
Best Start, Bright Futures

Delivering a one council, whole family, whole community approach to tackling child poverty

Report of Design Workshop 1st June 2022

This event took place on 1st June 2022 in the Salutation Hotel in Perth and involved colleagues from across PKC, the Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS and Third Sector.

We invited parents to attend, but they said that they would prefer to take part in more informal sessions held in their localities. We will follow up the event with local coffee mornings to enable parents to engage in the way that is most comfortable and convenient for them. We were also joined by colleagues from the Scottish Government.

The aim of the day was to explore some of the challenges that child poverty presents – and to come up with some new thinking on how we might approach tackling child poverty in our communities. We are currently developing a 4 year Delivery Plan for tackling Child Poverty – and many of the suggestions and ideas generated on the day will find their way into that plan.

The plenary session in the morning prepared the ground for the design workshops which considered how to

- Support more parents into employment which pays the Living Wage
- Close the gender employment and pay gaps
- Address the rural poverty premium
- Deliver a one door approach to connecting children and families to the services and support they need in 3 localities (Coupar Angus, Highland Perthshire and Kinross)

Key Recommendations for Child Poverty Working Group

Recommendation 01: No wrong door/one stop shop approach

PKC sets up an Agile Project Management Group to scope out a one stop approach for families who need access to a range of services and support. This group should involve ECS, H&SCP, Communities (Housing and Employability), Corporate and Democratic Services (IT and Welfare Rights). It should cover process mapping of referral pathways, IT support systems and a training needs analysis.

It is striking that every workshop identified the need for a one stop, single person point of access to all services and support for parents and families.

Proposals to support this one stop, single point of access provision included:-

- An Integrated Support Framework or Online Portal where frontline workers could access all the information they would need to identify what help was available and how to process a seamless referral for the family
- A single database/record so that families did not have to repeat their stories over and over again to multiple services
- Training and support needs of frontline workers who would deliver the new approach.

Recommendation 02 – Data driven approaches

A Child Poverty/Data Intelligence group be established to look at data driven approaches to problems from transport, childcare to ensuring financial resources available were deployed to areas where there were families in need.

Several workshops proposed better use of data to improve service delivery and resource deployment. Using data to generate information for local transport providers to enable them to run profitable routes and provide flexible services was thought to be a means of addressing both the local need and the need of the transport providers. Ensuring that resources were allocated to areas where there was the greatest need/ presence of families affected by poverty was raised. Current SIMD data was felt to be too blunt an instrument for this purpose as it masked the fact that many families living in poverty live outwith the SIMD 4/5 areas.

Recommendation 03 – Access to affordable housing that matches household need

Several workshops identified the need to provide affordable housing of the size and type that families want in locations of their choice.

Recommendation 04 – Increase access to affordable, flexible childcare to support parental employment . Several workshops mentioned the need to increase access to breakfast clubs, afterschool care, wraparound care and childcare.

Recommendation 05 – Deliver a Perth and Kinross Employment Offer to employers which ties business stimuli and incentivisation packages to support for and payment of the Living Wage.

Recommendation 06 – Address the perception that Community Campuses are not open to use by the Community

Several workshops raised the need for Community Campuses to be open to use by the community as venues for the delivery of services by community service organisations. These could include surgeries for debt and money advice, informal childcare provision etc

Recommendation 07 – Develop a Highland Plan for Transport which connects private and community led transport to extend the reach and cover of transport across Highland Perthshire enabling families to travel to childcare, employment, training, education and leisure venues.

Plenary Session Speakers

Professor John McKendrick introduced his research Lived experience of child poverty in Perth and Kinross. His research found that

Overall Perth and Kinross is a good place to live for families with children, however

- **Intense poverty exists.** There is evidence of abject poverty in Perth and Kinross. Sometimes, such poverty has is a passing intensity, which may be triggered by unforeseen circumstance (e.g. breakdown of a household appliance; loss of employment; change in family arrangements). Intense poverty may subside, rather than disappear, becoming an enduring challenge of seasonal pinch points, e.g. increased living costs during summer when children are not in school for part of the week, or in winter when energy bills are higher and Christmas brings additional expense.
- **Family support.** For those with access to it (which does not apply to all families experiencing poverty), the support provided by families – at critical stress points and in everyday life – is acknowledged and highly valued. Families are a key source of childcare support, and a resource that is drawn on in times of crisis.
- **Time pressure.** Time pressures are reported by many families experiencing poverty. The challenges of managing children's lives and the challenges of combining work and family life are the primary sources of this stress.
- **Cost of living.** Housing, transport and food expenditure is reported to place strain on family budgets, particularly in rural areas.
- **Cumulative impacts.** Many of the challenges faced by families experiencing poverty are encountered by other families. However, the difficulties in facing these challenges on a low income – without the ability to draw on a safety net of financial resource – exacerbate these problems. Similarly, the cumulative impact and interaction of these problems impacts on family life.
- **Stigma** Many of the families described issues related to stigma, with narratives indicating stigmatisation was even experienced when accessing support.

On their experience of Perth and Kinross Council Services families report that in the main this was apposite experience. However

- Families are not always aware of who is providing the services they are receiving or where to go to for help
- Inadequate service provision generates additional financial costs for some families

- Service delivery decisions can impact on the work of others e.g. when a service is withdrawn, the need that the service met remains.
- Support and service provision can have a positive impact that extends beyond the provision that is delivered

Things work best for families when a one-door approach is delivered.

- **Referrals work.** There is much evidence of effective cross-referral and integration of support pathways. Where this works, it is not received as being 'passed on', but rather as being directed to the right source. Successful referrals were reported within services, and across services. Positive impacts of this included being connected to support in a timely manner which was critical for prevention of intensification of problems.
- **Key individuals.** Many parents experiencing poverty made reference to a key individual who provided them with critical support and/or who 'made things happen'. These interventions were often understood as someone going 'above and beyond' duty, rather than delivering routine service. These sources of key support were found across a range of service areas.

Professor McKendrick recommended

- A collective effort – beyond service department boundaries – is required to seek solutions to the problems of childcare and housing. The lack and adequacy of provision of childcare and housing was cited among families experiencing poverty.
- Poverty proofing of changes to public services to ensure families experiencing poverty are protected from adverse impacts of change
- A One Council approach should be adopted and it should be recognised that all frontline workers can play a critical role in connecting families to the services and support they need.
- Ongoing dialogue and co-production with people experiencing poverty should be the start of what is promised in the "Offer".
- The Council needs to think about how it communicates with people experiencing poverty.
- Urgent action needs to be taken on food to develop better access to affordable food.

This event was held as part of the follow up to Professor McKendrick's research and to identify how we could use systems-thinking to deliver a one council, whole family, whole community approach to tackling child poverty.

Thomas Glen, Chief Executive, Perth & Kinross Council announced that the Council has decided to make tackling poverty a corporate priority and to demonstrate its commitment the new administration announced an additional £600,000 for its Financial Inclusion Fund to help people experiencing stress because of the Cost of Living Crisis. They also provided an additional £104,000 to address food insecurity during school holiday periods.

Thomas shared an example of what delivering a one council, whole family, whole community approach to tackling child poverty looked like in practice – and it was fairly simple.

A young mother was referred to the employability service and she was able to get a job at Perth Royal Infirmary. But she couldn't take it up – even in work she could not afford the £1000 a month childcare bill that would come with the job as it stood. She was in despair and on the brink of turning down the job. Our employability team found her money to help pay upfront childcare costs of around £700 – and they called the Senior Charge Nurse who would be her boss and explained the situation. The Senior Charge Nurse spoke to HR and her shift pattern was changed and this massively reduced her childcare costs.

The initiative the employability officer took to phone the Senior Charge Nurse, and the SCN's willingness to be flexible resulted in a life changing event for the family whose material circumstances and future prospects now look much brighter.

Clare Mailer introduced Best Start, Bright Futures, the Scottish Government's 2nd Delivery Plan for Tackling Child Poverty. It aims to offer families

- The opportunities and support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work
- Support to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs
- Support for the next generation to thrive.

The Scottish Government intend that the outcomes will be that 12,000 parents will be supported to access and sustain employment, that direct financial support lifts 50,000 children out of poverty and that the impacts of poverty are mitigated and better lifelong outcomes are secured for children and young people.

She explained that in Perth and Kinross we were currently working to develop a 4 year Child Poverty Delivery Plan and this would focus on delivering a one council, whole family, whole community approach to tackling child poverty.

The Council had taken data driven approaches to identify the causes and consequences of child poverty. This had been supplemented with qualitative research into the Lived Experience of Child Poverty in Perth and Kinross undertaken by Professor McKendrick's team at the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit and Poverty Alliance Scotland.

A Children's Scorecard had been developed to monitor how effectively we are addressing the concerns of parents who are affected by poverty.

There were strategic issues which needed concerted action across a range of Community Planning Partners.

Employment

The Fraser of Allander Institute found that if all parents had 20hours work a week which paid at least the Living Wage, the interim poverty targets would be met. Perth and Kinross is a low wage economy and fewer people are working than in 2019. There are job opportunities around but access to affordable childcare and transport remain barriers to employment.

Gender Employment and Pay Gaps

Half of all lone parents raise their children in poverty. 96% of lone parents are women and increasing maternal employment rates is a key factor in reducing child poverty. We need to think about what we can do to close the gender employment and pay gaps.

Rurality

People who live in rural areas need more money to achieve the same standard of living as people in urban Scotland. The rural premium arises from being forced to shop locally, run a car and poor connectivity (digital and access to services). There are fewer social houses in rural areas and private sector tenants pay more in rent and heating costs. Parents report not being able to obtain affordable, flexible childcare and transport and this affects their ability to work.

The Perth and Kinross Child Poverty Delivery Plan will need to address all of these challenges – and the workshops are designed to ensure that a broad range of stakeholders have a chance to present their ideas and suggestions for consideration.

We are not starting from a zero base – there is already a lot of work being done across Perth and Kinross and our Community Planning partners who are tackling the effects of child poverty and supporting families on a daily basis. Some examples of this work included:-

- Cash 1st approaches – deliver £4.9M into people's pockets (Educational Maintenance Allowance, School Clothing Grants, Tenancy Sustainment Funds etc)

- Feeling the Pinch and not Cost of Living campaigns – direct people to the help they need
- 1309 families with dependent children get welfare rights advice
- Welfare Rights Team – achieves client financial gain of nearly £6M
- 6 social prescribers connect people to help and support they need across a wide range of council, nhs and community providers
- £20,000 to the Perth Foodbank and £256,000 on Eat Well, Live Well community food initiatives
- 7000 households - affordable tenancies – Council's affordable rents toolkit
- 8249 children free school meals

Professor Clarkson addressed how we apply systems thinking to improving the way we connect children and families affected by poverty to the help and support they need. This approach has been used by Health Boards in England and Wales and is currently being used by the Scottish Government to address big change. Professor Clarkson introduced us to the Improving Improvement Toolkit which he developed with colleagues at Cambridge University and which is recommended for use by the UK Cabinet Office.

He introduced us to a range of tools that we can use to help us on our improvement journey. But said that essentially we were trying to answer 2 questions –

- How can we do better?
- What can possibly go wrong?

To do this we need to know

- What do we do now?
- How could we improve?
- How do we perform now?
- What should we measure?

The first question we need to answer is who should be involved – we tried to pull together different teams who can look at the various challenges we face

- How to get parents into work that pays the living wage
- How to close the gender employment and pay gaps
- How to address the rural poverty premium and
- How to connect parents and children to the help and support they need in their locality

- The first session focused on identifying the stakeholders, and what are their needs.
- The second session looked at the families and the challenges they faced and their user journey through the services
- The third session looked at the system – what does it comprise of and how does it knit together
- The fourth session was dreaming – what does good look like? This gives us some ideas of what we are striving to attain.

Professor Clarkson's questions formed the plan for the design workshops in the afternoon. You can check out his [Improving Improvement Toolkit](#).

Design Workshops

The Design Workshop followed . [Workshop Session Plans](#) which are available should you wish to use them in your Locality or Service meetings.

Workshop 1 – Employability

Ideas/ Proposals from Workshop for Further Action

- Transport data project to enable/ support bus companies to identify profitable routes that would provide flexibility around working times for parents and people living in rural areas.
- Better marketing/ info and awareness raising of the package of support available to local businesses
- Info/awareness campaign around legal minimum wage aimed at employers and employees
- Creation of a Perth and Kinross Employment Offer (flexible working for parents etc) and Recognition for employers who pay the living wage
- Encourage schools, health workers, and DWP referral to Parental Employment Advisor
- One employability pipeline – bring various employability services provided by PKC under one PMO.
- Develop local hubs as one stop shops for range of advice, employability and skills programmes
- Single 24 hour point of contact with integrated team

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders

Bus Companies – who need to be financially viable and turn a profit

Employers – who need information on the Living Wage, business stimuli and support packages.

The 3 families challenges and journeys to help and support were discussed.

- Family 1 would require the support and assistance of different agencies and would benefit from a one stop shop.
- Family 2 would benefit from employability support and income maximisation. Access to affordable housing was considered to be important.
- Family 3 would benefit from a key point of contact who could help them to gain access to respite services. A care package should be put in place which considered the needs of the whole family from the parents need for mental health and wellbeing support and respite care, to the needs of the non-disabled children as well as the disabled child.

The success of the local system in delivering support for the families was felt to require integration of services and systems, good communication and collaboration, the existence of a One stop shop and one database across all services/agencies and partners.

Key success factors were identified as being

- One Single 24hour Point of Contact with 1 Lead Person/Co-ordinator and one integrated system.
- Respite that suits the whole family.
- Services that fit around the needs/demands at certain points of the day including weekends.
- Every employer is signed up to and pays the living wage.
- Kudos to employers who pay accredited living wage
- Recognise its different for each family
- Employers who don't pay the living wage are held to account
- Dashboard to assist in monitoring progress
- Perth and Kinross Offer
- Make the connections for people

Workshop 2 – Gender Employment and Pay Gaps

Ideas/Proposals for Further Action

- FORT system used by Dundee Council Fort (adviceinfrastructure.com) to deliver seamless referral across all agencies
- Engage with local employers around gender employment and pay gaps
- Strategic level acknowledgement that gender employment and pay gaps are problems which require action
- Directory of Employability Services and support for women seeking employment
- Increased provision of breakfast clubs, wrap around care and after school care
- Flexible rural transport to support women into work

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders

PKC needed to be open about the gender employment and pay gaps and address this with local employers

There needs to be a partnership approach to ensuring gender employment and pay gaps are addressed

Attracting employers to Perth and Kinross who are committed to gender equality is important.

The success of the local system

The FORT (Fife Online Referral Tracking System) which is in use in several local authorities was felt to be an important means of ensuring women who are parents get access to the employability and other support they need. Access to housing, childcare and transport was key. For people who are further from the jobs market, additional support to enable them to enter and sustain employment was required.

Key success factors were identified as being

- Breakfast clubs and Wraparound childcare
- Free childcare for all
- Access to affordable transport and flexibility around transport
- Wage and other incentives to employers
- Interview and skills training for women
- Grants for training for women
- Funding for additional support required to enable women to take up employment/ training opportunities
- Single point of contact, seamless referral and online portal for all services

Workshop 3 – Rural Poverty Premium

Ideas/Proposals for Further Action

- Information about real transport demand
- Provide financial means to parents to enable them to attend important appointments
- Increase provision of local childcare
- Provide prospective childminders with support around registration process and securing the Living Wage
- Changes to the timing of the school day to enable children to eat and play (uptake of free school meals and breakfast clubs)
- Tayside Contracts provision of free school meals to extend to rural areas

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders for reliable, affordable transport so that they could attend appointments, go to work or training and take children to clubs etc. Other issues raised were:-

- Access to mental health services and support
- Access to money advice
- Good digital connectivity and skills

The success of the local system in delivering support to families lies in signposting families to services and support, seamless referrals to social work and for childcare and the health referral pathways.

Key success factors were identified as being

- Signposting and seamless referrals to sources of support across a range of services
- Access to financial support, welfare rights, debt and money advice
- Access to childcare
- Access to detox programmes, Antabuse medication and counselling/addiction services
- Having locally based services or services that will travel to where the parent/family is based
- Getting help with forms, applications and language barriers

Workshop 4 – Coupar Angus

Ideas/Proposals for Further Action

- Literacy and digital literacy classes/support for parents
- Staff Directory for each locality
- System for information sharing between agencies (CPP partners)
- Information on available help and support for parents
- One door approach - Lanarkshire approach (?)
- Integrated Resource Framework

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders parents needed a single point of contact to access services, and frontline workers needed better knowledge of what support is available and access to a shared information system to enable them to be that single point of contact.

The success of the local system in delivering support to families was felt to rest upon early intervention and prevention.

Key success factors were identified as being

- Levels of deprivation and need taken into account when resources are being deployed
- An integrated resource framework
- Data from foodbanks and other sources utilised to help focus on prevention
- Stronger Communities Forum that is well attended
- Housing which matches household needs in terms of size and affordability
- Access to transport
- Support with childcare costs
- Digital Connectivity

Workshop 5 – Highland Perthshire

Ideas/Proposals for Further Action

- Better information from housing partners to enable hard to let properties to be let more quickly
- Collaboration with Stagecoach around provision of bus services/routes
- Welfare Rights provision in community hubs
- Promote volunteering and donations to foodbank
- Sharing of information on families who might benefit from energy help and advice
- Increased wraparound care
- Single point of access to all help and support
- Invest in early education, childcare and community campuses
- Build more homes of the right size, location and type
- Highland Plan for Transport
- PKC School bus pass
- Local hubs to provide range of support to families

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders who were service providers and who needed access to data to predict demand levels for services, better use of Community Hubs to allow these spaces to be used for community meetings, welfare rights advice surgeries etc.

The success of the local system in delivering support to families rested on the ability of the services to get the right help to the right families at the right time and in delivering a single point of access to all help and support available.

Key success factors were identified as being

Providing affordable homes of the right size, location and type

Having a Highland Plan for Transport which connected communities to work and leisure and which ensured that buses operated at the right times

Local hubs with information for local families

Information sharing across and between services

Access to childcare

Workshop 6 – Kinross

Ideas/Proposals for Further Action

- Increase availability of childcare
- Focus on opportunities for parents to work from home
- Remove barriers to access community campuses
- Provide low cost buses to supermarkets
- Provide free family trips
- Comprehensive support for community organisations around volunteering, funding, resources, training, networking, engaging hard to reach groups and individuals, information on provision and less red tape

The discussion focussed around the needs of stakeholders who were community organisations. They needed access to volunteers, funding, training, accessible spaces and knowledge of other support available. The barriers to accessing community campuses should be removed so that community provision can be located there also.

The success of the local system in delivering support to families depended on schools and partners getting round the table to co-ordinate their efforts and ensure that pathways to help and support were visible.

Key success factors were identified as being
As above.

What Now?

- The ideas generated at the Workshop will help to determine what is in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 -2026 which will be implemented through the Child Poverty Workstreams (Employability, Dignified Life and Thriving next Generation)
- Follow Up meetings will be held in the 3 localities and with parents
- A newsletter is being sent to all participants and to key contacts across the Council and CPP Partners outlining the main issues to come out of this event.

Who took part?

A broad range of key stakeholders across Perth and Kinross Council, NHS Tayside and our Community Planning Partners took part in the design workshops. The importance of involving all stakeholders and finding out what they need in order to improve support to parents and children affected by poverty was a key element of the approach taken on the day.

PKC - Communities

Executive Director – Communities
Depute Director - Communities
5 Team Leaders – Housing, Performance and Business Support, Community Planning and Policy, Adult and Family Learning, Income Maximisation
2 Housing Co-ordinators, Housing Options and Perth City
4 Parental Employment Support Worker
Modern Apprenticeship

Equalities Engagement Officer
3 Skills and Employment Project officers
1 Community Planning Officer
1 Equalities Officer
1 Senior Community capacity Building Officer
3 Community Learning and Development Workers
Community Learning Assistant
1 Performance and Business Support Manager
4 Business Support Officers
4 Co-ordinators/Project officer – Child Poverty, Good Food, Transport, area Co-ordinator (Housing)
Graduate Trainee

PKC – Corporate and Democratic Services

Revenues and Benefits Service manager
Team Leader -Welfare Rights
IT Team Leader

PKC – Education and Children’s Services

Head of Service, Children, Young People and Families
2 Service Manager – early years and childcare, Looked After Services

1 Headteacher (Secondary School)
2 Headteacher (Primary School)
3 Primary School teachers
2 Community Link Workers
2 Early Years Practitioners
2 Education Support Officers
1 Parent and Family Learning Team Leader
3 Quality Improvement Officer
1 Corporate Research and Information Manager
1 Improvement Officer

Health & Social Care Partnership

Social Prescriber
HART (?)

NHS Tayside

Child Poverty Lead Officer
2 Nurse Practitioners

2 Healthy
Communities Co-
ordinators
Care Experienced
Children and Young
Person's Nurse
2 Health Visitors
2 Dietitians
4 School Nurses

Others

Chairperson, Letham
For All
PKAVS Manager
4 Police Officers
2 Scottish
Government Unit
Heads