

Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026

Summary and Recommendations

The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Unit are engaging stakeholders as part of their consultation to support the development of the next version of the national Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. COSLA has facilitated a number of opportunities for local authority and professional association contributions to this. These are to be used to inform a COSLA response and made available to Scottish Government. This report summarises key points from those contributions and seeks the Community Wellbeing Board's views. It also sets out a process for progressing and signing off a COSLA response.

This paper invites the Community Wellbeing Board to:

- i. Offer views on the summary of responses provided by local authorities, professional association roundtable and others outlined in paragraph 7 of the report and detailed further in Appendix 1
- ii. Consider the questions being posed by the Scottish Government and whether the Board have any additional comments to inform the COSLA response. The Board may want to focus on responses that can shift-the-dial on reducing child poverty as well as those promoting child well-being.
- iii. Consider whether COSLA
- iv. Offer views on whether COSLA should pursue a shared ownership of the national delivery plan as per paragraph 13.
- v. Agree the process for developing and signing-off a COSLA response as per Next Steps.

References

Previous reports on [topic]:

- COSLA Community Wellbeing Board – 18/06/21
- COSLA Children and Young People Board – 21/05/21
- COSLA Community Wellbeing Board – 19/06/20
- COSLA Children and Young People Board – 22/05/20
- COSLA Community Wellbeing Board – 08/03/19
- COSLA Children and Young People Board – 08/06/18
- COSLA Community Wellbeing Board – 04/05/18
- COSLA Community Wellbeing Executive Group - 17/03/17

Lindsey Murphy, Organisational Lead for Local Government – CYP, CYP

lindsey@cosla.gov.uk

Robert McGregor, Policy Manager, Communities

robertm@cosla.gov.uk

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Purpose

1. The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Unit are engaging stakeholders as part of their consultation to inform the next version of the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. The plan will run for four years and will follow on from the current plan 'Every Child, Every Chance' which comes to an end in March 2022.
2. As part of this engagement COSLA officers have facilitated opportunities which include:
 - Communication and collation of responses from SOLACE
 - Facilitation of sessions with local Child Poverty Leads
 - Co-ordination of a round table event for professional association representatives
3. The engagement is focused on gaining feedback to the following questions:
 - What's currently working well, and what should the Scottish Government and partners continue to do more of?
 - Are there policies, actions or approaches that the Scottish Government and partners stop doing or do differently?
 - What new policies, actions or approaches should Scottish Government consider implementing?
 - What lessons from the Covid response should be applied to tackling child poverty in the future?

Current COSLA Position

4. The feedback from the opportunities noted above has been collated and themes identified. These resonate with discussions with members of the CYP Board which have taken place in the past year. A summary is provided in Appendix 1 for consideration as part of the CWB Board response to this paper. The response also highlighted the variety of work and efforts being undertaken in local areas to tackle child poverty.
5. Child poverty continues to be a priority for COSLA and national partners. Many of the themes which have emerged from our review of local responses align with wider COSLA Board discussions around resources and the need for local flexibility in order to meet local needs. COSLA Officers are already engaged in discussions with partners on some of the areas highlighted in the response for action, for example, support with local data and intelligence.

What is changing?

6. Based on current projections, it is likely that targets identified within the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 will not be met. Consequently, the government has declared a national mission to eradicate child poverty. The interim targets are due to be met in

2023/23 and final targets in 2030/31. The next delivery plan will need to set a critical path to meeting these targets.

7. The suggestions from local areas are outlined in Appendix 1 with some of the common responses shown below:
 - The need for further resource and funding which is flexible and longer term
 - The need to clearly understand what policies have the greatest impact on child poverty targets (through increasing earned income, reducing household costs and/or increasing income from social security) and prioritise these, whilst recognising the value of complementary policies and interventions to address child and family wellbeing
 - National support with data / intelligence sharing and data at a local level to help inform local action and monitor progress against the four child poverty measures which form the national targets.
 - Maintaining the ways of working, partnerships and removal of barriers which have been facilitated as part of the need to change ways of working due to Covid.
 - The need to join up policy and action across all areas that influence child poverty i.e. housing, transport, digital inclusion, employment.
 - Improving accessibility and removing complexity of benefits system.
 - Tackling stigma and working more closely with experts by experience.
 - Poverty proofing future policies and working to understand the interventions that are most likely to lift families out of poverty.
 - Prioritising protected characteristic and priority groups.
8. As highlighted in paragraph 6, work is also currently underway to develop a 'call to action' for leaders across Scotland in relation to child poverty, which states that tackling child poverty is a national mission.
9. It is also worth noting the recently published Covid Recovery Strategy: For a fairer future (Scottish Government, 2021) which also identifies actions needed to tackle low income and address financial security for low income households and which is likely to also inform aspects of the next version of the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. The Strategy can be accessed [here](#).
10. Furthermore, a consultation is now underway on a draft national plan for ending the need for food banks. This will be brought to the CWB Board in January. The Scottish Government are also inviting COSLA to consider whether they would like to have joint ownership of the national delivery plan to end the need for food banks and this will be brought to relevant Boards alongside the consultation which can be accessed [here](#).

Proposed COSLA Position

11. COSLA welcomes the opportunity to respond formally to the child poverty delivery plan consultation.
12. COSLA supports the call for tackling child poverty to be a 'national mission' and wishes to explore the opportunity for shared ownership of the next iteration of the child poverty delivery plan.

13. In addition to the local responses which are being submitted directly to Scottish Government from Local Authority areas we propose that COSLA submits a response aligned to the points being raised locally as per Appendix 1.
14. The CWB Board may wish to provide a separate response should they feel it is needed or they can provide additional context to the themes already identified in the report that will be submitted by the CYP Board.
15. COSLA Officers have also raised the potential for the upcoming version of the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan to be a jointly owned plan, rather than badged solely as Scottish Government Plan, with other national partners including COSLA. There has been no formal request made at this point and the CWB are also asked for a view on COSLA pursuing this.

Next Steps

16. Views from the Community Wellbeing Board on the feedback contained in Appendix 1, and any additional views will inform the COSLA response, alongside views offered by the Children and Young People Board which meets on 19 November.
17. The CYP will be asked to mandate COSLA officers to draft a COSLA response and mandate the appropriate Spokesperson to sign off the response ahead of its submission to Scottish Government.
18. The Scottish Government will continue to engage with stakeholders as the development of the delivery plan progresses, Officers will keep Board members and partners up to date.

Appendix 1

1. What's currently working well, and what should the Scottish Government and partners continue to do more of?

- Tackling stigma and ensuring local voices are being heard including experts through experience, reference given to relationships developed during Covid and work towards the ambition of the Christie Commission and the need to maintain and build on these relationships
- Integration of services ensuring access to the right service, at the right time, for the right person.
- Ongoing funding for commitments including ELC, transport, employment support with proposal of expanding i.e. funded childcare for all ages and for 52 weeks, expand free transport for young people to other groups
- Support for Minimum Income Guarantee and Universal Basic Income
- Community wealth building
- Sharing learning and experience across Scotland
- Partnership working and collaboration with new partners
- Targeting initiatives at priority groups
- Direct payments.

2. Are there policies, actions or approaches that the Scottish Government and partners stop doing or do differently?

- Acknowledge the demands of current reporting and the impact this has on implementing and embedding change and consider options to reduce this including less regular full reporting with annual template completion
- Shifting to longer term approaches and prevention and away from mitigation and crisis response, while acknowledging many will still need this type of intervention
- Need to acknowledge and explore the depth of child poverty which can assist in understanding the type of interventions needed to lift families out of poverty and potential impact of interventions across Scotland
- Review of grant criteria and improvements to the benefits system to include:
 - Rather than a number of application processes could it be simplified with acknowledgement that if eligible for one benefit will be eligible for others and remove the need for multiple applications and reduce complexity
 - Increase to benefit levels, for example, increase child payment to mitigate UC cut
 - ELC provision across more ages and for 52 weeks per year
 - Implementation of data sharing agreements to allow direct take up campaigns
 - Promotion of payments available by Social Security Scotland and the agency itself to 'make it a household name'.

3. What new policies, actions or approaches should Scottish Government consider implementing?

- National and local approach to 'poverty proofing' any new policies
- Approaches to improve affordability and access to the variety of factors which can affect child poverty i.e. transport, education, childcare, housing, fuel
- National approach to local data and intelligence to reduce duplication of efforts, the recent PHS package to support this is welcome but acknowledgement more national contribution needed
- Long term funding agreements for local programmes and third sector agencies
- Resource to assist capacity in local areas to coordinate and progress local child poverty action

- Consider potential of local overarching tackling poverty strategy/approach as the dissection of elements of poverty can impede joint working and increase reporting and administration
- Better engagement with local authorities with regards to forthcoming legislation to ensure costs and impacts can be identified and understood prior to implementation

4. What lessons from the Covid response should be applied to tackling child poverty in the future?

- Continued flexibility to support families and meet their needs by reducing bureaucracy and barriers to working in partnership i.e. funding, grants, procurement, data sharing, GDPR, decision making
- Additional funding which has been put in place but could affect families when removed if alternative support is not in place
- Ability for local delivery of direct payments
- Income maximisation efforts
- The key role that the 3rd sector play and the need for access to longer term funding to offer security and sustainability to their efforts
- Ensuring the improvements to partnership working and collaboration is not lost and that people do not retreat to their 'silos'
- Community engagement and working with local groups and families to identify how best to meet their needs
- The need for local influence over national agencies including but not limited to Government and energy providers
- Continued focus on protected characteristic groups and priority groups at most risk of child poverty:
 - Lone parent families
 - A household where someone is disabled
 - Families with three or more children
 - Minority ethnic families
 - Families with a child under one year old
 - Families where the mother is under 25 years of age.

“In 2017-2020 almost 90% of children in relative poverty after housing costs were in one of the priority groups” (Scottish Government, 2021)