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A Design Based Approach to  
Understanding and Tackling  
Rural Child Poverty

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# Introduction and Overview

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In March 2022, the Improvement Service received funding from the Scottish Government to explore barriers to addressing rural poverty. Given the complexity of the issue(s) and the varied range of partners involved including local authorities, health boards and national government, the Improvement Service suggested a process of engagement (an 'intelligence sprint') based on principles and process derived from the Scottish Approach to Service Design. The intelligence sprint – which comprised as four half day workshops - was intended to:

- ▶ Build & strengthen relationships between peers and colleagues working at local and national level to understand and address child poverty in remote, rural and island authorities;
- ▶ Highlight examples of where data and intelligence is informing decision making effectively; and
- ▶ Allow participants to work together to address some very difficult questions including:
  - What more – if anything - do we need to know to tackle child poverty effectively in remote and rural areas?
  - What is stopping us from gaining that understanding?
  - How can we work together to overcome any barriers and hurdles we identify?
  - Above all, what difference would these changes make to families?

Participants in the process came from a wide range of organisations including the Improvement Service, the Scottish Government, Orkney Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Moray Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Shetland Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), Aberdeenshire Council, Highland Council, Scottish Borders Council, Angus Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Northern Alliance, the Scottish Poverty Research Exchange (SPRE), the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) and NHS Grampian.

Our approach was informed by design principles which include:

- ▶ **Being person-centred** – Participants were encouraged to consider the problems from the perspective of a child or family experiencing poverty. This was intended to ensure the process resulted in the identification of practical steps that could have a significant impact on families and children experiencing poverty. The intelligence sprint was not intended to be an academic or theoretical discussion.

- ▶ **Being collaborative:** The process was intended to bring different disciplines together to identify and consider complex but concrete problems. Having people from a range of backgrounds – including local and national government, academia, health boards and the third sector – helped us understand the problem from different angles and allows us to benefit from one another's expertise.
- ▶ **Being focused:** Child poverty has been described as a wicked problem i.e. a problem which is ever changing, complex and almost impossible to resolve. For this reason participants were encouraged to be very clear about the particular 'problems' they wanted to address through this process.
- ▶ **Being inclusive:** Participants were from different backgrounds so were encouraged to explain their terminology and avoid jargon wherever possible.

As well as drawing on design principles the process was also informed by the four stages of the Scottish Approach to Service Design. These are:

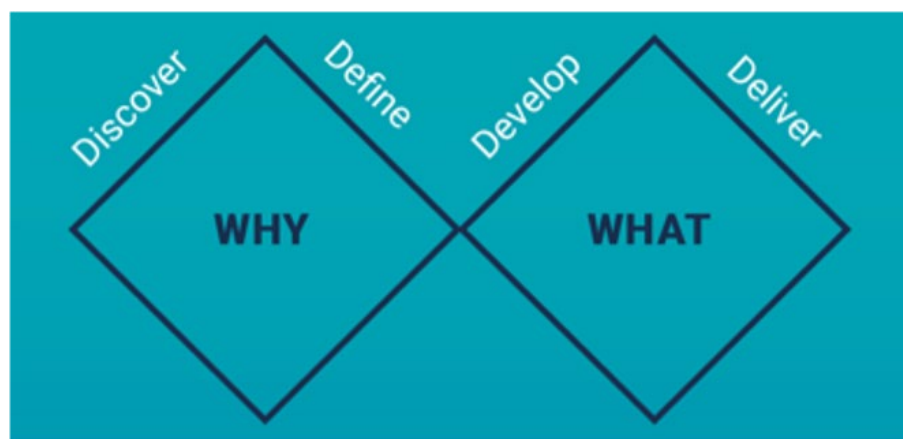
**Discover** – Exploring what the obstacles and difficulties are in relation to a complex issue;

**Define** – Carving out what the specific problems we want to overcome are;

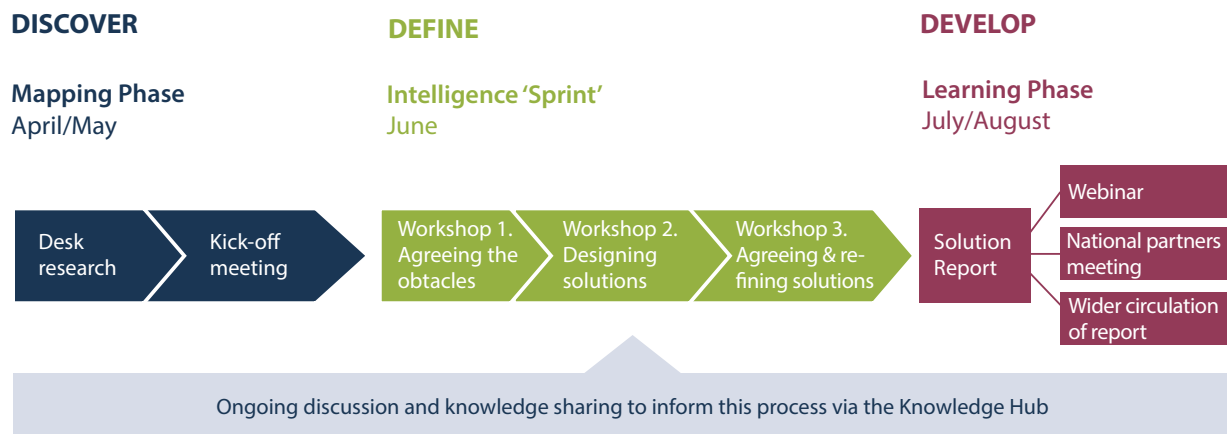
**Develop** – Designing solutions to the specific problem identified; and

**Delivery** – Bringing about the changes we want to see.

Given our brief for the events, the sprint focused on the first three stages of the Design approach.



Namely: Discover, Define and Develop.



Phase 1; 'Discover' was intended to bring together existing views, opinion and evidence on child poverty in rural and island settings. This included an online session including input from academics and policy makers as well as an online survey of participants.

Phase 2; 'Define' Involved an online workshop whereby – building on the knowledge from the first session and the survey, participants were asked to drill down into what the problems are (using the 5 whys approach) and to reframe them from the perspective of families in poverty.

Phase 3: 'Develop' involved two further online sessions whereby participants were asked to brainstorm solutions to the identified problems. This was followed up with an online survey which gave everyone an opportunity to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the solutions identified as well as suggesting any changes.

Phase 4: 'Deliver' - We hope that phase four 'Deliver' will involve the roll out of some of the solutions identified through the intelligence sprint. This will hopefully be achieved in part through the work of the Rural and Island Child Poverty Network which the Improvement Service will support to meet four times from late 2022 into Summer 2023.

The 'solutions'/recommendations identified are set out below.



# Recommendations

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## Working group on child poverty intelligence at local and sub-local level

1. The Scottish Government should consider establishing a short life working group on Child Poverty Intelligence at Local and Sub-local Level. The Working Group should have particular focus on what must be done at local and national level to enable local authorities and their planning partners to access and share intelligence to better identify and support families experiencing or at high risk of experiencing child poverty. The group would work together over a period of 12 months to establish detailed recommendations regarding:
  - Gaps in the intelligence routinely available at local authority and sub-local authority level; and
  - How obstacles to data sharing within and between local and national organisations might be overcome.

## Supporting and sharing good practice across local government

2. To inform the working group – and support best practice – the Improvement Service could be supported to compile an overview of relevant work currently underway to address obstacles to data sharing at local level. This might include:
  - Examples of where data has been shared in an innovative way locally (or between national and local organisations) in order to better understand child poverty and/or identify and contact families at significant risk (Orkney, Glasgow, Perth); and
  - Information on the tools currently in development to better understand the intelligence at local disposal (SAVVI, Prioritising child poverty, Policy in Practice approach).
3. The Improvement Service should work with partners such as the Scottish Government, Scottish Office of the Information Commissioner (ICO), SAVVI, the Digital Transformation Framework, SOLAR and Scottish local authorities to develop a training resource or toolkit on information sharing relevant to child poverty. The objective of this resource would be to provide more clarity around data sharing legislation and what can legally be shared within and between organisations [subject to resource].

## Piloting innovative solutions

4. The Scottish Government should explore the possibility of supporting pilot programmes in at least two local authority areas (at least one of which should be remote rural or island) to interrogate how sharing data and intelligence and/or having access to a wider range of data and intelligence could be used to tackle child poverty more effectively.

## Developing tools to support best practice

5. The Improvement Service (IS) should explore the feasibility and cost attached to the development of a child poverty mapping tool using – in the first instance - HMRC/ DWP Children in Low Income Household statistics and SEEMiS data on uptake of local educational benefits to better understand the location and depth of child poverty at data-zone level.
6. Public Health Scotland should work with local authorities and health boards to improve 'Prioritise Child Poverty: A Data and Systems Approach tool'. This might include prioritising and rearranging data sources more clearly and by their geography (e.g. grouping household level, postcode, locality, data-zone information together) with clear links to relevant policy areas.

## Understanding and acting upon the cost of living in remote and rural locations

7. Local areas believe there is a need for more granular, up to date information on the cost of living in remote rural and island communities to inform policy, resource and service delivery decisions at local level. The Scottish Government should give in-depth consideration to supporting the following approaches:
  - Commissioning annual research into the Minimum Income Standard in remote, rural and island areas. In commissioning such research the Scottish Government would need to ensure sample sizes are large enough to reflect variations across different Scottish Government Urban Rural Classifications.
  - Supporting access to technology which gives local government real time information on the cost of housing, energy and transport. [Applications/'apps' such as Trolley use real time information to compare the cost of a basket of goods in supermarkets across the country, for instance].
  - Funding access to CACI Acorn and/or Paycheck data for public sector bodies in Scotland. CACI can provide an insight into ongoing and future increases in the cost of living, transactional data about household spending and the likely impact of cost of living increases on financial behaviours across different geographies.
8. The Scottish Government and COSLA should give detailed consideration to how effectively the cost of living is taken into account in relation to the allocation of funding intended to reduce or alleviate child poverty. This might include routinely

taking account of child poverty rates adjusted to reflect the cost of living. The existence of such a measure was put forward in a recent Scottish Government research paper which concluded that, *“to better understand the impact of the cost of living on rural poverty, it may be useful to conduct further research into the feasibility of applying a rural cost-of-living adjustment to the poverty threshold (currently 60% of the UK median income). Such an adjustment may present a more accurate picture of rural poverty”*<sup>1</sup>.

## Lived experience

9. It can be difficult for local authorities and their community planning partners to engage people experiencing poverty – particularly families in the child poverty ‘priority groups’ in remote, rural and island communities. Households in which someone is disabled and BME households were highlighted as seldom reached. Rural, remote and island authorities should work with the Scottish government, third sector and academia through the IS’s short life rural child poverty network to identify gaps in engagement and co-ordinate their action and resources to address them.



# The Intelligence Sprint

## Phase 1 – Discover

The Discovery phase included a survey of participants and an online workshop, referred to as our 'Kick-Off' Session. The session was an opportunity to present and discuss the most recent evidence available on rural, remote and island child poverty and – in particular – difficulties with data and intelligence experienced by rural, remote and island local authorities and health boards. This included presentations from Dr Jayne Glass, regarding Scottish Government/SRUC research that she co-authored, and Hanna McCulloch, National Coordinator for Local Child Poverty Action Reports.

Academic Research and evidence from Local Child Poverty Action Reports was presented.

### **Dr Jayne Glass: Improving our understanding of child poverty in rural and island Scotland - Output 1: Existing research and data – where are the knowledge gaps?**

Jayne gave an overview of the factors that can make living in poverty – and addressing child poverty – particularly challenging in remote, rural and island locations.

#### **Income from work and earnings**

- Volatile and unpredictable rural incomes.
- Limited access to training and skills development.
- Reliance on private vehicles.
- Lack of local and flexible childcare.
- Rural gender pay gap.

#### **Costs of living**

- Higher levels of fuel poverty in remote rural and island areas.
- Additional minimum living costs in remote rural and island areas (add 15-30%).
- Unaffordable housing and/or poor housing condition.



Improving our understanding of  
child poverty in rural and island  
Scotland

Jayne Glass and Jane Atterton  
Rural Policy Centre, Scotland's Rural College

SRUC

June 2022

Scottish Government  
Gàidhlig agus na h-Alba  
gov.scot

### **Income from social security**

- Lower take-up of welfare support due to stigma, lack of awareness/support and challenges with the welfare system.

Jayne also highlighted that there are some *key data and knowledge gaps* that limit the extent to which local authority leads and partners can take effective action to support low-income families in rural and island communities. These data gaps mostly relate to information at a sub-local authority level, including: information on eligibility and uptake of welfare benefits; cost of living; fuel poverty; uptake and provision of early learning and childcare; and the combined impact of employability and skills development initiatives. Importantly, Jayne highlighted that more attention needs to be paid to lived experience data that can inform the design and delivery of effective support for rural and island children experiencing poverty.

### **SRUC's recommendations include that we:**

1. Recognise lived experiences as valid and important qualitative data for informing place-based decisions and actions in rural and island communities.
2. Support the Improvement Service to continue its work on sharing good practice, particularly in relation to local data analysis and other available evidence to inform action in rural and island communities.
3. Enable Public Health Scotland to support the roll out of the child poverty data source and associated workshops to all local authorities (in collaboration with the Improvement Service when implementing recommendation 2).
4. Use the child poverty action reports strategically to understand and share best practice and provide additional support to those local authorities with less capacity to undertake local level data collection and analysis.
5. Set up a Rural and Island Child Poverty Network (or similar) that places a strong emphasis on sharing knowledge and best practice between local leads (across sectors – health, education, transport, etc.), the Improvement Service, PHS, Social Security Scotland, SPIRU and other researchers.

Based on the evidence reviewed in the report, in relation to interventions to tackle child poverty and support families, SRUC suggested that interventions to tackle child poverty in rural and island locations:

1. Recognise the higher costs of living experienced by families in these locations.
2. Recognise the higher costs of service delivery in these locations.
3. Are place-based and support mechanisms allow aspects to be community-led.

4. Strengthen cross-issue, cross-sectoral partnership working at national, regional and local levels to recognise the inter-related drivers of poverty which need to be tackled in a holistic way.
5. Ensure early intervention and a long-term approach as this is likely to be most effective (although we note this is challenging under single year financial allocations).
6. Place children and families at the centre of the intervention.
7. Explore digital technology as a delivery mechanism, though recognise that this might not always be appropriate.
8. Involve schools as key partners in local interventions.
9. Ensure that all interventions are rural and island proofed (i.e. checked to ensure that they are equally as appropriate in rural and island locations as they are in urban locations and if not that modifications/mitigations are made to design and/or delivery).

Hanna McCulloch, National Coordinator for Local Child Poverty Action Reports then gave an overview of how data, intelligence and lived experience are represented in Year 3 Local Child Poverty Action Reports.

Sources of data drawn upon in Local Child Poverty Action Reports included: [Scottish Government Child Poverty Dashboard](#), [Public Health Scotland – Prioritise child poverty data sources](#) and the Improvement Service ‘Families in Low Income Households’ data zone map.

Further information drawn upon in the reports included:

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), End Child Poverty (ECP), HMRC/DWP children in local income households and [Stat Xplore](#) are commonly drawn on but these have limitations in terms of reliability, granularity and the existence of significant time lags. Often it is labour intensive to process and hard to draw conclusions about current need at sub local authority level.

The presentation highlighted that some areas had taken creative approaches to overcoming these barriers. Some local reports draw on an extremely wide range of data sources ([Dumfries and Galloway report by North Star](#) for example). The links between the data, what it tells us and how it is used to identify priorities is often less clear.

Some reports highlight innovative and practical responses. The [Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index](#) was designed as a measure to work alongside SIMD but with a more specific focus on child poverty. It draws on HMRC and DWP data for children

in low income households at data zone level. It also draws upon the proportion of households in receipt of free school meals, school clothing grants and education maintenance allowance.

The elevated cost of living in rural areas is repeatedly mentioned in local child poverty reports, as is the fact it is not fully represented by income based measures of poverty. This gives rise to a sense that poverty in rural and island areas can be somewhat ‘hidden’ and may therefore not attract the attention or resources that urban deprivation does. National sources drawn on to illustrate this included Highland and Islands Enterprise work to identify a [minimum income standard for rural Scotland](#) in 2016. Furthermore, in February 2021, the Scottish Government published a new analysis of data from the Scottish House Condition Survey for the three years 2017-19. In the period 2017- 2019, the 3-year average fuel poverty rate in Scotland was 24%. Seven local authorities had significantly higher fuel poverty rates than the national average, including Orkney at 31%.<sup>2</sup>

Despite a lack of ‘hard data’ around rates of child poverty and the cost of living in remote, rural and island areas many LCPARs showcase the value of using ‘softer intelligence’, including the voice of those with lived experience to identify, understand and inform responses to poverty. Many examples of this kind were included in the reports including this from [Shetland’s Year 3 LCPAR](#):

*“There was a willingness by Community Anchor Institutions (CAOs) the length and breadth of Shetland to support people impacted by lockdown, including families whose personal financial circumstances had quickly changed or who had insufficient digital access to support remote learning. **Ultimately though, many of our CAOs became much more informed about pre-existing need, exacerbated by lockdown, and much more aware of the needs for families in their communities.**”*

More formalised examples of engagement with those with lived experience included the following:

Parents Voices Aberdeenshire; Poverty Alliance research with 22 parents in Perth and Kinross; research about the [impact of COVID funding](#) in Aberdeenshire; and the ‘Voices for’ methodology, which entails recruiting people from different parts of the Shetland community and pairing them with the people who influence and have responsibility for making decisions in Shetland.

Participants at the kick off session were asked to share their initial thoughts on what the knowledge and intelligence barriers to tackling child poverty in remote, rural and island communities were. They could also share their thoughts via an online survey. Notes from the session are available on the [MIRO Board](#). Observations collected via the survey included the following:



“There is a stigma involved in small, rural areas where families do not want others to know they are struggling. Data sharing can be an issue between organisations.”

“Some information is very difficult to collect and there may not be ‘raw’ numbers for this. It’s important to recognise that experience (stories) can be very powerful. Hard to see the people that ‘hid’ their challenges and the resilience (which is very good) of families and communities may hide further challenges - or show how to overcome the challenges.”

“GDPR rules get in the way all the time... social Security Scotland and DWP releasing access to their data would be a big step forward.”

“At one point, it felt like the political will to understand the impact of cost of living in remote and island areas wasn’t there. This is no longer the case, which is really positive.”

“We want better information on the cost of living - not just CPI - really understanding the costs for food essentials, fuel, gas/electricity. Is there regional/local variation. Information from people about how they are coping - is this via Scottish Household Survey?”

“More localised data on a range of child poverty issues from prevalence to attainment etc. more local data around provision - especially relating to childcare, employability, transport, benefits take-up”

“Layering cost of living in remote and island authorities onto the local and national child poverty statistics.”

## Phase 2 – Define

Analysis of the information gathered through the ‘Discover’ phase allowed us to identify four main categories of problem relating to local intelligence that likely had a significant knock-on impact for households experiencing poverty.

The four main problem areas were:

- ▶ Lack of – and lack of capacity to make use of – reliable, up to date sub local authority level data relevant to child poverty;
- ▶ An inability to fully understand variations in the cost of living at local authority and sub-local authority level, particularly in remote, rural and island areas;
- ▶ The difficulty engaging with and acting on the priorities identified by those with lived experience of poverty in remote, rural and island authorities; and
- ▶ The difficulty of ensuring data is shared effectively both between departments and organisations at local level and between national and local bodies.

To help ensure these problems weren’t purely academic, participants were urged to consider how they might manifest themselves for families at risk of poverty and whether they could cause real difficulties. The group agreed the problem would have an impact on families and based on group discussions, the following problem statements were developed.

- ▶ Data doesn’t reliably help pinpoint me and/or my community. So the resources and services we need aren’t always there, or don’t always reach us.
- ▶ My poverty and hardship are hidden because decision makers can’t always appreciate the extra cost of living in my area.
- ▶ Information about me is not shared effectively which means I don’t always get what I need, when I need it.
- ▶ Stigma and visibility means I (and others with lived experience of poverty) don’t always feel comfortable accessing services and entitlements or sharing my views.

At the second group session, participants were put into groups and asked to identify the ‘drivers’ or underlying causes of these problems, utilising the five whys technique.

The following diagrams give an overview of the core ‘problems’ they identified as posted on the group MIRO page.



## PROBLEM 1

**Data doesn't reliably help pinpoint me and/or my community. The resources and services we need aren't always there, or don't always reach us.**

The limitations inherent in SIMD - (housing not updated, 2/3 of deprived people not in high SIMD deciles.) and child poverty (impact of COVID on reliability, time lag) mean data is not always useful or reliable.

Relevant sources of data are not always available at sub-local authority level.

UC roll out will continue to prove challenging re identifying working and non-working households

It's hard to get a distinction between 'in work' and 'not in work' poverty from Stat Xplore.

Resources such as stat explore and statistics.gov.scot are **not user friendly** (Neighbourhood resources was better).

Most areas take a pragmatic approach using a mix of stats (FSM, SCG, UC) plus softer intelligence from services (SW, Food Bank, CAB). **But there is no uniformity. Or layering of data.**

No consistency across each LA of systems, culture of how data is used and what is gathered.

Issue of seasonal work - Is the data representative of the year as a whole or is this distorted by the peak points. Employment may only be for a couple of months, not fixed.

The population is so dispersed that data zone level info doesn't always allow us to target resources well.

Benefit claimant rates can be low because of stigma and seasonal variation in income. This affects our understanding of poverty and ability to understand need.

There is **not the capacity** locally or regionally to analyse the data and make the most of what is available.

Challenge to have common indicator set agreed across all rural authorities.

SIMD is useful but needs to be understood in context and with wider data.

Small area stats can't always be used because they make households identifiable.



## PROBLEM 2

**My poverty and hardship is hidden because decision makers can't always appreciate the extra cost of living in my area.**

The problem is trying to “prove” the inflated cost of living. How do we demonstrate this through data rather than just anecdotal evidence? How do we demonstrate how this actually impacts people on the ground?

There is not enough engagement with people around what their living costs are and how they absorb increases.

Commonly used data sources on poverty don't take rurality, remoteness or cost of living into account.

It's not just understanding cost. It's understanding cost as a barrier. Infrastructure is missing - e.g. flexible and affordable childcare is not available, or affordable transport. This plays a large part in the opportunities available and makes it less likely for people to take up opportunity. If jobs aren't in the right place where people can get to then they can't take up the opportunity.

Could we bring together data from LA's e.g. bus timetables, and private sector e.g. banking and credit information, housing prices and rental prices - bringing these datasets together and mapping these out could help us understand the cost of living.

It's difficult to identify areas - never mind individuals - that have elevated living costs or are particularly sensitive to changes in the cost of living.

We don't have access to spending information from private sector providers - compare rural vs non-rural areas. LA's will also know the cost of travel services and journey times. LAs should ask – “Is an employment opportunity a real possibility when considering the travel time to work and time available for childcare?”

The allocation of national funding does not routinely take the cost of living in remote, rural and island areas into account. How can it if we can't calculate it?

There is no ‘measure’ of the cost of living in an area that takes all relevant factors (housing, transport, childcare, energy, price of food) into account. CPI is not detailed enough.

Looking at the impact of 2nd home ownership and how this impacts on access to services. Rural and island areas where 2nd home ownership makes accessibility to homes more difficult, which makes local service delivery and employability more difficult.





### PROBLEM 3

**Information about me is not shared effectively which means I don't always get what I need, when I need it.**

Data sharing is very difficult and may limit some of the opportunities discussed here.

There is data sharing in place but not everyone is aware of what is being shared and how to get this.

Data sharing from DWP or SSS often involved disclosure for each individual accessing.

Staff are hesitant to share the information in case they get it wrong.

GDPR rules get in the way of data sharing.

Data that other services have about people in our area (health, childcare, social work, schools) could help our understanding about the needs of the population. But it isn't being shared.

Lack of understanding of what can and cannot be shared. Different partners and different services have different programmes that don't talk to each other and are not linking things in the same way.

SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability through Inter-operability)- could this expertise support new approach to identifying financial vulnerability?

National data sharing arrangements (e.g. between the DWP/SSS and local authorities) are not effective so teams can't share what they know.



#### PROBLEM 4

**Stigma and visibility means I don't always feel comfortable accessing services and entitlements or sharing my views.**

People underplay their poverty - and their resilience. Can lead to low uptake of benefits in rural areas as it can make you 'stand out' in some situations e.g. schools.

Making Ends Meet Survey in Orkney - people didn't feel like they are involved in decision making. It can be expensive and resource intensive to engage those with lived experience.

People have consultation fatigue because we don't feed back to them on what difference it made.

Rurality and remoteness make it difficult for people to engage in decision making on a practical level.

People don't identify themselves as being 'in poverty'.

There tends to be more stigma in small communities. People feel embarrassed and judged because they are more visible than in highly populated cities.

We do 'you said, we did' but we often don't do 'you said, we couldn't' more effectively.

Qualitative data is not respected in the same way/does not have parity.

Technology as part of engagement - can both enable engagement but can also be a barrier e.g. connectivity/equipment. Confidence in using technology and concerns about sharing their experience in an online platform.

Literacy and Numeracy are still an issue - support is needed to allow people to engage. Additional support is needed to articulate the support they need. Importance of gathering evidence in a range of formats including verbal/personal stories etc.

## Phase 3 – Develop

- 1.1 The third and fourth sessions brought participants back together for online sessions to brainstorm potential solutions to the identified problems. Tools used to develop and refine solutions included the Eisenhower Matrix which encouraged participants to make distinctions between actions and solutions that are important, not important, urgent, and not urgent. This in turn helps to identify which tasks should be focused on first and which should be delegate or deleted. The following paragraphs seek to summarise some of the key issues discussed.

### PROBLEM: “Data doesn’t reliably help pinpoint me/my community.”

- 1.2 Discussion initially centred on some of the shortfalls of the data sources commonly used to understand poverty and deprivation in rural contexts. For example, it was noted that the dispersed nature of the population in many rural and island areas meant that data zones often cover large geographical areas – making it more difficult to identify pockets of deprivation and/or to channel resources effectively. It was noted this is also the case in relation to child poverty specific statistics, such as the DWP/HMRC ‘Children in [Low Income Household](#)’ figures and ECP ‘[child poverty after housing cost](#)’ figures.
- 1.3 The limitations of DWP data (both Households Below Average Income (HBAI) and information on benefit claimants) as a proxy for child poverty were also raised. In particular it was noted that the uptake of social security entitlements in remote, rural and island areas is often low because of seasonal variation in their incomes which can make access to UC, for example, “more hassle than its worth”. This is because overpayments made as a result of income fluctuations can be clawed back by the government, resulting in more unpredictability of income for households.
- 1.4 There was also extensive discussion about how the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD) informs local understandings of poverty in remote and rural areas. One concern raised was that - according to the Scottish Government - a significant proportion of those in poverty live outside of areas classed as ‘deprived’. One lead noted,



*“We haven’t found SIMD useful at reaching those in need. Poverty is more dispersed in our area. Having said that, I would say SIMD is useful for understanding how things change over time. It also gives us a rough idea of areas that have issues. We can then use wider data, intelligence and engagement to give us the detail we might need.”*

- 1.5 One person highlighted that while the headline SIMD figures might not be useful in every context, the background data to make up the domains is also available and can give more specific insight on particular issues. There was, however, a note of caution that only those with a good understanding of the data could use it to

obtain meaningful insights. It was also highlighted that – as a result of COVID – some of the data underlying the SIMD had not been updated for a few years and could be misleading as a result.

## Sources beyond HBAI and SIMD

1.6 Other data sources beyond SIMD and the child poverty figures were also referenced. The Scottish Household Survey was cited as being potentially useful although the relatively small sample size was seen as problematic.



*“Representation challenges for rural or island communities in large national surveys, so limited capacity to do further analysis.”*

1.7 [StatXplore](#) and the data it contains on benefit claimants at sub local authority level was seen as a rich source of information. However, it was noted that StatXplore can be really difficult to use. Beyond the practical difficulties of finding the information was the issue of local areas having the capacity and expertise to understand its meaning. It was suggested that a national tool or resource bringing together relevant data and sub local authority level might be useful.


1.8 The idea of Public Health Scotland’s (PHS’s) [‘Prioritise Child Poverty’](#) Tool being refreshed to include a section bringing together all the relevant data available at sub local authority level was seen as an extremely useful idea, especially if there was some support was given to develop a narrative around implications of the data.



*“Invest in local or regional child poverty and analysis capacity to make better use of existing data. Wider use of PHS to map existing data. With clear separation of what is available at what level (household, postcode, datazone etc.)”*

1.9 Participants also further discussed the [Scottish Border’s Child Poverty Index](#) (SBCPI) which had been touched upon at the Kick off Session. Scottish Borders Council has merged and weighted local data around child poverty with SEEMiS (educational) data on eligibility for free school meals (FSM), school clothing grants (SCG) and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Using and weighting these sources helped to compensate for the limitations of the individual sources, such as the fact child poverty figures are subject to a significant time lag, and that EMA is only available to older children.

1.10 A data analyst from the Scottish Borders highlighted that in many cases the data zones identified as most deprived using SIMD were the same as those identified as at risk of child poverty using the SBCPI. However, in some areas there was a significant ‘mismatch’ which warranted further investigation. It was noted that the insights provided by the index has a very practical application and had been used to better understand poverty and target resources more effectively. Indeed, feedback from head teachers in the Scottish Borders suggests that the Index is more aligned with working understanding of child poverty in the area than SIMD is.

- 1.11 Participants from other areas were impressed with this approach and could see a benefit in it being developed so that it was available to all 32 local authority areas. There was discussion as to whether other data sources (such as DWP/HMRC stats or information on the cost of living) could be incorporated into the index. It was suggested that the kind of data areas might want to incorporate would depend on their own local priorities, circumstances and data availability.
- 1.12 Other sources of information and intelligence that participants thought might be worth exploring included those around indicative housing costs, including consideration of where social and private housing is located and where buy to let/ short term letting to tourists might be creating additional costs for local families. There was also a question of whether work being done in Edinburgh and the South West of England to understand seasonal shifts in housing costs as a result of tourism and second homes might be relevant to rural, remote and island authorities.
- 1.13 There was also discussion as to whether a wider range of data sources might be drawn upon to better understand child poverty. Suggestions put forward included supporting local partners to access ACORN. [ACORN data](#) is collected by a private company but can be bought by public sector bodies. It draws on income, data, health and spending information to profile neighbourhoods at post code level. It can be useful in identifying – at quite a granular level – pockets of the community likely to be at greatest risk of poverty.
- 1.14 Information held by energy companies though – for example – the [Priority Services Register](#) was identified as a potentially rich source of information about the location of financial hardship. There was also discussion of whether wider data held by the private sector (e.g. spending, debt, payday loans) could be better used to enhance our understanding of households and communities.
- 1.15 In addition to easier access to a range of data sources – and tools to better understand them – the need for more capacity and expertise to process, analyse and draw meaning from local data was also highlighted.
-  *“Finding it, knowing what is available, knowing what is included and taken account of. Stat explore is difficult to use. Having to constantly remember how it all works. Data needs to be simple, clear and easy to understand.”*
- 1.16 Participants discussed the idea of bringing together all the data available in one or two local authority areas, including both traditional and non-traditional sources, along with additional resource for processing, pairing and analysis. It was suggested that this could include support from local and national partners, academia and even the private sector (e.g. energy companies). This idea of a “deep dive” from which learning could be shared more widely was very popular.
- 1.17 The need for ‘softer’ intelligence from frontline services – and indeed lived experience – to be considered as part of this process was also highlighted.



*“Services know a lot about their clients (social work, education) much of this might be recorded and can give us an insight into the circumstances in which people are living.”*

- 1.18 Training on the existing range of data sources and how to access, analyse and use them to inform decision making was also highlighted as an existing gap.
- 1.19 The suggestion was also made that data analysts and geospatial information specialists should be actively involved in work to understand and address child poverty at local level. This might involve, for example, including them in local reference and governance groups.
- 1.20 Another suggestion was investing in regional capacity (possibly through Regional Improvement Collaborative) to analyse and understand data relating to child poverty.

**PROBLEM: “Information about me is not shared effectively which means I don’t always get what I need, when I need it.”**

- 2.1 The issue of how data and intelligence already gathered and held by various teams and departments within the Scottish Government, local authorities and wider community planning partners is shared to help individuals and communities at risk was raised repeatedly.
- 2.2 There was a general consensus that data could be shared more effectively to build a more accurate picture of need in the local area – both at population and household level. However, both the existence of legal restriction on data sharing – and a lack of understanding of what they do and don’t allow - was repeatedly raised as a barrier to effective action.
- 2.3 Many participants suggested that data protection rules are not as restrictive as is commonly understood,



*“GDPR is not always the problem. How can Amazon and Facebook share information about us with private companies and we can’t find a way to pinpoint the most vulnerable households?”*

- 2.4 Examples were also given of public bodies and/or QUANGOs that sell or otherwise give access to the information they hold on individuals.



*“Credit checks are routine and this data is available and shared. The DVLA advertise that you can access the data they hold”.*

- 2.5 Indeed examples were also cited in which data had been shared effectively either to maximise incomes or provide wider support to families. These examples were seen to highlight that while some local areas are overly cautious in relation to data sharing, others are more proactive.

- ▶ [Research Data Scotland](#) is working in collaboration with regional safe havens to find a secure model to share sensitive data and overcome legislative barriers.
- ▶ Angus council has joined council tax data to electoral register to work out which households were not getting a single person discount.
- ▶ Shetland has used the need to promote child wellbeing and to Get It Right For Every Child to enable data sharing in relation to vulnerable households.
- ▶ Social Security Scotland is working towards being able to share information on claimants of the Scottish Child Payment with two local authorities (as a pilot) to enable them to better target information on the existence of local benefits and wider support.

2.6 It was noted that data protection rules can actually facilitate data sharing, but only if they are understood and applied. Several participants noted that a lack of clarity and training around GDPR was a major obstacle, with a lack of knowledge and confidence leading to staff being reticent to share – or ask for – information about individual households. It was suggested that public sector bodies also tend to be risk averse in regard to information governance so often do not proactively explore what can be done with information on service users/clients.

2.7 There was enthusiasm during the sessions for work to be done to compile examples of where household data had been shared and how that had been done. The suggestion was also made that there was a role for one of the national organisations to pull together expertise and examples around data sharing (from local authorities, national government, academics, the Information Commissioner etc.) to develop a training resources and/or toolkit to support local and national partners to be more confident around what data can be shared, how it can be shared and – subsequently – how it can be used to gain insight and inform decision making.

2.8 The particular issue of how sharing and/or pairing data sources to allow for early identification of households likely to be at risk of poverty and/or financial crisis was also discussed. Discussion centred around what information might be considered a ‘red flag’ in terms of a household being ‘on the road to financial crisis’. One such example discussed was School Meal Debt. It was felt by some that a family being unable to pay for school meals was a major indication that there was a family with children on the verge of financial hardship. There was discussion about what could be done with this information to allow the family to be targeted with wider information and support. There was also discussion of what other data sources might constitute ‘red flags’ whether alone or in combination. Perth and Kinross indicated that it might be interested in working with academics and other partners to explore this question further.

2.9 In addition there was discussion about whether Artificial Intelligence could be put to better use to pinpoint households at particular risk of poverty or financial crisis.

2.10 Repeated reference was also made to a project called the Scalable Approach to

Vulnerability Via Interoperability (SAVVI). According to its website “SAVVI aims to produce national data standards that result in reduced hardship for vulnerable people and households, by improving a locality’s ability to make use of data to support them – so that they can then promote a coordinated multi-agency response.”

2.11 The Improvement Service is engaged with SAVVI and - as a result - particular consideration was given at the workshop to whether one of the local authorities involved in the Intelligence Sprint might get more closely involved with SAVVI and explore what it could add to attempts to identify families at risk of child poverty through data sharing. This is something Perth and Kinross Council expressed an interest in taking forward.

2.12 There was also discussion around whether data and intelligence currently held by the private sector and/or regulators can be used to enhance our understanding of individual households and – as a result – the local population. Examples provided included exploring:

- ▶ Information on spending from banks;
- ▶ Financial profiling of local populations (e.g. Acorn);
- ▶ Information from energy companies on usage/arrears/who is not on the network;
- ▶ Fuel companies list of vulnerable households; and
- ▶ Information from Amazon/Tesco on comparative spend.

2.13 There was discussion as to whether hosting data on a shared platform could facilitate data sharing and more effective use of personal information. Technologies including My Account Scotland and Health Files – including household identifiers (CURL) were highlighted as platforms which might allow individuals data to be brought together in one place (with their permission).

2.14 The idea of having a national working group to explore and make recommendations on some of these issues was put forward.

**PROBLEM: “My poverty and hardship are hidden because decision makers don’t appreciate the extra cost of living in my area.”**

3.1 A particular obstacle to understanding the location and depth of hardship in rural and island areas was seen to be the elevated cost of living – particularly in remote and island communities. It was felt that this is not always adequately reflected in income based measures of child poverty. There was a concern that this could sometimes lead to households experiencing poverty being ‘invisible’ and not, therefore, targeted with services. There was also a concern that funding allocations did not always take the needs of these households (or areas) into account.



3.2 One suggestion put forward was that Scotland could use a common set of indicators of the cost of living in an area ('ideally sub local authority level') and use these to produce an adjusted child poverty rate. This was a suggestion that had previously been made in a Scottish Government report<sup>3</sup> on understanding fuel poverty in remote and rural areas. The report stated that it had:

identified additional minimum living costs for households in remote rural Scotland that typically add 15-30% to a household budget, compared to urban areas of the UK. This is not a comprehensive survey of additional costs – it does not include the additional cost of fuel, and takes only partial account of the situations of particularly remote areas. However, it confirms the findings of the 2013 and 2016 Minimum Income Standard research for remote rural Scotland, showing that there are substantial extra costs in these areas, of broadly the same magnitude.<sup>4</sup>

3.3 Another approach was to do more to understand the amount of income that is required for a household to enjoy a socially acceptable standard of living in different settings. Research was conducted on the [Minimum Income Standard in Rural Scotland in 2016](#) and more recently [updated in 2020/21](#) in relation to understanding fuel poverty. This research found that.

- ▶ The budgets that households need to achieve a minimum acceptable living standard in remote rural Scotland are typically 10-40 per cent higher than elsewhere in the UK.
- ▶ These premiums are most modest for pensioners and greatest for single people and families supporting children.
- ▶ For households living in the most remote island locations, too far from towns to make regular shopping trips and those relying on heating oil in older homes, additional costs can be even greater than 40 per cent.

3.4 The limitations of the Minimum Income Standard measure that were discussed included the fact that sample sizes did not always allow for variations within local authority areas to be identified. Participants highlighted that the cost of living in remote authorities can vary massively between, for example, towns which might be well served by transport and infrastructure and extremely remote, island hamlets. A measure of a Minimum Income Standard that took this variation into account might allow for a more nuanced understanding of hardship and deprivation – rather than just low income – amongst families with children. One option discussed was using a larger and more representative sample to calculate the Minimum Income Standard of those living in remote and rural areas.



*“Minimum income standard for remote rural Scotland - covers Borders, Dumfries & Galloway as well as the islands. Last done in 2016. Breaks locations down into four categories (towns accessible to towns remote etc.) and four household types. Could this be done again? Last time Highlands and Islands Enterprise facilitated research. Problem in the past was SG weren't really interested but this may be more recognised now and if SG are a partner it could be more readily used.”*

- 3.5 Another suggestion made was to increase the sample size for rural areas in the ONS Survey of Expenditure. It was suggested that all rural authorities across the UK could make a financial contribution to this approach. It was also noted that while the MIS research will be updated each year to reflect inflation, there are no plans to conduct the research and engagement again until 2028/29.
- 3.6 It was accepted through discussion that annual or biannual surveys wouldn't necessarily provide up to date, sufficiently granular information. Several participants suggested the development of an app that would allow both the public and public bodies to track and compare the cost of everyday items in different areas (along the lines of Compare the Market or the Trolley app). This might provide an informal but up to date reflection of the cost of living (and potentially allow consumers to shop around for the best deal on their shop). It might allow customers and the Scottish Government to compare the cost of a basket of basic items and fuel in urban/suburban Glasgow compared to a remote island on Shetland for instance. The question of how effective this might be in rural locations served only by small, independent shops rather than supermarkets was also discussed.
- 3.7 There was also extensive discussion about how there were several dimensions to the cost to living in rural areas. Not only did high costs mean there was less spend and a lower standard of living, they also created a barrier to opportunities and could therefore limit household earnings in the longer term. The cost of transport, childcare, food and clothes, for example could mean it was no longer worthwhile for the second earner in a household to work. One solution discussed was the possibility of using existing data to map barriers and costs for households with children in small areas. This might include mapping the average journey to nursery/school/workplace (cost and time taken). Other factors that could be taken into account include availability and flexibility of childcare, housing provision, location of employment opportunities etc. This might better enable families and the services that support them to make practical, informed decisions about whether it is worthwhile for a parent to be encouraged to work and also what the best interventions to alleviate poverty might be (e.g. investing more in broadband and supporting home working opportunities versus traditional employability services).
- 3.8 Some participants noted that making better use of existing data might be just as useful as expensive national research. Analysing rent arrears, council tax debt, food bank use, Scottish Welfare Fund applications would also allow us to understand where households were coping better / less well. The problem with this approach was widely seen as a lack of time and resource at local level to gather and analyse that data. [A recent Cost of Living Impact Assessment produced by Bristol Council gives an interesting insight into how locally held data might be used].
- 3.9 There were also questions raised about what the impact of having a more granular understanding of the cost of living might be.



*“If we got this data what would we do with it and what would we want to know. If we show the higher cost of living, does this just contribute to depopulation and not actually benefit those living there?”*

3.10 This led to discussions of the kind of policy interventions that might make a practical difference to families with higher living costs. Suggestions made included:

- ▶ Raising the Scottish Child Payment in areas where the cost of living is most elevated.
- ▶ More accurate ‘cost of living’ weightings being considered in relation to funding allocations e.g. Pupil Equity Funding, Parental Employability Support Fund.
- ▶ Campaigning for a remote/rural weighting to the living wage to reflect the elevated cost of living in some areas.

**PROBLEM: “I don’t always feel comfortable accessing services or entitlements or sharing my views.”**

4.1 The discovery and design phases had highlighted that it can be difficult to engage those with lived experience of poverty in rural and island areas in a meaningful way, both because of stigma being felt more sharply in small communities, and because of financial and geographical barriers to involvement (distance, the cost of transport etc.)

Perth and Kinross engaged extensively with households experiencing or at risk of child poverty. They say this gave them an agenda to take back to services to say specifically what parents need and to incorporate that into performance and improvement. They did this by developing a Families Scorecard. The Scorecard looks at current to desired performance and charts progress. It also ‘locks the authority in’ to ongoing engagement with parents. “Before would consult at beginning of strategy and then evaluate at end, rather than parental input all the way through.”

Dumfries and Galloway has a Tackling Poverty Reference Group which has actively been recruiting new volunteers. This has included trying to engage households in the priority groups. D&G related how this process had highlighted that, when supporting volunteers, there is always a need to remove the practical and financial barriers by covering expenses e.g. travel, childcare, digital support etc.

Shetland, amongst other approaches, paired senior staff and decision makers with a counterpart who was experiencing or had experienced poverty. This reportedly “worked better than a panel” because it led to the development of relationships, compassion and more in-depth understanding of the issues people were facing.

Angus had been engaging local people in service design work. In particular, Angus had analysed the uptake of FSM and engaged service users in identifying barriers via a survey. The survey findings have been enlightening and were described as ‘a real eye-opener’, not only for the local authority but also for national government.

Aberdeenshire highlighted its Voices programme which includes an online forum of parents. The forum has recently provided insight on the support provided during COVID including highlighting areas for improvement.

4.2 Ensuring lived experience is heard was seen as vital by all participants.



*“Data is what we traditionally turn to identify scale of child poverty. Lived experience is about identifying the type of solutions and whether these solutions are practical and actually work. This is where it can add the most value”*

4.3 All local areas represented highlighted at least one example of how they had taken steps to engage people in a meaningful way (see text box 1). However, discussion also highlighted gaps and difficulties to be addressed.

4.4 One major concern was the difficulty of ensuring the views of those in the child poverty priority groups were represented, given the very small size of these populations in some rural settings. Participants were concerned they were not necessarily reaching these groups through engagement and their statistical insignificance meant their needs were not reflected in surveys or statistics.

4.5 One lead noted, *“We did a lot of looking but could not find any research on what it’s like to be the parent of a disabled child. This may be a big issue.”* Disability was also discussed in the context of online engagement. Though email, online meetings and zoom calls are often perceived to be a more accessible approach, digital communications can exclude some disabled people. Another participant noted,



*“Moving online is essentially a shift in service design – and digital improvements can have negative impact. These are service changes that have not been fully consulted. Public bodies need to consult.”*

4.6 A failure to identify and overcome these barriers is not only problematic in terms of hearing the voice of lived experience, but also in terms of ensuing non-discrimination.

4.7 Ethnic minority households were also highlighted as being under-represented in many remote rural areas. This was seen as particularly problematic because of disparities in how many ethnic minority groups are accessing public services, suggesting the existence of ongoing barriers.

“Why are ethnic minority groups – a priority group in terms of child poverty – still unable to access social housing in the same way as other groups? We need to both speak to these groups and look at council systems to see whether these groups are not being recorded”.

4.8 It was suggested that rural and island authorities and national bodies – including academic institutions and PHD students – might explore what more could be done to support the involvement of priority groups. There was discussion over whether capacity might exist at national level to draw together lived experience testimony from those in the priority groups in rural settings. Another suggestion was to have pan-rural and island or regional experience panels with particular focus on the priority groups.

“Can we bring together lone parents across remote/rural/islands to consult and influence. Families with disabled children and ethnic minority groups - are these potentially top of the list to ensure better involvement?”

### How we value and use lived experience

4.9 There was discussion around the sense many participants had that lived experience and other qualitative evidence was not given the same weight or parity of esteem as statistical data. They identified a need to engage with senior management and elected members around the value of lived experience and the need for it to be given equal weight and consideration – particularly in remote rural and island areas.

4.10 Another barrier to lived experience testimony being paid adequate attention was a sense that honest feedback from ‘service users’ was often taken as criticism, making services and staff feel defensive. It was noted that we, “Need to create a culture that appreciates honesty and focus on improvement. People need to accept critical experiences and ensure people know there will be no adverse consequences from talking about their experiences.”

4.11 There was also discussion of the need to develop a more systematic approach to “how we balance statistical data with lived experience.” The two were seen as needing to work hand in hand, with one often flagging up the need for the other. “For example, the stats might tell us an area is deprived, lived experience might explain why OR lived experience might tell us there never seem to be suitable jobs - stats might explain why.”

4.12 Some participants also highlighted the need to consider the ‘grey area’ between lived experience and qualitative research on one hand and statistical data on the other. Instead of being “purist” and treating the two categories as distinct, policy makers should be more pragmatic and consider all the evidence that sits ‘in between’ and which might give both an insight into lived experience and some quantitative information. Examples mentioned in the course of this discussion included:

- ▶ Glasgow's analysis of crisis loan applications in its most deprived wards. Applications were analysed to gain understanding into the kind of households that have accessed them, what the requests are for, and how households might have been reached at an earlier point to avoid crisis. [this approach is discussed in more detail on this [IS webinar on the Scottish Welfare Fund](#)]
- ▶ The use of teacher records and social work records and other information that is already available to understand where public services are missing opportunities to assist and avoid poverty.

4.13 The [Scottish Policy and Research Exchange](#) were present at the last workshop and expressed a willingness to meet with local authorities to discuss how academics might be able to contribute to this area of investigation.



# The Recommendations

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Following on from the four interactive sessions (the Intelligence Sprint) the Improvement Service circulated a list of suggestions for action that had arisen over the course of discussion and identified as priorities through the Eisenhower Matrix and Menti Polling.

Participants were asked to comment on via Smart survey on these suggestions and decide whether they would support them, reject them or support them in some amended format, with space given to suggest relevant changes.

The recommendations below are the product of that process.

## Working group on child poverty intelligence at local and sub-local level

1. The Scottish Government should consider establishing a short life working group on Child Poverty Intelligence at Local and Sub-local Level. The Working Group should have particular focus on what must be done at local and national level to enable local authorities and their planning partners to access and share intelligence to identify and support families experiencing or at high risk of experiencing child poverty. The group would work together over a period of 12 months to establish detailed recommendations around:
  - Gaps in the intelligence routinely available at local authority and sub-local authority level; and
  - How obstacles to data sharing within and between local and national organisations might be overcome.

## Supporting and sharing good practice across local government

2. To inform the Working Group – and support best practice - the Improvement Service could be supported to compile an overview of relevant work currently underway to address obstacles to data sharing at local level. This might include:
  - Examples of where data has been shared in an innovative way locally (or between national and local organisations) in order to better understand child poverty and/or identify and contact families at significant risk (Orkney, Glasgow, Perth); and
  - Information on the tools currently in development to better understand the intelligence at local disposal (SAVVI, Prioritising child poverty, Policy in Practice approach).

3. The Improvement Service should work with partners such as the Scottish Government, Scottish Office of the Information Commissioner (ICO), SAVVI, the Digital Transformation Framework, SOLAR (Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland) and Scottish local authorities to develop a training resource or toolkit on information sharing relevant to child poverty. The objective of this resource would be to provide more clarity around data sharing legislation and what can legally be shared within and between organisations [subject to resource].

## Piloting innovative solutions

4. The Scottish Government should explore the possibility of supporting pilot programmes in at least two local authority areas (at least one of which should be remote rural or island) to interrogate how sharing data and intelligence and/or having access to a wider range of data and intelligence could be used to tackle child poverty more effectively.

## Developing tools to support best practice

5. The Improvement Service (IS) should explore the feasibility and cost attached to the development of a child poverty mapping tool using – in the first instance - HMRC/ DWP ‘Children in Low Income Household’ statistics and SEEMiS data on uptake of local educational benefits to better understand the location and depth of child poverty at data-zone level.
6. Public Health Scotland should work with local authorities and health boards to improve the Prioritise Child Poverty: A Data and Systems Approach tool. This might include prioritising and rearranging data sources more clearly by their geography (e.g. grouping household level, postcode, locality, data-zone information together) and links to relevant policy areas.

## Understanding and acting upon the cost of living in remote and rural locations

7. Local areas believe there is a need for more granular, up to date information on the cost of living in remote rural and island communities to inform policy, resource and service delivery decisions at local level. The Scottish Government should give in-depth consideration to supporting the following approaches:
  - Commissioning annual research into the Minimum Income Standard in remote and rural areas. In commissioning such research the Scottish Government would need to ensure sample sizes are large enough to reflect variations across different Scottish Government Urban Rural Classifications.
  - Supporting access to technology which gives local government real time information on the cost of housing, energy and transport. [Applications/‘apps’ such as Trolley use real time information to compare the cost of a basket of goods in supermarkets across the country, for instance].



- Funding access to CACI Acorn and/or Paycheck data for public sector bodies in Scotland. CACI can provide an insight into ongoing and future increases in the cost of living, transactional data about household spending and the likely impact of cost of living increases on financial behaviours across different geographies.
8. The Scottish Government and COSLA should give detailed consideration to how effectively the cost of living is taken into account in relation to the allocation of funding intended to reduce or alleviate child poverty. This might include routinely taking account of child poverty rates adjusted to reflect the cost of living. The existence of such a measure was put forward in a recent Scottish Government research paper which concluded that, *“to better understand the impact of the cost of living on rural poverty, it may be useful to conduct further research into the feasibility of applying a rural cost-of-living adjustment to the poverty threshold (currently 60% of the UK median income). Such an adjustment may present a more accurate picture of rural poverty”*.

## Lived experience

9. It can be difficult for local authorities and their community planning partners to engage people experiencing poverty – particularly families in the child poverty ‘priority groups’ in remote, rural and island authorities. Households in which someone is disabled and BME households were highlighted as seldom reached. Rural, remote and island authorities should work with the Scottish government, third sector and academia through the IS’s short life rural child poverty network to identify gaps in engagement and co-ordinate their action and resources to address them.

## Next Steps – ‘Delivery’

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Once finalised the solutions paper will be disseminated to a wide range of local and national partners through existing networks such as the National Child Poverty Peer Support Network, SOLACE, COSLA, LARIA etc. A recorded webinar will also seek to highlight the good practice identified through the process and the key solutions identified in the paper. The IS will also ensure the Child Poverty National Partners Group is made aware of the findings of the paper.

The Improvement Service will also develop a Rural Child Poverty Peer Support Network. The IS will support the Rural Child Poverty Network to meet quarterly online over the course of financial year 22/23. This will include child poverty and data/intelligence lead officers from the relevant local authorities and health boards, LEADER lead officers and any other officers/organisations the network identifies as relevant to its work.

The Rural Child Poverty Peer Support Network will have a role in taking forward the rural child poverty recommendations highlighted above. Beyond that, it may find purpose in building links between local authority areas and sharing good practice relating to tackling child poverty in a rural and island context.

The IS will also continue to host and facilitate an online platform –the [Knowledge Hub Group](#) - to support discussion and good practice sharing between local areas in relation to child poverty.

The IS is also currently in discussion with the Scottish Rural Network (within SG) about the possibility of supporting replication of the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index for other remote, rural and island authorities. The IS is also exploring how it might facilitate further exploration around the issue of information governance and data sharing at local and national level.



# References

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- 1 See Part 5 (Conclusion) of [Research and analysis Poverty in rural Scotland: evidence review](#) Published 1 December 2021. Directorate [Environment and Forestry Directorate](#); ISBN 9781802016765
- 2 Scottish Government. (2021). [The cost of remoteness - reflecting higher living costs in remote rural Scotland when measuring fuel poverty: research report](#).
- 3 See Part 5 (Conclusion) of [Research and analysis Poverty in rural Scotland: evidence review](#) Published 1 December 2021. Directorate [Environment and Forestry Directorate](#); ISBN 9781802016765
- 4 See Scottish Government. (2021). [The cost of remoteness - reflecting higher living costs in remote rural Scotland when measuring fuel poverty: research report](#) and Highland and Island Enterprise (HIE) '[A Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland 2016](#)' Report produced by: Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University Donald Hirsch, with support from Amanda Bryan and Jo Ellen.

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