

Local Child Poverty Action Report 2025/26

Summary of progress towards the Refresh of Fife's Child Poverty Strategy

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Introduction

Fife has prepared a short report for 2025/26 to allow for a focus on the refresh of Fife’s Child Poverty Strategy. This report gives a progress update of this work.

Fife is improving the approach it is taking to tackling poverty and making a shift to greater emphasis on prevention. To do this a whole system change is being undertaken to deliver No Wrong Door. The Fife Council report, ‘Tackling Poverty Strategy Refresh and No Wrong Door ‘June 2026, sets out how the work towards a refreshed child poverty strategy is aligning with Now Wrong Door whole system change and prevention work in Fife - Appendix 1

The Fife Child Poverty Report 2024/25 highlighted the need for more focus on long-term action to address challenges associated with low incomes and insecure employment and the need to build on preventative work. The review of current strategy started in February this year and has included stakeholder events involving council, voluntary sector and public health staff and consultation with volunteers with lived experience. The work will conclude this September. This work has been supported by Public Health Scotland utilising their Data and Systems approach to child poverty.¹

¹ [Prioritise child poverty: a data and systems approach - Child poverty - Economy and poverty - Social and economic impacts on health - Population health - Public Health Scotland](#)

Fife Child Poverty Data

– Knowing our communities

Fife is ranked 7 out of 32 local authorities for child poverty but the figures mask considerable variation within and across Fife. The latest children in low-income families data (FYE 2025) highlights that - after Glasgow - Fife has some of the highest levels of child poverty in Scotland in two of its parliamentary constituencies: Glenrothes and Mid Fife, and Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy.

Income from Social Security

Scottish Child Payment

The estimated take up rate is 93% (just below Scotland). 24,280 children were actively benefiting from Scottish Child Payment in Fife (Sep 25). Lower take up for pre-school children suggests that more could be done to promote Scottish benefits (including best start) to new mothers and in early years. Some neighbourhoods within Kirkcaldy Area may be underclaiming Scottish Child Payment.

Two child limit and benefit cap

Constituency-level child poverty rates are directly / strongly correlated with % children affected by two-child limit (parents can only claim universal credit or tax credits for their first two children). Abolition of two-child limit (from April 2026) will directly lift children out of poverty. 134 households (including 458 children) will only likely see a partial benefit before reaching benefit cap. Additional discretionary housing payment will be made available from Scottish Government to mitigate this.

Staying on

Fife has a lower percentage of young people in the most deprived areas and higher percentages of young people in SIMD quintiles 2, 3 and 5 receiving Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) compared to Scotland. The attainment of pupils from the most deprived areas in Fife is significantly below that of Scotland (levels 5/6).

Out of work benefits

In December 2025, Fife's claimant rate was 3.0% with an estimated 6,940 people claiming out-of-work benefits in the region. Fife's male claimant rate (3.6%) was significantly higher than the female rate (2.4%). In all parts of Fife (except North East Fife), 16–24-year-olds have the highest rate of people claiming out-of-work benefits. In Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy Areas, 16-24 age group's claimant rate was highest of all age groups in Fife (6.1%). The Kirkcaldy Area had the highest claimant rates for all three age groups (16-24, 25-49 and 50-66).

Income from Employment

Annual participation (16- to 19-year-olds)

Fife's participation rate (91.4%) is below Scotland (93.3%). 67.5% are participating in education and 21.1% in employment (compared to 70.5% and 20.7% for Scotland).

Employment

While Fife's employment rate 16-64 (73.9%) is just below Scotland (74.4%), the employment rate for 16–24-year-olds (45.8%) is significantly below Scotland (53.9%). Fife has a lower percentage of people employed part-time (19%) and a higher percentage of people who are self-employed (14%). 64.4% of children are in poverty where at least one adult works (66.3% Scotland).

Jobs and earnings

The job density rate in Fife (0.66) is lower than Scotland (0.83). There are around 6 jobs for every 10 working-age people in the area. While median earnings have risen over time, weekly wages (workplace based) continue to track below Scotland. 13.1% of employees earn less than the living wage (11.4% Scotland).

Skills and qualifications

Only 28.6% of Fife adults have qualifications at degree level or above, compared to 32.5% for Scotland. In Fife, the proportion of residents employed in lower paid occupations (caring and leisure, elementary occupations, sales and customer service work) are higher than Scotland.

Cost of Living

Early learning and childcare

Fife has a higher proportion using the two-year-old entitlement to early learning and childcare, and a lower proportion of children registered with childcare services. Fife has fewer childcare places, an average of 27.6 places per service (30.3 Scotland).

Housing

While the median residential property price in Fife is lower than in Scotland, the average house price in Fife was £178,000. Private rent prices stayed similar in the year to December 2025, at £807. Across Scotland, the average rental price rose by 2.8% over the year.

Progress to date – Refreshing Fife’s Child Poverty Strategy

February 2026	Process started with stakeholder event and system mapping
March 2026	Core group established, and consideration given to Fife poverty data and system mapping
April 2026	Lived Experience sessions held with support from the Poverty Alliance and feedback gathered on the data and systems in Fife
May 2026	A second-tier reference group established to widen the consultation and include additional stakeholders
June 2026	Progress to date taken to the Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis Board and a report to Fife Council Cabinet on the Refresh of the Child Poverty strategy and progress on No Wrong Door

Next Steps

September 2026	Gain consensus on priorities for Fife on child poverty
December 2026	Conclude the Public Health Scotland Data and Systems process with a refreshed child poverty strategy with measurable long-term outcomes in place.

Map created from the engagement from the session

[illegible]

Emerging Priorities – Refreshed Child Poverty Strategy work

Consideration of Data / Lived experience sessions has resulted in the following feedback

- Lack of childcare options: many areas of Fife, particularly rural areas, do not have access to childcare, wraparound support or childminders
- Need for a single trusted contact – a desire for “one agency [that] could help you with multiple things”
- Differences in services available across areas within Fife (e.g. Home Start/ Fife Gingerbread)
- Unclear eligibility for services or remit of services
- Good knowledge of local third sector services to support re. food/ fuel (Cosy Kingdom, LEAP, food pantries)
- Health Visitors seen as a key relationship and facilitator in accessing other services
- Access to transport to suits needs - a patchy experience across Fife (even when financial support is available)
- Access to locally smaller ‘place-based’ organisations was reliant on prior relationships/word of mouth
- Negative experiences with services influence likelihood of recommending them to others

Further detail of this work is available here [Fife priorities \(4\)](#)

LCPAR Priorities for Action 2025/26

Service	Priorities	Update July 2026 on Priorities from the 2024/25 Report
Community Wealth Building and Anchor Institution work	Increasing earned incomes by supporting and providing opportunities for parents and carers, to enter, sustain and progress in work	Life Chances supported 85 placements in organisations across Fife’s public sector, including in Fife Council and NHS Fife, and in the third sector in 2025/26. Life Chances is aimed at supporting people who are long-term unemployed back into the labour market by providing a placement paid at the Real Living Wage and targeted support by Fife Council Employability. Life Chances participants face many barriers to employment (many report having multiple barriers), and in 2025/26, was ‘living in a single adult household with dependent children’, followed by ‘limited/no work experience’ and ‘caring responsibilities. Once individuals complete their placements, they are offered a guaranteed job with the hiring service. 29 individuals went into employment post-placement in 2025/26, with others going into Higher Education or choosing to volunteer. Many individuals get their placement extended, either to align with an upcoming vacancy or to provide them with additional time and support for learning. This flexibility supports the overall aim of Life Chances - to provide opportunities to improve people’s chances of “doing well” through a helping hand into employment. As part of its Anchor Institution role, NHS Fife has continued to develop employability pathways that support parents, carers and other priority groups into paid employment. Through initiatives including Life Chances placements, targeted opportunities for lone parents delivered with Fife Gingerbread, careers programmes and community outreach activity, NHS Fife is helping people to enter, sustain and progress in work. • 2 Life Chances placements in NHS Fife were specifically targeted at lone parents through Fife Gingerbread. • 9 Life Chances placements were delivered overall, creating supported routes into paid employment in NHS Fife. • 1 person secured permanent employment within NHS Fife following DWP-linked outreach. • Around 10 people gained employment elsewhere following wider community outreach. • 25 young people completed the King’s Trust programme, with 15 gaining employment in social care, supporting early access to work and future earning potential. • 400 pupils from 12 high schools engaged through NHS careers events, supporting early awareness of employment pathways. • 14 pupils are currently progressing through the second EMERGE cohort, targeted at pupils from lower SIMD areas. • 14 NHS Fife mentors continued supporting young people through MCR Pathways.

Service	Priorities	Update July 2026 on Priorities from the 2024/25 Report
Supporting targeted Community-Based initiatives with the aim of reducing 6–8 week breastfeeding drop off rates		Fife continues to prioritise increasing breastfeeding rates through accredited services, targeted improvement projects, and expanded community support. The 2025/2026 Income Boost Project (funded by the Child Poverty Accelerator fund) generated £148,512.62 of financial gain for 78 referred families, while 6–8-week breastfeeding rates improved to 30.7 The national figure is 27.3 % Core Achievements & Active Projects • BFI Gold Status: Maintained the Baby Friendly Initiative Gold accreditation. • Golden Drops Project: Fully launched to optimise early colostrum collection in the Neonatal Unit. • 'Every Feed Counts': Active project targeting SIMD 1 and 2 areas to reduce breastfeeding drop-off at 6–8 weeks • Community Expansion: Increased local groups for baby massage, infant feeding, and sibling play. • Staff Capacity: Built up the Breastfeeding Support Team to provide proactive care. • Positive Feedback: Received overwhelming praise from families for creating supportive, nurturing spaces. The 2025/2026 Income Boost Project (funded by the Child Poverty Accelerator fund) generated £148,512.62 of financial gain for 78 referred families, while 6-8 week breastfeeding rates improved to 30.7 The national figure is 27.3 %
Employability	Strengthen data capture and reporting.	During 2025/26, a significant development has been the introduction of the new Helix CRM system, providing a more robust approach to participant, activity and outcome monitoring.
	Expand employer engagement	Employer engagement has been strengthened through the establishment of a multi-agency Employer Engagement Group, bringing together key stakeholders to improve coordination of employer activity, promoting inclusive recruitment practices and supporting pathways into priority sectors including health and social care, education and retail.
	Enhance rural access	Recognising transport as a significant barrier to employment, the partnership has introduced a Transport to Employment Fund to support parents and carers to access interviews, training and employment opportunities, particularly those living in rural communities.
	Build peer support opportunities, particularly for lone parents, young parents, and those new to the area or the labour market	The partnership has also welcomed the introduction of the Scottish Government's childcare related employability funding, which will provide additional opportunities to address childcare barriers that prevent parents from entering, sustaining or progressing in work. This complements existing support and strengthens the overall package available to families.

Service	Priorities	Update July 2026 on Priorities from the 2024/25 Report
Cost of Living	Maximise household income through benefits and financial advice Help people to better manage including initiatives around energy efficiency Enable key and front-line workers to work effectively together	Fife continues to work to shift from crisis support to prevention – this has been hard to do given the current cost of living crisis. Large scale benefit maximisation campaigns, help with fuel poverty and household support will continue with a £2 864 92 investment for 2026/27.