
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

13 June 2023

Cabinet

Title: Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26; Progress report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24.

Purpose: To seek approval for:

- a) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23
- c) The North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-24;
- d) The submission of the report to the Scottish Government and the publication on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24; and
- c) Agrees that the report can be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the draft North Ayrshire Local Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26, Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24 which has been attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report and action plan are statutory requirements by Scottish Government and are the responsibility of local authorities and NHS Boards. The North Ayrshire action plan has been developed using a collaborative approach with internal and external partners. The report summarises the existing and planned activity intended to reduce child poverty in North Ayrshire.
- 1.3 The report also reports on the establishment and activity of a board to lead the development and implementation of a Child Poverty and Cost of Living strategy to reflect the Scottish Government delivery plan.

2. Background

2.1 The current Government Spending Review Consultation is to inform how Scottish Government will prioritise its resources for the next three years (2022 – 2025).

2.2 The three priorities are:

- to support progress toward meeting child poverty targets;
- to address climate change and
- to secure a stronger; fairer, greener economy.

2.3 Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026

The Scottish Government's second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan covering 2022-2026 was presented to Parliament on Thursday 24th March 2022. It is projected to deliver the lowest levels of child poverty in Scotland in the last 30 years. This means that by 2023-24, the year of the Scottish Government interim targets, using current projections, it is anticipated that around 17% of children will live in relative poverty, with more than 60,000 fewer children living in poverty since the Act was passed in 2017.

2.4 North Ayrshire

According to figures released by [End Child Poverty in Scotland](#) in July 2022 **there are 5,394 or 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire living in poverty**. However, these figures were sourced from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and came with a caveat that data collection was impacted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and that statistics should not be compared with previous years. Therefore, the true figure is likely to be greater. North Ayrshire currently has the second highest levels of child poverty in Scotland.

2.5 Key themes and areas of action within the Scottish Government delivery plan

2.5.1 Scotland's Offer to Families: Working together to deliver differently. Scottish Government is committed to working together to ensure that systems work for the people who need them most, trialling and evaluating new approaches, adapting ways of working, and investing in rigorous monitoring to understand how changes are impacting on priority families.

2.5.2 This includes the following themes:

- Pathfinders
- Social Innovation Partnership
- Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs
- Supporting the next generation to thrive.

2.6 Local Child Poverty Action Plan

2.6.1 Local authorities and NHS boards are required to publish their annual joint local Child Poverty Reports and Action Plans in June of each year. This provides a retrospective review of progress against previous actions and sets priorities for the forthcoming year. This report contains, for Cabinet approval, its proposed three year strategy (2023-26), its annual report for 2022-23 and an action plan covering the period 2023-24.

2.6.2 The Child Poverty Action Plan and Report ([Appendix 1](#)) was developed using a collaborative approach with internal and external partners and summarises the existing and planned activity intended to reduce child poverty in North Ayrshire. The National Co-ordinator for Child Poverty Action Reports from the Improvement Service has supported this work and has published, with CPAG, our Cost of the School Day work as national good practice.

North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26

2.7.1 The proposed areas of focus are:

<i>Our Objectives 2023-2026</i>	<i>LOIP Priority</i>
<i>We will provide local leadership in tackling child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will have greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design and delivery</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will ensure our services are human and kind</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will commit to taking a No Wrong Door approach with partners</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>We will advocate for our residents in accessing resources and funding to tackle child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>
<i>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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>Across the Council, NHSAAA, 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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>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) support tackling child poverty, and implement key actions.</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will understand and address where possible the cost-of-living challenges that our families face</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will use data to inform place-based approaches to interventions and targeted use of resources</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>Wellness, family support, parental employability</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will improve access to affordable childcare</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will encourage greater job quality through Fair Work</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>

<i>We will ensure accessibility to employment and services through support for priority families</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will maximise the uptake of benefits and support financial inclusion</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will drive further progress in removing financial barriers to education (COSD)</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>We will improve whole family wellbeing outcomes, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>
<i>We will better link adult and children's services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>
<i>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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>

2.7.2 Key areas of activity over the past year include:

- **Establishment of our Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board**, to develop and challenge the Council and partners to tackle the current challenges, chaired by the Leader of the Council and supported by NHSAAA, the North Ayrshire HSCP, the Third Sector Interface and Community Planning partners;
- The introduction of a strengthened participatory approach through a **series of mini enquiries**;
- **A refreshed focus on local data, supported by the Improvement Service**;
- Ongoing **automation and streamlining of access to benefits**;
- Innovative **employability initiatives** with partners, including health visitors and the third sector, supported by the Parental Employability Fund;
- Our ongoing **cost of the school day** work, identified as national good practice and developed with our young people;
- Collaborative, effective approaches to continuing to address the **poverty related attainment gap, including through the Regional Collaborative**;
- A refreshed **Housing Allocation Policy** through the lens of child poverty
- Maximising **access to transport for under-22 year olds**;
- Innovative ways of tackling the rising **cost of home energy** for residents through our Energy Smart initiative, funded by the Council's investment fund.

2.7.3 Key actions for the forthcoming year include:

- Further maximising parental employment opportunities through a **Parental Employment Coordinator**;
- Implementing the recent review of **financial inclusion services**;
- Continuing to **support families where disability is a factor** through the Equal Programme;
- **Further aligning schools' PEF resources** to interventions we have shown to be effective in reducing the impact of poverty on learning;
- **Reviewing Early Years and Out of School Care provision** through a mini-enquiry, co-production approach;
- Maximising the opportunities provided by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, for example in relation to **supporting dads and male caregivers** and **extending the Family Centred Wellbeing Service**;

- Work with the Third Sector and community partners to scope our current provision for whole family support and identify where our gaps are, to create a **fund for partner activity** through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- Improving support for **young mums**;
- Further supporting activity in relation to **care experienced** young people through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund;
- Further extension of **mental health and wellbeing** in schools and communities.
- Extending our action plan in relation to the national **cost of pregnancy**;
- Extending financial inclusion and advice opportunities in the NHS, for example further developing **Maternity Services Income Maximisation** joint service;
- Progressing **support for New Scots** young people and families;
- Providing additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by **fuel poverty, including on our islands**;
- Explore, in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council, opportunities to undertake a **data sharing pilot** with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need; and
- Progress a **Pathfinder** project with the Improvement Service to explore ways of obtaining consent to process data for the benefit of our residents, to intervene early to identify unmet need.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- a) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy covering the period 2023-26;
- b) Approves the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Report 2022-23 and Action Plan 2023-24; and
- c) Agrees that the report can be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership website.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There are no financial implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Human Resources

4.2 There are no HR implications for North Ayrshire Council contained within the current report.

Legal

4.3 The Council has a statutory duty to publish its Child Poverty Report and Action Plan each year, preferably by June.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 Tackling child poverty sits at the heart of our equalities and socio-economic duty and there are wide ranging implications related to our approach.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 Key areas of the report such as transport, connectivity and warm and affordable homes have direct positive links to climate change and carbon.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The proposals relate to the Council Plan in its entirety.

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The Scottish Government commits within its plan to developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy with all local authorities.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Council and NHSAAA consult with a wide range of partners to deliver the local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan, including young people, CPP partners and national agencies. The strengthening of this approach through mini enquiries leading to co-production has been a notable feature of this year's report.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director (Communities & Education)

For further information please contact **Dr Audrey Sutton, Executive Director (Communities & Education)**, on **(01294) 324415**.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Draft Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26; Report 2022-23 & Action Plan 2023-24

NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2023-26

CHILD POVERTY PROGRESS REPORT 2022-23

AND CHILD POVERTY ACTION PLAN 2023-24

Contents

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 - North Ayrshire:
 - Leadership of Tackling Child Poverty
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7. Priority Families: progress report and action plan: Summary of actions and progress: 2022-23 and new actions for 2023-24
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1. Foreword

Addressing child poverty, in the context of the current cost-of-living crisis, is one of the key priorities of North Ayrshire Council.

Targeted investment in social security to reduce child poverty through increasing the value of the Scottish Child Payment and extending eligibility is already contributing towards reducing relative child poverty, however, one in four children in North Ayrshire is still experiencing the impact of lack of resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions which are the norm in 21st century Scotland.

As Leader of North Ayrshire Council, I chair North Ayrshire Council's Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living Board, which includes NHSAAA and North Ayrshire HSCP, and which is supported by a three-year £1.4m Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living fund allocated by the Council in the 2023-24 budget. This enables North Ayrshire to continue to make local interventions to support children and families.

Participation by our residents, and listening to people with experience of poverty, underpins our approach to co-producing mitigating actions. Mini enquiries - thematic and place-based – are used to inform our action plans and enable us to share learning and responsibility for improvement with partners from across the Community Planning Partnership and public services, the third and community sectors and Scottish Government.

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.

Leader of the Council

'Our ambition is to make North Ayrshire 'fair for all', a great place where people can live, work and visit, and young people can grow up without inequity. However, with one in four of our children living in poverty, we have significant work to do. Poverty has negative impacts on children's health, social, emotional and cognitive development and educational outcomes. We know that poverty puts an additional strain on families, which can lead to further challenges.

The Council and its partners at local level can have significant influence through their range of services and resources, and we are determined to target those resources available to us to reduce the impacts of poverty on our children and families.

The dedication of our workforce and of our communities can combine to change outcomes for our residents and we are determined to continue to work together to make a difference.'

Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council.

NHSAAA CEO Foreword to follow

2. Generic background document (local plans and policies – used for all children’s strategies)

3. Background and local context

Although recent data indicates that rates of child poverty in Scotland appeared to be stabilising, the effects of the recent cost of living crisis have exacerbated the structural challenges which exist in many of our communities in North Ayrshire, the most challenging symptom of which is the second highest level of child poverty in Scotland.

According to figures released by [End Child Poverty in Scotland](#) in July 2022 **there are 5,394 or 24.7% of children in North Ayrshire living in poverty**. However, these figures were sourced from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and came with a caveat that data collection was impacted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and that statistics should not be compared with previous years. Therefore, the true figure is likely to be greater! **North Ayrshire currently has the second highest levels of child poverty in Scotland.**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report ‘UK Poverty 2023’ found that: “We are in the midst of a profound cost of living crisis with huge implications for society. Many of us are having to make difficult choices on what spending we prioritise, but some of us face increasingly bleak choices.”

They found that in October/November 2022:

- Around six in ten low-income families are not able to afford an unexpected expense
- Over half are in arrears
- Around a quarter use credit to pay essential bills
- Over seven in ten families are going without essentials
- Around four in ten families with children are spending less on food for their children.

They also forecast that whilst inflation is expected to fall during 2023, prices are expected to continue to rise along with rents and mortgage payments, and wages are not expected to keep up. Scottish Government figures from 2019-20 showed that more than one in four of Scotland's children are living in poverty. The Resolution Foundation forecasts that the rate of child poverty in Scotland will be 29% by 2023-24 and Scottish Government projections indicate that, without significant change in national policy, the figure could reach 38% by 2030-31.

The Scottish Government's 2022 publication 'The Cost-of-Living Crisis in Scotland: An Analytical Report' found that low-income households with little or no savings are most impacted and also made reference to the higher costs of living for people in rural and island households for some goods and services, including off-gas-grid fuel and transport. While the most vulnerable members of our communities are continuing to access advice services in the largest numbers, there is evidence nationally, echoed by local advice services, that there are more people seeking help now who were traditionally less likely to access advice services e.g. homeowners and professional people. Many people who sit just above the benefits entitlement threshold are facing financial difficulties. Increasing numbers of people who are in a debt solution (payment plan/debt arrangement scheme etc) are finding that they can no longer afford their contributions and more clients are presenting with complex debt.

North Ayrshire

For the most recent time period available, North Ayrshire had:

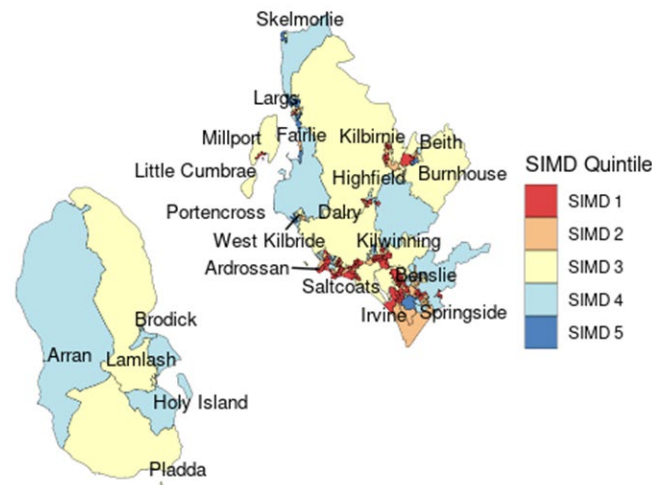
1. A total population of **134,220** people, where **47.5%** were male, and **23.3%** were aged over 65.
2. **9.7%** of people lived in the least deprived SIMD quintile, and **40.9%** lived in the most deprived quintile.

Table 1: Percentage of the North Ayrshire population living in the 2016 and 2020 SIMD Datazone Quintiles in 2016 and 2021 respectively.

Quintile	Percent of 2016 Population (SIMD 2016 Ranking)	Percent of 2021 Population (SIMD 2020 Ranking)	Difference
SIMD 1	40.9%	40.9%	0.0%
SIMD 2	20.0%	18.5%	-1.4%
SIMD 3	14.1%	15.8%	1.7%
SIMD 4	15.9%	15.0%	-0.9%
SIMD 5	9.2%	9.7%	0.5%

Source: Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland, National Records Scotland

Map of Data Zones within North Ayrshire coloured by SIMD quintiles:



Source: Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland

The population in North Ayrshire is estimated to decrease by 1.7% from 2021 to 2026. Although the overall population is projected to decrease, the older population of North Ayrshire is expected to increase, while the population aged under 65 is expected to decrease.

The dependency ratio is the number of people aged 0-15 and 65+ as a percentage of those aged 16-65. For North Ayrshire, the figure was 65.6% for the most recent year. For North Ayrshire, the projected figure for 2031 is 77.2%.

Income from employment

North Ayrshire is particularly vulnerable to economic crisis, with the 7th lowest employment rate, (which has improved from the 2nd lowest in Scotland (73.6%) compared to a Scottish average of 74.4%). This most recent data release reflects the period January – December 2022 and shows a 8.7% increase from the previous data release.

The North Ayrshire rate for claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%. This compares to regional figures of 4.3% for East Ayrshire and 3.7% for South Ayrshire and a Scottish average of 3.3%. This dataset is for March 2023 and shows the rate has remained the same compared to other areas where figures have increased.

In comparison to other local authority areas 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%. Addressing youth employment remains a priority given its impacts on future life chances.

Mental Health

the Mental Health Foundation reports that more than one in nine (13%) adults in Scotland are feeling hopeless, four in ten (40%) feeling anxious and one-third (33%) feeling stressed, when thinking about their financial situation in the past month. The Mental Health Foundation is warning of a significant rise in mental health problems without adequate support.

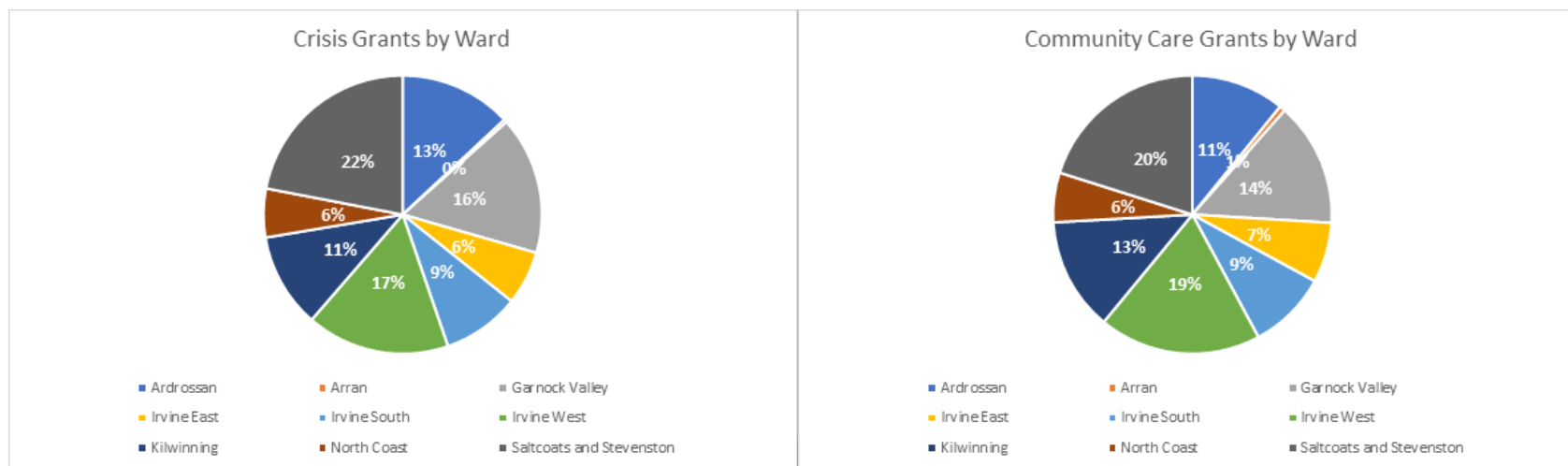
In 2020/21, 22% of people in North Ayrshire were prescribed medication for anxiety, depression, or psychosis in North Ayrshire HSCP. This is a 35.3% increase from the rate 10 years prior in 2010/11.

Many adults in Scotland are concerned about not being able to maintain their standard of living (75%), heat their home (70%) or pay general monthly household bills (65%). Significantly, more than half (52%) of adults in Scotland were at least a little worried about being able to afford food over the next few months, rising to 69% of those aged 18 to 34.

Costs of living

It is estimated that around 62% of Scottish households are now living in fuel poverty (paying more than 10% of their income on energy). This figure rises to 80% for low-income households. Another significant change is that almost half of all 'non-income' poor are now also likely to be fuel poor, up from 9.5% in 2019-20.

How does this manifest itself in North Ayrshire in 2023?



Recently, the Council has agreed funding packages to support our communities during the current cost-of-living crisis. These included:

1. A £1.4m Child Poverty and Cost of Living Fund
2. More than £2 million for an Energy Support Scheme which offers advice and support to help people lower their energy bills, as well as practical help to install energy-saving features in homes. This support will be directed to those who need it most and more details on this initiative will be announced in the coming weeks.
3. Two additional payments of £100 per child to increase the two separate Scottish Government Child Bridging Payments of £130 for families of children who are eligible for a free school meal, due to be distributed in October and December. The £100 payments will also be extended to low-income families with children of pre-school age, with approximately 3,300 families across North Ayrshire due to receive payment.
4. £500,000 to build on our existing Community Food Network to ensure basic food provision is available to anyone who requires the support, recognising the growing membership and anticipated increase in demand due to the impact of the rise in the energy cap.

The package also included a Public Transport Travel Scheme to support travel to work, a community transport initiative, support for the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme, new Skills for Life Work placements and Employer Recruitment Incentives.

Other recent interventions include:

1. Support for our Community Food Larders and specific Community Centres in relation to ‘**warm spaces/banks**’, with co-located advice services, encouraging our communities to use already available, halls, centres, community cafes and libraries better, ensuring they feel comfortable in order to stay longer.
2. A business review of our Community Larders and testing of **bulk buying scheme to reduce the costs** of food purchase.
3. A partnership with the **local credit union** to provide low-cost loans to higher risk groups.
4. Community Planning ‘**Community Books**’ which will focus on supporting the most vulnerable to find warm places, low-cost meals and so on.

The Scottish Government Local Child Poverty Dashboard showed, between 2018 and 2019, a significant drop in the number of people in North Ayrshire who felt they were managing well financially, having gone down from 62% to 49%, whilst across Scotland numbers remained fairly static. In addition, since 2017, the statistics show an increasing number of adults with no savings, against a slight reduction across Scotland.

In North Ayrshire we are fully committed to becoming a fairer and more equal society. The Council shapes its strategies and focuses its work on tackling inequalities and creating a society where no one lives in poverty, where the economy is inclusive and where everyone has the same life chances to live fulfilling and healthy lives. Our Community Planning Partners e.g., NHS A&A, Police and Fire Services, Third Sector Interface, etc. are committed to this ambition.

4. Child Poverty: Our 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.

North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Plan

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.

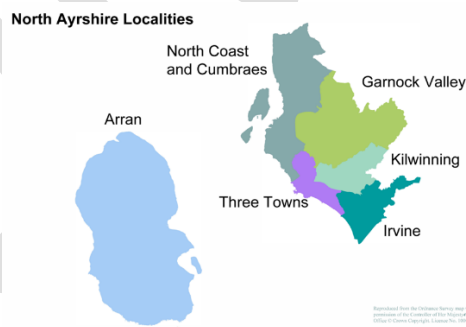
- **Work:** Address the causes and effects of poverty through a strong local economy and skills base by increasing employment, developing volunteering and providing better support for young people to develop the skills they need to play a strong role in our local economy.
- **World:** Work more closely and effectively together to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change by working together to by increasing 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.

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.

Our Locality Partnerships are the means by which we fulfill 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.

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

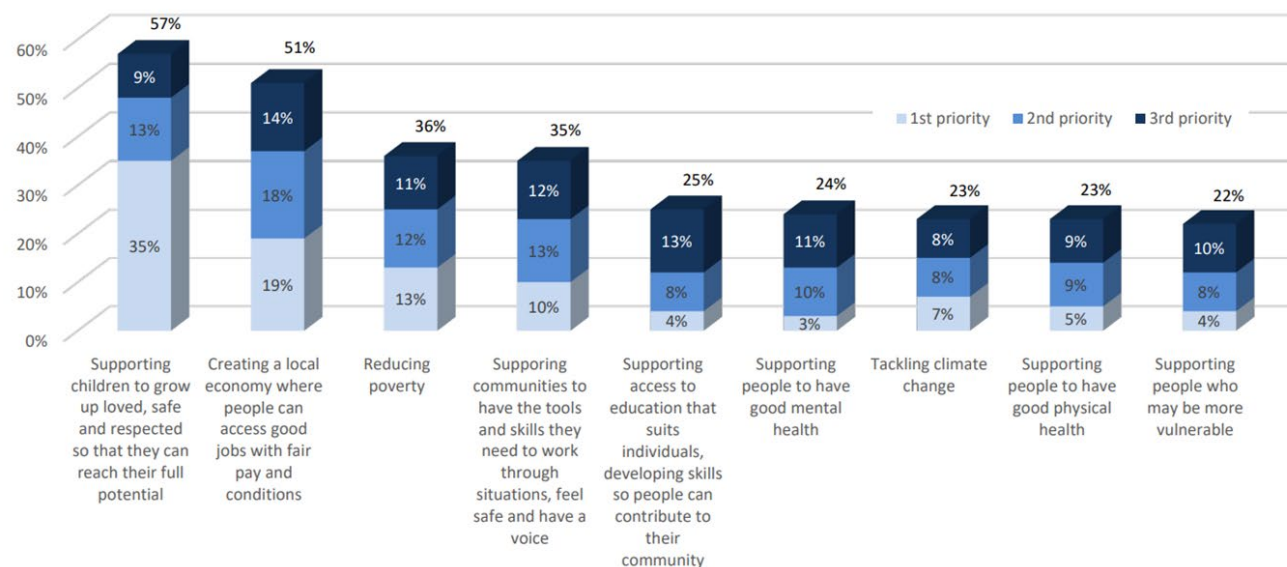
In developing this plan we were influenced both by the feedback from local people on what they think the key issues are as well as a range of statistics and analysis. This included a [Strategic Needs Assessment](#) written by Public Health Scotland which is available on our website.



Our People's Panel survey resulted in the following prioritisation which has informed our 2023-26 child poverty strategy:

Figure 2.1: Overall Priorities

Base: 645



Definition of Poverty

A family is considered as in poverty if, **after housing costs**, they are living on:

- **Less than £333 a week** or £17,400 a year for a single person with children aged between five and 14 years
- **Less than £450 a week** or £23,400 a year for a couple with children aged between five and 14 years.

Experiencing child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children.

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

- **Inadequate income from employment**
- **Inadequate income from social security benefits and**
- **Living costs.**

North Ayrshire is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland, with deprivation levels significantly higher than the national average, and has the second highest level of child poverty - after housing costs - of any area in Scotland. Child poverty statistics for 2019-20, released by Loughborough University, based on DWP and HMRC data, shows that an estimated 6200 children aged 0 to 16 years were living in poverty in North Ayrshire.

According to Children in low-income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2022 Updated 23 March 2023, North Ayrshire absolute poverty has risen from 5,300 in 2017 to 5,951 in 2022. We use the local data to identify how we target our resources at sub-local authority level, for example our Wellness model, our Family Centred Wellbeing service and commissioned family support services from third sector partners.

5. North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy (2023-26) – delivering on long term objectives

In a recent publication, the Improvement Service (IS) said:

“Local commitment is increasingly vital at a time when – though rates of child poverty appear to be stabilising across Scotland – ongoing rises to the cost of living continue to push more and more families towards deep poverty, instability and crisis. “

The IS produced 4 key messages, with a number of key components, which include a focus on outcomes, the use of a wide range of policy levers, leadership and partnership at a local level, strategic use of resources, better use of data, the importance of a dignified approach through cash payments, local entitlements and universal approaches to income maximisation.

Our approach to developing our strategy takes into consideration:

- a focus on shared outcomes across partners
- the data available to us to inform our priorities
- the views of our residents.

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.

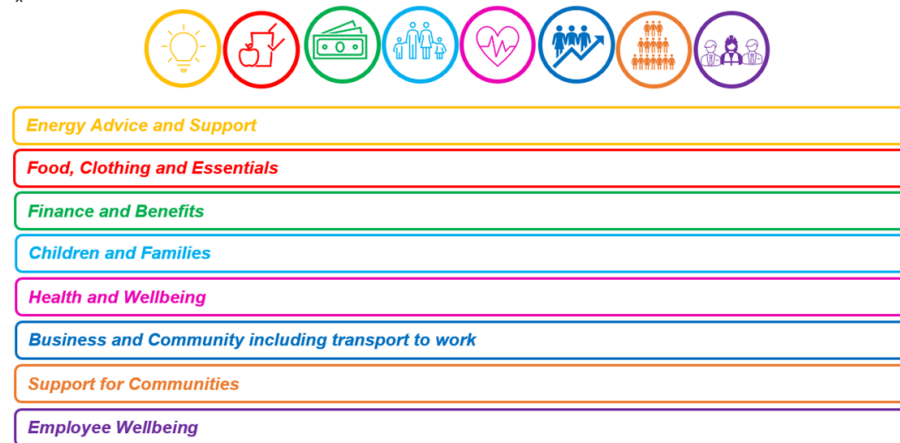
North Ayrshire Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board: Terms of Reference

- *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.

The Cost-of-Living themes are as follows:

x



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.

Co-design and co-production: a participatory approach

Our Locality Partnerships have all agreed local priorities. This work is led by local people supported by the Council and Community Planning partners. A £5.6m Community Investment Fund supports a range of initiatives which are focused on reducing inequalities. The links between the locality priorities and those in the LOIP are outlined below, alongside of an infographic that shows the work that takes place across our localities outside of each Partnership meeting to progress the locally agreed priorities:



Strategic Theme Mapping: LOIP, Child Poverty and Locality Priorities

North Ayrshire Partnership Plan (LOIP) Themes	Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy Themes	Child Poverty & Cost of Living Themes	Locality Priorities
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Environment Affordable Warmth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty Maximising Income from Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing our mental health and wellbeing (Irvine) Alleviating poverty (Irvine) Increasing civic pride and community engagement (Three Towns) Improving community wellbeing (Three Towns, Kilwinning) Improving access to financial services (North Coast) Increasing social inclusion (North Coast) Improving mental wellbeing (North Coast)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleviating poverty and promoting equality of access to opportunities (Kilwinning) • Community (Arran, Islands Plan)
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Green Economy • Transport & Travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising Income from Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting skills and work opportunities (Irvine, North Coast, Kilwinning) • Promoting the local economy and tourism (Three Towns) • Work & Local Community (Garnock Valley) • Economy (Arran, Islands Plan)
World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Operations • Carbon Absorption • Climate Change Adaptation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing green health and the natural environment (Irvine) • Regenerating community facilities (Three Towns) • Moving Around (public transport, traffic & parking) (Garnock Valley) • Facilities & Amenities (Garnock Valley) • Improving our local environment (Kilwinning) • Environment (Arran, Islands Plan)

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

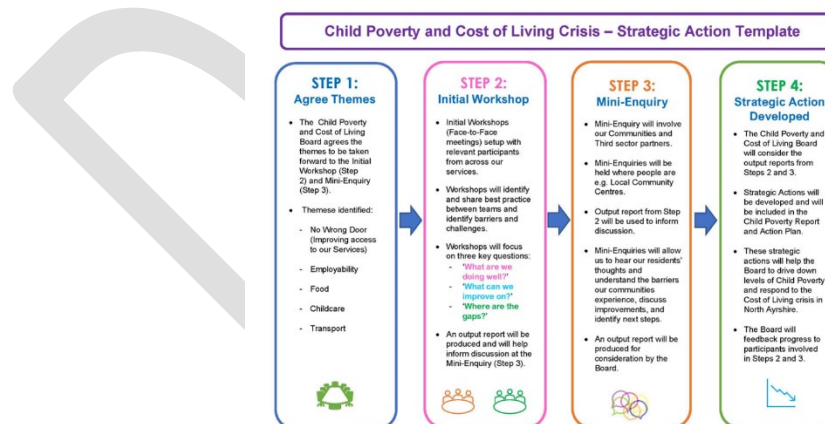
Place-based approaches

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.

Themes	Timescale	Actions	Evidence of success	Owner(s)	Partners	Progress against action
Develop a Cumbrae Food Local Plan	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out needs assessment Include residents Run a food bank based on the island for food banks Provide advice on food banks and other food and drink and alcohol and alcohol activity costs (e.g. alcohol) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report from Engagement Foodbank statistics Training materials Training materials Training materials Training materials 	CLC Cumbrae/Scottish Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Food Local Plan	
Develop a Cumbrae Food Local Plan	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out needs assessment Include residents Run a food bank based on the island for food banks Provide advice on food banks and other food and drink and alcohol and alcohol activity costs (e.g. alcohol) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report from Engagement Foodbank statistics Training materials Training materials Training materials Training materials 	CLC Cumbrae/Scottish Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Food Local Plan	
Support needs and recycling	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate potential waste and recycling point on Cumbrae 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate potential waste and recycling point on Cumbrae 	CLC Cumbrae/Scottish Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Food Local Plan	
Employability support	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential of an employment centre on Cumbrae 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the potential of an employment centre on Cumbrae 	CLC Cumbrae/Scottish Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Food Local Plan	
Energy advice and support	6-8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific advice and support on energy costs (e.g. energy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific advice and support on energy costs (e.g. energy) 	CLC Cumbrae/Scottish Council and Cumbrae	Community Partners: Cumbrae Food Local Plan	

A consistent approach to identifying expected outcomes and actions from our mini enquiries is ensured by the following approach:



Joint Cabinet

In North Ayrshire we have a very well-developed Youth Participation approach which ensure young people's voices are heard and that they influence our work. This includes a recent Cost of the School Day conference and our regular Joint Cabinets, where the Council's Cabinet has joint sessions with young people from every secondary school and our ASN campus. The action plans produced from Joint Cabinet inform our work.

The outputs from the above engagement (and more) with our partners and communities have informed the three-year Child Poverty strategy and annual report.

6. Our Tackling Child Poverty Strategy 2023-26

By 2026 we will have improved the outcomes for children and families living in poverty through the following:

<i>Our Objectives 2023-2026</i>	<i>LOIP Priority</i>	<i>Action Ref 2023-24 – to be completed in final version</i>
<i>We will provide local leadership in tackling child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will have greater involvement of residents, including children and young people, in service design and delivery</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will ensure our services are human and kind</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will commit to taking a No Wrong Door approach with partners</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>We will advocate for our residents in accessing resources and funding to tackle child poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing</i>	
<i>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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	

<i>Across the Council, NHSAAA, 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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>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) support tackling child poverty, and implement key actions.</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will understand and address where possible the cost-of-living challenges that our families face</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will use data to inform place-based approaches to interventions and targeted use of resources Wellness, family support, parental employability</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will improve access to affordable childcare</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will encourage greater job quality through Fair Work</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will ensure accessibility to employment and services through support for priority families</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will maximise the uptake of benefits and support financial inclusion</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will drive further progress in removing financial barriers to education (COSD)</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>We will improve whole family wellbeing outcomes, supported by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	
<i>We will better link adult and children's services to improve outcomes for families living in poverty</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work</i>	
<i>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</i>	<i>Wellbeing Work World</i>	

7. Priority Families

The Scottish Government identified six groups (or priority families) most at risk of poverty in Scotland. These are:

1. Single parent households
2. Households where an adult and/or a child is disabled
3. Households with three or more children (large households)
4. Minority ethnic households
5. Households with a child under one year old
6. Households where the mother is under 25 years of age.

Examples of current support for priority groups in North Ayrshire

- 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. Our Employability Support Services continues to target parents, young people and people with disabilities and work in partnership with other services to identify and target possible clients.
- We currently fund **We Work for Families** as our specialist employability support for parents who have had referrals exclusively from Health Visitors, and we are extending these referral pathways to support parents accessing 1,140 childcare hours.
- **Family Nurse Partnership** (FNP) is an intensive home-visiting programme for first time young mums and their families. Support is offered from the point of booking into midwifery services and then until the child is 2 years old, where the care of the family will be transferred to the local health visiting team. FNP provides a very client-focused approach to the family and works alongside the mum and baby to support areas like parenting, bonding-attachment, feeding, child development and self-confidence. There are currently 75 active clients with just under 90% of them living in the lowest three SIMD quintile.
- Housing identifies priority families, including a high percentage of lone parent families who are at risk of becoming homeless, are homeless or are in temporary accommodation, to allow consideration of child poverty in its **Housing allocation policy**.
- **Our Family Centred Wellbeing Service** is being scaled up to two further localities through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- In our **Intensive and Therapeutic Counselling Support for Care Experienced and Vulnerable Young People**, the criteria have been widened so that any child/young person who requires intensive therapeutic counselling can access this through our partner provider.

- **Support in the Early Years:** Expansion of the service attached to Health Visiting teams, which will support early intervention and prevention work for children under school and work with the whole family where appropriate, is being funded through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- **Early Learning and Childcare Provision:** We offer up to 30 hours free childcare per week to all children aged 3-5 and eligible two-year-olds.
- 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.
- **Strategic Equity Funding** is utilised in North Ayrshire to fund a range of supports including family learning opportunities and targeted nurture to improve pupil readiness to learn in 28 schools. Significant work is underway to embed nurturing principles on a whole school level across all educational establishments.
- **Targeted summer childcare and food programmes** for families includes employability support.
- Connected Communities runs **young mums' groups** to provide support, peer support networks, employability support, benefits maximisation advice and childcare opportunities.
- 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 **Modern Apprentice Programme**.
- Arran CVS facilitates the North Ayrshire share of the £15 million **Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022/23** supported by a multi partner steering group. The Fund prioritises a range of 'at risk' groups such as people facing socio-economic disadvantage, black and ethnic minority communities, people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people and LGBTI communities. In its second year, the fund has had a particular focus on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and an increased emphasis on those facing socio-economic disadvantage, with this focus to be continued in year 3.
- A partnership with the **local credit union** provides low-cost loans to higher risk groups.
- We work closely with our Syrian and Ukraine task force, Ayrshire College and community partners to support our **New Scots**. This includes support from Council services, HSCP and capacity building and youth services opportunities.

Examples of planned support for priority groups 2023-24

- **We will continue to capture voices and experience** of children and young people and their families and priority groups who are experiencing poverty and build in learning to policy and policy change.
- We will review, develop, promote and improve North Ayrshire **advice services** to ensure they are person-centred, responsive, and meet the needs of all our residents, particularly the more vulnerable groups.

- We will promote the Financial Inclusion Referral Pathways within NHSAA where staff refer families to appropriate FIS and incorporate this into routine practice, including role of Better Health Hub in referral to FIS.
- We will further develop **Maternity Services Income Maximisation** joint service.
- We will continue to build upon the provisions put in place through the **Whole Family Wellbeing Fund** to support families to access financial inclusion and benefit maximisation supports.
- We will scale up the **Family Centred Wellbeing Service** through the Whole Family Wellbeing fund.
- We will provide further support to enable families to take up their entitlement to Best Start Grant (BSG) and Best Start Food Scheme.
- We will introduce a **Community Charge Nurse for Care Experienced Young People** based in Throughcare/Aftercare Team (Whole Family Wellbeing Fund).
- We will introduce a **Dads' Support Worker** to develop and deliver specific programmes for dads, including practical parenting workshops; working in partnership with *Dads Rock* and learning from the established programmes and approaches they have developed (Whole Family Wellbeing Fund).
- We will continue to work towards developing sustainable models of **school aged childcare** for North Ayrshire families.
- We will continue to develop our community-based support for **young mums**.
- We will develop our **Neighbourhood Networks** to include a Transition Network and a network for young people to strengthen prevention and early intervention for people with learning disabilities funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- We will work with Third Sector and community partners to scope our current provision for whole family support and identify where our gaps are, to create a **fund for partner activity**.
- We will review our **housing allocation policy** to continue to ensure child poverty is a key consideration in decision making.
- We will explore, in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council, opportunities to undertake a **data sharing pilot** with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need.
- We will progress a **Pathfinder** project with the Improvement Service to explore ways of obtaining consent to process data for the benefit of our residents, to intervene early to identify unmet need.
- We will work with local partners to identify appropriate **data and health intelligence** to inform monitoring of progress against income-based child poverty targets.

Case Study

Ruth was registered in 2022 with We Work for Families, lives in a low-income household with her partner and their two young children. She had been diagnosed with postnatal depression and had been prescribed medication. After a few weeks of engaging, we discussed options and agreed to be referred to Working for a Healthy Economy for counselling, which she advised has helped her immensely.

Ruth also said that while she loves being a mum that she felt as though she needed to be 'her' too, earning her own money and interacting with adults. We discussed options and she considered her qualifications and experience as a nail technician and that she would love to go back to the beauty industry but felt she was limited in what she could offer and that her skills may be outdated. Due to the nature of the beauty industry, Ruth said she thought she would need to gain more relevant qualifications.

We helped Ruth to source an accredited course in Russian Lashes, which we funded. This course was completed online as she did not feel confident enough to attend a class at the time. WWFF supplied a Chromebook to allow her to access this course online. She was over the moon when she passed and sent photos of the work that she had done to gain the qualification. She identified another course, Laminated Brows, she used her ITA Account to pay the first £200 and WWFF funded the excess. Ruth now felt that with these new qualifications, her experience, and the confidence she had gained in completing the courses that she was ready to start work. She found a salon that she felt comfortable in and committed to being there all day one day a week offering beauty treatments. For her to be able to go to work she needed childcare for her baby, we helped her to find suitable childcare and funded the initial four sessions until she was able to pay for it herself.

Ruth's business has grown significantly, and she has found herself in constant demand, building up a large client base. She decided that with her son now in preschool she can work extra days and have her own premises which is more financially viable as she can come and go as she needs. As she has been working, clients have asked for different treatments, and she wasted no time in gaining the qualifications needed to provide these services. WWFF funded an acrylic nail extension and nail art course. She has recently been nominated for a national beauty award and was absolutely blown away when she won the Bronze Certificate. Ruth has grown so much in confidence since joining the project and continues to do so. More recently WWFF part-funded a new beauty bed as this is a vital piece of equipment but also expensive. She continues to work hard and is expanding her knowledge in the beauty business continually updating her skills and investing in more courses and has shown she is a very dedicated and hard-working individual who has achieved so much, an inspiration - and all this happened following her accessing the targeted childcare offered by North Ayrshire Council in summer 2022.

8. Child Poverty progress report and action plan: Summary of actions and progress: 2022-23 and new actions for 2023-24

Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment 2022-23: Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)) • Underemployment (of 16+ population (%)) (2020) showed North Ayrshire levels at 10.7% compared to a Scottish average of 8.1% (Scottish Government) • The Employment Rate (January 2022 to December 2022) showed that North Ayrshire sits at 73.6% against the Scottish average of 74.4% (ONS?) 		
Action: What we committed to doing	Progress: what we've done	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete
Progress the regional Fair Employment workstream action plan	<p>We score fair work first (including living wage) in all relevant contracts.</p> <p>We carry out annual review of living wage status of all applicable contracts and prepare action plan, to encourage suppliers to work towards if required.</p> <p>We refer all suppliers who are not living wage accredited or do not pay living wage to all suitable staff to the Fair Work Ayrshire Team to enable them to encourage payment/accreditation status.</p> <p>We are continuing to encourage Third Sector organisations to pay the Real Living Wage.</p> <p>We have offered Cost of Living payments to staff (90% locally based staff).</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support school leavers and their families to secure positive and sustained destinations, for example through the Youth Guarantee	<p>Working with the Local Employability Partnership, identification and tracking of vulnerable leavers has improved. Schools are increasingly using the school management information system (SEEMIS) 16plus tab which helps to inform Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Data Hub. This data is used by SDS and other partners for early intervention and support in advance of anticipated school leaving date.</p> <p>An Ambition Agreement worker offers individualised support and various pathways for vulnerable leavers and supported by partner agencies. For example, Barnardos are employed for targeted and outreach work with young people, including care experienced, facing significant challenges in accessing a positive destination.</p> <p>As a result of ongoing work, in February 2023 for North Ayrshire nearly 96% of all school leavers achieved an initial positive destination, the highest figure ever recorded for North Ayrshire.</p> <p>In the last academic year, 229 young people were mentored by the MCR programme across six North Ayrshire secondary schools to enable identified pupils to achieve to their full potential and obtain a positive post-school destination.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprentice Programme, including young people	Over the 3-year period, 151 new MAs were recruited, achieving the target set. The MA programme supports the Council's future workforce planning programme, successfully recruiting local people to gain work experience and a qualification.	Ongoing in 2023-24

with a disability and who are care experienced.	<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>Public Health are exploring filling vacancies using the employability advisor's knowledge and resource including recruitment of a modern apprentice.</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>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Support parents to progress to or improve employment	<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. Since April 22, 78 parents/ carers have been referred to WWFF. 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 childcare hours.</p> <p>We are 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> <p>We have a care at home pilot offering more flexible hours of employment.</p> <p>We continue to offer families support for income maximisation and use and awareness of food larders and promoting the use of Third sector supports.</p> <p>We continue to promote Employee Supported Volunteering for all organisations for staff teams to support local groups and charities.</p> <p>We have responsive and flexible childcare solutions for parents engaging in training during the Easter School holidays.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

	Public Transport Scheme – 99 parents received a travel pass to access 3 months free public transport which supported enhanced engagement with employability services as well as increased wellbeing and family leisure time.	
Targeted summer childcare and food programmes for families to include employability support	The Information and Culture Service were able to offer childcare support to parents who were undertaking an employability pilot project organised by North Ayrshire Council's Employability Team, Ayrshire College and We Work For Families. Through this project, parents engaged in training then were interviewed for a 6-month work placement with partner, anchor organisations. All employers involved were aware that a 10am until 2pm work pattern would be favoured to avoid the challenges that childcare can bring. SEE CASE STUDY	Ongoing in 2023-24
Create new Skills for Life work placements	Our Skills for Life model delivered with North Ayrshire Council has been extended this year to include paid work experience within the Third Sector. This has supported over 120 unemployed people in the last year to secure employment. A pilot programme - Step into Business - uses the Skills for Life Model and 11 parents are now in paid work experience within our CPP Partners and anchor organisations - NHS, SFRS, TACT, Ayrshire College and the parents are working towards achieving a SVQ Level II in Business Administration - certifying competence in the workplace. We are keen to extend this to growth sectors such as engineering, which would unlock potential for higher paid employment.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Develop mentoring within the Positive Steps with Partners Project employability project	Employability is working closely with TACT (TSI) to deliver a Positive Pathways programme specifically for parents to access volunteering to develop work experience - using the Steps Programme to build confidence. TACT (one half of the TSI) 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. 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 in the near future.	Ongoing in 2023-24
We will progress Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs)	In 2022-23, 54 people were progressed into employment utilising an Employer Recruitment Incentive to secure employment.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Establish our Digital Growth Fund for Businesses	53 Businesses were supported through specialist digital consultancy and grant provision. The fund has now been completely delivered and closed off. Those receiving support will continue to be supported by a local adviser to continue their digital plan.	
Complete the roll out of our literacy and employability programmes.	CLD employability programmes now have an established partnership with SDS and have workers for both schools and communities. Programmes in secondaries support the most vulnerable and disengaged young people into a positive destination. Opportunities include an Easter Skills Roadshow, ESOL Employability	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<p>Introductory sessions, 1:1 or group sessions on CV building/job searches/personal statement, online employability, and college application support. The Mobile Youth Centre supported this programme through roadshows in schools and communities, with drop-in sessions and employability awards such as Playback ICE. 1433 adults have engaged in CBAL including social media training, bike maintenance employability, Gaelic for beginners, Community Council training, ESOL buddies and locality CBAL programmes. Funding was allocated via CBAL to 27 projects.</p>	
Develop partner support for care experienced young people	<p>SFRS offer the following supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community garden projects and social events • Halloween, Christmas and Easter events involving games and gifts for young people • Soap making sessions at Ardrossan Fire Station with LUSH. • SFRS mentoring project • Care experienced young people attended YVS at Kilwinning and another care experienced young person has been offered a position within the unit. • Fire Safety Support and Education is being undertaken with various young people within ENSA. <p>Aligned with The Promise, the Police Scotland Community Wellbeing Unit (CWU) in North Ayrshire has been engaging with staff and residents from several children's residential houses across North Ayrshire. The team has built a good rapport with the young people with several attending at Irvine Police Office where they were cooked an officers' breakfast. There has been a marked reduction in the number of young people being reported missing and potentially coming to harm since the adoption of the CWU in North Ayrshire in June 2022. Work is ongoing to hold joint events with Connected Communities and KA Leisure aimed at forging positive relationships with young people in the community from all settings including those in care whilst addressing concerns they may have.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Develop partner support for people in recovery through mentoring, volunteering and work placements	<p>Mentoring, Volunteering & Work Placements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers and various groups within communities attend the community fire station gardens to carry out work and socialise with others at events such as weekly gardening groups and coffee and chat groups set up for local tenants and residents, some of whom are in recovery or have mental health issues. Two volunteers are due to start with Community Action Team (CAT) in June 2023 from the Positive Steps group within North Ayrshire. The volunteers will assist with CAT duties. • Volunteers from Positive Steps are painting a unit within Kilwinning Fire Station that will be utilised as a Safe Space area for our communities. 	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SFRS Rapid Relief Team – pan Ayrshire - will provide food boxes, sanitary products etc to vulnerable families, supported by volunteers. • Various FireSkills courses are being held within ENSA. • Work is ongoing to establish pathways for police to refer individuals to statutory partners and the third sector. 	
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Maximising Income from Employment: What else are we doing?

- **Procurement (North Ayrshire Council)**
 - Employment community benefit clauses are included in all procurement exercises over £500K. Suppliers are asked to employ local people (employment duration, based on the value of the contract awarded). These jobs are mandatory, and delivery is monitored by our Community Benefits Officer.
 - Payment of the real living wage is encouraged in all procurement exercises. If suppliers do not pay all staff real living wage, we ask what their plans are to work towards it.

Case Study – We Work for Families
<p>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 a SIMD area 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>“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”.</i></p> <p>At 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.</p> <p><i>“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”</i></p> <p>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.</p>

Jane was put forward for North Ayrshire Council's pilot scheme with Care at Home. She attended weekly workshops to improve her confidence, employability skills, interview skills and techniques and has gained more qualifications. She secured an interview and has now been offered one of the positions. This will allow Jane to work during school hours therefore she will not require childcare which was one of her initial barriers and has now reached her 6-month milestone and has just been offered a permanent contract with North Ayrshire Council's Care at Home Team.

"I will be able to have some independence back and be better off financially. I will have extra money which will allow me to treat the boys."

We Work for Families have been able to provide money for travel, tickets and lunch via the Easter Funding and Summer funding that we secured, for Jane to take her 3 sons on a day out on 2 separate occasions.

"The weans loved it, they all had fun and loved the fact that they were able to run around and enjoy themselves. On the last day out, my youngest son experienced the cinema for the first time, something that I wouldn't have been able to afford myself."

Maximising Income from Employment: Areas of Focus 2023-24

What progress have we made?

- *% of young adults aged 16-19 participating in education, training or employment has risen from 90.1% (2021) to 90.8% in 2022.*
- *in 2023 nearly 96% of all school leavers achieved an initial positive destination, the highest figure ever recorded for North Ayrshire.*
- *The number of Modern Apprentices recruited by North Ayrshire Council, who are care experienced or disabled has risen from 6 in 2021-22 to 42 in 2022-23.*
- *% of all school leavers achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 5 has dropped from 89.6% in 2021 to 88.6% in 2022*
- *% of care experienced school leavers achieving one or more awards at SCQF level 5 has risen from 62.4% in 2021 to 67.7% in 2022*
- *Number of three-to-five-year-olds registered to access 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare in North Ayrshire has risen from 1893 in 2021 to 1936 in 2022.*
- *% Working age population in work has risen from 71.2% to 73.6% between September 2022 and Dec 2022.*

What will change?	Our actions	How will we know?
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from more jobs and training in the local area.	We will amend the community benefits policy for procured contractors to ensure more local people are trained and employed through Council funded contracts.	There will be an increase in local people trained and employed through contracts awarded by the Council.
North Ayrshire residents will have their incomes increased.	We will continue to encourage payment of real living wage across North Ayrshire Council's partners, including in the Third Sector.	There will be an increase in the number of local people receiving the real living wage.

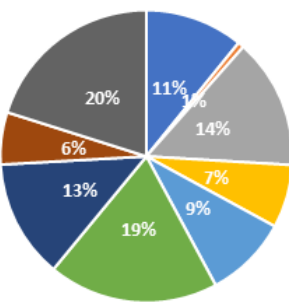
North Ayrshire parents will have their household incomes maximised through employment opportunities.	We will increase opportunities for parents to secure employment through the Employability Service and identified partners.	There will be an increase in the number of parents engaging with North Ayrshire Council's Employability Service as part of established parenting programmes.
North Ayrshire residents will have increased access to a range of employment opportunities across Local Employability Partnership organisations.	We will continue to work collaboratively as part of the Local Employability Partnership to proactively identified opportunities to reduce barriers to employment across partnership organisations.	There will be an increase in the number of local residents accessing employment opportunities, including Modern Apprenticeships, across Local Employability Partnership organisations.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a wider range of employment opportunities through Community Planning Partnership organisations.	We will continue to work in partnership with Public Health to explore opportunities to fill vacancies through innovative approaches which utilise employability advisor knowledge and resources.	There will be an increase in the number of local Public Health vacancies that are filled through innovative employability pathways, including the Modern Apprentices.
North Ayrshire residents will know where to access employment support from North Ayrshire Council and partner organisations.	We will explore approaches to raising awareness of local employment support for parents and carers through use of peer navigators and peer to peer influencing.	There will be an increase in the number of parents registering interest in local employability support in North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire residents participating in employability and skills courses in North Ayrshire will have access to meaningful work placements.	We will continue to create meaningful placements for individuals on employability and skills courses in North Ayrshire.	There will be an increase in the number of employability and skill course participants reporting they were able to access a meaningful placement.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a wider range of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities.	We will implement changes to our Modern Apprenticeship programme following a review which included an assessment of available budget; new apprenticeship products; workforce development needs; labour market conditions; other employability offers for young people; and feedback from modern apprentices and services.	There will be an expansion to the number of Modern Apprenticeship programmes with a diverse range of apprenticeship opportunities, including graduate and foundation apprenticeships, with ringfenced places for young people with a disability and or care experience, to join the Council's workforce.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of opportunities through public sector supplier funded community benefits.	We will work in partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran to improve local child-related community benefits that are delivered via the Community Benefits Gateway in partnership with	There will be an increase in the number and uptake of children related community benefits available in North Ayrshire via the NHS Community Benefit Gateway.

	Third Sector organisations, schools and community organisations.	
North Ayrshire residents will have easier access to a greater range of employment opportunities within public sector organisations in North Ayrshire.	We will ensure the Council, CPP and partner websites promote specialist public sector recruitment websites (including MyJobScotland and the NHS Recruitment Portal) and we will ensure role profiles accurately reflect the role and job environment with minimal terminology and appropriate minimum criteria.	There will be an increase in the number of local residents accessing employment opportunities through public sector organisations in North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of employment opportunities in North Ayrshire.	We will develop opportunities for job shadowing, work experience and volunteering and promote these through channels such as job application websites, TSI for parents	There will be an increase in the number of local residents engaging in TSI employment opportunities.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to a greater range of mentoring opportunities.	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will implement a mentoring programme for kinship carers during summer 2023.	There will be an increase in the number of kinship carers being supported by CPP partner organisations.

Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits 2022-23 Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

- 28.6% of North Ayrshire children live in relative low-income families (2022) compared to a Scottish average of 20.8% (Local Child Poverty Dashboard (www.gov.scot))
- The North Ayrshire rate for claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%. This compares to a Scottish average of 3.3%.
- The Unemployment Rate (January 2022 to December 2022) for North Ayrshire was 3.6% against a Scottish average of 3.4% (ONS).
- The number of households in rent arrears / council tax debt rose from 5461 (40%) in 2022 to 5793 (43%) in 2023.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Healthy Weight: The 2020/21 percentage of Primary 1 children with a healthy weight in North Ayrshire was 65%, decreasing by 9.9 percentage points from 2019/20. The figure for Scotland was 70%.																						
Action: What we committed to doing	Progress	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete																				
Top up the child bridging payments for 2022 school holidays	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. 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.	Ongoing in 2023-24																				
Improve access to services via “Accessing our Council” and by engaging with our residents	<p>We are investigating opportunities to do a proof of concept using RPA (Robotic Process Automation) with the aim being able to use this technology to automate benefits such as Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and Community Care Grants to enable these to be processed and administered as quickly as possible.</p> <p>We understand the importance of place-based needs and approaches in relation to joining up our services and those of our partners in local settings, including community hubs, by using local data, for example:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community Care Grants by Ward</p>  <table><thead><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Ardrossan</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>Arran</td><td>1%</td></tr><tr><td>Garnock Valley</td><td>14%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine East</td><td>7%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine South</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine West</td><td>19%</td></tr><tr><td>Kilwinning</td><td>13%</td></tr><tr><td>North Coast</td><td>6%</td></tr><tr><td>Saltcoats and Stevenston</td><td>20%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Ward	Percentage	Ardrossan	11%	Arran	1%	Garnock Valley	14%	Irvine East	7%	Irvine South	9%	Irvine West	19%	Kilwinning	13%	North Coast	6%	Saltcoats and Stevenston	20%	Ongoing in 2023-24
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	<p>Our support team is spending an increased amount of time supporting families to make online application for benefits or support. This included ELC placements, access to Best Start grants and following up with issues relating to the Department of Works and Pension or Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>Automation has been achieved 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.</p> <p>Improvements have been completed to streamline the Council's top 15 online services, improving online customer journeys.</p> <p>The launch of the new customer online account My NAC uses the national My Account to authenticate customers and will offer a simple secure way to access a range of Scottish public services online. The new account will allow customers to see the status and history of all their cases and they will also be able to access their existing Council Tax and Housing Rent Online accounts.</p>	
Review North Ayrshire Council and HSCP financial inclusion services	<p>North Ayrshire Council has agreed a which Financial Inclusion Strategy that reflects the impact of the current economic situation on our services and details our immediate response to meeting the needs of people in our communities during 2023-24. The interim plan for 2023-24 will focus on 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>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Identify areas of improvement and create an action plan from the Cost of Pregnancy report	NHSAAA have established Cost of Pregnancy implementation group, created an action plan and started work on some actions.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Establish child/ family poverty as a priority area	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	Ongoing in 2023-24

within child health assessments.	<p>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 detailed below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="465 300 1861 639"> <thead> <tr> <th>Aspect</th><th>Service</th><th>No. of referrals (% of total)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Employability</td><td>We Work For Families</td><td>93 (60.4%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>SALUS</td><td>4 (2.6%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Benefits Advice</td><td>Money Matters</td><td>42 (27.2%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Debt Advice</td><td>CHAP</td><td>4 (2.6%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Better Off North Ayrshire</td><td>1 (0.7%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Energy Advice</td><td>Home Energy Scotland</td><td>1 (0.7%)</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>CHA Lemon Aid</td><td>9 (5.8%)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td></td><td>154</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Some services also offer direct support to families so a number of families will also have been signposted to services directly.</p>	Aspect	Service	No. of referrals (% of total)	Employability	We Work For Families	93 (60.4%)		SALUS	4 (2.6%)	Benefits Advice	Money Matters	42 (27.2%)	Debt Advice	CHAP	4 (2.6%)		Better Off North Ayrshire	1 (0.7%)	Energy Advice	Home Energy Scotland	1 (0.7%)		CHA Lemon Aid	9 (5.8%)	Total		154	
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Monitor and improve the uptake of the Young Patients Fund	The Young Patients Family Fund (YPFF) is provided by the Scottish Government to support families visiting children up to 18 years old who are receiving inpatient care. With a view to increase uptake a process mapping exercise was undertaken and a range of promotional materials produced. Work will continue to promote and evaluate this fund.	Ongoing in 2023-24																											
Prioritise income maximisation and the transfers of claimants from PIP to Scottish Adult Disability Payment and Legacy Benefits onto Universal Credit	<p>The merger of the Money Matters and the Welfare Reform and Advice Team has now begun and options are being explored to develop and improve existing services.</p> <p>In the short term, the priority is to maximise capacity to meet the increasing demand for welfare rights advice services and a number of options are currently being explored, including the development of referral pathways across the sectors to manage demand.</p> <p>The Money Matters Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> generated over £18.4m in financial gains for our residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits. received 5823 enquiries /referrals in 22/23 compared to 4958 in 21/22. delivered Welfare Rights services in seven Secondary schools with one Welfare Rights Officer. The financial gains were £468,550.42. 	Ongoing in 2023-24																											

	<p>Delivering Welfare Rights service in partnership with nine GP Surgeries in North Ayrshire, the first practices went live in June 2022 with two Income Advisers working in the 9 surgeries one day per week. There were 429 referrals from GP staff up to March 2023 resulting in financial gains £945,273.54.</p> <p>We have invested in a Welfare Rights Officer who works with our 9 secondary establishments, providing support to Pastoral teams enhancing their knowledge of welfare rights and takes referrals directly from both education staff and families.</p> <p>The focus and the level of resource allocated to this work is informed by local intelligence such as that shown below:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School Clothing Grants by Ward</p> <table><caption>School Clothing Grants by Ward</caption><thead><tr><th>Ward</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Ardrossan</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>Arran</td><td>1%</td></tr><tr><td>Garnock Valley</td><td>13%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine East</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine South</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>Irvine West</td><td>17%</td></tr><tr><td>Kilwinning</td><td>16%</td></tr><tr><td>North Coast</td><td>6%</td></tr><tr><td>Saltcoats and Stevenston</td><td>20%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Ward	Percentage	Ardrossan	9%	Arran	1%	Garnock Valley	13%	Irvine East	9%	Irvine South	10%	Irvine West	17%	Kilwinning	16%	North Coast	6%	Saltcoats and Stevenston	20%	
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Continue awareness raising sessions and poverty impact assessments training for staff on available supports and updates in relation	<p>Health Inequalities Impact Assessments (HIIA) are a tool to assess the impact on people of applying a proposed, new or revised policy or practice. A HIIA goes beyond the public sector's legal duty of the Equality Act 2010 by assessing also assessing health inequalities, human rights and socioeconomic circumstances.</p> <p>Since 2021 we have worked with Public Health to complete HIAs on a number of plans and policies including North Ayrshire’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, and our Local Police and Fire plans to support our partners to include assessment around potential differential impacts based on income, employment, social and cultural status in their strategic planning.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24																				

to relevant benefits		
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Maximising Income from Benefits: What else are we doing?

- **Income maximisation and improving access to information and advice about benefits**
 - We are holding further sessions with senior managers to encourage poverty impact assessment approaches in our work.
 - We are encouraging use of EDIA which includes questions relating to the Fairer Scotland Duty.

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 UC work capability assessment with expected award of **£1,205.56 per month bringing total monthly increase to £1,920.18.**

Maximising Income from Benefits: Areas of Focus 2023-24

What progress have we made?

- Over £18.4m financial gains have been delivered to residents in receipt of Welfare Benefits through the Money Matters team.
- The number of enquiries received by Money Matters has increased to 5823 which 17% greater than in 21/22.
- Financial gains of £468k have been delivered via Welfare Rights services in seven North Ayrshire Secondary Schools.
- Between June 2022 and March 2023, 429 referrals for welfare rights services were made through partnership working in 9 North Ayrshire GP surgeries. This resulted in financial gains of £945k being delivered to North Ayrshire residents.
- In 2022, 306 Three Towns residents were referred, or self-referred, to the Better Off pilot advice service. There were a further 67 'drop-ins' who accessed immediate welfare rights help and support. 75% of those referred had a disability or long-term health condition, and 23% were from child poverty priority groups. A total of 449 services were accessed by those referred, including 48 individuals who were referred on for health and wellbeing needs and 15 to employability services.
- Dental Caries: The percentage of primary 1 children with no obvious dental caries has steadily increased across North Ayrshire where in 2021/22, 73% of Primary 1 children are free from any obvious dental caries. The figure for Scotland was 75%.

What will change?	Our actions?	How will we know?
We will reduce levels of child poverty through income maximisation, increasing the number of adults who are managing well financially and increasing the number of adults with savings	<p>We will implement our new Financial Inclusion Strategy and develop a professional, in-house advice service which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission independent debt advice services • Work collaboratively across third and public sector advice agencies • Adopt a 'named/key worker' approach across advice agencies • Improve referral pathways to advice services and build on our holistic approach to support for those who need to access multiple services • Develop systems and processes to standardise data recording and reporting and enable services to fully evidence outcomes for clients and achievements of service 	<p>There will be an increase in local access points to advice services in our communities through building on our outreach model.</p> <p>There will be an increase levels of engagement with advice services.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in repeat presentations to advice services.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in levels of poverty, and in particular child poverty, for the most vulnerable people and families in our communities.</p>

North Ayrshire residents will have additional opportunities to engage with financial services to access their full entitlement to financial support.	We will develop, promote and embed a Financial Inclusion Referral Pathways within NHS Ayrshire & Arran to ensure access to appropriate support for staff and patients.	There will be an increase in referral rates to Financial Inclusion Services through direct electronic referral.
North Ayrshire's families will have enhanced support to maximise their income through benefits.	We will continue to build upon the provisions put in place through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to support families to access financial inclusion and benefit maximisation supports.	There will be an increase in the number of families supported through the Family Wellbeing Fund to maximise their income from benefits.
North Ayrshire families will benefit from the best start in life throughout early childhood.	We will continue to support eligible families to take up their entitlement to the Best Start Grant and Best Start Food Scheme.	This will be scoped out further to find suitable alternative measures to uptake data, which is held by Social Security Scotland but not made available locally.

<p>North Ayrshire residents will have seamless access to Council services to apply for benefits and entitlements.</p>	<p>We will integrate our MyAccount and ContactUs with our CRM to create a “golden record” for our residents.</p> <p>We will continue to implement the “Accessing our Council” transformation programme to improve access to council services, including Customer Services and Financial Inclusion Services.</p> <p>We will set up a proof of concept using Robot Process Automation to automate benefits such as Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and Community Care Grants to enable these to be processed and administered as quickly as possible.</p> <p>The current NAC website will be rebuilt in consultation with services and customers and will be live by Spring 2024.</p> <p>Opportunities to re-design our current face to face model for accessing Council services will be investigated, incorporating the use of corporate technology to ensure a streamlined customer journey.</p>	<p>There will be an increase in the number of benefit recipients benefiting from automated benefit payments.</p>
<p>North Ayrshire benefit applicants will benefit from a seamless application process that ensures their full benefit entitlement is progressed based on available data.</p>	<p>We will continue to work in partnership with the Improvement Service as part of a pilot project to explore how the Council can use data to maximise customers entitlements, verify eligibility and reduce the unmet need gap through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data.</p>	<p>This will be scoped out further as this work progresses in partnership with the Improvement Service, DWP and North Ayrshire Council’s Information Governance team.</p>
<p>North Ayrshire tenants, and prospective tenants, will benefit from a housing allocation policy</p>	<p>We will review our housing allocation policy to ensure child poverty is a key consideration in decision making.</p>	<p>This will be scoped out further as part of the policy review to ensure a tangible measure of progress in this area.</p>

which mitigates the potential impact of housing on child poverty.		
North Ayrshire families benefiting from NHS Ayrshire and Arran services will have enhanced access to holistic wellbeing prescriptions.	We will introduce the wellbeing prescription pad to Child Health Weight programme and Better Health Hubs	The usage and number of referrals from the holistic wellbeing prescription pad from families participating in programmes, patients, staff and visitors.
North Ayrshire families will have reduced financial burdens associated with visiting a child receiving inpatient care.	We will ensure effective use of the Young Patient's Family Fund to support families visiting children up to 18 years old who are receiving inpatient care.	There will be strong evidence of impact associated with the spend and use of the Young Patient's Family Fund.
North Ayrshire residents will have access to nutritional benefits which can enable them to lead healthy active lives.	We will roll out the universal Scottish vitamins scheme.	There will be an increase in the distribution of vitamins via pharmacy and care partners.
North Ayrshire residents will have improved oral hygiene and dental health.	We will continue to distribute oral hygiene resources Distribution of oral hygiene resources with access to direct support for dental care costs for those who need it most.	There will be an increase in the number of oral hygiene products delivered to services through increased provision and availability.

Section 3 – Reducing household costs and mitigating the effects of poverty: 2022-23. Why is this a priority for North Ayrshire?

LOIP outcomes: Work and World.

- 49% of North Ayrshire households were managing well financially (2019) before the cost-of-living crisis compared to a Scottish average of 56%
- The number of households in rent arrears / council tax debt in North Ayrshire rose from 5461 (40%) to 5793 (43%) between 2022 and 2023
- Since 2017, the statistics show an increasing number of adults with no savings, against a slight reduction across Scotland
- Since the last quarter of 2012, the Council has referred 1472 people to the food bank.
- In 2022/23, the North Ayrshire Food bank issued 55.21 tons of food to 5558 persons (4144 adults and 1414 children).
- For the period January to March 2023, 6918 North Ayrshire Fairer Food larder appointments were made, with at least 1386 of these directly supporting households with families.
- Age of first-time mothers – 19 and under (% of all first-time mothers) (2016/17-2018/19) (Statistics.gov.uk): North Ayrshire: 12.4%; Scotland 6.65
- In 2017-2019 aggregated calendar years, North Ayrshire had a higher percentage of teenage pregnancies (36%) compared with Scotland (29%).
- Number of children aged between 0-15 on the child protection register: the most recent rate for North Ayrshire was 6.1 per 1,000 population aged 0-15. This is higher than the rate for Scotland, which was 2.9 per 1,000 population aged 0-15.
- Number of looked after children: the most recent rate for North Ayrshire was 22.7 per 1,000 population aged 0-17. This is higher than the rate for Scotland, which was 14.0 per 1,000 population aged 0-17.
- In the latest time period available from 2019/20-2020/21 (3-year aggregate), the percentage of babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks in North Ayrshire was 20%. In 2019/20 – 2021/22, North Ayrshire had a lower rate of babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks than the rest of Scotland (20 compared to 32 percent).

Action: What we committed to doing	Progress	Ongoing 2023-24 or complete
Deliver additional support to vulnerable families and children impacted by fuel poverty	c. £2.2m has been secured for the Energy Smart Scheme over the past year. 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. There are three elements of the Council's Energy Smart programme:	Ongoing in 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. • 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. • A further £254,000 was allocated by the Council in the budget of March 2023. 	
Complete the roll out of free school meals for Primary 6 and Primary 7	c. £3.9m of Scottish Government funding has been provided to support the continued roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs). This funding is the revenue funding to cover costs for Primary 4 & Primary 5 children in the financial year 2022/23. Uptake of school meals has increased for primary 4 & primary 5 children following the UFSM provision roll out however, overall uptake for UFSMs is lower than anticipated. This is the general trend across other authorities. The Scottish Government have provided revenue funding of £570,000 in 2023/24 to start the roll out of free school meals to all P6 and P7 pupils whose families are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. Using the Council's Cost of the School Day funding, last year we purchased reusable water bottles for every pupil across the school estate this year we introduced the Winter Warmer breakfast from December 2022 until March 2023. This provided a hot and cold breakfast options at every secondary school, free of charge. In total over 66,000 breakfasts were served across all nine secondary schools. In addition, we also offered a free snack item at morning break for those who are unable to attend school for the breakfast for those traveling to school by transport who were unable to access this provision.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Provide holiday meals for families who need it	<p>The Scottish Government also provides funding to enable a continued provision of food-based support during the school holiday periods to those children with an assessed eligibility for free school meals. With support from the Scottish Government, we were able to provide over £700,000 of holiday school meals. In North Ayrshire there are almost 5,000 eligible children entitled to this. Over 20,000 holiday meals were provided during the Summer and Easter holiday period providing a range of activities for families to engage with while accessing a free healthy meal.</p> <p>We have now switched to cash payments during the holiday periods for families entitled to Free School Meals. This has been proposed as a more dignified approach to allow families to use vouchers at shops of their choice.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

Introduce new models of provision for free period products across schools and communities.	<p>Educational Facilities Provision</p> <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.</p> <p>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>Community-based Provision</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.</p> <p>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>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Review Out of School Care provision	£100,000 was allocated from Covid Recovery funds to develop OOSC planning and networks. A mini enquiry was held in May 2023 to further inform developments and feedback from this is helping to inform future developments over 2023-24.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Focus on vulnerable families who are tenants	We have been working with North Ayrshire tenants to promote maximising income from benefits through our frontline staff. We have been communicating via our social media channels and tenant chat on the range of supports available to reduce household costs.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Prioritise the retention of the Education Professional Learning Academy	Review of the Professional Learning Academy has been completed and a revised structure is in the process of being implemented. A new delivery model has been developed which assures the continuation and expansion of the quality work of the PLA into the future. This will continue to have a direct impact on learner outcomes and will support us in our work to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Review our approach to nurture across our educational establishments	Review of Nurture has been postponed until session 2023-24 because of external factors restricting changes in teacher numbers. Nurture will continue in its current format for session 2023-24, at which time a review will be undertaken to combine and extend the impact of this work across all schools, using a revised delivery model. In parallel, significant work is underway to embed nurturing principles on a whole school level across all educational establishments.	Ongoing in 2023-24

Review the relationship between family learning work and other supports for families	The Family Learning Team continues to operate with a blend of targeted and universal supports available for families. Discussions on the future shape of this type of support will commence across services in 2023-24.	Ongoing in 2023-24
Prioritise mental health and wellbeing in schools and communities	<p>Within our communities, our MHWB Project Delivery Officers report that the number of children and young people with improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes through involvement with CLD activities is 2086. Key highlights include the development of a 'Your Resilience' programme with Ayrshire College to reach 16–24-year-olds for 60 college students with 37 completing the full course.</p> <p>CLD and the Family Learning Team have developed a programme aimed at primary aged children and their families: "Take Time Families" which has since been rolled out to libraries.</p> <p>A peer mentoring programme (Bee You Ambassadors – 33 members) is ongoing with young people trained in Mental Health First Aid, leading MHWB activities in the community.</p> <p>Engaging with at-risk groups remains a priority and the team have continued to deliver wellbeing sessions and run groups with New Scots, Care Experienced, Young Carers and LGBTQI.</p> <p>Third sector partners Aberlour support children and young people in a range of ways and settings. Aberlour family support has worked with over 100 families in the Kilwinning and Auchenharvie areas providing practical support and support with wellbeing, working alongside families to empower them to lead their own wellbeing, including use of Covid Recovery funding to provide vouchers and childcare for families.</p> <p>Barnardo's support many of our establishments delivering bespoke wellbeing programmes with enhance engagement with education.</p> <p>Children 1st continue to provide whole family support in some areas, with financial advice a core element to their offer.</p> <p>Within our Education Service we have developed a Coping with Anxiety Resource – Be Amasin' (Anxiety Management and Supports in North-Ayrshire), this sits within our one stop shop for community supports, which has had 8244 users. In addition, 93 members of staff have been trained to deliver LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management), an evidence-based programme. Early indications are this has been successful in supporting young people to address the barriers to engaging fully with education.</p> <p>Suicide Prevention staff upskilling sessions provide staff with the confidence to manage situations where suicide risk is a concern. This school session 112 additional staff have attended suicide prevention training.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

<p>Continue to facilitate the North Ayrshire share of the £15 million Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022/23 supported by a multi partner steering group.</p>	<p>The Fund prioritises a range of ‘at risk’ groups such as people facing socio-economic disadvantage, black and ethnic minority communities, people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people and LGBTI communities. In its second year, the fund has had a particular focus on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and an increased emphasis on those facing socio-economic disadvantage, with this focus to be continued in year 3. As the Year 1 fund was to cover a 12-to-18-month period the first impact report will not be available until September 2023.</p> <p>50% of the projects funded in year 2 were continuations from year 1 and 50% were new projects. In year 2, 8 of the 55 projects funded have a specific focus on financial inclusion, with 5 being new projects and 3 continuations from Year 1. Many of the other projects funded have a more indirect impact on financial inclusion as part of their wider project outcomes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Year 2 - Funded Projects - Localities covered</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Year 2 - Funded Projects - Localities covered</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Locality</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Garnock Valley</td> <td>15</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cumbrae</td> <td>9</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three Towns</td> <td>17</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Coast</td> <td>9</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kilwinning</td> <td>16</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irvine</td> <td>13</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Ayrshire-wide</td> <td>25</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arran</td> <td>5</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Locality	Count	Percentage	Garnock Valley	15	14%	Cumbrae	9	8%	Three Towns	17	16%	North Coast	9	8%	Kilwinning	16	15%	Irvine	13	12%	North Ayrshire-wide	25	23%	Arran	5	4%	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>
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<p>Mainstream self-sustaining leadership development model in Education</p>	<p>This work is well-underway and has been incorporated into the revised professional learning delivery model in the education service. Improved leadership capacity and greater distributed leadership is intended to positively affect outcomes for learners, including the more effective targeting of work to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.</p>	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>																											
<p>Align schools’ PEF resources to interventions we have shown to be effective</p>	<p>Revised PEF guidance has been produced and circulated across all schools within the service. The template for gathering PEF impact summary reports has been updated and issued to all schools for completion as part of their annual standards and quality reporting requirements.</p> <p>In addition, to help close the Poverty Attainment Gap, we employ 26 Equity and Excellence Leads to support early years children.</p>	<p>Ongoing in 2023-24</p>																											

in reducing the impact of poverty on learning	<p>We work with the Employability Team to support families with childcare over holiday periods, and this has allowed the parents to access work placements.</p> <p>Strategic Equity Funding is utilised in North Ayrshire to fund a range of supports including professional learning for education practitioners; family learning opportunities; targeted nurture to improve pupil readiness to learn in 28 schools, a range of mental health and wellbeing initiatives; and leadership development across establishment leadership teams.</p>	
Reduce the cost of the school day	<p>Over the last two financial years, North Ayrshire Council has committed £1million of COSD funding. This funding has been primarily used to address COSD barriers to learning through provision of food (£150k), IT (£250k) and school clothing and equipment (£100k). This work has been informed by a COSD conference which took place in May 2022 and brought together over 170 young people from across North Ayrshire to consider where this funding should be used to address need. £150,000 was invested this year in provision of a Winter Warmer breakfast across all 9 secondary schools, with over 66,000 free breakfasts being served. Funding has been made available to purchase school uniform, equipment or activities that ensure that all learners are able to fully participate in learning opportunities within their establishments.</p> <p>At the Council budget of 1/3/23, this fund was replaced by the Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living – a one off investment over 3 years. The allocation of this fund will take into account existing commitments and will be directed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board).</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
Complete our Digital Learning review to ensure access to devices	<p>The commitment to provision of 1000 devices (and home connectivity to the internet) per year (to Primary 5 and S2 children) continues. Schools know their pupils well and are confident in targeting additional resource appropriately to families who need this most. In parallel, there is a pilot of “bring your own device” in one campus allowing external devices to connect safely to the school network.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24
The Eglinton Garden project will extend its approach to include a stronger family focus.	<p>A Positive Steps Project Mentor offers support and advice for participants at Eglinton Community Garden. They have been supporting 16 different individuals with a range of advice and support around planting their own fruit and vegetables at Eglinton Garden and also at home. The Project Mentor has been a great support for all participants, easy to approach and offers a huge amount of support for all people with their own personal issues.</p>	Ongoing in 2023-24

Cost of Living: What else are we doing?

North Ayrshire Food System

- 14 food larders have now been developed in and a peer support network is in place.

North Ayrshire Community Book(s)

- We have introduced an online 'Inform' Booklet which highlights and showcases a range of support for children, families and local people

Scottish Government Islands CoL Emergency fund:

- Support has been provided for schools, energy grants, financial advice and community support.

Case Study – Cost-of-Living Directory

The Community Planning Partnership website has been developed as a useful resource for community members to access key information and resources relating to the work of the Partnership, Locality Planning and community news, which was vital during Covid 19 pandemic. Building on the work developed during this time, including locality specific 'Community Books' that included information and contacts for community members in crisis, a Cost-of-Living section has been added to the CPP website including easy to access information and support. Work is underway to build on this web resource by developing a full, community led North Ayrshire directory. This will use open data through ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) to provide an up-to-date interactive directory of services, groups and contacts that can be updated locally by the community and used by those in crisis or looking for local support. The resource will be hosted on the Community Planning website, as well as being made available through the North Ayrshire Libraries app which will be re-launched as the 'North Ayrshire Communities' app.

CASE STUDY: Transport for Young People Digital Access: Under-22s travel

We have collaborated with Ayrshire College and created a specific application form for those residents in North Ayrshire who attend any Ayrshire College Campus which includes the college verifying details to speed up the process and improve the time taken for the card to be received. This has all proven to be very successful and increased the uptake from 4,051 in May 2022 to 18,887 by the end of March 2023. At the last time of checking, North Ayrshire was sitting at 3rd in Scotland in terms of uptake figures. We made changes to the application for the under 22 free bus travel, creating a simplified digital consent form, allowing applications details to be verified via school records, eliminating the need for supporting evidence. We held regular drop-in sessions across North Ayrshire at various venues including libraries, community centres and local colleges. These proved to be great benefit to the local community with families who were struggling with the online process gaining the support required. We attended Youth Events across North Ayrshire during the summer holidays to encourage uptake. Promotional material was created for advertisement of the free travel as well as easier access to the scheme. These provided a QR code to scan to order a replacement card. There has been an increase in uptake on the cards, up to 18,887 in March 2023 from 4,051 in May 2022.

Case Study: Addressing Barriers to Sports Participation for Children from Refugee Backgrounds

Child poverty is a significant issue in many parts of the world, and children from refugee backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to its effects. These children often face multiple barriers to accessing sports opportunities due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities, which can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. Here we explore how the New Scots team worked with Active Schools coordinators to address these barriers and provide a solution that meets the cultural needs of young people from refugee backgrounds.

Challenge: Young people from refugee backgrounds face numerous barriers to participating in sports due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities. This is particularly true for young Muslim women who face unique cultural challenges in participating in mainstream sports. Many of these young people are living in households with low income and do not have access to sports opportunities, which can negatively impact their health and wellbeing.

Action: The New Scots team worked closely with Active Schools coordinators to identify young New Scots who would be interested in an overnight residential trip. They then identified the barriers to participation and worked with the young people to remove them, which included cost and cultural sensitivities around mixed sports and sleeping arrangements. The New Scots team fed this information back to Active Schools to ensure that the residential trip would meet the cultural needs of the young people.

Child Poverty Element: The children from refugee backgrounds live in households with low income and often cannot afford sports opportunities. The barriers to sports participation due to financial constraints and cultural sensitivities can exacerbate the negative impacts of poverty on their health and wellbeing.

Results: Approximately 35 young New Scots from refugee backgrounds were able to participate in the residential trip, which they had not had the opportunity to do before. The trip was especially beneficial for young Muslim women, who were able to participate in sports in a culturally sensitive environment. The residential trip also provided an opportunity for socialization, which can be challenging for these young people. This initiative has led to a positive relationship between Active Schools and the young people, with more sports opportunities being offered to them.

Positive Outcome: The collaboration between the New Scots team and Active Schools coordinators has successfully addressed the barriers that prevent children from refugee backgrounds from participating in sports. Through this initiative, approximately 35 young New Scots were able to participate in an overnight residential trip that they had not previously had the opportunity to do. This trip provided a culturally sensitive environment for the young people to participate in sports and socialize with others.

The initiative has also helped Active Schools to offer more sports opportunities for these young people, based on their feedback on which sports they would like to participate in. This collaborative effort has created a positive relationship between Active Schools and the young people, providing them with the chance to improve their health and wellbeing and reach their full potential.

Conclusion: The New Scots team's efforts to engage with young New Scots from refugee backgrounds, identify their needs and barriers, and work with Active Schools to provide a solution that meets their cultural needs are commendable. This initiative has opened new doors of opportunities for young

people, which will have long-lasting positive impacts on their health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life. Addressing barriers to sports participation is an important step towards creating a more inclusive and healthy society, especially for children with refugee experiences.

Case Study

Families in an Irvine neighbourhood who need support when it comes to clothing and food could find what they need at a school Donation Station. This was set up at St John Ogilvie Primary School, in Bourtreehill, when it became clear that parents could benefit from a little additional help.

School Early Years Practitioner Anne started the project, in response to feedback from mums and dads, with just one rail of clothes and now has five rails of clothing as well as food on offer. Anne said: "Starting the Station was in response to finding out that parents have been struggling in recent months due to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The rising costs of food, clothes and life in general is what sparked the project.

"I thought it would be great idea to start a Donation Station. It started off as one rail and some food, and it very quickly gathered arms and legs. I have parents coming in and using it all the time.

"Through social media, we managed to get some more donations and we set up about four or five rails. We have clothes for children, teenagers and adults as well as shoes, some bags and nappies.

"It's really, really, really worthwhile and it is getting used frequently."

Awareness is currently being raised among North Ayrshire Council staff to ensure that everyone knows about their ongoing responsibility to protect the rights of our children. The Council follows and respects The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to ensure that all children's rights are respected and that they are free to learn, play and develop.

Article 27 states: "Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this."

The Donation Station, which also saves waste going to landfill by recycling, is a great example of this.

Anne added: ""The reason we set it up is because of the Cost-of-Living Crisis. People are struggling. When we were talking to parents, they said they were struggling with the costs of winter jackets, the different seasons and how quickly children go through clothes. It's also really good for the environment because we're recycling."

The school is always looking for donations, which will be greatly appreciated, and will take items including children's clothes, adults' clothes, shoes, nappies and food.

Case Study: Cost of Living

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. 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."

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.

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.

Case study: New Scots

New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers, often face difficulties accessing financial and employment support services due to language barriers. Phone support services, in particular, pose challenges to those whose first language is not English.

Action:

To address these challenges, the Community Learning and Development (CLD) New Scots team collaborated with two new Scots-led community groups in North Ayrshire: the Spike Wheat Scots and Ukrainian Community. The team engaged with New Scots and service organizations to identify possible solutions for communication and support.

Using an asset-based approach, the CLD team identified members of the community who spoke Arabic. These members worked with the CLD team to support calling through systems and leverage the language skills of people in the community.

Results:

The CLD New Scots team facilitated two weekly drop-in sessions, one for Ukrainian guests from the Cranberry Moss Community Centre and the other for Arabic-speaking resettled families from the Whitehurst Park Community Centre. A rota of groups, services, and organizations attended, including DWP, Social Security Scotland, CHAP, North Ayrshire housing services, and HSCP partners. Bilingual sessional staff and volunteers provided support to families, addressing language and cultural barriers.

Recurring issues faced by New Scots were identified, such as over-reliance on certain support workers despite being in Scotland for over five years. As a result, the CLD team engaged with third-sector organizations to support people in the community, such as CHAP and Social Security Scotland.

Additionally, Lemonaid attended and supported people with energy vouchers, which helped address the cost-of-living crisis.

Members of New Scots (both Syrian and Afghan) regularly attended the sessions at the Spike Wheat Hub to get support from CLD staff working with community bilingual volunteers with a range of support needs, such as contacting the Home Office. Similarly, members from the Ukrainian hub were supported. One Ukrainian woman contacted the team for support with energy debt; they were able to signpost her to the hub on the day that Lemonaid were there, who supported her with vouchers and advocated on her behalf to the energy company.

Positive outcome:

The collaboration between the New Scots team, the New Scots community groups, and relevant partners successfully addressed barriers preventing New Scots from engaging with financial, housing, and health support services/organizations. The drop-ins provided a language and culturally sensitive environment for participants to find the support they need.

Feedback from New Scots:

Overall, this initiative has been a significant success, representing a positive step towards creating a more inclusive society. The New Scots team's efforts in engaging with New Scots, identifying their needs and barriers, and working with relevant partners to provide a solution that meets their cultural and language needs are commendable. One Ukrainian woman said that she has enjoyed the hub because when they ask for help or more information via

CLD staff, those organizations that can support are soon at the hubs to help the community. A Syrian member said that it was good for people to attend the hub because they can benefit from socializing with others, get the support they need, and help with translation.

Case Study: Family Learning

The Education Service's Family Learning Team offer several programmes and initiatives to help address child poverty across North Ayrshire, as well as working in partnership and signposting families to CHAP and Money Matters through financial drops-ins. This ensures families have access to up to date and accurate financial information. So far in the 2022 -23 academic year, 83 families have taken part in our Family Cooking programmes across both primary and secondary schools. All recipes consider the increased cost of food so use a variety of fresh, frozen and tinned ingredients. All the food prepared by families can be taken away and enjoyed. In addition, the team also offers Family Fun Clubs in selected schools, which provide families will lots of activities that don't have a cost attached to them and can be easily replicated at home. This academic year 80 families have taken part in Family Fun Clubs.

The Family Learning Team also works in partnerships with certain schools and community centres to provide families with school uniforms and School Prom outfits with 8 senior phase pupils having taken away their perfect Prom outfit and 20 families accessing the uniform shop for the Three Towns. The Prom initiative will continue to run until Proms take place, as well as Uniform Pop-Ups taking place over the summer holidays to support families to prepare for the following academic year.

"The cooking sessions were good fun. Learned tricks and hacks. All on a budget and with one pan. Brilliant. Felt welcomed and no judgement to any families. Was a great experience." Parent, Greenwood Academy.

Cost of Living: Areas of Focus 2023-24

Progress:

- *% Uptake of Universal FSM has risen from 60.4% in 2021-22 to 78.6% in 2022-23*
- *17% more vulnerable two-year old children have been identified as eligible for early learning and childcare (2022-23) than before Covid (2019-20).*
- *With support from the Scottish Government, we were able to provide over £700,000 of holiday school meals to children with an assessed eligibility for free school meals. In North Ayrshire there are almost 5,000 eligible children entitled to this and over 20,000 holiday meals were provided during the Summer and Easter holiday period alongside a range of activities for families to engage with while accessing a free healthy meal.*

- *Launch of the Council's Energy Smart programme which has support over 1,900 North Ayrshire households through energy advice provided by partnership working with Home Energy Scotland; provision of £450,000 of one-off emergency support payments towards energy bills for low-income families; and creation of a £1.726 million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills in North Ayrshire households.*

What will change?	Our actions?	How will we know?
North Ayrshire's children and young people will have an amplified voice in informing local services across the local authority.	We will progress with capturing voices and experience of children and young people and their families, with a specific focus on priority groups who are experiencing poverty, to build inform policy change across the Community Planning Partnership.	There will be evidence of effective use of gathered views to inform policy and actions across Community Planning Partnership organisations.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from local services that recognise and respond appropriately to child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis' impact on our communities.	We will ensure child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis remains an active focus of key governance groups including North Ayrshire Council, NHS Cabinet, the Community Planning Partnership, the Integrated Joint Board and NHS Boards.	A range of Community Planning Partnership organisations will be able to evidence an enhanced focus on child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis through established governance mechanisms.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from local services that recognise and respond appropriately to child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis' impact on our communities.	<p>We will develop a Cost-of-Living portal on the Council and CPP websites and partners will share information on the support currently available with each other and our communities.</p> <p>We will improve our communication methods, better utilising channels such as those used by schools to reach families and extended families</p>	<p>An increased number of residents will have access to relevant and timely information.</p> <p>A greater degree of targeted support will be evidenced by an increased uptake of benefits.</p>
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from consistent and accessible support	<p>We will provide consistent training for frontline employees and volunteers on advising residents on accessing basic cost of living information.</p> <p>We will coordinate support, so our residents are not overwhelmed. This includes exploring a single point of contact for our most vulnerable</p>	An increased number of residents will have access to relevant and timely support.

	residents, helping them navigate and access support from across providers.	
We will have a better evidence base for our knowledge of relevant services and supports, and of the gaps in provision	<p>We will complete a checklist to support local planning from</p> <p>Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland - A rapid health impact assessment - Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland - A rapid health impact assessment - Publications - Public Health Scotland</p> <p>Appendix: Mitigating the impacts of the rising cost of living (publichealthscotland.scot) 06 December 2022 (Latest release)</p> <p>We will work with local partners to identify appropriate data and health intelligence to inform monitoring of progress against income-based child poverty targets.</p>	Resources will be targeted more effectively. A robust, appropriate and meaningful local database will be developed.
Resources to address child poverty will be maximised.	We will identify and map funding streams relevant to child poverty delivery plan and ensure we are accessing all available funds	Additional external funding will be achieved.
Wellbeing will be improved for children and families.	We will establish a North Ayrshire Health and Wellbeing Alliance to deliver the Wellbeing priority of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan	<p>Health and wellbeing outcomes will be improved.</p> <p>More people will engage in relevant activities</p> <p>Improved outcomes will be reported.</p>
Asset-based approaches to improving mental health will be encouraged.	Following the announcement of the additional £15 million to support a third year of funding for	More people will report improved mental health.

	the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing projects, the Third Sector Interface North Ayrshire are fully committed to ongoing collaboration with partners and those with lived experience to ensure that funds are disbursed to optimise the best possible outcomes for our communities, effectively targeting the strong links between poor mental health and poverty.	
More of our strategies will encompass awareness of child poverty,	We will further promote the use of HISA	Uptake rates of the on-line HISA tool will increase and strategies will reflect our responsibilities in relation to child poverty.
North Ayrshire residents will have enhanced access to services and groups in their locality.	<p>We will launch a new Communities app and online platform to host North Ayrshire's community book directory.</p> <p>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will be equipping Community Fire Stations with crisis Boxes, welfare and comfort packs. Island Community Fire Stations will get triple supplies for logistical reasons. The crisis box can feed a family of 4 with basic food and nutrition for a week and provided by firefighters any time of day or night in response to an incident. They will also include period products to support period poverty. They hope to get oral health items such as children's toothbrushes and special toothpaste included in the near future. Home energy advice cards will also be included in the boxes.</p>	There will be an increase in the number of views of North Ayrshire's community book directory.
Island communities will have improved and bespoke services and advice.	We will provide tailored cost-of-living support for our island communities.	Grants and benefits uptake on our islands will improve.

North Ayrshire residents will have improved access to financial support.	We will continue to embed a refreshed financial inclusion pathway to provide a single point of contact and no wrong door approach. We will review, develop, promote and improve North Ayrshire advice services to ensure they are person-centred, responsive, and meet the needs of all our residents, particularly the more vulnerable groups.	There will be an increase in the number of residents provided with support through financial inclusion services
North Ayrshire residents will have more energy efficient homes with household energy costs minimised where possible,	We will continue to install energy efficient measures in people's homes in North Ayrshire.	There will be an increase in the number of energy efficient measures installed by the Council in North Ayrshire homes.
North Ayrshire families will have reduced household costs through the provision of universal free school meals.	We will prepare for the full roll out of universal free school meals from P1 to P7 pupils in 2026 across all primary schools.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire primary aged pupils accessing free school meals.
North Ayrshire families in receipt of Scottish Childhood Payments will have reduced household costs through provision of free school meals.	We will explore opportunities to fast-track free school meal provision for families in receipt of the Scottish Childhood Payments.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire primary aged pupils accessing free school meals.
North Ayrshire residents will benefit from a local authority that has fully embedded a community wealth building approach.	We will continue to raise awareness and further embed our community wealth building approach in North Ayrshire.	More local people will be in employment More contracts will be awarded to local companies
North Ayrshire families will face fewer barriers to education because of the cost of the school day.	We will continue to focus on reducing the cost of the school day across our education establishments.	There will be a wide range of effective initiatives put in place across education establishments and NHSAAA to reduce the cost of the school day.
North Ayrshire residents will have greater access to food with dignity opportunities.	We will enhance awareness of opportunities to access food with dignity in North Ayrshire localities.	There will be greater numbers of North Ayrshire residents accessing food with dignity opportunities across North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire children and young people will have more affordable access to physical activity and sport.	KA Leisure's Inspire membership numbers have reached 334 members. Partners such as Justice Services, Phoenix Futures and the Childhood Obesity and Health Weight Group will refer young people for memberships.	Universal and targeted opportunities will be increased to allow more young people to benefit from the opportunity to take part in physical activity.

	<p>KA Leisure North Ayrshire Community Sport Hub officers are finalising plans for a clothing and equipment recycling programme. It will focus on redistributing throughout North Ayrshire to reduce participation-related obstacles. The programme will be promoted amongst partners and clubs will be encouraged to get their members involved in the scheme. Donors will be able to use bins at KA Leisure venues to drop off their clothing and equipment.</p> <p>KA will hold pop-up shops and drop-in nights across the region in our Community Sport Hubs.</p>	
North Ayrshire residents impacted by poverty will have an enhanced range of opportunities to learn about living healthy lives and reducing energy consumption.	We will continue to work with a range of community planning partnership organisations including NHS Dietetic Health Improvement Team to provide opportunities to upskill community ladders on cooking, food waste, and cooking energy usage.	There will be an increase in the number of community ladders undertaking 'cheap and nutritious' (can) toolkit training.
North Ayrshire residents in receipt Scottish Child Payments will receive an integrated approach to maximised benefit entitlement.	We will explore in partnership with the Improvement Service and Glasgow City Council opportunities to undertake a data sharing pilot with Social Security Scotland on use of Scottish Child Payment data to help identify need.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire residents in receipt of Scottish Child Payments accessing other benefit entitlements.
North Ayrshire families and learners will have an enhanced range of opportunities to access available benefits, discounts and free entitlements.	We will conduct a range of drop-in sessions across North Ayrshire to promote available benefits, discounts and free entitlements for eligible children and young people.	The number of families registering for free bus travel, Education Maintenance Allowance, Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants and the Scottish Child Payment
North Ayrshire residents will have seamless access to Council services to access benefit entitlements.	We will continue to implement the "Accessing our Council" transformation programme to improve access to council services, including Customer Services and Financial Inclusion Services.	There will be an increase in the number of North Ayrshire residents who report improved access to the Council.

North Ayrshire parents and carers of eligible 2-year-olds will have reduced barriers to accessing childcare.	We will establish a new local performance indicator to capture the number of eligible 2 years olds living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1&2 accessing their full entitlement of 1140 hours of free ELC in North Ayrshire.	This measure will be established.
North Ayrshire parents and carers will have an enhanced range of affordable childcare options for school aged children.	We will continue to work towards developing sustainable models of school aged childcare for North Ayrshire families.	There will be an increase in the number of parents and carers accessing school aged childcare.
Families across North Ayrshire will be supported to experience better outcomes through holistic family support.	We will scale up the Family Centred Wellbeing Service through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.	Additional families in North Ayrshire will be supported to improve outcomes for adults and children.
Families with pre-school age children will receive support to prevent and support issues in relation to parental mental health and domestic abuse.	We will provide support in early years for both early intervention and prevention recognising the increasing level of need in respect of parental mental health and domestic abuse.	There will be an increase in the number of families with pre-school age children who will receive support to prevent and support issues in relation to parental mental health and domestic abuse.
Outcomes for families will improve through more targeted support for dads and male caregivers.	We will engage in a formal partnership and recruitment process to provide practical parenting skills support to dads and other male caregivers.	More dads and male caregivers will benefit from specific programmes for dads, including practical parenting workshops.
Children and families will have more effective access to appropriate digital technology and skills relevant to their learning requirements.	A digital learning strategy for NAC education settings will be launched in session 2023-24	More children and families will have access to learning-related ICT.
We will ensure a range of opportunities are available to our children and families in accessible community settings.	We will continue to deliver a range of free events and activities in the local community through our Connected Communities team and partners.	There will be maximum uptake for local events in libraries and community centres
We will use all the levers possible to advocate for better outcomes for children and families living in poverty.	We will lobby, advocate and seek to influence wider change across all systems, including focus on National Public Health Priority 5 and in line with our Council Plan priorities.	Awareness-raising and engagement in partnership will be improved.