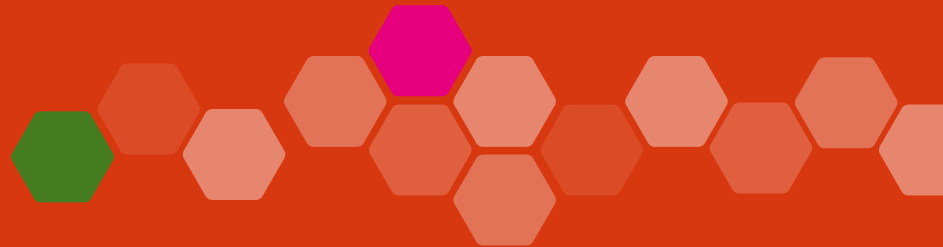


Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26: Evaluation approach to system change



PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

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Background

[Evidence](#) shows the wide range of interacting factors that influence child poverty and the diversity in experiences of poverty for different households. Interventions which focus on a single factor alone are unlikely to lead to sustainable change. Instead, a number of different forms of support are likely to be needed to help people move out of poverty, in different combinations, for different family circumstances.

Therefore, there are a wide range of services that play a role in addressing child poverty. This is what is known as the child poverty support system. A recent mapping exercise shows the complexity of the current local [child poverty support systems](#).

During the first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, [Every Child, Every Chance](#), we learned that many families find the system overly complex as it can be hard for individuals to navigate the wide range of support and varying eligibility requirements. There was limited join-up between policies at national and local level

The second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, [Best Start Bright Futures](#), aimed to improve join-up and simplify the system by introducing a range of policies supporting system change and improved ways of working.

This document summarises the approach to assessing progress towards system change in the context of child poverty.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the evaluation on system change initiatives is to understand the effectiveness of the broad approach in [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) of tackling child poverty through a place-based and system-change approach.

Drawing on evidence and learning from across individual evaluations, it aims to build our understanding of how the system-change and place-based approach is being interpreted and implemented in practice, and whether, and how it makes a difference to child poverty and its drivers.

Specifically, the objectives are to:

- identify and understand the range of approaches taken to system change and person-centred support in local child poverty systems through the initiatives committed to in Best Start, Bright Futures
- provide an understanding of the process experienced in the implementation of system-change initiatives and distil key lessons which can be applied to other areas and to wider policy development
- understand how initiatives have impacted on system change, what the facilitators and barriers have been, and what the impacts are for delivery organisations, service users and wider partners and stakeholders
- understand which types of system change approach are effective to support child poverty reduction, for whom specifically, in what contexts, and why
- assess the extent to which the approaches examined can (and, where measured, do) contribute towards local child poverty reduction and the mechanisms by which this may occur

Research scope

This project focuses on those initiatives in [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) targeted at changing the child poverty support system and creating better join up between local support services.

There is no clear definition in the [Plan](#) of what is exactly meant by changing the system or creating better join up in services. However, the [Plan](#) includes a commitment to:

- ensuring that systems work for the people who need them and that the range of support that people need to move out of poverty is joined up
- partnership working - with the Scottish Government and Local Government working together with partners from across the public, third and private sectors
- a place-based approach, with the design and delivery of services based in the distinctive needs of communities
- providing holistic and person-centred support, that wraps around the needs of the individual or family

To date, the following initiatives in the Delivery Plan have been identified as falling within the remit of this work:

- **Dundee Child Poverty Pathfinder** - a collaborative initiative between Dundee City Council, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland and other partners, aiming to support parents to move out of poverty on a sustained basis, working across boundaries to provide holistic approaches centred around a family's specific needs.
- **Glasgow Child Poverty Pathfinder** - Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service are working together, using a 'No Wrong Door' approach, to achieve better outcomes for families by reforming systems and removing barriers, including siloes, data sharing and restrictive funding, to enable the delivery of holistic person-centred services.
- **Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund** - Scottish Government is launching a bid-in fund to support small scale, local projects to test and innovate ways of working and generate evidence on what works to tackle child poverty.
- **The Social Innovation Partnership (SIP)** - a partnership between Scottish Government and the Hunter Foundation, using a distinctive wellbeing and capabilities approach to tackling poverty and inequality, that supports people to live flourishing lives based on what matters to them.
- **No-one Left Behind** - an integrated approach to employability services, underpinned by a partnership approach to design and delivery between Scottish Government and local authorities. The programme aims to provide a flexible, user-centred system, that helps people to find, stay in and progress in sustainable work.
- **School age childcare** - building a system of school age childcare, offering care before and after school and during the holidays, by taking a person-centred and place-based approach, designing services collaboratively with families, childcare providers and the wider public sector, meeting individual and community needs.

- **Whole Family Wellbeing Fund** - supporting 'whole system transformational change' in order to reduce the need for crisis intervention in families and shift investment towards prevention and early intervention, so that families have access to the range of services they need, when they need them, and for as long as they need, to help them flourish and thrive.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** – the ultimate aim is for mental health considerations to be integrated into all policy. This will be done via a phased approach, prioritising areas where there is already joined-up links, such as employability and child poverty.
- **Empowering Communities Programme** – a range of funds and grants with the aim to support system change through a place-based approach. It is intended that system change will happen through coordination, collaboration and partnerships formed within local community delivery structures.

It is anticipated that due to the range of initiatives in scope, the research will yield learnings on designing local initiatives as well as on how mainstream services should operate.

Over time, it may be that other initiatives could fall within the scope of this research, including initiatives in health, transport, education, housing and potentially economic development. A review of the initiatives in scope will be undertaken by the Research Advisory Group annually.

A key early task is to further clarify the scope of this piece of work, taking into account its purpose and relationship to other existing work.

Research questions

The objectives for this broader piece of work are underpinned by a set of research questions which cover a variety of themes. For clarity, the research questions are outlined under their corresponding objective.

Objective 1) To identify and understand the range of approaches taken to system change and person-centred support in local child poverty systems through the initiatives committed to in Best Start, Bright Futures (with the option to include other relevant child poverty initiatives in Scotland).

Research questions:

- What are the range of approaches taken to system change / place-based work across the different initiatives in scope? What are their similarities and differences? Can distinct types of approach be identified?
- What system change outcomes are sought across these initiatives, how are these anticipated to impact on child poverty outcomes, and what are the range of actions planned to achieve these outcomes?
- Who are the intended beneficiaries and what is the intended scale or reach of the initiatives? To what extent are families in poverty and [“priority families”](#) the intended beneficiaries?
- How are approaches being evaluated or monitored? What are the key research questions being asked and methodologies employed?

Objective 2) To provide an understanding of issues experienced in the implementation of system change initiatives and distil key lessons which can be applied to other areas and to wider policy development.

Research questions:

- How successfully have different types of actions to achieve system change been implemented? What has been overall most/least successful in its implementation?
- What are the common enablers that have facilitated system change and the challenges that have been experienced (across sites), and what are the most effective ways that challenges have been overcome?
- What are the range of costs seen in the delivery of initiatives? (where data is available)
- What have been effective and ineffective ways of engaging intended beneficiaries? To what extent have priority families been engaged? Have any intended beneficiary groups not been reached and what are the reasons for this? How have groups facing disadvantage due to gender, race / ethnicity, disability or nationality / migration status been served by the interventions?
- What are the contextual factors that have influenced the success (or otherwise) of implementation?

Objective 3) To understand how initiatives have impacted on system change for delivery organisations, service users and wider partners and stakeholders.

Research questions:

- What are the range of system change impacts - both positive and negative, intended and unintended - experienced by a) service users, b) service providers and c) policy stakeholders (local and national)? Which of these are most important? Are there any tensions or trade-offs between the impacts for different groups?
- To what extent have system change impacts varied for different groups of beneficiaries (for example, priority family groups, depth of poverty, equality groups)?
- To what extent have system outcomes been achieved?
- How have system outcomes been achieved? What has prevented system outcomes from being achieved?

Objective 4) To understand which types of system change approach are effective, for whom, and in what contexts.

Research questions:

- What is the most appropriate way to assess whether system change approaches have been effective?
- Which types of system change approach are more effective / less effective in tackling child poverty? What are the range of contextual factors that influence this?

Objective 5) To assess the extent to which the approaches examined can (and, where measured, do) contribute towards child poverty reduction and the mechanisms by which this may occur.

Research questions:

- Where this has been measured, have any of the initiatives resulted in a reduction in child poverty?
- Where this has been measured, have any of the initiatives resulted in an impact on the child poverty drivers (i.e. increased income from employment or from benefits or reduced cost of living for families in poverty)?
- What are the pathways by which child poverty reductions could be achieved through system change initiatives and what are the main contextual factors that facilitate or hamper this?
- Where evidence is available, what were the main costs and benefits of initiatives and is there potential for a return on investment if initiatives were replicated or scaled?

Research design and methods

It is anticipated that the project will have two distinct strands of activity.

- **Strand 1: Developmental and set-up work.** This strand aims to identify and understand the range of approaches taken to system change and person-centred support in local child poverty systems through the initiatives committed to in [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) (Objective 1).
- **Strand 2: Synthesis analysis.** This strand aims to collate key developments and findings relating to system change policies (addressing Objectives 2 to 5). Strand 2 is reliant on information from evaluations in scope as they become available. Policies in the scope of this research are at varying stages of design and delivery.

Further details of what each strand entails can be seen below.

Strand 1 – Development and set-up work

This strand involves three key tasks:

1. Refining the scope and identifying and understanding the system-change initiatives in [Best Start Bright Futures](#)
2. Understanding what system-change initiatives are trying to achieve and how, and developing an overarching Theory of Change for system-change initiatives as a whole
3. Producing a common set of research questions relating to system change and supporting their use in individual initiative-level evaluations

This strand has already been completed over 2022-23. A separate publication summarises the approach and key findings, including an [associated logic model](#).

Strand 2 – Synthesis analysis

The synthesis analysis aims to collate key findings to better understand system change. Specifically, it addresses Objectives 2 to 5. It will use the typology developed in Strand 1 to answer the key research questions set out above.

The scope of this strand, and the methods to be used, will vary depending on business need and how policies evolve. It is anticipated that, as a minimum, evidence and learning from published evaluation reports, as these become available, will be gathered and synthesised. Information will be supplemented with:

- Commissioned updates of evidence from analytical teams structured around the key research questions
- Interviews and workshops with Scottish Government policy and analytical colleagues

- Deep dives or case studies on particular issues of interest (this could include, for example, analysis of local data and reports, interviews/workshops with local partners, etc.)

This activity is dependent on information from evaluations being available in a timely way and of sufficient quality to address the research questions outlined above – which are ambitious in scope. The research questions and the timing of the analysis may need to be modified as evaluation outputs and timelines become clearer.

Strand 2 commenced in April 2023, with an interim report anticipated by the end of the year. Evidence will be drawn from:

- the [implementation evaluation](#) of No one Left Behind
- [the interim evaluation report](#) from Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- [early implementation findings](#) from Child Poverty Pathfinders
- The evaluability assessment that is underway for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- The evaluation strategy currently being developed on School Age Childcare, the [Summer Holiday programme evaluation](#), and the review of access to childcare (to be published by end of 2023).
- Any new emerging learnings from [the Empowering Communities Fund](#)
- Findings from the [evaluation of the Social Innovation Partnership programme](#).

Reporting

A first synthesis analysis will be completed by the end of 2023. Thereafter, it is envisaged that analysis would take place annually and feed into the child poverty progress reports. Learnings will feed into the development of the third delivery plan towards tackling child poverty as well as the public sector reform agenda.

Findings will be published as a standalone report, with a summary included within annual child poverty progress reports.

Timelines and resource

It is anticipated that this work will be undertaken internally by Scottish Government analysts. The key milestones and anticipated timelines are highlighted below.

	When?
Strand 1: Developmental work	Over 2022/23
Refining the scope, exploring additional initiatives and producing a typology	By March 2023
Developing a theory of change	
Producing and reviewing common set of research questions	
Strand 2: Synthesis analysis	
Analysis	Ongoing
Reporting (annually)	December 2023, and annually thereafter

The project is supported by a Research Advisory Group. The group consists of representatives from a range of policy areas leading on key system-change policies on child poverty across Scottish Government.

The role of the Research Advisory Group is to offer insights, advice, feedback and contacts that ensure high quality and robust search is completed. Specifically, group members are expected to:

- Bring their knowledge and expertise to inform the work
- Share with RAG members any developments or research exercises that could inform or supplement the evaluation
- Identify any risks and issues which impact on the evaluation and to propose actions for mitigating and resolving these
- Provide constructive challenge and advice



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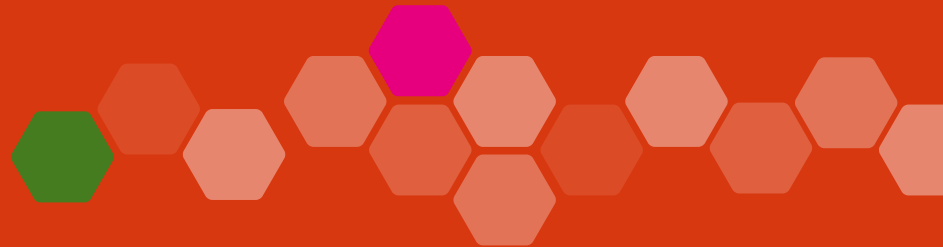
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