

North Ayrshire Community
Planning Partnership

North Ayrshire

Local Child Poverty Action Plan and Report

2019/20





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The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic saw an unprecedented situation for us and the whole country. Overnight, this created a vast challenge for all Partners in supporting our residents, communities and businesses.



This is why our Child Poverty Action Plan is key, now more than ever, to show our commitment to mitigating the impact of the current circumstances and to further state our determination to reduce child poverty in the longer term.

Foreword and Introduction

In North Ayrshire we are fully committed to becoming a fairer and more equal society. Our shared strategic approaches shape everything we do and focuses all of our work to tackle inequalities and create 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 ambition is shared by all of our Community Planning Partners and is demonstrated in our partnership working and joint commitment to the priorities and actions outlined in this report. Our multi-agency partnership approaches are recognised as a key strength in North Ayrshire.

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic saw an unprecedented situation for us and the whole country. Overnight, this created a vast challenge for all Partners in supporting our residents, communities and businesses. The economic impact of Covid-19 will be vast and is already being evidenced. For children already living

in poverty, Covid-19 will intensify the experience and potential resulting trauma.

This is why our Child Poverty Action Plan is key, now more than ever, to show our commitment to mitigating the impact of the current circumstances and to further state our determination to reduce child poverty in the longer term.

It is unacceptable to us that 23.4% of our children were living in poverty (before housing costs) prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and this report set outs our plans to reduce this.

We are committed to economic growth in our area through our Community Wealth

Building Strategy and the Ayrshire Growth Deal. We value employment for our residents and want to attract the best jobs and employers possible. We are working to reduce the cost of living for our residents and are committed to develop 1,575 new build council homes by March 2025.

Our proposed new North Ayrshire Food System will ensure that no one finds it difficult to access food in our area and that we have a more sustainable approach to food with dignity. We will also continue to encourage the uptake of Free School Meals to reduce costs for families.

One of our major priorities for the year ahead will be to establish a working group to take a full and coordinated approach to reducing the Cost of the School Day. This is one of our key areas of action where we can make a real difference to the lives of our families.

We hope you will find our Child Poverty Action Report informative and encouraging. Please let us know your thoughts. You can email us at: info@northayrshire.community



Councillor Robert Foster
Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care (and lead Member for Poverty)



Craig Hatton,
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North Ayrshire Council



John Burns
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To ensure Scotland is the best place in the world to grow up as well as meeting the Fairer Scotland Duty, eradicating child poverty is fundamental.



Child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of the children who experience it. Poverty also has a wider cost for society.



National Context

To ensure Scotland is the best place in the world to grow up as well as meeting the Fairer Scotland Duty, eradicating child poverty is fundamental.

Child poverty can undermine the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of the children who experience it. Poverty also has a wider cost for society. A 2013 study found that child poverty in the UK was costing at least £29 billion a year¹. The Fairer Scotland Duty is an overarching strategic duty on public bodies (including local authorities). It has interactions with the Equality Act 2010; Scotland Act 2016; and came into force on 1 April 2018.

The Duty requires that: “An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.”

1. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/child-poverty-costs-uk-29-billion-year>

Local Action Plans and Reports

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced a new requirement for local authorities and each relevant Health Board to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report, as soon as practicable after the end of each reporting year.

National Child Poverty Targets

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out four measures of relative poverty and statutory targets for Scotland to reach by 2030. This establishes Scotland as the only part of the UK with statutory income targets on child poverty. These targets are:

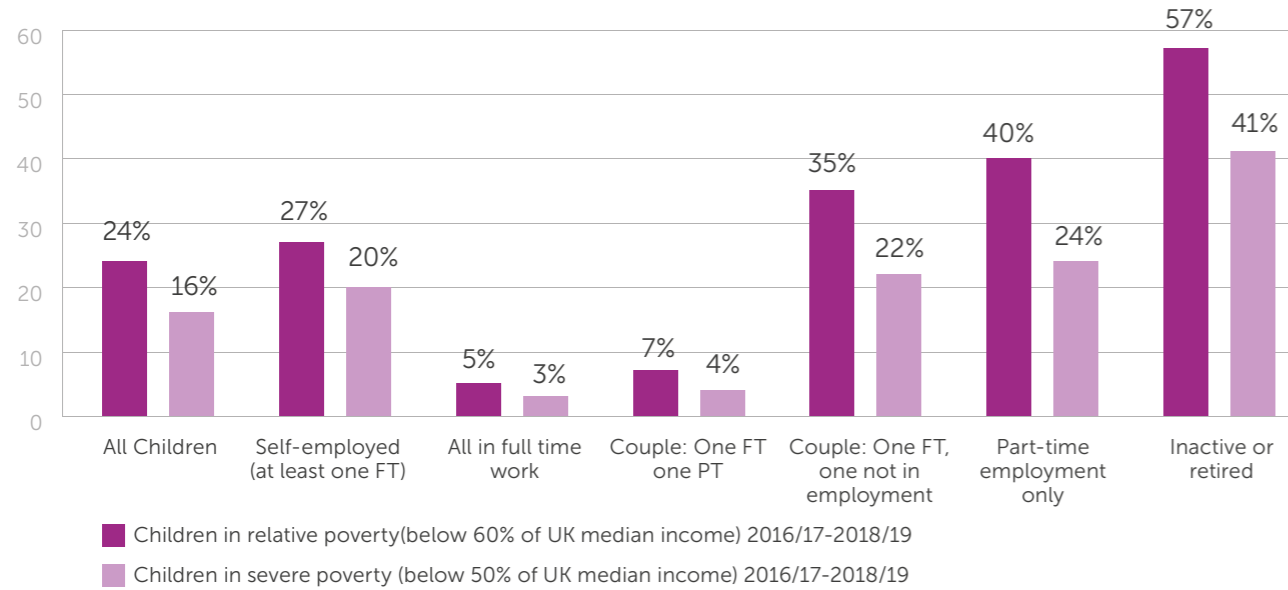
Figure 1: National Child Poverty Targets

Target	Description	Rationale
For less than 10% of children to be in relative poverty	The proportion of children living in households with incomes below 60% of the median (middle) UK income in the current year.	Recognises that individual and household needs are relative to societal standards of living and measures whether the incomes of the poorest households are keeping up with growth in average (middle) incomes in the current year.
For less than 5% of children to be in absolute poverty	The number of children living in households with incomes below 60% of the median UK income in 2010/11, adjusted for inflation.	Assessment of whether living standards at the bottom of the income distribution are rising or falling (keeping pace with inflation) irrespective of those elsewhere in the income distribution.
For less than 5% of children to be in combined low income and material deprivation	The number of children living in households with incomes below 70% of the median UK income AND going without certain basic goods and services (such as a warm winter coat, a holiday away from home, money to replace worn out furniture etc.)	Enables an analysis of a household’s ability to use resources to buy essentials as well as of the income coming into the household.
For less than 5% of children to be in persistent poverty	The number of children who have lived in relative poverty in 3 of the last 4 years.	Living in poverty for a significant period of time is more damaging than brief periods spent with a low income.

Figure 2: Who is affected?

Figure 2 below shows the proportion of children from different household types that are affected by poverty.

Proportion of children in each priority group who are in relative poverty (poverty rate) 2015-2018 (after housing costs)

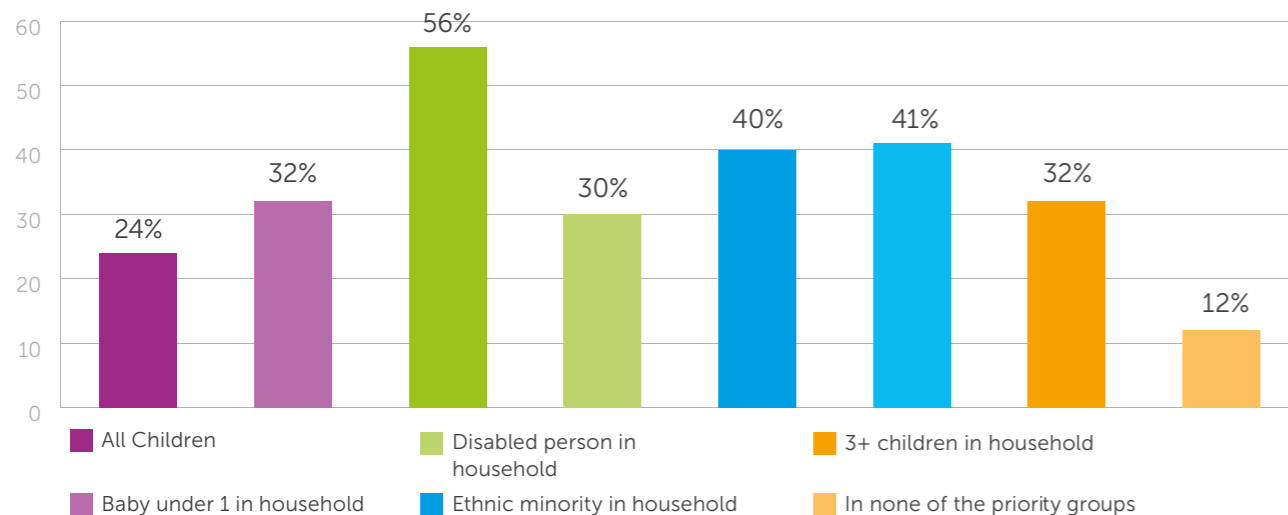


Source: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-child-poverty-statistics-2020/>

Figure 3: Priority Groups

Figure 3 below shows the proportion of children living in poverty by the priority group status of their household.

Proportion of children in each priority group who are in relative poverty (poverty rate) 2015-2018 (after housing costs)



Source: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-child-poverty-statistics-2020/>

The priority groups are households with children that are known to be at high risk of poverty. These groups have been identified by the Scottish Government using available data, but we know this does not cover all groups at higher risk of poverty.

However, the following groups when viewed together cover the majority of households in poverty:

- Having a lone parent (mainly women)
- Having two or more siblings (3+ children)
- Being disabled or having a disabled sibling or parent
- Being from a minority ethnic background
- Having a young child in the household (less than 1 year old)
- Having young parents (using data for households where the mother is aged under 25 years)

However, Scottish Ministers are clear that in the current environment, which threatens to make many families worse off, there is a strong case for intensive action at national and local level to tackle child poverty.



The key reason for these projected rises is the impact of welfare reform, primarily the benefit freeze and the two children limit on tax credits.

The chart below (Figure 4) shows the projected trend of child poverty for each target. By 2030/31, it is estimated that 38% of children will be in relative poverty, 32% of children will be in absolute poverty, 17% of children will be in combined low income and material deprivation and 16% of children will be in persistent poverty.

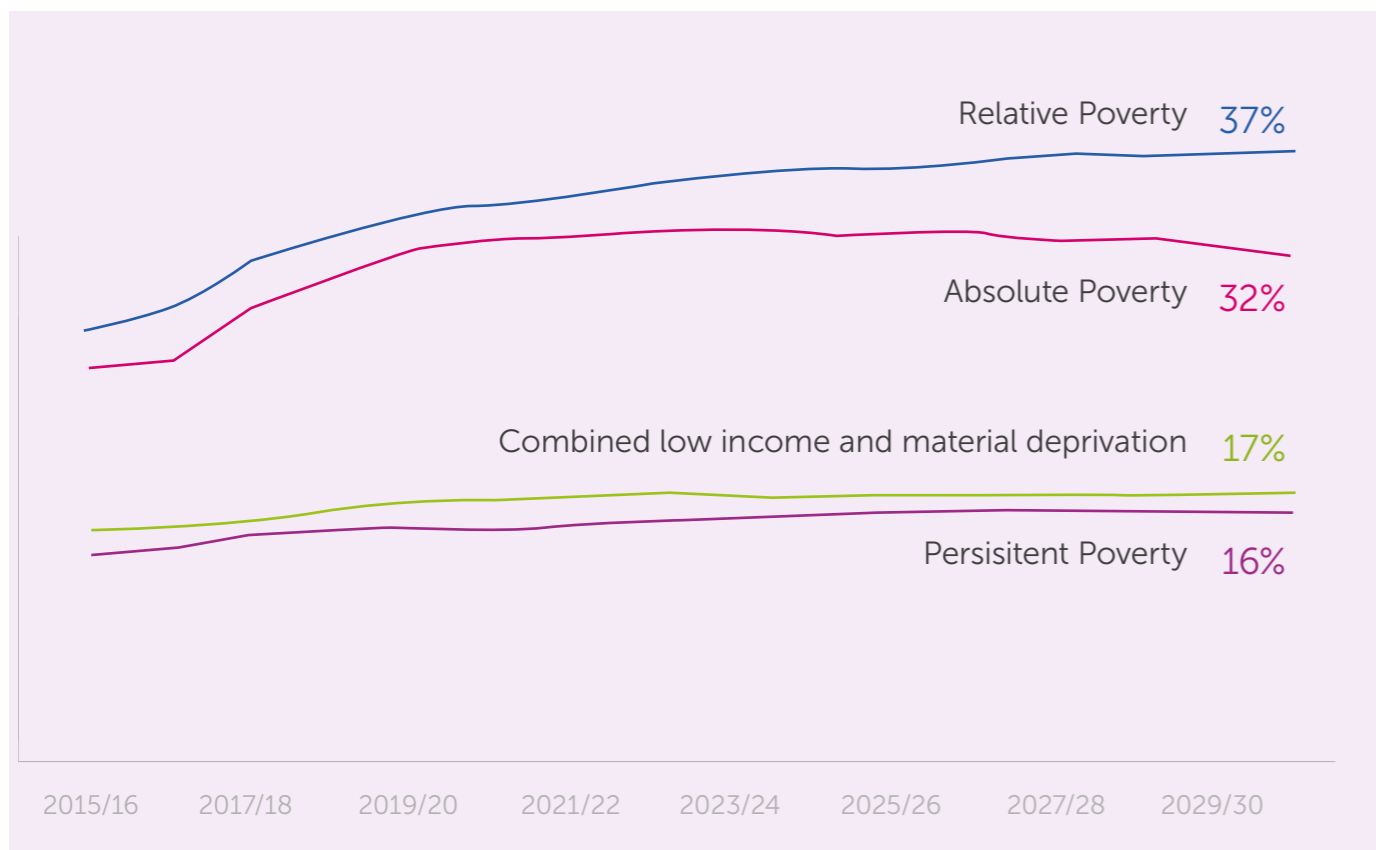
The key reason for these projected rises is the impact of welfare reform, primarily the benefit freeze and the two children limit on tax credits.

The Scottish Government recognises that in the context of these projections the child poverty reduction targets within the Act are ambitious.





Figure 4: Projected Child Poverty Levels to 2029/30



Source: Reed and Stark 2018

What are the drivers of child poverty?

The direct drivers of poverty fall into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security.

Figure 5: Direct Drivers of Poverty

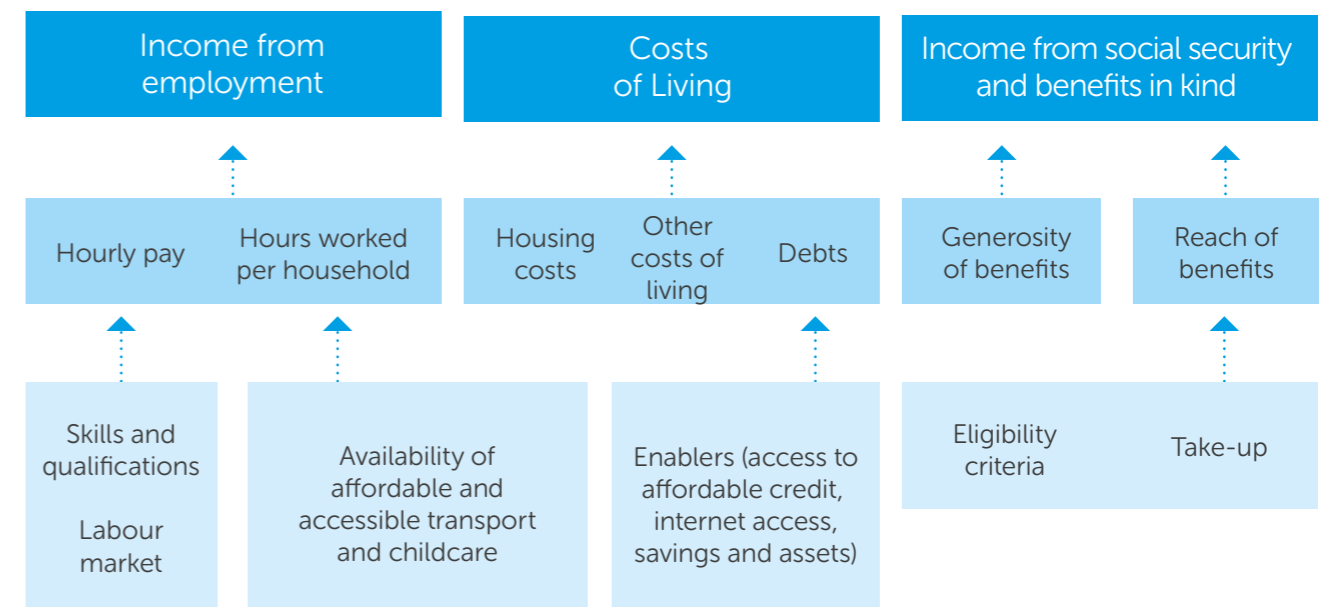




Figure 6 below shows the links in our Children's Services Planning approach.



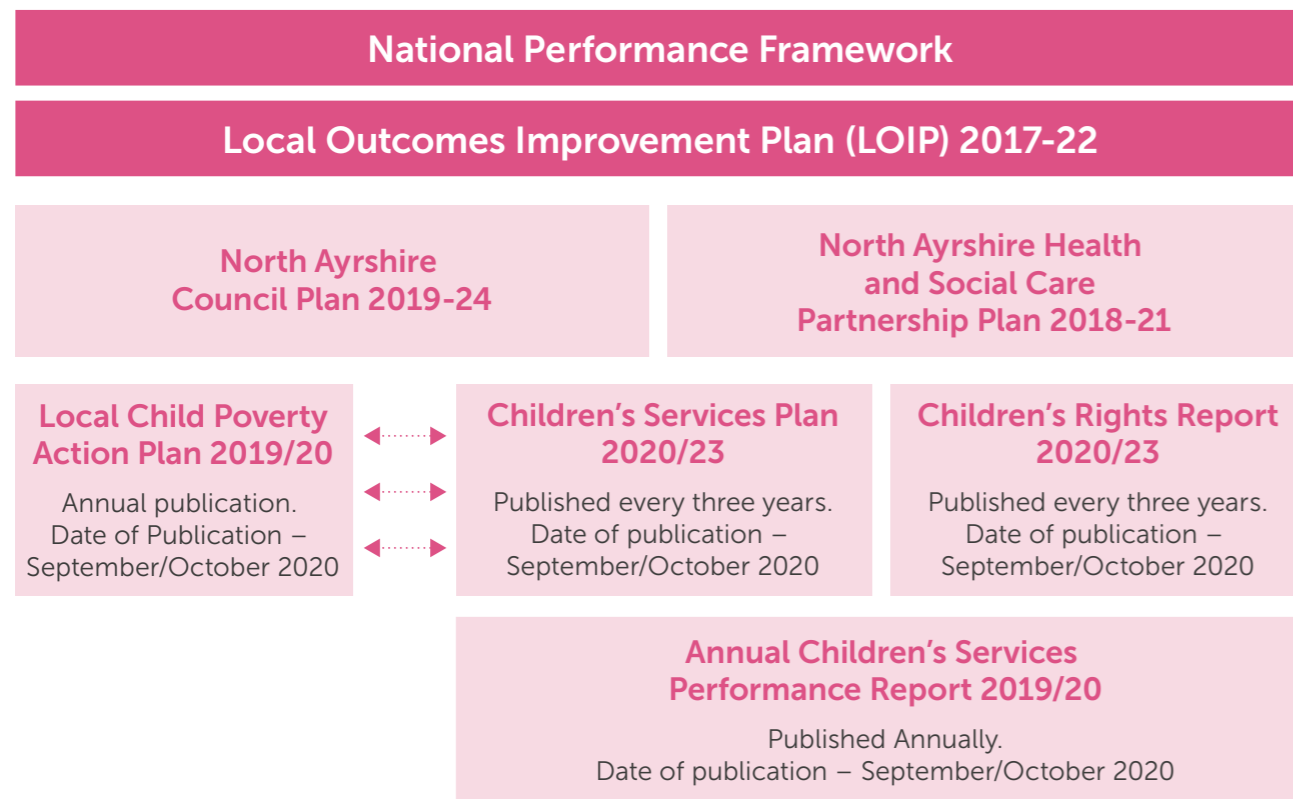
We recognise that high levels of inequality, particularly poverty exist in North Ayrshire. In our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2022, we have increased our focus on child poverty.

North Ayrshire Strategic Context

Figure 6 below shows the links in our Children's Services Planning approach.

Figure 6: Children's Services Planning Dashboard

Children's Services Planning 2020



North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is a strong and effective collaboration of a wide range of organisations. Through working together, we continue to realise the benefits of sharing our resources, knowledge and skills to improve the lives of local people. All partners have a shared commitment and partnership vision: "North Ayrshire – A Better Life".

We recognise that high levels of inequality, particularly poverty exist in North Ayrshire. In our [Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2017-2022](#), we have increased our focus on child poverty. This is in response to very concerning local trends in child poverty levels.

Underpinning this we have four priority areas:

- A Working North Ayrshire
- A Healthier North Ayrshire
- A Thriving North Ayrshire – Children and Young People

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.





We became the first Child-Centred Council in Scotland, putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do and making sure that we give our young people the best possible start in life.

Figure 7: Community Planning Structure in North Ayrshire



We became the **first Child-Centred Council in Scotland**, putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do and making sure that we give our young people the best possible start in life.

The [2019-24 North Ayrshire Council Plan](#) was approved in June 2019. The plan titled 'North Ayrshire: A Council that is Fair for All' describes our vision, mission and priorities. It sets out our new strategic approach which is focused on making North Ayrshire a fairer and more equal society.

We are determined to tackle inequalities and create 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 plan has three strategic priorities linking all of the work we do:

Aspiring Communities

A society where everyone, has the same life chances to grow, prosper and have fulfilling and healthy lives.

Inspiring Place

An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable environment, appealing to investors, attractive for visitors and a place where our residents are proud to live and work.

A Council for the Future

Our Council is forward thinking – motivated to transform and improve the services we provide for our communities, through innovation and reshaping our approach. We will focus investment towards our priorities.

[Our Children's Services Plan](#) was launched by our North Ayrshire Children's Services Strategic Partnership in March 2016. This Plan details how North Ayrshire Children's Services Strategic Partnership aims to give our children the best start in life and to make North Ayrshire the best place in Scotland to grow up.

Community Wealth Building is a radical and bold approach that will see key institutions use the economic levers available to us to support our local economy. The result will be a more resilient local economy with more diverse businesses and well-paid jobs for our residents.

The **Scottish Attainment Challenge** focuses on closing the poverty-related attainment gap by providing targeted support to increase the attainment of children living in North Ayrshire's most highly concentrated areas of deprivation. North Ayrshire Council is one of nine Challenge Authorities supported through the Attainment Scotland Fund and is granted an allocation of this £750m fund to develop and deliver targeted initiatives and interventions to increase attainment in the highest concentrated areas of deprivation.

Inclusive Growth

We worked with the Scottish Government to develop and pilot the "inclusive growth diagnostic". The main purpose of the diagnostic was to see how economic growth could benefit all our residents by identifying any barriers, such as access to transport as well as opportunities. This significant piece of work gives us the information we need to prioritise actions, such as investing in a supported employment programme to help more disabled people access and sustain employment. The diagnostic has been rolled out across Ayrshire and is central to the Ayrshire Regional Growth Deal.

Ayrshire Growth Deal

The Ayrshire Regional Growth Deal represents a major investment of over £250 million into the Ayrshire economy over the next decade. It was agreed in March 2019 between the three Ayrshire local authorities and the Scottish and UK Governments. The Deal aims to radically boost the economic performance of the area, supporting businesses and creating new jobs across a range of key sectors.

Inclusive growth, ensuring all our residents benefit from our economy is central to the Ayrshire Regional Growth Deal. For example, it has allocated £3 million to support the development of a Community Wealth Building Strategy across Ayrshire.



The Ayrshire Regional Growth Deal represents a major investment of over £250 million into the Ayrshire economy over the next decade.

Community Wealth Building

Together with our Community Planning partners, we have launched our first **Community Wealth Building Strategy** for North Ayrshire, and in collaboration with East and South Ayrshire for the Ayrshire region as a whole. Community Wealth Building is a radical and bold approach that will see key institutions use the economic levers available to us to support our local economy. The result will be a more resilient local economy with more diverse businesses and well-paid jobs for our residents. Key to this approach is partnership working and we are working alongside the CPP and wider regional partners to deliver inclusive economic outcomes that will benefit all our residents. This is Scotland's first Community Wealth Building strategy.

A community wealth building approach seeks to provide resilience, local economic security, and to ensure that economic opportunity is widely spread and inclusive. Community wealth building provides a concrete and practical approach to help deliver on the aspiration of inclusive economy.

This Strategy has five key elements or pillars:

- Employment
- Procurement
- Assets
- Ownership
- Financial Power

Community wealth building is key to tackling poverty and deprivation.

North Ayrshire Food System

As part of our Community Wealth Building Strategy, we are working on our North Ayrshire Food System with the North Ayrshire Foodbank and various community organisations to develop networks of community fridges, larders, community supermarkets and food coops in line with a more sustainable approach to food with dignity.



A community wealth building approach seeks to provide resilience, local economic security, and to ensure that economic opportunity is widely spread and inclusive.



Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Community Planning Board is committed to supporting Pan-Ayrshire work on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in conjunction with Community Justice Ayrshire. ACEs are stressful events that occur in childhood and can have a lifelong adverse impact on sustained health and behaviour.

Following a motion to Council for us to become 'trauma informed', officers in collaboration with partners across the wider Community Planning Partnership have been working to broaden and embed trauma informed practice in all services.

Lived Experience of Poverty – Fair for All Commission

Lived experience is known to be the most valuable consideration when addressing areas as complex and challenging as child poverty. By creating a shared insight of lived experiences, we not only begin to understand how to tackle real life issues, we also gain knowledge of how to measure whether a positive impact is really being made.

Our North Ayrshire Fair For All Commission consists of:

- Community Commissioners – representatives of our communities struggling against poverty and insecurity.
- Civic Commissioners – representatives from a wide range of areas including Policy, universities, public services, health services and businesses.
- Fair for All Commission Officer – provides support to the Commission.

The four key themes identified are:

- Poverty and Health
- Poverty and Housing
- Poverty and Benefits
- Poverty and Cost of the School Day

The Commission also agreed that the theme of Stigma was cross cutting and affected all four themes. It explores the causes of the issues raised in the stories shared by the Community Commissioners, the unintended consequences on communities of policies, procedures and decisions and what possible changes or improvements can begin.



Lived experience is known to be the most valuable consideration when addressing areas as complex and challenging as child poverty.



Get Heard Scotland Discussions

Get Heard Scotland (GHS) is designed to help people on low incomes get their voices heard on the policies and decisions that most impact their lives and their communities. The programme is coordinated by the Poverty Alliance and funded by the Scottish Government as part of Every Child Every Chance, the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. By holding discussions with people affected by poverty they find out what is working in their community, what is not working and what needs to change to better support people living on low incomes and loosen the grip of poverty on their lives.

A total of 37 GHS discussions took place across Scotland between August 2019 and December 2019, with more than 200 people taking part in these discussions. Ten discussions took place in North Ayrshire.

In North Ayrshire, discussions took place in partnership with organisations, services and projects such as:

- Centrestage
- Stevenson Library
- Garnock Valley Men's Sheds
- North Ayrshire Disability Alliance
- Garnock Valley Youth Forum
- Kilwinning Junior and Senior Youth Forum
- Kilwinning Academy Accredited Learning Group
- Café Solace
- North Ayrshire Youth Conference


The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Most of the recommendations raised in the report are already in progress or are being considered as part of our future actions. The recommendations are a key resource to enhance our understanding of the impact of our actions on local residents.




Get Heard Scotland (GHS) is designed to help people on low incomes get their voices heard on the policies and decisions that most impact their lives and their communities.





Families can often struggle to afford uniforms, trips, school lunches, gym kits, pencils and pens, and dress down days can be difficult or impossible.



Inequalities in outcomes can be seen across all sectors including education, employment, income and health and wellbeing.

Cost of the School Day

We are fully aware that costs associated with attending school can be major barriers for families living on low incomes. Families can often struggle to afford uniforms, trips, school lunches, gym kits, pencils and pens, and dress down days can be difficult or impossible. This can have an impact on children's ability to learn and have an impact on how children feel and engage with school.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted children and young people's learning due to school closures. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on the economy, resulting in a reduction in income for many of our families.

Poverty can have a lasting impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing as well as the significant and persistent gap in attainment from lower and higher income families. Education can represent a route out of poverty, but crucially only if children and young people can access education as fully and equally as possible.

The cost of the school day will be a major priority for us going into school session 2020/21 and beyond. We intend to establish a working group with representatives from key services.

The group will work together to identify key actions that can be implemented in a coordinated approach across all of our schools and education establishments. This group will be an important aspect of our plans to tackle poverty.

Our aim will be to identify and overcome cost barriers that can limit children's opportunities at school. We will build on the information we have gathered through our Fair For All Commission and the Poverty Alliance Get Heard discussions, basing our work directly on the lived experience of those in poverty.

Poverty in North Ayrshire – what do we know?

High levels of inequality exist in North Ayrshire, particularly poverty and the associated effects this has. North Ayrshire is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland. Deprivation levels are significantly higher than the Scottish average. The latest 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) highlighted continuing levels of deprivation in North Ayrshire. 52 of our 186 datazones now fall within the 15% most deprived in Scotland. 39,139 people live within these deprived areas representing 28.8% of North Ayrshire's population, significantly above the Scottish average.

In addition, unemployment levels in North Ayrshire are high, there are significant numbers of people on low income and almost a third of children live in poverty.

Inequalities in outcomes can be seen across all sectors including education, employment, income and health and wellbeing. They are the result of an imbalance in power, money and resources across society, further compounded by the recent economic conditions of recession, austerity and welfare reform.

Information from the End Child Poverty Coalition, released up to April 2019, was based on a calculation "After housing costs" and was not a direct measure of how many children are in poverty.

This showed us that that levels of child poverty in North Ayrshire had decreased overall from 2017 to 2018, from 29.26% to 26.59%. This overall reduction was a positive movement for North Ayrshire and requires further investigation into the contributing factors.

New data on child poverty was released in May 2020. This new estimate is based on Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) data but is based on family income levels, before housing costs. This analysis, by Loughborough University can be viewed here – <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-201415-20189/>



When comparing local authority areas in Scotland, North Ayrshire has seen the third highest percentage point increase in child poverty levels (4.5%) and is above the Scottish percentage point increase (3.6%).



The main issues highlighted in terms of employment are more 'lower paid' jobs, higher underemployment levels and higher unemployment compared to Scotland as a whole.

The new data (as at 2018/19) shows that over **5,500 children (23.4%) age 0-16 could be living in poverty in North Ayrshire**. There are methodological differences in the calculation of the new estimates so caution must be used when looking at previous figures.

When comparing local authority areas in Scotland, North Ayrshire has seen the third highest percentage point increase in child poverty levels (4.5%) and is above the Scottish percentage point increase (3.6%). North Ayrshire has the second highest level of child poverty of any area in Scotland (23.4%) and is higher than the national average of 18.1%. It is also worth noting that the three largest percentage point increases are found in the three local authority areas with the highest overall levels of child poverty.

The dataset is based on a '**before housing cost' (BHC)** estimate of relative poverty (specifically, the percentage of children living in households below 60% median equivalised income). This measure takes no account of the effect on disposable income of some households having to pay a lot more in rent or mortgage payments than others. Comparison of the overall levels of child poverty shown in different parts of the country using this measure need to be treated with caution.

Local Poverty Related Indicators

Further analysis of the data available to us at a local level provides further insight into our local context. The information has been displayed below. The main issues highlighted in terms of employment are more 'lower paid' jobs, higher underemployment levels and higher unemployment compared to Scotland as a whole. In terms of benefits, there are higher level of out of work benefit claims. In terms of other related issues that impact on people's lives, we have higher levels of children looked after by the authority, higher rates of children admitted to hospital due to asthma and higher levels of domestic abuse incidents. These provide an indication of other factors.



When comparing local authority areas in Scotland, North Ayrshire has seen the third highest percentage point increase in child poverty levels (4.5%) and is above the Scottish percentage point increase (3.6%).

Figure 8: Local Data Overview

Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	Source
Percentage of children in low income families (2016)	24.0%	16.8%	HMRC, Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure
% Households managing well financially (2018)	62%	55%	Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey – Adults dataset
Children in working households (2018)	62.4%	62.0%	ONS, Annual Population Survey, Workless households for regions across the UK
% Employees (18+) earning less than the Living Wage (2019)	16.0%	16.9%	ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
% P4-P7 pupils registered for free school meals (2018)	25.2%	17.0%	Healthy Living Survey
Employment in 'lower paid' occupations (% of all in employment) (2019)	35%	29%	ONS, Annual Population Survey, year to Jun 2019
Underemployment of 16+ population (%) (2018)	13%	7%	ONS, Annual Population Survey
% Adults reporting a limiting long-term physical or mental health problem – household with children (2018)	21.6%	14.9%	Scottish Government, Scottish Surveys Core Questions
Age of first time mothers – 19 and under (% of all first time mothers) (2015/16 – 2017/18)	12.6%	7%	NHS Information Services Division, Age of First Time Mothers
% Single parent households (2018)	6%	5%	Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey
% Large family households (2018)	4%	5%	Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey
Employment Rate	70.2%	74.8%	Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (Oct 2018-Sep 2019).

Figure 8: Local Data Overview (cont.)

Indicator	North Ayrshire	Scotland	Source
Unemployment Rate	6.0%	3.9%	Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (Oct 2018-Sep 2019).
Working age population claiming out-of-work benefits (2016)	14.6%	10.56%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Households with children living in fuel poverty (2015/17)	16%	13%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Children admitted to hospital due to asthma, rate per 100,000 population (2016/17- 2018/19)	268.55	151.97	Public Health Information for Scotland
Children looked after by Local Authority, rate per 1,000 (2018)	20.58	13.53	Public Health Information for Scotland
Domestic Abuse Rates, per 10,000 population (2016/17)	123.41	108.81	Public Health Information for Scotland
Employment rate for 16-24-year olds (2018)	53.6%	57.2%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Households with children living in homes that fail the SHQS (2015/17)	47%	38%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Proportion of Working age population employment deprived (2017)	15.46%	10.58%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Young people in prison per 100,000 (2012-2014)	484.7	300.23	Public Health Information for Scotland
Young people living in the most income deprived quintile (2018)	47.64%	21.75%	Public Health Information for Scotland
Proportion of people earning less than the living wage (2018/19)*	24.3%	19.40%	Local Government Benchmarking Framework

*Data correct as at March 2020.

Sources:

- <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty/LAPovertyData/LAdashboard>
- <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157425/report.aspx>
- <https://www.scotpho.org.uk/>
- <https://scotland.mylocalcouncil.info/>

The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

In March 2020 the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus prompted the UK Government to take the unprecedented step in instructing all members of the public other than key workers to stay at home, unless under very specific circumstances such as for exercise or shopping for food. In addition, many particularly vulnerable residents were told to fully self-isolate. The entire UK found itself in what is now referred to as “lock down”. Overnight, this created a vast challenge for all Partners in supporting our residents, communities and businesses.

The economic impact of Covid-19 will be vast and is already being evidenced. There has been a five-fold increase in claims for Universal Credit across the UK and Scottish Welfare Fund teams have seen a doubling of crisis calls. Research by the [Save the Children and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) shows that seven in 10 families surveyed in Scotland about the impact of Covid-19 have had to cut back on food and other essentials, while 51% have fallen behind on rent or other household bills. 55% of families on Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit in Scotland have been pushed to borrow money since start of crisis – with many relying on expensive forms of credit. Four in 10 people claiming Universal Credit took an advance which needs to be repaid.

By the end of May, more than 148,000 Universal Credit claims had been made in less than three months: 86,429 (3.2%) out of work and 61,810 (2.3%) in employment. This equates to two new claims from a person still in employment for every three new claims due to unemployment. It compares with an average of just 20,000 new claims per month in 2019. Universal Credit figures over this period show Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire

and North Ayrshire as the areas with the biggest increase in claims. These are followed by East Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and Dundee. This group of authorities is among those with the highest rates of child poverty before the crisis began. New claims due to unemployment were lowest in Orkney, Shetland Islands and Aberdeenshire. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) ref: [A stronger Scottish lifeline in the economic storm](#).





For children already living in poverty, Covid-19 will intensify the experience and resulting trauma.



Tackling child poverty has been one of our main concerns during the initial response to the pandemic

In particular we are hugely concerned with the impact this will have on child poverty in our area as well nationally. For children already living in poverty, Covid-19 will intensify the experience and potential trauma.

The impact of the pandemic has not fallen evenly across our communities and the crisis has served to highlight the impact of longstanding inequalities in Scotland. NHS Ayrshire and Arran Public Health have considered the Scottish Public Health Observatory Covid-19 community vulnerability analysis and produced a local report.

The report includes a ranking score for each datazone in North Ayrshire. It is based on a range of indicators which have:

- Direct relevance to Covid-19 vulnerability (demographic or clinical), or
- Relevance to other demands on clinical or public health services, or
- Social factors likely to modify the impact of Covid-19 on communities.

This includes indicators such as number of older people, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) hospitalisations, and income deprivation. Many of the areas identified align with our local knowledge in terms of deprivation and concentrated populations of older people.

In addition, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Youth Unemployment Claimant Count Statistics (25 June 2020) show the following:

- As of May the youth unemployment claimant count was 1,355 (aged 16-24) in North Ayrshire, this is 10% of the total youth population (13,456) and represents a 57.6% increase since February. For context, the total claimant count (everyone aged 16 and over) for North Ayrshire went from 4,600 in February to 7,050 in May – an increase of 53.2%.



The impact of the pandemic has not fallen evenly across our communities and the crisis has served to highlight the impact of longstanding inequalities in Scotland.

The Scottish Enterprise report on Covid-19 Economic Impacts (13 July 2020) reveals the following:

- Scottish Enterprise have produced an assessment tool mapping local areas by economic risk which maps local authorities based upon unemployment rates versus the rate of Job Retention Scheme and SEISS (Self-Employed Support Scheme) take-up among the working age population in the local authority.
- North Ayrshire has the worst unemployment rate (% of working age population) – at just under 9% and falls into the most at-risk band of local authorities.

North Ayrshire ranks as the least economically resilient local authority in Scotland in new analysis conducted by the Scottish Government (Scottish Government Advisory Group on Economic Recovery – Towards a robust, resilient wellbeing economy for Scotland (22 June 2020).

Tackling child poverty has been one of our main concerns during the initial response to the pandemic. This has included:

- Taking a partnership approach to ensure our most vulnerable children have been supported through emergency childcare and free school meals.

- New mechanisms to deliver food in communities being established at pace.
- Providing families with money and welfare rights advice, access to crisis grants and support to sustain tenancies.
- Supporting young people to have access to digital resources, without which the inequalities and poverty gap could increase further.
- We are working to prioritise key activity which will enable and support economic recovery. Our decision-making processes are informed by poverty in our area.





As the Governments' business and employee support is tapered down after August there is likely to be a surge in those out of work, in more precarious jobs and on lower income.

We work with the Foodbank and are developing the Food and Food Growing Strategy to include a wider view of food, especially given all the innovative approaches now in place in North Ayrshire.

As the Governments' business and employee support is tapered down after August there is likely to be a surge in those out of work, in more precarious jobs and on lower income. Those already in poverty or vulnerable to it will be hit hardest, and there may be a strong rural impact as key industries such as tourism falter. These circumstances will see a rise in the number of children living in poverty and place additional pressure on Council resources and systems in place to mitigate the impact.

We understand that at this time we need to focus even more on reducing child poverty. Both the Fairer Scotland Duty and the requirements of the Child Poverty Act will remain at the heart of our decision making, to ensure we provide support to those most in need.

In response to the Covid-19 situation, we provided immediate support for our communities. Working with our communities and partners we were well placed to provide this.

North Ayrshire acted early to set up Community Support Hubs in each of our

local areas to respond to and intervene early in issues related to the Covid-19 crisis. Our "Humanitarian Hubs" across North Ayrshire were established during the week of 23 March 2020 to prepare for and respond to the crisis. These are run by the Council staff and third sector partners at Fullarton and Vineburgh Community Centres, with support from Health and Social Care Partnership staff and a range of community and staff volunteers.

Community Hubs

Our eight community hubs (three in Irvine and one in each of the other localities), support our local communities with the delivery of food parcels, prescriptions and other services.

North Ayrshire Foodbank, Whitlees Community Centre, Cranberry Moss Community Centre, Woodwynd Aces, the Inspire, Motivate and Celebrate (IMC) Project and a range of community resilience partners are playing a significant role in the resilience effort, including on our island communities of Arran and Cumbrae.

The hubs operate as a network of staff and volunteers as they deliver the following services:

- Responding to incoming calls
- Arranging food and prescription deliveries
- Packing and preparing food bags
- Cooking and deliver hot meals
- Providing an emergency larder facility
- Providing period products and toiletries
- Providing mental health packs
- Making health referrals
- Making financial advice referrals
- Supporting social isolation
- Working with a range of partners to provide multi-agency response to complex cases
- Providing and coordinating other requirements e.g. dog-walking.

We work with the Foodbank and are developing the Food and Food Growing Strategy to include a wider view of food, especially given all the innovative approaches now in place in North Ayrshire. An application to Magnox (at their invitation) will result in funding being

shared between North Ayrshire Foodbank and Largs Foodbank. Magnox staff volunteers are also working with us. The Corra Foundation (Kilwinning) have to date granted Scottish Government funding to Cranberry Moss Community Association, Woodwynd ACES and 1st Alliance. Other local organisations are receiving support from the Council and are also receiving support to seek external funding from the Scottish Government's Resilience Fund.

We have a strong partnership working approach in place, including with the NA Foodbank, community larders and community foodbags. Over a million meals have been provided.

Shielding Vulnerable Residents

The shielded group in North Ayrshire now totals nearly five and a half thousand people – for whom Covid-19 is a much higher risk. Our approach has been to leaflet everyone on the list to ensure they have a paper copy of our call centre telephone number and those of our local hubs, and to follow this up with telephone contact.



All our services are delivering a wide range of innovative opportunities online.



Inequalities in individual outcomes are directly linked to wider socio-economic inequalities in society.

Digital Services

All our services are delivering a wide range of innovative opportunities online. A selection of the services that were delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic include:

- Virtual Community Centres on Facebook, one for each locality. Sign up has been extensive.
- Adult learning online – English to Speakers for Other Languages (ESOL) is an especially good online opportunity for our new Scots.
- #DigiDream – a fantastic online platform by Youth Services – Drop Everything and Move (online!) The Wednesday night quiz is especially popular and the uptake has been extensive.
- Active Schools online – via Facebook and Twitter – great range of activities for physical and mental health, including TikTok competitions.
- Library Services have launched a new digital platform called “Borrow Box.”
- KA Leisure: online activities and motivational programmes.
- 1000 iPads for digitally excluded families and care-experienced young people and connectivity.
- 600 Chromebooks and connectivity.

- E-Sgoil Gaelic learning platform and remote learning developments.
- Resources (books, stationery etc).

North Ayrshire Community Book(s)

There are six locality-based [community books](#) and a North Ayrshire wide Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that cover common queries people have in relation to issues such as access to food, prescription delivery, and financial advice.



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North Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan Understanding Inequalities – Our Approach

A range of factors which, when distributed unequally in society, result in inequality of outcomes across socio-economic groups.

Inequalities in individual outcomes are directly linked to wider socio-economic inequalities in society. The distribution of power, money and resources has a direct influence on environmental influences such as:

- Availability of health enhancing work
- Access to good quality and affordable housing
- Social and cultural experiences
- Transport
- Education and learning opportunities
- Availability and quality of services

While there will be some fundamental causes of poverty which are out with the control of North Ayrshire CPP, there are many areas where an impact can be made. In order to be most effective, interventions need to be taken at all three levels:

- *Undo* the fundamental causes
 - *Prevent* the wider environmental influences
 - *Mitigate* the individual experiences
- As well as needing to ensure that our approach intervenes at all three

levels described above, research also demonstrates that a combination of approaches across three areas of the population is essential to effectively tackle inequalities. These three approaches are:

1. Targeting – targeting the worst off in society
2. Enhanced – reducing the gap between groups
3. Universal – reducing the gradient across the population

Our Action Plan will reflect these approaches where relevant.

Our [first Action Plan](#) was developed in order to ensure clear links to our LOIP and to reflect the above approach. We have used this as a basis of our understanding of inequalities, its causes, and the most effective ways of responding. This, our second annual Action Plan, builds on the work done to date, develops some of the existing work, and introduces new actions, some as a direct result of Covid-19 impacts and local responses.

Our key actions have been linked to and summarised in terms of the key drivers of child poverty.



Our Ayrshire Growth Deal was signed in March 2019 which will see over £200M of investment in Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace and Energy.



Our key actions have been identified and included in **Appendix 1**. Our key actions have been linked to and summarised in terms of the key drivers of child poverty. We have included actions where the greatest impact will be made taking into account scale and pace.

The six priority groups (lone parents; families where a member of the household is disabled; families with three or more children; minority ethnic families; families where the youngest child is under one year old; and mothers aged under 25) have been considered in developing our Action Plan. They will continue to be a focus as part of the development of our future actions.

Poverty Impact Assessment Approach Pilot

On 19 February 2020, we held a Child Poverty Workshop for senior managers across the Council, Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Ayrshire and Arran. This event was designed to bring senior managers together to start looking at actions through a poverty lens, to encourage consideration of any poverty implications of their work. The session

also facilitated partnership working and discussions. The event included the Fairer Scotland Duty, including the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, our Financial Inclusion Referral Pathway and Rights Based Approaches. Feedback from the event was very positive and we aim to hold more events in the future.

Monitoring of this plan

This report requires agreement and monitoring by the Community Planning Partnership. Reporting will link to other strategic groups as required. Our Performance Framework has been created and is monitored regularly. This will ensure consistency in reporting across all our plans and strategies. We aim to report on our progress every six months to the Community Planning Partnership to ensure we are achieving our ambition of a fairer and more equal society.

Our Performance Framework has been designed as a Poverty Scorecard, linked to the three key drivers of poverty. This is our first scorecard and we aim to further develop this work in the coming months and beyond.

2019/20 Key Highlights – What have we been doing to tackle child poverty in North Ayrshire?

Section 1 – Maximising Income from Employment

Bringing new and better jobs to the area

Our Ayrshire Growth Deal was signed in March 2019 which will see over **£200M of investment in Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace and Energy**.

Community Wealth Building

North Ayrshire is Scotland's first community wealth building council. Our Community Wealth Building Strategy was approved in May 2020. This radical and bold approach will see us work with other established institutions to use the economic levers available in order to create a more resilient local economy, with more diverse businesses, to create

more well-paid jobs for local people. Some of the actions we will take forward will be:

- Work with local and regional Anchor Institutions through the Community Wealth Building Commission to deliver Community Wealth Building across North Ayrshire and the wider Ayrshire economy.
- Develop an Anchor Charter agreement to embed Community Wealth Building principles across Anchor Institutions in the region.
- Work within our localities to support communities and businesses to develop and co-produce Community Wealth Building activities.

- Develop and implement the £3 million Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) Community Wealth Building Fund and ensure the AGD as a whole delivers Community Wealth Building to ensure lasting benefits for our businesses and communities.
- Use municipalisation as a tool to secure local public services and enhance local wealth, creating local economic opportunities.
- Encourage communities to shop local, including via Community Charters, and highlight the benefit of this to support local jobs in the North Ayrshire and Ayrshire economy.
- Establish an Expert Advisory Board to inform the work of the Community Wealth Building Commission and challenge our progress on delivering our Community Wealth Building Strategy ambitions.
- Continue our conversations with young people about what Community Wealth Building means to them.

Encouraging the Payment of Living Wage Across the Area

We developed our Community Wealth Building Strategy, to enhance local wealth and create fair jobs, and will utilise a £3M Ayrshire Growth Deal Fund to progress this agenda. A part of this will be encouraging and supporting local businesses to pay the Living Wage. **Currently 17 businesses in North Ayrshire are accredited as Living Wage employers.**

Providing In Work Support

Our North Ayrshire employability services are moving to focus more on in-work support. Employed parents on low incomes are now being targeted through new funding available from the Scottish Government.

Employment Support Programmes

We continue to invest significantly in services to support unemployed residents back to work. The We Work for Families programme is targeting parents with key worker support to get them into secure and fair work. The Council currently invests over £1.5M a year in such schemes and utilises EU funding to enhance this further.



We continue to invest significantly in services to support unemployed residents back to work.



Our Skills for Life initiative is an intensive skills and training programme that helps support the long-term unemployed get back into employment. It is a partnership approach which sees the Council, Ayrshire College, Department for Work and Pensions, CEIS Ayrshire and Childcare and Recreational Information Service (CARIS) all working together to provide participants with a meaningful and valuable experience.

The focus is entirely on single parents to help provide them with an opportunity they may not have had since becoming a parent – a chance to gain real experience in the workplace. **15 people have completed our Skills for Life programme in 2019/20. 11 have secured permanent employment with North Ayrshire Council and a further two have secured employment in the private sector.** Analysis shows that participants are **on average £90 per week better off.** 17 Skills for Life participants have had their placements interrupted by Covid-19, so those outcomes have yet to be realised.

The We Work for Families Programme specifically engages with parents of young children under five, particularly women, who may find it difficult for a range of reasons to take the next step to realising their potential. The programme is delivered using a partnership approach. **91 parents registered for support with the We Work for Families service in 2019/20, with 17 going on to secure employment to date.**

We have five Employability Hubs based in our localities which offer our residents –

- Skills sessions and employer workshops
- Employment fairs
- College courses
- Information on vacancies
- Help with CV's, online applications and interview techniques
- Accredited and non-accredited training
- Advice on business start-up and self-employment
- Help with digital skills
- Literacy and numeracy support
- Welfare reform advice and support with online services such as universal credit



The We Work for Families Programme specifically engages with parents of young children under five, particularly women, who may find it difficult for a range of reasons to take the next step to realising their potential.





We successfully completed our first SEEME CV pilot, creating video CVs for six clients, of whom three have started work using this as a means of applying for vacancies.

During 2019/20 we re-launched the Kilwinning Hub at Kilwinning Library with a jobs fair that **attracted 150 unemployed residents**. We held several job fairs throughout the year.

465 people have registered for support through the Hubs this year. **140** people registering with the hubs have secured employment. CEIS Ayrshire have maintained contact with customers by telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2019/20, we have registered and supported **109 disabled residents**, with 18 clients being supported in employment.

A full launch of our disability employment support service was organised for March but was then cancelled due to Covid-19 guidance.

During Quarter Four of 2019/20, we placed **six disabled clients** into work with a Covid-19 Helpline and a further two clients into employment with retail outlets. Another two clients began Modern Apprenticeship placements internally. One other client has been successful in gaining a start date for a role which due to current circumstances has unfortunately been put on hold for the moment.

We successfully completed our first SEEME CV pilot, creating video CVs for six clients, of whom three have started work using this as a means of applying for vacancies. As a result of this success we had planned a further series of workshops for 10 main service clients and a further eight transitional pupils from Stanecastle School, however as a result of Covid-19 these workshops have been rescheduled and we will review start dates as soon as is practical.



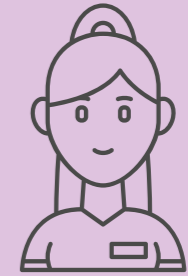
During 2019/20, we have registered and supported **109 disabled residents**, with **18 clients** being supported in employment.

Case Study

Employment Programmes

The Skills for Life employment programme has been successfully delivered in North Ayrshire for the past three years with many of its participants going on to secure jobs. The focus is entirely on single parents to help provide them with an opportunity they may not have had since becoming a parent and a chance to gain real experience in the workplace.

Heather is one of the 20 participants who took part in the previous programme.



Heather said:

"Before starting the programme I had little confidence and experience in the sector I wanted to work in, I had also been out of work for some time. The programme helped me to develop valuable skills and experience and my confidence grew. My newfound confidence coupled with the three months of employability training helped me to secure a position as Library Assistant with the Council."



The participants will take part in a skills and training academy at the Ayrshire College – picking up a number of qualifications along the way. They will also receive childcare and money advice to ensure they reap the rewards that working life can bring.

And after the initial training they will then begin a 26-week work placement with the Council in roles such as catering, cleaning and janitorial staff, administration assistant, care at home assistant and assistant customer service advisor.

On completion of the programme, they will continue to be supported by all partners in their quest for employment.

Speaking about the programme, Councillor Alex Gallagher, Cabinet Member of Economy, said:

"One of our main priorities as a Council is to increase job opportunities for our residents and the Skills for Life programme is just one in a number of ways we work to achieve this."

We understand and appreciate the challenges that being a single parent presents – not least when you add full-time employment into the mix as well.

But by working alongside these individuals we have been able to develop a unique and tailored programme that allows them to take that first step back into employment."



Our Priorities and Continuing Work

Our Priorities for 2020/21 – Income from Employment

1. We will work with our suppliers to restart contracts suspended by the Covid-19 lockdown and to tackle the backlog of tenders that we have been unable to tender during this time. We will continue to use the emergency procurement powers and increased quick quote thresholds to help more local suppliers win contracts. Our activities aim to stimulate the local economy, by securing jobs or generating community benefits.
2. Our Employability Support Service will:
 - Ensure service users are ready to face recent and ongoing challenges
 - Continue to support the most vulnerable parents as unemployment level may rise
 - Engage with parents and positive messaging about the service
 - Continue to adapt/ find new ways of working to ensure the best outcomes for clients
 - Continue to deliver Skills for Life and We Work for Families to ensure opportunities exist for parents to access employment/ training
 - Work with national partners to ensure approaches to redundancy are well co-ordinated
3. We will deliver our Disability Employment Support Service: Equal
4. We will hold further workshops of the SEEME CV pilot

In addition to these priorities, our work will continue in:

- ✓ Inward Investment Strategy
- ✓ The Ayrshire Growth Deal
- ✓ Living Wage
- ✓ In-Work Support Programmes
- ✓ Employment Support Employability Hubs
- ✓ Disability Employment Support
- ✓ Early Years and Childcare:
 - Delivery of 1,140 hours
 - 2-year old nursery provision
- ✓ A range of support for young people



How we will monitor our progress – Income from Employment

Measure	2018/19	2019/20
Number of jobs created by businesses in North Ayrshire supported by Business Development	555	524
Percentage of people in North Ayrshire earning less than the living wage	24.30%	Data not available
Percentage of working age population in employment	69.70%	70.20%
Employment Rate – percentage women age 16-64	64.40%	65.50%
Employment rate – percentage aged 16-64 EA core or work limiting disability	44%	49.2%
Youth Employment Rate (16-24)	60.00%	58.30%
Participation Rate for 16-19-year olds (per 100)	90.53%	Data not available
Women's Median Gross Weekly Pay	£501.00	Data not available
Gross weekly earning of full-time employees in North Ayrshire (Median)	£563.60	£550.10
Cumulative number of unemployed disabled residents supported into employment	Data not available	18
Number of employed modern apprentices recruited to North Ayrshire Council	87	54
Number of Modern Apprentices recruited by North Ayrshire Council, who are care experienced or disabled	Data not available	10
No of weeks employment through using Community Benefit clauses	2093	2864
Percentage of learning disability service users accessing employment support activities	23.88%	23.84%
Number of unemployed people registered with employability hubs	597	465
Numbers of unemployed people accessing the employability pipeline	1149	939

The financial gains in 2019/20 is an increase of over £5m from 2018/19 and is following the recruitment of North Ayrshire Citizens Advice Service.



Money Matters assisted and both decisions were successfully appealed, resulting in our client retaining an ongoing work capability addition of £128.25 per month on her Universal Credit

Section 2 – Maximising Income from Benefits

Income Maximisation

Our Money Matters service assists clients to receive their full, legal entitlement to benefits. The service is about dealing with poverty and deprivation in an area with persistently high levels of unemployment and income deprivation.

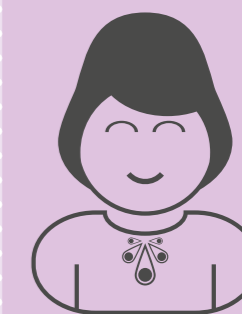
In 2019/20 the amount of income generated (£) for service users by the Money Matters Service was **£15.3m**. This is great achievement against a backdrop of austerity and welfare reform cuts and is testimony to everyone's work in the Money Matters Team.

The financial gains in 2019/20 is an increase of over £5m from 2018/19 and is following the recruitment of North Ayrshire Citizens Advice Service. **Money Matters received 4,951 enquiries/ referrals in 2019/20**. The team had a **71% success rate for appeals** which proceeded.



Case Study

Our client is a lone parent with 3 children (aged 15, 9 and 8). Money Matters were first contacted in 2018 after our client was found fit for work so losing her Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) award. The subsequent Universal Credit claim also resulted in a 'fit for work' decision. Money Matters assisted and both decisions were successfully appealed, resulting in our client retaining an ongoing work capability addition of £128.25 per month on her Universal Credit.



The client's Universal Credit maximum amount is currently £413 per week and Child Benefit payment is £48.95 per week, therefore she was subject to the benefit cap (currently £384.62 per week for her circumstances). This meant the client's Universal Credit was reduced to £335.67 per week. However, Money Matters assisted a successful appeal of a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decision of no entitlement. The appeal resulted in the award of PIP at the Standard Rate of Daily Living and Standard Rate of Mobility.

This was backdated to the date of her claim in February 2019. This will result in a weekly gain of £83.30 and arrears of approximately £6,168. In addition, the Benefit Cap will no longer apply as she now receives PIP and so she should receive her maximum Universal Credit amount of £413 per week (an increase of £58.64 per week).

Case Study

Our client lives with her husband and two daughters, aged 8 and 3. Daughter (age 8) suffers from Neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1), behavioural problems and is awaiting assessment from CAMHS for possible Autism and ADHD. Our client was receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for her daughter although after review, the claim was refused altogether. This had a big impact on family income as loss of DLA Middle Care of £59.70 per week and Low Mobility of £23.60 per week, Carers Allowance of £67.25 per week and Child Tax Credit Disabled Child Element of approximately £53.52 per week.

Starting Income: Husband works and earns £1,276 per month (£294.46 per week). Client receives Child Benefit £35.00 per week and Child Tax Credit £94 per week. **Total Income: £423.46 per week.**

With the assistance of the Money Matters Team, appeals were made and were successful. Allowances were reinstated and backdated.

Advice was also provided to advise that the client can apply for the School Age Payment and between 1 June 2020 and 22-02-2021. Information from mygov.scot website was provided.

Our client is pregnant with her 3rd child. We discussed Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment – £300 (on the birth of any subsequent children) – information was provided regarding this.



The family are now £204.07 per week better off.

Total Backdated Monies of £3430.30 were paid.



“Just to say a big thank you for all the work you done to enable me to win my appeal. If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t have had a chance. You were the only one who took time to listen to me.”

Linda*, Money Matters Client

“£3154.92 is what I’m getting, I can’t believe it, thank you so much, I can see my future now, a bit emotional”

Moira*, Money Matters Client

Discussed 2 child limit for Child Tax Credit. Discussed Child Benefit. The case was closed but the client was advised to get in touch if she required further advice.

The family income was increased substantially after Money Matters assistance – Total Income after is now £627.53 per week meaning

School Clothing Grant, Education Maintenance Allowance and Other Grants/ Benefits

New customers for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants apply online and is processed by our Contact Centre team. If a customer has previously applied the Team will email or write to them and ask them to go online and confirm that their details are the same or provide details of any changes.

The Council have explored using shared information to automate the application process, for example if the Team know a customer is claiming a certain benefit then the Team would automatically award their clothing grant and free school meals. However, with the roll out of Universal Credit, more and more customers are moving to this and the Council are unable to use this information for anything other than awarding Council Tax Reduction. This is stipulated by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

An internal review of the benefits service is currently underway by the transformation team to look at improving processes for customers.

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) are processed by Local Authorities on behalf of the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government provide detailed guidelines/ criteria to be followed when administering EMAs. In brief the criteria covers: age, income, residency, course, attendance and Learning Agreement. EMAs are processed on behalf of young people in our schools and our application form and documentation requested is designed around the criteria that is specified.

Each year we cross reference our existing Free School Meal applicants with data from our Benefits system to identify all those who meet the qualifying criteria. We contact parents and carers to advise them to go online, check and confirm their details and complete or renew their application. This digital process ensures that benefits are awarded as quickly as possible to those families who need them.

We carry our promotional campaigns annually using Twitter, Facebook and our website to capture new customers who may eligible in order to maximise uptake.



Each year we cross reference our existing Free School Meal applicants with data from our Benefits system to identify all those who meet the qualifying criteria. We contact parents and cares to advise them to go online, check and confirm their details and complete or renew their application.

*Names have been changed to protect identity

Encouraging the Uptake of Free School Meals

All P1-P3 pupils in our schools receive a free school meal. Our schools are pro-active about encouraging families to apply for free school meals. Head Teachers are made aware of those children and young people who are entitled to a free meal but do not routinely use their allowance. Head Teachers and Guidance Staff engage with families and young people to encourage the uptake of free school meals.

Case Study

One of our Secondary Schools proactively used the data available to them and identified that a large percentage of young people were using their free school meal allocation on breakfast rather than lunch. The school are actively addressing this and are developing a free breakfast service at morning registration to enable young people to use their full meal allocation on a healthy and substantial lunch.



All school handbooks and websites contain information on accessing Free School Meals. Schools also provide leaflets to parents and carers at P1 Registration. Schools use their regular newsletter to promote our school meals.

Our Family Learning Team also supports parents and carers in the completion of the application, if required.

We introduced a Pilot Healthy Breakfast service in four secondary schools where young people who are entitled to free school meals have a daily breakfast allowance added to their school meals account, giving a good start to the day free of charge. The Healthy Breakfast option is also available to all pupils who pay for lunch.

Cashless catering is operated in all of our Primary and Secondary Schools to allow total anonymity to any child receiving a free school meal to reduce any associated stigma.

Every August we run a two-week campaign to promote free school meals, using local radio and social media. This is designed to promote school meals to new starts as well as other pupils returning after the holidays.

We work with primary pupils to design new menus and to get their opinions. This ensures we are offering choices which are attractive to pupils and raises the profile of school meals.

Working with schools, we develop and host theme days at different times of the year. These can be linked with school projects.

We offer taster sessions to promote a range of healthy choices and allow children to experience foods that they may not have tried or tasted before. We also provide taster sessions at Parent Council meetings or parents evenings to allow parents and carers to experience the wide variety of healthy meals available. This encourages parents and carers to support school meal uptake for their children and young people.

We use social media to promote school meals and their nutritional content. These are widely shared to encourage uptake. Some schools have 'clean plate' initiatives where children are encouraged to eat all of their meal and reduce food waste. This is also regularly shared and promoted on social media.

Our Facilities Management Team are Gold level "Food For Life Served Here" certificate holders, awarded by the Soil Association Scotland. We are the highest awarded local authority in Scotland for the number of schools holding this accreditation. This award recognises the use of local suppliers and quality produce. We have retained this award every year since 2013.

Over 90% of our school menu items are freshly prepared and we still retain the school meal cost of just £2.05. This is the lowest across Ayrshire. Convenience food can be expensive compared to £2.05 for 2 courses of nutritious, healthy and tasty school meals. Children having a full lunch at school reduces the financial pressure on parents/ carers. We are also aware that some families may not have the option of a hot meal outside of school due to a range of circumstances.

Improve access to information and advice about benefits

Our Money Matters Service receive direct referrals from Health and Social Care colleagues such as GPs, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Community Link Workers, Nurses, Alcohol and Drug Workers as well as other agencies including North Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, The Ayrshire Community Trust and others.

We have a financial inclusion pathway in place. During 2019-20, training has been

provided to Health Visitors and other Early Years staff, and a pilot session with other managers took place to raise awareness.

Information leaflets are available at a variety of locations promoting the work of the Money Matters Team. The team is also promoted on Twitter and Social Media.

The Housing Welfare Reform Advice Team (WRAT) provide support to manage claims, maximise income and make rent payments to avoid arrears. The Team provide a 'live' Welfare Rights messenger service through Facebook messenger. WRAT also have regular Facebook posts on the Housing Services Facebook Page to promote the service, advertise new benefits particularly Scottish Social Security benefits as well as outcomes achieved for our tenants.

The previously developed Direct Referral tool for NHS staff to sign-post families to appropriate specialist money advice services was updated and disseminated. An A5 version was specifically developed as a diary insert for all Health Visitors and Midwives and disseminated following completion of the training programme.

All NHS staff were advised of the new Best Start Food payments via internal communications, and targeted communications were undertaken with midwives, health visitors and other relevant staff who work with pregnant women and families with young children.



Pregnant women and families with babies and children receiving certain benefits are to be offered increased access to healthy foods.

Pregnant women and families with babies and children receiving certain benefits are to be offered increased access to healthy foods. The new Best Start Foods payment replaces the UK Government's Healthy Start paper vouchers with a new payment card. A payment card replaces paper vouchers from August 2019.

The card, which works in a similar way to bank cards, can be used to buy a variety of healthy foods including milk and infant formula, fruit and vegetables, pulses and eggs.

A range of resources (Banners, Posters, Leaflets) were developed to raise awareness amongst pregnant women attending antenatal appointments that midwifery staff were asking all women about money worries as a routine element of delivering care. Similar resources were developed for families with young children specifically for use in Paediatric clinical areas in NHS Ayrshire and Arran acute hospitals. These information leaflets are now being disseminated in the packs that Health Visitor provide to all women with new-born infants in their first visit to the family home.

A local training programme for Community Midwife Assistants (CMAs) was developed that includes advice and guidance on best practice in raising money worries with pregnant women, and explicit use of the direct referral tool.



The card, which works in a similar way to bank cards, can be used to buy a variety of healthy foods including milk and infant formula, fruit and vegetables, pulses and eggs.



Our Priorities and Continuing Work

Our Priorities for 2020-21 – Maximising Income from Benefits

1. We will hold further sessions with senior managers to encourage poverty impact assessment approaches in our work.
2. Ensure that our Customer Services Team are prepared to deal with any increase in demand for Benefits, Council Tax Reductions, EMA, FSM/ SCGs and Scottish Welfare Fund applications.
3. As part the Transformation Plan, we will be assessing the possibility of a "Single Shared Assessment". This involves a full end to end review of means tested / disability related assessments currently being undertaken throughout the Council with a view to looking at how these could be assessed and processed at one single point of contact for the customers.
4. Our Welfare Reform Advice Team will continue to provide assistance to tenants to provide support during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic to ensure income maximisation for families, initial benefit applications and also passported benefit applications such Scottish Social Security child payments, young carer as well as CTR, DHP, free school meals, clothing grants.
5. We will promote Free School meals to encourage uptake. We will build confidence in school meals (safe environment to eat) and develop menus to comply with new legislation coming in next year.
6. We will build on our success with local suppliers and continue to support low food miles and local employment.
7. We will continue to encourage families to apply for Free School Meals to ensure maximum numbers of families are reached.
8. A bespoke awareness-raising training session on accessing money and benefits advice for midwives was developed in 2019/20 and will be delivered in 2020/21 when Covid-19 related circumstances permit.
9. We will monitor the uptake of the new Best Start benefits with Social Security Scotland.
10. Resources to raise awareness amongst pregnant women attending antenatal appointments that midwifery staff ask all women about money worries as a routine element of delivering care will be deployed in clinical areas subject to Covid-19 related social distancing arrangements in waiting rooms at Ayrshire Maternity Unit, the Paediatric Suite at Crosshouse Hospital and Community Clinics.

In addition to these priorities, our work will continue in:

- ✓ Money Matters Service
- ✓ Free School Meals and Clothing Grants online application
- ✓ Encourage EMA uptake
- ✓ Social media promotional campaigns
- ✓ Free School Meals uptake campaigns
- ✓ Healthy Breakfast service in secondary schools (as well as primaries)
- ✓ Cashless Catering in schools
- ✓ Housing Welfare Reform Advice Team (WRAT)
- ✓ NHS – Referral tool for NHS staff to sign-post families to appropriate specialist services
- ✓ Best Start payments cards

How we will monitor our progress – Maximising Income from Benefits



Measure	2018/19	2019/20
Money Matters – income generation for service users	£9,526,758.64	£15,305,924.43
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (New Claims) days	8.51	7.38
Speed of processing Housing Benefit (Change of circumstances) days	10.46	7.63
Speed of Processing (Council Tax Reduction) new claims (days)	28.28	24.96
Speed of processing (Council Tax Reduction) changes of circumstances (days)	7	5.8
Number of Crisis Grants Paid	4579	3856
Uptake of EMAs (Academic Sessions)	835 young people applied, 729 young people received at least one payment.	806 young people applied, 718 young people received at least one payment
Uptake of Free School Meals (Primary)	87.5%	82.72%
Uptake of Free School Meals (Secondary)	75.45%	61.49%



We are committed to the provision of new affordable housing to ensure that children and young people experience the best start in life.

Section 3 – Reducing household costs

Increase Availability of Affordable Housing

We are committed to the provision of new affordable housing to ensure that children and young people experience the best start in life. There is also evidence that children and young people can benefit from improved cognitive development and a reduction in behavioural issues through living in a more attractive, warmer, and better ventilated environment.

Our Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2020-2025 sets out the priorities for affordable housing investment in North Ayrshire over the next five years. It supports the Council's ambitious commitment to **develop 1,575 new build Council homes by March 2025** taking the total investment by the Council over the SHIP period to £155.572m. It further supports Local Registered Social Landlords to develop over 400 new homes by March 2025.

Rent levels

Our robust Housing Revenue Account Business Plan provides clear strategic direction, ensuring that effective short, medium- and long-term financial planning is undertaken. The plan clearly details how we will plan for, and deliver, key priorities such as; compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard; an on-going Council house building programme; rent setting and our older people housing strategy.

The business plan was developed by a cross stakeholder working group which included representation from Elected Members, tenant representatives and officers from within Housing and Finance & Infrastructure Services. This approach ensured balanced decision making that stands up to both internal and external scrutiny.



We have installed Solar Panels where appropriate to assist with energy costs.



we are currently working on a North Ayrshire Food System with North Ayrshire Foodbank and our community organisations.

This Plan is reviewed annually, and we are focused on providing value for money through several measures such as operating robust financial management processes, implementing value for money principles, exploring efficiency opportunities, and managing competitive contractual arrangements. Our rent levels remain lower than the national average and neighbouring authorities and landlords, however we continue to invest significantly in our existing stock and new house building programme. We face challenges in for example, changes to welfare reform, demographics and the housing stock profile. We are committed to delivering services in new, improved and more cost-effective ways.

Energy Costs

We have installed **Solar Panels** where appropriate to assist with energy costs. The social housing rooftop photovoltaic (PV) project came to an end in 2020. The final number of PV systems installed on properties is 290 (895kWp) and 165 of these installations (518kWp) were installed before the deadline and successfully registered for the Feed in Tariff (FIT) subsidy. All properties are monitored remotely to ensure that faults are identified and resolved.

The Sustainability Team also continue to deliver replacement and top up loft

insulation and cavity wall insulation for council properties, supporting Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) compliance and other housing programmes.

Housing

Our Teams work with other Services to plan digital publications sent to tenants (Tenant Chat and Tenancy Matters), social media posts to include areas that would help address child poverty. We have been hosting live 'Messenger' sessions where customers can contact services and ask for advice.

Almost all allocations to homeless and additional priority to applicants in temporary accommodation are to families with children. In addition, we are still working in partnership with Health and Social Care Partnership and allocating housing to young people supported by Throughcare who are care experienced.

Electricity tariff was reduced to zero for Redburn Gypsy/ Traveller site throughout Covid-19 crisis. We also made regular welfare calls to vulnerable tenants (including families) and made onward referrals where further support was identified as needed. Eviction action was also suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic and replaced by welfare calls offering advice and assistance.

A Housing Youth Matters Group was set up in conjunction with Youth Services to give an opportunity for young people to get involved in housing and related services. We also deliver homeless prevention and housing advice to all 4th, 5th and 6th year pupils across all our Secondary Schools.

We provide a Housing Support and Housing Options Advice to prevent homelessness, ensuring households are accessing appropriate benefits and other assistance. Our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan details our drive to reduce the duration of homelessness, provide self-contained dispersed furnished flats within the community from where a household presents to ensure children can retain their Social Networks and minimise disruption to education.

We provide furnished tenancy grants for homeless people to ensure they have access to furniture on rehousing. Where a family are homeless, we provide a package of support to ensure young people have space to do homework, can attend school and are registered with primary health care and a local dentist.

North Ayrshire Food System

Access to food and food with dignity is a fundamental right for all our children and young people. This access is a core principle of our service delivery and we have a range of systems in place, to target and eradicate child hunger as demonstrated throughout this report.

Learning from the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with our commitment to Community Wealth Building, we are currently working on a North Ayrshire Food System with North Ayrshire Foodbank and our community organisations to develop networks of community fridges, larders, community supermarkets and food coops in line with a more sustainable approach to food with dignity. This will also empower our communities to have an active role in addressing and eradicating child hunger.

We will work with community organisations to develop the initiatives, taking a person-centred approach. Ongoing support will be provided as well as skills such as, REHIS, risk assessments, hygiene, business planning, committee skills and so on.

Advice and assistance with Food Costs

Our Family Learning Team provide Family Food Programmes based on the CAN (cheap and nutritious) toolkit training from the NHS. Budget busting cooking was offered in Winton Primary to include parents shopping with the budget. A similar family cooking programme took place in Auchenharvie Academy. Each week a parent is in charge of the budget and go shopping with the Family Learning Worker. The budget busting toolkit was offered to all parents with targeted families being prioritised.

Our holiday meals initiative has grown from strength to strength, providing a healthy Gold standard 'Food for Life' Lunch for North Ayrshire primary children at no charge.

We have successfully rebranded our holiday meals programme this summer as Wrap, Run and Fun, with a strong partnership with KA Leisure to deliver free activities for the children. This relaunch sought to remove the stigma of free meals, provide help to parents and introduce the initiative as a community activity club for North Ayrshire primary school pupils, where food is available.

To continually improve, an ongoing review of the activities on offer has resulted in a wider partnership with KA Leisure and other community partners at various venues. The attendance over the summer period resulted in an additional 721 meals being served, which equates to a **5% increase** compared to summer 2018. Facilities Management continues to develop the school holiday meals provision to maximise the number of children benefiting from this service. The ongoing review will include building

on existing community partnerships and working with other stakeholders to widen the service into the community to reach those who need it most.

Providing Advice on how to Minimise Costs for Energy

Our Corporate Sustainability Team provide general energy efficiency advice to the public on a weekly basis, by responding to enquiries and by using our referral process with internal and external agencies (current average three referrals per week). Corporate Sustainability are also an active member of the Local Energy Advice Forum (LEAF), a partnership which aims to increase domestic energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty within North and East Ayrshire.

A programme to deliver replacement and top up loft insulation and cavity wall insulation for council properties continues to support EESHH compliance. In addition, our Corporate Sustainability team continue to promote energy efficiency to the general public as well as other council departments.

The Welfare Reform Advice Team visit our tenants and complete a survey and matrix as part of this visit to discuss fuel poverty and offer referral to Citrus energy for any fuel related issues such as debt, switching suppliers etc. Warm Homes Discount is also discussed and assistance to apply is provided if applicable.

As part of the Financial Inclusion Pathway, referrals can be made to Home Energy Scotland.

Community Hubs

Case Study

Increasing Empowerment – Community Hubs

Community hubs are led by Community Learning and Development and include Community Link Workers (HSCP), voluntary sector, volunteers, redeployed staff, and businesses. The Hubs provided:

- Food & energy security, particularly for shielding residents
- Prescription deliveries
- Money advice
- Mental health assistance
- Digital access
- Staff welfare hubs for HSCP
- Third sector funding partnership – TSIs, funding officer
- Islands resilience
- Digital services
- Linking recovery to Community Wealth Building



Some of the feedback we received from the Community Hubs during the Covid-19 Pandemic were –

“Absolutely amazing support. Please don’t forget the Largs and Millport who are also doing an amazing job. Well done everyone.”

“You are all doing an amazing job during this difficult time. Well done, keep up the good work.”

We’ve seen an extraordinary community support in the last three months by highly motivated and energetic community clusters, sometimes without the formal structures of existing groups.

This has run on a street-by-street and social media framework and attracted a lot of young people and a lot of highly skilled people. We intend to build on this support and carry into future community networks.

Real Nappy Incentive Scheme

We became the first Council in the UK to provide free “birth to potty” real nappy packs.

The new enhanced nappy scheme could save families up to £1,300 per child on the cost of disposable nappies, whilst reducing the environmental impact of nappies by 40 per cent.

North Ayrshire Council already offers a Real Nappy Incentive Scheme which provides a free trial pack, giving new parents the chance to see what suits their baby best. This trial pack consists of three, free reusable nappies in various styles, two waterproof wraps, biodegradable liners and a handy laundry bag.

Now, parents or carers who use the trial pack will be able to request the full new ‘birth to potty’ pack, containing 20 birth to potty nappies, biodegradable liners and a laundry bag. This comprehensive kit will also be provided free. Parents or carers who are already comfortable with the idea of using reusable nappies can request this option without the need for a trial kit first.

Making the switch to reusable nappies can save a significant amount of money in the longer term – however the initial outlay can be restrictive. North Ayrshire Council’s ‘birth to potty’ scheme will remove this cost.

The enhanced ‘birth to potty’ scheme will be funded by the reduced costs of the Council sending disposable nappies to landfill.

Below are a selection of quotes from our customers so far:



“The scheme has made a huge difference to us. It has given us a real boost in being able to use cloth nappies full time.”

“This scheme really is an amazing thing. It enabled our family to move to cloth full time and we will be able to continue until baby is potty trained.”

“The scheme is great and I am so proud to be a resident of north Ayrshire who are implementing this groundbreaking real nappy scheme I hope it continues for a very long time.”

Digital Access

As part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have supported children and families to have access to digital devices. We have purchased 1200 iPads and 750 Chromebooks as well as connectivity in the form of individual pupil SIMs or MiFi Units for families to share. This amounts to connectivity for 512 pupils. E-Sgoil and remote learning were developed to ensure pupils were able to continue their learning and we put in place other free resources such as books, stationery etc. Virtual Community Centres were set up on Facebook. There’s one for each locality. Sign up has been extensive.

Reducing the cost of the School Day

In the 2019-20 academic year, we extended provision of a free breakfast to identified young people entitled to Free School Meals in four secondary schools. This is funded through the Scottish Attainment Challenge and is being piloted to assess if this has a positive impact on improving school attendance.

The cost of the school day will be a major priority for us going into school session 2020/21 and beyond. We will be making a proposal to Cabinet later in 2020 to enable us to establish a cross party member and officer working group.

The group will work together to identify key actions that can be implemented in a coordinated approach across all of our schools and education establishments. The group will be an important aspect of our plans to tackle poverty.

Our aim will be to identify and overcome cost barriers that can limit children’s opportunities at school. We will build on the information we have gathered through

the Fair For All Commission and the Get Heard discussions, basing our work directly on the lived experience of those in poverty.

Use of Pupil Equity Funding

Every council area benefits from Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and 95% of schools in Scotland have been allocated funding for pupils in P1-S3 known to be eligible for free school meals. For every child that is registered, the school receives £1,200 in addition to their normal budget. In total, in North Ayrshire, the Pupil Equity Fund in 2017-18 amounted to £4.39m. This rose to £4.41m in 2018-19 and £4.46m in 2019-20.

Pupil Equity Funding is to be used at the discretion of head teachers in partnership with their school community. All schools work with their school community to decide on how to invest PEF in order to impact positively on pupil outcomes. Plans are developed, which are incorporated into the annual School Improvement Plans. Schools have begun to take a participatory approach to the allocation of PEF in their school communities.

In 2018-19 a wide range of interventions were identified. Almost all interventions focus on the National Improvement Framework (NIF) priorities of improving attainment in literacy and numeracy and improving children’s and young people’s health and wellbeing. An example of how the PEF funding has made an impact to socio-economic and wellbeing issues that can present as barriers to the attainment and achievement of our learners is detailed below.

Case Study

Auchenharvie Academy – Poverty proof our curriculum and tackle the cost of the school day.

Approach and Intended Impact

The school is dedicated to providing an equitable learning environment and as a result Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) was allocated to raise aspirations and mitigate against the potentially negative impact of learners' socio-economic context. This has centred on ensuring access to resources to support learning at school and at home across the curriculum, including curriculum-related excursions, celebrating success events, access to uniform and any other resources required for full participation.

Evaluation

- Professional dialogue with staff, particularly those planning trips and events, has led to a deeper understanding of more inclusive approaches towards mitigating the cost of the school day.
- Evidence from self-evaluation activities, including Faculty Health Checks of Science and Health and Wellbeing, demonstrates effective approaches to poverty-proofing and ensuring all learners can participate. This has included approaches such as: creation of electronic resources to support home learning; cost-absorption and reduction in Home Economics; and sensitive approaches to supplying kit in Physical Education. Moreover, staff have been encouraged to think creatively about accessing alternative funding to ensure equity and poverty-proof our curriculum. Additional funding has been secured from Historic Environment Scotland for transport and the Duke of Edinburgh.
- Based on a sample survey of parents, the school has continued to provide a good amount of notice on upcoming costs associated with school trips or activities.
- There has been an increase in participation and positive pupil feedback from a range of curricular and social events, including theatre experiences to enrich the English and Drama curriculum. Funding has also supported celebrating success events to support the school's approach to Positive Relationships.
- PEF support has also enabled learners to access learning experiences that have further enriched their education, including summer schools.



Next Steps

Following a curriculum activities audit, the school will continue to support curricular events and excursions with a revised participation and activity tracking system. This will allow the school to more strategically identify and target any identified gaps in activity participation from pupils experiencing poverty.

Childcare Provision

Working together with the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative, a project was undertaken to increase uptake of eligible 2-year-old places within the Garnock Valley area. The project involved the significant role of Universal Early Years staff as a key point of contact to support early intervention and support for families. The project achieved a 75% increase in uptake and the approach can easily be scaled up.

The Early Years Partnership Plan to use the learning from the project to roll out to other areas across North Ayrshire. A revised information leaflet will be shared broadly across services and communities to promote 2-year-old Early Learning and Childcare places. The eligibility criteria awareness will be shared with other Universal Early Years Teams and partners across the Local Authority. Data will continue to be collected and monitored pertaining to up-take.

Prior to Covid-19, our Early Learning and Childcare Expansion was delivering 1,140 expanded hours of childcare in **15 of our establishments**. Progress had been made with adaptations to deliver the increased provision. We were working towards full implementation of 1140 hours by August 2020, however this will now be likely to be fully delivered in August 2021, dependant on Scottish Government guidance.

Provision of Low-Cost Credit and Debt Reduction Services

The Better Off North Ayrshire service provided both access to low cost credit through 1st Alliance Credit Union and debt advisors supported hundreds of people to reduce debt. The Better Off Service ceased taking new registrations

in September 2019 and the Service will cease completely in February 2020. Customers are in the main being re-directed to Money Matters and the NAC Welfare Reform Team now. The Council has successfully bid for funding from the Improvement Service to employ a debt worker embedded within employability services and this will run from March 2020 to December 2020 in order to test the approach.

The Welfare Reform Advice Team offer debt services to North Ayrshire Council Tenants on:

- Preparing financial statements and offering budgeting advice
- Negotiating repayment arrangements with creditors
- Supporting tenants with arrears
- Helping with court forms
- Advice and help with insolvency options such as bankruptcy



Progress had been made with adaptations to deliver the increased provision. We were working towards full implementation of 1140 hours by August 2020, however this will now be likely to be fully delivered in August 2021, dependant on Scottish Government guidance.



Before the Easter school break, we provided a holiday provision of free period products to over 4,000 pupils in all our secondary schools.



We are developing Walking and Cycling Infrastructure and raising awareness of local cycling and walking infrastructure

Period Poverty Initiative

We continue with our Period Dignity project to support the dignity and respect of our residents. Initially established in 2017, we were the first local authority in the UK to offer free sanitary provision in its schools, libraries, community centres and public buildings and we continue to lead the way in our fight against period poverty.

Before the Easter school break, we provided a holiday provision of free period products to over **4,000 pupils** in all our secondary schools. We hope that by distributing free period products before the Easter break, we can give some reassurance and peace of mind to secondary pupils.

Period Poverty Scheme

Distributed throughout schools before pupils finish for the Easter break, we provided products in the community, working alongside the Health and Social Care Partnership, and NHS Ayrshire and Arran to reduce inequalities and combat period poverty.

Councillor Jim Montgomerie, Cabinet Member for Place said: "This valuable initiative forms part of our highly successful #perioddignity campaign.

"Initially established in 2017, we were the first local authority in the UK to offer free

sanitary provision in its schools, libraries, community centres and public buildings and we continue to lead the way in our fight against period poverty.

"We hope that by distributing free period products before the Easter break, we can give some reassurance and peace of mind to secondary pupils."

The progress we have made already aims to address the growing issue of period poverty which sees females across the country use unsuitable items, or nothing at all, to manage their period simply because they cannot afford the proper products.

Council Leader Joe Cullinane added: "Sanitary products are a necessity, not a choice. I wish for no person in North Ayrshire to find themselves in the embarrassing and often degrading situation of having to use improper sanitary protection simply because they cannot afford it.

"Periods are not exempt from poverty – they don't take account of what is in your pocket or purse. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we should continue to develop ways in which to tackle this gendered inequality.

"The #perioddignity initiative is all about dignity and respect and we will continue to try our best to reach as many people in the community as possible so that no

person in North Ayrshire who menstruates has the stress or worry of not having access to the products they need.

"During this uncertain time, we will be reaching out into communities to ensure supplies are still available for those who require them."

Travel Initiatives

Prior to Covid-19, we promoted active travel and public transport with local businesses, workplaces and at community events and personalised travel plans were offered to staff in the nine workplaces (approximately 3000 staff). Public Transport use is encouraged by running initiatives, promotions, and competitions as well as providing information on bus and trains. Social media is now being used to promote sustainable travel whilst the Trinity Active Travel Hub is closed.

We are developing Walking and Cycling Infrastructure and raising awareness of local cycling and walking infrastructure.

A fleet of bikes at the Active Travel Hub at Trinity Church are generally available for members of the public to utilise. This pool includes adapted bikes for all abilities. During Covid-19, the Trinity bikes have been loaned to key workers to help them travel to work

The Active Travel Hub (Irvine) provides information on bus and train routes, stops and fares. These are also promoted at community events.

We have installed bike maintenance and servicing stations at six train stations to encourage integrated travel choices.

We encourage cycling within our schools by helping plan active travel to school, distributing bike maintenance packs and installing cycle parking.



Public Transport use is encouraged by running initiatives, promotions, and competitions as well as providing information on bus and trains.

Early intervention and building on community assets as well as family assets is vital to empower both individuals and localities.



A research project to examine the cost of pregnancy for low-income families in urban and rural settings was completed in 2019/20.



Children and Families

Our face to face interventions continued for our most vulnerable children and young people throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic. Between 21 March and 26 June 2020, Children and Families teams undertook 5969 home visits to offer support, guidance and respond to safeguarding issues and vulnerabilities. 4884 telephone calls were made to families. The number of vulnerable families being identified has steadily grown throughout the period of lockdown. We are aware from international research that there are concerns about aspects of hidden harm that have arisen from the Pandemic. For example, young people's online safety and increases in the potential for online grooming.

Opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic to work collaboratively and differently through partnership working require to be captured and built upon. In particular the Summer Childcare Hubs have been a great example of breaking down barriers and of a multi-disciplinary approach to provide support to children. Professional trust and autonomy was

fundamental to removing barriers and shifted focused energy to planning solutions to the transitioning of children, within very tight timescales, to Childcare Summer Hubs. We are now supporting 119 children of school age within these settings.

Partnership communication is vital in considering our most vulnerable families, maximising take up of various initiatives. For example, free school meals had to be applied for, some families due to poverty had no online access and or had literacy issues so required HSCP workers support. The initiative was communicated well so assisted workforce to reach these families. Cross service collaboration to ensure we know who these families are and how we best reach them is required which will help combat aspects of inequality.

Early intervention and building on community assets as well as family assets is vital to empower both individuals and localities. Building local connections to enhance this approach, recognising both community strengths and challenges are vital to empowering both individual families as well as communities to

inform what they need. This correlates with our priority to review our Family Support Models.

The Cost of Pregnancy Pathway (COPP)

A research project to examine the cost of pregnancy for low-income families in urban and rural settings was completed in 2019/20. This was jointly commissioned by NHS Ayrshire and Arran, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Health Scotland (now Public Health Scotland, PHS). Women from low-income households may miss important antenatal appointments due to money concerns, which impacts adversely on their health and the health of their infant.

The qualitative research comprised interviews and focus groups with women from low-income households across Ayrshire and Arran, including pregnant women and women with infants less than one year of age. Barriers to attending antenatal appointments were identified, particularly up-front travel costs and childcare costs. The need for women and/or their partners to take time off work to

attend appointments, especially unpaid, was an issue. Most concerns highlighted in the research were exacerbated for women and families living in rural areas, including North Ayrshire.

The research findings have been disseminated locally and nationally. An action plan has been developed by all research partners and Scottish Government, as some proposed recommendations require national-level changes.

The research findings have been disseminated locally and nationally and can be viewed [here](#). An action plan has been developed by all research partners and Scottish Government, as some proposed recommendations require national level changes.

Our Priorities and Continuing Work

Our Priorities for 2020-21 – Reducing Household Costs

1. We will work in partnership with Better Off North Ayrshire, with 1st Alliance Credit Union and other partners and employment of debt worker.
2. Implement the Action Plan from Our Fair for All Commission, Lived Experience of Poverty and our Youth Commission. The Commission has agreed on key themes to take forward.
3. We will establish a working group working group to take forward a coordinated approach to the reducing the cost of the school day
4. We will implement our North Ayrshire Food System with North Ayrshire Foodbank and our community organisations to develop networks of community fridges, larders, community supermarkets and food coops in line with a more sustainable approach to food with dignity.
5. Continue to build on the multi-disciplinary approach to provide support to children that proved vital and successful during the Covid-19 pandemic.
6. We will work to deliver different models of partnerships with community volunteers and established organisations and what sort of network we could communicate and support them with. This promoted community organisations and building resilience.
Further priorities include:
 - Community hubs
 - Sustainable community food system
 - Mental health and social isolation
7. Further support digital learning with access and devices in Education services.
8. We will focus on mental health through a dedicated support (HSCP)
9. We will build on the Participatory Budgeting approach to Pupil Equity Funding.

Our Priorities for 2020-21 – Reducing Household Costs

10. We will raise awareness of the North Ayrshire Community Book(s). We have six locality-based community books and a North Ayrshire wide FAQ that cover common queries people have in relation to issues such as access to food, prescription delivery and financial advice.
11. Our Family Learning Team will continue to support families with Family food programmes and other initiatives.
12. Continue to focus on attainment and achievement of care-experienced young people (dedicated officer with HSCP) and the poverty related attainment gap.
13. We will further work on our food waste project which makes surplus food available for children.
14. We will promote free period products by enlisting champions in schools to break down gender and language barriers and expand the availability of period products at different buildings/venues.
15. We will take forward the Action Plan from the Cost of Pregnancy Pathway research programme

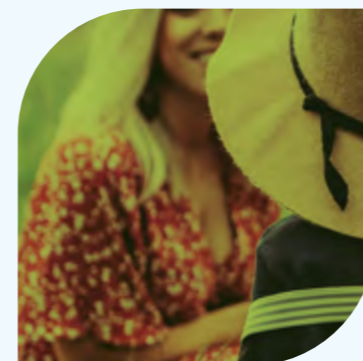
In addition to these priorities, our work will continue in:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Affordable Housing programme: Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2020-2025 | ✓ Referrals to Home Energy Scotland. |
| ✓ Rent levels – value for money | ✓ Wrap, Run and Fun holiday meals initiative |
| ✓ Corporate Sustainability Team – general energy efficiency advice | ✓ Bookbug programme |
| ✓ Referrals to Citrus energy for any fuel related issues | ✓ Period Poverty Initiative |
| | ✓ Travel initiatives |

How we will monitor our progress – Reducing the Cost of Living

Measure	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of lets to homeless	22.38%	29.97%
Number of tenants referred for support with energy costs (cumulative for reporting year)	95	96
Households in fuel poverty	26%	28%
Affordable Housing Supply (new builds/completions)	296	381
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year	3.34%	3.65%
Percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as homeless sustained for more than a year	81.48%	84.07%
Number of early learning establishments offering 1,140 hours	2	13
The % of Peoples Panel respondents who say that food is available but too expensive	Data not available (every two years)	10%
The % of Peoples Panel respondents who have access to email or internet from home	Data not available (every two years)	90%
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband	93.7%	96.8%
Out of term school meals – number per annum	21,967	22,914

Appendix One



Appendix 1 – Actions to Reduce Child Poverty

Increasing Income from Employment

Action	Who action is carried out by (all those partners involved in action)	Level of Intervention	How impact has / will be assessed	Targeted Group
Support the creation of new jobs in North Ayrshire through business development and the Inward Investment Strategy and Ayrshire Growth Deal.	NAC Team North Ayrshire working with local and regional partners	Universal	Percentage of working age population in employment – 69.7% (2018/19) Number of jobs safeguarded – 245 (Q3 2019/20) Number of jobs created by businesses in North Ayrshire supported by Business Development – 393 (Q3 2019/20)	All Residents
Encourage and support local businesses to pay the Living Wage	NAC Economic Development	Universal	Percentage of people earning less than the living wage – 21.4% (2017/18)	Employed residents
Increase participation and positive outcomes across a range of employment programmes including: • Skills for Life Programme • Family Futures • We Work for Families	NAC Employability services	Targeted	Number of participants in programmes and number of participants entering employment	Lone parents, unemployed parents
Provide In-work Support Programmes	NAC Employability services	Targeted	Number of participants	In work parents
Remove barriers to employment • Positive Steps programme • Supported Employment team • HSCP IPS service (Individual Placement and Support)	NAC Employability services	Targeted	Number of participants in programmes	Unemployed people, people with disabilities
We will deliver our Disability Employment Support Service: Equal	NAC Employability services	Targeted	Number of participants in programmes	Unemployed people, people with disabilities
We will hold further workshops of the SEEME CV pilot	NAC Employability services	Targeted	Number of workshops and attendances	Unemployed people, people with disabilities
Support the local economy through procurement activities	NAC Procurement Business Development Team	Targeted	N/A	Local businesses and residents
Support care leavers with employment and training opportunities	NAC Throughcare support team	Targeted	Care leavers in positive destinations	Care leavers
Modern Apprenticeships for young people leaving care or have disabilities	NAC	Targeted	Number of Modern Apprentices	Care leavers of young people with disabilities
Maintain a specific focus on reducing the poverty related attainment gap and maximise the learning potential of specific groups of learners, including Looked After Children.	NAC Education Services	Universal	Average total tariff score of pupils living in SIMD 30% most deprived areas Average tariff score: All Leavers	Looked after children, children in poverty
Childcare/Out of School Care Roll out of 1140 Early Years Expansion to aid Covid 19 recovery and enable parents to work As part of the expanded hours a funded lunch time meal and early evening meal is provided.	NAC Education Services, HSCP, partner providers	Universal	Centres providing 1140 hours provision	All parents
Work in partnership with Ayrshire College a range of vocational programmes are on offer to pupils in the Senior Phase. Ayrshire College also offer a new Foundation Apprenticeship (FA)	NAC Education Services, Ayrshire College	Universal	Numbers attending vocational programmes	Senior pupils
Activity Agreements – Activity agreements provide 1:1 support to help young people overcome barriers they may face when taking the next step to employment, training or further education.	NAC Education Services, NACHSCP	Universal	Number of activity agreements	Senior pupils
Develop the Young Workforce (DYW) – All North Ayrshire schools are broadening the range of wider qualifications and experiences available in secondary schools.	NAC Education Services and Partners	Universal	N/A	Senior pupils
Strengthen the links between schools and partnership organisations and employers	NAC Education Services and Partners	Universal	Participation measure of 19-19 year olds School leavers entering positive destinations	Senior pupils

Appendix 1 – Actions to Reduce Child Poverty

Maximising Benefits

Action	Who action is carried out by (all those partners involved in action)	Level of Intervention	How impact has / will be assessed	Targeted Group
Undertake income maximisation by Money Matters Team to assist clients to receive their full legal entitlement to benefits	NAC Money Matters Team and referring services	Targeted	Income generation for service users – Over £15m in 2019/20 Success rate for appeals – 71% in 2019/20	Parents
Hold further sessions with senior managers to encourage poverty impact assessment approaches in our work.	NAC, NHS Ayrshire and Arran	Targeted	N/A	Raise awareness for Staff
Process Free School Meals and School Clothing and Footwear Grant – continue to automate annual process	NAC Customer Services	Targeted	N/A	Families entitled to free school meals and clothing grants
Continue to encourage uptake of Free School Meals in Primary and Secondary Schools	NAC FM Team and Education	Targeted	% uptake of free school meals (P1-3) – 84.87% as at Q3 2019/20 % uptake of free school meals (P4-P7) – 79.04% as at Q3 2019/20 % uptake of free school meals (Secondary) – 63.96% as at Q3 2019/20	Families entitled to free school meals
Ensure that our Customer Services Team are prepared to deal with any increase in demand for Benefits, Council Tax Reductions, EMA, FSM/ SCGs and Scottish Welfare Fund applications.	NAC Customer Services	Universal	Speed of processing Housing Benefits and Council Tax reductions	All residents entitled
Transformation Project, to assess the possibility of a “Single Shared Assessment”.	NAC Customer Services and Transformation Team	Universal	N/A	All residents
Digital support to residents – • Assisting with benefits claims • Assisting with digital upskilling	NAC Tenant Welfare Team	Universal	Number of residents assisted with digital skills Number of tenants provided with face to face UC digital support (cumulative for reporting year)	All residents
Deliver bespoke awareness-raising training session for midwives	NHS Maternity Services and Money Matters	Targeted	Referrals to Money Matters from Maternity Services	Pregnant women and families
Monitor uptake of the new Best Start Grant	NHS Teams	Universal	BSG uptake	Families
Increase awareness for pregnant women attending antenatal appointment about money advice referrals	NHS Maternity Services, NHS Teams	Universal	Referral rates to specialist services from NHS teams	Vulnerable families
Encourage use of locally developed referral tool to enable NHS staff to sign-post families in need to appropriate specialist services, and incorporate this into routine practice.	NHS Teams	Universal	Referral rates to specialist services from NHS teams	Vulnerable families

Appendix 1 – Actions to Reduce Child Poverty

Reducing the cost of living

Action	Who action is carried out by (all those partners involved in action)	Level of Intervention	How impact has / will be assessed	Targeted Group
Implement the Local Housing Strategy including – • alleviating fuel poverty through our new build Council housing programme (latest insulation standards, use of renewable and energy efficiency technologies)	NAC Housing Services	Targeted	Number of households in fuel poverty % of council dwellings that are energy efficient	Vulnerable families
Focus on keeping our Council housing rent levels affordable	NAC Housing Services	Universal	Weekly rent rates compared to Scottish average	Council residents
Homelessness Prevention – Rapid re-housing Transition Plan.	NAC Housing Services	Universal	Number/ % of presentation that did not make a homeless application and were able to sustain current accommodation or secure alternative	Vulnerable families
Energy advice – • Corporate Sustainability Team – general energy efficiency advice • Referrals to Citrus energy for any fuel related issues • Referrals to Home Energy Scotland.	NAC various teams	Universal	N/A	All residents
School holiday meals programme	NAC Facilities Management, KA Leisure, Community Partners	Universal	Number of young people accessing holiday meals programme	Vulnerable families
We will further work on our food waste project which makes surplus food available for children.	NAC Facilities Management	Universal	Uptake figures	Vulnerable families
Period Poverty' initiative – providing free access to sanitary products at secondary schools and in all council buildings.	NAC Facilities Management	Universal	Provision figures	Vulnerable families/ young people
Welfare Reform Advice Team offer debt services to NAC Tenants	NAC Welfare Reform Advice Team	Targeted	Tenants engaging with service	
Reduce transport poverty by ensuring that local communities and families have sustainable and active travel opportunities to enable them to easily access services, facilities, employment and school.	NAC Travel and Transport with Partners	Universal	Measures for Transport usage	All residents
Travel Smart project aims to promote sustainable and active travel and reduce transport poverty in local communities.	NAC Travel and Transport with Partners	Universal	Measures for Transport usage	All residents
Family Learning Team funded to work in partnership with schools and the extended community – including food and budgeting support	NAC Education Services, Family Learning Team	Universal	Numbers of families engaged in programmes	Vulnerable families and all families
Continue to support digital learning with access and devices in Education.	NAC Education Services and partners	Universal	N/A	All children and young people

Appendix 1 – Actions to Reduce Child Poverty

Reducing the cost of living (cont.)

Action	Who action is carried out by (all those partners involved in action)	Level of Intervention	How impact has / will be assessed	Targeted Group
We will focus on mental health through a dedicated support (HSCP)	NAC HSCP	Targeted	N/A	Children and young people
We will continue to build on the Participatory Budgeting approach to Pupil Equity Funding.	NAC Connected Communities Team and partners	Universal	N/A	Children and young people
We will raise awareness of the North Ayrshire Community Book(s).	NAC CPP Team	Universal	N/A	All residents
Continue to focus on attainment and achievement of care-experienced young people (dedicated officer with HSCP) and the poverty related attainment gap.	NAC HSCP and Education Services	Targeted	N/A	Children and young people, care experienced young people
Improve local awareness of and access to food related opportunities to address Household Food Insecurity (HFI)	NAC Connected Communities Team and partners	Universal	N/A	All residents
Implement the Action Plan from Our Fair for All Commission, Lived Experience of Poverty and our Youth Commission. The Commission has agreed on key themes to take forward.	NAC Connected Communities Team and partners	Universal	N/A	All residents
Support development of early literacy through management of Bookbug in libraries and communities, provision of training for partners and staff and provision of four Scottish Book Trust story bags each year from birth to Primary 1 for all children	NAC Connected Communities Team	Universal	Number of bags distributed to areas of deprivation	All families
Develop approach to reducing the cost of the school day	NAC Education Services and Partners	Universal	TBC	Vulnerable families
We will take forward the Action Plan from the Cost Of Pregnancy Pathway research programme	NHS Teams	Targeted	TBC	Pregnant women

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