

GET HEARD SCOTLAND BRIEFING

CHILD POVERTY DELIVERY PLAN 2022-26: VOICES FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

BACKGROUND

From July to November 2021, the Poverty Alliance spoke with community organisations and people with experience of living on a low income across Scotland to understand their priorities for tackling poverty. This engagement acted as a contribution to the development of the next four-year Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (TCPDP), which the Scottish Government is required to produce as part of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act of 2017. Meeting our child poverty targets will require significant interventions from all spheres of government but to make real progress we need to

galvanise activity across Scottish society. The new TCPDP is an opportunity to raise the level of discussion about what needs to be done to address child poverty and to guide the action required. The views gathered from communities as part of the *Get Heard Scotland* programme forms a vital part of that discussion – we now need to act on what is said.

To read the full report from this year's *Get Heard Scotland* activity visit <https://www.povertyalliance.org/get-involved/get-heard-scotland/>

KEY MESSAGES

Social Security

The role of our social security system is fundamental to addressing child poverty. We need to ensure that all Scottish entitlements are contributing to an adequate income. More needs to be done to raise awareness and uptake of available support from both DWP and Social Security Scotland. Improving support for key groups such as unpaid carers and people with No Recourse to Public Funds should be a priority.

Jobs and Employability

Jobs paying at least the real Living Wage and which provide secure and reliable incomes are vital for reducing poverty. This requires more responsibility being taken by employers in sectors such as hospitality, retail and care. Procurement processes and more conditions on employers that receive government support should be used to help address child poverty. The high cost of childcare was noted as a barrier to employment and, although welcome steps have been taken already, an expansion of free childcare provision must be rolled out to better support parents to access and stay in employment.



Communities and Poverty

Community organisations (COs) provide crucial support to people on low incomes, and the significant support provided by COs during the pandemic reinforces their critical role in tackling child poverty. By being embedded within communities, these organisations are well placed to deliver preventative interventions. Greater sustained investment in community organisations is required if they are to play their full role in reducing and preventing child poverty.

Civil society organisations also provide much of the infrastructure and expertise needed to coproduce solutions to child poverty. The next CPDP should set out how the goal of participation and co-production are to be realized at both the local and national levels.

Addressing Stigma

Although there has been welcome recognition of the impact of stigma by policy makers, there remains little tangible action to practically address the problem. Initiatives like the Cost of the School Day show that problems of stigma can be addressed in ways that make a real, material difference to the wellbeing of children and families; lessons from this work should be learned when producing the next CPDP. To this end, the next CPDP should be accompanied by an awareness raising programme designed to both provide a higher profile of the actions that are being taken across Scotland and help undermine some of the stigmatising beliefs that persist about poverty.

WHAT'S WORKING?

The new CPDP is not starting from scratch – it will be building on a range of policies and approaches. Below is a summary of the key elements that are, according to the individuals and organisations we engaged with, working at the moment.

Social Security

“The key is putting money in people’s pockets. People will make the best choices for their families.”

There is strong support for financial support packages introduced by the Scottish Government, such as the Scottish Child Payment and the Best Start Grants. In addition, cash first approaches were strongly favoured and examples like the School Clothing Grant and the cash support delivered during school holidays were positively welcomed based on the additional income and the greater autonomy that it fostered.

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Cost of Living

There was strong support for actions to address the cost of living in areas such as housing and energy costs, and on areas such as digital access, food and transport. There was recognition of the important role of School Clothing Grant, provision of free childcare and free prescriptions. It was noted by local third sector organisations that support they provided such as emergency food aid, pantries, providing digital access, was also important in reducing the cost of living.

Income from employment

Income through paid employment was seen as a key route out of poverty. In this context the focus on the payment of the real Living Wage was seen as critical in securing the provision of fair work. It was also acknowledged that there was further to go in some of the sectors where young people are disproportionately employed, such as hospitality, and that these people may need additional support. It was noted that pay is just one aspect of the experience of in-work poverty and some participants welcomed the efforts to address other dimensions of the experience, in particular emerging efforts to address the need for security of contracts and hours for low paid workers.