Falkirk's Child Poverty Action Report 2023-2024

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Foreword

The impact of the Covid pandemic and subsequent rise in living costs continues to have huge repercussions on families and individuals living in poverty across the UK, and in our own communities. This is our fifth joint Local Child Poverty Action report and was produced during some of the most challenging times we have had recently.

Our partnership is resolute in its commitment to tackling poverty across Falkirk. Reducing poverty and addressing inequalities continue to be a priority for us and we are proud of the shared values and commitment across our Community Planning Partnership that enable this. We welcome the many fantastic examples of services and communities working together innovatively to support those families in greatest need.

The increasing cost of living has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalised individuals and families in our communities. We have seen dramatic increases in the prices of essential items such as food and fuel, with low-income families struggling now even more than before. We are actively striving to make sure that all families have the resources they need to thrive.

Falkirk's Child Poverty Action Plan reaffirms our commitments to address child poverty in Falkirk and reflects our progress so far. The plan also reveals our future objectives and initiatives for reducing child poverty in the area. Together, we want to make sure that all children, regardless of their household income, have equal access to the resources necessary to prosper and reach their full potential. We believe this Plan is an integral part of achieving that goal. It is our aim to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, child poverty before 2030.

We are committed to improving the wellbeing of every child across Falkirk.

Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn

Chair of Community Planning Board

Cathie Cowan

Chief Executive, NHS Forth Valley

Introduction

A quarter of a million children in Scotland today are living in relative poverty[1] (after housing costs). With an estimated 7771 of those children living in the Falkirk area, addressing child poverty is a continued priority for Falkirk's Community Planning Partnership.

In 2019 the Partnership produced its first Child Poverty Action Report, following the passing of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. We gathered information on activities taking place to tackle child poverty as well as what else needed to be done going forward to prevent more children slipping into poverty.

This fifth report was put together following a significant rise in cost of living in the UK. As a result, we are seeing demand for services increase. The efforts made by so many prove that the aim of helping individuals and families out of poverty is still at the forefront and our upmost priority despite the significant challenges the rising cost of living is having on individuals and families in Falkirk.

The following report details the progress made over the past year (2022-2023) in relation to the key poverty drivers. It also identifies work that needs to take place in the coming year (2023-24) and the groups we have identified as most at risk of poverty because of the rising cost of living.

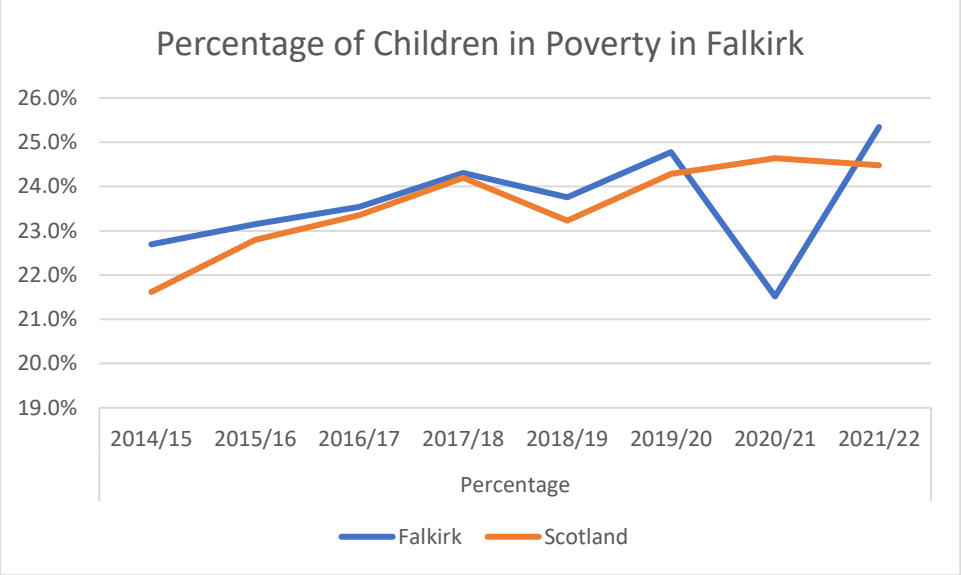
We are working to progress a five-year anti-poverty strategy for Falkirk which will include a particular focus on families and addressing child poverty. Therefore, this year's report is more succinct than previous annual reports, whilst still ensuring all the required information is provided.

Local data and input from partner organisations were used to identify the most vulnerable groups across our area, particularly in light of the impact of the rising cost of living. Going forward we will focus on the needs of those families and communities and take actions that have the biggest impact on their situations.

[1] Child Poverty Statistics - End Child Poverty

1. The scale of child poverty locally and the impact of the rising cost of living

The latest data available to us includes child poverty statistics from 2021/22.[2] The graph below (figure 1) shows the percentage estimates of children living in poverty below 60% median income after housing costs in Falkirk between 2014/15 and 2021/22. According to these figures there were 7771 (25.3%) children living in poverty 2021/22, an increase from the last statistically reliable year of 7686 (24.8%) in 2019/20.



Child Poverty in the Falkirk area

Highlighted below (table 1) is the percentage of children in relative poverty and absolute poverty by ward over the past 3 years[3] in the Falkirk area. Falkirk North and Grangemouth have the greatest percentage of children living in poverty. This has remained the case for the past 3 years.

Relative poverty is defined as having less than 60% of median income.

Absolute poverty is defined as having less than 60% of median income in 2010/11.

A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits, or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be included in these statistics.

[2] Child Poverty Statistics - End Child Poverty

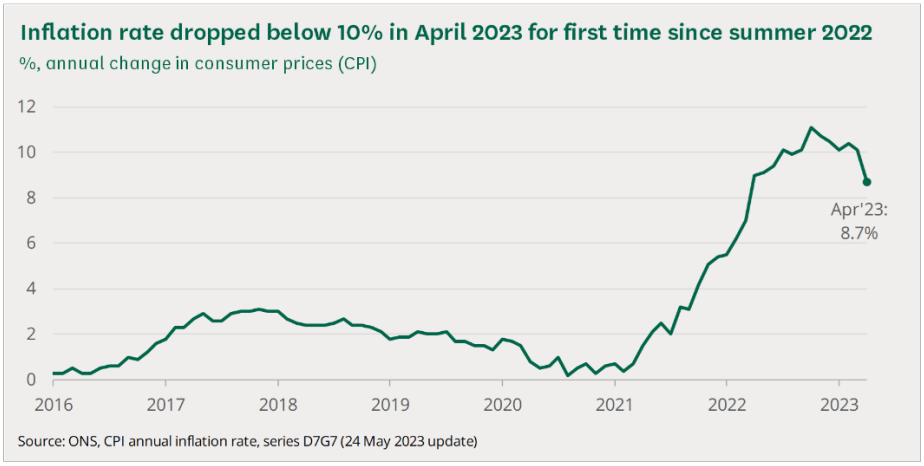
[3] children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2022.ods (live.com)

Table 1 – Percentage of Children living in Poverty by Ward in Falkirk

Ward	Relative poverty			Absolute poverty		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Bo'ness and Blackness	18.6%	15.0%	23.0%	15.5%	12.9%	17.7%
Bonnybridge and Larbert	13.8%	11.8%	15.9%	11.9%	9.8%	12.6%
Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst	15.2%	12.6%	15.9%	12.7%	10.1%	12.7%
Denny and Banknock	21.2%	18.0%	24.9%	17.7%	15.2%	19.3%
Falkirk North	26.6%	22.3%	29.2%	22.7%	18.4%	23.3%
Falkirk South	18.1%	15.0%	21.8%	15.0%	12.2%	16.2%
Grangemouth	25.8%	20.0%	30.0%	21.2%	16.3%	22.7%
Lower Braes	16.0%	13.9%	16.7%	14.1%	11.8%	12.7%
Upper Braes	17.6%	16.2%	19.7%	15.1%	13.2%	15.0%
Falkirk (Local Authority)	**19.2%**	**16.1%**	**21.8%**	**16.3%**	**13.3%**	**16.9%**
Scotland	**18.9%**	**16.0%**	**20.8%**	**15.8%**	**13.0%**	**16.5%**

Cost of Living

The cost of living in Scotland in 2022-2023 was expected to increase, as it has in previous years. However, for a variety of reasons costs have increased dramatically since 2021. Below is a graph showing the inflation rate in the UK demonstrating a significant increase in prices since 2021.



For those on low incomes, the cost of living in Falkirk is a significant burden. Low-income families are struggling more to make ends meet with an already tight budget, placing further demands on services.

2. Governance and reporting arrangements

Addressing poverty is a priority for the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership, supported by the Fairer Falkirk Partnership. This report and action plan has been reviewed and approved by

- the Fairer Falkirk Partnership
- the Falkirk Children's Commission
- the Local Employability Partnership
- the Children and Families Programme Board
- the NHS Forth Valley Children and Families Board

3. Our impact in 2022-2023

Appendix 1 documents what we have done over the past year and sets out our actions for next year. Additionally, for each of the three child poverty drivers we have summarised some of our achievements and provided case studies examples of the impact these have had. The names used in the case studies have been changed to protect their anonymity. Additionally below are some achievements that address all three drivers of child poverty.

Over 2022/23 we have delivered 'Think Poverty' training to staff across Falkirk Council. This interactive group session aims to increase awareness and understanding of poverty and encourages staff to put themselves in other's shoes via an interactive budgeting session. The training provides information on the support available to help people increase their income and reduce their costs. This equips staff to better support the people they are working with, but also to support their colleagues, friends and family. By the end of 2022/23, 133 people had attended one of these sessions.

Over 2023/24 we will offer these sessions monthly to Council staff and aim to encourage all new staff to attend as part of their induction. Additionally we will offer these sessions to Community Planning Partners as part of Challenge Poverty week 2023. This approach will increase understanding across Falkirk of the challenges faced by people in poverty and make sure more people know how to get help.

We have developed a test of change to support families in Grangemouth. Focused initially around Rannoch Early Years Centre we aim to

- introduce services to support whole family health and wellbeing for families
- work with the families to extend test of change based on their needs
- build communities around this by further extending this work across Grangemouth

Our approach includes activities around healthy eating, physical activity, active travel, literacy and numeracy, community growing, income maximisation, employability, parenting and attachment, music and arts. We will set up a steering group for the project with parents and carers to develop the programme further building on their lived experience.

This test of change is ready to start with the new school year in August 2023.

Driver 1 - Income from Employment

Highlights in 2022/2023

Money advice and support embedded in Employability Support

- Through dedicated financial advice and debt management support, we helped parents access £250,952 in unclaimed benefits.
- Parents received debt support funding amounting to £127,574.43.

Parental Employment Support Programme

The Parental Employment Support Programme aims to reduce child poverty by increasing household income through various means, including employment opportunities, affordable childcare, and effective money advice. This pioneering initiative takes a whole system approach to tackling the issue of child poverty. This work is jointly funded by the Scottish Government and Falkirk Council, with in-kind support from various community-based organisations.

The program supports families to increase their household income by creating fair and sustainable employment opportunities. By providing a range of community-based interventions, practical advice, personal development, health and wellbeing support, and training opportunities, the programme supports the entire family unit.

A key feature of this initiative is its streamlined approach to support services. By providing ongoing, dedicated financial advice and debt management support in 2022/23, the programme helped parents access £250,952 of unclaimed benefits and £127,574.43 of debt support funding.

Third sector services, community groups and private training providers collaborate to deliver the community-based provision, developing content from discussions and feedback directly provided by parents. Sessions have included 'Look to Cook' sessions, assisting with meal preparation on a budget, talks provided by Fire Safety Scotland, NHS Keep Well Service and Money Advice Services, with opportunities for individual follow up appointments. Certificated Training in First Aid with a child focus, REHIS Food Hygiene, Health and Safety and Manual handling have been requested by parents and incorporated into the community-based programmes.

Parents are involved in the co-design of project-based groups. Discussion with a group of disabled parents and parents of disabled children led to the development of a service directory of support services aligned to the needs of the parents.

Impact on priority groups

Pre-work engagement and support (Apr 2022 – Mar 2023)

- 142 unemployed parents commenced the Parental Employability Support Programme (PESF) support
- 40 unemployed parents successfully secured employment
- 6 unemployed parents progressed to further education
- 1 parent received support to engage in training, enabling them to become self-employed
- 30 young parents are continuing their support journey through the dedicated Young Parents Programme
- 6 unemployed parents have progressed to Further Education
- 5 unemployed parents have progressed to self-employment, 1 parent has been supported via the Scottish Child-Minding Association and 4 parents who undertook Beauty and Nails training.
- 10 parents attended Mark Brown Best of You part time training

- 64 parents participated in 6 community-based Parent programmes, including health and wellbeing; certificated and soft skill training as well as Financial Capability Supports – Debt and Income Maximisation training

In-work poverty (Apr 2022 – Mar 2023)

- 49 in-work parents engaged in PESF in-work support.
- 10 employed parents transitioned to alternative employment, resulting in increased household income.
- 6 in-work parents are attending college on a part-time basis to pursue qualifications in Counselling and HNC in Childcare Practice, facilitating career progression within Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) roles.

Young parents under 25

30 young parents are being supported in partnership with Family Nurse Practitioners and Community Learning and Development. How they engage is agreed with each individual and reflects individual circumstances and needs e.g., in person or online, one to one and group meetings. This flexible approach enables young parents to connect with the project and each other in the way that makes most sense to their lives.

In terms of opportunities for accreditation and recognition of achievement, young parents, within the 22/23 core group and peer group, have been offered the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award at Bronze and Silver levels given the correlation between activities in action plans and Duke of Edinburgh sections, namely skills, physical and volunteering.

An event to promote peer learning was undertaken in February 2023, which was well received by the young parents and encouraged sharing of their ideas and suggested plans for how both their individual and group action plans could develop in the future.

Case study

'*Your service allowed me to switch my career without going through a stage of unemployment. They understood the difficult situation of being a mum to two young children and trying to remain in employment. For the opportunity that has been giving I am very great full for everyone's help and support.*
Many thanks, Ruth'

Ruth was keen to make a career change as during covid she struggled to sustain employment due to shift work and the changes in family life as the children were now home schooling. Ruth spoke to her employer but due to the demands of the job they were unable to alter her hours of work as working in Social Care she was required to do shift work; however, this was no longer sustainable in her family life.

Things became very difficult, and Ruth was in a position where she considered leaving her job. This would have had a huge impact on the family financially, reducing their income and putting them at risk of poverty.

Ruth approached a local nursery enquiring about the possibility of employment that would allow her to work around school hours. The employer, being aware of Parental Employability Support, advised Ruth to refer herself to the Parental Employability Support Fund service to ask if they could support her to change her career.

Ruth and the Parental Employability Support key worker engaged with the employer, and it was agreed Ruth would start employment as an Early Learning Childcare Assistant. She would receive

Parental Employability in-work support and hours of work negotiated to fit in with her family life, allowing her to take up the opportunity. Following a period of time in post, developing her experience and knowledge working with the children, Ruth will be offered the opportunity of completing the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7 which allows candidates to demonstrate competence in job related skills in their particular area of work. This is Scottish Social Services Council requirement to follow a career in childcare.

Ruth has been in post for over a year now and continues to receive in-work support. She has adapted well to the change in career and is looking forward to completing her qualification. She also completed Paediatric 1st Aid and Food Hygiene Training.

Engaging with the Parental Employability Support has allowed Ruth to sustain full time employment and achieve a good work life balance.

What next in 2023/2024

Additional investment has been received from Scottish Government, aligned to the policy intent within Bright Start, Best Futures, allowing the Local Employability Partnership and Child Poverty Action Planning Group to build on the successes and lessons learned through the local delivery of the Paternal Employment Support Programme**.**

Investment has been developed in partnership with stakeholders and parents to ensure greater reach across priority areas and with priority groups, increasing access to joined up support services and forward referrals to employability support provision.

Areas of development include;

- Increasing staffing resource and capacity of the Parental Employability Support Fund team
- Increasing the dedicated Income Maximisation and Debt Advice resource for parents
- Continuing community-based provision such as the young parents programme, NHS THRIVE to Keep Well and Best of You programmes
- Expanding reach by creating partnership with dedicated family support and crisis services to support community engagement and delivery of community-based parents programmes
- Increasing the accessibility and availability of part time sector-based training programmes
- Working in partnership with Scottish Child-minding Association and the Department for Work and Pensions to support unemployed parents to undertake child minding induction training and associated health and safety support to become a self-employed child-minder.
- Increasing transitional support funding for parents to access when progressing into employment to cover unexpected costs
- Implementing a regional NHS and Local Authority partnership to establish paid work placement opportunities across the NHS sites in Forth Valley, gaining critical skills, and experiences to utilise in a sustainable job.
- Working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to identify and support low paid parents to access a variety of training to increase career progression opportunities and increase household income.

Driver 2 – Cost of living – Highlights in 2022/2023

Taking a cash first approach to supporting families – Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund was developed to provide cash first support to low-income households to help alleviate the need for crisis support, promote engagement with advice services, and break the stigma associated with other types of support. It works on a "trusted partner" approach, with referral partners identifying and referring households for support.

The fund provides a cash payment to low-income households and the amount paid depends on the household composition, with £100 paid for the first person in the household and a further £80 per person, including their partner and each child. The amount per extra person is the same whether or not that person is an adult or child maximising support for single parents and larger families.

The fund is open to households who meet one of the eligibility criteria below:

- 16 years old or over and resident in the Falkirk Council area, and in receipt of a qualifying benefit as listed below:
- Council Tax Reduction (CTR)
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit
- Income Support/Income-based Job Seekers Allowance/Income related Employment and Support Allowance/Pension Credit
- or have an equivalent low income
- or have a Young Person's Council Tax Exemption
- or have no recourse to public funds

By taking a cash first approach, we are moving away from more traditional ways of providing support, such as voucher schemes or charitable food aid. Giving people money allows them to spend the money they receive in flexible ways, whether that is buying groceries, topping up the electricity meter or buying clothes. We don't prescribe how the money should be spent.

Impact on priority groups

To ensure that the fund supports families in our tackling child poverty priority groups, we have regularly promoted it among groups and partners who are already working with those households. These include One Parent Families Scotland, Al Masaar and our own Leaving Care team amongst others.

The fund particularly helps to support larger families, as there is no limit on the total amount of support each family can receive.

In the first phase of the fund, which ran between January and April 2022, the Household Support Fund provided £186k to 1,158 low-income households supporting 1,440 adults and 1,180 children. The second phase of the fund has provided support of £792,660 to 4,492 low-income households, supporting over 5,261 adults and 3,541 children.

This includes:

- 1,404 lone parent households (31%)
- 424 households with three or more children (9%)
- 1% of households with children from ethnic minority groups
- 17% of households where someone has a disability
- 8% care leaver households

Free Swimming for Low Income Households

Falkirk Council have introduced free swimming as part of the GoCard scheme. This was introduced on the 1st September 2022. GoCard eligibility criteria was aligned with the Councils' charges and concessions policy from 1st October, increasing the number of low income families and young people who are eligible.

GoCard memberships have increased by over 140 since 1st September, with an overall increase in active memberships of 3% in the same period (inclusive of cancellations and suspended memberships) 567 GoCard holders enjoyed over 3600 individual free swims during September and October 2022 - a 31% increase in the number of GoCard members swimming from the same period in 2021

Case studies

A woman came forward after hearing about the Household Support fund. She was referred for a payment to the fund, however she was also referred for a fuel voucher after telling her referrer that due to the cost of heating she was unable to heat her children's bedrooms and as such she shared a bed with her three children every night. The £280 awarded from the Household Support Fund as well as the fuel voucher meant that the woman was able to heat her children's bedrooms for a number of weeks.

A young mother who had received a payment through the fund noted that the money she received was a 'godsend'. Whilst she is in employment, the money she earns is not enough to live on. She said that the payment came at the perfect time for her as she wasn't due to be paid for another week. The pressure that it took off her was 'indescribable'.

A young single parent with 3 children all under 5yrs old, having access to this fund has allowed her to the freedom to purchase items of clothing for her children, go on outings which before were not possible and support her with bills. Without this money there would have been no option to go on outings and money for clothing would need to be saved over the course of months. The extra financial support has not only benefited the young person but also her children's health and wellbeing.

What next in 2023/2024

More recently, we have begun to use the fund as a tool to help us target advice services towards people within our priority groups whom our data suggests would be better of claiming other benefits. Whilst at an early stage this approach will support households who may experience benefit delays as they take the steps they are advised to take to claim other benefits or tackle problem debts, resulting in better long-term outcomes for them.

Driver 3 – Income from social security and benefits in kind

Highlights in 2023

Our Revenues and Benefits team offer frontline support to those in our communities who need it. Our Advice and Support Hubs are open to the public, and staff provide face to face support with Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payments, Free School Meals, Education Maintenance Allowance and access to the Scottish Welfare Fund.

As well as this support, the team also provide help to access energy grants, emergency food aid and local support through our Household Support Fund, as well as providing a gateway to specialist support through our Community Advice Service. In 2022/23, our Advice and Support Hubs saw more than 3,700 people, with over half of those enquiries about benefits.

Our Welfare Benefits team work hard carrying out benefit checks as well as supporting households all the way through to benefit appeals, to ensure that they are supported to maximise their entitlement to benefits, grants and in-kind support. In 2022/23 they saw 3,056 new clients with benefit gains totalling £7.1m.

Impact on priority groups

- More than £2m of financial gains for families with three or more children
- More than £700k of financial gains for families where someone has a disability

Case study

David and Marianne are a couple with four children (aged between 11 and 16) living in a 5-bedroom private tenancy. They were claiming Universal Credit which did not cover all of their rent, owing to the impact of the Benefit Cap and Marianne's income from her part time employment.

Our Revenues and Benefits teams were able to provide support Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), mitigating the impact of the Benefit Cap as well as providing further short-term support with the shortfall between their Universal Credit Housing Cost element and their rent.

They were also supported to claim Council Tax Reduction (CTR), Free School Meals and Clothing Grant (which renews automatically each year) and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for their eldest child.

In total, we estimate that this package of support is worth £14,871 per year of financial support for this family via benefits administered by the Council.

What next in 2023/2024

Our Welfare Benefits Team has expanded, taking on new Household Support Officers. This increases the capacity of the service to carry out further benefit checks to make sure households are receiving their full benefit entitlement as well in-kind support such as free bus travel, period products and swimming. We are exploring ways of targeting this

support towards households in greatest need of it, and incentivising engagement through our Household Support Fund.

Falkirk Council Executive recently agreed a two-year Income Maximisation Strategy which aims to make sure that the right support is readily available to anyone who needs it to claim all the financial and in-kind support they are entitled to. Our actions to deliver this focus on four key areas.

- Improving knowledge among staff and those in the third sector who directly work with households and communities.
- Developing simple, easy to use tools and resources which support the delivery of easy-to-understand advice and support and empower households to check their own eligibility for benefits and in-kind support.
- Using our wealth of data effectively as a resource to allow us to proactively identify and target support to households most in need of it.
- Improving our communication to ensure it is timely, reaches the right audience and is clear and action focussed.

4. Priority Groups

Whilst our actions will support many people on a low income across the Falkirk Council area, including those in the national tackling child poverty priority groups, over the next year we will continue to prioritise those in the groups below.

- **Young people (16 – 19 or 16 – 24)**
- **Large families (3 + Children)**
- **Lone parents**
- **Care Experienced Young People**
- **Kinship Care Families**

The Falkirk North and Grangemouth wards have the highest proportion of children living in households experiencing relative poverty, compared to the rest of the Falkirk area. As such we will look for opportunities to prioritise these areas as we take forward actions to address child poverty. However, our actions will not exclusively focus on these areas given we know that there are children living in poverty across our communities.

5. Our Action Plan and Progress Update

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
1. Increase engagement with employment support services for young people and parents on low income, through targeted marketing and community engagement aligned to communities of most need.	1. Local third sector family support partners to deliver 2 pre-pipeline programmes in four priority areas in 2023/2024 to increase reach and engagement opportunities. Work in partnership with Community, Public and Private sector groups to augment service delivery.	30 Young parents are being supported in partnership with Family Nurse Practitioners and Community Learning and Development. Duke of Edinburgh, Certification, Socialisation Events and Peer learning are inherent within this project.	Falkirk Council Employment and Training Unit	March 2024
	2. Increase dedicated community advice re financial and employability advice surgeries in communities, Early Learning Centres and schools. Targeted personal development programmes delivered for parent in communities aligned to Early Learning and Childcare Centres, schools and wider stakeholder referrals.	Through dedicated financial advice and debt management support, Employability Training Unit helped parents access £250,952 in unclaimed benefits. Parents received debt support funding amounting to £127,574.	Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit	March 2024
	3. Contribution to the THRIVE to keep well programme to enhance opportunity for progression to employability advice and support provision.		Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
1.2 Support families to increase their income through access to fair work and career progression opportunities.	1.Increase availability of skills programmes for parents across the Local Employment Partnership including digital skills, sector-based skills, and personal development. Employer engagement activity to target hybrid working roles for parents and skills development programmes aligned to opportunities.	13 parents participated in two Gateway Parent programmes, hosted in areas of targeted support, which included health and wellbeing, short courses such as managing stress and anxiety, and building confidence and self-esteem, Healthy eating on a budget and Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland introduction to food hygiene certification (meal prep), NHS keep well and life coach support, better off in work calculations and how to manage your money, childcare, first aid, and moving on - employability overviews.	Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit	March 2024
	2.Scottish Child-Minding programme development in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions.	34 unemployed parents have commenced employment since April, and 6 unemployed parents have progressed to Further Education.	Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit	March 2024
1.3 Increase income for families experiencing 'in work poverty', through skills development, financial advice, and employment progression opportunities	1.Review of in work participants to be undertaken to ensure access to in work advice and guidance re skills development and progression opportunities. UK shared Prosperity Fund workforce development to support and enhance access to those on low income and entry level jobs to upskill and increase earnings.	49 in-work parents commenced Parental Employment Support since April 2022. Training supports provided include Beauty Massage training, Train Learn Succeed Level 3 Certificate in Community Interpreting	Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	2. Increased skills development funding for individual certification and licences.	Qualification, Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies Counselling Certificate and Chartered Institute of Learning and Development, enabling parents to progress in work and increase self-employed client group.		
1.4 Increase accessibility of childcare for low-income families in employment and progressing into employment.	1.Increased childcare and wider discretionary funding for the transition into employment for parents.	Targeted uptake of eligible 2's and 1140-hour childcare commitment within the Upper Braes and Falkirk North wards, and towards lone parents.	Falkirk Council Employment Training Unit and Children's Services	March 2024
	2. Collaborative working with wider stakeholders re the increase to school day childcare.	To be done in 2023-2024		March 2024
1.5 Falkirk Community Planning partners will utilise community benefit in procurement clauses to ensure skill development and employment opportunities are made available to those within our local community. This includes paying the minimum of the Living Wage for those employed within procured contracts.	1.Employer recruitment incentive aligned to parents moving jobs or being promoted internally.	To be done in 2023-2024		March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	2.NHS Demonstrator implemented to provide an additional 15 temporary job opportunities to enhance the work experience and job opportunities of parents.	To be done in 2023-2024		
	3.Continued collaboration with Falkirk Council procurement regarding Community Benefit clauses being aligned to employment and modern apprenticeship opportunities. This will further be aligned to the benefit realisation of the Forth Green Free Port and Growth Deal projects, including increased opportunities for Modern Apprentices.	To be done in 2023-2024.		
2.1 Increase uptake of funded, early learning and childcare entitlement for 2- and 3-year-olds	1.Social media campaign to begin August 2023.	To be done in 2023-2024.	Falkirk Council Children's Services and Communication teams	
2.2 Reduce financial barriers to education for children and young people	2.Apply concessionary award of Free Meal Entitlement to support low-income families access School Breakfast Clubs free of charge.	Total Free School Meal awards (National and Concessionary) increased by 1.5%, Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant awards increased by 2% and Education Maintenance Allowance awards increased by 9%.	Falkirk Council Children's Services and Revenues and Benefits teams	
	3.Revisit the cost of the school day.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Children's Services	
	4. Increase the health and wellbeing caused by poverty of pupils living in	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Children's Services	

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1 and 2.			
	5.Increase attendance of those living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1 and 2.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Children's Services	
	6.Decrease exclusions for those living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation data zones 1 and 2.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Children's Services	
	7.Increase in literacy and numeracy to close the poverty related attainment gap.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Children's Services	
2.3 Assist young people and children to reduce their energy bills by providing up to date advice and access to financial help.	1.New Staff to attend Fuel Poverty Training with Home Energy Scotland.	229 staff were trained to give advice, with 2,755 people signposted to Home Energy Scotland 2755 for advice and support. 519 households who contacted Home Energy Scotland have a child under 16.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing
	2.Energy related article to be included in each edition of Tenant Talk magazine.	Three articles were published across the year.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing
	3. Hold two Fuel Forums for frontline staff to ensure staff can provide up to date advice and support to clients.	Forums were held in April and October 2022.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing
	4.Energy Advice and Benefits and Support webpages to be kept up to date.	Pages regularly updated throughout the year and kept under review.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing
	5.Welfare Benefits and Debt Teams continue to provide advice and direct support for fuel costs for young people at risk of financial insecurity.	Uptake of fuel voucher scheme, with 265 referrals made.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	Work with Upper Braes/Falkirk North and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and young people to adapt income maximisation services.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
2.4 Increase the financial wellbeing of young people and families	1.Deliver a minimum of twelve "Think Poverty" sessions reaching at least 240 existing staff and 75% of new staff. Sessions extended to wider Community Planning partners.	Delivered 13 sessions in 2022/2023, reaching 133 staff.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing
	2. Review existing staff resources on benefits (online and other resources).	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	3.Household survey on awareness of advice services and existing web content and resources, and review of web content. Results used to inform amendments to existing content and resources by end December 2023.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	December 2023
	4.Identify and appraise options for a quick financial health check tool which can be widely used by frontline staff across the council and third sector, as well as households themselves.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	5.Use data effectively to target advice and support to those who priority groups.	Trial exercise carried out using Low Income Family Tracker tool and Household Support Fund to proactively identify and engage with households who could benefit from advice services and income maximisation. Learning from exercise underway. Local Authority	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	Ongoing

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
		Covid Economic Recovery Funding was used to deliver £75 Covid Economic Recovery payments to more than 10,800 households including offered to Council tax exempt young people and those who are care experienced in line with priority groups.		
	6.Evaluate and get baseline on take up of in-kind support and develop measures to improve take up.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	7.Develop and implement measures to allow better capture of financial and in-kind support gains across frontline services.	Work underway to roll out use of Advice Pro system in relation to Household Support Fund and Advice and Support Hubs.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	8.Grow internal Yammer community based around the theme of supporting those in poverty, to enable effective sharing of information and advice among frontline staff.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	September 2023
	9. Expand Household Support Fund, leveraging it to target households not previously engaging and promoting take up of advice services to help maximise income from benefits and in-kind support.	From September 2022, the fund has provided support of £792,660 to 4,492 low-income households, supporting over 5,261 adults and 3,541 children.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
2.5 Improve digital inclusion amongst young people and families in the most deprived areas and priority groups	1. Develop a Digital Inclusion Project that targets older people, people with disabilities, people experiencing social isolation, ethnic minority groups and children, young people and families who	Due to a lack of funding, Community Learning and Development team were unable to deliver a digital inclusion project for children, young people and families e.g.,	Falkirk Council Community Advice Services/Fairer Falkirk	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	live in the most deprived areas and are from priority groups.	Connecting Scotland resources were redirected to support digital inclusion for Ukrainian families and applications were open to Resettlement teams only.		
	2. Develop scheme for the distribution of 200 SIM cards with one year of data.	To be done in 2023-2024.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	December 2023
	3. Develop scheme for the delivery of free broadband worth £50k from Virgin Media Social Value Fund and consider options for "mainstreaming" this support in future.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	December 2023
	4.Recruit a new Digital Libraries Graduate to support libraries in tackling digital exclusion.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Libraries Service	August 2023
2.6 Prevent and reduce homelessness for households including families with children and or/key young people	1. Increase collaboration with other agencies and services on homeless prevention. Homeless Prevention Team recruited and in place.	Prevention team established and building relationships with partners, stakeholders and services to ensure that homelessness prevention is at the heart of all services.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	2. Recruit a dedicated Prevention Officer to engage with families at risk of eviction from Scottish secure tenancies.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	July 2024
	3. Develop new protocols for working with Registered Social Landlords, Health and Social Care Partnership and other partners to minimise homelessness and promote prevention.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Community Advice Services/Advice and Support Hubs/Fairer Falkirk, NHS Forth Valley	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	4. Improve partnership working with local RSLs around section 14 notices and homelessness prevention activity. This will include additional information sharing protocols, key points of contact and case conferences. Awaiting Scottish Government publishing the duty.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Community Advice Services/Advice and Support Hubs/Fairer Falkirk, NHS Forth Valley	March 2024
	5.Develop a housing domestic abuse policy, with key stakeholders and those with lived experience, to look at early intervention strategies and promote safety measures to reduce homelessness presentations caused by domestic abuse	Increased the quota of social housing lets to homeless households from 33-45%, for a limited period of October 2021 - June 2022, leading to increased lets to Home Seekers.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	6.Develop content and resources to be taught as part of the school curriculum re housing options and housing and homelessness rights and services. Ensure that young people are empowered to make informed decisions about their housing options and know where they can seek further assistance.	Debt Advice worker specifically engaged in working with young people.	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	7.Develop media resources with young people to raise awareness of mediation and LGBTQ+ support networks.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	8.Recruit a young person's Housing Assistant to raise awareness of housing options and support young people through their housing journeys.	To be done in 2023-2024	Falkirk Council Housing and Communities Service	March 2024
	9.To provide financial support from Homeless Prevention fund in instances	Review of applications and spend of Homeless Prevention	Falkirk Council	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	where we need to prevent homelessness, or to rapidly rehouse people.	Fund. An analysis has been completed of the spend for 2022/23, and funding will continue at the same level for 2023/24/		
	10. Complete development work on Deposit Guarantee Scheme and launch this to qualifying households after the Deposit Guarantee Scheme is launched	Deposit Guarantee Scheme in operation, and a review of number of successful applications completed	Falkirk Council	March 2024
		Appraisal to be carried out for this service	Falkirk Council	March 2024
2.7 Reduce food poverty for young people and families	1. Continue to support Investing in Communities Fairer Falkirk Food participating organisations post March 23. Support and monitor Forth Environment Link UK Shared Prosperity Food Project	Number of households accessing affordable food via community food projects	Third Sector	March 2024
		Pantry and growing areas developments in Grangemouth, Denny, Langlees, Hallglen, Garden Buddies Scheme Community Meals Cooking from Scratch Supporting funding for food/climate projects Falkirk Food Partnership (Cross Sector Partners) Falkirk Food Partnership Network Gatherings	Falkirk Council	March 2024
	2. Children's Services Community Learning & Development Team will work with children, young people and families, within the context youth work and the principles	No of children, young people and families supported by Community Learning and Development to mitigate food	Falkirk Council	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	of holistic family support, to mitigate the impact of food poverty	poverty, Children's Services Community & Learning Development Team worked with 107 families, either one to one or in group settings, to mitigate the impact of food poverty. Examples of individual family activities include provision of food vouchers, recipes packs and referrals to emergency food providers within the context of holistic family support.		
		Examples of group activities include Resettlement English for Speakers of Other Languages Seasonal Holiday Programmes that integrated family learning activities with food related activities i.e., community picnics, cook 'n share, or food vouchers to prepare pack lunches for excursions Slow Cooking Group for families of young people attending Falkirk High School. Parents/carers were provided with ingredients, recipes, food vouchers and a slow cooker to	Falkirk Council	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
		take home. To compliment this activity parents/carers attended sessions on fuel poverty and income maximisation. Cafes (Social Isolation/Recovery Communities/Youth), Lunch Clubs, Cooking on a Budget, Batch Cooking (adults and children), growing areas, hardship food vouchers Holiday Hunger projects, Harvest Festival, Accredited Training (REHIS, etc) Voluntary Involvement in Volunteering Activities Project, Weight Management Programmes/Research Project/Pre-diabetes initiative (NHS)		
	3.Carry out a needs assessment for maternal and infant food insecurity in liaison with local authority and 3rd sector organisations	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	March 2024
	4.Identify 3 new community staff and partners from 3rd sector organisations to support distribution of vitamin D drops to vulnerable families in areas of deprivation.	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	5. Develop a Starting Solids toolkit and associated train the trainer for staff and partners who work with parents with infants and require further support to introduce and prepare appropriate family food.	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	
	6.Increase capacity of statutory and third sector organisations working with families affected by food insecurity to reduce diet related inequalities by ensuring funding/training/resources in place to support them.	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	
	7.Carry out test of change in Rannoch Nursery to improve healthy weight with P1.	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	March 2024
	8.Work with Birth and Registration services to increase the uptake of Best Start foods	To be done in 2023-2024	NHS Forth Valley	
	9.Scope out how to support the roll out and implementation of the new updated "Setting the Table" nutritional standards and guidance for early years and childcare providers through development of new training sessions.	Assisting in scoping /implementation and reporting of 7 Food Futures initiatives (Forth Environment Link0 in disadvantaged areas.	NHS Forth Valley	March 2024
		Establishment of growing areas, refurbished or new kitchen/		March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
		café facilities, accredited training programmes, youth programmes, lunch clubs for isolated individuals.		
	10. Update the map page and regularly promote it in a variety of different forums.	Number of people using our Support Services map to find food support	Children's Services Community Learning & Development	March 2024
		Assisting in scoping /implementation and reporting of 7 Food Futures initiatives (Forth Environment Link) in disadvantaged areas.		
		Establishment of growing areas, refurbished or new kitchen/ café facilities, accredited training programmes, youth programmes, lunch clubs for isolated individuals.		
		Number of people using our Support Services map to find food support	Fairer Falkirk	March 2024
		In June 2022, Falkirk Food futures invited the Public Health Nutrition team to deliver an Elementary cooking skills and Introduction to Food and Health Course at the Archibald Russell centre, Dennyloanhead. These courses are accredited by Royal	NHS Forth Valley	

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
		Environmental Health Institute Scotland.		
2.8 Improve Third Sector support pathways to help families in financial crisis make complete and appropriate applications for Scottish Welfare Fund support	1. Attend third sector awareness sessions and continue to engage with third part organisations.	Number and success rate of applications supported by third sector organisations.	Falkirk Council	March 2024
	2. Continue to maintain and create strong links with third party organisations and promote Scottish Welfare Fund to all third-party organisations. To encourage third party organisations to support applicants with the application process.	Number and success rate of applications supported by third sector organisations.	Falkirk Council	March 2024
	3.Increase awareness of Scottish Welfare Fund across social media adverts and Local paper. Webpage kept up to date.	Scottish Welfare Fund spend increased significantly in 2022/23 with previous underspend now fully utilised.	Falkirk Council	March 2024
2.9 Reduce the cost of participation in sport, leisure and culture experiences for young people and families	1. Work with children, young people and families to co-design accredited holiday programmes NB For 23/24 - Work with young parents will be included in reporting for 1.1	33 young parents participated in the pilot phase of Falkirk Supporting Young Parents Project. In 22/23, 5 young parents completed the Duke of Edinburgh Award at Bronze Level; the first young parents' group in Scotland to achieve the award.	Falkirk Council Children's Services CLD	March 2024
		Increased proportion of successful applications		
3.1 Increase uptake of welfare benefits and	1. Implement the Communications Plan (subset of Income Maximisation Strategy)	Number of referrals made by health visitors, family nurse	NHS Forth Valley health visitors, family	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
entitlements by young people and families on low income	with a focus on promotions at relevant points throughout the year.	practitioners, midwives, and community mental health team. Number of pregnant women and families with children under 5 who get advice from Community Advice Service Bridging payments provided. Additional families received this support worth £3,691,060. Total financial gain for clients referred by health visitors, family nurse practitioners, midwives, and community mental health team.	nurse practitioners and midwives Falkirk Council Community Advice Service, Employment and Training Unit	
	2. Review Benefits content as part of Income Maximisation Strategy.	To be done	Falkirk Council	March 2024
	3. Develop staff resources and training as part of Income Maximisation Strategy.	To be done	Falkirk Council	March 2024
3.2 Improve communication with young people, families, and child poverty support partners	1. The Health Visiting service is represented on the Childcare Allocation, Review and Evaluation Group. More strategic partnership with the Health Visiting Service as part of earlier intervention remains a key priority.	Number of people with lived experience of low-income involved in service design. Co-production of resources with those with lived experience of poverty/child poverty.	Third sector, NHS Forth Valley, The Health Foundation, Children's Services: Early Years	March 2024

Change required by 2024	Action to achieve change 2023-2024	Progress for 2022-2023	Who	When
	2. Increase awareness of the impacts of poverty across all and increase the responsibility of staff and partners on how they can contribute to reduce the impacts of poverty within schools and early years settings.	Review learning from research and integrate actions into next Child Poverty Action Report.	Falkirk Council	March 2024
		Reporting of employment opportunities aligned to 1140 expansion of priority groups and areas	Employment and Training Unit	March 2024