

*NE Fife Rural Poverty Action Plan
2023-2026*

2nd year edition



NE Fife Rural Poverty Action Plan 2023-2026

NE Fife is the largest of Fife's seven areas in both geography and population. It is much less reliant on manufacturing and heavy industry than any other area in Fife and characterised by agriculture, fishing and tourism.

Statistics paint an idealistic picture of NE Fife with high attainment levels, low unemployment and only one small area of multiple deprivation. Residents report feeling it is a safe place to live, as well as having lots of natural spaces ([NEF Local Strategic Assessment 2022](#)). These reasons are why so many people choose to live here. However, professionals and volunteers working in this area support some of the most vulnerable and deprived people and pockets of hidden poverty exist all over NE Fife which are not obvious in national statistics.

This was evidenced by Professor K. McArdle's first narrative research in 2018, [Living and Learning in NE Fife 2018](#), and reinforced by her more recent narrative enquiry during the pandemic- [Some people in North East Fife are struggling - now more than ever 2020](#). The transport research which was carried out by Axiom in 2019 ([Test of Change for Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme](#)) evidenced the impact of public transport on the most vulnerable stating that "someone on benefits can use a whole month's benefit money travelling simply to sign on at the job centre every year". Living in an urban area, it is much easier to walk to the job centre, which gives you an advantage financially over those who live rurally.

There are some alarming statistics that the recent SIMD 2020 highlights in [Know Fife Community Profiles](#) indicating St Monans having higher numbers than the Fife average for Child Poverty, with the smaller rural villages of Kingskettle, Colinsburgh and Kilconquhar almost equal to the Fife average. For in-work poverty, St Monans figures are higher than the Fife average, with Anstruther, Newburgh and Ladybank the same as the Fife average. Although these statistics are more in line with what people are actually experiencing, working directly with vulnerable groups in NE Fife gives you a better perspective of what the issues are and this is why those who sit on the Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty group, Food Network and People & Place Leadership groups were invited to attend a rural poverty conference, along with the Councillors in NE Fife and key community groups.

The first conference was held in 2018 ([RPC Report 2018](#)) and the feedback from this conference informed the first Rural Poverty Plan 2019-2021 ([Rural Poverty Plan 2019-2021](#)). The issues targeted in the plan remain relevant today and some would argue that these issues are now worse due to the aftermath of the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

Fife Partnership renewed the Plan for Fife for 2021-2024 and the plan focuses on Recovery and Renewal. It has 3 main strands: Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis, Addressing the Climate Emergency and Leading Economic Recovery, with Community Wealth Building at the heart of all three ([Plan4Fife 2021-2024](#)).

This new three-year Rural Poverty Action Plan takes in consideration all the feedback from the October 2022 conference, feedback form, what was raised in the last plan and the priorities set out in the Plan for Fife.



Main themes from the conference

There were 6 workshops at the conference: Fuel Poverty, Food Insecurity, Social Isolation & Mental Health, Young People, Social & Political Awareness and Climate Change & the Just Cause.

At all workshops the same three questions were asked: What is working well? What needs to improve? What actions can we take?

It was important to recognise what was working well as we tend to focus on the negatives.

Some of the common positives highlighted good partnership working, good local community responses, having larders/fridges which reduce waste and tackles stigma and dedicated specialist workers looking at the whole of NE Fife.

Actions which cut across topics from all the workshops:

- More frequent networking and joined up collaboration
- Promotion of services to both the wider public and other agencies
- Benefit checks to maximise income
- More education and knowledge around life skills, reusing and repairing, climate change and alternative fuel options.
- Having warm safe places to aid both fuel poverty and social isolation can also be used as a platform to educate and learn new skills, promote support and a chance for people's voices to be heard.
- Tackling issues with food supply and storage, as well as more ethical questions about the model being used.
- Growing food and using food already being grown by farmers
- Lived experience shaping services
- Access to services- mobile services
- Reducing stigma
- Holistic support

Priorities

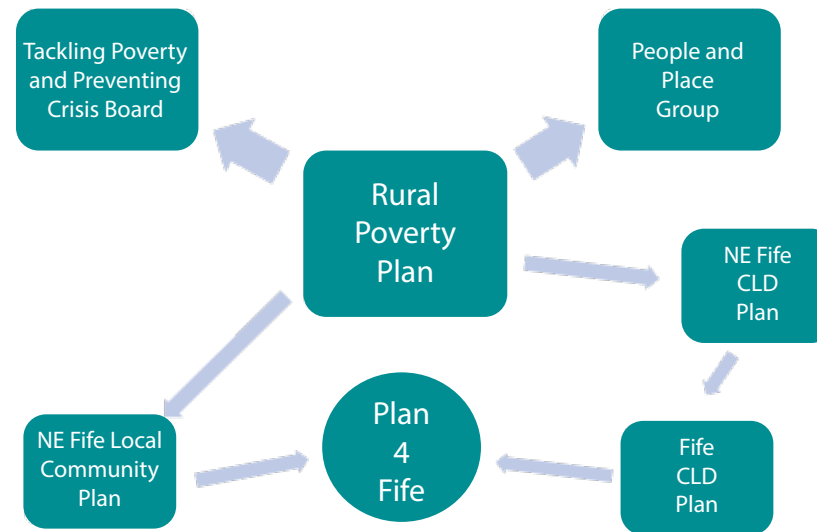
From the themes the following priorities were identified:

- Climate Crisis- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Food Insecurity
- Access to services
- Income Maximisation
- Lived experience
- Family Support
- Crisis/Cost of Living Support
- Social Isolation & Mental Health



Governance

- The priorities from the Rural Poverty Plan will be fed into the wider Local Community Plan and NE Fife CLD plan which in turn feeds into the Plan for Fife.
- A quarterly report on the priority updates by the Area Policy Officer will be fed into the Tackle Poverty and Preventing Crisis Board.
- Any issues highlighted from the Rural Poverty Group will be discussed at the People and Place Groups.
- The Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAAP) group will now be known as the NE Fife Rural Poverty Action Group (RPAG).
- Each priority will have a lead who will be part of the application approval panel.
- Lived experience voices will be included in every priority.
- The RPAG meetings will be quarterly and will have guest speakers and updates from Tackling Poverty & Preventing Crisis board, with half an hour allocated for networking.
- The plan will be a fluid document which can change its actions according to the needs of the community, however the priorities will remain the same.



Rural Poverty Action Plan

Priority	Desired Outcomes	Action	Impact measure
Climate Crisis-Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	To increase knowledge and confidence of communities in how to reduce climate change. Reduce Carbon usage in NE Fife	Education- Shared knowledge and skills from partners, presentations at schools, community venues and groups. Promote reuse initiatives	How many sessions carried out and impact feedback from participants. Number of carbon tonnes saved
Food Insecurity	To increase the availability of free and low cost food throughout NE. To increase the knowledge and tools you need to grow your own food.	Food Network to meet, share surplus and raise issues. Food growers' network to share experience and expertise. Education- how to grow your own food, distribute materials from StAndEN.	Show active participation in networks from a variety of groups. Report on how many sessions delivered, case study showing impact.
Access to services	Increase accessibility to services throughout NE Fife to address transport costs and poor transport links.	Promote Go-Flexi app and work with Transportation to target areas that have low uptake. Minimum Anti-Poverty offer in community venues and coordination of agencies for outreach in targeted areas. Mobile shop offer to targeted areas. Continuation of Travel Voucher Project.	Stats on increase of use of Go-Flexi. Case studies, impact statements from community venues about support being given at community level. Report on consultation for mobile shop offer and trial period of mobile shop. Local feedback and case studies from people who use mobile shop. Report on Travel Voucher Project to show impact.

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Priority	Desired Outcomes	Action	Impact measure
Income Maximisation	<p>To increase the income of people in NE Fife by making sure they are receiving all benefits they are eligible to and by addressing debt.</p> <p>Have a coordinated employability support pathway and increase employability opportunities.</p> <p>Promote and expand Big Hoose provision (which is now called Castle Home Hub) to reduce the most vulnerable household's outgoings.</p> <p>Promote money management and saving through Credit Union.</p>	<p>Promote Benefit Take up campaign.</p> <p>Promote and support people to access debt support at an earlier stage. Identify gaps in employment skills.</p> <p>Collaboration between employment agencies and local businesses.</p> <p>Continue links with young people to provide support.</p> <p>Development of Castle Home Hub to increase donations and expand the service.</p> <p>Post for Credit Union development worker.</p>	<p>Analytics after events taking place locally for impact.</p> <p>Liaise with CARF about stats on debt support. Numbers of people who have gone onto employment in a targeted local business.</p> <p>Statistics of participants from young peoples referred by Youth Cafe.</p> <p>Castle Home Hub coordinator to supply reports quarterly about usage.</p> <p>Credit Union worker to report back on stats.</p>
Lived experience	<p>To have lived experience voices heard in every priority in the plan.</p>	<p>Continue employment of Project Assistants.</p> <p>Find more lived experience voices to reflect the diverse groups in NE Fife.</p> <p>Shape direction of all anti-poverty work in NE Fife.</p>	<p>Recorded minutes of diverse lived experience panel attending various sessions where anti-poverty work is being discussed.</p> <p>Feedback from lived experience participants.</p>

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Family Support	<p>To increase holistic family support available in NE Fife to address the waiting lists.</p> <p>To address child poverty with targeted approaches. Collaborative working between agencies.</p> <p>Increase children's opportunities in NE Fife.</p>	<p>Holiday activities, Toy Drive, travel costs for activities, Cosy bags to address child poverty and opportunities available to all.</p> <p>Café Inc- partnership approach.</p> <p>Additional post for family worker in partner agency to reduce waiting lists.</p> <p>Work with Welfare Coordinator in Education to help families in schools.</p>	<p>Quarterly reports on those agencies who use the RPAG money for run family support.</p> <p>Evidence of partners being involved in Café Inc.</p> <p>Family Worker to produce quarterly reports to show impact of post.</p> <p>Welfare support to attend welfare events through Education.</p>
Crisis/Cost of Living Support	<p>To reduce the amount of people in NE Fife who find themselves in a crisis- so that they become rare, brief and non-recurring.</p>	<p>Crisis support includes cash first approaches- discretionary fund, supermarket vouchers, fuel payments, and bus tickets.</p> <p>Holistic support given by working in partnership with other agencies.</p> <p>Train fuel champions and benefit checker in community groups.</p>	<p>Statistics on number of crisis support accessed.</p> <p>Case studies from participants being support in a holistic manner.</p> <p>Number of fuel champions and benefit checker trained.</p>
Social Isolation & Mental Health	<p>To reduce social isolation through a joined up approach of services.</p> <p>To fill the gap for mild to moderate mental health issues support.</p> <p>Reduce waiting lists for support, especially for young people.</p>	<p>Partnership approaches to mental health support.</p> <p>Social Prescribing.</p> <p>Mental Health first aid training to frontline staff and volunteers.</p> <p>Additional post for young person's befriender from partner agency to reduce waiting lists.</p>	<p>Evidence of working with HSCP and NHS on mental health issues.</p> <p>Report on social prescribing service. Numbers of people who complete mental health first aid training.</p> <p>Young person's befriender post holder to report on work.</p>