

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	19 th January 2022
REPORT TITLE	Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/22/006
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Derek McGowan
REPORT AUTHOR	Derek McGowan
TERMS OF REFERENCE	Terms of Reference: 1.1.1 and 1.1.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with the Child Poverty Action report for 2020/21, as required by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 approve the joint Aberdeen City Council and NHS Grampian Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21 for submission to the Scottish Government; and
- 2.2 note that these reports have been created without access to national child poverty data, which is not yet available for the 2020/21 year; and that a service update will be issued once this data is available.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 (the Act) fully entered into force on the 1st July 2019. The Act sets out steps required to be taken by the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Health Boards to tackle child poverty. The Act identifies four definitions for poverty, identifies targets to be achieved by 2030, and creates a requirement for Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to annually agree a Child Poverty Action Report. This Report is then published and submitted to Scottish Ministers.
- 3.2 Poverty is defined in the Act under four different headings:
- Relative poverty
 - Absolute poverty

- Combined low income and material deprivation
- Persistent poverty

3.3 At Operational Delivery Committee on the 17th September 2019, the Committee agreed to adopt the Local Outcome Improvement Plan as the Council's Child Poverty Action Plan for the years 2019-22.

4 CHILD POVERTY TARGETS

4.1 Section 1 of the Act sets out targets that the Scottish Ministers must meet by 2030. These are that, of children living in households in Scotland:

- (a) less than 10% fall within relative poverty
- (b) less than 5% fall within absolute poverty
- (c) less than 5% fall within section 5 combined low income and material deprivation
- (d) less than 5% fall within section 6 persistent poverty

4.2 Section 2 of the Act sets out Interim targets, that must be met by the Scottish Ministers in the financial year beginning with 1 April 2023. These are, that, of children living in households in Scotland—

- (a) less than 18% fall within relative poverty
- (b) less than 14% fall within absolute poverty
- (c) less than 8% fall within combined low income and material deprivation
- (d) less than 8% fall within persistent poverty

These measures cannot yet be defined at a Local Authority level.

5 LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORTS

5.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 (the Act) requires each Local Authority and NHS Board to publish a Child Poverty Action Report (CPAR) and undertake annual monitoring and reporting to demonstrate progress against statutory targets.

5.2 A local child poverty action report must describe any measures taken in the area of the local authority during the reporting year by the local authority and each relevant Health Board for the purpose of contributing to the meeting of the child poverty targets, and measures that are proposed to be taken to meet these targets.

5.3 Additionally, a local child poverty action report must describe any income maximisation measures taken in the area of the local authority during the reporting year to provide pregnant women and families with children with—

- a) information, advice, and assistance about eligibility for financial support, and
- b) assistance to apply for financial support; and any measures taken during the reporting year, or which are proposed to be taken, in the area of the local authority in relation to children living in households whose income is

adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics, and

- c) The report must in particular also describe any measures taken during the reporting year, or which are proposed to be taken, in the area of the local authority in relation to children living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics.

- 5.4 The Act states that progress against these targets will be scrutinised nationally by the Poverty and Inequality Commission. However, at a local level it is the responsibility of the Local Authority and Health Board to publish, as soon as practical after the end of each financial year, a report on progress locally.

6 CHILD POVERTY ACTION IN ABERDEEN

- 6.1 The Population Needs Assessment used as the basis for the refresh of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan in 2021 identified that the rate of child poverty in Aberdeen was estimated to be 21.8%, or around 5500 children. Poverty is defined as 'below 60% median income after housing costs'.

- 6.2 This report sets out the measures that have been taken by the Council, NHS and other partners to tackle and mitigate the effects of child poverty during 2020/21. The reporting period therefore includes the initial responses to Covid and all subsequent actions during the year. It is unfortunate that national data is not yet available, as we are unable to reference the impact of the work undertaken against the rate previously reported to Committee. Once this data is available a service update will be provided to Members to provide further context to the details contained in this report.

- 6.3 The report outlines significant efforts to tackle child poverty through 2020/21, demonstrating both the extent to which the Council, NHS and partners understood the impact the pandemic would have on children and young people, and the actions taken to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

EDUCATION PROVISION

- 6.4 An extensive home online learning provision for all school age children was quickly launched, building on our partnership with Microsoft and using Google Classroom. Electronic devices were issued to ensure that learning could continue at home.

- 6.5 A wellbeing questionnaire was issued to children and young people in educational settings, with 5374 responses ranging from nursery to S6, 3507 parents and carers, and 1439 staff responded. This was used to understand and inform how education provision had worked during lockdown, and what support should be considered to ensure a safe and successful transition back to in school provision.

- 6.6 Key data from this survey included that 92% of learners felt safe online; that 87% knew who to contact if they felt worried or upset, and that 77% felt confident in their learning online. 61% of learners responded that they enjoyed learning online.

- 6.7 Parents and carers reported similar positivity, but highlighted concerns that learners' emotional wellbeing was not being supported fully online. This enabled staff to focus on mental health and wellbeing.
- 6.8 Trend data shows that school exclusions reduced during the year, and that attainment levels improved, demonstrating the efficacy of the online learning environment and subsequent detailed planning to permit transition back to class based learning.
- 6.9 1354 key worker / vulnerable child registered to receive childcare, with 829 supported in school and 1111 supported through an outreach model.
- 6.10 SISTEMA Scotland continued to deliver the Big Noise Torry programme, moving quickly to a digital offer that enable participants and their families to remain engaged in learning. Over the course of the pandemic, this included support visits to families involved with the collaboration of Integrated Childrens' Services and Education staff, and Big Noise Torry staff were able to take participants out for walks to maintain relationships.
- 6.11 The major step to extend in-school Big Noise provision from P1-P3 only to all school P1-P7 provision during the pandemic increased the opportunities available for children in Torry to engage with music and participate in fun, creative and inspiring opportunities. Around 3500 online sessions were delivered over the year, and participant testimony illustrates how important the programme was for children and families involved throughout.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

- 6.12 The Council's Maternity Guidance on rest breaks for pregnant and breastfeeding employees, and on the arrangements and facilities in relation to employees breastfeeding or expressing milk on return to work, were updated to include provision for granting reasonable paid time off to breastfeed a baby or to express milk.
- 6.13 It is acknowledged that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic, and an event was held to promote early years and childcare careers to ethnic minority groups in the City, which included details about early years as a career and routes into early years. This has been followed by further support to BAME communities to assist with finding employment.

INCOME AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT

- 6.14 Aberdeen Socio-Economic Rescue Plan 2020/21. The Plan was an immediate and dynamic response to the impact of Covid19, aligned to the LOIP strategic themes of Economy, People and Place. Locality Socio-Economic recovery Plans were also created to ensure a clear line of sight between the economic needs of the City and the priority locality areas. Scrutiny and oversight of the implementation of the Plans is done through the Community Planning Aberdeen (CPA) Board.

- 6.15 Ongoing support and commitment to Living Wage employment across the City throughout the year, including through the ABZ works programme.
- 6.16 5336 Business Grants awarded and distributed, with a total value of almost £39m. These were vital in supporting local businesses to continue operating and support staff across the city.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- 6.17 The provision of over £5m in funding to community organisations with a focus on providing support to children and young people. This included £2.383m through revenue grant funding to community groups and associations, £1.606m through the Fairer Aberdeen Fund; £621k to Leased Centres across Aberdeen; and £391k through the Common Good Fund. The Council also distributed £996k in Food Funding and £592k Hardship funding.
- 6.18 Through the Fairer Aberdeen Fund disbursement, notable outcomes include over 10,000 children and young people supported; 1.8 million meals distributed; 4705 children and young people supported, and 26 young people moved into employment, education or training.
- 6.19 The development of multi-agency 'Fit Like' hubs in priority locality areas allowed families with specific support needs to maintain access to professional support where statutory social work eligibility criteria are not met and where there are mental health and wellbeing concerns. In the first year of their inception (Oct 2020 – Oct 2021) Fit Like? Aberdeen has received more than 500 referrals, including self-referrals. 69% of these referrals came from an education professional and 17% from a health professional.
- 6.20 Almost £650k was distributed through the Scottish Welfare Fund to households in need.
- 6.21 8385 children were enrolled for Free School meals by the end of 2020/21, with increased uptake. To support families, Education Operational Delivery Committee agreed to fund free school meals for families in certain circumstances when transferring to Universal Credit.
- 6.22 The Summer of Play provided a range of activities for children and young people. £418k was invested in a participatory approach to providing activities for children and young people, with over 15000 bookings made. The average enjoyment rating for these activities was 9.5/10.
- 6.23 The Lord Provost's Charitable Trust collected £300k in public donations which was disbursed to local charities supporting our most vulnerable families and individuals.
- 6.24 Community Planning Aberdeen Integrated Children's Services Board and Anti-Poverty Outcome Improvement Group both adopt a multi-agency approach to tackling child poverty, with key aims identified and reviewed regularly.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial implications relating to this report would result from failure to achieve the outcomes sought for children and families across the City. Public services face significant challenges on expenditure, with financial projections indicating that these pressures will remain. Demand management is a key driver in helping meet these challenges, and failing to address child poverty may mean that costs associated with child poverty do not reduce, adding to projected pressures in coming years.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The preparation and publication of the CPAR fulfils Aberdeen City Council's duty under section 13 of the Act.

9 MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Risk relates to non-achievement of targets long term and failing to reduce demand through early intervention in key drivers. Failure to achieve the outcomes desired will mean residents requiring support from public agencies for longer.	M	Joint working and multi-agency service redesign to identify appropriate measures.
Legal	Risk relates to failure to comply with statutory requirements	L	Provision of the LOIP as Aberdeen City Child Poverty Action Plan; annual reporting.
Employee	None	L	
Customer	Failure to meet statutory targets	L	This work will improve outcomes for children and families across the City.
Environment	Risk as opportunity	L	Meeting the LOIP outcomes will improve the environment for children.
Technology	None	L	
Reputational	Risk relates to failure to meet the statutory targets.	L	Meeting the LOIP outcomes.

10 OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	This report demonstrates the positive range of work being undertaken at service and partnership level to improve the quality of life for families and children in poverty.
Prosperous People	This report demonstrates the positive range of work being undertaken at service and partnership level to improve the quality of life for families and children in poverty.
Prosperous Place	This report demonstrates the positive range of work being undertaken at service and partnership level to improve the quality of life for families and children in poverty.
Enabling Technology	Digital support provided in several areas including education provision and Connecting Scotland.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	This report demonstrates the priority being given to children in poverty. Children are our current and future customers and improvement made here will impact on their whole lives.
Organisational Design	<p>The TOM design allows for work on child poverty to be delivered in several Clusters, as well as through strategic work such as the LOIP, Local Development Plan and Local Housing Plan.</p> <p>The focus on Early Intervention in tackling poverty clearly manifests in work undertaken by Early Intervention and Community Empowerment; Customer Experience; Education; Integrated Children and Family Services; Capital; Corporate Landlord and Place Planning.</p>
Governance	This relates to the tracking of the outcomes, which will be undertaken through existing scrutiny of the LOIP, and through Council governance structures at annual intervals.
Workforce	Poverty is recognised as a key issue for the Council, with role and structure design taking account of relevant poverty areas.

Process Design	As new methods of undertaking work are identified processes will be updated and normalised to ensure children and families in poverty benefit.
Technology	As new methods of undertaking work are identified processes will be updated and normalised to ensure children and families in poverty benefit.
Partnerships and Alliances	As we are presenting the LOIP as the Child Poverty Action Plan, we are confident that partners across the City have been involved in the creation of this plan, and will be involved in delivering the outcomes identified.

11 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	There is no adverse impact on any protected characteristic.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	The aim of the LOIP is to improve outcomes for all. The Fairer Scotland Duty is considered against strategic decisions.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

13. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Joint Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21

14. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name: Derek McGowan
Title: Chief Officer – Early Intervention and Community Empowerment
Email Address: demcgowan@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel: 01224 522226