

*NE Fife Rural Poverty Action Plan  
2023-2026*



# 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

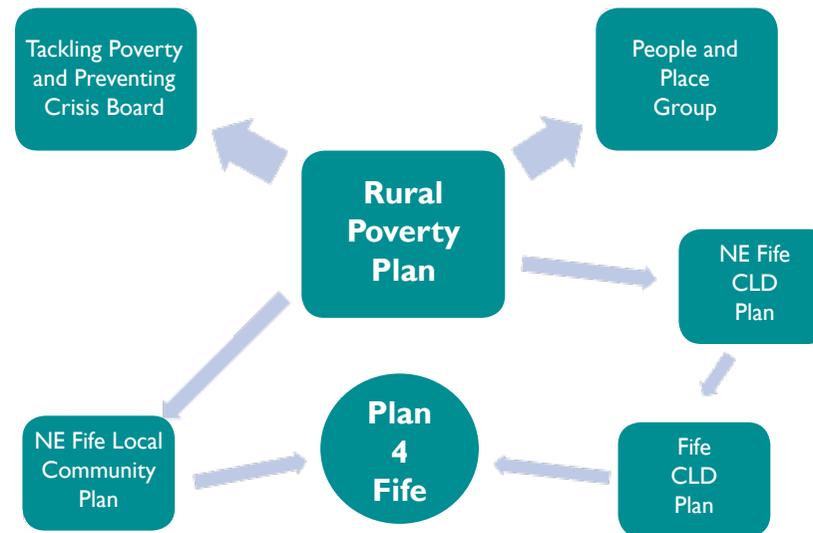
# Priorities

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 Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAAP) group will now be known as the NE Fife **Rural Poverty Action Group (RPAG)**.
- The priorities from the Rural Poverty Action 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 Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis Board.
- Any issues highlighted from the Rural Poverty Action Group will be discussed at the People and Place Groups.
- Each priority will have a working group who will be driving the actions and feeding the impact measures into the action plan.
- Lived experience voices will be included in every priority.
- Working groups can meet as frequently as needed, the quarterly RPAG meetings will be reserved for guest speakers and updates from each priority, with half of the time 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
<b>Climate Crisis-Reduce, Reuse, Recycle</b>	<p>To increase knowledge and confidence of communities in how to reduce climate change.</p> <p>Empower communities to find other solutions to fuel issues.</p>	<p>Education- Skills taught at community venues, understanding climate change.</p> <p>Investigate community fuel schemes, promote this and support communities through the process.</p>	<p>How many sessions carried out and impact feedback from participants.</p> <p>Report on how many communities was this promoted to and whether communities have taken a scheme up.</p>
<b>Food Insecurity</b>	<p>To increase the access to local, healthy and affordable food throughout NE Fife.</p> <p>To increase the knowledge and tools needed to grow your own food.</p>	<p>Central procurement and distribution hub which will include healthy homemade food for smaller food providers and community groups to purchase at low cost.</p> <p>Food growers network to share experience and expertise.</p> <p>Teaching how to grow your own food.</p> <p>Train more food champions in community groups.</p>	<p>Impact statements from participants of food providers.</p> <p>Statistic report from food providers about project.</p> <p>Show active participation in network from a variety of groups.</p> <p>Report on how many sessions delivered, case study showing impact.</p> <p>Numbers of Food Champions in NE Fife.</p>
<b>Access to services</b>	<p>Increase accessibility to services throughout NE Fife to address transport costs and poor transport links.</p>	<p>Mapping of transport links to find gaps for targeted approach.</p> <p>Coordination of agencies for outreach in targeted areas.</p> <p>Mobile shop offer to targeted areas.</p>	<p>Report on findings on transport links</p> <p>Increase coordinated hub model in targeted areas – local feedback survey</p> <p>Report on investigation mobile shop offer- models, sourcing, mapping of areas, costing.</p> <p>Local feedback and case studies from people who use mobile shop.</p>

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<b>Income Maximisation</b>	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.	Promote Benefit Take up campaign. Promote and support people to access debt support.	Analytics after events taking place locally for impact. Liaise with CARF Money Advice about numbers accessing their service after promotion to indicate increase.
	Have a coordinated employability support pathway and increase employability opportunities.	Identify gaps in employment skills. Collaboration between employment agencies and local businesses, including the central food hub project which can provide placements.	Numbers of people who have gone onto employment in a targeted local business. Statistics of participants from young people's Community Job Club service.
	Promote and expand Big Hoose provision to reduce the most vulnerable household's outgoings.	Support and include young people in Community Job Club service	Big Hoose coordinator to supply reports quarterly about usage
	Promote money management and saving through Credit Union.	Big Hoose coordinator to be jointly employed with Glenrothes to manage both hubs. Post for Credit Union development worker.	Credit Union worker to report back on stats.
<b>Lived experience</b>	To have lived experience voices heard in every priority in the plan.	Recruit lived experienced- possible pathway to employment	To have active members in each priority.
		Shape direction of each priority	Feedback from lived experience participants.
<b>Family Support</b>	To increase holistic family support available in NE Fife to address the waiting lists.	Holiday activities, Toy Drive, travel costs for activities and cosy bags to address child poverty and opportunities available to all.	Quarterly reports on those agencies who use the RPG money for run family support.
	To address child poverty with targeted approaches.	Café Inc- partnership approach.	Evidence of partners being involved in Café Inc
	Collaborative working between agencies.	Additional post for family worker in partner agency to reduce waiting lists.	Family Worker to produce quarterly reports to show impact of post.
	Increase children's opportunities in NE Fife.	Welfare Support for families in schools.	Number of sessions at schools from Welfare Support and case studies for impact.
		Promote support in schools through Parent Council. Link with Parent Councils to have parent voice/ feedback and to identify actions.	Feedback survey for schools about effectiveness and opinions.

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<b>Crisis/Cost of Living Support</b>	To reduce the amount of people in NE Fife who find themselves in a crisis- so that they become rare, brief and non-recurring.	Crisis support to include- discretionary fund, All Pay cards, hardship grants, shopping vouchers, fuel payments, and bus tickets.	Statistics on number of crisis support accessed.
	To promote a cash first response where able for dignity and choice.	Holistic support given by working in partnership with other agencies.	Case studies from participants being support in a holistic manner.
		Train fuel champions in community groups.	Number of fuel champions trained.
<b>Social Isolation &amp; Mental Health</b>	To reduce social isolation through a joined up approach of services.	Partnership approaches to mental health support.	Report from the Wells which operate with other partners.
	To fill the gap for mild to moderate mental health issues support.	Social Prescribing.	Promotion of social prescribing and mental health support in NE Fife- add to local map feature.
	Reduce waiting lists for support, especially for young people.	Mental Health first aid training to frontline staff and volunteers. Additional post for young person's befriender from partner agency to reduce waiting lists.	Numbers of people who complete mental health first aid training. Young person's befriender post holder to report on work.