

West Lothian Local Child Poverty Report April 2024-March 2025.

Child Poverty is still a national priority across Scotland. Each year many families with children and young people are living in poverty that can often be complex due to many factors including low pay and the rising cost of living. Across Scotland around one in four children are living in relative poverty. Families living in poverty can be found in any area including those that are considered affluent.

Living in poverty contributes to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for families – physically, mentally and financially, and can make people feel less in control of their lives. By helping to address the drivers of poverty (income from Social Security, income from employment, the cost of living) it can improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for families and reduce inequalities in health.

Each year Local Authorities and NHS Boards are required to submit a joint Local Child Poverty Report to national partners (Improvement Service/Public Health Scotland) that highlights the progress and steps being made to reduce and mitigate against child poverty. This is the 2024-2025 Local Child Poverty Action Report for West Lothian.

Section 1 - Setting the Scene

1.1 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act

Scotland has four statutory targets assigned to reducing child poverty by 2030 that include:

- Less than 10% of children live in households that are in relative poverty
- Less than 5% of children live in households that are in absolute poverty
- Less than 5% of children live in households that are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 5% of children live in households that are in persistent poverty.

The Act places a duty on local authorities and health boards to jointly produce and publish annual reports on planned activity, progress and outcomes in their local area. It also requires Scottish Ministers to publish child poverty delivery plans every four years. The next plan is due to be published in 2026.

Unfortunately, the interim national target of reducing child poverty to 18% has not been met and rates across many local authorities in Scotland remain high.

1.2 Drivers of child poverty and priority groups

There are three key drivers across Scotland that the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 focuses on

- Income from employment (including consideration of hourly pay, number of hours worked, skills and qualifications and the labour market)
- Cost of living (including housing, energy and food costs, affordable childcare and transport, digital inclusion, savings, affordable credit and debit management and the cost of the school day)
- Income from social security and benefits in kind (maximising income by ensuring awareness and uptake of benefit entitlement)

Between 2021-2024, relative child poverty (after housing costs) in Scotland fell to 23% compared with 24% in 2020-2023. Unfortunately, the interim target set by the Scottish Government to reduce child poverty by 18% by 2023-2024 was not met. Across the United Kingdom relative child poverty levels are 31%.¹

There are some families across Scotland that have a higher-than-average risk of poverty and may require targeted or specific support. These priority groups and the proportion living in Scotland are set out in Table 1.²

Priority Group	Relative Poverty		Absolute Poverty	
	2021-2024	2020-2023	2021-2024	2020-2023
Disabled person in household	27	27	23	23
3+ children in household	41	38	36	35
Minority ethnic household	37	43	31	38
Lone parent household	36	38	32	33
Mothers under 25 yrs household	*	*	*	*
Baby under 1 yr household	35	*	25	*
All children	23	24	20	33

Table 1. The percentage of families living in poverty by priority groups in Scotland. *data not available

In previous reports, data was included on low income and maternal deprivation. However there has been a change in the way this information collected therefore national data is not available.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/news/child-poverty-in-scotland-falls/> (accessed 06/05/25)

² <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/> (accessed 06/05/25)

1.3 West Lothian Child Poverty Reference Group

In West Lothian, the Child Poverty Reference Group continues to drive action forward by:

- Identifying gaps and developing solutions to prevent and mitigate the impact of child poverty in West Lothian
- Monitoring the progress of actions of the West Lothian Child Poverty Action Plan
- Ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience of poverty are heard
- Reporting of work through governance structures including the West Lothian Poverty Task Group

1.4 Governance

The Child Poverty Reference Group is a subgroup of the West Lothian Tackling Poverty Task Force. Regular child poverty updates are provided as part of a wider poverty approach for West Lothian. The West Lothian Tackling Poverty Task Force have also developed the [Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-2028](#) which includes high level actions to reduce poverty. These objectives are continually being assessed and reviewed to make sure they are still effective and making a difference.

The governance process for approval for the West Lothian Child Poverty Action Report involves senior sign off from both NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council before it is submitted to national partners.



Section 2 An overview of child poverty in West Lothian

2.1 Poverty in West Lothian

Work in West Lothian to inform the approaches and actions to tackle child poverty continues to be data and intelligence led.

Across West Lothian anti-poverty figures indicate:

- 20% of West Lothian population experience some form of financial hardship³
- 24.1% of children experience relative poverty⁴
- 76.7% of working age adults are in work⁵

³ West Lothian Council data, 2025

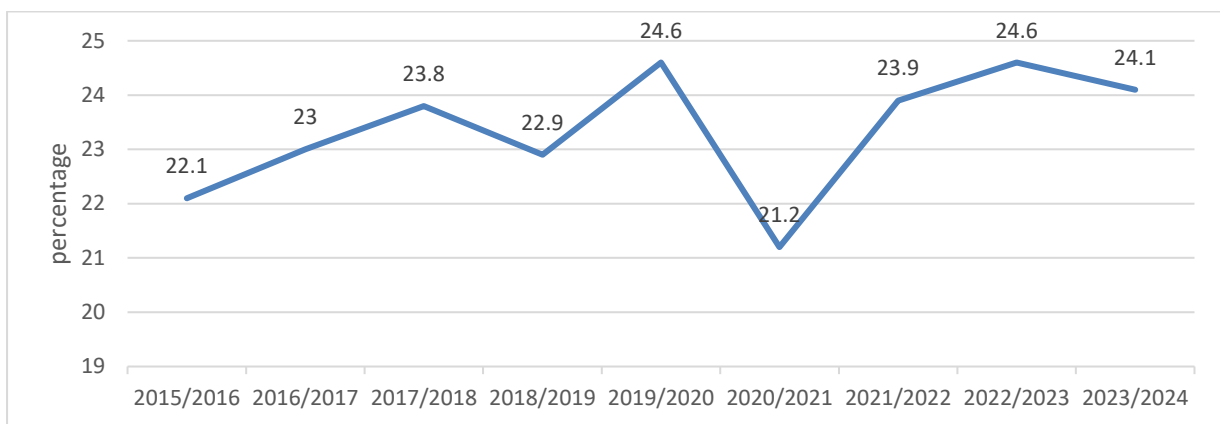
⁴ <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty-2024/>

⁵ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157436/printable.aspx>

- 4.7% of West Lothian working residents earn below the living wage⁶
- 18% of residents experience fuel poverty (fuel bill >10% of income after housing)⁷
- 9% of residents experience extreme fuel poverty (fuel bill >20% of income after housing)⁸

2.2 Child Poverty

In 2023-2024, it was estimated that 24.1% of children living in West Lothian were living in relative poverty (after housing costs) which is a reduction of 0.5% from 2022-2023.⁹ West Lothian is above the Scottish average of 22%.¹⁰



Graph 1. The proportion of children living in relative poverty after housing costs in West Lothian

When comparing rates across the 32 local authorities in Scotland, West Lothian (24.1%) features in the top 10 highest ranking areas for child poverty, ahead of neighbouring local authorities City of Edinburgh (22.8%) South Lanarkshire (19.5%) and the Scottish Borders (21.5%). Glasgow sits at the top of the rankings for child poverty with a rate of 36%.¹¹

West Lothian does not, however, feature in the top ten ranking Scottish constituencies with the highest child poverty rates by county/region in the UK.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/low-pay-commission-report-2024>

⁷ Scottish House Conditions Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017-19, The Scottish Government

⁸ Scottish House Conditions Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017-19, The Scottish Government

⁹ [Child Poverty Statistics 2025 - End Child Poverty](#)

¹⁰ [Child poverty in Scottish local authorities](#)

¹¹ [Child poverty in Scottish local authorities](#)

2.3 Educational Attainment

West Lothian Education Services continues to be fully committed to ensuring excellence and equity for all children and young people. Progress continues to be made across Education Services in tackling the poverty related attainment gap and is measured against the stretch aims¹² and through the impact of 7 Strategic Equity Funded Projects. This partnership approach to Strategic Equity Funding planning continues to be taken in order to collaborate with a range of services across the local authority. The Equity team is one of these projects which has a specific targeted focus on attainment. This team provides universal support to schools while also providing enhanced, targeted support to schools in areas where deprivation is more concentrated and/or there is a higher risk of poverty.

Table 3 below highlights various Scottish Government stretch aims measures. Whilst there can be year on year fluctuations in cohort numbers and Quintile1 v Quintile 5 performances, most importantly there have been improvements in all measures below for Quintile 1 children and young people, from the baseline of 2020-2021. (Please note that the primary data below is still subject to verification by external national body).

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels P1, 4, 7 Combined Literacy				
	Overall Levels	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
West Lothian base level (2020/21)	76.2	67.2	87.9	20.7
West Lothian (2021/22)	78.8	69.8	89.6	19.8
West Lothian (2022/23)	79.2	70.0	90.8	20.9
West Lothian (2023/24)	79.6	71.7	90.9	19.2
West Lothian (2024/25)	79.1	72.8	89.3	16.6
Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levers P1, 4, 7 Combined Numeracy				
	Overall Levels	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
West Lothian base level (2020/21)	82.2	74.9	91.8	16.9
West Lothian (2021/22)	83.7	76.2	92.8	16.6
West Lothian (2022/23)	84.7	76.8	93.6	16.8
West Lothian (2023/24)	85.0	76.5	94.4	17.9
West Lothian (2024/25)	84.6	77.6	91.8	14.3
SCHOOL LEAVERS WITH 1+ SCQF LEVEL 5				
	Overall Levels	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
West Lothian base level (2020/21)	87.5	75.5	95.8	20.3
West Lothian (2021/22)	88.7	78.5	95.7	17.2
West Lothian (2022/23)	94.1	89.2	98.3	9.1
West Lothian (2023/24) pub Feb 2025	94.0	90.0	98.8	8.8
SCHOOL LEAVERS WITH 1+ SCQF LEVEL 6				
	Overall Levels	Quintile 1	Quintile 5	Gap
West Lothian base level (2020/21)	64.3	46.9	83.8	36.9
West Lothian (2021/22)	60.4	42.2	84.2	42.0
West Lothian (2022/23)	85.2	77.1	94.0	16.9
West Lothian (2023/24) pub Feb 2025	85.4	71.0	93.8	22.8

Table 2: Scottish Government Stretch Aims Measures 2020-2024/5¹³

2.4 Claimant Count

Across Scotland there has been an increase in both the number of claimants and percentage of the Scottish population from 107,495 (3.1%) in February 2024 to 10,135

¹² Stretch Aims were introduced as part of the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) to help close the poverty related gap and support progress in relation to increasing attainment for children and young people.

¹³ Data from West Lothian Education Services May 2025

(3.2%) in February 2025. Scotland claimant count and percentage of the population claiming has remained relatively unchanged since February 2023.¹⁴

West Lothian sits under the trend for Scotland for the percentage of the population. There has been a very small decrease in the number of people claiming out of work benefits from 3,155 in February 2025 compared to 3,160 in February 2024, however, the percentage of the population claiming, remains the same (2.7%).

	West Lothian Count Rate	West Lothian % of population	Scotland Count Rate	of Scotland's population
Feb 2020	3425	3.0	114,605	3.3
Feb 2021	6385	5.5	212,200	6.2
Feb 2022	3715	3.2	135,105	3.9
Feb 2023	3065	2.6	111,155	3.2
Feb 2024	3160	2.7	107,495	3.1
Feb 2025*	3155	2.7	110,135	3.2
+/- Change 2024-2025	-5	0	+ 2,640	+ 0.1

Table 3 West Lothian claimant count - *% is no of claimants as a proportion of residential population of area aged 16-64¹⁵.

In November 2024, the number of West Lothian households on Universal Credit increased by 2,265 compared to the same period in 2023. The increase may be due to the migration of individuals on to Universal Credit benefits from other legacy benefits. Table 4 shows that the breakdown of applicants across household types is comparable to previous years with figures indicating that fifty-one percent of claimants have dependents - especially households with lone parents who make up 38% of the claimants.

	Number Nov 2023	Percentage	Number Nov 2024	Percentage	Changes in % November 2023- November 2024
Single with child dependents (s)	5,143	38	6,077	38	0
Couple with child dependents (s)	1,421	11	1,902	12	+1
Single with no child dependent (s)	6,379	47	7,149	46	-1
Couple with no child dependent (s)	508	4	592	4	0
Total	13,462	100	15,720	100	-----

Table 4: West Lothian Universal Credit Claims and percentage change over time.¹⁶ *data still to be confirmed.

¹⁴https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157436/subreports/cc_time_series/report.aspx

¹⁵ [Nomis - Query Tool - Claimant count by sex and age](#)

¹⁶ The Department of Work and Pensions Stat-Xplore (accessed May 2025)

Social Security Scotland administer several devolved benefits including five payments specifically for families with dependents.¹⁷ Uptake of these benefits is generally higher than other benefits, perhaps due to the additional support in place for families.

Benefits	Applications Received				Approval Rate (%)				Total Value of Payments £			
	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024	2024 2025	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024	2024 2025	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024	2024 2025
Best Start Grant and Foods	3265	3350	1920	1800	66	65	59	68	1,024,393	1,191,388	1,293,362	1,323,559
Scottish Child Payments	2050	6335	1940	1650	79	86	70	71	2,039,840	7,300,250	16,603,950	17,406,564
Young Carer Grant	145	165	250	245	66 N=9 0	72 N=1 05	66 N=1 70	70 N=1 70	27,407	34,366	58,224	65,019
Job Start Payment	200	45	55	30	39	29	20	32	20,244	7,138	4,173	3,710
Child Winter Heating Allowance									162,000	237,000	333,000	423,000
Child Disability Payment	110	1110	2340	3,445	69	83	80	75	118,540	8,644,240	17,916,560	21,875,730

Table 5 Scottish Security Family Benefits

Since 2021, across five of the child payment benefits, the total value of payments has continued to increase. For some benefits, while the number of applications has decreased the percentage of approval rates has increased for example Best Start Grants and Foods.

For the period of August 2024-May 2025, 7,403 clothing grants were processed. This is a decrease of 839 for the full academic year of 2023-2024 (7,882 grants). The total number of grants for 2024-2025 may increase as the full data will not be available until later in 2025. Clothing grants need to be applied for every year.

2.5 Food Insecurity

From August 2024 to May 2025, West Lothian Council has provided 3,209 Free School Meal Grants for P6-S6 students. This is a reduction of 202 grants compared to the 2023-2024 academic year. All P1-P5 students already have access to free school meals. Schools continue to ensure that families are aware of the free school meal entitlement and how it can be accessed, via the cost of the school day approach in West Lothian.

Emergency food provision in West Lothian is supported via the West Lothian Food Network (this is a collaboration of various partners) and the West Lothian Foodbank.

¹⁷ <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics>

In 2024-2025, the West Lothian Foodbank issued 4,018 emergency food vouchers. Of these 1,262 (31.4%) vouchers were for families. This was a reduction compared to 2023-2024 of 230 vouchers and a 2% reduction of families accessing the vouchers. A breakdown of the structure of families is within table 7

	No of emergency vouchers issues	% distributed to families
2022-2023	5,885	-
2023-2024	4,586	33
2024-2025	4,018	31

Table 6 No of vouchers issues by West Lothian Foodbank

Family Structure	No of Vouchers Fulfilled		Change from 2023-2025
	2023-2024	2024-2025	
Single with 1 or 2 children	787	666	-121
Single with 3 or more children	235	205	-30
One couple household with 1 or 2 children	173	144	-29
Once couple household with 3 or more children	99	64	-35
Couple with additional adult(s) with 1 or 2 children	26	33	+8
Couple with additional adults(s) with 3 or more children	14	8	-7
Multi adult household with 1 or 2 children	121	112	-9
Multi adult household with 3 or more children	32	23	-9
Household no adults single child (16 yrs old)	4	6	+2
Total	1,491	1,261	-230

Table 7 West Lothian Foodbank Food Bank food vouchers. - Children 0-16 years old.

In this period the West Lothian Food Network have been changing the way they collect data and therefore comparisons on previous year cannot be made. Indicative data suggest that there have been 79,132 visits for help and support with approximately 41% of visits from adults with children.¹⁸

2.6 Parental Employment

In West Lothian various services and networks, including the Local Employability Partnership, have developed pathways/services to support parents into employment. The No One Left Behind (NOLB) programme has supported 448 parents in 2024-2025; numbers of parents supported have increased over the past three years.

Examples of support for parents include paid 6-month work placements, upskilling programmes to support people in their employment journey, specialist employability advisor support and training and education opportunities including the opportunity to attend courses such as Child and Adult Social Care, Child Development, Digital and Office Skills. West Lothian has a higher proportion of NOLB parental participants than the national figure and work is currently being undertaken to understand the data that is captured across the LEP to gain a greater insight into this work including effectiveness at engaging the six child poverty priority groups.

¹⁸ This data is still to be confirmed due to a change in the networks recording systems

2.7 Housing

As of the 31st of March 2025, there are 454 children living in temporary accommodation. The majority of children are living in local authority furnished temporary accommodation (n=310).

To reduce the use of temporary accommodation, West Lothian Council launched its Homelessness Strategy 2025-2028, which aims to deliver a prevention led approach to tackling homelessness. It has three key priorities:

- Ensuring prevention is the first response to reduce homelessness where possible and safe to do so
- Increasing opportunities and improving access to supply
- Ensuring people who become homeless are supported to achieve long term sustainable outcomes.

While there has been developments in reducing homeless demand, the pressure for the homeless services have remained high due to the shortfall in affordable social housing.

2.8 Children's Rights

West Lothian recognises the importance of investing in children and young people to be able to grow and flourish into adult life. In West Lothian there are mechanisms in place to help embed and promote children's rights and participation, including the West Lothian Children's Rights Working Group and the West Lothian Children's Rights Network. For more information on the work please visit the [West Lothian Children's Rights Web pages](#).

Within the child poverty action plan, work adopts a children's rights approach and has been mapped against the articles that include: the right to live and grow as a person (article 6), the right to live with my family if they can keep me safe (article 9), the right to have a proper home, food and clothing (article 27) and the right to education (article 28).

Section 3 – Strategic approaches to reducing poverty

The [Tackling Poverty Task Force](#) is the overarching group that drives forward action to reduce poverty across West Lothian. The Child Poverty Reference Group reports to this partnership group.

Becoming an [Anchor Institution](#) is an approach for large organisations such as NHS Boards and Councils (large employers) that have a significant and strong presence for the communities they serve. The Anchor approach aligns to the five pillars of community wealth building: Fair work opportunities, Local purchasing, Purposeful use of land and assets, Working with partners and Reducing environmental impact - alongside the organisations core business. The size and reach of Anchor Institutions such as NHS Lothian means they can help positively influence the health and wellbeing of communities and contribute to improving population health and wellbeing and tackling health poverty and inequalities.

Two areas that NHS Lothian are strongly supporting are 1) offering a range of opportunities to support pathways into work and 2) a welfare advice service for patients and staff in St John's Hospital in Livingston.

West Lothian Council nurtures a [Community Wealth Building Approach](#) to help economic development opportunities. It provides a people centred approach to economic development (communities and businesses) that supports the redirection of wealth back into the local economy to help benefits the local communities of West Lothian.

The [West Lothian Community Planning Partnership](#) Board, has the strategic overview in identifying, assessing and prioritising what is important for the communities in West Lothian. The partnership includes many organisations including anchor institutions which supports the work around child poverty including ensuring that child poverty is prioritised within relevant organisational plans.

The [Local Employability Partnership](#) includes a focus on supporting vulnerable groups into employment including young people, parents and carers, and has a collective priority of tackling child poverty through increasing parental income. Actions that support this work include: assistance with childcare, driving lessons or access to education and in-work support alongside paid work placements.

Section 4 – Update on Actions to Reduce Child Poverty (including Case Studies)

In West Lothian, the child poverty reference group partners actively contribute to target actions at a local level to reduce and mitigate against child poverty focused on the main drives of poverty. While it is acknowledged that rates of child poverty are fluctuating, the strong partnerships in West Lothian have developed approaches that have made a difference for families.

During 2024-2025, examples of work that were developed include:

- Delivering approaches to assist parents into work, strategically driven through the Local Employability Service, such as accessing work advisors, training, funding access income maximisation services
- West Lothian Council was successful in gaining child accelerator funding to further develop a data-informed approach to child poverty and unmet need in partnership with The Improvement Service.
- Improving attendance at school across the stages with support from West Lothian Council Equity Team
- Successfully referring families with young children into Income Maximisation Services and wider holistic support through a partnership between NHS Lothian, Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian, West Lothian Council and Kidzeco.
- Strengthening the child poverty agenda in other partnership groups e.g. Local Employability Partnership, by members of the child poverty reference groups attending relevant partner meetings.

4.1 Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future: West Lothian Programme

It was identified that West Lothian had seen a decline in childminder numbers over the past five years. Childminders provide high quality childcare in a nurturing home from home environment, that is tailored to each individual's needs. It offers flexibility for parents that is difficult to find in other forms of childcare. Childminders offer families much-needed flexibility and high-quality care for their children and play a vital role in child poverty reduction efforts by enabling parents to work, seek work or stay in work. Childminders also report enjoying the flexibility of being able to run their own business from home and earning an income while bringing up their own children. Lack of childcare is a barrier for many parents considering employment.

West Lothian Council education and employability officers explored how we could improve opportunities for those considering childminding as an option into employment by working with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA).

Employability funding allowed the SCMA to deliver a recruitment and training support programme in West Lothian. People joining the programme were offered a full training programme, a business start-up grant, their first year of SCMA membership free, and one-to-one support at every stage of the process. The 20 places created were all filled.

The programme has supported a small number of participants to commence trading as a childminder along with a further group awaiting an inspection from the Care Inspectorate to allow them to start up; another four candidates are currently working their way through the programme. One of the programme participants said

"Being a childminder is the best decision I've ever made! It's such a rewarding job & fits in great around my own family providing a great work/life balance. Access2employment have also given me the opportunity to further my knowledge and gain qualifications. Kidz Kabin Childminding is thriving thanks to their continued help and encouragement."

Based on this success, a further programme is scheduled for 2025-2026 with 34 places supported for this period.

4.2 Parental Employment Support

West Lothian Council Parental Welfare Team's primary role is to support parents who are looking to start work, training, education, upskilling or increasing their hours by providing a service that helps with benefit checks, income projection calculations alongside advising on childcare. The support is targeted at parents who fall into one of the six child poverty groups: lone parents, parents of a child under 1, parents of 3+ children, parents aged under 25yrs, parents with a disability/or disabled child, parents from minority ethnic family.

As part of the support, individuals can apply for a Parental Welfare Transitional Fund that can assist with travel costs, childcare, clothes etc. to a total of £1,000 paid in three instalments which does not affect any benefits. To qualify for all three payments, parents must be in work, engage with their parental advisor, be resident in West Lothian, be in receipt of benefits and fall into one of the child poverty priority groups. During 2024-2025 ninety one referrals for parental support were received.

4.3 NHS Lothian Employability Support

NHS Lothian as an Anchor institution has supported West Lothian citizens in different routes into work. There have been opportunities for apprenticeships and paid work placements alongside a Step into Healthcare programme for young people who are considering a health career. In this period, four candidates who undertook the six month paid placements have managed to secure permanent posts; three individuals who are on the apprenticeship pathway are linking in with West Lothian College and over 150 young people (from across Lothian) participated in the Steps to Healthcare programme. A lot of this work, however, would not be as successful if it did not have the support from wider partners and strategically support from the Local Employability Partnership. This work will continue into the next year.

4.4 Developing Data to Identify Unmet Need of Families (Child Accelerator Fund)

West Lothian Council in partnership with the Improvement Service, were successful in achieving funding from round two of the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Accelerator Fund. The funding will enable the use of statistical and administrative data to identify areas of unmet need where low-income families may not be accessing all the services and entitlements available to them.

This work will build upon the 'West Lothian Model of Understanding Unmet Need' and the development of the Child Poverty Index - which combined council held data on free school meals, clothing grant, and educational maintenance data with children in low-income families data produced by HMRC/DWP. The index, based on the prevalence of each indicator within small areas, shows areas with high child poverty levels, including areas that traditionally child poverty may not have been identified.

The 18-month project will further develop the data and intelligence to identify lower-than-expected uptake of benefits and support, which will also feed into the development of an interactive dashboard to help inform approaches and target interventions.

The dashboard will then help West Lothian Council and partners to target approaches and interventions such as income maximisation. It will also support services in communities identified as 'in need' to encourage uptake of entitled benefits and support in these areas to reduce or mitigate against child poverty especially in areas of lower deprivation. West Lothian have already been able to use the findings from the Child Poverty Index to help target interventions such as door knocking campaigns and community outreach events and working with other partners including the Third Sector.

While this work is being led by West Lothian Council and the Improvement Service, it involves many partners, including NHS, Third Sector, Academic Institutions and other Council areas. The partners have supported both interventions, as outlined above, and the analysis itself to support local decision making. We also believe this approach is scalable and the IS will work with other local authorities across Scotland to develop similar approaches for their areas.

The Children in Low Income Families/Education Benefits datasets used in the original model has been refreshed recently to support planned future activity. This updated data has identified areas with higher than expected levels of unmet need that require further scrutiny.

In response, and in collaboration with Community Regeneration Officers and other key partners, targeted work has been initiated in these areas. This includes a combination of Income Maximisation Pop-Ups, targeted leaflet drops, mail shots, School Group Calls, local newsletters, Facebook posts, and door-knocking campaigns.

To help inform our approach further, West Lothian Council and the Improvement Service engaged with an Experts by Experience Panel of volunteers who have a lived experience of poverty. The panel provided valuable feedback on how best to target the identified areas and suggested additional data that could enhance the Child Poverty Index. They were also given a first look at a demonstration of our interactive dashboard and advised that they thought a simplified version would be most effective.

4.5 Equity Team

The Equity Team is one of the West Lothian's collaborative Scottish Attainment Challenge Projects. The team was established in August 2021 to provide both universal and targeted support to schools which would assist them in tackling poverty-related gaps. The work of the team focuses on four key areas: to provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for staff at all levels, embedding equity through quality improvement approaches, maximising opportunities for collaboration, networking and cross-sector partnerships around equity and embedding equity within school culture and systems and within classroom practices.

This comprehensive approach ensures that there is a clear focus on equity across all schools. In addition, the team provides enhanced, tailored support to schools in areas where poverty is more concentrated. Impact is evident in West Lothian's P1,4 & 7 combined Curriculum for Excellence Quintile 1 attainment data where there are consistent improvements over time.

Inspections and school evaluative process also demonstrate improving outcomes for learners as a result of more effective Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning and interventions - and strengthened approaches to reducing the cost of the school day. The Equity team supports a network of practitioners and partners across West Lothian who share a strong commitment to tackling equity and ensuring that all children and young people can flourish in schools.

4.6 NHS Pathways into Income Maximisation Services

In 2024, NHS community-based staff (Midwives, Health Visitors and Family Nurse Practitioners) were given access to West Lothian Fast Online Referral Triage Systems (F.O.R.T). This has helped refer families with young children who require support when living with or at risk of poverty. Since this system has been introduced over 110 referrals have been made into Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian, West Lothian Council Advice Shop and a Third Sector partner – Kidzeco. Support for families includes income maximisation services alongside wider holistic support e.g. equipment, healthy eating on a budget and the opportunity that further referrals can be made to other services as and when required e.g. foodbanks.

The referral pathways set up enables a quicker response to referrals and allows for tracking of progress both for the referring agency and for the agency that will provide the support.

To help families, NHS referrals are included in a three-year Health Improvement Fund (HIF) project set up to support families with children aged 0-15 years old and by utilising the NHS referral pathways as part of the wider HIF project, over the past 18 months, has helped generate a client financial gain of over £900,000.

4.7 Parental Toolkit – Experts by Experience Panel

An online toolkit is being developed to support parents and carers with information and links to various services to help with family life including where to access financial advice, transport, cost of the school day and wellbeing information. The resource will be accessible on computers, tablets and phones. To ensure that the resource (when launched) is fit for purpose, the Child Poverty Co-ordinator (who is funded through No One Left Behind employability programme) worked closely with the Expert by Experience Panel. Feedback was very positive as the families reported back that the resource was really comprehensive and easy to use with information they would need and use. Some of the information in the toolkit parents/carers had not even heard about.

This toolkit was launched in September 2025, to establish how well this is used and to gather user feedback website hits will be gathered and a customer survey has been created and added to the toolkit.

Section 5: Forward Planning 2025-2026

A new two-year West Lothian Child Poverty action plan (2025-2027) is due to be developed to drive forward action. As part of this process, West Lothian Child Poverty Reference group are working in partnership with the Improvement Service to undertake a self-assessment of child poverty activity across the wider partners within the Community Planning Partnership. The findings from the self-assessment alongside other local intelligence and data will then inform and shape the new action plan.

There are some actions that have already been identified that will be incorporated in the action plan. These include:

- Developing action from the findings of the child poverty self-assessment process
- Development of a child poverty dashboard and annual local child poverty profile to ensure access to up-to-date poverty data to help shape developments that support families.
- To make more use of the West Lothian Poverty Scorecard to help monitor and track progress. This is currently in development and once the new child poverty action plan has been agreed this will dovetail into the wider approach of the Tackling Poverty Task Force.
- Further develop the Community Planning Partnership strategic approach to child poverty through the local Anchor Institutions and the role of Community Wealth Building.

Appendix 1 – Child Poverty Action Plan 2023-2025

West Lothian Child Poverty Action Plan 2023- 2025

Action will be undertaken in West Lothian under three main priority areas.

1. The Cost of Living
2. Income from employment
3. Maximising income from Social Security.

To drive forward this work it sits within the wider strategic context of [Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy \(2023-2028\)](#) and moves towards being more data driven to help better support the targeting of activities. The Child Poverty work will also contribute to and underpinned by [Children's Rights](#).

1. The Cost of Living (UNCRC – Articles 3, 6)

Action	Who is involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Parental Employment Support Fund will support families experiencing or at risk of poverty to access employment or progress in work.	Access2Employment Local Employability Partners (LEP)	The following KPI's and project specific data will be used: Access2employment living in the 20% most disadvantaged data zones. Target 20% Number of residents supported to Upskill/Reskill by Access2employment Target 180	March 25
To support the creation of employment opportunities for unemployed residents in West Lothian Opportunities will be created for all ages at Living Wage.	Economic Development and Regeneration Jobs Task Force	Number of opportunities for parents created at real living wage levels. Target 30 opportunities	March 25
Support positive destinations for care experienced young people.	Inclusion & Support Service (ISS)	Increase in the percentage of care experienced young people achieving a positive destination	March 25
Develop and deliver SQA modules including tenancy awareness and personal finance award for identified young people.	Education Housing Anti-Poverty Service	No of young people receiving the accreditation Ongoing evaluation pre, during and post course	March 25

Action	Who is involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
<p>Cost of the school day</p> <p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh the anti-poverty proof statement • Include a cost of the school day element within the health and wellbeing survey on poverty • Identify, develop actions and monitor progress from the outcomes of the health and wellbeing survey 	Education	<p>Implementing action in Poverty Proofing Statements</p> <p>Financial impact plans</p> <p>PEF plans</p> <p>Processes for measuring impact of PEF initiatives</p>	March 25
<p>Provide support to schools for Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning, monitoring, and evaluation e.g. Meetings</p> <p>Targeted support</p> <p>Provision of supportive resources</p> <p>Identification /delivery of training.</p>	Education	<p>Feedback from Headteachers</p> <p>Processes for measuring impact of PEF initiatives</p>	March 25
<p>To develop action to address emergency food provision in relation to infant food insecurity (formula)</p> <p>A short life working group to be established to develop a pathway to provide support for families struggling to buy formula.</p> <p>A national tool kit has been developed which will be adapted for local use.</p>	<p>NHS Lothian</p> <p>The Advice Shop</p> <p>Third Sector</p>	<p>To identify current practice</p> <p>To identify if new pathways of support are required</p> <p>Any new pathways to be implemented with monitoring in place</p>	

Action	Who is involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Education Services to develop new school attendance pathways	Education	Attendance pathway developed and implemented	March 25
Actions to support unpaid carers: To support young carers in particular.	West Lothian Council	Proposed actions in consideration of the West Lothian Carers Strategy 2023-2026 . Within this strategy two areas for inclusion Carers are able to access the financial support and assistance they are entitled to Young adult carers are supported when moving from education to training and or work while balancing ongoing caring roles	March 25
Source funding to provide food for children engaging in CLD (and other) activities	CLD Youth Services	Funding streams identified, applied and successfully granted	March 25

2. Income from Employment (UNCRC articles – 3,6,26,27)

Action	Who is Involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Raising awareness about benefits of employment (dispelling myths that people will be worse off if they work)	A2E / LEP partners	50% of parents accessing employability services will be supported to engage with income maximisation services	March 25
Developing actions to support people who are in work and still experiencing poverty	A2E/ BG/ LEP partners	30 individual training funds provided to parents. 20 flexible workforce funds distributed to local business	March 25
Working with employers to develop more family friendly flexible working policies	A2E/ LEP partners	30 staff trained on flexible working 80% of staff report improved understanding of flexible working practices and how to discuss subject	March 25

Action	Who is involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Developing specific actions to support those who are experiencing mental health issues as a barrier to employment, particularly young people/parents.	A2E/LEP partners	<p>Deliver 4 courses: Women into Work and similar employability courses supporting confidence and skills supporting participants journey towards work</p> <p>Deliver 2 Schools Employability programme</p> <p>80% of Participants report increased confidence and skills supporting their journey towards work</p>	March 25

3. Maximising Income from Social Security (UNCRC Articles – 26, 27,6)

Action	Who is Involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Income maximisation advice and support for families will be embedded in school settings.	Education Anti-Poverty Service	<p>Financial gains through income maximisation and debt managed for the families supported and additional support accessed</p> <p>Customer evaluations forms</p>	March 25
Families struggling with debt or financial capability concerns will have access to a range of support.	West Lothian Debt Advice Forum West Lothian CAB	<p>Improved engagement with debt advice</p> <p>Improved financial confidence</p>	March 25
Raise awareness of, and reduce barriers to, new benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland including Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment as these become available for West Lothian families	Social Security Scotland Anti-Poverty Service Practitioners Network Food Network West Lothian CAB	<p>Training and numbers attending training events</p> <p>Number of people taking up the new Social Security Scotland benefits</p>	March 25
Implementation of the Social Security Scotland (SSS) Local Delivery Advisory Service in West Lothian	Social Security Scotland Anti-Poverty Service Child Poverty Reference Group	<p>Awareness of Social Security Scotland benefits across communities and groups</p> <p>Number of people taking up the new Social Security Scotland benefits</p> <p>Improved joint working between Social Security Scotland and West Lothian anti-poverty partners</p>	March 25

Action	Who is involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Provide a range of financial support options to support families to remain in their homes, which includes, income maximisation and affordability advice and sources of financial assistance such as discretionary housing payments.	Anti-Poverty Service	Financial gains through income maximisation Number of people who have received affordability advice and support and accessed sources of financial assistance Ongoing customer evaluations will be undertaken	March 25
Develop and deliver financial wellbeing pathways, training, referral system and data capture across midwifery and health visiting services to increase identification of, and support to, those in need.	NHS Lothian Public health Midwifery FNP Health visiting Anti-poverty service CAB	Proportion of women referred for financial wellbeing support Proportion of women taking up Best Start Foods Financial gain	March 25
Continue to deliver welfare advice in the Royal Hospital for Children Edinburgh and St John's Hospital Livingston.	NHS Lothian West Lothian CAB	Referrals Appointments Client financial gain Staff awareness of the project Client feedback	March 25
Deliver the Prevention and Intervention Money Advice Project (PIMAP) *now part of a 3 year health improvement funded project	West Lothian CAB NHS Lothian Anti-Poverty partners	Number of referrals Client financial gain Debt management for customers Customer and partner evaluations	March 25
Provide welfare advice in GP practices	CAB NHS Lothian Public Health Anti-Poverty Service	Number of referrals Client financial gain Debt management for customers Customer and partner evaluations	March 25
Working in partnership with parents & carers to access enhanced holistic financial advice with opportunities to support from other partners	WL CAB Anti-Poverty Service Kidzeco NHS Lothian Public Health	Client financial gain Referrals from partners No of families accessing the service	March 25

Lived Experience

Action	Who is Involved?	How will impact be assessed	Timescale
Collate results from young people's survey and identify young people to become Anti-Poverty Champions. Once identified, the champions will receive training and follow up support to link in with a youth club to carry out their role. The young people will also form a steering group which will be supported as part of the Participation Strategy within CLD Youth Services	Education CLD Youth Services Anti-Poverty Service	Opportunity of anti-poverty champions training for young people is established. Number of young people completing Anti-Poverty Champions Training and contributing in the community in this role	March 25

UNCRC articles remind governments of their clear obligations.

- Article 3 states that children's best interests must be a main consideration in all actions that affect them. This includes taking decisions around welfare and support that will significantly impact families.
- Article 6 states that governments must ensure the development and survival of children to the maximum possible extent. This doesn't always happen for children who live in poverty.
- Article 12 states that children and young people's views should be meaningfully considered on matters that affect them (however this doesn't tend to happen when policies are made that impact on child poverty) Children and young people may be often able to identify new approaches to tackle poverty.
- Article 24 states that children and young people have the right to the best health possible. This includes the best nutritious food to help them grow and maintain health. This can be affected when families experience food insecurity.
- Article 26 states that children and young people's human right to social security should be fully realised
- Article 27 states that every child has the right to a standard of living that allows them to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Children who live in poverty often mean they live below this threshold.