

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	26 November 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen City Council Response to the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/228
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Michelle Crombie on behalf of Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Michelle Crombie, Strategic Lead, Prevention and Community Empowerment Matthew Lee, Anti-Poverty Officer
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1, 3.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Council's response to the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the Council's planned actions to be taken in response to the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty in Aberdeen;
- 2.2 Thanks members of the Scottish Women's Budget Group Steering Group, Aberdeen Youth Movement and all other stakeholders who participated in improvement action planning process;
- 2.4 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to provide an update on the 52 improvement actions presented in this report by December 2026.

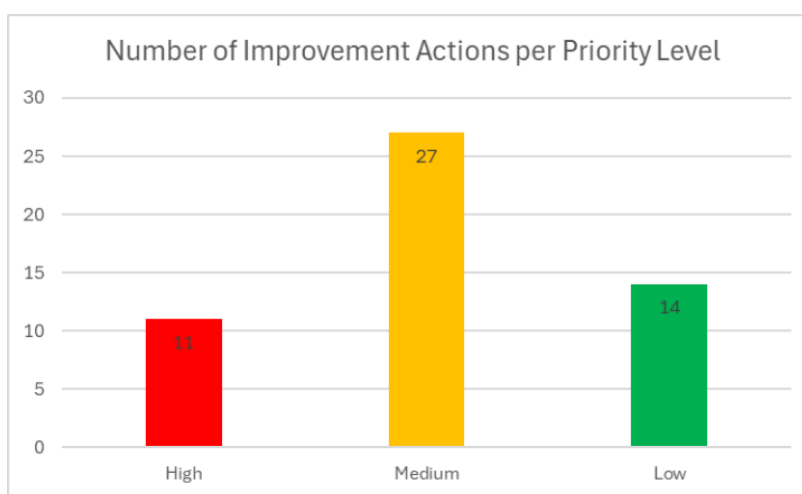
3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Following the decision at the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee on 12 June 2024, the Scottish Women's Budget Group was commissioned, in accordance with the Council's procurement regulations, to deliver a citizen's assembly approach to poverty and gender inequality in Aberdeen.
- 3.2 The [Aberdeen Gender Inequality and Poverty Report](#) considered by the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee on 11 June 2025. The report contained 116 recommendations, of which 96 were directed to Aberdeen City Council. The other 20 were directed at the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, Scottish and UK Government, Police Scotland and Financial Services Ombudsman.

3.3 Key Actions for Improvement

3.3.1 This report presents the Council's response to the recommendations of the Aberdeen Gender Inequality and Poverty study and identifies 52 key improvement actions to be taken forward by the Council in partnership with the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership and Police Scotland to address the issues raised.

3.3.2 Each improvement action has been assigned a priority level: high (urgent, legally mandated, or likely significant positive impact); medium (important) or low (minimal impact expected and/or already in place). 11 improvement actions are categorised as high, 27 are categorised as medium and 14 are categorised as low.



3.3.3 The 52 key improvement actions are listed below under the following themes:

- Care and Caring (childcare, kinship care and unpaid care)
- Safety (violence against women/community safety)
- Welfare/Benefits (low pay and in-work poverty, benefits and income maximisation, and Council Tax, Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax debt)
- Health and Wellbeing (accessing support, housing and transport)

See Appendix 1 for the Council's full response to Aberdeen Report on Gender Poverty and Inequality.

Care and Caring

Affordability and availability of childcare in Aberdeen

1. Continue to build on the success of the flexible childcare models being implemented at Cummings Park Nursery and Tillydrone Nursery if funding to further extend the provision of Early Learning and Childcare becomes available. Furthermore, offer the option to purchase additional Early Learning and Childcare hours in settings with available capacity.

2. Continue to publicise and promote Early Learning and Childcare to eligible two-year-olds to increase uptake. We will ensure that literature is clear about eligibility, including for twins and triplets.
3. Strengthen awareness of the Job Start Payment among parents by highlighting its coverage of childcare and other essential costs. Provide simple, easy-to-understand materials and share them with partner organisations for wider distribution.
4. Continue to monitor the number of childminders recruited as part of the National Childminding Recruitment programme, including those providing childcare for children with additional support needs. A Family and Friends Referral Scheme is being established to encourage existing childminders to promote childminding as a career and encourage their family and friends to consider it.
5. Continue to support children who struggle to attend school for emotional reasons as part of the Stronger Families Series. A new Digital Resource Hub has launched to improve access for parents and carers, supported by promotional materials in schools and community spaces. Training will also be extended to partners like the Family Learning Service to strengthen targeted support for families.
6. Participate in Business in the Community's (BITC) In-Work Poverty Lab, which will help the Council develop an action plan to tackle in-work poverty among council employees, including employees with caring responsibilities. This will involve continuing to promote flexible working and we will also work with BITC and ABZ Works to encourage other employers in Aberdeen City to do the same to embed flexible working practices and Fair Work principles.

Kinship Care and Parents of Looked After Children

7. The Financial Inclusion Team will use the Low Income Family Tracker to identify households with a child under three who are affected by under-occupancy or the benefit cap. These families will be targeted for Discretionary Housing Payments and other financial support, reducing the risk of financial crisis. By providing this support early, the Council can help families stay together and prevent children from needing to enter care.
8. Children's Social Work leaders will work with colleagues to strengthen staff knowledge on how to help families involved in the care system maximise income, manage debt, and access support. This includes training from Fife Gingerbread on how to support parents with the Child Maintenance Service, including how to make a claim, challenge decisions, and find further help. The service will also explore whether there is a gap in local advice and advocacy. A new Learning and Development lead will work with colleagues to deliver briefings that improve staff understanding of the benefits system and income maximisation routes.

9. Continue to promote school-age childcare provision and explore ways to capture data on children in kinship who access this support. This will help us better understand how we are meeting the needs of kinship families and identify opportunities to strengthen and improve the support available.
10. Review the offer to kinship carers as part of our new Family Friendly Project, ensuring that Council staff who step into this role receive the right balance of leave, flexibility, and practical support. The project brings together policies on carers leave, parental leave, and flexible working into a clear framework, making it easier for kinship carers to understand and access the support available to them.

Cost of the School Day and School Holidays

11. The Education Service will continue to monitor the cost of the school day and share best practice through the Equity Network. Targeted information will continue to be provided to parents and carers to help them access their full entitlements, including support from Money Advisors in schools.
12. The Financial Inclusion Team will distribute the Support for Families booklet three times a year, detailing advice agencies, available support, and clear centralised access routes to ensure families know how to claim what they are entitled to.
13. Household data will be analysed to understand how current benefit thresholds affect families working 16 hours a week at the National Minimum Wage or Real Living Wage. This will help explore options to support those who earn just above the cut-off for financial assistance such as the housing element of Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction, or Free School Meals, and cost estimates will be prepared for any potential changes.
14. In collaboration with Education, the Financial Inclusion Team will use the Low Income Family Tracker Dashboard to identify families entitled to Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants, or the Education Maintenance Allowance who are not currently claiming. Where possible, eligible households will be auto-awarded, and families will be proactively contacted to provide any required information, such as bank details, to ensure they receive their full entitlement.
15. Remove the requirement to provide a mobile phone number on all educational benefits application forms, making it optional while maintaining alternative contact methods. This change will remove a potential barrier to applying and ensure that families can access support in a way that suits them.
16. Explore the data we hold on school-aged children and their families to determine whether we can identify pupils who may require additional support with bus travel to school, focusing on children in low-income households who are not entitled to school transport.

Unpaid Care and Social Care

17. Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership will examine how they better understand and record situations where people need support but do not qualify for funded social care. They will work with communities and third sector organisations to explore how these needs could be met and to develop a Single Point of Access, making it easier for people to find out what support is available in their area.
18. Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership will ensure the annual report on the Carers Strategy is shared more widely and promoted more effectively. The strategy is currently being refreshed for April 2026 and input from the Scottish Women's Budget Group will be welcome.
19. Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership are reviewing their non-residential social care charging policy to make sure it properly considers disability-related costs. They will check this against national guidance and compare it with what other health and social care partnerships across Scotland are doing.
20. Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership will work with the Council's Data and Insights Team to test assumptions that non-residential care charges do not affect child poverty and consider whether the policy needs to change.

Safety

Violence Against Women

21. Explore options to prevent the need for temporary accommodation, working in partnership with Homewards Aberdeen, a five-year homelessness initiative launched by The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales, to reduce the risk of homelessness resulting from domestic abuse.
22. Continue to support teachers and youth workers to address and prevent issues contributing to future violence against women, including harmful online influences and pornography. As part of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group will work with schools on the Personal and Social Education curriculum review, incorporating updates to Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood. Health and Wellbeing Groups will meet monthly, with separate activity for primary staff, to ensure staff are equipped to deliver consistent, effective programmes that build understanding of consent, healthy relationships, and respect.

Feelings of Safety and Street Lighting

23. The Council's Strategic Place Planning team will continue to monitor work being undertaken elsewhere in Scotland around designing public spaces with women's safety, comfort, and inclusion in mind. Where appropriate, we will explore opportunities to take this approach in Aberdeen, for example through the revised Local Development Plan, ensuring new developments and redevelopments reflect best practice in safe and inclusive urban design.

24. Use the conclusions of the Path Network Audit and Open Space Audit to help identify areas flagged as needing improvement. The Path Network Audit provides detailed assessments of walking and cycling routes, highlighting safety, accessibility, and condition issues, while the Open Space Audit evaluates public spaces for quality, accessibility, usability, and community value. These audits will inform targeted improvements to create safer, more accessible streets, paths, and public spaces for all users.
25. Engage with Police Scotland as it develops its new Operating Model. This model emphasizes a stronger community policing presence, increased visibility in neighbourhoods, and improved problem-solving approaches at the local level. Close collaboration will ensure that public spaces are supported by responsive policing and that safety improvements align with community needs.

Welfare/Benefits

Low Pay and In-Work Poverty

26. Participate in Business in the Community's In-Work Poverty Lab, which provides an opportunity to collaborate with other organisations to better understand the drivers of in-work poverty and identify practical solutions. Through this Lab, the Council will gather insights on the specific challenges faced by employees, including those with caring responsibilities, and use this evidence to develop a comprehensive action plan. The plan will outline targeted measures to reduce in-work poverty within the Council workforce, ensuring pay, benefits, and workplace support are fair, transparent and inclusive.
27. Review the information contained on the Council Jobs website and My Job Scotland. Build a social media campaign to promote the Council as an 'Employer of Choice' sharing the range of job roles, pay grades and working patterns along with the benefits of working for the Council. Additionally, we will review other opportunities to promote the Council as an 'Employer of Choice'.
28. Analyse household income data to understand how current benefit rules affect families working 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage or the Real Living Wage. This includes examining the Department for Work and Pensions' income threshold of £952 per month, which influences eligibility for financial support. By understanding these impacts, the Council can explore potential measures to support families who earn just above these thresholds. Any proposals to adjust support in response to these findings would require funding approval from Aberdeen City Council and formal endorsement by the relevant Council committees, ensuring that any action is both financially responsible and aligned with local governance processes.

Benefits and Income Maximisation

29. Improve the accessibility and promotion of support available for women with children, bringing together information in an easy-to-understand format, making it available online, and sharing it with partner organisations to support wider use.
30. Review and update easy-read materials on benefits and financial support, identify gaps, and engage women with lived experience to understand their preferred formats. Feedback will inform a communications plan, including translations into priority languages and consideration of visual materials for those with limited literacy.
31. Develop a clear, user-friendly resource on Universal Credit calculations, including a simple introduction, a worked scenario, bullet points explaining the calculation, and links to official GOV.UK guidance and the online benefit calculator. Use household income data to understand how current benefit rules affect women working 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage or Real Living Wage, particularly regarding the £952 monthly income threshold.
32. Provide training for up to 40 Council and third-sector staff through Fife Gingerbread's "Confident Conversations" programme to improve discussions about child maintenance. Embed these principles into all conversations about maximising income, updating Financial Inclusion Team scripts, online benefit calculator prompts, and case-note templates, and ensuring staff sensitively ask about child maintenance, with guidance that maintenance income does not affect benefit eligibility.
33. Explore how we can analyse Scottish Welfare Fund application outcomes to identify underrepresented groups and potential differences in success rates. Use these insights to inform targeted promotional activity, and increase visibility of eligibility criteria and other financial support through multiple channels, including the Council website, community centres, family support booklets, and communications platforms such as Newsbite and the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations bulletin.
34. Continue proactive use of the Low Income Family Tracker to identify households eligible for Pension Credit and support women and families to successfully claim through multiple communication channels.

Council Tax, Council Tax Reductions and Council Tax Debt

35. Plan and deliver the 2026/27 budget consultation, including engagement with the Scottish Women's Budget Group to encourage participation and ensure residents have a voice in decisions affecting Council Tax.
36. Make information on Council Tax exemptions and discounts clearer and more accessible. This includes information available on the Council's website and the layout of Council Tax bills. We will consider whether a flyer could be added to the Council Tax letter to highlight this information and provide details of other support available for households to cope with the cost of living.

37. Create a dedicated, plain-English webpage explaining Council Tax Reduction. This will provide an introduction to what it is, how entitlement is calculated, and how individual circumstances and Council Tax banding affect outcomes. The page will include a simple worked example, a real-life case study, and a clear call-to-action directing residents to the online benefits calculator. Messaging will be promoted through local social media influencers and other accessible channels to reach those most in need.
38. Review the household data the Council currently collects to identify gaps beyond those in receipt of Council Tax discounts and exemptions, improving understanding of residents' needs and helping to target support more effectively.
39. Consider proposals to introduce a Council Tax allowance scheme, designed to reduce or remove historic, uncollectable Council Tax arrears for households experiencing financial hardship.

Health and Wellbeing

Accessing Support and Digital Support

40. Ensure the new website is fully accessible via smartphones and designed to support residents in accessing information easily. The Council will engage different citizen groups, including representatives from the Scottish Women's Budget Group, to gather feedback on ease of navigation and accessibility, and inform the development of content, such as guidance on important life events, to make it as useful and relevant as possible.
41. Develop a communications campaign to raise awareness of low-cost broadband options ('social tariffs') for households on a low income. This will include producing a flyer with information on social tariffs and distributing it through schools, libraries, community hubs, and local support organisations. The campaign will also promote this information on social media, the Council website, and in the Support for Families booklet to reach as many residents as possible.

Housing

42. Continue to work with partners to deliver more affordable housing across the city, with a particular focus on larger family properties. The need for these homes is set out in the Housing Asset Plan being presented to Council in October 2025 as part of the 30-Year Business Plan.
43. Develop a new Family Support Model as part of the Homewards project, which will take a closer look at how domestic abuse affects people's housing situations. This will help ensure services are designed to meet the needs of those most at risk of losing their home.
44. Implement a new digital platform to manage housing repairs. This platform will make it easier to manage and complete work efficiently, improving the service tenants receive.

45. A new insulation contractor will focus on loft insulation in shared Council and privately owned buildings, alongside some cavity wall and underfloor insulation to reduce energy costs for residents.
46. Create a “Support for Migrant Families” hub on its website, offering clear, multilingual information and a direct link to the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Network. Staff will have access to dedicated training and resources to help them provide informed assistance. QR codes linking to the hub will be shared through schools, community centres, and partner organisations.
47. Hold a focused session with the local community to understand the impact of limited public transport options near the Gypsy/Traveller site and explore potential improvements. It will also promote the contents insurance available for residents and ensure all tenants are aware of current repair timescales to support transparency and equality of service.

Transport

48. Review the assessment and renewal process for Blue Badges to identify opportunities for improvement. As part of this work, we will consider the needs of people with neurological conditions and engage with Aberdeen Action on Disability to receive their feedback.
49. Continue working with the North East of Scotland Bus Alliance to explore the most effective ways of delivering public transport across the region, ensuring that services remain affordable and offer value for money.
50. Work with the Bus Alliance to include a safety survey in future research to better understand passenger experiences and perceptions of safety when using public transport.
51. Improve awareness of existing community transport schemes by providing clearer information to the public. The Council will also review financial options, including the potential use of Low Emission Zone funding, to support initiatives such as a Taxicard or Dial-a-Bus scheme.
52. Continue to monitor Low Emission Zone exemption data to ensure the scheme remains fair and does not disproportionately impact any group.

3.8 Next Steps

- 3.8.1 To progress the implementation of these improvement actions, the Council has established a Gender Inequality and Poverty Working Group, the terms of reference of which are included in Appendix 1.
- 3.8.2 Progress towards completing the improvement actions will be reported to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee by December 2026.
- 3.8.3 Council Officers will continue to engage Scottish Women’s Budget Group as the proposed improvement actions are implemented.

3.8.4 Council Officers will collaborate with Health and Data Research Centre colleagues to ensure that improvement actions are guided by robust data and evidence.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial implications arising from this report will be funded from existing service budgets. Where this is not possible, they will be referred to the 2026/27 General Fund Budget Process in March 2026.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not responding to or implementing the recommendations within the final report.	Council officers have carefully considered all the recommendations within the study to determine what actions can be taken to fully or partially meet the recommendation. Where it was not possible to develop an improvement action that responds directly to a recommendation, officers have proposed alternative actions that deal with the general issue highlighted in a recommendation. Officers have attended engagement events and meetings with SWBG to seek clarification on certain recommendations, or to explain why the Council cannot implement them.	L	Yes
Compliance	Failing to comply with procurement law	Compliance with the Council's Procurement Regulations	L	Yes
Operational	Insufficient resources to implement the	Council officers will be asked to consider the resource requirements	L	Yes

	recommendations within the final report.	associated with implementing the actions for improvement to ensure a proportionate response to the likely outcome.		
Financial	Insufficient funding to cover the costs of implementing the recommendations within the final report.	Council officers will be asked to consider the financial requirements associated with implementing the actions for improvement to ensure a proportionate response to the likely outcome.	L	Yes
	Reduced revenue associated with implementing certain actions for improvement. Increasing public awareness is likely to result in higher demand for financial support, which could have an impact on service budgets.	Council officers will be asked to consider whether implementing actions for improvement could lead to a reduction in Council revenue.	L	Yes
Reputational	Not responding to or implementing the recommendations within the final report.	SWBG is aware that the recommendations are advisory. However, there is a commitment to consider the recommendations, provide feedback or seek clarification, and implement relevant actions for improvement where feasible.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement within the context of tackling poverty:-</p> <p>A Transparent, Accessible and Accountable Council</p> <p>Aberdeen City Council works for the people of Aberdeen, and it is important that people can access, understand, and take part in the Council's democratic</p>

	<p>processes. To make Aberdeen City Council more transparent, accessible, and accountable we will</p> <p>‘Explore options to establish local Citizens’ Assemblies – with the first remit of a Citizens’ Assembly being to advise the council on what’s needed to tackle gender inequality in Aberdeen’</p>
<p><u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u></p>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>Stretch outcome 1: 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 2: 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.</p>
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>Stretch outcome 3: 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 5: Care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 6: 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 8: 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 9: 10% fewer adults (over 18) charged with more than one offence by 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 12: Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Michelle Crombie, Strategic Lead, Prevention and Community Empowerment on 24 October 2025.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Citizens' Assemblies Approach - Final Report on the Scottish Women's Budget Group Study on Gender Inequality and Poverty 11 June 2025](#)

[Citizen Assemblies 12 June 2024.pdf](#)

[Citizen Assemblies 11 January 2023.pdf](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Aberdeen City Council Response to the Scottish Women's Budget Group Report and Recommendations on Aberdeen Gender Inequality and Poverty

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Matthew Lee
Title	Anti-Poverty Officer
Email Address	matlee@aberdeencity.gov.uk