

Child Poverty Peer Support Network: Summary Briefing

9 June 2026

Key messages:

- Partners welcomed the overall direction of the plan but emphasised the need for greater clarity, longer-term certainty, and stronger alignment between national ambition and local delivery realities.
- There is a clear ask for more detail on how commitments will be implemented locally, particularly beyond Year 1, to support planning and confidence in delivery.
- Early priorities should focus on key structural drivers, particularly housing affordability, and improved data sharing.
- Partners called for a shift away from fragmented funding toward fewer, large-scale interventions, supported by clearer oversight of funding flows.
- Delivering impact will require system change, including better policy integration, more flexibility for local areas, and a stronger focus on prevention, learning, and scaling what works.

Scottish Government

The Scottish Government presented *Bringing Hope, Building Futures* as a flexible framework (2026–2031), aiming to keep 100,000 children out of poverty by 2027. The plan is structured around four themes, increasing earnings, reducing living costs, maximising social security, and supporting families to thrive, with continued focus on priority groups and the three drivers of poverty. It's informed by extensive stakeholder and lived experience engagement and includes over £110 million in new investment and expansion of programmes such as MCR Pathways, Family Nurse Partnership and Bookbug, alongside new measures including transport to employment and a child maintenance pilot. Data sharing and Whole Family Support are identified as key enablers. Next steps include new governance arrangements and refreshed LCPAR guidance.

Poverty Alliance

Gary Christie from the Poverty Alliance emphasised that, while the Child Poverty Delivery Plan reflects many of their long-standing priorities, such as recognising public debt, strengthening social security, and promoting whole family support and joined-up services, the key challenges remain around scale and delivery. They acknowledged concerns, including external criticism that the plan may not meet statutory targets, but stressed the importance of working constructively with government to make progress. They welcomed elements such as the Scottish Child Payment uplift and other targeted initiatives, but noted limited new investment and a lack of detail beyond year one. They highlighted the critical role of local partners in translating national ambition into impact, while pointing to ongoing barriers including data sharing, workforce capacity, and fragmented funding. Overall, they see the direction of travel as positive, but stressed that stronger focus on impact, income maximisation, prevention, and clearer delivery frameworks will be needed to achieve meaningful change for families.

LCPAR Guidance Refresh

Scottish Government outlined plans to refresh the LCPAR guidance to better align with the new delivery plan and strengthen its role in driving local priorities, with updated guidance expected before the end of the year and applied from 2026 to 2027 (Year 9) reporting. The refresh is likely to focus on improving alignment with other strategies, strengthening planning and evaluation, and supporting more strategic partnership working, including a clearer role for Health Boards. Discussion highlighted a desire for the guidance to move beyond annual reporting toward supporting longer-term local strategies, with greater emphasis on demonstrating impact rather than activity, particularly for priority families. Local partners also called for clearer expectations, practical examples, and improved integration with existing planning cycles, while noting ongoing challenges in balancing annual reporting with longer-term progress.

Summary points

Funding and communications

- Local partners highlighted a lack of clarity on how national plan commitments translate into local funding and commissioning decisions.
- There is currently no central communications plan; responsibility sits with individual Scottish Government policy teams.
- Concern about a “scattergun” approach to funding, with small, short-term allocations spread across multiple initiatives.
- Strong support for focusing on a small number of large-scale, evidence-based interventions, such as the Scottish Child Payment.
- Questions raised about the evidence base underpinning planned policy expansions.

Local delivery

- Concerns raised about the feasibility of transport-related employment measures in rural areas, particularly where infrastructure is limited.
- Risk identified that allocated funding may not be spendable within required timescales.
- Partners highlighted risks of duplication where national funding does not account for existing local provision.
- Variability between rural and urban contexts means national assumptions do not always hold.
- Lack of visibility of all funding streams contributes to duplication.

Local priorities

- Local partners reported that they are already maximising capacity within existing powers and resources.
- There was a view that income from employment alone is insufficient for many families, suggesting the need for a stronger cash-first approach at national level.
- Early priorities identified for years 1 to 2 included:
 - Housing
 - Data sharing and data use
- Housing, particularly the cost and regulation of the private rented sector, was identified as one of the most impactful levers. Some partners reinforced that meaningful action in this space could significantly reduce child poverty locally.

- Data is seen as critical to identifying families not receiving full entitlements, but persistent barriers to data sharing remain, including governance, trust and uncertainty about handling sensitive data. Significant demand for support in linking datasets, particularly DWP and Social Security Scotland data, with local systems.

Preventative agenda

- Strong concern about the practical challenge of shifting from reactive spend to preventative investment in the context of constrained public sector budgets.
- Acknowledgement from Scottish Government that this transition is difficult across all partners.
- Existing programmes, including Whole Family Support and Fairer Futures Partnerships, are intended to support flexibility and system change, with emerging local examples (for example Clackmannanshire Transformation Space).

Statutory targets

- Practitioners expressed concern about perceived lack of urgency in meeting statutory child poverty targets.
- Specific issues raised:
 - Limited detail beyond year one of the plan
 - Short-term nature of pilots
 - Scale of intervention required, referencing Poverty and Inequality Commission analysis
- Scottish Government response pointed to ministerial statements and ongoing learning from pathfinder areas.

Income maximisation services

- Income maximisation is seen as a critical preventative intervention, but services are under significant demand.
- Long waiting times and reliance on short-term funding limit ability to shift to preventative work.
- Concerns about workforce sustainability due to temporary funding.

Policy integration

- Strong call for improved alignment across policy areas (for example children's services, employability, Whole Family Wellbeing Funding).
- Current funding and policy structures are perceived as siloed, limiting integrated local delivery.

Recommendations

Short-term delivery enablers

- Scottish Government agreed to produce a comprehensive, short-term overview of funding streams, including indicative allocations and timescales. Local partners also encouraged the development of a national-level communications approach across policy teams.
- Delivery arrangements could be made more responsive to local capacity by reviewing timescales for funding, engaging with local authorities early to test deliverability, and ensuring place-based approaches are supported, particularly in rural areas. Place-based approaches could include allowing for greater flexibility for local areas to adapt or repurpose funding where

equivalent services already exist, reducing duplication and making better use of existing provision.

- Early delivery priorities should align with areas identified by local partners, particularly housing and data. There was a suggestion for national focus on enabling fewer, high-impact interventions, such as the Scottish Child Payment.
- Provide clarification, or strengthen transparency, on analysis underpinning key policy decisions. While local partners suggested they themselves could capitalise on existing local networks, such as tackling poverty officer group, to map provision and funding flows.

Long-term system change

- Scottish Government should set out a clearer multi-year strategy for delivery, including milestones beyond Year 1, and a stronger articulation of how the scale of intervention aligns with statutory child poverty targets to build confidence in the plan.
- A more sustainable shift toward prevention is required, supported by medium-term financial mechanisms such as multi-year funding settlements, greater budget flexibility, and clearer guidance for local partners on prioritising preventative spend within constraints.
- Learning from pilots and pathfinders should be systematically embedded into sustained delivery models, ensuring that effective approaches are scaled rather than remaining time limited.
- Greater policy coherence is needed across government, including improved alignment of funding frameworks and a reduction in restrictive conditions that reinforce siloed delivery.
- Longer-term investment in core services, particularly income maximisation, is required to support a shift from reactive to preventative approaches, alongside consideration of wider policy measures to strengthen this system.