



Local Action on Child Poverty:

Insights from Year 7 LCPARs



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1. Executive Summary

This report presents key findings from the review of all 32 Year 7 Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs), alongside insights gathered through feedback discussions with 28 Local Authorities and 14 Health Boards. It highlights emerging trends, examples of local practice, areas of progress and opportunities for improvement in local approaches to tackling child poverty across Scotland.

1.1. Headline findings

- **Year 7 marks a milestone in Local Child Poverty Action Reporting**, with all 32 reports published within the timeframe for analysis.
- **Local areas are increasingly taking a preventative and whole system approach** to child poverty, continuing to extend activity beyond income maximisation and children's services into wider policy areas such as housing, childcare and transport. However, reports vary in their ability to demonstrate how these interventions form part of a coherent preventative strategy linked to the three drivers of child poverty.
- **The use of data and intelligence as a key enabler of change is playing a more prominent role** in understanding local need and targeting support. While many local areas are investing in new datasets, dashboards and analytical tools, challenges remain in translating intelligence into strategic action and demonstrating impact.
- **Consideration of the priority groups and the voice of lived experience continue to progress**, with stronger examples emerging of targeted interventions and engagement approaches. However, the extent to which priority groups and lived experience are systematically embedded within strategic decision-making, service design and outcomes frameworks remains variable across local areas.
- **Strong partnership working is widely recognised as an enabling condition** of effective child poverty action. Most reports provide evidence of collaboration between partners, though opportunities remain to strengthen shared accountability and strategic coordination, including between local authorities and health boards.
- **Year 7 reporting demonstrates a growing focus on outcomes and impact measurement** with an increasing number of areas developing

clearer outcomes frameworks and indicators, suggesting progress in local approaches to evaluation. However, demonstrating long-term change for families experiencing poverty, alongside stronger outcomes frameworks and clearer measures of progress towards those longer-term outcomes, remains a significant challenge.

- **Feedback discussions revealed a number of persistent barriers to progress**, including short-term funding arrangements, extensive reporting requirements, a complex policy landscape, difficulties measuring impact, and the need for greater recognition of rural and island realities.
- **The overall direction of travel in reporting local action on child poverty remains positive.** National Partners' assessments suggest an increasing proportion of reports demonstrate stronger strategic thinking, use of evidence, partnership working, and consideration of child poverty as a cross-cutting system challenge rather than a collection of individual interventions.

1.2. Key messages from local partners

Feedback discussions with Local Authorities and Health Boards highlighted several recurring themes that provide important context to the analysis of Year 7 LCPARs. While local areas remain strongly committed to tackling child poverty, both local and national partners consistently identified opportunities to strengthen planning, delivery, and reporting, alongside barriers that continue to constrain progress.

- **A strong appetite for learning and improvement.** Local partners welcomed the opportunity to discuss their reports with National Partners and demonstrated a clear commitment to continuous improvement, peer learning and strengthening local approaches to tackling child poverty.
- **Funding, reporting demands and policy complexity remain significant challenges.** Local partners identified short-term funding cycles, multiple reporting requirements and the complexity of the wider policy landscape as ongoing barriers to long-term planning, innovation and sustainable delivery. There was a strong call for greater alignment, clarity and stability at a national level.
- **Rural and island areas require tailored solutions.** Partners highlighted that approaches which work in urban settings do not always translate effectively to rural and island contexts, particularly in relation to childcare, transport and service accessibility, reinforcing the need for greater flexibility and recognition of local circumstances.
- **A desire to move from activity to impact.** Many areas highlighted the challenge of demonstrating the difference local action is making for children and families. There was significant interest in developing stronger outcomes frameworks, clearer indicators and a more robust 'golden thread' linking

priorities, actions, outcomes and evidence of impact.

- **Increasing focus on data and targeting.** Local partners are making greater use of data to understand need, identify priority groups and provide support that will help those on low incomes, particularly the priority groups. Many areas described ambitions to further integrate datasets and improve understanding of unmet need, although challenges remain in translating intelligence into action and measuring outcomes.
- **Recognition of the importance of whole system approaches.** The need to address child poverty through wider policy levers such as childcare, housing, transport, and employability, alongside income maximisation activity, was consistently discussed throughout feedback meetings between national and local partners. There was a particular recognition that preventative and structural approaches are essential to achieving long-term change.
- **Partnership working remains critical.** Effective collaboration between Local Authorities, Health Boards, community planning partners and the third sector was viewed as essential to tackling child poverty. However, partners also highlighted opportunities to strengthen strategic collaboration, shared accountability and joint planning.

Year 7 reports present evidence of progress in local approaches to tackling child poverty. Across local authority areas, local partners are increasingly using data, lived experience and strategic partnership working to inform local responses to child poverty, while making greater use of wider policy levers such as housing, childcare and employability. Further challenges remain around building on this progress by demonstrating impact more clearly (particularly long-term change), strengthening preventative approaches and ensuring that child poverty remains embedded within wider strategic decision-making.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

Under the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#), Local Authorities and Health Boards in Scotland must publish annual LCPARs. According to section 13 of the Act, the reports must outline what has been delivered in the previous financial year and what is proposed for the current financial year, to contribute to the national 2030 child poverty reduction targets.

It is worthwhile noting that Local Authorities and Health Boards are not obliged to meet the targets locally in their statutory duty to produce LCPARs, but to make a sustained contribution to meeting the national targets.

The Scottish Government has also published non-statutory [LCPAR Guidance](#) which provides recommendations and information on wider resources that might support effective reporting.

This report provides an overview of the content of the seventh round of LCPARs, covering what was delivered during financial year 2024-25 and proposed for financial year 2025-26.

While authored by the Improvement Service (the IS), with additional contributions from Public Health Scotland (PHS), the analysis is based on the reflections of the Local Child Poverty National Partners, who reviewed and provided feedback on each of the 32 Year 7 LCPARs.

The [National Partners](#) include the Improvement Service (the IS), the Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland (PHS) and The Poverty Alliance amongst others.

2.2. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarise learning from Year 7 LCPARs and highlight examples of local action taken to address child poverty. The report also provides commentary around how the content of this year's LCPARs compares to that of previous years. This is intended to promote peer learning and continual improvement at both the national and local level.

In addition to this, and unlike previous reports, this year's analysis incorporates local qualitative feedback from local child poverty leads ([Part B, Sections 5](#)). This feedback was gathered during one-to-one LCPAR discussions with National Partners which 28 of the 32 Local Authorities and 14 Health Boards participated in throughout late 2025 and early 2026. Inclusion of this section is intended to provide insight on activity beyond the scope of the LCPARs, including local lead's perceptions of barriers to effective local action on child poverty.

This year's analysis moves beyond a purely descriptive summary of reported activity and seeks to identify emerging trends and opportunities for improvement. 'Actionable insights' are included throughout the report to support local and national partners in considering how local approaches can continue to evolve and encourage discussion about how to effectively drive change and maximise the impact of local and national action on child poverty.

This report will be accompanied by a dedicated briefing for Local Authority Child Poverty Leads and NHS Child Poverty Leads. A subsequent series of shorter briefings will draw out the implications of the analysis for wider stakeholders, including Scottish Government ministers, the third sector, COSLA, SOLACE, as well as a dedicated briefing on rural child poverty.

2.3. Methodology

Each year, the Improvement Service, Public Health Scotland, the Scottish Government and The Poverty Alliance review all 32 LCPARs using a shared assessment framework and survey to identify trends in local approaches to tackling child poverty and highlight interesting practice (see [Appendix 2](#) for the list of survey questions). This analysis is used to inform feedback to local areas on their LCPARs.

The Improvement Service collates survey responses from National Partners in relation to each of the 32 LCPARs and uses them to inform this report. Analysis on the role of Health Boards ([Section 4.7.1](#)) is provided by Public Health Scotland.

As a result, this report is not intended to form a robust academic analysis. Instead, it offers a snapshot of how local partners are describing and prioritising action on child poverty in their LCPARs. The findings are based on National Partners' reviews and professional interpretation; therefore, a degree of subjectivity is inevitable. Furthermore, LCPARs are not produced to a standard format and as such, variations often reflect differences in reporting rather than differences in activity. Thus, while the analysis identifies emerging themes, trends and examples from across Scotland, it should not be viewed as a definitive measure of performance.

This year's report is structured in two parts:

Part A presents a thematic synthesis of trends and examples across LCPARs. In processing and presenting this information, the IS have drawn on [LCPAR Guidance](#) and the emphasis it places on:

- The need to focus on the three drivers of poverty and balance long term preventative approaches with annual reporting.
- The need to give special consideration to the priority families.
- The need to ensure local action reflects local data and intelligence, including the voices of lived experience.
- The need to understand impact through monitoring and evaluation.
- The need for partnership working and clear governance structures.
- The need to align with national approaches, programmes, and initiatives.

Part B ([Section 5](#)) provides a summary of reflections gathered in feedback meetings with Local Authorities and Health Boards. It summarises the views informally expressed by local child poverty leads when asked for their reflections on what is driving change locally, and any barriers and challenges they are experiencing. Local leads also shared ideas and recommendations on the kind of national support that would be most helpful. This complements part A by presenting local perspectives alongside the key trends highlighted by National Partners. Again, it should not be regarded as an academically robust analysis of the views of local partners. Rather, it provides a snapshot of the reflections of 28 local child poverty leads in late 2025 to early 2026.

It should be noted that the examples of practice provided are by no means exhaustive and instead provide an insight into what is contained in the Year 7 LCPARs. More in-depth examples of local practice to tackle child poverty are available via the [Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit online directory](#).

National Analysis Overview

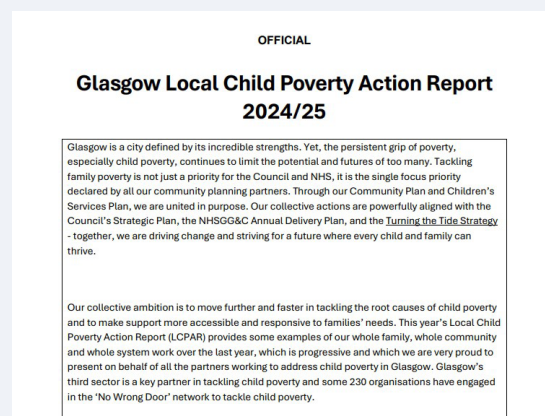
3.1. Overview of local reports categorised as strong examples

Each year, local and national partners express interest in being referred to particularly 'strong' reports to better understand how effective practice is being driven and what might be replicated elsewhere. For this reason, we are taking this opportunity to flag up five reports identified by National Partners as leading examples. These reports shared a number of characteristics including:

- The fact that child poverty is understood and treated as a shared strategic priority across partners, not a standalone workstream.
- They demonstrate a preventative, whole system approach, making use of wider policy levers such as housing, childcare and employability.
- Data, intelligence and the voice of lived experience are key enablers used to inform priorities and decision-making.
- There is a clear golden thread linking data and evidence, priorities, actions, and short, medium, and long-term outcomes.
- Strong partnership working and shared accountability are evident throughout.
- Some of the reports focus on impact as well as activity, demonstrating what difference interventions are making for families.
- They show how child poverty governance is driving innovation, improvement, and activity beyond business as usual.

Glasgow City Council

- National Partners noted that child poverty is positioned as the single shared priority across the Community Planning Partnership, with strong alignment to the Community Plan, Children's Services Plan and NHS/Council priorities.
- The report describes a strong integrated and preventative approach, including the embedding of the Child Poverty Pathfinder as a formal programme of system change and public service reform.
- Numerous examples of innovative practice including [Tell Your Story](#), [Glasgow Helps](#), whole-family primary care approaches and Demonstrations of Change in Booster Wards.
- Sophisticated use of data and intelligence through the [Centre for Civic Innovation](#), booster ward analysis, lived experience data and the [Health Determinants Research Collaborative \(HDRC\)](#).
- Extensive partnership working, including the [No Wrong Door network](#), Glasgow Helps, Glasgow Futures Strategy and over 230 third sector organisations engaged.



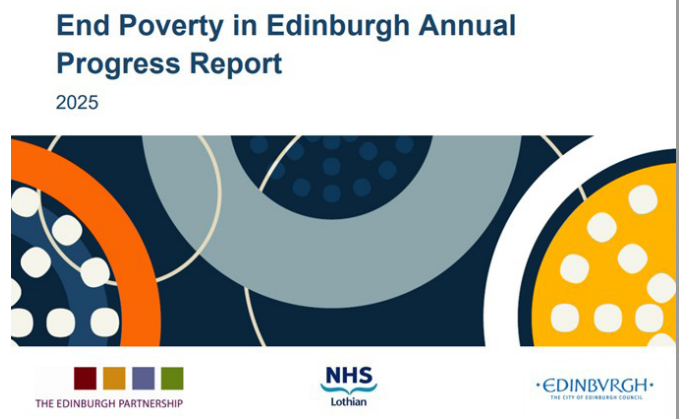
Stirling

- Child poverty is clearly embedded within a wider strategic landscape, including links to the Children's Services Plan, Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), housing, employability, and economic strategies.
- Strong whole system approach, including multi-agency data sharing, service mapping and a commitment to developing a collective response to poverty.
- Excellent use of data and intelligence, combining quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform priorities and service decisions.
- Strong partnership working across the council, NHS Forth Valley and third sector organisations, with many examples of joint delivery.
- Evidence that tackling child poverty is driving innovation and change, including Housing First for Families, food partnerships, employability initiatives and organisational culture change.



City of Edinburgh

- Strong strategic focus, with child poverty actions clearly linked to the Community Plan, Children's Services Plan, Council Business Plan, and wider anti-poverty agenda.
- Local poverty targets and actions are embedded across governance frameworks and public sector partners.
- Rich use of data and intelligence, including dedicated child poverty indicators and evidence-led decision-making.
- Clear partnership working involving the Edinburgh Partnership, Council, NHS Lothian and lived experience structures such as the End Poverty Edinburgh Citizen's Group.
- Strong NHS contribution, including provision of child poverty indicators and active involvement in delivery and scrutiny.



South Ayrshire

- Strong governance arrangements with child poverty fully embedded within Community Planning Partnership structures and linked to the wider Child Poverty Strategy 2024–29.
- Annual reporting is tightly aligned to a longer-term strategy, providing both strategic direction and accountability for delivery.
- Data-driven approach using whole system mapping, deprivation analysis and service gap identification to inform priorities.
- Broad partnership engagement across NHS, employability, education, housing and third sector partners, with clear ownership of actions.
- Strong evidence of a coordinated effort, lived experience engagement and work extending beyond business-as-usual service delivery.



North Lanarkshire

- Clear governance through the Tackling Poverty Officers Action Group, bringing together the council, NHS Lanarkshire and third sector partners.
- Strong use of data to understand local poverty, monitor reach and outcomes, and demonstrate impact for priority families.
- Good evidence of child poverty being considered across local plans, services, and wider anti-poverty structures.
- Effective monitoring of service reach and outcomes, including income maximisation and employability support for priority families.
- Strong partnership approach involving the council, NHS Lanarkshire and community partners in tackling poverty and inequality.



4. PART A: Thematic Analysis of LCPARs

Analysis of Year 7 LCPARs suggests that local child poverty action continues to mature across local areas, with evidence of improvement in many thematic areas including the use of data and intelligence, consideration of priority groups, lived experience and monitoring outcomes. However, progress remains uneven, with variation in the extent to which local areas are able to demonstrate reporting improvement on the previous year and articulate the impact of their activity (see [Figure 10](#)).

Overall, a light-touch longitudinal analysis of reporting over the past three years suggests the greatest areas of progress have been in the strategic use of data and intelligence, links drawn with housing as a wider policy lever, and the strategic integration of the voices of lived experience in decision-making (see [Figure 12](#)).

This section presents a thematic analysis of Year 7 LCPARs. Drawing on National Partners' reviews of all 32 reports, it highlights emerging trends, areas of progress and examples of local practice across key themes. The examples included are illustrative and are intended to support learning and reflection rather than provide an assessment of individual local areas.

The thematic sections include:

- 4.1 Local approaches to producing LCPARs
- 4.2 Prevention, early intervention, and policy levers
- 4.3 Data and intelligence
- 4.4 Priority groups
- 4.5 Embedding the voice of lived experience
- 4.6 Monitoring outcomes and evaluation
- 4.7 Partnership working and Health Board integration
- 4.8 Alignment with national approaches, programmes, and initiatives

4.1. Local approaches to producing Local Child Poverty Action Reports

This year, almost two-thirds of reports (21 reports) were ‘standalone’ LCPARs (i.e., they were not combined with another statutory reporting requirement). Of the remaining eleven reports, two were contained within wider tackling poverty reports (i.e., not specific to child poverty), five were combined with another statutory report (including children’s services plan, annual Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIP) reports and in one case a Community Learning and Development Plan). Four reports were classified as ‘other’ by National Partners. These included, for example, **Clackmannanshire’s** ‘One Fund, One Plan, One Report’ which included the LCPAR along with nine other reports.

[Clackmannanshire’s](#) report covers the Children’s Service’s Plan 2024-2026, Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-2027, Community Justice Plan 2023-2028, Local Child Poverty Action Plan 2024-2030, National Improvement Framework 2024-2027, Violence Against Women and Girls Plan 2023-2026, Libraries Plan 2024-2027, Sport and Active Living Framework 2024-2028, Family Wellbeing Partnership Plan and Promise Plan.

National Partners noted that, while lengthy, Clackmannanshire’s report reflected in depth consideration of child poverty across a wide range of strategies while maintaining focus on the three drivers and priority groups. An [overview report](#) has been published which focuses on child poverty. A table on page 60 of the ‘One Report’ highlights the areas of the wider report that relate directly to the drivers of child poverty which is useful as an approach.

As noted above, several plans embed their LCPAR within their children’s services plan. These included Aberdeen City, Moray and East Ayrshire amongst others.

In relation to [East Ayrshire](#), National Partners noted that despite the LCPAR being included within the East Ayrshire's Children's Services Plan, the levers engaged went beyond those generally associated with the delivery of children's services. Housing and homelessness, employability, and community wealth building, for example, had been expressly considered from a child poverty perspective. It was also noted that while the report contains a chapter that focused specifically on child poverty, it was clear that child poverty had been considered throughout the rest of the plan as well.

In [Moray](#), the LCPAR is incorporated within Moray's wider Children's Services Plan 2024-25, alongside the Children's Rights Report, the Corporate Parenting Plan and Child Protection Plan. The action plans are structured around the five foundations of The Promise. Child poverty-related actions fall under the 'Family' foundation, and 'Tackling Child Poverty' is identified as a core priority (10 pages of a 63-page document, including appendices). Given that the report covers four statutory reporting duties, the space allocated to child poverty seems proportionate, albeit limited. There is recognition of child poverty as a structural and contextual driver affecting wellbeing, education, and family stability.

Several authorities have expressed an intention to combine their LCPAR with other statutory reports in coming years including their Children's Service Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

While many combined reports were classified as being strong, several National Partners reflected that there is a need for local partners to be proactive to ensure the scope of the report with which the LCPAR is combined does not place limits on the scope of the LCPAR itself. For example, embedding within Children's Services Plan should not limit the scope of the LCPAR to service delivery nor preclude outcomes and actions relating to transport, housing, planning, economic development etc.

In their analysis of combined reports, several National Partners also noted that effective combining of reports requires proactive effort to ensure the child poverty 'lens' of the three drivers and the priority groups are considered across the entirety of the report. In some reports, child poverty and the reach of children's services to low-income households and the priority groups is not considered.

National Partners also highlighted a need for clarity over governance structures where LCPARs are combined with other reports. This is particularly important when the statutory duty relating to the report with which the LCPAR is combined falls on partners other than (or excluding) the Local Authority and Health Boards.

In response to several reports, National Partners also highlighted that outcomes relating to reductions in child poverty are not diluted or lost among competing priorities.

4.1.1. Standalone LCPARs

The majority of plans were standalone LCPARs, many highlighting the added value and clarity that can result from this approach to reporting.

National Partners noted that [Glasgow City's](#) standalone LCPAR “provides a clear, focused account of action to tackle child and family poverty in Glasgow while remaining strongly anchored within wider local strategies. The report is consistent in linking operational activity to the Glasgow Community Plan, Children’s Services Plan, and Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde strategic priorities. As with the previous year, the report explicitly states that tackling child and family poverty is the single shared priority of all Community Planning partners.” It was clear from Glasgow’s report that tackling child poverty is the main overarching priority for the council and its partners.

While several other standalone reports were praised for their clarity, it was also noted in relation to several reports that it may be helpful to understand where the standalone report sits in relation to relevant council strategies such as LOIPs, Children’s Services Plans, Local Housing Strategies etc.

For example, the [Outer Hebrides'](#) report is a standalone LCPAR incorporated within the wider Outer Hebrides Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2026. National Partners noted that one of the key strengths of this approach is its emphasis on longer-term strategic planning and shared ownership across partners. By aligning child poverty reporting with a multi-year anti-poverty strategy and common governance arrangements, the report provides a clearer sense of direction of travel and how annual actions contribute to longer-term outcomes.

4.1.2. Multi-annual reporting

As well as an increased number of reports being combined with other statutory duties, an increasing number of reports are now annual updates on multi-annual strategies.

The City of Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Inverclyde, and Dundee City include their LCPAR as an update on a longer-term (often three-year) tackling poverty strategy.

National Partners also praised [South Ayrshire's](#) report, noting that “this progress report is tightly aligned to South Ayrshire’s 2024–2029 Child Poverty Strategy. This structure works well as the strategy sets long-term direction, while the annual report tracks concrete progress.”

[The City of Edinburgh's](#) LCPAR, for example, gives 2025’s progress towards the goals of the End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan. National Partners noted that the plan “puts the actions listed in the strategic context of different long-term plans including the 2022-28 Edinburgh Partnerships Community Plan, 2023-26 Edinburgh Children’s Services Plan and 2023-27 Council Business Plan. This makes clear that tackling poverty in Edinburgh is a long-term commitment across multiple stakeholders. This feels like a successful approach as it gives the report, and actions listed within the report, a clear strategic focus.” National Partners also noted that Edinburgh’s report structure should be noted as an example of good practice, as the layout of the report, separated into the 4 key priority areas in the ‘End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan’, makes it clear how activities relate to their strategic aims.

National Partners noted that in many cases this gave a clear direction of travel, allowing annual reports to focus on progress towards longer terms strategic goals.

In relation to several other multi-annual reports, National Partners noted how difficult it can be to avoid duplication whilst also ensuring each report makes sense on its own merits. In response to one report, National Partners noted the need for the differing purposes of child poverty strategies and annual update reports to be clearly delineated and explained.

4.1.3. Governance arrangements

Governance arrangements for tackling child poverty continue to develop across Scotland, although the quality of information provided within reports remains variable. Around one-fifth (22%) of LCPARs did not clearly describe the local governance structures in place to oversee and coordinate child poverty activity. Where governance arrangements were clearly articulated, reports often demonstrated stronger links between strategic priorities, decision-making processes and delivery activity, providing greater confidence that child poverty is being treated as a cross-cutting priority.

Actionable insights:



- Ensure child poverty remains visible and distinct within combined reports, with clear outcomes, actions and accountability arrangements expressly linked to the drivers of child poverty.
- Strengthen reporting on governance structures as they relate to child poverty, particularly where LCPARs are integrated with other statutory reports, so leadership, oversight and decision-making responsibilities are clear.
- Apply a child poverty lens across all relevant policy areas including housing, transport, planning, employability and economic development. This requires consideration of the three drivers of poverty, underlying enablers and the priority groups.
- Clearly differentiate between long-term strategies and annual progress updates demarcating what is contained within each in order to reduce duplication and improve clarity.
- Ensure child poverty outcomes and measures are not diluted among wider strategic priorities and remain a focus of performance monitoring.

4.2. Prevention, early intervention, and use of local policy levers

In keeping with the [LCPAR Guidance](#), [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#), and wider principles of [public service reform](#), emphasis has increasingly been placed on how local policies and interventions can prevent families from falling into poverty in the first place, as well as ensure those currently experiencing poverty are prevented from reaching crisis point.

This section focuses on the extent to which LCPARs describe strategic and preventative approaches to tackling and preventing child poverty and improving outcomes for low-income families.

National Partner analysis suggests that Year 7 reports appear to continue the trend of increasing focus being placed upon preventative and structural approaches to poverty reduction. Many local areas are using a wider range of policy levers to prevent families from falling into poverty and reduce the risk of escalation to crisis.

Focused use of policy levers

The Guidance emphasises the need for focus within the LCPARs. It notes:

'An effective approach to tackling child poverty will require local areas to identify and utilise all the policy levers at their disposal, with particular consideration given to the specific impact on families with children, especially those in the priority groups. LCPARs should therefore provide an opportunity to better coordinate efforts across, for example, housing, transport, childcare, education, physical and mental health care, and economic development, in order to deliver the most holistic and effective support possible for families. This involves analysing broader policy decisions and spending from a child poverty perspective; applying a child poverty lens to local systems.'

Analysis of Years 5 to 7 reports highlights a shift towards a more strategic use of policy levers with explicit links made to child poverty within LCPARs (see [Figures 7](#) and [8](#) in Appendix). There has been notable growth in other policy areas, with the largest increase observed in housing and homelessness, which rose from 3% of reports demonstrating strategic links to child poverty work in Year 5 to more than two-fifths (44%) of reports in Year 7. Employability services (69%, around seven-tenths) and income maximisation work (63%, nearly two-thirds) remained the two policy levers most frequently linked to child poverty outcomes in Year 7, reflecting their continued prevalence amongst the levers within local strategies.

To a greater or lesser extent, every report made at least one reference to the areas of housing, employability services, and income maximisation. Affordable credit,

community wealth building, planning, and climate change remained among the least developed policy levers across the three-year period. In Year 7, affordable credit was not mentioned in almost four-fifths (78%) of reports, while climate change and planning were absent from around two-thirds (66%) and just under half (48%) of reports respectively, suggesting considerable scope for local areas to strengthen consideration of these agendas within child poverty strategies.

It is apparent now that the challenge for local areas when developing their LCPARs is less about whether references to wider policy levers are being made, but whether they are explicitly connected to the three drivers and presented as part of a coherent preventative strategy.

The following sections provide a range of examples where focused use of a wide range of policy levers appear to be contributing to a preventative approach to tackling child poverty.

4.2.1. Driver 1: Income from Employment

In relation to income from employment, the preventative approach has included increased emphasis on partnership working to ensure the availability of high-quality jobs and opportunities to parents, particularly those in the priority groups. While employability is one of the policy areas referenced most commonly across the reports – and with a high degree of focus on the needs of parents and the priority groups – the role of employers in creating high quality jobs accessible to parents has traditionally been less prominent. To drive improvement, the examples highlighted below reflect the increasing local awareness of the need for local employers across the public, private and third sectors to understand and play their part in overcoming the barriers to work experienced by low-income families in the priority groups.

[Shetland Islands Council](#) focused on the fact that despite there being a high job density on the islands, the barriers to employment are often the additional support needs (ASN) of potential employees. The local employability partnership focused on upskilling employers as well as employees to ensure workplaces could accommodate those with ASN, conducting sessions with employers promoting inclusive workplace environments and flexible working. Feedback was very positive with all respondents surveyed afterwards reporting feeling ‘satisfied’ or ‘extremely satisfied’. Over half of respondents felt they knew ‘a lot’ more about future workforce engagement.

[East Renfrewshire’s](#) ‘Time to Flex’ project, funded by the Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (CPAF) and delivered with Flexibility Works, supports local employers to adopt flexible working through workshops, tailored advice, and peer learning.

Perth and Kinross’s Futures for Families project takes a holistic, family-centred approach to tackling child poverty and employability challenges and differs from “traditional services that operate in silos” by integrating support across multiple sectors – skills development, childcare, digital inclusion, and self-employment – through a single point of contact: a dedicated key worker. It is described in the report as “the only local employability programme fully focused on families and parents, offering tailored support and flexible funding solutions such as the elev8 training and self-employment grants.”

4.2.2. Driver 2: Cost of Living

Action to tackle the cost of living represented in LCPARs often focuses on vital short-term interventions to ensure families have adequate resources to cover immediate and basic need. This can take the form of the provision of emergency food aid, fuel vouchers and clothing exchanges.

In this analysis we have chosen to apply a preventative lens and focus on the increasing number of examples that are intended to reduce the cost or accessibility of goods and services that are likely to have a longer-term, preventative impact. Chief amongst these from a preventative perspective are childcare and transport given the direct impact they have on access to work, education, and wider opportunities.

Childcare

Across the LCPARs, there is clear recognition that childcare is a critical barrier to employment for families with children, particularly for those on low incomes or in priority groups, and that addressing this requires both improving access and designing provision around family needs.

Several areas are taking direct action to reduce the cost and availability barriers to childcare. It is notable that many of the examples identified by national partners were found in the reports of rural or island authorities where barriers to the provision of accessible, affordable childcare are arguably most significant.

In Shetland, out-of-school care is offered at a 50% discount for families receiving Universal Credit or free school meals, explicitly targeting low-income households most likely to face affordability challenges. This helps parents, particularly lone parents or those in low-paid work, to take on or sustain employment by reducing one of the most immediate cost pressures. Similarly, in [Orkney](#), investment in new nursery infrastructure and expansion of wraparound and after-school provision addresses both availability and affordability, which are key barriers in rural and island settings. By increasing local capacity and improving access, this supports families with young children to enter or remain in work, particularly where provision is otherwise limited.

There are examples of system-level responses to childcare supply and workforce challenges. In [Aberdeenshire](#), the recruitment of new childminders through partnership working directly addresses gaps in local provision, helping ensure that parents, especially those in rural areas or working non-standard hours, can access childcare. This reflects an understanding that without sufficient local provision, employment support alone is unlikely to be effective.

In **South Lanarkshire**, partners identified gaps in local childcare provision, and in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association and support from the Scottish Government, the Council introduced a new initiative offering subsidised grants to help parents become childminders. The approach seeks to both expand childcare availability and create local employment opportunities, demonstrating how childcare can be used as a lever to support family incomes and prevent poverty.

Other rural authorities like [Argyll and Bute](#) have worked with their third sector partners InspirAlba to pilot programs to support parents through the process of becoming registered childminders to take steps to tackle the shortage of childcare practitioners in rural Scotland. All parents who enter the childminding programme are supported by an Employability Coach to build confidence as well as skills and requisite qualifications. InspirAlba ran the pilot in 2023/24, and of the five parents who commenced, four are now in business, and the fifth secured a post with social work. Due to the pilot's success, a further four places were offered in 2024/25.

[Highland Council](#) secured funding from the Scottish Government Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP) enabling them to collaborate with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Childcare and Learning Alliance (CALA) to develop business plans for new and innovative childcare models which aim to provide flexible and affordable childcare in rural communities. Progress is being seen through the development and piloting of an Integrated Single Care Model (SCM), where adult social care is delivered alongside childcare in the same setting. A toolkit of flexible childcare options available in rural communities has also been developed.

In [Glasgow](#), a childcare pilot with Clyde Gateway provides a strong, targeted case study of how childcare can be used as a preventative anti-poverty intervention when aligned with employability. By offering short, structured after-school provision that fits around the school day, the programme enabled parents to take on extra shifts, extend working hours, or access training opportunities. Crucially, it reached families quickly and demonstrated measurable impacts on income, confidence, and child wellbeing. This highlights that even relatively small-scale, flexible childcare solutions designed around families' real circumstances can remove immediate barriers to employment and support longer-term outcomes.

Overall, these examples suggest that addressing childcare as a barrier to employment is being approached through a combination of:

- affordability measures targeting low-income families.
- increased local provision, particularly in rural areas.
- flexible, place-based solutions aligned with work patterns and family needs.

Transport

There is increasing recognition in some reports of the vital role transport plays, not only as a direct expense for low-income families, but in terms of how lack of availability and flexibility can create a barrier to education, employment, and social security.

Most commonly, reports had drawn clear links with child poverty in relation to just one or two transport-related initiatives or services. Only a couple of reports were understood to have drawn more explicit and strategic links between transport and child poverty, with clear delivery impact.

[Falkirk](#), for example, is seeking to identify a baseline measure of those living in transport poverty, using Public Health Scotland's [definition and framework](#).

[South Ayrshire](#) secured funding to carry out a test of change project on free travel for care leavers and those with care experience aged 22-30.

In island authorities such as [Orkney Islands](#) and [Shetland Islands](#), transport is being used as a preventative lever to reduce poverty for families with children, particularly those in remote and ferry-linked communities where costs can be significant. In **Orkney**, extending the Young Persons' Free Bus Scheme to include ferry travel, alongside substantial fare reductions and freezes, has reduced the cost of travel for children and young people.

In [Shetland](#), the approach is more focused on improving accessibility and responsiveness through engagement. The Youth Voice Transport Forum brings young people into decision-making, highlighting issues such as limited bus schedules, the cost of off island travel, and safety concerns. This preventative approach ensures that transport systems better reflect the needs of children and families, particularly those most reliant on public transport.

Housing

Housing represents one of the most significant areas of improvement since Year 5 reporting. This is of particular significance in relation to the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 given that headline child poverty rates are calculated after housing costs.

The proportion of reports providing strong evidence of housing being considered as a child poverty policy lever increased from 3% (one report) in Year 5 to 44% (more than two-fifths) in Year 7 (see [Figure 12](#)), reflecting a growing recognition of the contribution that housing affordability, homelessness prevention and access to suitable homes can make to improving outcomes for low-income families. Reducing housing costs can have a direct impact on headline child poverty rates which are calculated after housing costs have been taken into account and is increasingly being recognised as a critical lever for poverty reduction.

In [Inverclyde](#), for example, child poverty considerations will be embedded within the Local Housing Strategy governance framework, ensuring links between affordability, tenure security, and income stability are fully recognised in policy and investment decisions. Inverclyde also plans to establish a more formal presence for child poverty within the Local Housing Strategy governance framework.

[Falkirk's](#) report highlights increased recognition of the importance of new build housing, council homes and home efficiency improvements in tackling child poverty. It summarises plans in place to add more energy efficient, family sized homes over the next two years. Falkirk also increased their Homelessness Prevention Fund budget for 2024/2025, supporting families and children move from temporary to permanent housing by covering the cost of essential household items and removal expenses, and with “added travel support to help people relocating to end their homeless applications”.

In [East Ayrshire](#), CHAT (Connecting Housing and Tenants) visits are an “integral function” according to the Neighbourhood Coaches who engage with tenants in relation to all housing and tenancy matters. Neighbourhood Coaches aim to ensure tenants are receiving all entitled benefits to increase household income and reduce rent arrears and poverty within the home, maximising opportunities for children and young people to thrive in a healthy home. The CHAT visit has “established a platform for upstream early intervention, enhancing tenants’ health and wellbeing”. It has also “improved data collection in relation to aids and adaptations, saving time and resources when allocating homes and supporting tenants”.

Schools and Cost of the School Day

Schools continue to play an important role in local approaches to tackling child poverty, with interaction in and around school providing an important opportunity to reach and support low income families, potentially preventing financial crisis. Reports increasingly showcase the role of schools as trusted community settings where families can access income maximisation services, food provision, childcare and wider wellbeing support. Activity to reduce the Cost of the School Day remains a common feature of local approaches, while several areas are increasingly using schools as venues for whole-family and preventative support.

In the [Scottish Borders](#), using Children in Low Income Families (CiLiF) data, funding was devolved to school clusters and used to appoint home school link workers to address barriers to attendance and help tackle the poverty-related attainment gap. The Teviot and Liddesdale Together Hub were established, with the hub overseen by a Cluster Wellbeing Lead who coordinates with schools, partners, and families to put support and interventions in place. This has helped parents back into employment and allowed children and young people to attend school.

In [South Lanarkshire](#), the 2025 Cost of the School Day Parental Survey collected data from 1,560 parents, revealing concerns about uniform, food, trips, and activities affordability. Schools responded by offering pre-loved uniform banks, free breakfasts, subsidised or funded trips, hardship funds, and discreet payment plans. By March 2025, every South Lanarkshire school had a Cost of the School Day Policy.

[Inverclyde](#) continues to provide one of the most generous clothing grant schemes in Scotland, exceeding national minimums, uniform swap shops, extended breakfast clubs provision, and universal free school meals to all primary school pupils.

4.2.3 Driver 3: Income from Social Security

Local Authorities are increasingly adopting a preventative, strategic approach to tackling child poverty through income maximisation, with activity broadly falling into three complementary approaches: (1) automation and data-led identification, (2) active outreach, service redesign and embedded support and (3) building workforce capacity. Together, these approaches aim to ensure that families receive their full entitlements early, supporting financial stability and enabling sustained participation in employment.

Active outreach, service redesign and embedded support

[Aberdeen City's](#) Early Years Financial Inclusion Pathway is a universal pathway that asks and offers all women and families if they require financial support, and has been well received by Midwives, Health Visitors, the Family Nurse Partnership and Allied Health Professionals. Evaluation of the pathway and targeted improvement can be viewed in the [project end report](#).

[East Lothian](#) is focusing on improving referral pathways and redesigning customer journeys to create a more joined-up, 'Tell Us Once' system. This reduces complexity for families and ensures that those with children, particularly those navigating transitions such as changes in work, can access financial support more easily and at the right time.

[Fife](#) has adapted its eligibility criteria to ensure families do not lose access to clothing grants when moving from Tax Credits to Universal Credit. This protects families from sudden drops in income, helping maintain financial stability during periods when parents may be entering or progressing in work.

[North Lanarkshire](#) demonstrates a highly developed outreach model, embedding income maximisation within schools, health services and social work. Welfare advisors in ASN schools, GP practices and hospital settings ensure families are identified early, while automatic referrals, such as for kinship carers, ensure targeted reach to priority groups. This integrated approach enables families to access financial support at multiple touchpoints, supporting stability and engagement with employment.

[North Ayrshire's](#) Single Shared Assessment approach is helping to streamline access to benefits and support services through a more coordinated, whole system model. By introducing a single consent and assessment process through a test of change, the council reduced 17 separate processes to one, making it easier for families to access support while improving identification of need and referral to wider services.

Automation and data-led approaches

[Falkirk](#) is developing automated processes to identify families who may be missing out on school-related benefits. By reducing reliance on applications, this approach enables earlier and more systematic identification of low-income families, ensuring financial support is in place before gaps in income become a barrier to taking up or sustaining employment.

Building workforce capacity

In [South Ayrshire](#), local ‘Worrying About Money?’ leaflets were developed alongside The Independent Food Aid Network’s (IFAN) [Money Counts training](#) for frontline staff and volunteers across the NHS, Local Authority services and community organisations. The training aims to increase confidence in discussing financial hardship and using referral pathways, ensuring families can access support before problems escalate. Investing in workforce capability through measures such as this helps support early identification of financial hardship.

In [Midlothian](#), income maximisation training and referral pathways have been developed with a particular focus on priority families, including automatic referrals between midwifery services and Citizens Advice Bureaux, alongside secure referral arrangements involving Health Visitors and the Family Nurse Partnership. This approach aims to ensure that frontline practitioners are better equipped to identify financial hardship, initiate conversations about income, and connect families to support at an earlier stage.

Across areas, there is a clear shift towards combining automation and proactive identification with embedded, service-based outreach. Automation ensures that families are identified and supported regardless of engagement, while service redesign and outreach approaches ensure support is accessible, joined-up and responsive to family needs. Together, these approaches reflect a preventative model in which income maximisation underpins employment outcomes, helping families, (particularly those in priority groups) to enter, sustain and progress in work.

4.2.4. Emerging policy levers

Child poverty action across reports is generally structured around the three drivers of poverty reduction, aligning with the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. In Year 7, we are beginning to see growing consideration of a wider range of policy areas that can influence poverty and inequality over the longer-term, which is a positive trend. Emerging areas include climate change and fuel poverty, community wealth building, and planning, all of which offer opportunities to embed a child poverty lens within wider local decision-making.

Climate change and fuel poverty

Climate change and child poverty are interconnected; low-income families, particularly those in rural areas, disproportionately suffer from the effects of climate change-driven extreme weather and its impact on food supplies, transport disruptions, and financial security. Rising whole-sale gas prices and access to and affordability of heating oil, LPGs, and electrical heating, are also interconnecting issues that correlate with rising fuel poverty. Tackling fuel poverty involves improving access to affordable energy-efficient homes that meet housing quality

and efficiency standards and delivering income maximisation services that help households in vulnerable circumstances manage their energy costs. It also involves building resilience to the impacts of climate change and ensuring the delivery of co-benefits in health and wellbeing. One way in which Local Authorities may consider their approach to this is through incorporating a child poverty lens in their climate plans, and a climate lens in their child poverty plans.

Across Year 7 reports, climate change (and affordable credit) remains the least referenced policy areas by a significant margin (21 reports were understood not to have made any reference to climate change), suggesting potential opportunities for future development.

In [East Lothian](#) the Climate Change sub-group is exploring and putting into action activities that will co-benefit communities from both tackling climate change and poverty. This includes considering the tools available locally to support clearer consideration of these issues. East Lothian notes that it “will continue to explore how we can direct resources and support communities to achieve a just, equitable transition to Net Zero.”

In [Argyll and Bute](#), through the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund the Council paid out nearly £110,000 in grants between April 2024 and March 2025 to householders with food and fuel insecurity and successfully referred them to advice agencies for further support. Working in partnership with the Community Food Forum, Bute Advice Centre and Allenergy, 965 families were supported, achieving a combined client gain of £1.357 million in income maximisation through increasing benefit entitlements.

Community wealth building

Community wealth building (CWB) remains one of the less frequently articulated policy levers assessed by National Partners within LCPARs, suggesting further scope to strengthen understanding of its contribution to reducing child poverty. While almost one-third (10 reports) of Year 7 reports didn't mention local CWB approaches, around one-eighths of reports (4 reports) were reviewed as having drawn explicit strategic links to child poverty (no reports referenced this in Year 6).

This is increasingly relevant considering the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026 is now in force requiring Local Authorities and relevant public bodies to prepare and publish action plans detailing measures to support local wealth generation and retention. Given the shared aim of improving local economic conditions that drive child poverty and supporting longer-term poverty prevention by promoting fair work and local procurement, there is potentially scope for clearer links to be drawn.

Where referenced, reports generally focused on the role of local partners as anchor institutions (See [Section 4.7.1](#)), local employment opportunities, fair work practices and strengthening local economies as mechanisms for preventing poverty.

[North Ayrshire](#), one of Scotland's leading CWB areas, linked their local CWB approach to the Fair Employment pillar through a programme of mentored vocational placements for parents. 80 parents participated in 20 hours per week for 26 weeks, earning the Real Living Wage. Placements included 50 in council services, 21 in third sector organisations, and 9 with local employers, demonstrating how CWB approaches can support local people to access fair, sustainable employment while retaining economic benefits within the local area.

[Fife](#) is embedding CWB within council strategies and policies and working with anchor institutions to strengthen local employability pathways and create access to fair employment, focusing on the Workforce pillar. "NHS Fife has developed targeted programmes for young people to help onboard them, for example, hosting interactive career events for Fife secondary school pupils and developing various apprenticeship opportunities in partnership with Fife College, some of which have led to permanent employment."

4.2.5. Preventative approaches to whole system service delivery

In addition to this systemic work across the drivers, many areas are working to develop joined up services that identify and support families experiencing or at risk of poverty before they reach crisis point, through whole system service delivery.

In [Clackmannanshire](#), for example, the STRIVE (Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention) model brings together housing, social work, education, mental health and financial inclusion services to respond quickly to families at risk. By intervening early and coordinating support, it helps stabilise families' circumstances, reduce disruption to housing, schooling, and employment, and prevent issues escalating into crisis, supporting longer-term financial and social stability.

Alongside this, Clackmannanshire are also using the CATS (Community Around the School) model uses schools as trusted, non-stigmatising hubs to reach families. By wrapping services such as benefits advice, income maximisation and wellbeing support around schools, it improves access and engagement while supporting both children and parents. This approach addresses immediate financial pressures and longer-term outcomes, including educational engagement and future employability.

Overall, Clackmannanshire's approach shows how integrated, place-based service delivery can prevent poverty from deepening by reaching families early, reducing barriers to support, and supporting sustained family wellbeing.

In [Fife](#), Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) has supported the delivery of earlier, more coordinated holistic support for children and families enabled through service redesign within the Children & Families Social Work Service and the rollout of Early Help and Support Teams across Fife's seven localities. "Comprising Social Work and Family support staff, the teams will offer earlier advice and help for children whose wellbeing is impacted by a range of adversities. This will be a whole family approach, offering a family decision making approach, group work, one to one support and working collaboratively at a local and school level with key partners." This funding has also supported the development of Fife's No Wrong Door approach, improving coordination between services, and enabling families to access support more easily through a new community information database to support better coordination of resource at a local level.

[Perth and Kinross's](#) whole systems approach is inspired by John Paul Lederach's peacebuilding methodology, "which emphasises relationship-building, local agency, and multi-level collaboration. This fosters dignity, resilience, and long-term change." They developed a [Whole Family Support - Directory of Services](#) tool, published in 2023, in response to parents' requests for information which has had 2,600 views from 1,570 unique users.

[North Lanarkshire's](#) Year 7 report was reviewed as extremely strong, largely due to their approach to preventative work. The report shows how the local partnership is shifting to structurally embed child poverty prevention activities as a way of working (rather than pockets of good practice and short-term activities) while still seeking new opportunities to target low incomes families and improve reach.

Listed activities versus joint strategic planning

Despite the wide range of levers employed, several reports were highlighted by National Partners as presenting a list of separate activities as opposed to a strategic partnership approach to tackling child poverty.

Stronger reports aim to narrate how partnership working has helped contribute to the reduction of child poverty through shared outcomes, pooled resources and meaningful partnership working. This was often supported by a shared evidence base, clear shared outcomes and data sharing between organisations to support holistic responses.

Examples below may be of interest to areas seeking to learn more about other approaches to multi-agency collaboration.

[West Dunbartonshire's](#) Family Prosperity Network has brought together community planning partners, the third sector, local employers, and those with lived experience of poverty in West Dunbartonshire to share the one aim, align approaches and take forward actions to tackle child poverty.

[Orkney Island's](#) LCPAR details mapping activity undertaken to understand all activity carried out by public and third sector partners that could potentially be of relevance to tackling child poverty. This light touch exercise may be useful to help understand the scale and reach of services and scope for collaboration.

[South Ayrshire's](#) partnership engagement is broad and includes NHS, Social Security Scotland, VASA, Children 1st, employability services, education, and housing. Reporting includes action tables that clearly assign responsibilities across partners, demonstrating shared ownership.

The [Shetland](#) Local Employability Partnership (SLEP) is a clear example of partners working together to address issues of income from employment alongside multi-agency delivery of cost-of-living mitigation and community-based support for families.

[Aberdeenshire's](#) employability partnership Employment Connect developed a coordinated, no wrong door referral system which ensures the right support and advice at the right time to meet the clients' needs, supporting 695 individuals to access a range of employability and training support to enhance their employment options.

The Additionality of Partnership Working: Beyond Business as Usual

A key finding from this year's review is the extent to which local partners are delivering activity and improvement that goes beyond business as usual. There is strong evidence of this in over half (53%) of reports (see [Figure 1](#)). Many local areas described innovative approaches, new ways of working and targeted interventions.

For example, [Highland's](#) work to develop flexible childcare models in rural communities was highlighted by National Partners as driving significant local change across local systems, including local economic development and efforts to influence regulatory reform.

In [East Lothian](#), partners noted a substantial programme of activity aimed at supporting households experiencing poverty, with initiatives such as the CPAF Signal project and a strong culture of continuous reflection and improvement demonstrating an approach that is clearly beyond routine service delivery.

Similarly, [Orkney Islands Council](#) reported a range of innovative initiatives, including employer engagement activity and new childcare models, all of which suggest that child poverty has become a significant local priority driving co-ordinated policy and service innovation across departments.

Child poverty as a cross cutting priority

This emphasis on child poverty is also reflected in broader strategic planning. There was strong evidence across almost three-fifths (19 reports) that child poverty is recognised as a priority across key local strategies, including Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), Children's Services Plans and corporate plans. This alignment is important as it helps to embed child poverty considerations across partnership structures and service areas, rather than treating it as a standalone policy issue.

Child poverty and the budgeting process

There is also emerging evidence that child poverty considerations are influencing local financial decision-making. Almost two-fifths (12 reports) demonstrated some evidence that child poverty is being considered within budget-setting processes and wider financial planning.

One particularly strong example came from [Scottish Borders](#), where the report explicitly stated that "significant Scottish Borders Council budgets and funding are attributed to tackling child poverty" and included a detailed breakdown of funding allocations for 2024/25. While this level of transparency was not common across all reports, it provides an example of how local governance arrangements can support stronger alignment between strategic priorities, resource allocation and delivery.

Insights from analysis

The section above highlights examples of excellent practice from local partners across Scotland. However, the balance between mitigating poverty and taking a strategic and preventative approach is still not universal. Several areas are not demonstrating engagement of vital levers such as housing, childcare, transport, and economic development in the LCPARs.

Furthermore, while some areas demonstrate clear alignment across the three drivers, articulating shared priorities and linking actions across income from employment, social security, and cost of living, the overall picture is still mixed. In many cases, activity is described as a series of standalone interventions, with limited evidence of how these are brought together within a strategic framework. Key gaps remain in connecting core system levers such as housing, childcare and transport, and in consistently linking actions across partners to shared outcomes for priority families.

Actionable Insights

- Local partners continue to strengthen the focus on structural and preventative approaches, ensuring action extends beyond crisis support and service delivery to address the root causes of child poverty.
- Local and national partners should work to make ever clearer links between wider policy levers, particularly housing, childcare, transport, planning, community wealth building and climate change, and the three drivers of child poverty in order to reduce poverty and inequality on a sustained basis.
- Reports should seek to move beyond describing individual projects and demonstrate how activities are connected through a shared preventative strategy with common outcomes for priority groups.
- Increase focus on the role of employers, housing providers and wider economic development partners in preventing poverty and improving family incomes.
- Develop a shared local and national understanding of how the impact of long term preventative interventions can be established.



4.3. Data and intelligence

Effective preventative approaches rely on a robust understanding of local need. Increasingly, local areas are using a combination of administrative data, service intelligence and analytical tools to identify priority groups, understand barriers and target resources more effectively. The following section explores how data and intelligence are informing local child poverty action.

The LCPAR Guidance notes that “*for local actions to tackle child poverty to be most effective, they should be based on effective use of information throughout the planning process.*”

According to National Partners, half of all Year 7 reports demonstrated that ‘both strategic direction and key policy and service decisions are informed by data and intelligence’. This represents significant improvement when compared to analysis of Year 6 reports.

Local reports appear to increasingly reflect how data and intelligence have been used to better understand local context and actively inform decision-making and drive improvement (see [Figure 3](#)).

Several areas have proactively reviewed local data to reassess local priorities.

[North Ayrshire](#), for example, used Public Health Scotland’s whole system methodology to identify system gaps and map services. This included extensive quantitative analysis, drawing on SIMD, DWP low-income families’ data as well as service data on the uptake of early learning and childcare, employability, and other local services. The data was used to identify childcare gaps, transport barriers, and engagement patterns which are picked up in the priorities identified in the rest of the report.

Other areas have sought to deepen their understanding of local context and pre-existing priorities.

[Shetland Islands](#), for example, has used Minimum Income Standard research alongside child poverty statistics to reflect the rural premium and its impact on the cost of living.

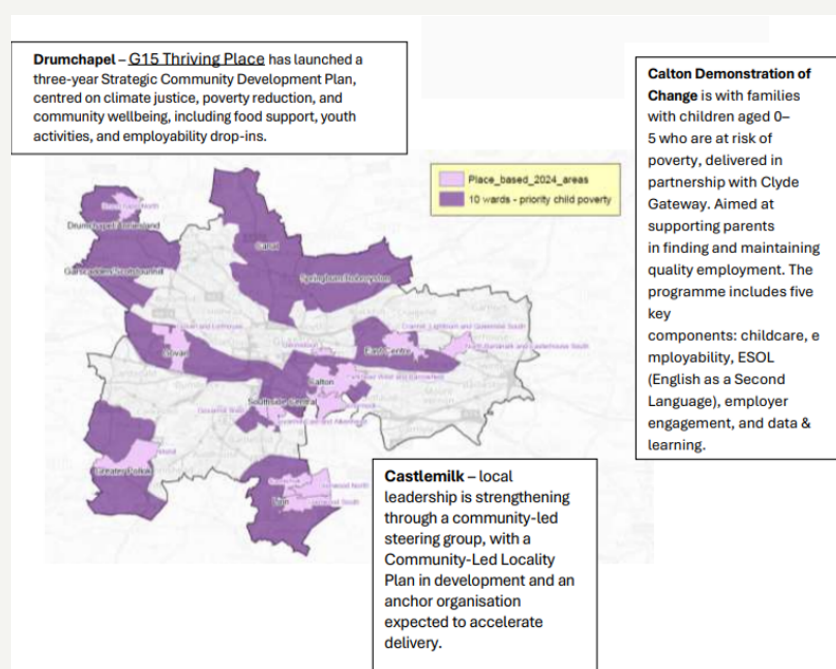
Locality	Children in Poverty (2023-24) %	Cost of Living (% compared to Shetland average - 20-65% over UK average)	Out of Work Benefits 2023/24 (% claiming)	Median Income (2022) (% compared to Shetland average of £34,095)
Lerwick & Bressay	11.8	-13	12.2	-3.1
Central	11.4	-8	8.6	13.2
North	9.2	8	8.8	-6.6
South	11.4	-8	7.2	23.4
West	7.3	+8	8.3	-1.9
Whalsay & Skerries	7.4	+13	3.4	-22.2
Yell, Unst & Fetlar	7.5	+13	9.7	-25.7
Shetland	9.2		9.3	

[Stirling's](#) report demonstrates how local data has been used to develop a fuller understanding of how housing impacts poverty rates locally. The analysis links local rent data, Local Housing Allowance levels and national comparisons to clearly articulate the impact of housing on household income, highlighting that while social rents are relatively low in Stirling, higher private rents place significant pressure on families. This is complemented by the use of administrative data, such as rising discretionary housing payments, to evidence how policy changes and service responses are interacting with need, particularly among larger families affected by the benefit cap. The report also includes planning for future demand based on tenant profiles and ensuring rent-setting processes reflect the circumstances of priority groups.

[West Lothian](#): West Lothian has taken a data-driven approach to better identify unmet need by moving beyond traditional measures of poverty which, it concluded, tend to capture only those already receiving support. Working with the Improvement Service, the council has combined council-held data (including free school meals and school clothing grants) with national datasets such as children in low-income families to model expected levels of benefit uptake and compare this with actual uptake. This allows areas where uptake is lower than expected to be identified, highlighting 'hidden' families who may be entitled to support but are not currently accessing it. This approach, supported by an unmet need dashboard, provides a more granular, place-based understanding of where support is not reaching those in need, enabling West Lothian to target interventions such as outreach, school-based promotion and community engagement more effectively.

In Year 7, [Glasgow City Council](#) has continued to build on and develop its use of local Council Tax Reduction data and wider intelligence by the Centre for Civic Innovation to build and act upon a clearer understanding of the local context. Recent insights include the depth of poverty (on average lone parent households in poverty in Glasgow are £114 a week below the poverty line) and the extent to which lone parents and those with young children are over-represented amongst families experiencing child poverty.

This has led to the identification of ten booster wards being used to target whole family support for families.



4.3.1. Commercial data tools

Several local areas have purchased tools from the private sector to support their work of better understanding and addressing child poverty at local level.

In [Aberdeen City](#), the implementation of the Policy in Practice Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Dashboard has further enabled the Local Authority to identify households most in need, allowing for targeted support and effective resource prioritisation. Since 1 November 2024, targeted communications have been initiated with 86 families affected by the benefit cap. These efforts involve engaging households through various channels, offering specific discretionary housing payments to mitigate income losses caused by the benefit cap, and working towards long-term financial improvements to achieve exemptions from the cap.

With funding from the Child Poverty Accelerator Fund (CPAF) Aberdeen City is exploring how it can use lift to better support disabled households. It is also looking at how it could use its own data to identify and reach low-income households without the need for the LIFT tool.

[East Renfrewshire](#) has employed Smart Data Foundry to analyse local banking data in order to better understand levels of debt and financial insecurity. It is now exploring how to use its own data to continue this work. Their LCPAR notes that, “Building on learning from our work with Smart Data Foundry, we are refocussing work on integrating internal datasets at a local level - like Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit, free school meals, clothing grants, and rent arrears - to build a fuller picture of household vulnerability. This will help us target support earlier and more effectively. We are engaged in the national data-sharing discussions around Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability (SAVVI) and Scottish Child Payment data. As these projects develop, we will respond and utilise this additional data as appropriate.”

4.3.2. Mixed Methods Approaches

Several interesting examples have emerged of local partners combining qualitative and quantitative data to develop a shared understanding of local context and priorities.

In [Perth and Kinross](#), for example, the Children's Scorecard, which includes both statistical data and feedback from families, appears to be proactively informing priorities and actions from year to year, with services held to account about how they have responded to qualitative feedback. Priorities identified via the scorecard to date have included a lack of affordable housing and the gender pay gap locally. Ward level data has also been used to identify geographic areas most in need of support.

[East Lothian](#) too is working to build a shared picture through ongoing engagement. Following a Child Poverty Self-Assessment, East Lothian Council identified a need to integrate lived experience data into their understanding of the local community. They are developing a qualitative data set that will feed into the East Lothian partnership and work of the Poverty Working Group. [SIGNAL](#) is a platform hosted by Volunteer Centre East Lothian and allows for innovative, real time data collection. Using a Life Map tool people visualise their personal path, identifying strengths, challenges and aspirations. This approach provides an insight into community needs and identifies clear, actionable insights while also providing a common evidence base for multi-agency collaboration.

Actionable Insights



- The extent to which local partners are translating the data they have collected and analysed into practical interventions is not always clear from LCPARs. Local areas would benefit from further support to clearly articulate how evidence informs strategic priorities, decision-making and resource allocation through a coherent ‘golden thread’ from data to outcomes. There’s also a need for local areas (supported by National Partners) to focus on strengthening the role of data as a driver of action rather than a descriptive tool. (See [PHS’s Prioritise Child Poverty Tool](#) for more information).
- Partners also highlight the need to enhance integration of data across sources and organisations, including third sector intelligence and lived experience, to support more holistic and locally responsive approaches. Improving the depth and granularity of analysis (particularly at sub-local level and across key drivers such as housing, transport, employment and rural costs) and strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be critical to evidencing reach and effectiveness over time.
- Local areas are developing approaches in response to their own need and circumstances. However, there is clearly scope for good practice to be shared across authorities to avoid duplication. National Partners should continue to explore how local approaches can be replicated.

4.4. Priority groups

The Scottish Government's Guidance on Developing a Local Child Poverty Action Report identifies six priority family groups who are identified as being at highest risk of child poverty. Local partners are encouraged to align their focus on these groups: lone parent families; minority ethnic families; families with a disabled adult or child; families with a younger mother (under 25); families with a child under one-year-old; large families (3+ children).

The following section considers the extent to which local areas are using evidence to understand and respond to the specific circumstances of these priority groups.

From National Partners' assessment of the consideration of priority groups across the reports, there has been significant progress made in reflecting in-depth strategic and service delivery level consideration across reports (see [Figure 5](#) in the appendix).

Effective reporting on the priority groups may begin with using data to identify presence of priority groups in their local area and developing an understanding of the unique barriers and needs associated with each priority group while paying attention to intersectionality, i.e., the compounded effects of belonging to more than one priority group.

The most significant shift in Year 7 reporting is not simply greater recognition of priority groups, but growing evidence that local areas are using data, lived experience and targeted interventions to tailor support to families at greatest risk of poverty. Longitudinal analysis from Years 5 to 7 suggests that local areas are moving beyond simply identifying priority groups towards developing more targeted responses (see [Figure 12](#)). However, progress has not been uniform. While considerable improvement is evident in relation to younger mothers and families with babies under one, fewer reports provide detailed consideration of larger families and minority ethnic families.

While consideration of priority groups has evolved considerably over the past three years of reporting, it has not yet become a consistently embedded feature of strategic decision-making or outcome measurement.

Many reports reflect a descriptive rather than analytical approach, citing priority groups without clearly demonstrating how the needs of these households have been considered or their relevance to, or impact on, child poverty. Furthermore, without explicitly linking targeted interventions to measurable poverty-related outcomes, reports risk evidencing reach alone, rather than impact. This undermines understanding of whether these actions contribute to reducing child

poverty. Stronger reports go some way towards providing evaluative insight into whether certain actions or interventions are more successful than others in effectively supporting priority families out of poverty – as far as is reasonable to interpret within the annual reporting framework.

Using data and the priority groups

Some reports evidence using data to better understand the needs of priority group households.

[Glasgow's](#) report provides detailed analysis of priority groups, including the Centre for Civic Innovation's particular focus this year on lone parent households, families with a disability, and minority ethnic families. Glasgow City Council's Community Planning Partnership Performance Framework is structured around the enabler themes of the Community Plan and combines diverse types of information to understand how actions impact across families and specifically priority and protected characteristic groups.

Other reports evidence the use of data to inform policymaking.

[Stirling](#) demonstrates how a clearer understanding of the priority groups can inform strategic decision making across policy areas. For example, "By understanding the proportion of child poverty priority family types within our tenant population, we are better equipped to anticipate and plan for their future needs. Stirling Council sets rent in close consultation with its 6,117 tenants, aiming to strike a fair balance between service levels, associated costs, and affordability for both current and prospective tenants. We manage all aspects of the housing service to ensure that tenants receive services which continually offer improved value for the rent and other charges they pay." This represents a strategic commitment to understanding the experiences of priority families across wider policy levers.

Lived Experience and the priority groups

Consideration of the lived experience of priority groups remains variable. Under one-tenth (9% of reports) were perceived to have expressly considered the lived experience of low-income households with children in all of the priority groups. This included South Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, and West Lothian.

Identifying additional local priority groups

Some areas are using local evidence to identify additional groups who may experience increased poverty risk or face distinct barriers within their communities.

[West Dunbartonshire](#) identified 'local priority groups' in addition to the six national household types. Some local areas, particularly those in remote, rural and island areas, may be interested in this approach, where the six priority groups recognised at a national level may not consistently apply to local realities. West Dunbartonshire used to data to identify the fact that it has a "higher than average prevalence of looked after children and young people and families where children have Additional Support Needs (ASN). Both groups face increased vulnerability to poverty and poorer long-term outcomes. For this reason, we have identified looked after children and young people and children with ASN as local priority groups, ensuring that our interventions are responsive to the specific challenges within West Dunbartonshire. Children from low-income families are disproportionately likely to be identified with ASN, and poverty itself can increase the likelihood of requiring additional support."

Interventions focused on one or more priority groups

Local child poverty leads often express an interest in what other authorities are doing to target specific priority groups. The following section highlights examples from across the six groups which National Partners highlighted as being of particular interest.

4.4.1. Mothers under 25 years-old

Consideration of young mothers and parents under 25 has increased substantially over the past three years, representing one of the strongest areas of improvement identified through a longitudinal analysis of LCPARs ([Figure 12](#)). Across Year 7 reports, there were more common and detailed examples of targeted support, reflecting growing recognition of the barriers to employment and financial security experienced by younger mothers.

In [East Ayrshire](#), supported by Scottish Government employability funding, the NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Family Nurse Partnership has been in operation for four years. It's a valuable referral pathway into the parental employability programme, supporting them to make links with families who are not only at high risk of child poverty but also the most disconnected from Council services. The Family Nurse Partnership is a voluntary programme for young, first-time mothers (aged 19 and under, or under 25 in some areas) to support them from early pregnancy until their child is two years old. They provide intensive, structured home visits to build a therapeutic relationship, helping mothers with their own health and wellbeing, as well as the health and development of their child. The role involves identifying strengths, supporting holistic change, and connecting families to community resources to improve their social and economic circumstances, in line with Scotland's children and young people policies.

[Clackmannanshire's](#) Young Parent Partnership currently offers tailored support to 23 young parents. The project works closely with key partners, particularly NHS Forth Valley, Forth Valley College, Skills Development Scotland and various Council services.

4.4.2. Families with a disabled adult or child

Families with a disabled adult or child continue to receive significant consideration within reports, reflecting both their elevated risk of poverty and growing local efforts to improve access to financial support and tailored services.

[Moray's](#) CPAF project provides an example of stronger practice in linking a priority group to the child poverty drivers. Work with families of children with ASN identified interconnected financial pressures, including the cost of accessing health services, complexity of disability-related benefits, and affordability of activities. These insights informed coordinated action across partners, including service redesign, improved access to Child Disability Payment, and targeted provision, demonstrating a clearer link between the needs of a priority group and efforts to maximise income and reduce costs.

[Inverclyde's](#) Additional Support Needs (ASN) Summer Programme was co-designed with parents and carers to provide inclusive, stigma-free opportunities for children and respite for families. As the report notes, this achievement demonstrates that Inverclyde is "moving beyond pilot initiatives into long-term, embedded change that reduces poverty, strengthens resilience, and creates fairer opportunities for families".

National partners flagged a general lack of engagement with the issue of the cost of living for disabled families, including the cost of non-personal care at home.

4.4.3. Lone Parents

Lone parents remain one of the most consistently referenced priority groups across Year 7 reports, with many areas continuing to focus on employability, income maximisation and childcare as key mechanisms for reducing poverty.

In [Fife](#), Fife Gingerbread piloted a new Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) Traineeship designed to help lone parents move into meaningful, family-friendly employment within schools, while also addressing local recruitment challenges in the education sector. Key features included: guaranteed school placements in partnership with Fife Council Education, accredited training delivered flexibly to fit around school hours, one-to-one keyworker support from Fife Gingerbread throughout the programme, confidence building, peer support, and practical help with childcare, transport, and digital access. The traineeship was successful in building both confidence and capability among lone parents who had been out of the workforce or lacked recent experience. Many participants had previously faced barriers such as isolation, low self-esteem, or lack of formal qualifications. Outcomes included increased confidence and employability, successful completion of qualifications, progression into permanent or longer-term school-based roles.

4.4.4. Babies under one

Reports increasingly recognise the importance of the pregnancy and early years period, with NHS-led pathways particularly well established, often acting as a key route to identifying families in need of support and connecting them to wider services.

[West Lothian](#) demonstrates a service-level focus on families with babies under one through midwifery and health visiting financial wellbeing pathways, though consideration remains

programme specific rather than strategic. The action set out to 'Develop and deliver financial wellbeing pathways, training, referral system and data capture across midwifery and health visiting services to increase identification of, and support to, those in need'. The FORT referral system was highlighted as a key enabler for allowing direct referrals from frontline health services to income maximisation support, helping connect families to advice and assistance at an early stage.

Similarly, in [Orkney](#), a Hungry Baby service supported local access to baby milk, baby food, and nappies, through a referral to Health Visitors where the child/ children are under two years old.

4.4.5. Large families

Large families remain one of the less frequently explored priority groups within Local Child Poverty Action Reports. Where considered in greater depth, local areas are beginning to use local data and intelligence to better understand the specific challenges experienced by larger households, including access to suitable housing and the additional costs associated with raising larger families.

[Argyll and Bute's](#) report demonstrates how local housing data can be used to better understand the needs of larger families. The report highlights the importance of access to suitably sized housing, noting that overcrowded housing can negatively affect children's wellbeing, educational attainment, and longer-term life chances. Analysis of the HOMEArgyll housing register found that, as of March 2025, 135 households with children required a property with four or more bedrooms, representing 19% of families with children identified as having a housing need. This illustrates how local evidence can be used to identify specific challenges affecting larger families and inform local housing priorities.

4.4.6. Minority ethnic families

Consideration of minority ethnic families remains variable across reports. Where explored in greater depth, local areas are using data, lived experience and targeted employability activity to better understand and address the specific barriers to employment, income and service access experienced by minority ethnic communities.

In [Glasgow](#), NHS Glasgow and Greater Clyde undertook a Health and Wellbeing Survey (2024) involving home interviews with 2,638 adults from six minority ethnic communities to enhance understanding of the scale and diversity of financial challenges affecting minority ethnic residents.

In 2024/25, the [City of Edinburgh](#) began a project of engaging with employers to ensure that their workplaces were accessible and inclusive to minority ethnic workers. Capital City Partnership has now delivered a number of events and workshops with employers on topics such as immigration and sponsorship, how to evaluate and improve their equality and diversity policies, retaining an ethnically diverse workforce and recognition of qualifications gained abroad. Overall, the project has engaged with 50 employers and have reported that being brought together with people with lived experience has been 'illuminating' for them.

In summary, analysis of reports shows that a consistent, strategic approach to targeting and evidencing outcomes for priority groups has not yet been adopted as standard practice across every local area.

In some reports, a strong strategic approach is evident, with priority groups clearly embedded and considered from the point of initial strategic decision-making to service delivery outcomes. However, several reports were reviewed as showing no evidence of in-depth consideration at service or strategic level for any priority group.

There is also notable variation in the depth of consideration across each of the priority groups. Mothers under 25 and households with a disabled member were more commonly explored in depth at both strategic and service delivery levels, while larger families are most frequently absent from reports. Uneven coverage of priority groups may distort understanding of need locally, and there's a risk that those underrepresented priority groups may be less likely to inform strategic decision-making or benefit from targeted intervention.

Actionable Insights

- Priority groups ought to be more consistently embedded in strategic decision-making. Reports often describe priority groups without clearly linking them to targeted action or measurable poverty-related outcomes, limiting understanding of impact.
- Stronger use of data and lived experience is needed to inform targeting. Greater integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence would support more effective prioritisation, design of interventions, and resource allocation.
- Coverage and depth across priority groups remains uneven. Variation in how different groups are considered risks distorting local understanding of need; more consistent and balanced consideration, alongside clearer links to the three drivers, will strengthen impact.



4.5. Embedding the voice of lived experience

While quantitative data can identify patterns and trends, it cannot fully explain how poverty is experienced. Many local areas are therefore combining statistical evidence with lived experience to better understand barriers, improve service design and ensure action reflects the realities faced by families.

The LCPAR Guidance notes that, *“Policy should be developed in collaboration with those with direct experience of poverty and give particular consideration to the experiences and barriers faced by priority family groups who we know to be at highest risk of experiencing child poverty.”*

Further, there is a shared recognition that qualitative evidence, including case studies grounded in lived experience, is as important as quantitative data in understanding impact. Together, these forms of evidence provide a more complete picture of progress for families experiencing poverty.

Year 7 reporting increasingly demonstrates how lived experience is influencing strategic decision-making, policy development and service design. National Partner analysis found that more than two-fifths (44%) of reports provided clear evidence that lived experience was shaping decisions, compared with around one-quarter (26%) of reports in Year 6 and around one-seventh (14%) of reports in Year 5 (see [Figure 4](#)). Meanwhile, the proportion of reports with no evidence that lived experience had been sought or considered remains low, suggesting a growing shift from mere consultation towards more meaningful influence and co-production.

There were many strong examples of the use of lived experience panels and consultation groups as part of service design, policy development and budgeting processes as well as general ongoing panels which hold a position within governance structures. Some strong examples include:

End Poverty [Edinburgh](#) (EPE) Citizens Group is a lived experience panel supported by The Poverty Alliance that played an active role in development and scrutiny of the City of Edinburgh's Local Child Poverty Action Report. This involved taking part in many conversations and consultations with low-income households and adding detail to the understanding of the poverty landscape in Edinburgh. Further to their involvement in the reporting process, EPE have been involved in decision making with their views and opinions consulted at various stages. The group has reported feeling valued as equal and have contributed to successful collaborative working.

The Fairer [Renfrewshire](#) Panel consists of those with lived experience of poverty and is a component part of the broader Fairer Renfrewshire Programme, holding a clearly defined place within the governance structures. The panel is described in the report as an "invaluable resource for Council services and beyond, feeding into policy and practice in a number of areas including our Local Transport Strategy, summer holiday programme and digital inclusion." Furthermore, the panel were commissioned by Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership to scrutinise and report on the most recent Health and Wellbeing survey results and report back to the Community Planning Partnership Executive Group.

[Aberdeenshire](#) Lived Experience Network (ALLEN) brings together 30 partner organisations and embeds lived experience into decision-making and service design through regular engagement rather than one-off surveys or focus groups. As an ongoing network, ALLEN ensures local voices continue to shape services, training, policy and spending decisions.

This has resulted in 671 parents and community members from priority households helping to shape training, policy, practice and budget decisions; and £72,405 of funding was allocated by expert panels and online forums to support 1,358 families through lower housing costs, improved food security and access to social activities.

[West Lothian](#) Experts by Experience Panel is a panel of volunteers with experience of poverty. In the most recent reporting period, the panel has provided feedback on how best to target areas of unmet need identified through data analysis and have suggested additional data points which could enhance the Child Poverty Index. Furthermore, an online toolkit providing a map of local services was codesigned with the panel.

[Dundee](#) Fairness Leadership Panel brings together people with lived experience as well as representatives from local organisations to give a voice to Dundee's most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Some highlights of the panel's work include the Dundee Fairness Action Plan which has been critiqued and reviewed by the panel, which gave an honest response as to how the proposed actions will or won't help the community. The panel has also produced a report with thirteen recommendations to strategic partners across the city that would improve these challenges for communities. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation presented findings from an independent assessment of the panel over a nine-month period which commended the panel's success and highlighted what others might learn regarding the empowerment of people with lived experience.

This year's reports have also showcased some strong examples of thematic lived experience groups where specific policy areas have been identified and lived experience data collected in conversation with those affected by policy.

The [Shetland](#) Youth Voice Transport Forum which “involves young people in the decisions which affect their lives regarding transport. Priorities emerged from the forum such as: Extended bus schedules (especially on Sundays), Improve young people's discounts for off-island travel, Enhance safety on late-night buses”.

[East Ayrshire](#) engaged young people in the development of their Local Housing Strategy through an online survey and in person roadshow events. “The feedback from the consultation helped shape the outcomes and actions within the strategy and Housing Services will continue to work with partners to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people across East Ayrshire.”

[East Ayrshire](#) involved the Care Experienced Cabinet in the development of their Corporate Parenting Action Plan. While not directly related to child poverty, the process and structures in place may be of interest to other areas. “Working with the Chair and the Health and Social Care Partnership's Planning and Performance team, the Cabinet recently agreed new parameters for its functions and how it reports back to our young people, with the aspiration to complete the cycle of the Lundy model of participation (Article 12) around Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.”

These are each excellent examples of a targeted lived experience data collection where people are consulted directly about the difficulties they face regarding a specific issue.

Other examples include the development of successful lived experience projects that sought the attention of senior ministers, such as [Dumfries and Galloway's 'Through Young Eyes'](#) film. Developed and directed by young people with lived experience, “it gives a voice to their stories and sheds light on the real challenges faced by families in the region” and represents a comparatively strong example of youth-led engagement.

Actionable Insights



- Continue to build on existing lived experience approaches, recognising that many areas are already demonstrating meaningful engagement and influence on local decision-making.
- Where possible, move beyond consultation towards ongoing opportunities for people with lived experience to inform the design, review and improvement of services and policies.
- Consider how existing lived experience groups, community forums and participation structures can be used to support child poverty work, reducing the need for separate engagement mechanisms.
- Strengthen reporting on how lived experience has influenced decisions, helping demonstrate the value of participation and encouraging continued engagement.
- Explore targeted engagement on specific issues such as transport, housing, childcare and employability, where focused discussions can generate practical insights for service improvement.
- Share learning from established lived experience panels and networks to support peer learning and avoid duplication of effort across local areas.

4.6. Monitoring outcomes and evaluation

As local areas strengthen their use of data and lived experience, there is growing interest in understanding whether local action is resulting in meaningful change for families. This requires the development of clear outcomes based on a strong use of data and evidence that also reflects the needs of families in the local area. Local partners are also increasingly considering the importance of monitoring and evaluation in demonstrating progress and supporting continuous improvement.

Child poverty is complex and so too is understanding the impact of local action. Local action is rarely attributable to changes in poverty rates in a direct or linear way, and, indeed, there is no expectation that local partners demonstrate contributions to national child poverty targets through simple measures.

The LPCAR Guidance recommends *“the development of a monitoring framework, where each priority has actions identified, linked to indicators that will capture who it is intended to target, who it is reaching and what difference this is making.”* However, it also notes that *“It is difficult to measure the impact that local actions are having on rates of child poverty, partly because child poverty rates are influenced by a wide range of socioeconomic factors.”*

Thus, while monitoring remains essential, it should focus on what local partners can realistically influence and evidence. This includes using expert insights, local intelligence, quantitative data and lived experience to explain what is changing, for whom, and why.

Relevant measures will vary by local priorities, but commonly include changes in service access and reach, household income gains, local cost pressures, and experiences of stigma or exclusion. Priorities should be evidence-informed, kept under review, and supported by a proportionate approach to evaluation that strengthens learning and improvement over time.

Across the 32 reports, most include some outcomes, indicators and monitoring information, but this is often partial or inconsistent and not always clearly linked to impact for low-income families and priority family groups. However, the quality of reporting on outcomes is becoming more consistent across Scotland. Over the three-year period, the proportion of reports providing little or no consideration of outcomes and indicators fell from 21% in Year 5 to just 3% in Year 7, while the proportion providing a clear and comprehensive outcomes framework increased from 10% to 25% (see [Figure 9](#)).

Monitoring is typically strongest on activities and outputs (e.g., volumes supported, referrals, programme participation). Fewer reports present a single,

coherent outcomes-and-indicators framework with baselines, trends and clear measures of success that show “what difference” actions are making for families experiencing poverty. While only a quarter of reports currently provide a comprehensive framework, the findings suggest that local areas are increasingly moving beyond descriptions of activity towards a stronger focus on outcomes and impact measurement. A smaller number demonstrate structured monitoring and evaluation frameworks which support a clearer understanding of impact; a minority offer limited evidence of outcomes, indicators or evaluation. This pattern is consistent with last year’s analysis. Overall, the direction of travel is positive, with gradual improvement in the use of outcomes frameworks and evaluation approaches, and several notable examples of good practice.

[South Ayrshire](#) stands out as an exemplar because it uses clear, structured [Child Poverty Action Priority \(CPAP\) tables](#) that strengthen accountability and makes monitoring practical. By setting out actions alongside identified owners/leads, measures/indicators and timescales, the report creates a transparent line of sight from planned activity to how delivery will be tracked and managed. This format supports consistent progress reporting, clarifies who is responsible for what, and enables partners to review delivery against agreed milestones and measures, features that are often less explicit in other reports.

[Stirling](#) is assessed as exemplar-level largely because it combines a strong logic model with a detailed [supporting appendix](#) that systematically organises interventions and connects them to intended outcomes. This provides a coherent ‘golden thread’ from need and rationale, through inputs and activities, to expected changes and outcomes, making it easier to judge whether actions are likely to deliver impact and how progress should be evidenced. The structured presentation also supports evaluation because it clarifies what success would look like, what information should be gathered, and how different strands of activity contribute to overarching outcomes.

[North Lanarkshire](#) stands out because it combines a clear outcomes-and-action structure with systematic performance reporting and frequent use of quantified impact measures. The report is explicitly organised around the drivers of child poverty, plus a fourth locally adopted driver, holistic supports which reinforces a ‘No Wrong Door’ approach through referral pathways across council, NHS and third sector services. It presents a strong monitoring narrative, including high-volume service metrics (e.g., benefit checks completed), total and disaggregated financial gains, and reach/impact evidence for priority family groups and localities (e.g., tables showing additional benefit income generated for lone parents, disabled households, larger families, families with a child under one, and minority ethnic families). It also reports return on investment (financial gain per £1 invested), progress measures over time (e.g., increases in referrals year-on-year), and provides case studies that complement quantitative reporting by illustrating how pathways and interventions affect families’ circumstances. [Its appended Action Plan tables](#) include baseline and outcome updates across years, supporting a clearer ‘line of sight’ from actions to monitoring and enabling year-on-year comparison in a way that many reports do not consistently provide.

Similarly, [Midlothian’s](#) report was flagged as an exemplar by National Partners, for its provision of a clear action plan and logic model that shows how activities will contribute to short, medium and long term outcomes.

Actionable insights



- Continue to strengthen and develop the use of outcomes-focused reporting, ensuring actions, indicators and intended outcomes are clearly connected and proportionate to local capacity and priorities.
- Build on existing monitoring arrangements by focusing on measures that local partners can realistically influence, such as service reach, income gains, access to support and experiences of families in priority groups.
- Where possible, provide a clearer line of sight between local priorities, actions and evidence of change, helping partners understand what is working and where improvements may be needed.
- Use a mix of quantitative data, local intelligence and lived experience evidence to provide a richer understanding of impact and progress over time.
- Consider how existing performance and reporting systems can be used to support child poverty monitoring, reducing duplication and reporting burdens.
- Continue to develop evaluation approaches that focus on learning and improvement, recognising the challenges of directly attributing changes in child poverty rates to local action.

4.7. Partnership working and Health Board integration

Delivering and evidencing impact requires coordinated action across organisations and policy areas. Partnership working remains a critical feature of effective local approaches, enabling partners to align resources, share accountability and respond more effectively to the drivers of child poverty.

4.7.1. Health Boards

The data for the section on Health Boards was provided by Public Health Scotland as part of a wider report on the NHS contribution to tackling child poverty with information extracted from the Year 7 LCPARs.

For the full report and report summary, contact the Poverty and Income Maximisation team at Public Health Scotland: PHS.PovertyIncomeMaximisation@phs.scot

This brief overview of NHS contribution to Year 7 LCPARs focuses on the four themes of:

1. NHS Leadership
2. Income maximisation referral pathways and services
3. NHS role as an Anchor institution (with a focus on parental employment)
4. Enhancing awareness and understanding across frontline staff

1. NHS Senior leadership

Thirteen LCPARs included senior NHS or HSCP sign-off, a slight decrease from both year 5 and 6 reports. Additionally, NHS sign-off remains inconsistent across Local Authority areas within some NHS Boards.

Strategic and operational involvement of Health Boards

The number of reports which demonstrated strategic involvement of NHS Boards in tackling child poverty increased in Year 7. However, the involvement in the delivery of actions was less evident.

2. Income maximisation referral pathways and services – health settings

There is continuing evidence that some areas have shifted from a less effective signposting approach to a more effective referral pathway within health settings.

Health Visiting and Family Nurse Partnership - 18 LCPARs reported established income maximisation pathways and there has been a sustained improvement over years 5, 6 and 7.

Maternity services – there was a more significant improvement in the number of LCPARs reporting established income maximisation referral pathways from maternity services; up from 17 reports in Year 6 to 21 reports in Year 7. There has been sustained improvement over year 5, 6 and 7.

GP practice settings – there was an increase in reports highlighting income maximisation pathways within General Practice settings; up from 10 reports in Year 6 to 12 reports in Year 7.

Other NHS services - 9 reports described other health income maximisation pathways, such as from acute settings, paediatrics, and crisis infant feeding pathways.

Twelve reports described other health income maximisation pathways, such as from acute settings, family advice services, early years services, education, mental health, social work, prisons, paediatrics, and crisis infant feeding pathways.

Income maximisation support for NHS staff - 4 areas reported direct referral pathways to address the financial wellbeing of health and social care staff. This is a reduction from Year 6 (7 reports).

Income maximisation pathway measures for priority groups – In Year 7, data on reach of income maximisation pathways for priority groups either fell or remained unchanged compared to Year 6. This includes data on the number of referrals, financial gains and/ or amount of debt managed, specifically reported for priority group families.

Example of practice: NHS Tayside

A welfare rights referral pathway from Neonatal services has been developed using BadgerNet electronic record system and app. Training has been provided to neonatal staff to support their use of the pathway. Discussions are ongoing with paediatric teams to explore the establishment of a similar pathway.

3. NHS Role as an Anchor institution - Parental Employment

Within NHS Boards Anchor Strategic Plans and annual returns to Scottish Government, Boards are expected to include information on recruitment, employability programmes or progression schemes which target priority groups (including the child poverty priority families).

Sixteen LCPARs reported employability programmes within the NHS reaching parents, a slight increase from 15 reports in Year 6. There has been a sustained improvement over Years 5, 6 and 7.

Five areas reported in-work employee progression programmes for parents within Boards, a slight reduction from Year 6 (6 reports).

There was a decrease in the number of reports that contained information on priority family groups in relation to employment programmes within the NHS (5 reports in Year 7, compared to 9 reports in Year 6).

No priority family group data were provided for in-work progression programmes in Year 7 reports (2 reports in Year 6).

Example of practice: NHS Lanarkshire

In North Lanarkshire, following a successful pilot programme within Wishaw locality, parents now receive routine enquiry of employability from their health visitor. Parents are referred onto the Working for Families Programme, delivered by Routes to Work (a local employability support provider). All health visiting teams have received training, and the MORSE system has been updated to ensure conversations and referrals are captured.

4. Enhancing awareness and understanding of frontline staff

There was an increase in the number of LCPARs evidencing child poverty awareness training for NHS and HSCP staff, from 7 reports in Year 6 to 13 reports in Year 7.

There was also a slight increase in the number of reports highlighting staff receive training on income maximisation referral pathways, from 12 reports in Year 6 to 14 reports in Year 7.

Training was reported to include topics like health inequalities, trauma awareness and trauma informed practice, child poverty, financial inclusion, money worries, stigma, and social security benefits, holistic support, and local services and pathways for income maximisation support.

There was a slight decrease in the number of areas reporting that NHS and HSCP staff have a role in the delivery of training on poverty and awareness, and income maximisation. This has been a sustained decrease over Years 5, 6 and 7.

Example of practice: NHS Tayside

NHS Tayside have piloted including financial inclusion within their 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC) brief advice training. This has been delivered to a range of staff across NHS Tayside, including Vaccination staff. The MECC project learning has been used to identify other topic areas for inclusion, including employability, health and work.

Conclusion

NHS Scotland continues to make an important contribution to tackling child poverty with clear examples of progress and good practice. However, information provided within LCPARs suggests that this contribution is not yet consistent or systematically reported across all areas, indicating further scope to strengthen and embed activity.

To maximise its contribution to meeting the child poverty targets for 2030 and beyond, NHS Boards should strengthen and focus action across the four themes to address the drivers of child poverty and improve outcomes for children and families across Scotland.

4.7.2. Wider partnership working

Partnership working remains inconsistent in depth, with continued variability in the extent to which partners are jointly shaping priorities, sharing accountability, and delivering integrated responses across all drivers of child poverty. This year, over 80% of reports were characterised as showing joint planning at a strategic level to address child poverty (26 reports), with other reports displaying more operational level approaches to partnership working with different partner organisations. Every report was perceived to have provided at least some evidence of partnership working.

Where reports detail more operational activity, as opposed to evidencing more strategic-level detail, this is largely down to operational actions that reflect single agency delivery with a lack of clarity over how they were influenced by wider partnership planning. This suggests that while most areas demonstrate broad partnership engagement, fewer provide evidence of deeper collaboration, such as co-production of strategy, shared accountability, or joint resourcing.

There's also some evidence to suggest that partnership working is more developed in relation to the three drivers of child poverty, particularly employability and income maximisation, perhaps as a reflection of where the funding streams tend to situate. Whereas, in contrast, partnership approaches are slightly less evident across wider policy levers such as housing, transport, and childcare.

Some reports consistently evoke strong partnership/ collaborative working language, reflecting a clear intent and vision that actions are driven by strong partnership working.

[East Ayrshire's](#) report emphasises collaboration in their strategic priority: 'working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our Children and Young People', showing strategic focus.

Similarly, [Shetland Island's](#) LCPAR foregrounds partnership working as a priority, outlined under 'strategic connections' and throughout. There is clear demonstration of joint planning through alignment with the Shetland Partnership Delivery Plan and the Children's Services Plan with child poverty embedded as a priority across partners.

[East Renfrewshire's](#) Equalities Coordinators partnered with the Child Poverty Action Group to explore ways to involve pupils in reducing school-related costs. Several schools have joined the Cost of the School Day Voice Network, empowering pupils to share ideas and raise awareness.

[Angus'](#) report shows clear examples of strong partnership working. A key example of this multi-agency collaboration is the development of the Tayside Infant Food Insecurity Pathway, a collaborative initiative involving NHS Tayside and the three Tayside Local Authorities. The pathway adopts a 'no wrong door' and cash-first approach, ensuring families experiencing infant food insecurity can access immediate support alongside income maximisation and wider welfare advice. This demonstrates how health services, Local Authorities and financial inclusion partners can work together to provide coordinated support for families while addressing the underlying drivers of poverty.

Actionable insights



- Collaboration with NHS Boards ought to be more evident in joint strategic planning, as well as at an operational level, indicating a need to embed shared ownership of child poverty across Local Authorities and health systems.
- While most areas demonstrate broad engagement, fewer show deeper collaboration through co-produced strategy, shared accountability, or joint resourcing.
- Partnership approaches are more developed in employability and income maximisation, with opportunities to strengthen joint working across housing, transport, and childcare.
- Approaches such as ‘no wrong door’ systems, multi-agency networks, and service mapping could be more widely shared and adapted across areas.

4.8. Alignment with national approaches, programmes, and initiatives

Local child poverty action does not take place in isolation. Many of the approaches described throughout this report are influenced by and aligned with wider national policies, programmes and initiatives. Ensuring national and local policy interact in a coherent way is important for achieving Scotland's ambitions to reduce child poverty.

The Guidance on developing a LCPAR encourages local partners to make connections in their reports to relevant local and national policy frameworks such as the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Promise and Children's Rights and Whole Family Wellbeing. LCPARs achieve this with varying levels of success. The following section provides an overview of the extent to which these links have been drawn.

Best Start, Bright Futures

Most reports reference Best Start, Bright Futures and structure reporting around the drivers of child poverty (income from employment, income from social security, cost of living). This has helped create a common narrative across local areas, although the strength of alignment varies depending on whether drivers are used as a reporting structure only or are embedded in outcome frameworks and monitoring arrangements.

4.8.1. Alignment with wider national programmes and plans

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF)

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) is commonly referenced, but the clarity of the link to child poverty outcomes varies. Some reports describe WFWF-funded activity primarily as wellbeing support without clearly articulating the impact on child poverty drivers or priority groups.

[Clackmannanshire's](#) Family Wellbeing Partnership stands out because it operationalises whole family wellbeing as a joined-up system, not a collection of separate projects: key workstreams such as STRIVE, Community Around the School (CATS), Enhancing Employability, and the Child Wellbeing Partnership (CWP) are designed to connect families to coordinated support across services (including housing, education, mental health, financial inclusion, childcare and employability), with a clear emphasis on early intervention, prevention and reducing crisis escalation (see further detail on STRIVE and CATS in [Section 4.2.5](#)). The partnership is also underpinned by person-centred practice and lived experience, using community voice and co-production approaches to shape delivery. It is supported by strong evaluation evidence (including a Scottish Government evaluation), demonstrating shifts toward more integrated and multidisciplinary working and providing a stronger basis than many areas for explaining how whole family support is being implemented and what change it is driving over time.

UNCRC/children's rights

UNCRC/children's rights are increasingly referenced, with variation in depth and in how directly it is linked to child poverty outcomes.

[North Lanarkshire](#) is highlighted as an exemplar in linking child poverty action to a children's rights approach, with children and young people's voice explicitly referenced as shaping the work and a rights-based framing running through the report. The LCPAR positions tackling child poverty not only as an economic issue but as part of delivering children's rights and improving outcomes for families.

[Stirling](#) provides a strong example of explicit alignment with the UNCRC and children's rights, with the report stating that child poverty work is underpinned by a human rights approach, referencing relevant UNCRC articles (including Articles 26 and 27) and committing to the use of Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) alongside the Fairer Scotland Duty in shaping policy and decision-making. A further bonus is the inclusion of a child-friendly infographic summarising child poverty action, which supports accessibility and helps communicate key priorities beyond professional audiences.



[Argyll and Bute](#) demonstrates meaningful alignment with children's rights through specific UNCRC implementation activity, including successful participation in the UNCRC Innovations Fund to develop awareness-raising and coproduced rights-based work with children, young people and families.

The Promise and Trauma-informed approaches

The Promise and trauma-informed approaches are widely referenced across reports, but most commonly as context and values rather than as explicit levers for shifting the three drivers of child poverty. Where these approaches are strongest, reports move beyond general alignment statements and describe how commitments under The Promise or trauma-informed practice are shaping local policy choices, eligibility, and service design for groups at higher risk of poverty.

[West Dunbartonshire](#) provides one of the clearest examples of linking The Promise to anti-poverty delivery, particularly for care experienced children and young people, who are treated as a locally defined priority group. The report highlights a detailed package of measures, including financial and housing-related support for care leavers (e.g., council tax exemptions, rent abatements during further education, tenancy set-up support, and access to permanent housing through a protocol with strong sustainment rates).

[South Ayrshire](#) is a strong example of framing trauma-informed practice as part of the local response to poverty, rather than positioning trauma solely as a workforce or wellbeing agenda. The assessment notes participation in a Trauma Aware Communities pilot, which explicitly recognises the cross-cutting relationship between trauma and poverty and aims to build community-level capability through training and local connectors.

4.8.2. National improvement initiatives

LCPARs are seen by many as a natural home for reporting on innovative local initiatives to tackle child poverty, particularly those funded by the Scottish Government and/or those intended to drive improvement across Scotland as a whole.

In Year 7 reports, the **Child Poverty Accelerator Fund (CPAF)** is frequently mentioned, but often mainly as a funding source rather than as part of a learning and improvement cycle. Many reports do not provide detail on what has been learned, what changed, and what will be scaled or adapted. Stronger examples describe a test-of-change approach and clearer links to emerging outcomes, including:

- [Midlothian](#), where CPAF supported ethnographic and lived experience work, with plans to integrate findings into the next action plan.
- [Moray](#), where CPAF supported work on maximising incomes for families with disabilities, using phased engagement and cross-service collaboration.

- [Stirling](#), where CPAF supported a test-and-learn pilot focused on children disengaging from education alongside family employability support.

Early Adopter Childcare reporting is generally clearer where it is present, particularly when linked to employability barriers and wraparound family support. Inverclyde is a strong example, showing scaling up of early adopter childcare alongside wellbeing worker support.

Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFP) are 'locally driven, place-based, targeted tests of change to tackle child poverty, with a view to learning and spreading successful approaches across Scotland'. There are 16 FFP areas across Scotland: Clackmannanshire, Dundee City, Glasgow City, Aberdeen City, East Ayrshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Shetland, Dumfries and Galloway, the City of Edinburgh, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, and West Lothian.

Across LCPARs, FFPs are often reported as emerging work. Updates are not fully up to date, with the LCPAR reporting cycle evidently lagging behind delivery activity. Exceptions include areas where FFP is more established and visible in reporting, such as Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, and Aberdeen City. In [Glasgow City](#), for example, whole system approaches are linked to the Glasgow Futures Strategy and Partnership, strengthening the focus on parents, those furthest from the labour market, and paid placement opportunities.

Adopt and Adapt is at an early stage in reporting. Only a small number of reports note awareness of the funding, with limited detail on implementation or learning to date.

[Angus'](#) report notes that they have used their Adopt & Adapt funding to commission Columba 1400 to begin initial work around values-based leadership model and bringing partners together to establish a collaborative framework for an area of high need within Arbroath.



Actionable insights

- Strengthen the link between national policy frameworks and local child poverty outcomes by demonstrating how initiatives such as Whole Family Wellbeing, The Promise and UNCRC contribute to the three drivers of child poverty and outcomes for priority groups.
- Ensure that there is clear oversight and awareness of all the different funding streams related to child poverty at local level, and how they are all working together towards shared outcomes.
- Move beyond describing programmes and funding streams to reporting what has been learned, what has changed and what will be scaled or adapted as a result.
- Embed children's rights, whole family support and trauma-informed approaches throughout delivery and decision-making, rather than presenting them solely as principles or values.
- Strengthen local and national narratives around how Fairer Futures Partnerships are contributing to tackling child poverty.
- Ensure that LCPARs include a stronger focus on how FFP work is influencing local practice and improving outcomes.
- Draw closer and clearer links between Local Child Poverty Action Reports and national improvement programmes, such as CPAF, Fairer Futures Partnerships and Early Adopter Childcare.

5. PART B: Local reflections from feedback meetings

This section comprises reflections gathered through feedback meetings between local areas and National Partners following review of Year 7 LCPARs.

These meetings form part of the established review process, where a National Partner meets with each Local Authority and Health Board to offer reflections on the report, highlight strengths and good practice examples and identify potential areas for improvement and support.

Crucially, this also provides space for local partners to reflect on the realities of delivering and reporting on child poverty action. It provides an opportunity to engage in a two-way dialogue about local barriers and opportunities, and any support they'd like from National Partners.

For the first time, findings from these discussions have been collated and included in this report. This reflects the value of local partner insight in contextualising the content of LCPARs which - by nature - only capture a partial picture of local action. As one local partner noted, LCPARs *“often reflect a small part of the wider work happening across the area, so it isn't reflective of the totality of the work happening in this space”*.

Taken together, these reflections complement Part A by providing a more grounded, personalised account of how local child poverty action is delivered in practice.

5.1. Summary of local partner reflections

- A total of 28 local areas participated in feedback meetings with National Partners, indicating a high level of engagement with both the LCPAR process and the wider child poverty agenda.
- A wide range of support offers were taken up or requested, including one-to-one support from the Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland, facilitation of planning discussions, and use of tools such as the Prioritise Child Poverty approach. This reflects a strong appetite for hands-on support to strengthen planning, delivery, and evaluation.
- The inclusion of senior representatives from Local Authorities and Health Boards in many meetings signals that child poverty remains a visible and prioritised issue at senior leadership level across local areas.
- Some local partners emphasised that annual reports do not fully reflect the scale or complexity of work underway, justifying the decision to complement LCPAR analysis with direct local insight to better understand delivery context.
- Persistent challenges raised by local partners include short-term and fragmented funding, complexity in national policy expectations, and the burden of multiple reporting requirements, all of which impact delivery and long-term planning.

5.2. Understanding of Local Challenges

5.2.1. Priority groups, lived experience and the three drivers of child poverty

Feedback discussions highlighted the challenge of developing a consistently strategic approach to priority groups across local systems. While local partners broadly understood which priority groups were most affected by poverty in their areas, many described difficulties in accessing sufficiently detailed local data, understanding intersectionality, and evidencing the impact of interventions on specific family types. This was particularly challenging where services and performance frameworks had not historically been designed around the priority groups.

Several local partners reflected that they were still building the data and analytical capacity required to move from identifying priority groups to systematically tracking reach, outcomes and impact. Many described this as an area of active development, with new dashboards, data sharing arrangements and analytical tools beginning to improve understanding of need.

Partners also highlighted challenges in translating lived experience activity into strategic decision-making. While many areas had established engagement mechanisms, officers noted that collecting views was often easier than demonstrating how those insights influenced policy, resource allocation or service redesign. Some areas reported concerns about consultation fatigue amongst communities, while others highlighted capacity constraints in sustaining meaningful engagement over time.

Rural and island authorities described additional challenges due to small population sizes and limited sample sizes, making it difficult to disaggregate data or apply nationally designed approaches to targeting the priority groups. Several partners emphasised the need for flexibility in recognising how poverty manifests in different local contexts.

5.2.2. Consideration of wider policy levers

Local partners consistently spoke about the challenge of moving beyond traditional anti-poverty interventions and embedding child poverty considerations across wider policy areas such as housing, transport, childcare and economic development.

Many participants reflected that these policy levers often sit across multiple departments, partnerships and governance structures, making it difficult to develop integrated approaches or establish shared accountability for outcomes. As a result, local child poverty partnerships sometimes face challenges in influencing decisions that sit outside their immediate remit.

Childcare was repeatedly identified as both one of the most important and one of the most difficult policy levers to address. Partners described ongoing challenges relating to workforce availability, rural provision, affordability and transport connectivity. Rural and island authorities in particular highlighted that solutions designed to benefit nation-wide communities (and often favouring urban environments) do not always translate effectively into their local context.

Several local areas also described challenges in balancing immediate pressures to provide crisis support with longer-term preventative work. While there was broad support for a preventative approach, partners highlighted that financial pressures

and increasing demand for services can limit the capacity available for longer-term system change.

5.2.3. Data use

Feedback discussions demonstrated strong enthusiasm for data-informed approaches, but also highlighted the practical challenges involved in developing and maintaining robust local intelligence.

Many local partners described the difficulty of bringing together data from multiple systems and organisations to create a shared understanding of need. Technical barriers, governance requirements and limitations around data sharing continue to make integration complex and resource intensive.

Partners also reflected on the challenge of moving from data collection to data-informed action. While increasing volumes of information are available, many areas are still developing approaches for translating intelligence into strategic decisions, targeting resources and measuring impact.

There was also a strong recognition that quantitative information alone is often insufficient. Many partners expressed interest in strengthening the integration of lived experience, service intelligence and qualitative evidence alongside traditional datasets to create a more complete understanding of local poverty.

5.2.4. Outcomes, evaluation, and demonstrating impact

Many local partners identified evidencing impact as one of the most significant challenges they face.

Local partners highlighted the complexity of demonstrating how local interventions contribute to changes in child poverty outcomes, particularly where local action interacts with wider economic, labour market and national policy factors. Several areas questioned how best to evidence progress when the most meaningful outcomes may take many years to materialise.

There was also recognition that local systems often have stronger information on activities and outputs than on long-term outcomes for families. While partners could frequently demonstrate service reach, referral volumes or financial gains, they described greater difficulty in measuring changes to family wellbeing, financial resilience or life chances over time.

Many areas expressed an interest in further support around outcomes frameworks, evaluation approaches and the development of indicators that are meaningful, proportionate and achievable within local capacity.

5.2.5. Reporting and alignment with wider planning

Feedback meetings consistently highlighted reporting burden as one of the most significant challenges facing local child poverty partnerships. Partners described operating within an increasingly complex landscape of overlapping strategies, funding programmes and statutory reporting requirements, creating significant pressure on limited staff capacity.

One of the most consistent themes emerging from feedback discussions was the challenge of reporting within an increasingly complex policy and planning landscape. Local partners described balancing the requirements of LCPARs alongside multiple other statutory plans and reporting duties, often drawing on the same evidence, partnerships and staff resources.

Many partners highlighted the challenge of aligning child poverty reporting with wider planning arrangements, including Children's Services Plans, Community Planning and anti-poverty strategies. While there was broad support for reducing duplication, partners noted that integrating reports can make it more difficult to maintain a clear focus on child poverty outcomes and the three drivers of poverty.

Several local areas also reflected on the resource implications of reporting activity. While recognising the value of LCPARs for accountability and shared learning, some questioned whether the time required to produce reports can sometimes detract from delivery and improvement activity. There was strong interest in more proportionate approaches that reduce duplication while continuing to meet statutory requirements.

Local partners expressed a particular appetite for practical examples and peer learning around different reporting models. Approaches such as Glasgow's shorter annual update, Clackmannanshire's 'One Plan, One Fund, One Report' model, and Aberdeenshire's integrated tackling poverty report were frequently highlighted as examples from which others would welcome learning.

Overall, feedback suggested a desire for greater clarity, flexibility and support in navigating reporting requirements, alongside recognition that no single reporting model will be appropriate for every local area.

5.2.6. Partnership working and the role of Health Boards

Local partners consistently recognised partnership working as essential to tackling child poverty but described a number of practical barriers to achieving fully integrated approaches.

Several areas highlighted the challenge of coordinating activity across organisations with different priorities, governance arrangements, reporting cycles and resource pressures. While commitment to partnership working was generally strong, maintaining strategic engagement over time could be difficult, particularly where staffing changes or financial pressures reduced capacity.

Local partners also reflected on the complexity of securing meaningful engagement from all partners across the full range of child poverty areas. While collaboration was often strongest around income maximisation and employability activity, developing equally strong partnerships around housing, transport, planning and economic development was viewed as more challenging.

In some areas, partners noted that the respective roles of Local Authorities, Health Boards and wider partnerships continue to evolve, creating opportunities for further discussion about shared accountability, joint leadership, and contributions to local child poverty priorities.

5.3. National Messages and Improvement Support

Funding stability and clarity of expectations

Local partners raised frustrations around short-term and fragmented funding as a significant barrier impacting the ability to scale effective interventions. Within this, there are also difficulties around (a) sustaining successful projects after pilot funding ends, (b) uncertainty beyond short funding cycles undermining workforce stability, and (c) restrictions on using funds for continuation rather than new activity (the example of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding was cited here). One area also highlighted their frustration at the provision of national or multi-authority funding for third sector services providers, where the service being provided is already being delivered by the local authority itself, a local community planning partners or existing local third sector provider. This was seen as resulting in duplication, waste and unnecessary complexity.

Local partners expressed a need for clearer, more consistent national guidance, particularly around reporting expectations in relation to funding pots and the need for funding alignment across policy areas.

Overall, there was a strong view that longer-term, sustainable funding is essential to support action to tackle child poverty.

Policy coherence

An untangling of priorities at the national level and greater alignment between national programmes were requested to help enable more effective local delivery.

Local partners emphasised the importance of linking agendas with a child poverty focus to enable policy cohesion and for local areas to embed into wider strategic planning. Further information on the transition to the Whole Family Support System Change Programme (named the 'Whole Family Support Integrated Change Programme' in the latest Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan [Bringing Hope, Building Futures](#)) was also called for.

Rural child poverty

There is a strong call for policy approaches that better reflect rural realities, including transport, childcare, and cost of living differences. Local partners discussed a need for further, robust conversations to help understand the unique challenges of rural areas to ensure that policies and resources are tailored to meet those needs, with one such policy being an evidence-based rural uplift. Further points reflected the lack of a rural lens in the latest Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

Support for learning and improvement

Continued opportunities for peer learning, and tailored support were widely welcome.

The key identified areas of National Partner support include:

- Facilitated self-assessment using the Improvement Service [Child Poverty Self-Assessment Tool](#).
- Signposting to [Public Health Scotland's Prioritise Child Poverty tool](#) for further support on strengthening outcomes frameworks and evaluation, including the offer of one-to-one support.
- Sharing examples of effective local practice through national networks and referral to specific examples contained within SPIRU's online [Tackling Child Poverty directory](#).
- Independent facilitation to support local tackling child poverty groups and local planning discussions.

- Support to connect local areas with relevant networks and partnerships, including the child poverty peer support network and rural child poverty network.
- Support with the use of data from the IS Research Team, and technical and information governance support from [SAVVI](#).
- Continued offers of one-to-one support to explore specific initiatives, programmes, and partnership opportunities, including linking to wider local and national stakeholders.

The feedback discussions provided valuable insight into the opportunities and challenges associated with local child poverty delivery. While many of the themes raised align with the findings from the analysis of Year 7 reports, they also provide important context on the practical realities of implementation and the areas where additional support may be required.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of Year 7 LCPARs presents encouraging evidence of progress.

Across Scotland, local partners are increasingly using data, lived experience and partnership working to inform local responses to child poverty, while making greater use of wider policy levers such as housing, childcare and employability. Reports also suggest that child poverty is becoming more firmly embedded within wider local planning, governance and public service reform agendas.

At the same time, feedback from local partners highlights that many of the barriers to progress lie beyond the control of individual organisations. Challenges relating to funding stability, reporting burden, policy complexity, workforce capacity and rural delivery continue to shape what can be achieved locally and the pace at which change can be delivered.

As local systems continue to evolve, the challenge will be to build on these foundations by demonstrating impact more clearly, strengthening preventative approaches and ensuring that child poverty remains embedded within wider strategic decision-making. The examples highlighted throughout this report demonstrate that meaningful progress is possible when local partners share a clear vision, use evidence effectively and work collectively towards common outcomes for children and families.

Ultimately, the strongest reports show that tackling child poverty is most effective when it is viewed not as a discrete programme of activity, but as a shared, whole system responsibility that influences how local services, partnerships and policies are designed and delivered.

7. Resources

The following resources may support relevant partners in furthering their understanding of national and local action to tackle child poverty:

- [Published Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#) – Access all published LCPARs and supporting resources.
- [Previous LCPAR Annual Reports](#) – Access previous national analyses of Local Child Poverty Action Reports.
- [Tackling Child Poverty Directory](#) – Scottish Poverty and Inequality Unit's (SPIRU) Directory of tools, guidance and case across Local Authorities.
- SPIRU Thematic Briefings – Scottish Poverty and Inequality Unit's (SPIRU) research and evidence briefings on child poverty and related policy areas. The first briefing will be published in the Autumn – contact [SPIRU](#) for details.
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan: Progress Report 2025-26](#) – Scottish Government update on progress towards Scotland's child poverty targets.
- [Poverty and Inequality Commission Child Poverty Scrutiny Report \(June 2026\)](#) – Independent scrutiny and recommendations on progress towards Scotland's child poverty targets.
- [Prioritise Child Poverty Resource](#) - A resource to support local areas develop child poverty strategic plans. It provides practical tools and guidance to support local areas use data and evidence when planning, monitoring and evaluating local action on child poverty. This includes the [Child Poverty Prevention Dashboard](#).
- [SAVVI](#) – The SAVVI team in Scotland provide support to Local Authorities and partners to identify, understand, and respond to vulnerability more effectively.
- [Child Poverty Self-Assessment](#) – The Improvement Service's Child Poverty Self-Assessment process is a tool designed to help Local Authorities evaluate their local child poverty work, encouraging reflection on progress, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- [Child Poverty Tools](#) – Improvement Service guidance, datasets and analytical tools to support local child poverty action.
- [Aberdeenshire Lived Experience Training](#) – Training and resources to support meaningful engagement with lived experience. This training is also available to external partners, contact childpoverty@improvementservice.org.uk for further information.
- [Child Poverty Peer Support Network](#) - Hosted by the Improvement Service,

the network of local government officers and partners working to tackle child poverty meet on a 6-weekly basis to engage in peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange. This includes access to the online community on [Khub](#) – contact childpoverty@improvementservice.org.uk to join.

- [Rural and Island Child Poverty Network](#) – The Improvement Service works with rural and island Local Authorities and their partners to share learning and develop tools to overcome barriers and tackle child poverty and wider inequality.
- [Fairer Futures Partnerships Learning Resource](#) – The Improvement Service host the online resources space, containing an overview of FFP work, the learning strategy, and various engagement outputs, including quarterly synthesis reports.
- [Glasgow Pathfinder Briefings](#) (July 2026) –learning and insights from Glasgow’s public service reform approach to tackling child poverty developed by Improvement Service.
- [Child poverty and community wealth building in Preston](#) – Centre for Local Economies published a report in July 2026 examining why Preston appears to have performed more favourably than many comparable places on child poverty after housing costs.

8. Appendix 1: Longitudinal Analysis of Local Child Poverty Action Reporting

The following charts present indicative findings and a longitudinal overview of key themes identified through the national partner review of Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs) over the past three reporting years (Years 5 – 7). The analysis compares the extent to which key themes and areas of work have been approached within reports over time, helping to highlight emerging trends and aspects where development remains more variable across local partnerships. While changes shown in the charts may reflect both improvements in local practice and changes in reporting approaches, they provide a useful indication of how local child poverty action is evolving across local areas and where increasing focus is being applied to particular priorities and ways of working.

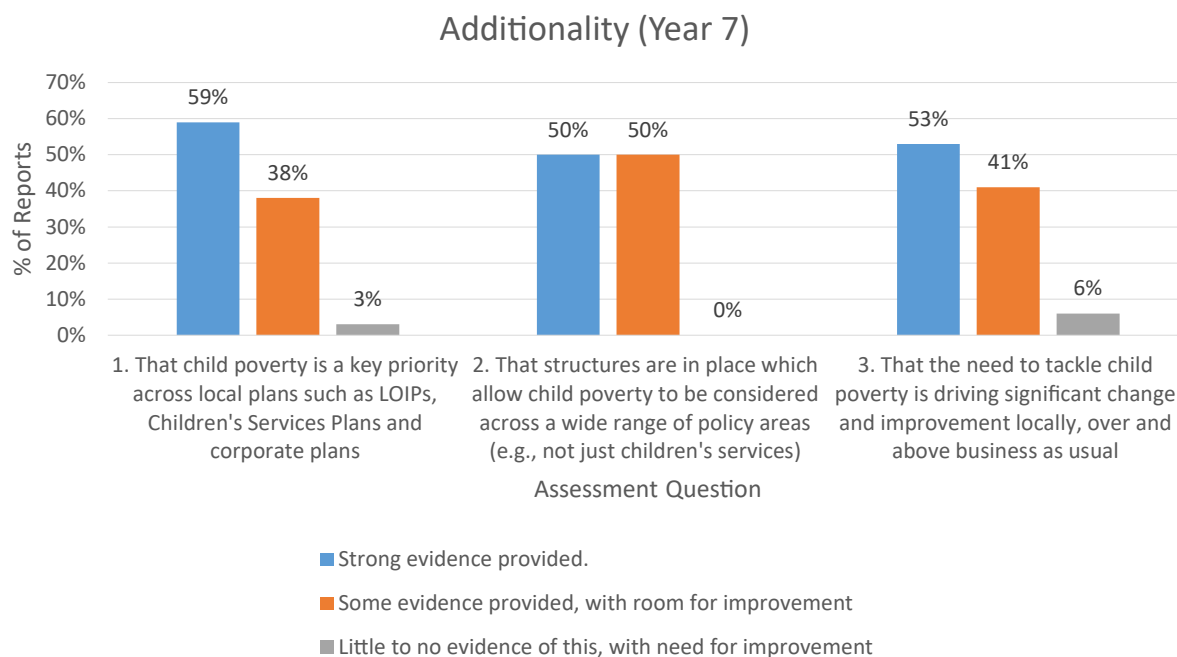


Figure 1: Indicative assessment of the additionality of local child poverty action, Year 7.

Most Year 7 reports provided strong or moderate evidence that child poverty is influencing wider local planning, policy integration, and driving significant change over and above business as usual.

Note: The Year 6 reports were reviewed using a 1 – 10 scale. The average Year 6 assessments were: 7/10 for priority across local plan, 7/10 for wider policy integration, and 6.5/10 for evidence that child poverty was driving activity beyond business as usual.

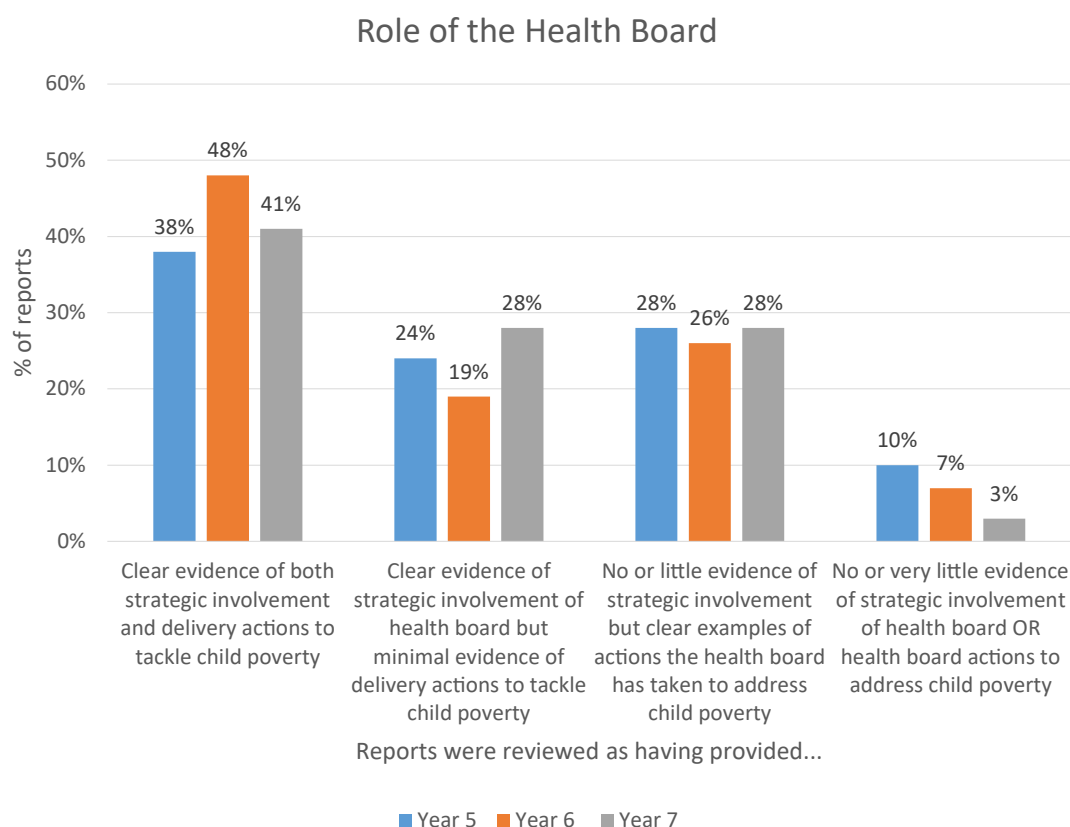


Figure 2: Indicative assessment of the role of the Health Board in LCPARs, Years 5 - 7.

Health Board involvement remains evident across most reports, although the balance between strategic leadership and operational delivery continues to vary.

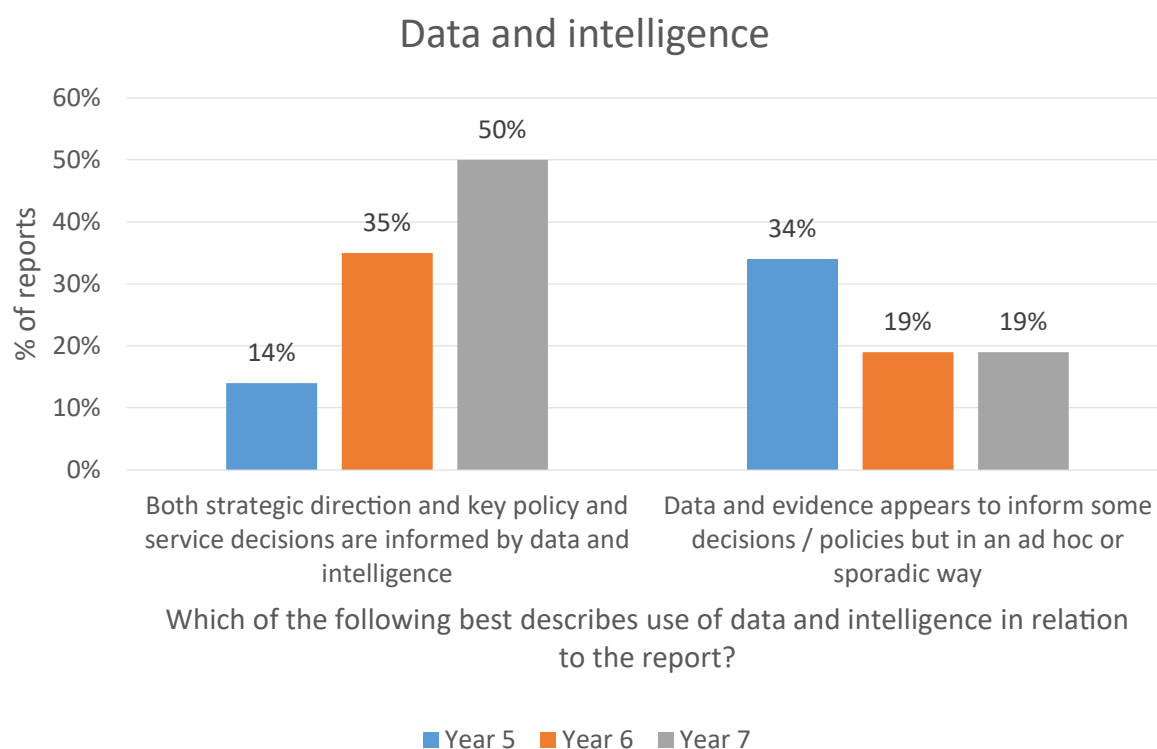


Figure 3: Indicative assessment of the use of data and intelligence, Years 5 - 7.

Data and intelligence are increasingly informing policy and service decisions, representing one of the strongest areas of improvement across reporting.

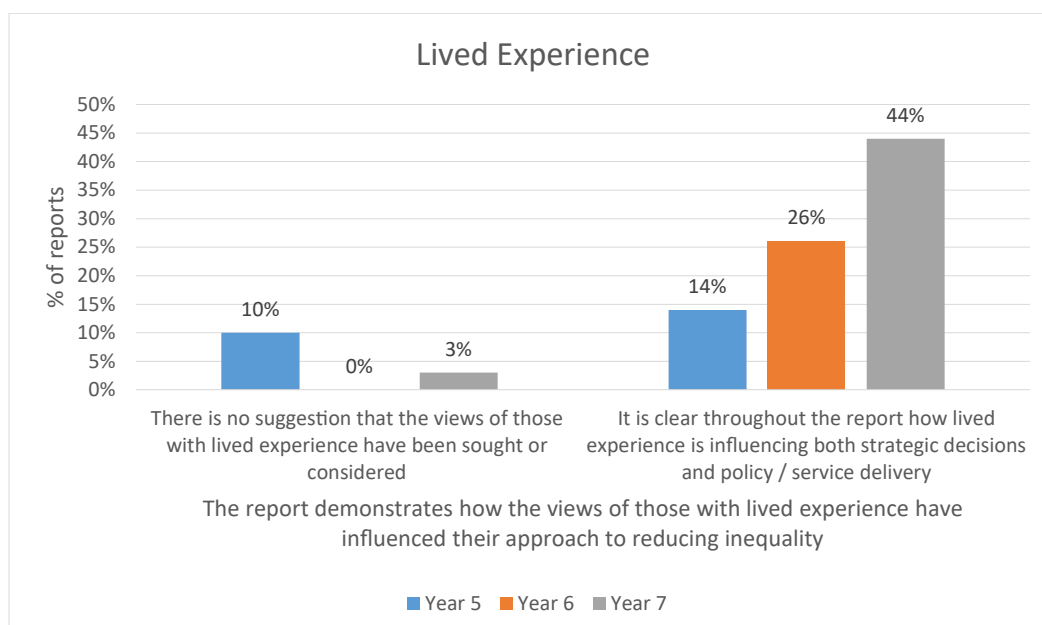


Figure 4: Indicative assessment of the use and influence of the voice of lived experience, Years 5 - 7.

Longitudinal analysis suggests a significant increase in the use and influence of lived experience on local decision-making, policy and service delivery.

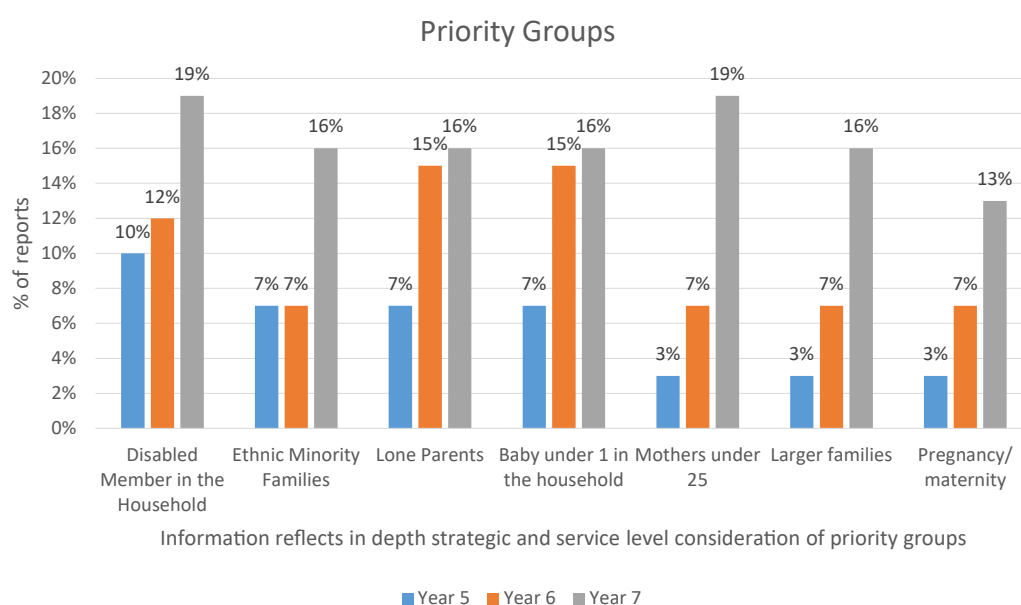


Figure 5: Indicative assessment of strategic consideration of priority groups, Years 5 - 7.

Collectively, strategic and service-level consideration of priority groups across LCPARs continues to mature, although the depth of analysis and strategic focus remains variable across individual priority groups.

Strategic approaches to the three drivers, Year 7

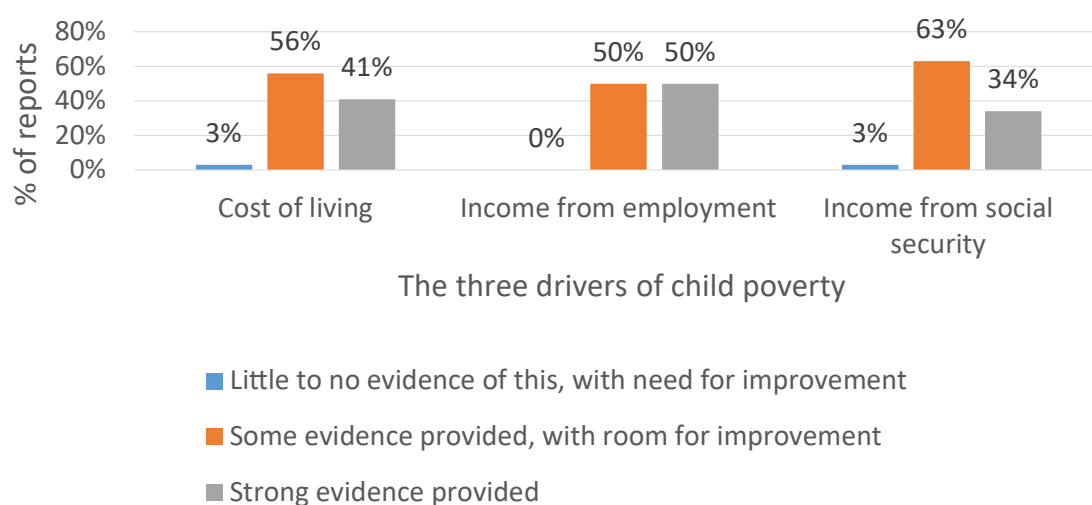


Figure 6: Indicative assessment of strategic approaches to addressing the three drivers of child poverty, Year 7.

Most Year 7 reports demonstrated at least some strategic consideration of the three drivers of child poverty, with particularly strong evidence in relation to employment and cost of living interventions.

Note: We haven't made a direct comparison to Year 6 reports as they were reviewed on a scale of 1 – 10. The averages across Year 6 reports were: Cost of living 6 / 10, income from employment 6.5 / 10, and income from social security 7 / 10.

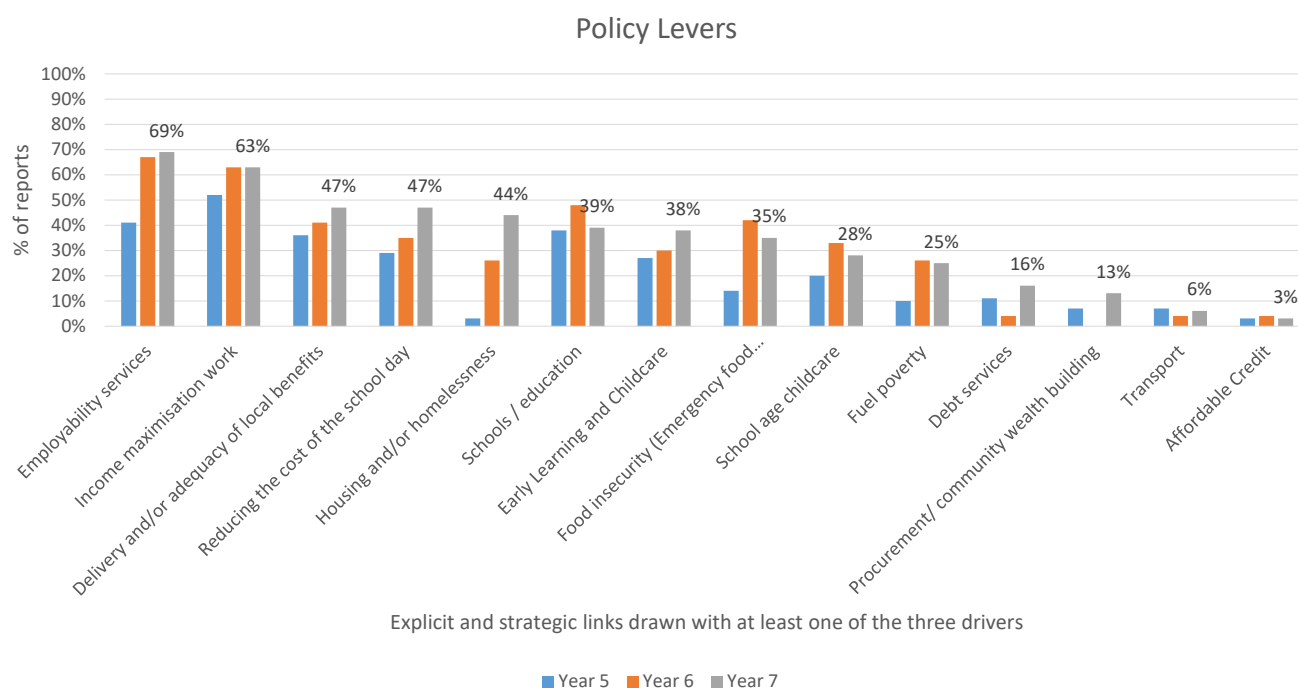


Figure 7: Indicative assessment of strategic links drawn to wider policy levers, Years 5 - 7.

LCPARs increasingly make explicit and strategic links to a wider range of policy levers that contribute to child poverty, with particularly strong growth in housing-related activity.

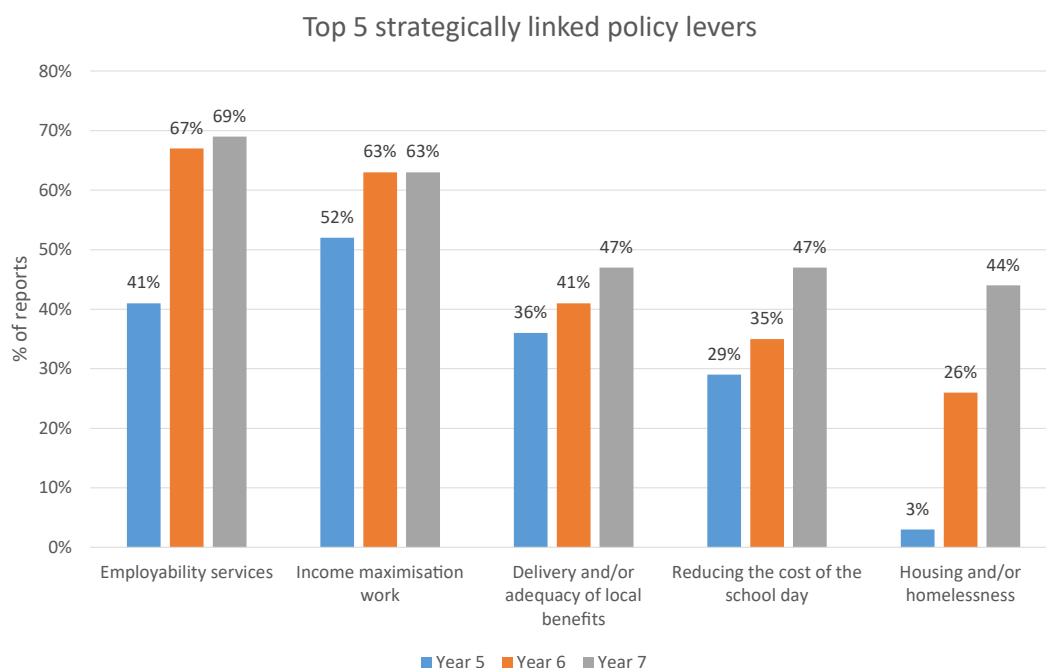


Figure 8: Indicative assessment of the top 5 strategically linked policy levers, Years 5 - 7.

Employability, income maximisation, local benefits, reducing the cost of the school day and housing are the top five most strategically linked policy levers across Year 7 LCPARs.

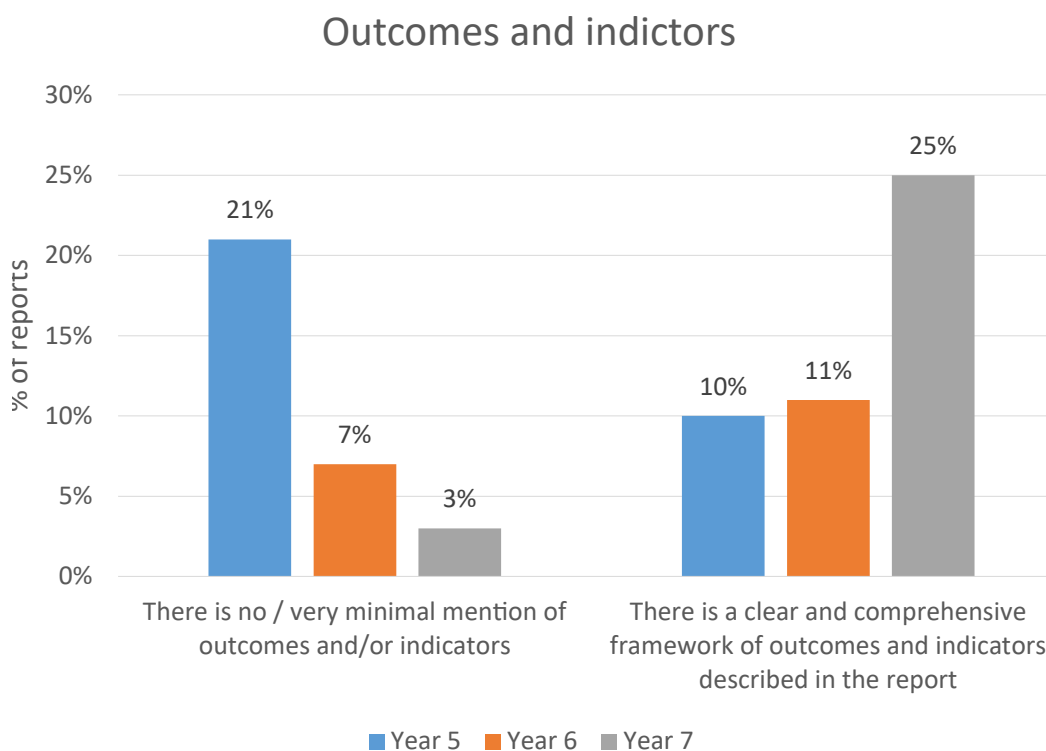


Figure 9: Indicative assessment of outcomes and indicators, Years 5 - 7.

Reporting on outcomes and indicators continues to improve, although less than half of reports include comprehensive outcomes frameworks.

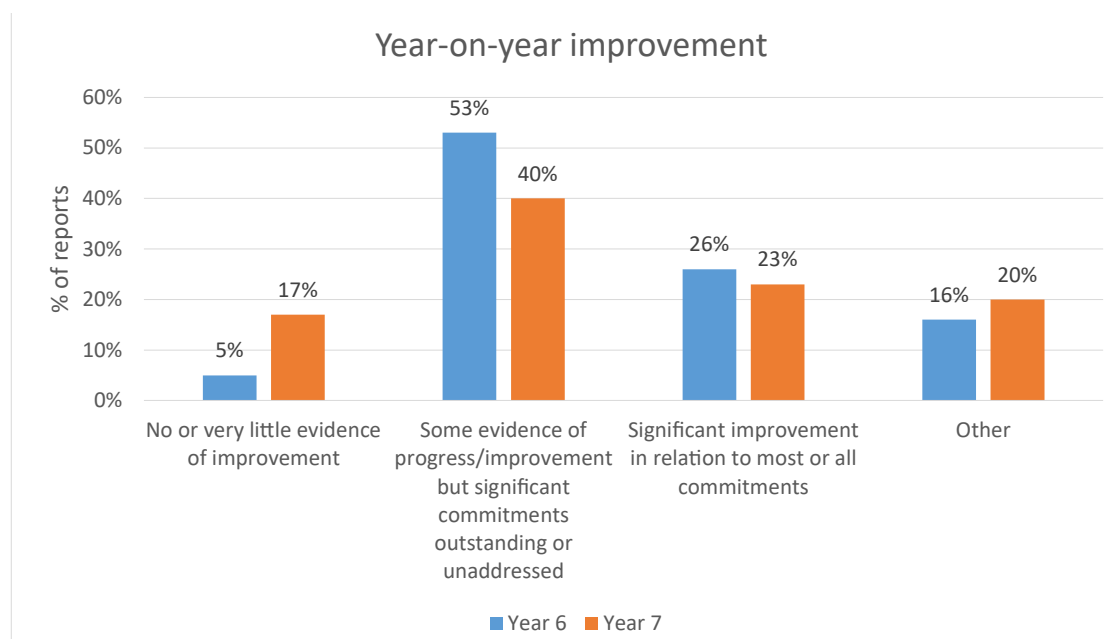


Figure 10: Indicative assessment of year-on-year improvement, Years 6 - 7.

Most reports evidence some improvement using feedback on the previous year's report, although the pace and extent of improvement varies across local areas. This chart presents National Partners' reflections on the question: 'Have previous commitments and/or suggested improvements from [the previous year] been addressed in this report?'; Year 6 responses refer to improvements made since Year 5, and Year 7 responses refer to improvements made since Year 6.

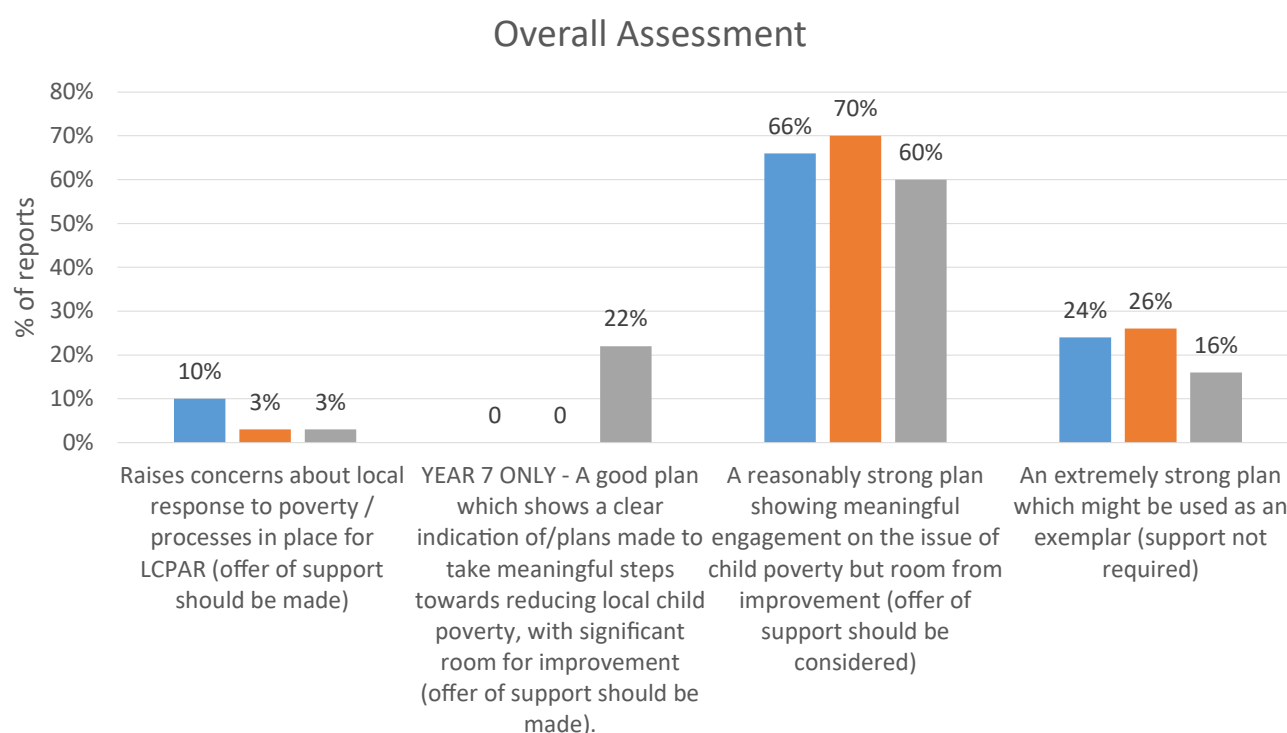


Figure 11: Indicative overall assessment of LCPARs, Years 5 - 7.

Most LCPARs continue to be reviewed as good or strong, demonstrating meaningful engagement with local child poverty action, although variation remains in overall report quality and maturity.

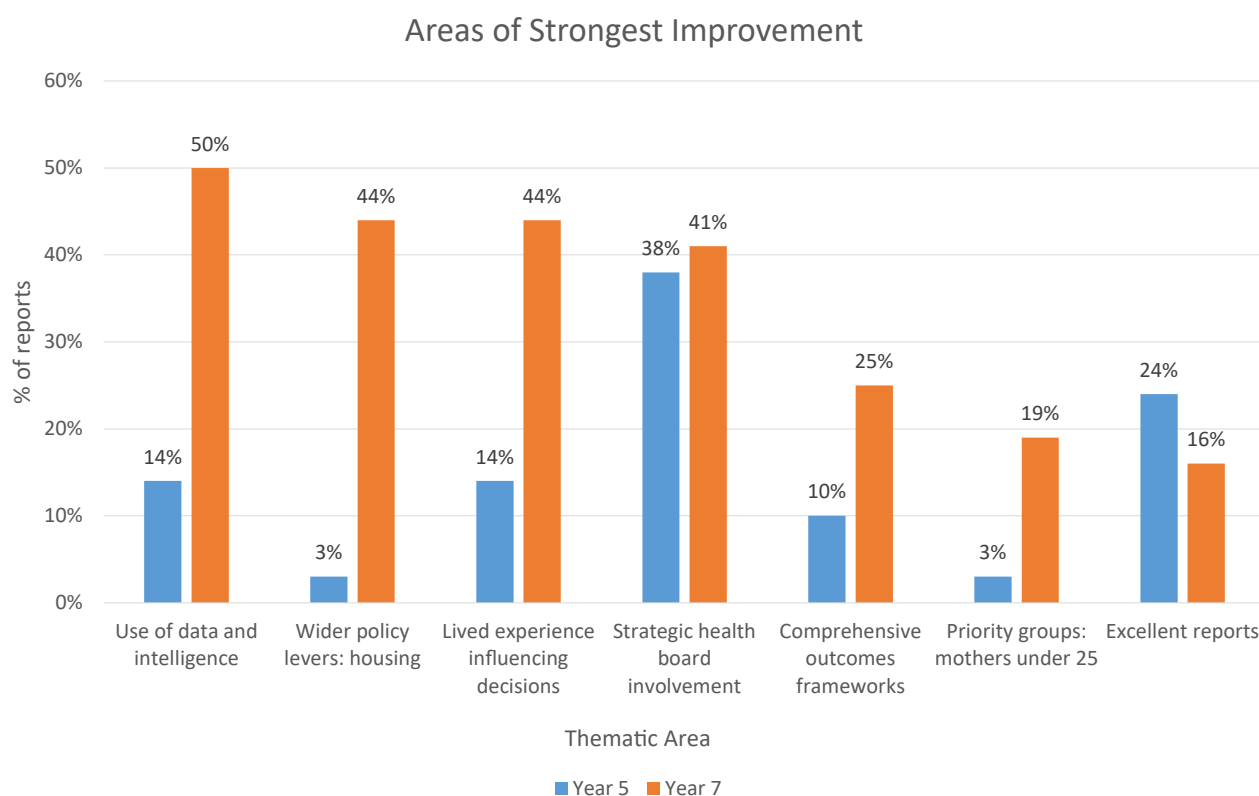


Figure 12: Indicative areas of strongest improvement in LCPAR reporting, Years 5 & 7.

The strongest improvement areas, based on the proportion of reports demonstrating strong evidence against selected review criteria, were observed in the use of data and intelligence, housing as a policy lever, and lived experience, suggesting increasing maturity in local approaches to tackling child poverty.

9. Appendix 2: Smart Survey Questions

1. Which national partner is completing this survey? (Name and organisation)
2. Name of Local Authority
3. Please comment on any existing support provided by a national partner with this Local Authority (e.g., IS self-assessment, PHS toolkit.)
4. Month/Year of Publication
5. The report is:
 - A standalone Local Child Poverty Action Report
 - Contained within a wider tackling poverty or inequality strategy
 - Contained within a Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Children's Services Plan or other local strategy.
 - Other (please specify)
6. The report is:
 - An annual 1-year report
 - Covers more than 1 year (please detail below)
 - Is an update on a longer terms report or strategy covering more than one year
7. Does the LCPAR describe both past action and action planned for the coming year and beyond?
8. Who signed off the LCPAR for Local Authority, CPPs, NHS or HSCP?
 - Local Authority - no signature
 - Local Authority Chief Executive
 - Local Authority – Other
 - CPP - No signature
 - Chair of the CPP
 - Please specify who signed off the report for CPPs
 - NHS - No signature
 - NHS Chief Executive
 - NHS Chair
 - Director of Public Health
 - NHS – Other
9. Are the local governance structures for tackling child poverty described clearly in the report?

10. To what extent does the report suggest:

- That child poverty is a key priority across local plans such as LOIPs, Children's Services Plans and corporate plans.
- That structures are in place which allow child poverty to be considered across a wide range of policy areas (e.g., not just children's services)
- That the need to tackle child poverty is driving significant change and improvement locally, over and above business as usual

11. How would you characterise the role of the Health Board in relation to the report?

- No or very little evidence of strategic involvement of Health Board OR Health Board actions to address child poverty
- No or little evidence of strategic involvement but clear examples of actions the Health Board has taken to address child poverty
- Clear evidence of strategic involvement of Health Board but minimal evidence of delivery actions to tackle child poverty
- Clear evidence of both strategic involvement and delivery actions to tackle child poverty

12. Based on the contents of the report, how would you characterise partnership working to address child poverty in this area?

- Little evidence of any partnership working
- Operational level: activity from different partner organisations is described but little evidence of joint planning presented
- The report suggests joint planning at a strategic level to address child poverty

13. Which of the following best describes use of data and intelligence in relation to the report?

- There is no evidence that data or intelligence have informed either strategic priorities or specific policies
- Data and evidence appears to inform some decisions / policies but in an ad hoc or sporadic way
- There are clear examples of specific policies or services being informed by data and intelligence (but not strategic priorities)
- Overarching strategic priorities have been identified based on data and intelligence (but not policy / service decisions)
- Both strategic direction and key policy and service decisions are informed by data and intelligence

14. Do you have any comments or reflections on the use of data and intelligence (e.g. particular gaps, areas that were unclear or follow up questions)

15. The report demonstrates how the views of those with lived experience have influenced their approach to reducing inequality

- There is no suggestion that the views of those with lived experience have been sought or considered
- Lived experience has been collected/mentioned but no insight is given as to how policy/ practice has changed as a result
- There are clear examples provided of how the lived experience of people is influencing policy and/ or practice, but only in relation to one or two specific policy areas or services

- It is clear throughout the report how lived experience is influencing both strategic decisions and policy / service delivery
 - The views of those with lived experience have not been considered but there is an intention articulated to ensure that this happens in future
16. The lived experience of the following groups has been expressly considered
- General population
 - Low-income households
 - Low income households with children
 - Low income households with children in some of the priority groups
 - Low income households with children in all of the priority groups
 - Children and/or young people
 - It is unclear which groups have been included
17. Do you have any further comments or reflections in relation to lived experience (e.g., particular gaps, areas that were unclear or follow up questions)
18. The report draws on a wide range of policy levers that can contribute to the reduction of child poverty. The specific impact on child poverty is drawn out in that policy area:
- Housing and/or homelessness
 - Employability services
 - Delivery and/or adequacy of local benefits
 - Transport
 - Early Learning and Childcare
 - School age childcare
 - Reducing the cost of the school day
 - Procurement/ Community Wealth Building
 - Affordable Credit
 - Debt services
 - Fuel poverty
 - Income maximisation work
 - Food insecurity
 - Schools / education
 - Planning
 - Climate Change
19. Income maximisation pathways and settings
- Maternity
 - Health Visiting /FNP
 - Primary Care
 - Other NHS settings (e.g. Acute hospitals)
 - Income maximisation support for staff

- Education
- ELC settings
- Other (please specify below)

20. To what extent are each of the three drivers of poverty being addressed in a strategic and structural way (as opposed to the report listing largely un-connected interventions)

21. Is there evidence in the report that child poverty is considered in budget setting and/or financial decision making?

22. Does the report make reference to the Local Authority, NHS or wider CPP partners being involved in the delivery of anchor-related workstreams outlined below?

Does the report describe employment programme(s) which support parents into jobs within:

- The Local Authority
- The Health Board
- Another community planning partner

If yes, is information about priority groups are recorded in relation to each?

Does the LCPAR make reference to in-work/ employee progression programme(s) for parents working within

- The Local Authority
- The Health Board
- Another community planning partner

Is there evidence that local economic and/or business support activity is being designed to contribute to reducing child poverty?

- The Local Authority
- The Health Board
- Another community planning partner

23. Does the report describe interesting ways of working?

- A whole systems approach
- A person-centred approach
- A rights-based approach
- A cash-first approach
- A place-based approach
- A participatory budgeting approach

Consideration of the Fairer Scotland Duty

24. Information about Fairer Futures Partnerships, self-assessment, early adopters, and CPAF. Does the report provide information about the following national initiatives?

- Child Poverty Self-assessment
- CP Accelerator Fund (CPAF)
- Early Adopter (childcare)

- Fairer Futures Partnerships
- Adopt and Adapt

25. Are links made with relevant strategies and initiatives

- UNCRC
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- The Promise
- Trauma informed approaches
- Community Wealth Building
- Best Start, Bright Futures
- Fairer Scotland Duty
- Other (please specify)

26. Staff training. Is there reference to staff training in the LCPAR? (Local Authority; NHS and HSCP; Other CPP Partners (e.g. third sector))

- Staff are receiving training on child poverty/ poverty awareness
- Staff are receiving training on local income maximisation referral pathways
- Staff are delivering training on child poverty/ poverty awareness
- Staff are delivering training on local income maximisation referral pathways
- Training is reaching staff who support low-income families
- The impact of the training for staff is recorded.

27. Information /data on priority groups is included in the report.

- Disabled Member in the Household
- Ethnic Minority Families
- Lone Parents
- Baby under 1 in the household
- Mothers under 25
- Larger families
- Pregnancy/ maternity

28. Do you have any further reflection in relation to priority groups (this might be gaps, follow up questions or reflections on progress for example)?

29. Does the report make reference to people with protected characteristics (outwith the priority groups). This might include, for example, gender, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital status, gender assignment?

30. Which option(s) best describes the use of outcomes and indicators in the report?

- There is no / very minimal mention of outcomes and/or indicators.
- Outcomes are described but it is unclear how progress towards them will be understood.
- There are outcomes and/or indicators in relation to some specific areas of the report, but not others.
- There is a clear and comprehensive framework of outcomes and indicators described in the

report.

Other

31. Which option(s) best describe the approach taken to monitoring and evaluation in the report?

- None of the actions are monitored or evaluated in a way that shows impact on low-income families to be understood
- Several actions / services are being monitored/evaluated but impact on low-income families is not drawn out
- Several actions / services are being monitored/evaluated and the impact on low-income families is clearly drawn out
- There appears to be a clear framework for monitoring and evaluating actions across the LCPAR. Impact on low-income families is clearly understood.

Other (please specify)

32. Do you have any further reflection in relation to understanding impact (whether through outcomes, indicators, monitoring or evaluation)?

33. Have previous commitments and/or suggested improvements from Year 6 been addressed in this report?

34. Feedback for local partners on the LCPAR. Please list key points that you might wish to highlight to the relevant Local Authority / Health Board in order to support continual improvement. This might include:

- Key strengths of the report, including areas of interesting or innovative practice (although there is no need to repeat in full areas of practice described elsewhere in this survey)
- Potential gaps or areas for future improvement.
- Specific challenges experienced by this area including partnership challenges.

35. How would you classify this LCPAR?

- Raises concerns about local response to poverty / processes in place for LCPAR (offer of support should be made)
- A good plan which shows a clear indication of plans made to take meaningful steps towards reducing local child poverty, with significant room for improvement (offer of support should be made).
- A reasonably strong plan showing meaningful engagement on the issue of child poverty but room for improvement (offer of support should be considered)
- An extremely strong plan which might be used as an exemplar (support not required)

Any reflection on support required?

36. Does this LCPAR provide any examples of good practice that should be shared with SPIRU for inclusion in the Directory?

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