

# Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Local Action Report

April 2022 – March 2023



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## Partnership Foreword

I am proud to chair the  
Aberdeenshire Tackling Poverty  
& Inequalities Strategic

Partnership and the work of the partnership to support children and families in our communities. Working together with NHS Grampian, our Third Sector partners, and agencies such as Skills Development Scotland and Social Security Scotland, our focus is to enable families to be lifted out of poverty, and to prevent families from ever experiencing poverty.

This report highlights some of the excellent and positive work being delivered in very challenging times. Together we have improved financial inclusion and employability pathways for low-income families by delivering integrated services to ensure people can access help and support when they need them most. Together we are working to develop interventions to support families to improve health & wellbeing, ensuring they have a voice in developing opportunities which reduces fuel poverty, and increasing youth opportunities especially within the rural and remote communities across Aberdeenshire.

The partners central to the success of the partnership is of course our families with lived experience – working together to codesign and coproduce services that enable families to have the best outcomes possible, now and in the future. Together we are challenging stigma and ensuring local voices are heard when decisions are being made. Families tell us this approach makes a difference – not just in terms of the way in which services are developed and delivered but, more importantly, the process empowers them to become more active in their community, reducing the stigma which they have previously experienced.

However, as a partnership we know that the future is going to be as challenging as the present. Aberdeenshire families experience the rural premium that means the cost of living is even tougher here than in many other parts of the country. Families who have never experienced financial insecurity before are struggling with day-to-day bills and we know families highlighted as most vulnerable in the Scottish Government's Best Start Bright Futures strategy will continue to be at risk of experiencing poverty. Our focus as a partnership in the coming year is to ensure there is 'no wrong door' to support families through continued integration of services, regardless of responsible agency.

Reducing child poverty is a shared agenda and must be a priority for us all. It is increasingly important that the partnership between local voices and the community planning partners is strengthened as it needs all of us working closely together to ensure that what we are delivering will support those most affected by the current economic circumstances.

*Amanda Roe Chair of Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Partnership*

# Executive Summary

## Overview

This is a reflective report which has been developed with partners and those with lived experience. It outlines the activities delivered to reduce Child Poverty Across Aberdeenshire in 2022/23, the impact made, identifies areas for development in 2023/24 and highlights good practice.

## Outcomes Achieved in 2022/23

**Employment:** Income from parents' work and earnings is insufficient to lift them from poverty;

There are a number of programmes delivered through the Aberdeenshire Employability partnership that have supported over **880** individuals to enhance their employability skills through targeted training programmes, work experience and delivery of supported employment schemes.

**Household costs:** The costs of living that households must cover are too high;

There are a number of workstreams that support low-income households to reduce housing costs. These are support with food, fuel, wellbeing funds and Information & Advice services. The number of households supported to reduce their housing costs is **21,731** with a client financial gain of **£6,509,323**.

**Social Security:** Income from Social Security

Through specialist pathways **386** priority families have been supported.

**4737** children and young people being supported through the financial support available to families across Aberdeenshire.

The Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Action Plan can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

## Areas for Development for 2023/24

- Develop a Child Poverty data dashboard which will improve our use of data and intelligence to identify priority areas for investment.
- Continue to develop the Lived Experience Structure and develop a lived experience Charter and Youth Board.
- Continue to deliver rights-based approach projects focusing on young people's services.
- Co-develop targeted support pathways for families that are marginalised.
- Using the recommendations from the Childcare Research to develop flexible childcare framework.
- Integrate services to ensure a 'no wrong door' approach is delivered for families.
- Highlight the impact Pupil Equity Fund and the impact of the cost of the school day.
- Explore affordable transport models with those with lived experience and make recommendations for change.



## Aberdeenshire Data

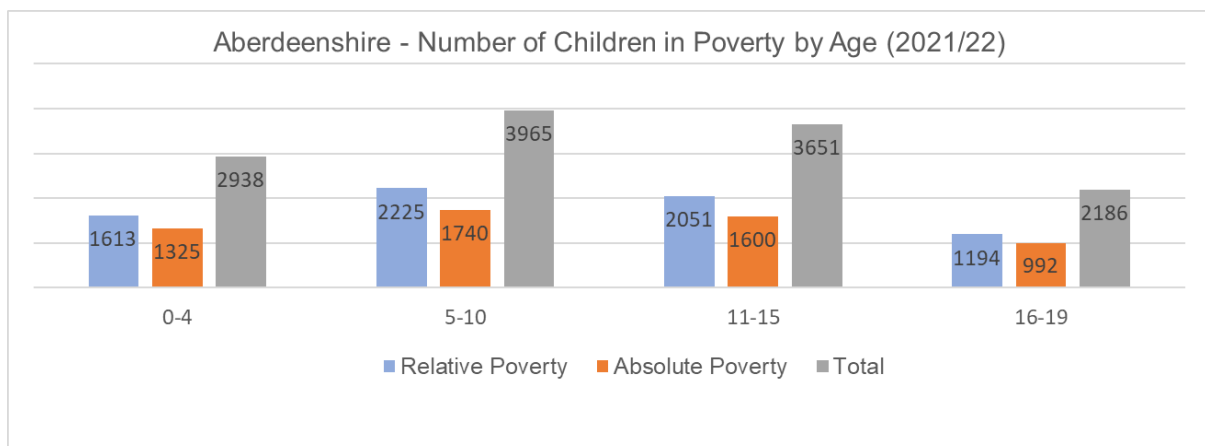


**Aberdeenshire** is one of Scotland's 14 rural authorities and is defined as 'mainly rural'. We are the fourth largest geographical local authority in Scotland.

The economy of rural Scotland is both similar to, and tightly integrated with the economy of urban Scotland. However distinct differences, often related to distance and scarcity, remain between urban and rural economies. These differences may contribute to an even greater level of inequality particularly for low-income families.

It is estimated that 16% of young people (under 16) in Aberdeenshire live in Poverty.

Constituency	2020/21	2021/22
Banff & Buchan	3326 (18%)	4054 (22.8%)
Gordon	2897 (13.3%)	3270 (15.2%)
West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine	2453 (11%)	2753 (12.8%)
Total	8, 676 (14.2%)	10,077 (16%)



## Aberdeenshire's Approach

The Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Strategic Partnership leads on Child Poverty. This is a multi-agency partnership consisting of key council colleagues and external partners: Education & Children Services, Economic Development, Skills Development Scotland, Health & Social Care Partnership, Housing, Department of Work & Pensions, NHS Grampian, Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action. Reducing Poverty is also a Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priority, therefore the Child Poverty Action Plan has been developed with local voices and Community Planning Partners.

In Aberdeenshire our approach to tackling child poverty focusses on early



intervention and prevention.

Tackling the root causes of poverty and building families capabilities through income maximisation, employability and promoting positive life changes. A partnership approach is vital in ensuring opportunities and services are accessible and relevant. This agenda is complex therefore streams of work have been developed to reduce inequalities and tackle

child poverty. These areas of work are led through a range of partnership groups that are linked through the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities strategic partnership. These partnership groups deliver actions, identify trends, and collate data which is used to inform priorities annually.

### **Partnership Principles**

The partners who are working within this agenda have agreed the following principles:

- Recognise, place and empower young people and families to not only influence and inform decisions but coproduce services which meets their needs.
- Ensure a holistic approach is developed through the partnership working at a local and/or strategic level.
- Improving Health Inequalities.
- Addressing the causes of child poverty, not its symptoms.
- Making early interventions for families, young people, and disadvantaged communities.
- Improving employability as a key means of tackling child poverty.

## Developing an Intergrated Approach

It is important that through a partnership approach low income families, children and young people feel valued, respected and supported to access services and opportunities when they need them at a local level.

An integrated impact assessment was carried out in 2023 and the current work being undertaken to reduce Child Poverty and the positive impact as follows –

- The work which is delivered that aims to maximise income and improve employability for people on a low income and can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage, which helps meet the aims under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- The children and young peoples' rights and wellbeing implications are likely to close the inequalities gap and support improved quality of life, which may contribute to children and young people living a poverty free life in adulthood.

Tackling fuel poverty and ensuring affordable housing is a priority outlined in the [Aberdeenshire Housing Strategy](#). The housing service is also a partner in the Aberdeenshire Financial Inclusion Partnership which coordinates and delivers information & advice services, income maximisation and increases the uptake of benefits ensuring families access all the financial support they are entitled to. Parents and local tenants were involved in developing a report which has been used to inform future services and practice.

[Fuel Poverty Project - Report November 2022 \(ouraberdeenshire.org.uk\)](https://ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)

Increasing income from employment and earnings should ensure the best support for parents to work and earn more, effectively lifting them and their families out of poverty. These outcomes are developed with the Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership which includes Skills Development Scotland, Department of Work & Pensions, Aberdeenshire Council, a range of third sector deliver partners such as Barnardos, Enable, SHMU, Aberdeen Foyer and Inspire.

The [Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) has Tackling Inequalities and Public Protection as a priority which contributes to Reducing Child Poverty.

Partners working through the GIRFEC Strategic Group continue to support positive outcomes for children, young people and their families, resulting in improved life chances of all children and young people in Aberdeenshire. [The Children and Young Peoples Service Plan \(2023-26\)](#) reflects the commitment partners have made to reducing Child Poverty across Aberdeenshire.

## Making Employment Work for Families

### What we know

Universal Credit Single parent households	Universal Credit Families with 3+ Children	Universal Credit Disability entitlement
4210	1164	646

The total number of children 19 and under living in poverty is 12,738 out of which 8,913 are in working households.(69.97%)

A high number of low-income families are employed in the care, processing, agriculture, or retail sector where wages are low and hours can be limited, therefore access to affordable flexible childcare is important to allow parents to continue to work.

Due to the rising cost of living there has been an increase in people not being able to take up employment opportunities as they can't afford the transport or childcare.

Several families have raised the issue of the low number of family friendly employers who can offer sustainable employment in the rural areas. Several lone parents or parents with a disabled child have found it increasingly difficult to find local employment with hours that can be flexible around transport and childcare. These parents have taken up several part-time posts to ensure that flexibility.

*“I have part of a teaching degree that meant I was qualified as a nursery nurse but being a lone parent and a severe lack of childcare in my area meant that I could not pursue this as a career.” – Rural parent.*

### Actions & Impact

Action	Impact / outcomes	Lead
<p>Using lived experience to inform practice and what programmes should be commissioned for 2023/24.</p> <p>Develop a range of employability programmes that supports those priority families seeking employment.</p>	<p>A group of priority families highlighted the barriers, types of support required and gaps in services for those in work and seeking employment.</p> <p>Applications for employability funding now include a lived experience element which is scored through the assessment process.</p> <p>Enhanced employment skills will increase the opportunities to secure sustainable employment.</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Employability partnership have supported <b>880</b> to enhance their employability</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.</p>



Action	Impact / outcomes	Lead
	skills through targeted training programmes, work experience and delivery of supported employment schemes.	
Provide appropriate support to address in-work poverty by targeting support to help parents already in jobs to remain active in the workplace through accessing the Parental Support Fund, Tax Free Childcare and gain skills or additional qualifications which supports Career progression.	The progression or enhancing skills will support those in work to secure sustained employment.	Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.
Develop a partnership with local employers to increase the number of local businesses who are Real Living Wage employers.	Those employed will feel valued, appreciated, and supported out of in-work poverty.	Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.

## Next Steps

Actions	Impact	Timescale & lead
Encourage all businesses that are delivering services which have been procured by Aberdeenshire's Community Planning Partners to be living wage employers with a diverse workforce which has no gender pay gap.	The local economy will benefit from employers who invest and value their staff.	Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board.
Recruit Child Poverty Employability workers who will use a place-based approach to identify and address barriers to securing or sustaining work.  The workers will support families through developing positive relationships to address barriers such as money advice, transport,	Increased access to employment opportunities for those who have previously found securing sustained employment a challenge.  Increased access to employment and training opportunities for those parents and young people living in rural & remote areas.	Aberdeenshire Employment Support Team  June 2023

<p>affordable childcare or digital access.</p>		
<p>To continue using a key worker to deliver support to those parents that require additional support especially around health &amp; wellbeing.</p> <p>Develop the key worker model to include a Health &amp; Wellbeing post.</p> <p>Develop opportunities for those parents with lived experience to secure key worker posts.</p>	<p>A new Health &amp; Wellbeing post to be developed as a result of the impact of those with lived experience in developing practice and services.</p> <p>Increased support for parents to secure the support required to increase positive employability outcomes.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Employment Support Team</p> <p>August 2023</p>
<p>Commission research to review models of existing childcare and through working with local families, partners, childcare providers and employers to develop a flexible childcare framework.</p>	<p>Increased accessibility to affordable childcare targeting primary age children who live in the rural and remote areas.</p>	<p>Tackling Poverty &amp; Inequalities Partnership</p> <p>Aug 23</p>
<p>To develop a childcare sector-based training programme to address the challenges faced by providers with recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>To pilot a childcare training academy targeting a rural setting which will also deliver wrap around childcare for those with primary age children.</p>	<p>The role of childcare has been identified as an important pillar of the approach to addressing child poverty in Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership</p> <p>Education &amp; Children Services</p>

## Case Study – The Vinery

[Grow at the Vinery](#) is in Banff and led by [Aberdeen Foyer](#). The Vinery Project is a Community Inclusion project around food, financial inclusion, and skills, delivering personal development and employability programmes for young people, parents and adults who are experiencing multiple and complex barriers to moving into good quality, sustainable employment. The project also supports those with long term mental health conditions, substance dependency, social isolation and are disengaged from education.

It also provides a safe, shared space for other community and third sector groups. Aberdeen Foyer works in close partnership with NESCOL to ensure these are accredited learning opportunities.

The project has created 30 volunteer opportunities which give parents the opportunity for a first step into employment and training. The Vinery has created 11 additional local jobs within the project and has delivered skills academies and work experience for over 60 local people. This has included general employability skills, digital skills, CV updates and work placements and mock interviews, resulting in securing employment within the council Roads team as Survey Assistants and within the landscaping teams.

The Vinery has a Digital Skills Coach and has had a Financial Inclusion worker to provide financial health checks, assist with applications for grants and benefits and to support with budgeting skills training. This integrated approach of delivering advice, employment, wellbeing sessions, skills sessions in food and personal development along with developing that safe space has supported 129 families to access a range of services and employability opportunities.



## Making Every Opportunity Count for Families

### What we know

Children & young people entitled to free school meals, clothing grants and bridging payments. 2019/20	Children & young people entitled to free school meals, clothing grants and bridging payments. 2022/23	Financial support secured for low-income families, including those home schooled 2022/23
2556	4737	£3,173,790

Over the last five years, average household incomes in Aberdeenshire have increased by 8%, while in Scotland they increased by 17% over the same period. The majority of Aberdeenshire towns have seen increases below the Scottish average.

There is a rural premium to be paid for families living in rural and remote areas resulting in a higher cost for fuel, food, transport, and housing costs. The impact of the rising cost of living has seen an increased number of households seeking advice and financial assistance especially working households. Home Energy Scotland and advice services have seen an increase in households with children seeking advice on how to reduce their fuel bills. In Aberdeenshire we have seen an increased number of families choosing to go on prepaid meters for gas and electricity as a result of fuel debt.

Those experts of experience still highlight the stigma they feel when accessing services especially for the first time. The perception of those who are living in poverty can be very negative therefore people from smaller communities are hesitant to come forward.

*“I have a car, a house and live in a nice area, but I have been made redundant. I feel ashamed that I need to use the local food larder to feed my family as I don’t have enough money to buy the weekly shopping. I live in an area that is perceived to be nice, but I am in the trap of poverty” – Parent highlighting hidden poverty.*

### Actions & Impact

Action	Impact & Outcomes	Lead
To continue to deliver good quality accessible information & advice services through the Information and advice framework. Money Advice & Welfare Rights workers will use a	Increasing household income will ensure families can be financially supported through transitions in their children’s lives.  Increased accessibility to the service the workers will be hosted within Primary Health Care facilities, housing services, community organisations including foodbank and within rural & remote communities.	Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Money Advice & Welfare Rights Team.

Action	Impact & Outcomes	Lead
<p>key worker approach to provide support for priority families.</p> <p>A community-based information &amp; advice service will be delivered by a consortium which has been developed to include the 4 Citizen Advice Bureaus which operate across Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Through specialist pathways 386 priority families have been supported to access additional benefits and financial support.</p> <p>This consortium delivered a range of advice services including debt advice, benefit, housing, relationship, and employment advice.</p> <p>Over the last 12 months 9,841 clients have accessed Information &amp; Advice Services across Aberdeenshire. Income maximisation has been challenging throughout the last 12 months however for those clients supported through the framework approximately £9,355,405 has been secured in client financial gain. The main issues that clients are receiving support for are benefits, debt, housing, energy debt and support with the rising cost of living.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire CAB Consortium.</p>
<p>To develop a cash first approach to food security through the delivery of the <a href="#">‘Worrying About Money?’</a> leaflet, developing a strategic partnership and delivering wellbeing funds through a range of trusted partners and social landlords.</p> <p>To develop partnership</p>	<p>The Aberdeenshire ‘Worrying About Money?’ leaflet has been sent to every household in Aberdeenshire and training has been rolled out to staff &amp; volunteers within Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, Health &amp; Social Care Partnership, Third Sector, and community groups. The training highlights the complex nature of poverty, increases knowledge on what support is in place and how to access it and helps to reduce stigma.</p> <p>The Cash first approach is a dignified form of support to people facing hardship at a local level. It reduces the stigma therefore the initiatives and projects using this approach are seen as more inclusive. The number of low-income households supported using this approach to reduce their housing costs is 21,731 with a client financial gain of £6,509,323.</p> <p><b>Connecting with Communities</b> is a project delivered through CFINE that reduces food insecurity through increasing</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire’s Financial Inclusion Partnership</p>

Action	Impact & Outcomes	Lead
<p>projects and initiatives which reduces food security, fuel poverty using a cash first approach.</p>	<p>access to affordable food, increase cooking skills and those using the service can access the support they need when they need it.</p> <p>The aim is to ensure residents in more rural and remote locations can access fresh fruit &amp; vegetables at low cost and additionally receive good quality FareShare produce to ensure easier management of household budgets. The project operates in areas which may have limited food support and / or transport links for accessing food. Over the past 12 months they have supported 561 people out of which 232 have been children.</p>	
<p>Deliver a range of opportunities to ensure those experts of experience can coproduce services, develop opportunities and inform practice &amp; strategies.</p> <p>Support priority families to participate in the Local Voices Forum, expert panel sessions including deep dives into issues such as Fuel Poverty, affordable &amp; flexible childcare and accessible transport.</p>	<p>Local Voices have improved services, opportunities and informed practice. Those families involved have developed skills, confidence and have felt not only supported but valued as equal partners.</p> <p>In 2022, 608 people shared their experience, with over 250 being young people. These experts of experience informed practice around stigmatisation, ensured information was available by the development of a 'Worrying About Money?' leaflet, Young Scot TP&amp;I page, and the Child Poverty Action Plan &amp; Report. They have informed national research on food insecurity and health conditions such as obesity, informed local charges set for recreation activities, explored issues that affected them such as fuel poverty and made recommendations for the future.</p> <p>Lived Experience Conference 2022 – <a href="#">See Me, Hear Me, Work with Me</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fuel Poverty Project - Report November 2022 (ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)</a></p>	<p>Tackling Poverty Team</p>

## Next Steps

Actions	Impact/ Outcome	Lead
Support priority families to participate in the Local Voices Forum, expert panel sessions including deep dives into affordable & flexible childcare and accessible transport.	Those families involved have developed skills, confidence and have felt not only supported but valued as equal partners.	Aberdeenshire's <a href="#">Lived Experience Network/Forum</a> and Youth Advisory Panel.
To continue to develop a Cash First Approach through securing additional funding and co-developing support pathways for marginalised communities who don't traditionally access services.	Increasing household income will ensure families can be financially supported through transitions in their children's lives.	Progress In Dialogue <a href="#">Progress In Dialogue – #ConversationsForChange</a> Aberdeenshire Financial Inclusion Partnership.

## Case Study – Progress in Dialogue

Progress In Dialogue (PID) is a grassroots organisation that amplifies the voice of those least heard. PID developed a wellbeing fund which targeted those marginalised communities that don't traditionally access support due to negative experience, fear of stigma, lack of knowledge and lack of trust in Local Authorities. The project used Community Champions from these communities to build up trusted relationships who would support the families to access the support required. The full report can be found using this link:

[Progress in Dialogue FWF2022 23 \[IMPACT REPORT\] \(canva.com\)](#)

One outcome of this project has been to place a full time Money Advice Welfare Rights Officer within the organisation who is developing a positive relationship with families who feel marginalised ensuring the Cash First approach is delivering sustained outcomes for these families.



(Image source: [link](#))

## Making the Future Possible For All

### What we know

Accessing services and opportunities is not equitable across Aberdeenshire as some remote and rural communities have been disadvantaged by centralising services such as health care. The challenges for those living in Aberdeenshire are around sustained employment, access to services, high cost of fuel especially for those off the grid, access to affordable food and affordable housing.

The impact of the last few years has highlighted the impact of stigma, lack of community ownership of services and solutions to address poverty & inequalities felt by children, young people, and their families.

Early intervention and changing the narrative will ensure that services and opportunities are inclusive and accessible to all children young people and their families.

*“...certainly, where we live in such a rural location, change has to come from within. Local people need to be the ones who instigate the change, and then should be supported by the Council. More funding for them, and more support.” - Rural Parent.*

### Actions & Impact

Action	Impact and Outcomes	Lead
<p>Support young people from priority families to participate Youth led projects which use a rights-based approach. Through these projects young people will challenge stigma and ensure the inequalities felt by those young people living in poverty are addressed.</p> <p>Strengthen the voice of children &amp; Young People to ensure future plans, strategies and funding allocation is informed by their lived experience in relation to Poverty &amp; Inequalities.</p> <p>Ensure young people are aware of all the financial support available to them at different life transitions.</p>	<p>Stigma will be reduced, services become inclusive and young people will change the narrative around poverty and challenge the inequalities.</p> <p>A youth project was developed with young people using a rights-based approach resulting in a youth event developed and delivered by young people from 15 different youth groups. These groups explored the impact of poverty &amp; inequalities on them and their families. They developed workshops and performances that could be delivered at the event <a href="#">“Over 2 Youth 22”</a> which was held on 24th September 2022 to deliver their findings to over 250 young people and partners.</p> <p>Young people from this event are developing a TP&amp;I youth panel.</p>	<p>TP&amp;I Strategic Partnership</p> <p>Education &amp; Children Services</p>



Action	Impact and Outcomes	Lead
<p>Raise awareness and improve access to services aimed at pupils to improve physical and mental well-being of children and young people experiencing poverty.</p> <p>Raise awareness and improve access to wellbeing services for priority families through the development of hubs and interventions that prevent crisis within the family.</p>	<p>There is clear evidence of the link between the increased stress and worry that living on a low income brings and deterioration of people's mental health.</p> <p>There had been significant increase in mental health and anxiety because of the pandemic which is being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, particular for young people and their families.</p> <p>Using a rights-based approach a Mental Health Action Plan has been developed through GIRFEC which is outlined in the <a href="#">Childrens Service Plan 2023-26</a></p>	<p>GIRFEC Strategic group.</p> <p>Education &amp; Children's Services</p>

### Next steps

Action	Impact & outcomes	Lead
<p>Increase access to ESOL, digital skills and literacy support for priority families especially targeting those from marginalised communities where literacy levels are low.</p> <p>Improve digital access, affordability and skills for priority families across Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Increasing literacy, numeracy and digital skills will improve the ability for families to take up offers and new service deals which they may not have been aware of.</p> <p>It gives the families increased opportunities not only through employment but social cohesion.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Community Learning Partnership</p>
<p>Develop and share good practice examples using the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). These projects and interventions are developed to support pupils on lowest income close the poverty and attainment gap.</p>	<p>Children, young people and their families will be supported to reduce the cost of the school day, increase opportunities to enhance their learning through a range of support and interventions.</p>	<p>Education &amp; Children Services</p>

<p>Ensure local transport strategies reflects the challenges and needs of priority families. Explore &amp; develop new ideas to overcome the transport challenges that rural communities face especially for low-income families.</p>	<p>Affordable transport is a key priority. Matching provision of where and when it is needed, linking work and services to where people live will make transport genuinely responsive and affordable.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Council  NESTRAN</p>
<p>Ensure strategies and action related to affordable housing, prevention of homelessness domestic violence, the prevention of childhood accidents; parental substance misuse; supporting the needs of the Criminal Justice population; parenting and mental health can reduce the inequalities gap and further improve quality of life and life chances for children and their families living in poverty</p>	<p>Increased ownership of local, area and national strategies and action plans.</p> <p>A workforce that will deliver inclusive services with dignity and respect.</p> <p>Improved life changes for all.</p>	<p>TP&amp;I strategic partnership.</p>

## Case Studies – Local Voices and Henry

### Case Study 1

Through the lived experience forum an in-person Conference - See Me, Hear Me, Work with Me, was developed and delivered as part of Aberdeenshire Challenge Poverty Week 2022. The conference was hosted by The Rowett Institute which is part of Aberdeen University.

The aims of the conference were to share good practice, raise awareness of the importance of coproduction with those experts of experience and listen to those with experience around food security, increase cost of fuel and the cost-of-living crisis.

*“The tackling poverty and inequality day that was held at the Rowett Institute today was so good. I am so glad I went along in person and met some people from the Forum. I think it was important to be present at the session to show that we do exist and are the actual people on the ground assisting with the Forum and having our opinions heard. I left today feeling valued, appreciated, and encouraged that what we do makes a difference. I hope there are more opportunities for engagement going forward.” – Forum member / conference volunteer*

The blended approach of in-person and online participation allowed 120 participants to take part in the day. They identified solutions, areas of improvements and informed national research but the main outcome was a commitment to develop a Charter that outlined expectations and process for those with lived experience.

### Case Study 2

HENRY is a UK charity working to give babies and young children a healthy start in life. HENRY [Homepage](#) | [HENRY](#) provides families with a range of supports to help achieve a healthy lifestyle. Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership are working in partnership with Home-Start colleagues including North East Aberdeenshire to deliver HENRY “Healthy families – Right from the start” programme.

This FREE programme is available to families with children aged 0-5 years that live in Aberdeenshire and are able to commit to the 8-week programme - self referral by the family is encouraged. We are now running both online and face to face groups and a range of 1-2 hour workshops taster sessions. Everyone wants the best for their children, but with so much conflicting advice it can be hard to know what to do for the best as a parent. Therefore, our trained accredited HENRY facilitators (from Homestart NEA, health visiting, public health and community dietetics) are best placed to provide this information through our exciting HENRY programmes.

From May 2022 to March 23 we ran 10 programmes supporting 50 parents/carers, below are some of their feedback:

*Parent 2; “Really good interesting course. The little bag of stuff you get is amazing. It’s great knowing that they’re always there if you needed anything. “*

*Parent 3; “It was great seeing a different approach to food and healthy living. Our bedtime routine is more consistent.”*

## Child Poverty Action Plan – Impact & Next Steps

Partners and local voices carried out a refocus of the Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Action Plan. This plan was agreed in March 2023 and can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

The intention of this Action Plan is to improve outcomes for all families living in poverty or at risk of living in poverty, but the key emphasis will be supporting families where the risk of children living in poverty is highest. To this end the Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Action Plan will focus on not only the ‘priority families’ who are at high risk of poverty but will ensure those living in rural and remote communities are supported. The partners have also added to those priority families to reflect the needs within Aberdeenshire. Those families that will be priorities are :-

- lone-parent families.
- a household where someone is disabled.
- families with three or more children.
- minority ethnic families.
- families with a child under one year old.
- families where the mother is under 25 years of age.
- families that are affected by in-work poverty.
- families that are within those communities that are least heard such as Gypsy/Traveller.
- families impacted by the criminal justice system.
- families effected by addictions.

This is an active action plan which partners keep up to date, the impact is highlighted within each of the sections.

The plan outlines a range of actions and will cover the next 3 years which will give the partners an opportunity to deliver sustainable outcomes.

## Final Word

*“Poverty is not a choice it is a change in circumstance which you can’t control or plan for”*

- Local Parent.

**INTRODUCTION**

In Aberdeenshire people are living in poverty due to low wages, high living costs, lack of accessible affordable flexible childcare, affordable transport and the premium felt by those living in a remote and rural area. Preventative approaches to address children poverty ensuring they have a rural bias is a priority for this plan.

Parents worry about the impact poverty has on their children, particularly that they may be bullied because of the circumstances in which they live. They can also feel stigmatised when accessing services which can result in reluctance to access support in future. Children living in poverty frequently report feeling excluded and embarrassed, citing it as a key source of unhappiness, and worry about their parents.

This plan has been informed by and will be monitored by those priority families that have lived experience. The actions do reflect the rural challenges and are driven by the need to improve outcomes for priority families. This plan will be delivered by a strong partnership who are committed to jointly achieve outcomes that will reduce Child Poverty in Aberdeenshire.

The rural dimension of Aberdeenshire creates distinct challenges. In addressing the specific dynamics of rurality, the development of providing localised a whole family approach where partners are collocated gives a real meaning to “no wrong door”.

Priority – Making Employment Work

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver	Progress /impact	Lead
Develop and deliver a range of employability programmes that supports those within priority families.	The number of priority families supported into employment.  The number of priority families supported to enhance their employability.	Increase income from employment.	880 individuals have been supported to enhanced employment skills out of which 225 have secure sustainable employment.	Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.  <a href="https://employmentconnect.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Aberdeenshire-LEP-3-Year-Plan-Overview-002.pdf">https://employmentconnect.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Aberdeenshire-LEP-3-Year-Plan-Overview-002.pdf</a>
Recruit Child Poverty Employability workers who will use a place-based approach to identify and address barriers to	The number of priority families supported through integrated flexible pathways.	Increase income from employment	The recruitment of 2 Child Poverty Employability workers has taken place and they will start in September 2023.  These posts will work with families to	Aberdeenshire Employment Support Team

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver	Progress /impact	Lead
securing or sustaining work. The workers will support families through developing positive relationships to address barriers such as money advice, transport, affordable childcare or digital access	<p>The number of working parents supported to reduce the cost of childcare and transport.</p> <p>The number of parents from the priority groups that secure or sustain</p>		increase access to sustained employment and training opportunities especially for those living in rural & remote areas.	
Provide appropriate support to address in-work poverty by targeting support to help parents already in jobs to remain active in the workplace through accessing the Parental Support Fund, Tax Free Childcare and gain skills or additional qualifications which supports Career progression.	<p>The number of parents from priority families, who are in work , to enhance their skills or supported through career progression.</p> <p>The number of families accessing the Parental Support Fund to support them to stay in work.</p>	Increase income from employment	<p>Over the last 9 months number of sessions around the Rising Cost of Living was delivered . These sessions raise awareness of the support available to working parents.</p> <p>The Parental Support fund supported 188 families. Including 54 into other employment including self-employment.</p>	Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.
Develop a partnership with local employers to	The number of employers that have been engaged with to	Increase income from employment	The number of accredited Living Wage employers increased from 64 in	Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership.

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver	Progress /impact	Lead
increase the number of local businesses who are Living Wage employers.	support them to become a living wage employer.  The number of Living Wage employers who operate within Aberdeenshire		2022 to 71 in July 2023.	
Encourage all businesses that are delivering services which have been procured by Aberdeenshire's Community Planning Partners to be living wage employers with a diverse workforce which has no gender pay gap	The number of employability opportunities delivered through procured services	Increase income from employment	Through procurement 171 employers are paying their staff the living wage this is an increase of 23% from previous years. 01 July 2023: All employed staff, including apprentices and any other workers engaged in delivering the grant-funded activity must be paid at least the real Living Wage.	Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board.

Priority – Making Every Opportunity Count

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
To continue to deliver good quality accessible information & advice services through the	The number of priority families supported to ensure they have secured all benefits and financial support	Maximising income from social security benefits;	Pathways have been developed with NHS, Foodbanks, ADP, Progress In Dialogue, Resettlement Team and a pilot in Meldrum Academy will inform	Tackling Poverty & Inequalities (TP&I) Strategic Partnership

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
<p>Information and advice framework.</p> <p>Money Advice &amp; welfare rights workers will use a key worker approach to support for priority families. To increase accessibility to the service the workers will be hosted within Primary Health Care facilities, housing services, community organisations including foodbank and within rural &amp; remote communities.</p> <p>A community-based information &amp; advice service will be delivered by a consortium which has been developed to include the 4 Citizen Advice Bureau who operates across</p>	<p>available to them.</p>		<p>future services within ECS.</p> <p>Increased access to support, advice and financial support for those most effected by the rising cost of living.</p> <p>Through these specialist pathways 386 priority families have been supported to access additional benefits and the financial available to them.</p> <p>An allocation of £3,173,790 has supported 4737 children and young people to access food, clothing and essential items.</p> <p>Over the last 12 months 9,841 clients have accessed Information &amp; Advice Services £9,355,405 has been secured in client financial gain . The main issues that clients are receiving support for are benefits, debt, housing, energy debt</p>	



Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
Aberdeenshire. This consortium will deliver a range of advice services including debt advice, benefits, housing, relationship and employment advice.			and support with the rising cost of living.	
<p>To develop a cash first approach to food security through the delivery of the Worried About Money Leaflet, developing a strategic partnership and delivering wellbeing funds through a range of trusted partners and social landlords.</p> <p>To develop partnership projects and initiatives which reduces food security, fuel poverty using a cash first approach.</p>	<p>Number of Worried About Leaflets distributed to partners and communities.</p> <p>Number of priority families who accessed support through the wellbeing funds.</p>	<p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p> <p>Increase income from employment</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire has distributed over 120,000 leaflets to households, community groups and partner organisations.</p> <p>Over 350 priority families have increased their household income through accessing love local cards and Wellbeing funds.</p>	Aberdeenshire's Financial Inclusion Partnership

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
<p>To develop and deliver the Fair Food Aberdeenshire action plan to increase access to affordable nutritious food, reduce food waste and increase food skills.</p> <p>To deliver the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) action plan which aims to make healthy eating and active living possible and achievable for everyone in Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>The number of priority families supported through to reduce fuel and food costs.</p> <p>The number of integrated food &amp; advice sessions delivered to priority families and the wider community.</p> <p>The number of priority families engaged with emergency food providers.</p>		<p>706 low income households have been supported to reduce their heating costs.</p> <p>62 advice sessions have been delivered to parents and partners.</p> <p>3,149 low-income families have engaged with the emergency food providers resulting in 4,944 children have been fed by emergency food providers.</p>	<p>Fair Food Aberdeenshire partnership</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Health &amp; Social Care Partnership.</p>
<p>To increase awareness and access to</p>	<p>Number of social media shares and</p>	<p>Reducing household costs.</p>	<p>Several campaigns have been shared on</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Financial Inclusion Partnership</p>

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
services when people need support through developing campaigns for transition periods of a child life enabling families to be aware of the support available at these stages of the child's life.	reach for campaigns.	Maximising income from social security benefits;	the social media platforms – Best Start Grants Parental Support Fund Fuel Fund These posts have reached over 6500 people per month.	
Deliver partnership training and awareness to address the stigma felt by those families when accessing services.	Number of participants who have engaged in training & awareness sessions.		Over 978 people and young people have participated in on line and face to face training and awareness raising session.	
Develop a range of targeted pathways for families who have a new-born baby , those households with a disabled parent or child, those engaged with Criminal Justice System and	Number of priority families supported through the targeted pathways.  Number of households/ people who have benefited from integrated services to improve their wellbeing , reduce poverty & inequalities ensuring		Through these specialist pathways 386 priority families have been supported to access additional benefits and the financial available to them.  The total number of people who have participated in the services, opportunities and	Financial pathways for families and those with new-born babies - NHS Grampian  Vulnerable & disabled Households – TP&I partnership. Specialist pathways -Criminal Justice Aberdeenshire ADP

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress / impact	Lead
clients supported through the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership service hubs.	positive outcomes		events that the partners have collectively delivered in 2022 is 26,073 out of which 3,272 are children and young people.	
<p>Deliver a range of opportunities to ensure those experts of experience can coproduce services, develop opportunities, inform practice and strategies.</p> <p>Support priority families to participate in the Local Voices Forum, expert panel sessions including deep dives into issues such as Fuel Poverty, Affordable &amp; flexible Childcare, accessible transport.</p>	<p>Number of partners involved in Aberdeenshire Lived Experience Network (ALEN)</p> <p>Number of interventions made by the network or expert forums which informs strategies, budgets, policy and practice.</p> <p>Number of priority families involved in expert sessions and forums.</p> <p>Number of coproduced services or opportunities.</p>	<p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p> <p>Increase income from employment</p>	<p>There are 18 partners involved in ALEN.</p> <p><a href="https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/hub-page/aberdeenshire-lived-experience-network">https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/hub-page/aberdeenshire-lived-experience-network</a></p> <p>There have been 15 different opportunities for those with lived experience to be involved in improving services , practice setting budget priorities, fees ,developing strategies and policies.</p> <p>608 including 250 young people from priority families have led and participated in sessions which informs practice and policy.</p> <p>Those experts with experience have coproduced training, Child Poverty Plans &amp; reports and allocating funding.</p>	<p>TP&amp;I Strategic Partnership</p> <p>Aberdeenshire’s Lived Experience Network</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Lived Experience Forum</p>

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
<p>Support young people from priority families to participate Youth led projects which use a rights-based approach. Through these projects young people will challenge stigma and ensure the inequalities felt by those young people living in poverty are addressed.</p> <p>Strengthen the voice of children &amp; Young Peoples to ensure future plans, strategies and funding allocation is informed by their lived experience in relation to Poverty &amp; Inequalities</p> <p>Ensure young people are aware of all the financial support available to them at</p>	<p>Number of young people involved in rights-based TP&amp;I projects.</p> <p>Number of interventions made by the young people which informs strategies, budgets, policy and practice.</p> <p>Number of children and young people from priority families involved in expert panels, informing consultations and participating in structures that empower young people.</p> <p>Number of coproduced services, campaigns or opportunities to address poverty &amp; inequalities which children and young people have developed.</p> <p>Number of young people from priority</p>	<p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p> <p>Increase income from employment</p>	<p>250 young people have been involved in TP&amp;I projects which identify priorities.</p> <p>Through Education &amp; Children Services there is a commitment from all partners to engage and empower young people.</p> <p>Through this structure there has been opportunities for young people to coproduce and inform policy around a number of areas which is outlined in the published Children Service Plan</p> <p><a href="#">Childrens Service Plan 2023-26</a></p>	<p>TP&amp;I Strategic Partnership</p> <p>Education &amp; Children Services</p>

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
different life transitions.	families who secure the Education Maintenance Allowance			
Increase access to ESOL , digital skills and literacy support for priority families especially targeting those from marginalised communities where literacy levels are low.  Improve digital access, affordability and skills for priority families across Aberdeenshire.	Number of priority families who access ESOL support.  Number of priority families that are supported with improving their literacy and digital skills.  Number of priority families that are digitally connected.	Reducing household costs.  Maximising income from social security benefits.  Increase income from employment	Increasing literacy, numeracy and digital skills will improve the ability for families to take up offers and new service deals which they may not have been aware of.  It gives the families increased opportunities not only through employment but social cohesion.	Aberdeenshire Community Learning Partnership
Develop and share good practice examples using the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). These projects and interventions are developed to support pupils on lowest income close the poverty and attainment gap.	Number of pupils benefiting from a PEF programme or activity.  Number of families supported through PEF initiatives.  Number of projects and interventions that are shared as good practice	Reducing household costs.  Maximising income from social security benefits.	Children, young people and their families will be supported to reduce the cost of the school day, increase opportunities to enhance their learning through a range of support and interventions.	Education & Children Services

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
	examples through the partnership.			
<p>To develop a childcare sector-based training programme to address the challenges faced by providers with recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>To pilot a childcare training academy targeting a rural setting which will also deliver wrap around childcare for those with primary age children.</p> <p>Develop models of flexible, affordable and accessible wrap around childcare for priority families and working parents that would include not only early years but primary age</p>	<p>Number of flexible childcare pathways developed to support the rural and remote communities.</p> <p>Number of training programmes for childcare / early years workers delivered through the sector-based training programmes.</p> <p>Number of new Childminders, models or providers.</p> <p>Number of new employment opportunities filled.</p>	<p>Increase income from employment.</p> <p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p>	<p>A tender has been developed with partners and those with lived experience to commission a review and research project which will be delivered in 2023. The outcomes will inform a Childcare strategy which will support working families going forward.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership</p> <p>Education &amp; Children Services</p>

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
children and young people who may require a higher level of care.				
<p>Ensure local transport strategies reflects the challenges and needs of priority families.</p> <p>Explore &amp; develop new ideas to overcome the transport challenges that rural communities face especially for low-income families.</p>	<p>Number of safe active travel routes across Aberdeenshire.</p> <p>Number affordable &amp; responsive rural transport projects.</p> <p>Number of sustained rural transport routes</p>	<p>Increase income from employment.</p> <p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p>	<p>An expert panel will be recruited from priority families to identify barriers and possible solutions around accessible and affordable transport.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Council</p> <p>NESTRAN</p>
<p>Raise awareness and improve access to services aimed at pupils to improve physical and mental well-being of children and young people experiencing poverty.</p>	<p>Number of children &amp; young people supported by the range of initiatives.</p> <p>Number of new projects, initiatives and opportunities available through the development of the wellbeing projects / hubs.</p>	<p>Increase income from employment.</p> <p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p>	<p>There is clear evidence of the link between the increased stress and worry that living on a low income brings and deterioration of people's mental health.</p> <p>There had been significant increase in mental health and anxiety because of the pandemic which is being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, particular for young people and</p>	<p>GIRFEC Strategic group.</p> <p>Education &amp; Children's Services</p>



Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
<p>Raise awareness and improve access to wellbeing services for priority families through the development of hubs and interventions that prevent crisis within the family.</p> <p>Deliver and fund a range of community-based wellbeing programmes.</p>	<p>Number of wellbeing programmes being integrated within existing opportunities.</p>		<p>their families. Through raising awareness and new opportunities people's wellbeing will improve.</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA)</p>
<p>Ensure strategies and action related to affordable housing, prevention of homelessness domestic violence, the prevention of childhood accidents; parental substance misuse; supporting the needs of the Criminal Justice population; parenting and mental health can reduce the inequalities</p>	<p>Number of strategies and action plans informed by experts of experience.</p> <p>Number of staff &amp; volunteers that are trauma informed.</p> <p>Number of coproduced strategies and action plans that are developed, monitored and delivered.</p>	<p>Increase income from employment.</p> <p>Reducing household costs.</p> <p>Maximising income from social security benefits.</p>	<p>Increase ownership of local , area and national strategies and action plans.</p> <p>A workforce that will deliver inclusive services with dignity and respect .</p> <p>Improved life changes for all.</p>	<p>TP&amp;I strategic partnership.</p>

Action	Performance Measure	Key Driver(s)	Progress /impact	Lead
gap and further improve quality of life and life chances for children and their families living in poverty				