

# **Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026**

## **Annex 2**

**March 2022**

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## THE EVALUATION JOURNEY THUS FAR

In 2018 our published [evaluation strategy](#) set out how we intended to monitor and evaluate the action taken by the Scottish Government and its partners to tackle child poverty. The evaluation strategy was conceived as a long-term strategy to 2030, however it is right that we should build on experience and thinking during the first delivery plan period to review the evaluation approach to ensure that it is still sufficient for our needs.

Annual updates on progress have been published, which include evaluation evidence. Key evaluation findings from the first delivery plan include that:

- Early evidence suggests that key policies were potentially effective but more thought was needed in ‘what works’ findings about mode of delivery, scale of response and timescales for change.
- There was a need to pivot policies to ensure that child poverty outcomes and priority families were considered as a priority in policy implementation, data collection and evaluation.
- There was a lack of join-up between policies at national and local level making it difficult for families to navigate the cluttered landscape. Individual policy evaluations were not necessarily picking up these gaps.
- Some families experience multiple disadvantages or adversities. These families are often among those deepest in poverty and who face particularly challenging journeys to get out of poverty. They tend to require, additional, targeted holistic support. These activities did not fit well into current measurement approach.
- Tackling child poverty requires pulling levers in a complex system which makes attribution difficult to identify. There is an ongoing need to ensure that longer term impacts are captured and that unintended consequences on targets, but also on children and parents’ wellbeing, are monitored.

The following improvements are suggested for the revised evaluation strategy:

- Consideration of the data and statistics around income and poverty, including the purpose, size and nature of any boost to the Family Resource Survey (FRS).
- Better contextualisation of data, especially thinking about long term trends.
- Continued use of qualitative and participative research to understand data.
- Further consideration of proxy indicators that might be available at local level.
- Incorporating periodic analysis of health and wellbeing outcome indicators to capture poverty-related evidence on longer term preventative action and to get early warning of potential adverse impacts from policies.
- Ongoing policy assessment, which includes developing a wider range of delivery, performance and impact data related to child poverty drivers and priority groups.
- Undertaking primary local case-study analysis of policy join-up (qualitative cumulative assessment), perhaps based around the pathfinder projects.
- Continued development and refinement of quantitative impact modelling.
- Improved governance, providing oversight of monitoring and evaluation principles and plans and bringing key findings/insights into deliberations.
- Periodic review of measurement framework to ensure that indicators are based on the latest and most accurate data.
- Reviewing the approach to producing priority family focus reports with the annual progress report, and consideration of more regular updates.

## EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017 \('the Act'\)](#): requires the Scottish Government and its partners to meet, by 2030, the four ambitious targets set out in the Act:

**Figure 1: Child poverty targets**

- Fewer than 10% of children living in families in relative poverty.** This means fewer than one in ten children living in households on low incomes, compared to the average UK household.
- Fewer than 5% of children living in families in absolute poverty.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in low income households where living standards are not increasing.
- Fewer than 5% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in low income households who can't afford basic essential goods and services.
- Fewer than 5% of children living in families in persistent poverty.** This means fewer than one in twenty children living in households in poverty for three years out of four.

In order to meet these targets, the Scottish Government is required to produce three delivery plans in the period to 2030, setting out action to deliver progress against the targets. The [first delivery plan](#) was published in 2018, this report accompanies the [second delivery plan in 2022](#) and the final one will be published in 2026. Annual progress reports, describing the measures taken and the effect of those measures on progress towards meeting the child poverty targets are also required.<sup>1</sup>

To measure progress towards the targets, [a theory of change](#) was established based on two key concepts: the drivers of poverty and the approach to identifying those family types at higher risk poverty.

### Drivers of poverty

Three drivers which can lead to measureable improvement in income for low income households were identified; increasing income from employment, reducing costs of living, and increasing income from social security and benefits in kind.

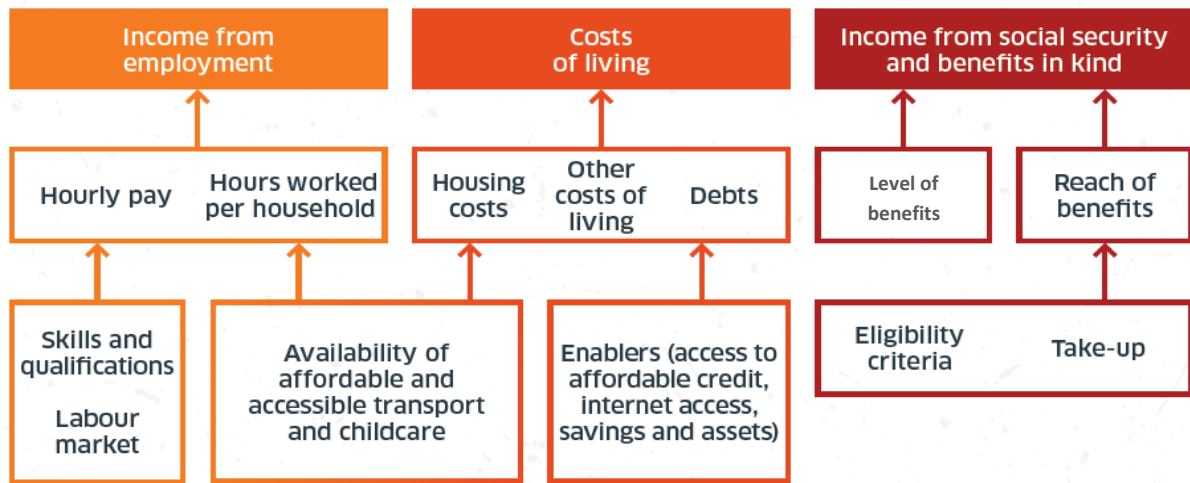
Our experience and consideration of the evidence have shown that this driver approach is appropriate and working. As a result we will continue this approach for the second delivery plan. However, one lesson from the first delivery plan is the importance of looking across the drivers to ensure there is balance, for example between the impacts of policies to increase income from employment and the impact

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<sup>1</sup> First year progress report: [Tackling child poverty: first year progress report \(2018 to 2019\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Second year progress report: [Tackling child poverty: second year progress report \(2019-2020\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Third year progress report: [Tackling child poverty: third year progress report 2020-2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

of policies to increase income from social security payments. This is necessary to ensure that longer term, unintended or negative outcomes are minimised for children in poverty and their families.

**Figure 2: Child poverty drivers**

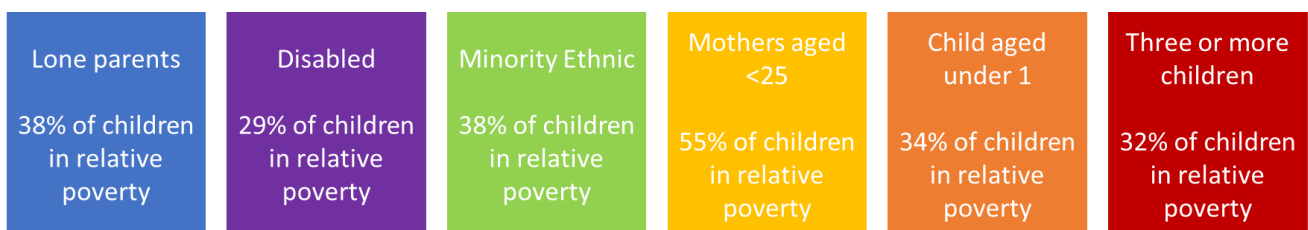


### Priority families

The second concept is the priority families. The priority family concept arose from analysis to see if we could better understand who was most impacted by poverty. This was important to help identify system barriers and blockages and to develop and tailor appropriate policies for different family types. The six identified priority groups, which are at a higher than average risk of poverty, comprise around 90% of all children in poverty.

Experience during the first plan period and further examination of statistics shows that these [priority families](#) continue to be at a higher risk of poverty.

**Figure 3: Priority families most at a higher risk of poverty (Source: Family Resources Survey 2017-20)**



However there is also a need for more nuanced consideration of the significant intersectionality within the groups, so it is often helpful to think of them as a lens rather than a discrete group. Families with experience of multiple disadvantage are often among those deepest in poverty and who face particularly challenging journeys to get out. Most of these families will also fall into at least one of our priority family groups. This matters to child poverty because the barriers they face and the support they need will be significant and highly specific.

## REFINING OUR UNDERSTANDING AND APPROACH TO TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

Focusing on the drivers of poverty and the priority families identified most at risk, remain at the core of the Tackling Child Poverty approach. However, our understanding of poverty has become more nuanced over the first plan period.

### Child Poverty System is highly complex

Experience over the first plan period has shown the [complexity of the child poverty system](#) and the vast diversity in the reasons why households experience child poverty and the barriers preventing them moving out of poverty. Poverty on a technical level is a binary – in or out of poverty – but in reality it is experienced as a sliding scale. Many families are near the poverty threshold, but others are in deep and persistent poverty, experiencing multiple adversity. Policies that help those near to the poverty threshold to push over the threshold in the short term will reduce technical poverty and help us meet the targets. But, policies that help families to move away from destitution and develop their own capabilities to engage with the drivers at their own pace, are also crucially important. In the short term some policies may not directly contribute to the targets but may help families move nearer to the poverty threshold, improving their immediate living conditions with a medium to long term trajectory to sustainably exit poverty.

### Tackling child poverty needs action at a range of intervention points

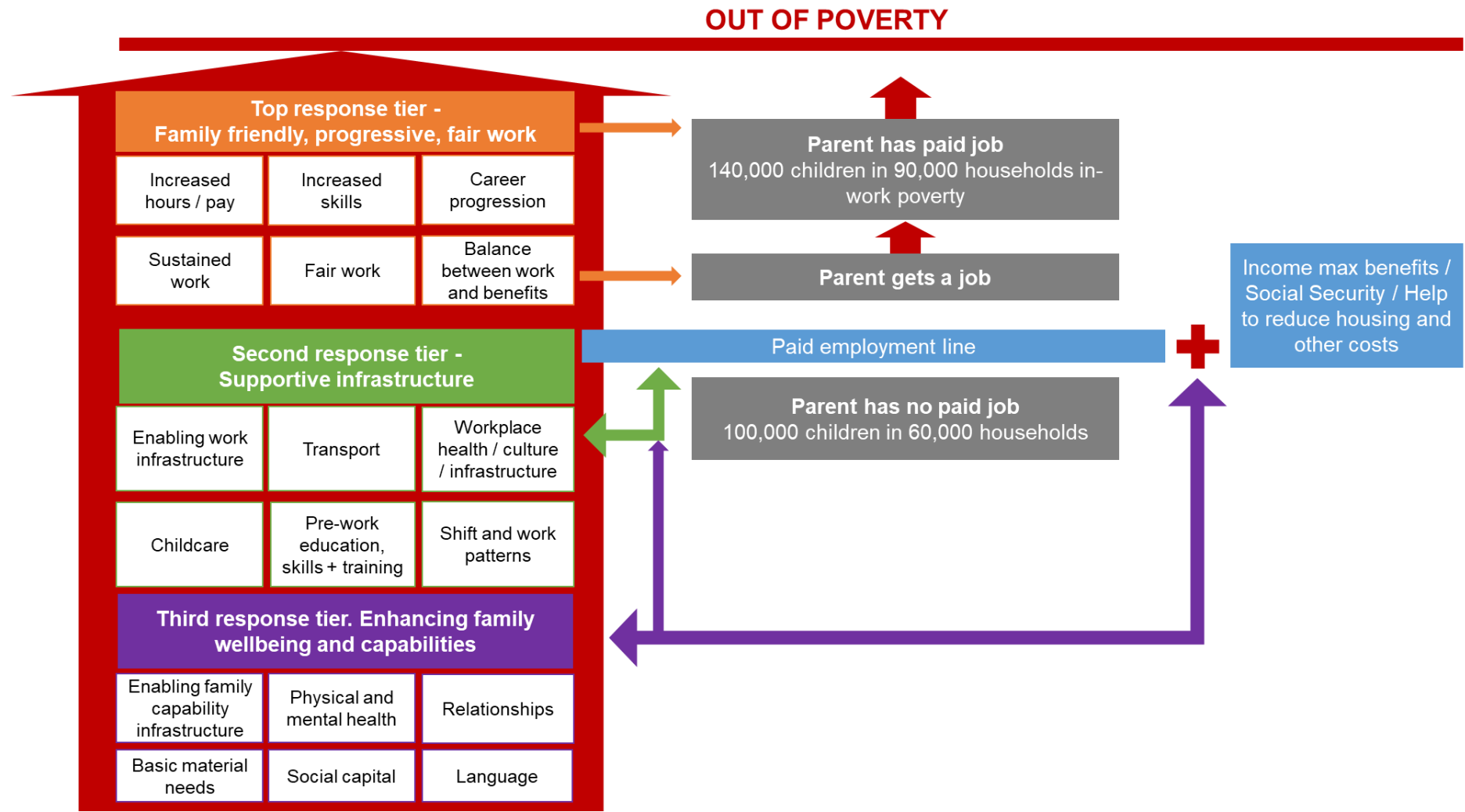
Due to these different circumstances, experiences and barriers, tackling child poverty will mean totally different things to different families and will require different combinations of response including a range of services and supports. We have found it helpful to think of different conceptual tiers of response. (See Figure 4 for a visual representation)

The first tier of support responds to circumstances where one or more adults in the family are in work or near to the labour market. Here policy action around fair work, reducing costs, improving the balance between work and benefits, and easier service navigation could allow families to pull themselves over the poverty line with minimal public or third sector interference.

The second tier of support responds to families where adults have the skills, confidence and desire to work if the infrastructure worked better to allow this to happen. Policy action which seeks to make infrastructure more family friendly and logistically easy, such as family-friendly employer policies, workplace adjustments, inclusive recruitment practice, accessible and affordable child care, flexible health and social care for families with a disabled member, logistically sensible transport and digital inclusion could all help in this space.

The final tier of support responds to families experiencing a range of adversity for whom directly accessing any of the drivers is currently a step too far; trust may be at such a level that even engaging with social security is problematic for them. For these families, supporting factors such as improved material conditions, skills, capabilities, confidence, mental health and wellbeing, will be needed alongside income support, before we can expect them to begin to engage with the wider range of services related to the drivers.

Figure 4: Conceptual response tiers in tackling child poverty



### **Poverty is not a fixed state**

We have also developed our understanding of ‘churn’ in poverty. There is often a view that there are people in poverty and people out of poverty, but in reality families fall in and out of poverty as their circumstances change. This means that for measures such as relative poverty, absolute poverty or material deprivation, data only shows a cross sectional snapshot. The same proportion may be in poverty but it will not be the same people each time. The measure of persistent poverty provides an indication of the proportion of households who have been in poverty for a longer period of time. Triggers into poverty include loss of employment, changes in pay/hours, additional children, relationship breakdown, increases in costs of living including housing, reduction in welfare support. The opposite will help families move out of poverty. A better understanding of triggers and the response in Scotland may also help to understand churn and prevention. Specifically, understanding poverty as a movable state rather than as a characteristic or a group is helpful.

### **Tackling child poverty should also support wellbeing**

The child poverty targets are not an end in themselves. Ultimately, they are about improving parents’ and children’s wellbeing, quality of life and life chances. We know that poor life outcomes for children and parents are driven by poverty so reducing child poverty, through increasing incomes and reducing costs of living, is one important mechanism for doing so. But it is not the only mechanism. We recognise that there are many other important actions being taken forward by the Scottish Government and its partners that will improve parents and children’s quality of life and life chances, in ways that are not in the short term about increasing incomes or reducing costs of living, although this might be a long term impact.

Reflecting on broader outcomes, experience has made us mindful of the need to ensure that income-based policies continue to support wellbeing. For example, it is no good encouraging a single mother to work long hours if this impacts negatively on the wellbeing of her and her child. Additional periodic analysis of wellbeing metrics will be necessary to monitor that driver action is associating with positive impacts on longer-term poverty-reduction outcomes and does no additional harm, as well as helping us to understand and track hopefully improving outcomes for people who remain in deep or persistent poverty.

### **Poverty levels and driver progress in Scotland reflect external factors**

Finally, in taking forward evaluation we need to continue to be mindful that poverty and its drivers are influenced by many different factors, only some of which can be influenced by public policy in Scotland. However, moving forward, we need to ensure that the interpretation of how child poverty and its drivers change over time is supplemented as needed with consideration of key external factors – for example, demographic change, macro-economic changes and UK-wide policy on employment law, migration, social security, foreign policy and trade deals.

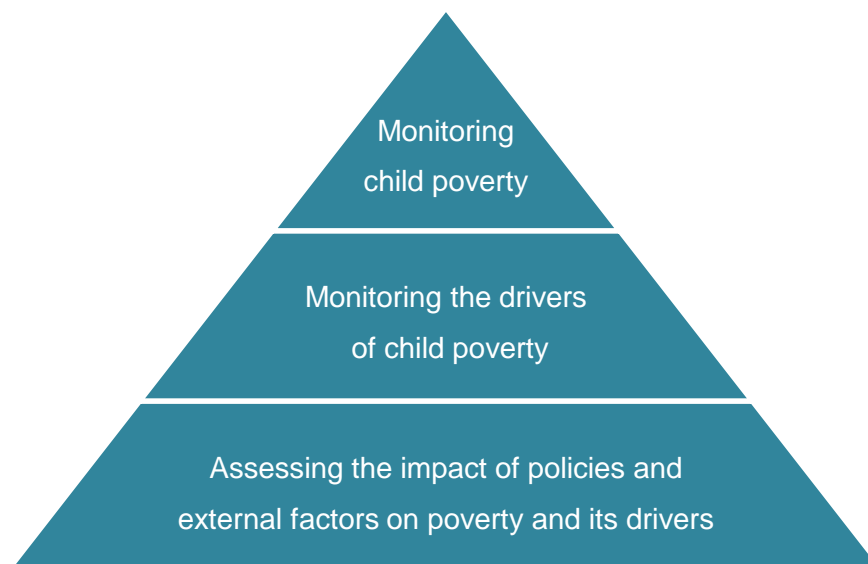
In summary, the approach established in the first delivery plan will be continued for the second delivery plan. But experience from the first plan has illustrated how messy the problem is. Monitoring and evaluation will increasingly need to capture the complexity of poverty experience and required successful response, as well as poverty churn and triggers and the wider factors that impact on the targets.



## THE ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The first delivery plan, [Every Child, Every Chance](#), set out the three key elements of the assessment approach. These 3 elements remain core to the evaluation approach, although as noted below we will be seeking improvements in each of them based on experiences to date.

**Figure 5: Evaluation approach to tackling child poverty**



### Element 1 - Monitoring child poverty

Statistics to monitor the four child poverty targets are published annually, usually in March of each year. The data for the relative poverty, absolute poverty, and low income and material deprivation indicators come from the Family Resources Survey (FRS), which is administered by the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Scottish Government provides funding to make sure that enough Scottish households are surveyed to give us robust data at the Scotland level. Statistics are produced in March each year, providing annual updates on a three year rolling average. The data for the fourth target, relating to persistent poverty, come from the longitudinal Understanding Society survey. Both sets of statistics (from FRS and Understanding Society) are usually published together, with the date for publication set by DWP.

These statistics are highly robust at the national level and can provide good assessment for many sub-groups, but there are some weaknesses which we are trying to mitigate:

- It is a sample survey and will never be large enough to pick up small populations, sub-groups or local data. In 2021/22 and 2022/23 we agreed with DWP to further increase the sample of the FRS in Scotland to try to provide additional sub-group analysis. However, COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on survey response rates. Moving forward, we will need to consider whether increased sample boosts can ever provide the refined detail

we would ideally like or whether other approaches, such as data linkage, could provide feasible alternatives.

- The FRS data is highly lagged which can be problematic in understanding the impact of policy action in the short to medium term. It is important to continue to monitor a range of additional ‘weather vane’ data through the measurement framework to help us monitor the trajectory of the drivers of poverty.

## Element 2 - Monitoring the drivers and impacts of child poverty

### Reviewed child poverty measurement framework

The measurement framework was originally developed and published in 2018 alongside the first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan to support the measurement of how the actions being taken were impacting on the drivers of poverty for children in Scotland.

It is reported on annually, although trend data is given to help contextualise annual changes. It is intended to help us understand why performance against the targets is improving, worsening or remaining static, which drivers are moving in the right direction, and which are not – potentially signalling the need for additional action or a change in approach.

The framework has recently been reviewed to check that it continues to use the best indicators and data. An [updated measurement framework](#) has been published alongside this document to support the progress reports for the second delivery plan.

### Additional periodic review of wellbeing

To support our refined understanding of child poverty, we have decided to do a separate periodic (every three years) review of wellbeing outcomes for low income households. This will include child poverty but not be limited to it. The first report will be experimental and we will seek views of stakeholders. Depending on the result and usability of outputs, we may then provide reports every three years, starting with 2022/23. Subsequent reports will then be published in 2025, 2028 and potentially 2031 as part of a final evaluation of the Act. The review would consider ‘do no additional harm’ indicators as well as trigger indicators and wellbeing outcomes.

Examples might include:

- wellbeing of low income parents versus all parents;
- wellbeing of low income young people versus all young people (preventative before they become parents);
- harmful behaviours (low income parents versus all parents);
- satisfaction with home (e.g. policies that move minority ethnic families to more affordable social rented homes in areas where there is racial tension may not be beneficial);

- satisfaction with neighbourhood (poverty also relates to ability to use kin and friend networks for childcare);
- experience of harassment of low income versus other (improvements here would show cultural changes which are likely to feed through to reduced discrimination in other areas of life);
- parent relationships (loneliness is related to wellbeing) and child-peer relationships (a long-term preventative factor);
- child attainment (preventative).

These are just examples and potential indicators will be fully explored.

### Continued support for local partners to access and interpret data

The national targets cannot be disaggregated at local level. Local partners therefore need to use a range of data to consider levels of poverty within their areas and we have been working with the [National Child Poverty Co-ordinators group](#) to help local partners do this. The [child poverty dashboard](#) provides a range of data that can help local areas to think about which drivers are weaker or stronger in their areas as well as the prevalence of different priority groups. The Scottish Household Survey, which does provide local authority breakdowns, now includes a poverty variable and statistics from the DWP/HMRC administrative linked data set [Children in low Income Families \(CILIF\)](#) is a valuable resource with data available for local authorities, data zones and wards. In addition many local partners such as local authorities and health boards will have a range of administrative and local data that can give them a very good sense of levels, types and location of poverty in their area, for example free school meals eligibility, council tax reduction etc. Examples can be found in [Glasgow](#) or [Inverclyde](#).

### Further consideration of priority family data

Various evidence from reviews of literature and lived and learned experience has also been provided around the priority families to help policymakers understand the range of differing barriers and enablers they faced. Evidence for the further two priority groups (young mothers aged under 25 and families with babies under 1) will be published alongside the annual report in June 2022.

We will continue to consider how to provide further driver evidence for the priority families and continue to update this evidence bank over time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Minority ethnic families: [Tackling child poverty: first year progress report - Annex C - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Lone parents: [Tackling child poverty: second year progress report - annex C - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Disabled: [Tackling child poverty - third year progress report : annex B - child poverty in families with a disabled adult or child - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Summary update across all priority families: [Tackling child poverty priority families overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

## Element 3 - Assessing the impact of policies and external factors on poverty and its drivers

Element 3 examines the depth of the complexity of child poverty and our efforts to tackle it. Monitoring the drivers helps to tell us **how** they are changing over time, but not necessarily **why** they have changed. To understand the contribution of particular policies to changes in poverty and its drivers, we need to evaluate the relative [contribution](#) of different policy actions.

Performance data is critical but qualitative evaluation evidence is also important in helping to unpack the reasons for any observed changes (or lack of change), identify any unintended side-effects, and understand how the actions could be refined and improved. Qualitative evidence includes detailed information about how each action is being implemented (which is likely to differ across service providers and locations), and the views of people supported by actions to find out what has and hasn't been helpful from their perspective. Finally, as more policies come on stream it is important to understand not just whether a policy works, but to understand whether it is the best option. Economic evaluations are complex but will be increasingly important through the second delivery plan<sup>3</sup>.

There are 3 different types of evaluation activity within this element:

- A. Individual Policy monitoring and evaluations including economic evaluation
- B. System evaluation (quantitative)
- C. System evaluation (qualitative)

### A. Evaluating implementation and impact of individual policies

Given the size and scope of the first delivery plan, it was not feasible or justifiable to attempt a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of every action on child poverty. As with the [evaluation of Scotland's alcohol strategy](#), decisions on where to focus evaluation efforts took into account a range of criteria, including: likely impact of the intervention on the four child poverty target measures; size of the investment from Government; and feasibility, cost and value of a robust evaluation of the intervention's impact on child poverty.

The shortlisted policies were subject to evaluation by the relevant policy and analytical teams. Key policies evaluated from the first delivery plan include [Fair Start Scotland](#); expanded [Early Learning and Childcare](#); [Best Start Grant](#); [Scottish Child Payment](#); [Connecting Scotland](#); [Money Talk Team](#); [Private residential tenancy](#).

Many policies from the first delivery plan will be continuing in some form allowing development of longer-term evaluation material. For new policies, we will use the same approach for the second delivery plan, shortlisting new key policies based on the criteria set out above.

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<sup>3</sup> Fair Start Scotland has undertaken this type of work although not specifically related to child poverty [Fair Start Scotland: economic evaluation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Each new or significantly refocused intervention featured as part of [the second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery plan](#) is analysed in the [Annex 5 \(Impact of policies on child poverty\)](#).

We show how each policy links to the targets, via the drivers of income from employment, cost of living and income from social security or benefits in kind. We describe the type of impact anticipated, and the numbers impacted. We also look across the priority groups to show where there are direct links, as well as considering geographical factors and wider impacts on gender and inclusive growth.

This analytical structure ensures consistency and transparency, and provides a clear explanation of how our assessment of the impact on child poverty has been arrived at. In so doing it provides a good basis to move forward with evaluating the policies.

### **Lessons from evaluating individual policies from Every Child Every Chance**

Over the last four years we have noted that whilst policies are being delivered there is often a lack of regular capture of key implementation activity/outputs. This base data is important for monitoring policy performance. Lack of data means that it is difficult to undertake policy evaluation or the cumulative impact assessment discussed below.

In addition, although plans are in place to evaluate policies to see if they are fulfilling their own objectives, they may not be collecting data to understand the contribution they are making to child poverty, and specifically in the context of the targets or priority families. There are a number of reasons why this might not be happening:

- Policies which relate to large infrastructure changes take time to implement. For several policies, implementation had only just started when the pandemic hit impacting both policy delivery and the collection of monitoring data.
- There can be challenges for policy implementation agencies to collect additional information, especially if it is confusing their policy narrative, or adding burden to service providers or clients/beneficiaries. For example, a key message of ELC is that it is about child wellbeing and that placements are, of course, not conditional on the parent being in, or taking up, work. Asking parents about work can confuse this message.
- During the pandemic, monitoring had to be light touch because of the capacity constraints on all public and third sector agencies and the constraints on data collection modes available.
- For households in poverty, or with multiple adversity, such data collection can feel overly intrusive, affecting response rates and learning. It also often does not fit with a more dignified experiential approach: Putting it bluntly, at what point does someone with little trust of government or organisations, turning up to play football in StreetSoccer become someone who could be open to interview as a data point?

From a tackling child poverty perspective, we will work with colleagues to continue to improve our understanding of child poverty from individual policy evaluations. Specific areas for improvement include to:

- Understand and articulate the importance of child poverty alongside other primary policy outcomes for each policy.

- Consider and articulate the appropriate nature and scale of data collection depending on the importance of the policy to tackling child poverty.
- Continue evaluation work to identify how and why policies are working and/or the barriers to their effectiveness, overall and for priority families. This will require collecting regular monitoring data that helps identify parental work and household income and ideally information to identify priority families.
- Ensure that evaluations consider not just effectiveness but scale. For example, a policy that gets 100 parents into work could be effective on its own terms but this needs to be considered against a scale of 60,000 parents without paid work.
- Ensure that evaluations increasingly contain economic considerations.

The original evaluation strategy set out that many of the individual actions would probably not be sufficient on their own to lift families with children out of poverty – rather, a package of policies would be required that fit seamlessly together. Work over the last few years has reinforced these messages. As a result many policies in the new delivery plan reflect the complex system. Rather than an employability policy there is an employability offer which is linked into other services such as childcare and transport. Cumulative impact work will be critical as we move forward.

## B. Evaluation of the cumulative impact of the package of policies

**Cumulative impact evaluation** (quantitative). The Act requires us to be able to assess the impact of the package of policies on the targets. When the first delivery plan was published we were not in a position to do this. However we have now built the capability to use UKMOD, an open-access microsimulation tax and benefit model hosted by University of Essex. UKMOD is based on the Family Resources Survey and is therefore capable of estimating the impacts of various policies on child poverty. It can be used to model the impact of any moderate to large scale policy that has an impact on household incomes or housing costs. Small policies can be modelled but their impact on poverty cannot be accurately assessed individually due to the underlying sample size of the FRS – they are better modelled as part of a cumulative package.

Some kinds of policies are easier to model than others. Since UKMOD is based on individual-level data, it is necessary to define who benefits from a policy, in what way, and to what extent. Most social security payments are relatively straight forward, where we can define who is eligible and apply a take-up rate. Employment and other policies require a range of assumptions to be made: eg. how many parents are enabled to move into work, who these parents are, and how many hours they will work and at what pay level. Any policy must have an attributable, additional impact on household incomes or housing costs in order to be modelled.

This [cumulative impact modelling](#) has allowed us to broadly estimate the impacts of a range of policies from the first plan period. This differs from simply adding up the individual impacts, since policies interact with each other both in their actual impacts (for example, benefit payments often decrease when someone moves into work or when their housing costs are reduced) and in their impacts on measured levels of poverty (since some households may need multiple policies to cross the poverty line). The cumulative impact assessment also projects the child poverty rate forward to future years, incorporating the impacts of external factors including UK



Government policies and macroeconomic trends. This allows us to assess how close or far we will be from meeting the targets in future years.

We will continue to use UKMOD to allow scenario development and cumulative impact assessment of policies to help us move towards the targets.

### **Lessons from quantitative cumulative modelling during the first plan period**

- No single model can do everything. The inputs and assumptions into the model are equally as important as the model itself. This underscores the importance of obtaining good quality data and investing in analysis prior to the modelling stage.
- Similarly, how the outputs are presented and what questions we are trying to answer are equally as important as the model itself.
- Modelling takes time – not every variation can be modelled.
- Small changes in poverty are not reliable due to the nature of the model. Single policies have to be very substantive to ‘show’ in impact data. Cumulative approaches are often better. By the same token, small policies can add up to create large effects, particularly given their interactions.
- UKMOD is based on FRS which is always at least 18 months out of date and needs regular updates in line with government changes.

### **C. System evaluation of the implementation and impact of the package of policies**

The quantitative modelling can tell us the theoretical impact of policies. However, whether theoretical impacts are realised will depend on how much friction is in the system. The third element of evaluation is to examine how well the system is working for families. This includes how well the policies have been designed, and are being implemented, as a coherent package. For example, is suitable childcare available to support employability services? Do the policies, and their implementation at a local level, seem joined-up from the perspective of the service user? Are there gaps in the coverage of the package of policies, for example are there particular groups who are not being reached?

This is an area where we have taken some initial steps: identifying and mapping the child poverty system ([Child Poverty System Map - Introduction \(data.gov.scot\)](#)); understanding the problems for people with lived experience<sup>4</sup>; and reviewing published [evidence of ‘what works to tackle child poverty’](#). Substantial evidence shows the logistical difficulties of linking up employment, care, transport and financial support for people who have limited resources, opportunities and choice, coupled with often immovable requirements due to health or care responsibilities.

Taking forward evaluation in this space will respond to the transformational place based policy approach in the plan. It is a priority for the second plan period. It is clear that this next stage needs to analyse the process effectiveness and the cost

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<sup>4</sup> Minority ethnic families: [Tackling child poverty: first year progress report - Annex C - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Lone parents: [Tackling child poverty: second year progress report - annex C - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Disabled: [Tackling child poverty - third year progress report : annex B - child poverty in families with a disabled adult or child - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // Update on all priority families: [Tackling child poverty priority families overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) // [Every Child Every Chance - Inverclyde Council](#)

effectiveness of the system at a local level from the perspective of families in poverty and from service providers. It also needs to draw learning from the different approaches being tested in pathfinders and other place based responses. This is complex and we will not get it right first time. Ideally this learning, good or less good, will be openly and constructively shared with other services and/or local contexts to better understand how local systems work in practice and to improve that practice. It also needs to grasp the difficult issues around economic evaluation looking at costs and return on investment. Evaluation in this space can only work if it is taken forward as a creative collaborative effort with partners at national and local level.

## **IMPROVEMENT TO GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The Scottish Government's governance structures are underpinned by assurance, which is defined as an evaluated opinion, based on evidence.

The structure established for the first years of the evaluation strategy relied on a technical working group providing evidence for a Delivery Group. Although this structure was reasonable, the lack of resources during the pandemic years meant that some of the seniority and drive to ensure that child-poverty needs were adequately incorporated and addressed in individual policy development and analytical plans was restricted.

### **Looking ahead**

Governance processes within the Scottish Government are currently being refreshed and adapted to take account of the learnings from the first Delivery Plan. The refreshed governance aims to ensure that the processes required to support the implementation of the Plan for 2022-26, to meet the targets and to break the cycle of poverty, are in place.

Data, analysis and evaluation are critical to the success of this approach, if we are to ensure that our policy interventions, pathfinder approaches and investments are having a positive impact on the drivers of poverty and the priority families, and we can take evidence-based decisions on where improvements and adaptations need to be made based on learning. Embedding data, analysis and evaluation into governance is therefore a priority over the course of this strategy and this will be reflected in the revised framework.





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