

Child Poverty Data Information Session: Summary Report

Tuesday 19th May



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Aims and audience for the session

- This was an initial event, developed by the Improvement Service in partnership with the Scottish Government, to provide information about work happening nationally around access to and making better use of data to improve outcomes for families experiencing or at risk of poverty.
- The session was designed to support colleagues to have a shared understanding of what work is progressing nationally. With a focus on household-level data, the aim of this session was to support policy and delivery colleagues in a shared understanding of:
 - o Ongoing initiatives and activities to remove data sharing barriers, locally and nationally;
 - o Key information that can be used to inform discussions with Information Governance and Legal colleagues in your organisations; and
 - o Opportunities to contribute to the activities to resolve data challenges.
- The session included inputs from the Scottish Government, the Improvement Service and SAVVI. Colleagues from across the majority of local authorities attended, including those leading work on Fairer Futures Partnerships, colleagues from across the Child Poverty Network, Whole Family Wellbeing Funding Learning into Action Network, Adopt & Adapt, and others.
- Learning from this session provides an opportunity to understand and develop future sessions to further enhance collaborative approaches to the data challenges associated with tackling child poverty and the delivery of Whole Family Support.

This output provides links to videos from each speaker, and shares some key learning from the session.

Speaker Inputs

Hanna McCulloch, Programme Manager for Child Poverty and SAVVI, Improvement Service

What do we mean when we're talking about child poverty and data?

[Watch](#) the presentation

- Data can help sharpen our focus, but we need to clearly understand the “why” and “so what?” to prevent getting lost in the complexity.
- Three main ways data can support local action, all contributing to understanding the impact we're having on children and families experiencing child poverty:
 1. Understanding need;
 2. Proactively identifying families in need of support;
 3. Supporting movement across services once a person is already through the door.
- Huge range of tools and approaches available, but how can we sharpen focus nationally to ensure this work is coordinated in an accessible way and how best to share learning.
- The challenges are the same across all categories of data.
- Data must support, rather than replace, the voices of lived experience and co-production approaches.

Clare McCrum & Darren Tierney, Tackling Child Poverty, Scottish Government

Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan and Data Actions

[Watch](#) the presentation

- Data sharing has potential and is critical to unlocking progress, but not in isolation and is not a silver bullet.
- The need to do more with data was a recurring theme in the consultation for the recent Delivery Plan. This work will continue to take time, but we are at a point of maturity to drive forward progress.
- Need a two-prong approach at national level: 1) The legal process, including managing and storing data safely, and ensuring local capacity and expertise to support this; 2) What to do with the data and follow through to implementation and redesign services to get support to families.

- What's set out in the Delivery Plan is not the totality of action around data. The plan gives an opportunity to sharpen focus with some of the actions set out.
- New actions set out in the Delivery Plan:
 1. Once for Scotland Data Exchange to strengthen public sector technical expertise in data
 2. Social Security Scotland data sharing
 3. Work with Glasgow work to share their learning around re-use of existing DWP data.
 4. DWP Universal Credit data sharing with local authorities in next 18 months, so need to support local authorities to be prepared to use this data.

Shona Nicol, Data Division, Scottish Government

Overview of key tools and resources from the Scottish Government

[Watch](#) the presentation

- Data Exchange, building tools to help people do the data sharing and strengthening expertise.
- [Data Maturity Programme](#), focusing on the non-technical aspects of data sharing, including culture and leadership.
- [Foundations of improving public sector data](#), guidance and training at the Scottish Digital Academy.

Nicola Nisbet, Whole Family Support, Scottish Government

Data and public service reform

[Watch](#) the presentation

- Data is critical to joining up of services in order to provide holistic support to families. Data can either block or unlock public service reform.
- The Public Service Reform strategy (2025) identifies data sharing as critical to joining up services, and includes workstreams on data sharing and usage, and digital public services. Data commitments in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan support whole family approaches and proactive identification of need.
- Early evidence from the Glasgow example of using data to proactively contact households and using an opt-out model to maximise uptake shows promising results.

- There is a lot of good work happening, but there's a risk of duplication, and creating new silos. Therefore, it is essential to share learning across areas, avoid reinventing solutions, and improve coordination nationally and locally.

Sean White, Principal Analyst, Leidos

Overview of work happening within the Digital Economy Act

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- Creating new objectives under the Digital Economy Act for public service delivery in Scotland. This allows Scottish Government departments and agencies who are listed under schedule 4 a legal gateway to acquire data for public service delivery.
- One of these new objectives is Early Intervention, focusing on a) intervening early in people's lives and b) intervening early in a process, before crisis occurs. The objectives are designed to create capability through the legislation.
- Data sharing is often blocked because organisations lack a clear legal route, not because it is actually prohibited.
- The work under the Digital Economy Act, especially the new Early Intervention objective, aims to fix that by:
 - o Enabling proactive identification of need;
 - o Supporting preventative, whole-family approaches;
 - o Making data sharing legally clear and operationally practical.
- There's still time to create use cases for early intervention, so colleagues are encouraged to get in touch: sean.white@gov.scot

Lisa Whyte, Chief Statistician's Office, Scottish Government

Overview of support available from the UK Data Sharing Team

[Watch](#) the presentation

- The UK Data Sharing Team acts as the gateway for Scotland to access data from UK Government departments such as DWP, HMRC, ONS and SSS.
- Agreed processes, contacts and documents with SSS, DWP, HMRC and ONS. The Team are not data protection specialists, but can offer advice about processes, contacts and practitioner knowledge.
- Examples of work delivered:
 - o Early Learning and Childcare data around eligible 2s shared with local authorities through Data Pipeline;
 - o Data linking for the Dundee Child Poverty Pathfinder (combining DWP, HMRC and Social Security Scotland data);
 - o Children in Low Income Families data used to inform funding distribution for schools.
- If organisations in Scotland need access to UK-held data, it's helpful to go via the UK Data Sharing Team early, as this speeds up and strengthens the request.
- Get in touch with the team: ukdatasharing@gov.scot

Helen Cannings, SAVVI Scotland

Overview of SAVVI and 2026 work

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- SAVVI was introduced as a practical framework to help local areas share and re-use data to identify and support households in financial hardship.
- SAVVI is focusing on sustained positive destinations for young people and wider adoption of work already done around financial hardship.
- Current activity across local authorities includes a focus on improving processes, building insight, automation and targeting support.
- The SAVVI team encourage local areas to get in touch if they're interested in sessions or surgeries, have use cases to share, and to provide feedback on the financial hardship blueprint: SAVVIScotland@improvementservice.org.uk

Learning from Fife Council

- Additional analysis carried out by Policy in Practice for Fife highlights that in Fife there are 112,014 claims (e.g., individuals or households that are missing out), totalling over £128 million in potential unclaimed benefits. [Missing Out 2025 | Policy in Practice](#)
- Fife use the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) which is produced by Policy in Practice, who share further data with Fife in their regular meetings. Local pension credit data is available online.
- [SPIRU case study](#)
- Fife are also looking to work with the SAVVI team to capture some of their specific case studies.

Resources

- [Learn more about SAVVI](#)
- [SAVVI - Rural Child Poverty case study](#)
- [SAVVI Playbook](#)
- [Data maturity programme](#)
- [Foundations of improving public sector data](#)
- [LIFT case study](#)

Contacts

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- UK Data Sharing Team: ukdatasharing@gov.scot

Contact us

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