Briefing for Local Government: *Bringing Hope, Building Futures* Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan

Child Poverty Peer Support Network Briefing Note

Purpose

This briefing note was developed by Improvement Service for members of the Child Poverty Peer Support Network in advance of the meeting on 9th June 2026. This briefing aims to support local government in interpreting the third and final Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2026-31, Bringing Hope, Building Futures. It's intended to support discussion in the context of a changing policy environment following the Scottish Parliament election in May 2026.

Bringing Hope, Building Futures – at a glance

What's new?

- *Bringing Hope, Building Futures* explicitly continues to promote a fourth theme, 'supporting children and families to thrive', alongside the three established drivers of child poverty and reflects a strong emphasis on whole family support.
- Whole family support is positioned as a primary delivery model with explicit recognition of the third sector as a core delivery partner.
- A commitment to joining up and simplifying the policy and funding landscape, mainly through integrating Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, Whole Family Support Early Adopter areas, and Fairer Futures Partnerships from 2027.
- New commitments around data use and data sharing with a focus on improving targeting, increasing benefit uptake, and understanding outcomes.

What's stayed the same?

- Maintained a targeted delivery approach with continued focus on the six priority family groups.
- Commitment to mainstreaming child poverty action with expectations on local and national government and their partners to embed child poverty considerations across strategies, service plans, and budget decisions, rather than treating child poverty as a separate, stand-alone agenda.
- Maintained focus on partnership working through existing local mechanisms.

What does this mean for local government?

- There is more emphasis placed on the importance of collaborative models delivered locally, particularly through Whole Family Support, Fairer Futures Partnerships, and place-based and preventative approaches.
- Building on previous plans, the plan recognises the need to prioritise long-term preventative approaches
- Scottish Government modelling indicates that the statutory 2030 child poverty targets are unlikely to be met (relative child poverty levels estimated to reach 18%, not 10%).[i]

Implications for local government

Increasing earned incomes

Employment and skills

The Delivery Plan has responded to sector calls for investment in employability infrastructure and employer incentives to support upskilling parents at risk of poverty.

The Scottish Spending Review 2026 commits to investing up to £90 million annually in employability services to 2028–29, subject to annual budget decisions.

Delivery Plan – employment and skills:

- £11 million on skills and education parents need to enter and sustain work (£9 million for **RISE**, and £2 million for **Training Access Fund**).
- New £10 million **Flexible Workforce Development Fund** to incentivise employers to support upskilling and progression opportunities for parents at risk of poverty.
- £4.2 million to **NHS Scotland's employability infrastructure** and deliver 200 paid placements for parents at greatest risk of poverty.
- £40 million for **Parental Employability Support** in 2026/27, and £5million for specialist support.

Childcare and early years

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is a strategic lever for prevention, reducing child poverty and wider inequalities, and generating economic growth, rather than just an isolated service to support parents.

The Delivery Plan highlight the role of childcare in enabling parents (particularly mothers) to enter and sustain work, the importance of school-age childcare and wrap-around provision, and a continued focus on targeting provision towards priority families and areas of low uptake.

The Delivery Plan positions childcare as critical infrastructure and commits to incremental expansion of existing models.

Delivery Plan – childcare and early years:

- £15 million childcare that priority families need to enter and stay in employment.
- **National breakfast club** offer for primary school aged children by August 2027, £100 million of investment across 2026-29.
- £2.5 million each year for wrap-around **activity clubs** for primary school age children.
- Over £1 billion investment in 2026-27 in **funded ELC** (1140 offer).

❖ *Discussion Point: Does the Plan deliver when it comes to reforming childcare as an anti-poverty lever, or is a more fundamental shift required?*

❖ *Discussion Point: What is needed at local level to implement the proposed expansions? How will this differ in remote and rural areas?*

Transport

Meetings of the Child Poverty Peer Support Network and Rural Child Poverty Network repeatedly highlight the importance of transport as both a poverty barrier and enabler and noted a need for national solutions to improve families' access to work, childcare, and other services.

The Plan responds to this by spotlighting transport as a distinct policy lever within the 'increasing earned incomes' driver, with a national targeted offer for low-income parents accessing work.

Delivery Plan – transport:

- £19 million for a new **Transport to Employment** offer for low-income parents.

❖ *Discussion Point: Are current transport levers sufficient to address the barriers faced by low-income parents, or is wider system change required?*

❖ *Discussion Point: What are the barriers to reforming transport provision to tackle child poverty at local level?*

Reducing the cost of living

Housing affordability

Housing policy is a preventative tool and critical enabler in reducing child poverty. It also has a direct impact on local and national rates of child poverty.

The Delivery Plan reflects this by positioning housing policy as a core strand of poverty prevention.

There is a question of whether the increased prominence of housing within the delivery plan may require a clearer articulation of housing as both a barrier and an enabler within LCPARs. This might include articulating how housing activity contributes to reducing poverty risk for families, including clearer links between housing decisions and outcomes for children, particularly those within the priority groups, and how housing aligns with wider place-based approaches, including planning, employability, and costs of living.

Delivery Plan – delivering homes for families:

- £4.1 billion over 4 years as part of a wider investment of up to £4.9, estimated to support delivery of 36,000 **affordable homes**. This supports commitment to the delivery of 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, (70% social rent, 10% rural and island).
- £9 million in mitigating the impact of the freeze in **Local Housing Allowance**.

Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is inextricably linked to child poverty. Low-income households struggle to afford energy bills and maintain safe, warm, and energy-efficient homes, and sustain good health and wellbeing. While local authorities play a key role in improving energy efficiency and targeting support, their ability to reduce fuel poverty is constrained by UK-level energy pricing and regulatory frameworks.

Local authorities are encouraged through LCPAR Guidance to consider multiple levers that interact with child poverty, and as part of this, may seek to embed a fuel poverty lens in child poverty reporting, particularly in relation to planning and housing policy.[ii] This might include ensuring families have access to energy-efficient housing near schools and demonstrating reductions in ongoing costs and improvements to living conditions.

Delivery Plan – making homes cheaper to heat:

- Up to £64 million for **Area Based Schemes** (ABS) in 2026–27.
- £1 million **Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund**, supporting vulnerable island households.
- Calls on UK Government to implement an energy **social tariff**.

Public sector debt

Public sector debt, particularly council tax debt, is recognised as a driver of child poverty. The Delivery Plan refrains from outlining structural changes, rather, emphasises earlier, more targeted approaches and improvements to data-sharing.

Delivery Plan – public sector debt:

- Work with local authority partners to explore how sharing **Social Security Scotland data** can help target support to households with children with council tax debt.

Maximising incomes from social security and benefits in kind

Social security

The Delivery Plan reinforces the importance of local government interventions designed to maximise take-up and targeting support to families most at risk. These measures increase household income directly, with a significant role for local services in identifying and supporting eligible families.

Expansion of Whole Family Support and third sector investment lend further support to this area.

Delivery Plan – social security:

- **Scottish Child Payment Premium** for children under 1 to £40 per week instead of the basic rate of £28.20 from 2027-28.
- One-off £2,000 payment for **care leavers** as they move out of the care system.

❖ *Discussion Point: Recognising significant local demand, what additional national support and/or changes to local delivery models are needed to reduce pressure on council-led services?*

Supporting children and families to thrive

Public Service Reform

Since the publication of the findings of the Christie Commission, local and national government have been working towards a more joined-up approach to delivery and a simplification of the reporting landscape. Child poverty leads have noted with concern the proliferation of funding pots, each requiring separate reporting requirements.

The Delivery Plan commits Scottish Government to implementing a transition year ahead of the integration of three programmes from April 2027: Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, Whole Family Support Early Adopter Areas, and Fairer Futures Partnerships will be brought together into an integrated Whole Family Support programme.

Delivery Plan – public service reform:

- Establishing a £20 million **Whole Family Support Third Sector Delivery Fund**.
- £2.2 million to expand Whole Family Support in **General Practice**, initially doubling coverage in Glasgow.

Cross-cutting areas

Local economic development and planning

Planning decisions can help to prevent poverty by improving access to opportunities, lowering everyday costs, and connecting families with the support they need.[iii]

The Delivery Plan reflects a number of principles that align closely with planning policy (particularly National Planning Framework 4), including a stronger emphasis on place, prevention and access to services. This suggests a continued expectation that Local Development Plans act as long-term, preventative tools that tackle the structural drivers of poverty; Fairer Futures Partnerships are positioned as a key vehicle for aligning planning with poverty reduction; and economic development approaches including Community Wealth Building are used to support growth and reflect community voices especially children, young people, and priority family groups when shaping decisions.

While planning and economic development are recognised as important contextual drivers, the Plan does not provide direction or new levers in this area.

Rural child poverty

There are no bespoke rural child poverty policies set out in the Delivery Plan; local authorities are expected to interpret and apply national policy in ways that reflect rural and island contexts. This requires local authorities to deliver local, place-based approaches that take account of childcare provision, transport costs and reliability, and family access to work and services.

Data and intelligence

With national-level buy-in for data-led services, councils are encouraged to continue to use and develop tools to identify families earlier and target support more effectively.

While the plan sets out a clear ambition for data-led, proactive services, more detail may be required in order for local government to understand their role in delivery.

- *Discussion Point: What would need to change locally, in terms of systems, governance, capacity and partnerships, for councils to deliver the level of data sharing and proactive support set out in the plan?*

Delivery Plan – data and intelligence:

- £2 million investment in **Once for Scotland** Data Exchange programme
- Continued work around **SCP data** and pilots
- Ongoing **data sharing** developments, including data use to identify vulnerable households.
- Continue work with DSIT to expand the data sharing powers in the UK Digital Economy Act 2017.

Further discussion points

You will have the opportunity to discuss the impact of the Delivery Plan on local government with the Network and to raise collective questions with Scottish Government representatives at the meeting on 9th June 2026. The prompts below are intended to support focused discussion and reflection in advance.

- Where does the Delivery Plan give local government scope to shape policy locally, and where is that scope limited?
- Which interventions ought to be prioritised for early action in Years 1-2 of the plan?

- What support would local partners want to enable them to deliver effectively on the policy commitments in the Delivery Plan?
- Are the most impactful levers for reducing child poverty adequately covered in the plan, or are some key areas under-represented?
- In light of the Delivery Plan, do you plan to approach developing your LCPARs in a different way?
- How might the LCPAR Guidance helpfully reflect policy and delivery changes highlighted through Bringing Hope, Building Futures?

You Should Know – changes to child poverty measures (March 2026)

In March 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published After Housing Costs data for the first time. Previously, officers relied on this type of data published by the End Child Poverty coalition.

Access the data and a background note **here**, and catch up on the Q&A Session with child poverty data experts held on 13th May **here**.

Caution: Due to methodological differences between datasets, we advise that the newly published After Housing Costs data published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should not be used for comparison with previous After Housing Costs figures produced by the End Child Poverty coalition (pre 2023/24) as this will risk inaccurate analysis.

[i] Scottish Government, *Bringing Hope, Building Futures: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2026-2031*, 2026
[ii] Scottish Government, *Developing a local child poverty action report: guidance*, 2022
[iii] Improvement Service, *Integrating Land Use Planning and Child Poverty*, 2026