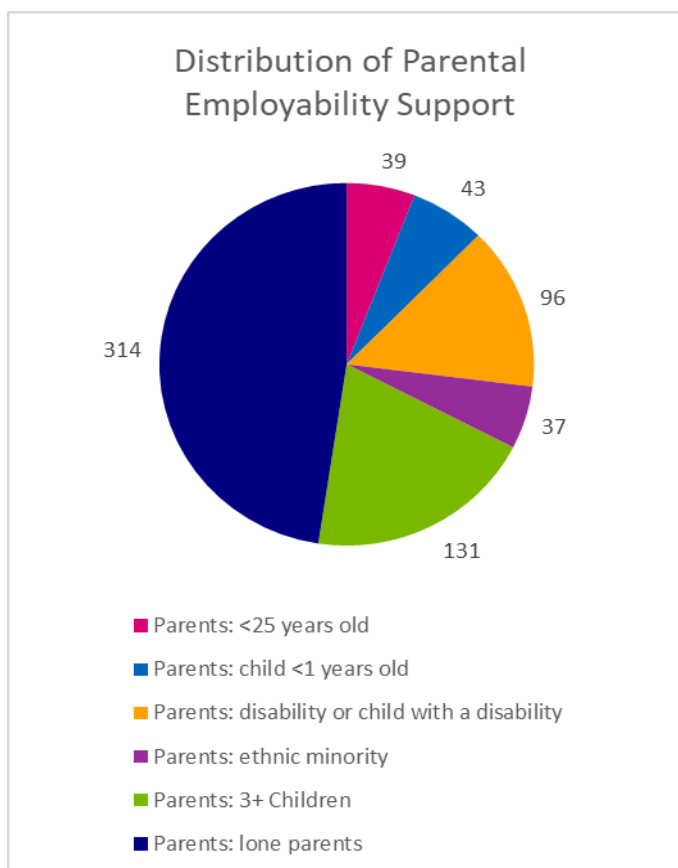
## Income from Employment – Key activities

### Helping People Into Employment

The Council’s Employability service has continued to engage and support individuals. We work in partnership with key stakeholders and the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) to improve outcomes and enable people to progress into sustainable employment.

In 2023/24, the service registered 660 new parents who are developing skills, confidence and resilience to secure and sustain employment in the future. During this period 80 parents have secured paid work experience through placements in third sector organisations and the Council. In addition, 50 have progressed into employment. In summary, 130 more families are benefiting from increased household income due to a parent gaining employment.

The 660 parents supported during 2023/24 can be directly linked to the six family groups (see chart below):



Our Employability service has established a Parent Group to ensure lived experience is considered in employability policy. This group is available for other services to access to ensure activity truly meets the needs of our families.

Access to employment as well as training and school activities can be very dependent on access to transport, particularly within rural areas such as parts of North Ayrshire. The Child Poverty and Early Intervention Fund has enabled a pilot that will provide driving lessons to 10 parents in order to pass their driving tests. They currently hold provisional driving licenses but have no means to pay for lessons.

Work continues as part of our Regional Economic Strategy to deliver the priority of ‘Fair Work’. This will ensure individuals from across South, East and North Ayrshire will have an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect within their workplace.

Our Council’s [Modern Apprenticeship Programme](#) is available for young people aged 16 to 24 years. We reserve 20% of places for applicants with a disability or who are care experienced. During 2023/24 we exceeded this target showing a commitment to our young people who are facing extra challenges. From the 36 Modern Apprentices recruited, 10 (27%) either had a disability or are care experienced. This is supported by partners including NHSAA.

[Skills For Life placements](#) within our Council help unemployed parents gain training and experience through employment. During 2023-24, 70 parents began their Skills For Life programme and plans are being developed to create new opportunities.

The NHSAA Employability Advisory service continues to identify opportunities for Modern Apprentice placements. NHSAA currently has one Modern Apprentice working in administration in Public Health, nine employed in pharmacy technician

apprenticeships and 13 dental nurse apprenticeships.

The NHSAA Employability Advisory service links in with a disability subgroup of the LEP and has offered application and interview support through this group.

To support parents to progress to or improve employment NHSAA participates in “Step into Business” project as part of the “We Work For Families” programme (see case study below).

Our third sector partner The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) is continuing to deliver the [Positive Steps with Partners Project](#). The project helps residents who are long term unemployed gain confidence and skills through a series of pre-placement activities and ultimately enter employment.

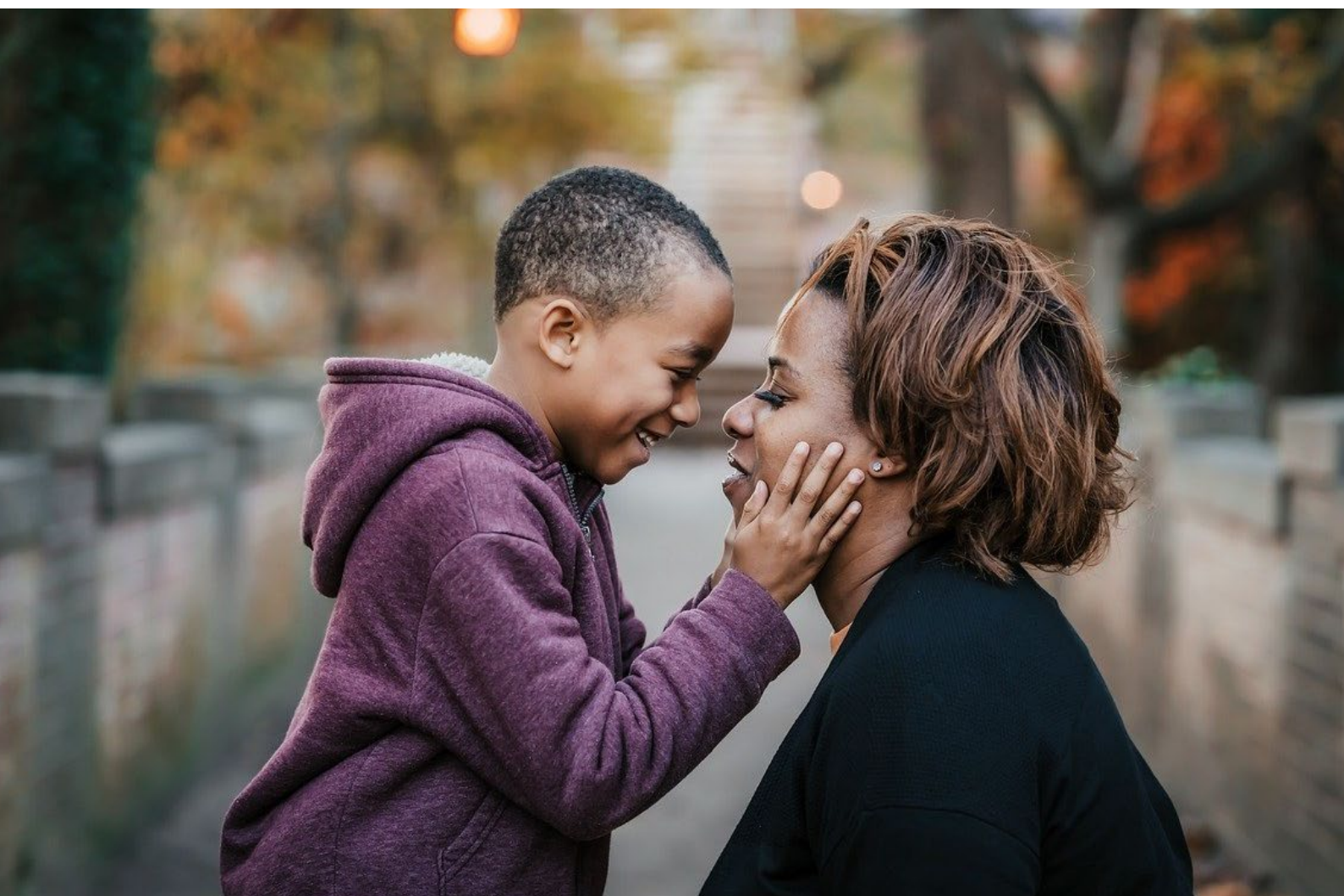
We are focussing more on supporting pre-employment training to prepare residents to be able to compete effectively for roles. For example, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), our Council has secured funding to work with our partners CHAP to

deliver the [Multiply Project](#). Launched in May 2023, the initiative supports our residents to use maths and numeracy in their daily lives, both at home and in work. This helps with many areas from everyday tasks such as budgeting, through to gaining qualifications.

### **Building Capacity**

The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is aligned to the national Child Poverty strategy, as well as other Scottish Government policy. Our Partnership with Dads Rock as part of our Whole Family Wellbeing Fund ensures a Dad’s Support Worker will work with fathers of early years children to build confidence and empower them to be positive, active role models for their children. This is in turn expected to lead to improved employability opportunities.

Our statutory North Ayrshire Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (NADARS) has employed additional Recovery Development Workers, posts created specifically to support residents who are in recovery from addiction.



The North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) is working alongside partners at Turning Point Scotland (TPS), our Council, Department of Work and Pensions and Ayrshire College to develop a course for people in recovery in North Ayrshire. The proposed programme is based on a similar model successfully implemented in South Ayrshire which will give people the opportunity to work towards a qualification, undertake meaningful volunteering opportunities and develop skills that will help them get closer to employment. Funding opportunities are being explored and if successful this will be rolled out in 2024.

The ADP continues to work alongside partners at TPS, Café Solace and others to develop community-based volunteering opportunities for people in recovery.

NHSAA's Employability Advisor is in discussion with the LEP regarding opportunities for work placements. Volunteering opportunities with NHSAA are being explored. In the coming year NHSAA will investigate potential opportunities for working with organisations to identify further opportunities and support for people in recovery.

The Police Scotland Youth Volunteering scheme in North Ayrshire builds life skills, enhances confidence and provides a supportive platform for our young people to develop. It seeks to support care experienced young people and within North Ayrshire there are 27 members. Our volunteers were involved with events such as the Marymass Festival in Irvine where they supported the police in looking after and reporting lost property and helped at various poppy appeals.

## Income From Employment – Next Steps

- Progress the regional Fair Employment workstream action plan.
- Support school leavers and their families to secure positive and sustained destinations, for example through the Youth Guarantee.
- Support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprentice Programme, including young people with a disability and those who are care experienced.
- Support access to employment in families where disability is a factor.
- Support parents to progress into or improve their employment.
- Develop mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project.
- Continue creating jobs through community benefit clauses issues within procurement exercises and encourage fair work practices including payment of the Real Living Wage.
- Address issues surrounding school aged and rural childcare to support education and employment.
- Improve employment outcomes for parents specifically within the priority family groups.
- We will continue to explore the potential for a community transport pathfinder following ongoing survey work and a Transport Needs Analysis.

## Case Study – Step Into Admin

The 'We Work for Families' programme is a Council-funded service in Ardrossan, supporting parents into work by offering help with housing matters, utility bills, access to food bank vouchers and developing CVs. Sam joined We Work for Families to help build her confidence and find work. She is a single parent to her son and has disabilities that restrict the type of work she can do. In addition, when Sam joined the programme she was grieving following a bereavement.

Sam has a caring nature, is always looking for ways to help people and has volunteered extensively. This has included providing support to young people who have suffered abuse. It was clear that Sam was very interested in returning to work, particularly working in an environment that would support others in any way possible.

As part of the We Work for Families programme, which includes areas such as the Step Into Business and Step into Customer Service options, the Step into Admin pilot which supports applicants into administrative posts, was ideal for Sam as it gave her the opportunity to access the third sector who directly support many of our residents.

Not only was Sam keen to get involved, it enabled her to gain qualifications at college which increased her confidence immensely. Sam was interviewed for a post and was successful in gaining a part time position with our third sector partners Community Housing Advocacy Project (CHAP).

Sam had only been in the position for a short period when she was offered a full-time role which she was delighted to do. Sam has developed in her work and enjoyed every aspect of it, gaining knowledge and experience too.

As the end date for Sam's placement approached, she was offered a contract extension for a further six months, proving that she is a valued member of the team.

Sam has now gained her SVQ and is excited about what her future holds.

## Case Study – Step into Customer Service

Kateryna from Ukraine, is a mother-of-two who is currently working as an administrative assistant at a local solicitors and estate agents in Saltcoats.

In Ukraine, Kateryna worked in HR and recruitment. When she moved to Scotland she was keen to upskill and find work that better aligned to her children's school hours.

She registered with We Work for Families and was offered a Better Off calculation. Better Off calculations explain the various benefits people are entitled to and how these could change when they start working.

Through the Council's 'Your Next Move, Working North Ayrshire' programme, an opportunity arose for Kateryna to join the Step Into Customer Service initiative. She has now completed various training courses including customer service, health and safety in the workplace and confidence building.

Since January, she has been working 20 hours per week and would highly recommend that parents looking for a way back into the workplace contact the Your Next Move, Working North Ayrshire team.

She said: "I contacted the Council's employability team to get help to find a job. I would say to other people, don't be afraid to make the call because you will get a very warm welcome. It could help change your life."

**To access support as detailed in these case studies, please contact our Employability Service. Email [employability@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:employability@north-ayrshire.gov.uk) or call 01294 310000.**



## Reducing the Cost of Living – Key activities

### Fuel Poverty

To help address fuel poverty the Council's Energy Smart programme provides a range of support to assist vulnerable families and children by installing energy efficiency measures and providing advice and support. This includes a crisis payment of up to £500 to vulnerable households to help with the cost of utilities. Over 7,000 households have engaged with energy advice to date.

The programme will further support delivery of an anticipated £1.6million for the installation of energy measures, with this element of the programme due to launch imminently. The Council has also worked with a local business, Green Home Systems, as part of our Community Wealth Building approach to lever in national funding as part of an innovative approach.

The Sustainability Team continue to respond to public enquiries on domestic energy efficiency and utilise the Local Energy Advice Forum (LEAF) partnership for referrals to internal and external agencies. Our Energy Awareness Officer also engages with local primary schools, delivers energy lessons and supports ECO School groups. We also continue to raise awareness of energy use and climate change through social media.

Through the Financial Inclusion Partnership a sub group met during 2023 to discuss availability of energy grants and payments for vulnerable families with high energy costs, for example, where a child has a disability which necessitates use of essential electrical equipment. This group identified a number of grant and payment opportunities and the eligibility criteria, these will be further discussed and promoted via the Financial Inclusion partnership and NHSAA.

Energy advice and support is available on our [Council website](#).

### Cost of the School Day (COSD)

Our Active Schools team has made progress in the following areas towards the priority of reducing household costs. Many of these areas are supported through the Child Poverty and Early Intervention Fund:

- Extracurricular clubs are free of charge across all school settings, supporting over 9,000 young people across the last year to be active during extra-curricular time.
- A total of 24 holiday programme opportunities were available, free of charge for targeted young people.
- We provided 47 free experiential activities for targeted young people across North Ayrshire.
- We have looked to remove barriers for targeted young people across North Ayrshire to access sport and physical activity opportunities. Identified barriers can include transport, access, cost, food provision and clothing.
- We provide individual support for young people to access community club provision by removing barriers such as membership costs, clothing and equipment.

Additionally, SportScotland provided funds to enable young people coaching for those most in need and this enhances what Active Schools can offer.

Active Schools has one part time member of staff dedicated to supporting our young people with additional support needs (ASN). The key priority for Active Schools is reducing the cost of the school day and making sure our service is equitable for our ASN pupils.

Our Education Service alongside our Community Learning and Development team has taken a sustainable, whole systems approach to sustainably reduce or eliminate costs relating to the school day. This has included:

- Issuing a clear statement to ensure no gifts for teachers or staff.

- Considering alternatives to monetary donations and dress down days for fundraising/charity days in schools.
- Ensuring there is no requirement for uniform branding.
- Recycled school uniforms are available in schools.
- Breakfast clubs and afterschool clubs are offered at no cost to families by utilising Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- Healthy snacks and holiday meals are freely available to pupils. (See 'Winter Warmer case study below.)
- We have explored our Council's Procurement Framework to assist with providing access to affordable uniforms and clothing options.
- We subsidise blazers for Senior Phase pupils.
- We provide all S1 pupils with a school tie.
- We provide branded school bags, water bottles and stationery to reduce costs.

In addition, there is a £150,000 recurring investment to extend our school and

community food network across all schools to support our children and families.

We are utilising £100,000 in recurring investment for a School and Family Participatory Funding Investment Fund. This is specifically for educational establishments to respond to local needs in relation to school uniforms, outdoor clothing, sports kit and the recycling and reuse of equipment.

These approaches have been designed in collaboration with our young people. Our Youth Forums and Joint Cabinet (which includes 110 of our young people discussing issues in partnership with our Elected Members) have been central to identifying and shaping our approaches.

Engagement with our young people is essential, with a view of "nothing about us without us". For example, our Youth Participatory Budgeting process involves our young people's applications being reviewed by their peers to ensure they really are meeting their needs.



Planning continues for the further roll out of universal free school meals to Primary 6 and 7 pupils. This includes reviewing employee resources, kitchen capacity, equipment and capital work requirements. The first phase of the capital work has been completed and the second phase is planned for summer 2024. Three dining hall extensions are planned for future years.

In March 2024, Cabinet approved the extension of our free school meals programme. This will provide a healthy mid-morning snack for all primary school children and availability of ambient food on a temporary basis during 2024/25 until the next phase of the national expansion of universal free school meals to those eligible for the Scottish Child Payment (expected in February 2025). National universal expansion is expected February 2026.

### Activities

Our innovative approach to the delivery of our leisure service means we use physical activity to support public health, address and manage health conditions, engage with communities, and reduce inequalities. Our provider, KA Leisure, has offered free swimming and skating during the holiday period to babies and young people aged up to 17 years. This was supported by funding from our Council.

Our Information and Culture Teams are delivering the [Out and About Project](#) in the Garnock Valley supporting vulnerable families to access the outdoors, discovering new spaces and activities at no extra cost.

We established the Council's first Lend and Mend Hub in Kilbirnie Library. It enables free access to equipment to repair, reuse, and upcycle everyday items. Between September and March 28 workshops had taken place at the Lend and Mend Hub and 27 items had been saved from landfill through upcycling and repairs. Not only is this addressing the cost of living, it supports our Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy 2024-27.

### Childcare

We are working with partners to support childcare providers to deliver school aged childcare. "Wrap around care" for school aged children is in a fragile situation as it has had to react to changes in work patterns and demand. £20,000 has been allocated by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board to support developing sustainable childcare in North Ayrshire.

### Transport

We are supporting the rollout of the free national entitlement for transport for young people aged from 11 to 25 years. 20,037 young people have a valid Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) in North Ayrshire. This represents 90% of the estimated population of 11 to 25 year-olds in the area. This includes a bulk issue of 1,718 NECs for our Primary 7 pupils in September.

Our [Community Transport Study](#) is continuing with our communities and partners to determine the level of need for a community transport initiative within North Ayrshire.

We have improved knowledge about sustainable transport choices by continuing to promote them through the Trinity Active Travel Hub and working with workplaces, organisations and volunteers to provide active travel activities across the area. We have also helped people develop more positive attitudes towards sustainable transport choices by continuing with workplace engagement including creation of travel plans and bike maintenance classes.

### MCR Pathways Mentoring Programme

Mentoring programmes have been introduced in a further two secondary schools meaning that all eight mainland secondary schools now have access to this provision. It is designed specifically to support positive outcomes for care experienced learners through regular mentoring with volunteer adult mentors from the local business community. These programmes have been evaluated highly by

care experienced learners at our recent Care Experienced Joint Cabinet Live event. MCR Pathways is a national initiative that provides mentoring for our young people. Our Council has been involved in the programme since 2019. Mentors have a range of experience across different aspects of life and volunteer to be matched with a young person based on their interests, potential career and personalities and support our young people on an ongoing basis.

### Food with Dignity

We have launched an [interactive map](#) (see below) to show available [food with dignity](#) opportunities in our localities. So far it has received over 106,370 views. The icons represent different food providers such as food larders, community shops and emergency food provision. Contact information is available by clicking on each icon. This service supports the North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network (90% volunteer led).

In addition:

- A WhatsApp group has been established to manage food waste.
- Christmas Meal in a Box was created for those in need of additional support.
- Emergency Utility Support can now be issued from Community Larders.

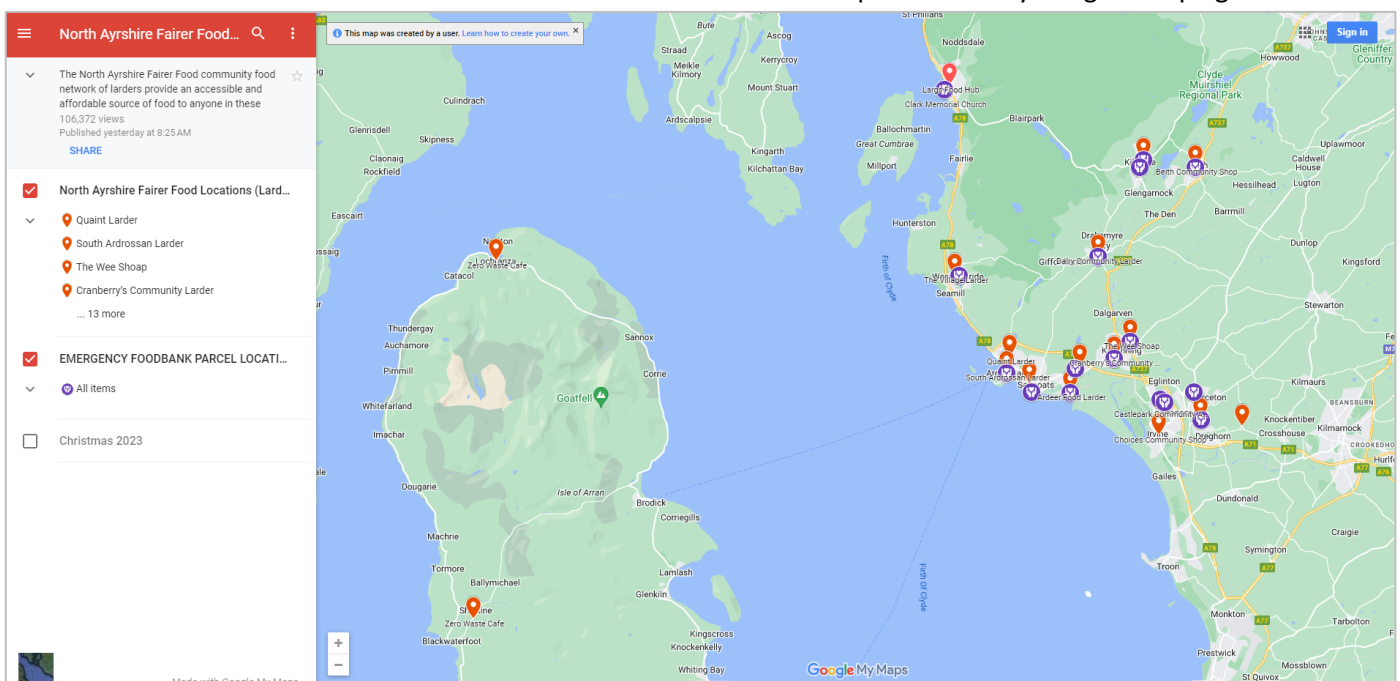
- Community Benefits within our procurement contracts are directly linked to Larders.
- 100,000 rolls are regularly issued to support breakfasts.
- Donations of baby food and pet food are placed in free baskets in larders.
- Strong links are established with our Customer Services team to direct support.
- Financial support for larders is established based on footfall.
- Following the launch of our 15<sup>th</sup> mainland larder at Largs Library in February, a location for a larder on the Isle of Cumbrae has been identified.

Overall the support offered is intended to be holistic, so a range of options are available to reflect the range of different needs in our communities.

### Holiday Meals

Teams across our Council worked in partnership with KA Leisure and community associations to deliver a holiday meal and activity programme. This was targeted at those entitled to free school meals over the summer holiday period. 11,740 meals were delivered across 23 sites over four weeks.

Public Health and NHSAA promote holiday meals as part of holiday hunger campaigns.



## Community Directory

We have launched the new Community Directory which provides communities with access to information about services in their locality, for example money advice, energy costs as well as activities for health and wellbeing.

The directory has been developed using open data and it enables Council services, community groups and partners to take ownership of the data.

Residents can look for services by locality, postcode and within a 15-minute walk or drive from their home. The Directory was soft launched at our Community Planning Partnership Conference at the end of February and we are working to officially launch the new directory with our communities and partners.

## Cost of Pregnancy

The Cost of Pregnancy Group created an action plan from the recommendations in the Cost of Pregnancy Report. These actions are being taken forward and a report will be presented to the Women and Children Diagnostic Governance Group and the Infant, Children and Young People's Programme Board.

## Period Poverty Initiative

Our Council is further developing the provision of free period products across our schools and communities by targeting youth events. Our mobile youth bus has been provided with regular supplies of period products, including re-useable products that are promoted at key climate campaign dates throughout the year. NHS Ayrshire and Arran provide free period products across hospital and clinic sites.

## Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund is being delivered by our community partners directly to communities to fund locally designed solutions to address

child poverty. So far £1.8m has been distributed. The fund is due to conclude in June 2025, however applications to the Council's Child Poverty and Early Intervention Fund are being considered to enable to support continued provision. The annual report on the delivery fund including impact is being finalised at time of writing.

Our Education Service has delivered a range of professional learning opportunities and our employees involved now feel confident to support both positive mental wellbeing and emotional distress. An example of our developments is our Building on Positive Relationships parent programme, which has been further rolled out with 30 additional staff members trained. 25 families have benefited from the programme with a positive impact on family relationships being reported.

Public Health sit on the review groups for allocation of the fund including the Children and Young People's group.

## Young Parents' Group

Our Council is piloting a Young Parents' Group for parents aged 25 years and under. This is taking place in the Three Towns area, funded by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. The group covers wellbeing and life skills. Youth Services work alongside the Livelong Learning Team to help increase parents' skills. The groups support develop positive relationships between the young parents and their toddlers, including through activities such as baby yoga.

Health visitors helped publicise the groups. Though six weeks into the programme at time of writing, we are due to do a full evaluation in the coming weeks. We are already looking to extend this through June, develop a second pilot in Irvine and ultimately within other localities too. We have identified a further need for parents aged from 25 to 30 years and are exploring this.

Overall our Community Learning and Development teams are recognised as making

a significant positive impact on our communities in terms of inclusion and reducing barriers, as [evidenced in a recent HMIE report](#).

### Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) is aligned to the national Child Poverty strategy, as well as other Scottish Government policy areas. The expansion of Early Years Social Workers within North Ayrshire will increase capacity to help support families who are struggling financially.

In addition, the Family Centred Wellbeing Service and wider investment in neurodevelopmental activity in North Ayrshire will offer holistic support which may see some families able to access appropriate benefits following diagnosis of a child's condition.

### Reducing the Cost of Living – Next Steps

- We will continue holiday food provision.
- We will continue consultation and engagement on child poverty, to ensure our policies and approaches are informed by lived experience.
- We will continue to prepare for the rollout of universal free school meals in 2026 and any required provision prior to this date.
- We will roll out the next phase of our Energy Smart programme to include

installation of physical measures, while continuing our ECO Flex partnership.

- We will look to increase the number of organisations working with our young people registered on the NHS Community Benefits Portal.
- We will carry out more work to identify how best to increase the update of the Young Patient Family Fund.
- We will review out of school care provision.
- We will explore the Lend and Mend approach and enhance public libraries to improve the quality of study spaces to assist with study and learning out with school times.
- We will continue to address food with dignity opportunities in our localities.
- We will specifically include actions to address child poverty when refreshing our three year Community Learning Development Plan. This will be presented to Cabinet and the Scottish Government in October 2024.
- We will explore a funding model for schools to enable our young people to access Duke of Edinburgh Awards by utilising the Outdoor Budget for participation and equipment.
- We will work collaboratively across our schools to use Pupil Equity Funding to close the poverty related attainment gap.
- We will develop an Infant Food Poverty care pathway in North Ayrshire which will include a process for the safe provision of infant formula in emergency situations.



## Case Study – Winter Warmer Breakfast

The second year of our Winter Warmer Breakfast initiative has ensured up to 1,000 pupils daily are accessing free food with dignity and has resulted in many being able to afford a more substantial lunchtime meal.

In December 2022, our Council commenced a new temporary service utilising the Cost of the School Day funding. This offered a free breakfast to all secondary school pupils and our young people at Lockhart Campus, our school for our children and young people with additional support needs.

Working across Facilities Management and our Education Service, we developed a model to ensure access for all pupils. A mix of hot and cold items were on offer and in an easy 'grab and go' style to allow pupils to pick items and eat where they chose. This ensured the provision of food didn't impact on existing friendship groups.

This service was well received, particularly during the colder winter months and as a result, we ran the programme during 2023/2024. The funding for the second year came from the service's own budget. We learned from the first year so we could work more efficiently and ensure we provided an attractive and filling offer to the pupils.

This second year of provision has seen a similar uptake across the schools with an average of 950-1000 pupils accessing this free food service every day.

A positive consequence of this provision has been an increase in pupils eligible for free school meals, not using their credit at morning break. They are instead using their credit at lunchtime to access a full lunch.

Hidden hunger is an issue in secondary schools as pupils are free to leave the school grounds at breaks and if they are not attending the school dining facility, it is difficult to identify those in need. This service helps to address the issue of hidden hunger by offering dignified free food provision at breakfast that is flexible to support the social groups of our young people.

The feedback to our catering teams has been extremely positive and seeing the pupils accessing food free for all, with no stigma attached has been extremely worthwhile. As a result, in March Cabinet agreed the extension of the Winter Warmer Breakfast initiative in secondary schools for winter 2024/25.



## Income from Social Security and Benefits in Kind – Key Activities

### No Wrong Door

No Wrong Door is an initiative to ensure our residents can always access the information and support they need from our Council and Community Planning Partners. It is strongly supported by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board and key to our Council Plan and [Digital Strategy 2023-28](#). It ensures people are at the centre of innovation and no-one is left behind to prevent digital exclusion.

There are two main elements to our No Wrong Door approach, 'Corporate Referral' and 'Single Shared Assessment'.

Our new **Corporate Referral** process is now live. It examined how our residents access services such as:

- Digital access and skills
- Benefits, welfare rights, debt, and money budgeting support
- Employment advice and support
- Homelessness advice and support
- Housing rent advice and support (for North Ayrshire Tenants)
- Health and wellbeing support

Services needed to rely on our residents to contact the various services and the services themselves didn't have visibility of other teams our residents were involved with.

As a result of the review, our residents only need to provide their information once and will be directly routed to the services that best meet their needs. In addition, services are immediately aware when a request for support is received. This is achieved through an online form on our website. This form is also used by our Customer Services team when residents call or visit our offices, so those without internet access are not digitally excluded and still receive the same high level of support.

Following the notification, services contact the resident to complete an assessment of their needs. At this point, decisions are made as to which services or external partners would be best to support them, such as Financial Inclusion, Employability, Housing and others.

These services or partners then contact the resident directly, reducing cost and the potentially overwhelming task for residents to contact a list of services and partners. In addition, as the information is at this point already known to our Council, it reduces the need for some of our most vulnerable residents to re-explain potentially complex and distressing circumstances.

Accessible from the Council and Health and Social Care Partnership [websites](#), the process is used by our Customer Services team to route referrals efficiently.

Our health and wellbeing support can also direct individuals to their GP practice and provide direct links to community supports on the Cost-of-Living webpage.

Our emerging **Single Shared Assessment** approach will inform decision making and provide residents with assistance more quickly through a whole system approach offering immediate and longer-term support to lift people out of the cycle of poverty. This will be achieved by asking residents at the point of application for their consent to use their details to assess eligibility for all benefits, grants and support available across our Council in one application. This ultimately will create a 'golden record' to proactively help residents access the support they are entitled to.

The approach aligns to a 'tell us once' approach and avoids the need to access information retrospectively or complete numerous application forms. Implementation of a Single Shared Assessment form will also enable us to target earlier intervention with a specific focus on the six priority groups.



The approach complements existing 'self-help' benefits analysis tools available.

Currently we are analysing the data we have about how our residents contact our Council to further organise our support. We were fortunate to be successful in our application for Scottish Government Child Poverty Accelerator Funding to support this approach.

### Review of Financial Inclusion

We have developed our new [North Ayrshire Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-28](#), intended to provide access to effective financial advice and products. It will support people to build their financial resilience and confidence in managing their money and dealing with financial difficulties.

During 2023/24 our Money Matters Team supported residents to access £20,081,590 in financial gains from 5,739 referrals.

Public Health are continuing to develop their child poverty and financial inclusion workshops for employees. Training was

delivered to 15 paediatric nurses and one senior orthoptist in 2023/24. Training now includes a video where someone with lived experience provides their experiences and is being promoted for the coming year.

### Customer Services

Our Customer Services team continues to ensure families are supported financially via the administration of benefits including the Scottish Welfare Fund, Education Maintenance Allowance, Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payments and Energy Support Crisis Payment. The processes for these are as seamless as possible for the resident to apply and where possible, automation is in place. The team is working closely to develop the No Wrong Door approach (above).

We ensure benefits and grants are processed as quickly as possible to prevent families from being in financial crisis and alleviate any pressures.



As at February, £1,301,497 had been spent through Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants out of a total budget of £1,577,601 (which includes a Council contribution of £237,000). From this, 3,150 Crisis Grants and 1,492 Community Care Grants and have been awarded. The scale of need is challenging with the available resources and we are actively managing the type and amount of support we can provide.

### Islands Emergency Crisis Funding

Our Information and Culture team supported the delivery of the £57,000 Islands Emergency Crisis Funding from Scottish Government.

### Cost of Living Reports

Six monthly Cost of Living Reports have been presented to Cabinet for consideration. These outline key initiatives designed to reduce the cost of living for our residents and associated progress.

### Health and Financial Reviews

Our HSCP Universal Early Years team has maintained a strong partnership with We Work for Families, having referred 34 families for employability support in the period April-November. Health visitors have supported a further 25 families to maximise their income through referrals to Money Matters, Lemon Aid, CHAP and Home Energy Scotland.

Financial inclusion and income maximisation is embedded as part of health assessments conducted by our Health Visitors as part of the Universal Health Visiting Pathway. This is closely monitored to ensure it is maintained, with data recorded on whether a family has been signposted or a family has been referred.

During 2023/24 the integrated Universal Early Years service (Health Visitor support workers, Family Nurturers, Perinatal Wellbeing Team, Early Years Social Workers, Infant Feeding Support Team and Dads Support Worker) received 846 Requests for Assistance (RFA).

When support concludes, either planned or unplanned, practitioners are asked to

complete an update form which is returned to the Named Person Service for processing. This form looks at outcomes as well as whether the family falls within one of the six priority groups.

Of the 846 RFAs, 357 were completed during 2023/24 of which:

- 37.8% has a child under one year old (135 RFAs).
- 13.2% had three or more children (47 RFAs).
- 2.5% had a disability within the household (9 RFAs).
- 1.96% were Black Minority Ethnic (7 RFAs).
- 17.1% were lone parents (61 RFAs).
- 4.5% were young parents (16 RFAs). (Please note this was changed this from young mothers due to the focus on young parents from a Family Nurse Partnership perspective.)
- 38 requests for assistance were for children in households with more than one priority group.

The team has also collected information on the 132 RFAs where support was not completed due to issues such as engagement. This data can be used to inform future approaches.

Public Health has examined the Cost of Health protection and improving processes for those who need to isolate due to illness and and who will lose earnings. In addition, Money Matters information (our financial advice service) is displayed in all hospitals including Ayrshire Central, Arran and Millport. These are situated in key high footfall areas such as lifts, stairwells and within outpatient clinic waiting areas.

The Rosemount Project and Family Centred Wellbeing Service are proactive in signposting and/or making referrals to Money Matters to ensure that families maximise all the support they are entitled to. They also liaise with Money Matters to support appeals if access to benefits such as the Scottish Welfare Fund or

Child/Adult Disability Payment is refused. The Rosemount Project is a crisis intervention and intensive support service designed to prevent children and young people from being accommodated. The service provides immediate support to vulnerable children, young people, families and carers who are assessed as high level of need and risk.

We worked with the Paediatrics Team to develop new posters to promote the Young Patient family Fund. These have been shared with the Ayrshire Maternity Unit and displayed in numerous public locations. The Nursery Nurses are wellbeing champions and available to help families complete paperwork.

### Housing

Our Housing Allocation Policy is currently under review. Consultation has taken place with applicants and residents in North Ayrshire to capture lived experience and ensure there are no negative impacts on child poverty.

Our Council's temporary accommodation is dispersed accommodation within the community. We have early interventions to avoid homelessness where possible and if it does occur, we will ensure financial support is in place so that temporary accommodation is only used in the short term.

## Income from Social Security and Benefits in Kind – Next Steps

- We will continue to progress the No Wrong Door initiative, with a particular focus on the Single Shared Assessment to maximise the levels and speed of support.
- We will progress the Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-28.
- We will monitor and improve the uptake of the Young Patients Fund. NHSAA's Public Health Department continues to work closely with Maternity services to improve the uptake.
- Public Health will continue to develop their child poverty and financial inclusion workshops for staff.
- We will explore Health Visitor access to crisis / emergency funding for families either in the form of vouchers or as a cash-first option.
- 2024-25 will see the first full year of implementation for many of the funded WFWF projects. The fund is only available until March 2026 so the focus will be on sharing learning and considering how projects become sustainable at the end of the funding.
- We will review our housing allocation to access larger housing for larger families and address overcrowding.



## Case Study – School Welfare Rights Officers

School Welfare Rights Officers provide confidential advice and assistance to parents and carers to enable them to access all benefits they are entitled to. They also offer advice when circumstances change, provide support to challenge any sanctions and offer representation at appeals. Through being based in schools it is hoped any stigma is lessened and parents and carers feel more confident in approaching officers for assistance as it is a trusted space.

Key results from our current School Welfare Rights Officer show an impact is being made. 106 referrals to our Money Matters team resulted in:

**£560,509 in financial gains for secondary school parents during 2023/24. An average of £5,387 per referral.**

**£1,067,328 gained by secondary school parents since the project began.**

In addition to schools, we partner with the Food Bank and have a Welfare Rights Officer funded by the Trussell Trust taking referrals from all Food Banks and having drop-in surgeries as required. We also have advisers in GP surgeries, Addiction Services, Justice Service, and Children and Families Teams and get regular referrals to our services such as Financial Inclusion.

### Next Steps

As at 2023/24 we have one Welfare Rights Officer based in our Secondary schools, with funding met by the Education Service and the Financial Inclusion Partnership (HSCP). In February 2024 as part of the budget discussions, Council agreed to fund £160k for School Welfare Rights Officers.

The agreed funding will enable recruitment of an additional two Welfare Rights Officers for two years, extending the current programme. It is intended that the school clusters will be placed into three sections with one Welfare Rights Officer in each. This will keep the links between Early Years, Primary and Secondary, meaning that if a family has children of various ages, the family is still supported by the same officer.

Performance management of the School Welfare Rights Officers emphasises wellbeing as well as financial improvement. As a result, case studies will be used to manage performance in addition to quantitative information.

Baselines will be taken to be able to show improvement.

With the additional funding we aim to replicate this across our schools. All three School Welfare Officers will be in position after the summer to help support our families during the 2024/25 academic year.

My husband passed away, I work, I need to find out what help I'm entitled to.

What am I entitled to as an unpaid carer?

I'm aged 17 and my mum's asked me to leave my family home. I'm staying with a close friend, and I don't have any access to funds.

What are the grants and financial rights that my children are entitled to? I have two girls in the academy and a baby girl.

*I just wanted to drop a wee email to say thank you so much for all the assistance in finding what we were entitled to... ..The gain isn't just about finances (which is a wonderful help and a huge weight off my mind) .... (I) no longer stress and panic over trying to cover school holidays, sick days etc. I am much happier and less stressed as I'm here fully for all three children now which has made the kids all feel happier.*

*The service you offer is wonderful and I'm very grateful to have been offered your assistance.*

## Case Study – Community Investment Fund

Our Community Investment Fund (CIF) enables community groups from each of our six localities to apply for funding for projects that will benefit our communities. Many of these projects directly address the causes and/or impact of child poverty.

### Children 1<sup>st</sup>

Children 1st is a registered charity supporting vulnerable children and families, with a focus on prevention, protection, recovery and resilience. Children 1st Family Wellbeing is based in Bourtreehill, Irvine, North Ayrshire and has been established since 2018. The Family Wellbeing Service is based in the heart of the community, where local families can discuss what concerns them, seek solutions, access specialist support, such as money advice and intensive family support for whole families from skilled people.

Through their current work across Irvine, engagement at the Irvine Locality Network Meetings and discussions at the Bourtreehill and Broomlands Locality Chit Chats, local people identified their need for a community-based Family Wellbeing Worker and a Community and Family Engagement worker. In November 2022 Cabinet awarded £97,580 for the recruitment of these posts.

These posts supported the local community by offering:

- Practical and emotional trauma informed and recovery focused support to children and families who have experienced trauma and / or adversity in their lives.
- A range of community lead activities that focus on wellbeing, relationships and hope. These programmes included existing partnerships with local services such as Active Schools, North Ayrshire Rangers and Ayrshire Wildlife Trust, to maximise opportunities for families to connect with outdoor, recreational experiences and seek to develop new partnerships with other groups, organisations and agencies in the area.
- Blended Money Advice support to help whole families establish the root cause of money worries, maximise their income, help budget and avoid and manage debt, again with a real trauma sensitive and relationship-based approach.

During 2023/24 Children 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Reached 99 people through trauma informed whole family support – 53 children and 46 adults.
- Reached 614 people through groupwork and events.
- Families made positive progress across all three Outcomes of wellbeing, community and relationships.
- 50% of the families introduced themselves to our service by calling on their own or coming into our space to ask for help.
- We supported local volunteers and community spaces including Towerlands Café, St John Ogilvie Church, Relief Parish Church and Bourteehill Park.

The main four challenges that families told us they experience are:

- Their children's emotional wellbeing, relationships, parenting and their children's education.
- Families feel they continue to face the same barrier accessing other services, in that they don't meet "criteria".

*Because of support my Granddaughter has a better understanding of her rights.*

*I'll be honest, I come to things for the children but stuff like this makes my anxiety sky high, you and the staff help me feel so comfortable.*

*My Granddaughter now feels more content and able to talk more about her worries.*

These outcomes show that the CIF is actively making a positive difference to the lives of our people in North Ayrshire. Other CIF applications granted recently include:

***CHAP Advice Outreach***

The Irvine Locality Partnership awarded the Community Housing Advocacy Project (CHAP) £91,534 to recruit two advice workers that are based within various community locations throughout Irvine. Making their services accessible locally, in established and trusted environments, means that people will be able to gain assistance with a variety of benefits, housing and debt issues on their doorstep.

***BABCA Community Garden***

The Irvine Locality Partnership awarded the Bourtreehill and Broomlands Community Association (BABCA) £12,777 to establish a community garden. The project will engage with a wide range of partners, centre users and community groups, as well as providing produce to support the Larder and the affordable café in the Centre, addressing issues of food poverty. It will also provide volunteering and learning opportunities for community members. The funding will be used to purchase equipment and materials for the garden.

***Turning Point - PEAR Service***

The Irvine Locality Partnership awarded Turning Point £96,112 to employ a Peer Led Practitioner for two years (as well as associated costs for resources, room hire and national support costs) to support the delivery of a college course by Ayrshire College for people in recovery from substance or alcohol use. This programme will support people to obtain an accredited qualification which could lead to further educational opportunities while also providing peer support.

***Micah Project***

The Irvine Locality Partnership awarded the Micah Project £50,000. The project for the Irvine locality will provide a storage base, coordinator, and delivery support within the town for two years to deliver a wellbeing package following a child's vaccinations (3-6 months, 9-12 months, 2-3 years and 3-4 years). These age-appropriate toys, books, and resources will promote early childhood development and the packs will be another channel to signpost parents to support.

***Beith Community Association***

The Garnock Valley Locality Partnership awarded £22,098 to Beith Community Association to contribute toward the employment of the Development Manager for one year and to employ a Project Assistant on a part-time basis. This project will benefit all Garnock Valley residents, irrespective of age, background or experience by providing opportunities and support, building confidence and developing skills for those disadvantaged due to unemployment, poverty, health issues or other factors.



















***Getting Alongside Communities***

The Kilwinning Locality Partnership awarded £36,000 to the Corra Foundation to support the overall running costs of their Getting Alongside Communities project. Getting Alongside Communities directly contributes to the Kilwinning Locality Priorities of supporting skills and work, alleviating poverty, and promoting equality of access to opportunities, improving community wellbeing, and building strong communities. Funding will support the project over the next three years.

# Summary of Performance

## Our Key Actions: Progress Status

We agreed three-year objectives/key actions as part of our Tackling Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26. These key actions are supported by operational activity directed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board. The table below shows a summary of the status of our key actions as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Green is on target (we are progressing as expected), amber is slightly adrift of target and red is significantly adrift of target.

Key Actions	Status
We will provide local leadership in addressing child poverty.	
We will have greater involvement of our residents, including children and young people, in service design and delivery.	
We will ensure our services are human and kind.	
We will commit to taking a No Wrong Door approach with partners.	
We will advocate for our residents in accessing resources and funding to address child poverty.	
Within the Community Planning Partnership, we will continue to take a system wide approach to child poverty within our Wellbeing priority and use our resources strategically to focus on better outcomes.	
Across the Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, our Community Planning Partners and our third and voluntary sector partners in our communities, we will ensure our workforce planning enshrines a No Wrong Door approach to access to services and that poverty impact assessments are embedded in our policy and practice.	
We will examine how economic development, transport, skills and childcare provision can combine to break down barriers to employment with parents as a priority group; ensure local economic practices (Community Wealth Building) supports addressing child poverty; and complement key actions.	
We will understand and address where possible the cost-of-living challenges that our families face.	
We will use data to inform place-based approaches to interventions and targeted use of resources to support wellness, families and parental employability.	
We will improve access to affordable childcare.	
We will encourage greater job quality through Fair Work.	
We will ensure accessibility to employment and services through support for priority families.	
We will maximise the update of benefits and support financial inclusion.	
We will drive further progress in removing financial barriers to education through the Cost of the School Day initiative.	
We will improve whole family wellbeing outcomes, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.	
We will better link adult and children's services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty.	
We will improve the use of data and performance measures in relation to what the local issues are and what actions need to be taken around child poverty.	

## Nationally Sourced Indicators

The following indicators provide context to the environment in which we are delivering services.

Description	2020	2021	2022	2023
Percentage of working age population in employment.	67.7%	64.7%	73.6%	70.3%
Gross weekly earnings – Workforce based.	487.20	506.20	555.40	595.60
Employment rate Percentage (women).	63.4%	64.4%	71.9%	68.7%
Employment rate work limiting disabled.	44.3%	44.7%	51.7%	Data not yet available
Youth employment rate.	55.3%	42.2%	66.1%	57.8%
Percentage of households managing well financially.	Data not available	Data not available	47%	Data not yet available
Percentage of children in low-income families*	25.2%	20.9%	28.6%	Data not yet available
Percentage of employees (18+) earning less than the Living Wage.	15.9%	11.4%	Data not available	10.4%
Percentage of adults with a limiting long-term physical or mental health condition.	27.4%	Data not available	Data not available	30.1%
Percentage of mothers aged under 19 years and under.	4.1%	3.1%	3.6%	Data not yet available

\*Financial years (i.e. 2019/20 listed under 2020).



## Locally Sourced Indicators

We continue to work on developing locally sourced indicators, particularly relating to the six priority families. We are also developing an operational set of input measures which will ultimately help demonstrate the impact of our interventions in the medium to longer term.

The following indicators give an indication of how we are performing. Many of the indicators reflect Covid-19 lockdown periods between 2020-2022.

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (New Claims) (days).	8.89	9.45	14.12	21.07
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (Change of Circumstances) (days).	7.59	9.24	14.12	12.41
Speed of Processing (Council Tax Reduction) new claims (days).	19.05	25.59	37.8	34.38
Speed of processing (Council Tax Reduction) changes of circumstances (days).	5.13	5.95	7.62	4.76
No. of Crisis Grants Paid.	3,539	2,460	3,605	<b>3,436</b>
Number of children receiving school clothing grants.	-	-	6,135	<b>5,987</b>
Number of families receiving school clothing grants.	-	-	3,864	<b>3,943</b>
Percentage of households in fuel poverty.	28%	Data not yet available	-	-
Percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as homeless sustained for more than a year.	92.48%	86.92%	88.38%	<b>84.02%</b>
Number of new build housing units reaching completion (all tenures) (Actual not cumulative).*	-	-	562	<b>384</b>
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year (LGBF).	5.5%	6.6%	7.1%	<b>5.88%</b>
Percentage of respondents who say that food is available but too expensive.	-	-	53%	Data not yet available

\*Indicator established in 2023/24.

