



Fife Local Child Poverty Action Report 2024/25



Contents

Contents	2	Part B - Income Maximisation	20
Foreword	3	● Benefit Take Up Campaigns	22
Introduction	4	● Cost of Living Programmes	24
Poverty overview	5	● Priorities for Part B 2025/26	31
● Fife picture - understanding of need in Fife	5	Part C - Supporting the next generation to thrive	32
● Impact of poverty	7	● Improving our Whole System Approach	32
● Addressing the impact of poverty	11	● Keeping the promise	35
Part A - Increase Income from Employment	12	● Other forms of support	36
● Partnership in action	12	● Priorities for Part C 2025/26	39
● Priority Groups Reached	13	Priorities for 2025/26 Tackling Poverty & Preventing Crisis	40
● Priorities for Part A 2025/26	15	● Tackling Poverty in Fife - Priorities and Change 2024/25	40
● Community Wealth Building and Anchor Work	16	Background Papers	41

Foreword

Fife is working to tackle poverty and prevent crisis, helping to break cycles of disadvantage and provide early support, through the implementation of a 'No Wrong Door' approach.

The focus is on prevention, supporting families before they reach crisis point. Early advice and support is offered to households to address issues related to housing, employment, income maximisation, fuel/ food poverty and family issues.

There is a need for effective long-term action to address challenges associated with low incomes, insecure employment, substance use, mental health, and the poverty-related attainment gap.

Fife has adopted a cross-portfolio approach to help address these issues, involving various Council Directorates and services such as education, early learning and childcare, housing as well as partners including public health and the third sector coming together. Work is underway to strengthen this way of working and the current strategic structure is being changed to reflect this. The need for a clearer call for action on child poverty underpins this, and engaging with communities and families to understand their needs and tailor their approaches will be key. Fife is now part of Fairer Scotland Pathfinders and allied to No Wrong Door will be looking at collaborative place leadership for better child poverty outcomes.

Introduction

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced a series of statutory income targets to measure reduction in child poverty in Scotland by 2030. The Act also places a duty on local authorities and health boards to jointly report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty.

This report provides an update on progress and developments for 2024/25 and gives a comprehensive picture of the expansive ways that Fife is working to reduce child and household poverty. These increased efforts are being made in the face of a growing challenge of the cost-of-living crisis exacerbating all aspects of poverty in our disadvantaged communities. We continue to listen to communities who are experiencing the worst of the impact, including developing Local Fairness Initiatives in two of the most affected neighbourhoods.

Our plan and subsequent workstreams acknowledge the need to focus on mitigating and preventing the negative impacts of poverty on children and families.

Within Fife, the **Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis (TPPC) Board** and the Children's Services Partnership, support a wider partnership approach to tackling poverty and preventing crisis.

A core aim of the Children's Services Partnership is to help break cycles of disadvantage. This is reflected in the inclusion of a cross-cutting theme within the Fife Children's Services Plan www.fife.gov.uk/FifeCSPlan2023 to improve equity and equality.

Achieving this ambition requires coordinating work across a broad range of national policies, each of which provides a different lens on the underlying wicked issues that lead to inequity and inequality in Scotland. This includes partnership delivery of: GIRFEC, The Promise, Whole Family Wellbeing, Corporate Parenting, Child Protection, as well as service specific policies such as the National Improvement Framework and Scottish Attainment Challenge.

The focus of partnership work is to ensure that work across all these areas of national policy is coordinated in a way that meets the needs of all children and young people at risk of adverse outcomes, including the significant numbers who are affected by multiple forms of disadvantage.

Poverty overview

Fife picture – understanding of need in Fife

The **Fife Strategic Assessment** informs strategic planning and prioritisation of resources across the Fife Partnership. **Local strategic assessments** are also produced three yearly for each of the 7 Areas to inform discussions about priorities and actions that need addressed locally, and support the shift to prevention and neighbourhood / place-based approaches.

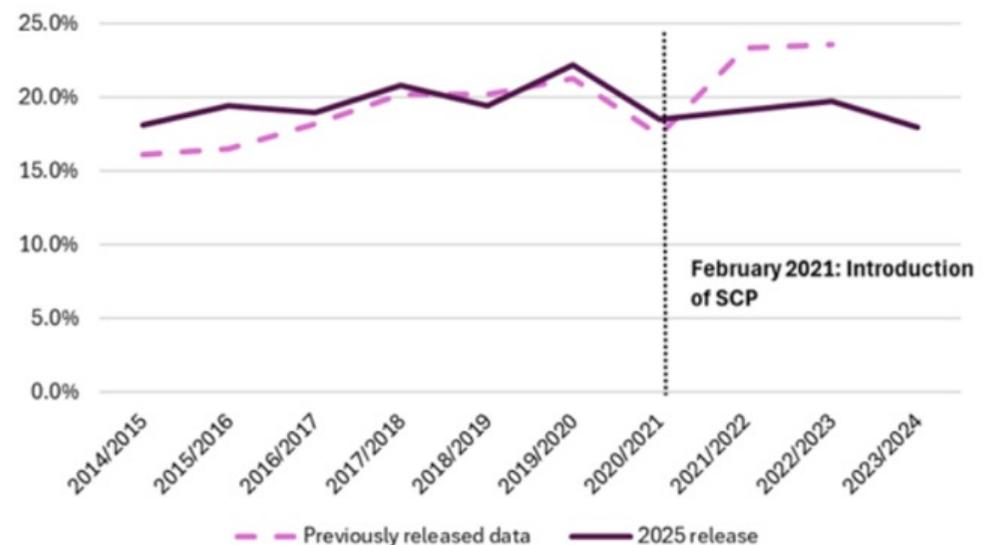
What recent assessments show is that poverty is persisting in Fife and living standards continue to be squeezed. Fife's recent declaration of a housing emergency reflects funding pressures, lack of affordable housing, rising housing costs and increased risk of homelessness.

As at 2024, 11,038 children in Fife (18.0% of those aged under 16) are living in relative poverty before housing costs. 8,925 children (14.6%) are living in absolute poverty before housing costs. Both are above the Scottish rates of 16.3% and 13.2% respectively. Although child poverty levels in Fife remain above Scotland, Fife has seen a slightly larger decrease in the rate of children living in relative poverty (-1.7 percentage points) compared to Scotland (-1.5 percentage points) between 2023 and 2024.

The latest figures show a reduction in child poverty across Scotland, reflecting a change to the methodology to include the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) – a payment to help low-income families towards the costs of looking after children - as a form of income.

In 2023, before taking account of Scottish Child Payment, 23.6% of Fife children (15,024) were in relative poverty. By including Scottish Child Payment in the methodology, 2,906 children in Fife were lifted out of poverty in 2023 (a difference of 3.9 percentage points for Fife, compared to 3.5 percentage points for Scotland).

The chart below shows trends in relative poverty in Fife according to the Children in Low Income Families Dataset (DWP), before and after the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment:

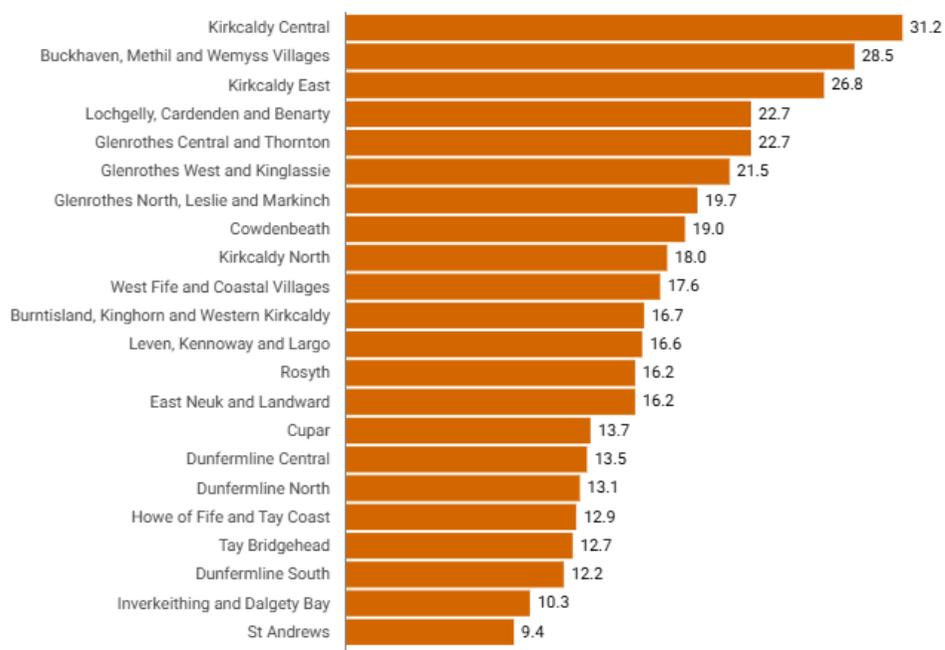


Comparison of relative child poverty figures in Fife before and after the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) (Children in Low Income Families, DWP)

Poverty rates vary across Fife, with relative child poverty (before housing costs) being highest in Kirkcaldy Central, Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages, and Kirkcaldy East. It is lowest in Inverkeithing and Dalgety Bay, and St Andrews. 30.2% of children living in the 20% most deprived areas are in relative poverty, compared to 7.1% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas of Fife.

Child poverty in Fife

11,038 children are living in poverty in Fife (18% in relative poverty before housing costs). Levels of child poverty vary across Fife wards.



DWP - Children in low income families dataset, FYE 2024

The latest figures from End Child Poverty coalition show that 25% (17,166) children in Fife, are living in relative poverty (after housing costs). This is just above the Scotland rate of 23% but below the UK rate of 31%, showing that devolved policies such as the Scottish Child Payment have contributed to overall lower levels of child poverty in Scotland.

In two-thirds of parliamentary constituencies, at least one in four children are in relative poverty after housing costs. Child poverty is highest in Glenrothes and Mid Fife (30.1%) and Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy (27.3%) and lowest in Dunfermline and Dollar (21.2%) and North East Fife (21.4%) parliamentary constituencies.

Local level child poverty rates are directly and strongly correlated with the percentage of children affected by the two-child limit - providing further evidence that the policy is a key driver of child poverty, actively contributing to higher child poverty rates in some parts of Fife.

Data published in 2024 by the End Child Poverty Coalition on the number of children impacted by the two-child limit highlighted that 6,760 children (9%) in Fife are affected by the two-child limit, in line with Scotland. 2,460 children (14%) are affected in Glenrothes and Mid-Fife, 1,990 (10%) in Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath, 1,550 (7%) in Dunfermline and West Fife, and 760 (6%) in North East Fife.

Impact of poverty

Poverty is associated with adverse developmental, health, educational and long-term social outcomes.

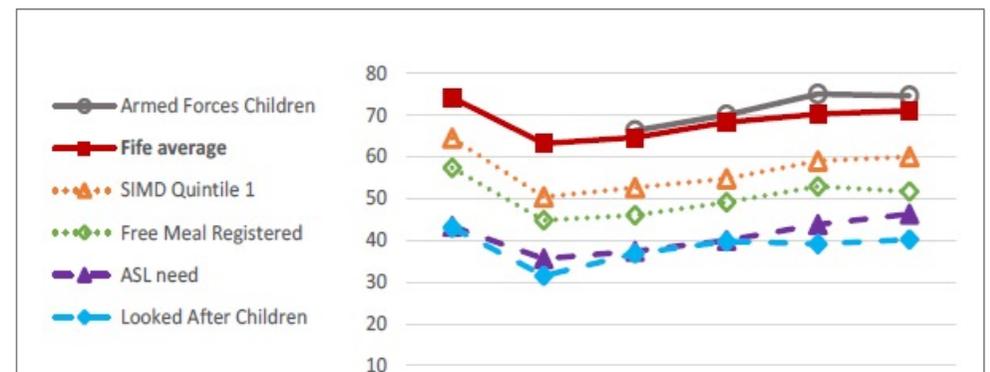
Child poverty is linked to a wide range of poorer outcomes, including:

- Low birth weight
- Poor physical health (linked to chronic conditions and obesity);
- Mental health problems / low sense of wellbeing.
- Experience of stigma and bullying from peers.
- Academic underachievement.
- Subsequent employment difficulties.
- Social deprivation.

Our plan and subsequent workstreams acknowledge the need to focus on mitigating and preventing the negative impacts of poverty on children and families.

Evidence shows that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (including those: living in SIMD Quintile 1, registered for free school meals, living in a family affected by disability, having any other form of additional support need for learning (ASL), from a minority ethnic group, from an armed forces family) frequently have lower achievement of development milestones, lower school attendance, poorer attainment and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. For example:

- An attainment gap is still apparent at all levels of qualification for almost all disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; an example is illustrated in the figure below. The attainment gap for school leavers widens with increasing SCQF difficulty.
- Attainment is linked to school attendance which has been declining since 2014/15.
- The number of Fife pupils that require additional support in schools has increased significantly with the rate in secondary schools approaching 50%.
- Mental health is a significant issue for young people. Referral rates for support remain above pre-pandemic levels. Pupils experiencing feelings of anxiety is an area of concern in the recent 2023 Fife Health and Well Being survey.



Literacy CfE achievement levels for different groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable children at stages P1, P4 and P7 of primary school.

Poverty is related to – and compounds – other forms of disadvantage

Evidence shows that the children and young people affected by multiple forms of disadvantage generally have poorer outcomes than those who affected by fewer forms of disadvantage. For example:

- Outcomes for those living in SIMD Quintile 1 with an Additional Support Need are generally poorer than outcomes for those living in SIMD Quintile 1 (but with no additional support need) or those with an additional support need (but who do not live in SIMD Quintile 1).
- Outcomes for those affected by three different forms of disadvantage will generally be significantly lower than outcomes for those affected by only one form of disadvantage.

Multiple disadvantage and poverty are risk factors for experiencing care

We know that there are a disproportionate number of care experienced young people who experience multiple disadvantages such as, homelessness, substance use, mental health and conflict with the law. Supports are being developed to improve outcomes for care experienced young people at risk of secure care or Justice involvement through the development of the Youth Intervention Service and Next Turn in Children, Families and Justice social work services. It is these inequalities on an individual and structural basis that the Fife Corporate Parenting Board seeks to expose and address, especially when considered through the lens of poverty, trauma, and loss, that is indelibly linked with the lived experiences of those in the care community.

Better understanding the link between poverty and other barriers to outcomes

Work within the Children's Services Plan has a strong focus on reducing barriers for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, enabling all children and young people to develop their individual potential to the full. These barriers show a clear link to:

- Different proxy measures of living in poverty (e.g. living in SIMD Quintile 1, being registered for free school meals, having a disability, having an additional support need related to family issues or wellbeing).
- Other forms of individual need (e.g. having an additional support need linked to a learning or communication issue).

A risk-based approach to modelling the outcomes for children affected by multiple forms of disadvantage has been developed within the Children's Services Partnership. This is being used to better understand: the risks of poor outcomes faced by individual children, and how different forms of disadvantage affect different outcomes.

The box on the next page illustrates how this approach can help distinguish different risk factors for different outcomes.

What a risk-based analysis can tell us about the importance of different forms of disadvantage for different outcomes

What factors present the highest risk of not attending regularly at high school?

The biggest risk factor for non-regular attendance at high school (i.e. having a personal attendance of less than 85%) is poverty. In particular:

- The single biggest risk factor is being registered for a free school meal.
- For those not registered for a free school meal, the biggest risk factor is living in SIMD Quintiles 1 or 2.
- For those neither registered for free school meals nor living in SIMD Quintiles 1 or 2, the biggest risk factor is having an additional support need relating to family, emotional or mental health issues.

Those affected by multiple indicators of poverty (as highlighted above) have particularly poor outcomes.

Learning and communication support needs (e.g. having a learning disability, having autistic spectrum disorder, not having English or Scots as a home language) can also be a significant factor for groups affected by poverty.

What factors present the highest risk of not attaining in primary school?

The biggest risk factor for not attaining in primary school achievement (i.e. not achieving the expected level of CfE at the end of stages P1, P4 and P7) is having an additional support need.

Those affected by specific additional support needs relating to a learning difference (e.g. dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorder, having a moderate or specific learning disability) have particularly poor outcomes.

Poverty, sex, and age within the year group are risk factors that can also be important for those with no additional support need.

Social Connectedness

The learning from the last three years delivering the cost-of-living programmes suggests that a more integrated neighbourhood-based approach to support helps people access assistance early and in ways that contribute to more positive outcomes

Fife's Employability Pathway – Support into work and training

The Employability Pathway is Fife's coordinated system for supporting people who are economically inactive, unemployed, or underemployed. It's focused on those furthest from the labour market including many families living in or at risk of poverty.

People are referred via Jobcentre Plus, health services, schools, community groups or can self-refer. Once referred, they are matched with a dedicated keyworker who helps them identify goals and access the right support, including training, volunteering, childcare advice, mental health support, and job opportunities.

The pathway brings together public, third sector, and private providers to deliver joined-up support across Fife. Providers work collaboratively to ensure wraparound support such as housing or health is connected with employability services.

Addressing the impact of poverty

Successfully addressing both types of barrier to life outcomes (poverty and individual need) requires:

- Improving initial assessment and early help and support. This is being addressed through ongoing development of the No Wrong Door model.
 - Better understanding how specific individual circumstances (including different types of additional support need) can adversely affect life outcomes. This is being addressed by the risk-based analysis of data being developed within the Children's Services Partnership.
 - More effective tracking and monitoring of the improvements seen for children and young people receiving support by a range of partners. This is being addressed via development of a Whole System Framework for children's services partnership approach; this is a systems-based framework, being developed with the support of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- Building opportunities for social connectedness which can act as a support against the negative impacts of poverty. Fife is supporting community led warm and welcoming places. These are helping those on low incomes deal with the challenges of high fuel costs as well as providing dignified approaches to food insecurity and social isolation.
 - Increasing earned incomes by supporting and providing opportunities for parents and carers, to enter, sustain and progress in work is being delivered through the work of the Opportunities Fife Partnership and Community Wealth building approaches. This includes employability support and the provision of essential infrastructure such as childcare and transport.

Part A - Increase Income from Employment

Increasing income from parental employment remains a core part of Fife's strategy to reduce child poverty. For many families, particularly those in priority groups, getting into work or progressing within it is one of the most effective ways to improve financial security and long-term wellbeing.

In 2024/25, Fife Council and the Opportunities Fife Partnership continued to invest in employability services that support parents to prepare for, move into, and sustain meaningful work.

Fife's approach is focused on practical outcomes, not just getting people into work, but helping them stay there, develop new skills, and progress.

Over 1,300 parents were supported through the pathway, with dedicated services tailored to their needs and including access to training, volunteering, confidence building, and in-work progression support.

Partnership in action

OFP operates through a referral-based pathway. Individuals can be referred by Jobcentre Plus, social work, health professionals, schools, or community organisations, or they can self-refer.

Once referred, individuals are matched with a keyworker or case manager who helps identify their goals and supports them to access the right mix of services. This can include:

- One-to-one employability support
- Accredited training and short courses
- Volunteering opportunities
- Job matching and employer engagement
- Support with childcare, digital access, mental health, and financial wellbeing

The system is person-centred and trauma-informed, meaning support is flexible and built around what matters to the individual, not just what's available. Providers work closely with other services to ensure that employability support is joined up with housing, family support, and health where needed.

The pathway supports both short-term progress - such as starting training or improving confidence - and longer-term outcomes, including entering and sustaining paid employment.

Multi-agency delivery

At the heart of OFP is a network of delivery partners from the public, third, and private sectors. These include:

- Fife Council services (Employability, CLD, Education)
- Third-sector providers such as Brag Enterprise, Fife Gingerbread, FEAT, Venture Trust and Fife International Forum
- Private Sector providers such as Triage.

This ensures that employability support links with wraparound services like childcare, mental health, housing, and financial advice.

The keyworker approach

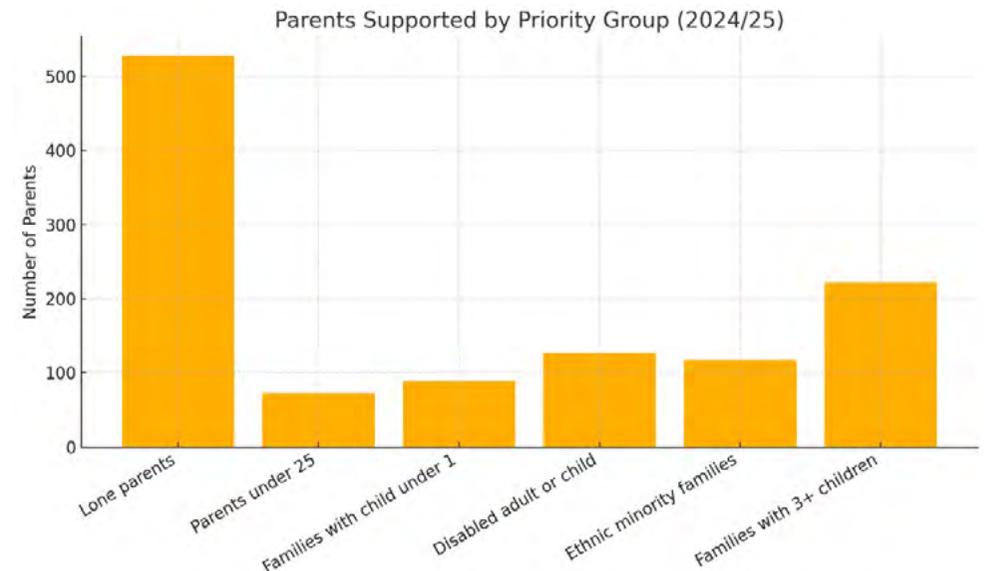
All participants are supported by a dedicated keyworker or case manager who stays with them throughout their journey. The keyworker builds trust, helps set goals, and coordinates access to services. They also help with practical issues - like securing childcare or accessing digital tools - so that people can fully engage in training or work.

This relational approach is central to the pathway's success. It ensures that support is not only available, but accessible and meaningful for the people who need it most.

Priority Groups Reached

In 2024/25, Fife's Employability Pathway supported 1,303 parents across Fife. 1,156 were from priority groups. The data reflects both the scale of engagement and the effectiveness of local referral routes: including from Jobcentre Plus, health and social care, early years teams, and voluntary sector organisations. It also highlights the continued demand for flexible, trauma-informed support among parents working to improve their family's financial future.

- Lone parents - 528
- Parents under the age of 25 - 73
- Families with a child under one - 89
- Families with a disabled adult or child - 127
- Families from ethnic minority backgrounds - 117
- Families with three or more children - 222



Case Study: Supporting Lone Parents into School-Based Roles – Fife Gingerbread

In 2024/25, Fife Gingerbread piloted a new Pupil Support Assistant (PSA) Traineeship designed to help parents move into meaningful, family-friendly employment within schools, while also addressing local recruitment challenges in the education sector.

Key features included:

- Guaranteed school placements in partnership with Fife Council Education
- Accredited training delivered flexibly to fit around school hours
- One-to-one keyworker support from Fife Gingerbread throughout the programme
- Confidence building, peer support, and practical help with childcare, transport, and digital access

The traineeship was successful in building both confidence and capability among lone parents who had been out of the workforce or lacked recent experience. Many participants had previously faced barriers such as isolation, low self-esteem, or lack of formal qualifications.

Outcomes included:

- Increased confidence and employability
- Successful completion of qualifications
- Progression into permanent or longer-term school-based roles

“This has completely changed how I see myself. I never thought I’d be working in a school – now I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

Case Study: Building Confidence and Finding Work - Mr C's Journey

Background

Mr C, a 43-year-old father of three, moved to Fife from India in April 2024. Although Mr C held a technical degree and had over 10 years of experience as a mechanic, he was unemployed after arriving in Scotland and unsure of how to access work in his field.

Mr C received direct help with job applications and was supported to identify roles that matched his skills and aspirations. After two initial interviews for mechanic roles, Mr C gained valuable experience and greater self-assurance. Soon after, he was offered a full-time job with a gas company in Edinburgh, starting with paid training as a mechanic and went on to secure a permanent position.

Mr C's confidence, communication, and motivation have grown significantly. He is now contributing to the family income, feeling more secure in his future, and better connected to his local community.

"I am truly grateful for the support I've received. The guidance from the caseworker has made a real difference in my life, and I now feel much more confident in attending job interviews. I can see a clear path ahead, and I am excited about the future."

Priorities for Part A 2025/26

- Strengthen data capture and reporting, especially around training outcomes, job starts, and sustained employment to better understand what's working and where support is most effective
- Expand employer engagement, with a focus on inclusive hiring, flexible roles, and pathways into priority sectors such as care, education, and retail
- Enhance rural access, through local outreach, transport solutions, and digital options to reach families in isolated areas
- Build peer support opportunities, particularly for lone parents, young parents, and those new to the area or the labour market

These priorities reflect what families tell us they need — practical support, opportunities that work for their circumstances, and services that are accessible, respectful, and joined-up.

Community Wealth Building and Anchor Work

Fife has adopted the Community Wealth Building approach to economic development to achieve better outcomes for people and reduce socio-economic disadvantage. It seeks to ensure that money stays local, and more decisions are made by the people who live and work in Fife.

Public sector organisations rooted in local places play a lead role in putting community wealth building into practice. These are sometimes referred to as ‘anchor institutions’, a term that describes organisations that have a strong foothold in communities. Anchor institutions in Fife include Fife Council, NHS Fife, Fife College and the University of St Andrews, and can also involve the third sector and large private sector employers. These organisations can change the way systems, processes and decision-making work to give local people more influence and control over the economy.

NHS Fife is committed to embracing its role as an Anchor Institution through sharing its resources and assets to maximise the wealth within Fife’s communities, influencing social determinants of health, providing fair employment opportunities, purchasing locally where possible, using procurement influences, and strengthening partnerships. To do this, NHS Fife is embedding its anchor ambitions within existing and future strategies, working in partnership with other local organisations.

Fife Council is committed to embedding community wealth building within key policies, strategies and ways of working, and working collaboratively with fellow anchor partners to embed and scale approaches to achieve greater impact and maximise benefits for Fife’s communities. The commitment to community wealth building is reflected in plans and strategies, including the Food4Fife Strategy 2024-29 in which community wealth building aims to ensure the local food system works well for local people and that any wealth generated by the local food economy stays in Fife.

A key pillar of Community Wealth Building is Workforce, which involves recruiting locally, supporting long-term employment opportunities, and redesigning recruitment processes to remove barriers to employment. It involves embedding Fair Work principles and promoting work that is secure, flexible and offers training. In response to this pillar, NHS Fife has developed targeted programmes for young people to help onboard them, for example hosting interactive career events for Fife secondary school pupils and developing various apprenticeship opportunities in partnership with Fife College, some of which have led to permanent employment.

Research consistently tells us that the most effective intervention in tackling poverty and inequality is in securing employment. The Plan for Fife 2017-2027 notes higher levels of unemployment in mid-Fife, a widening inequality gap and stubborn generational poverty and social problems impacting negatively on people and families. Some people face multiple barriers to employment due to, for example, long-term unemployment, little or no work experience, or long-term health conditions. These barriers make it difficult to progress into fair, sustainable work, contributing to the cycle of poverty and challenges for the public sector. In addition, anchor partners face skills shortages and challenges with recruiting and retaining staff in the current market (some vacancies are routinely referred to as ‘hard to fill’).

Overview of progress

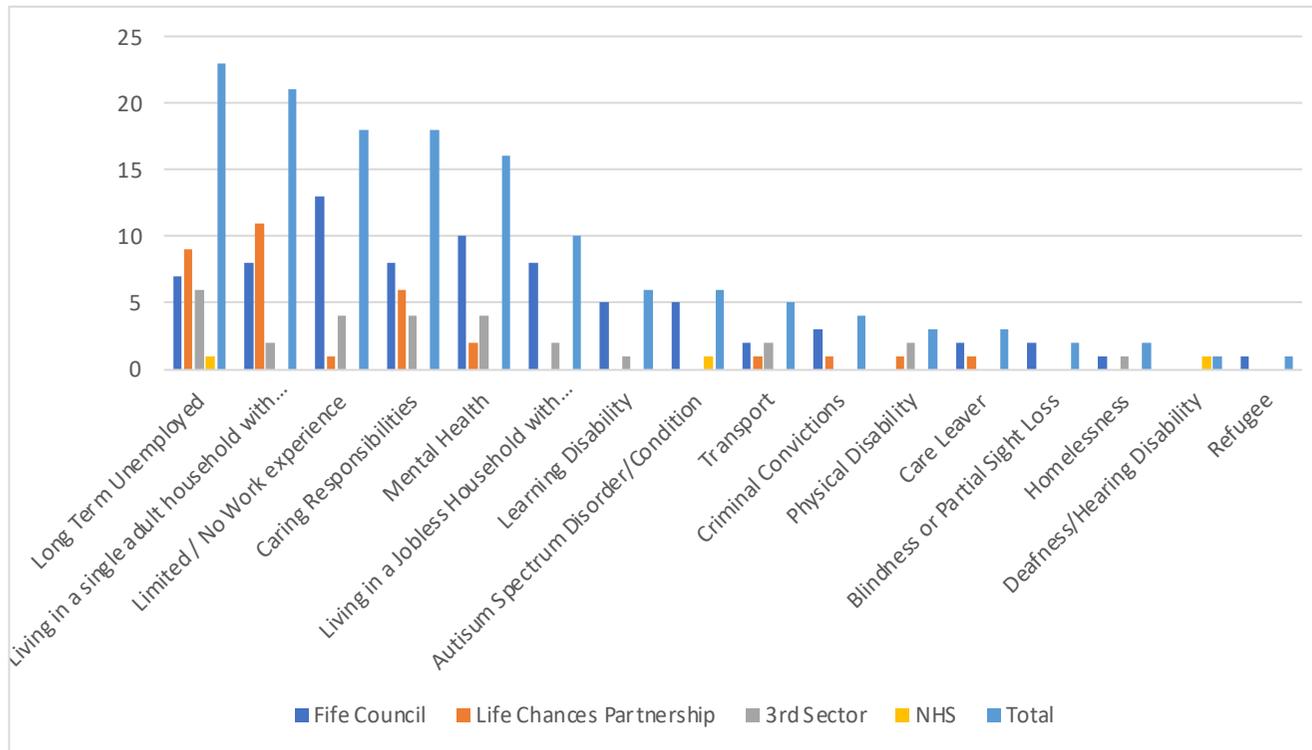
Life Chances is a progressive approach to recruitment that was developed and piloted by Fife Council in 2023/24, designed to take structural steps to reduce socio-economic disadvantage by using the power of public resources and levers within the council's sphere of influence. Life Chances has been designed with the client at the heart of the model. It involves linking clients on Fife's employability pathway and providing them with paid placements in the public and third sectors within supportive environments that enable them to flourish.

During 2024/25, Life Chances was rolled out across Fife with a target of filling 60 Life Chances placements. This was surpassed with 77 clients gaining placements and included 49 placements with council services, 2 in NHS Fife and 13 in the third sector. In addition, there were 13 Life Chances Partnerships. These partnerships are a collaboration with Fife Gingerbread to support lone parents. Nine placements were in Fife Council's Education Services, which offered opportunities for Pupil Support Assistants. Four were provided by Fife Sports and Leisure Trust which involved roles as receptionists (see the Case Study on page 12). These partnerships have supported lone parents to access new opportunities, gain confidence and secure sustained employment in Fife Council, have their placements extended or access higher / further education.

In terms of the outcomes achieved for individuals following their placement in 2024/25, 23 found employment in Fife Council; 18 had their placement extended; 2 moved into higher or further education; and 1 began volunteering. In addition to keeping track of these early outcomes post-placement, the Life Chances team in Employability will also track outcomes 52 weeks following the placement. Data has not been obtained for this yet, but the tracking aims to ensure people are reaching positive outcomes 12-months after their placement ends.

Participants are asked to report the barriers they have experienced to finding employment. The table below shows the barriers reported by participants by their placement provider. Living in a single adult household with dependent children is reported by 21 clients as being a barrier. This is the second highest barrier after long-term unemployed. Many barriers reported align with the child poverty priority groups, including disability and other health conditions, as well as refugee status, however, as noted, it is not possible to tell what proportion of clients are parents. Obtaining knowledge from clients about the barriers they face helps ensure placements are flexible to their needs and go at the pace that's right for them.

Table 1. Reported barriers experienced by Life Chances participants (2024/25)



During 2024/25, Fife Council secured the commitment to provide guaranteed jobs for successful participants and make Life Chances a mainstream alternative to traditional recruitment, helping the council address recruitment challenges and generate positive outcomes for people on the employability pathway. The target for 2025/26 is 160 Life Chances placements, a significant increase that will require more organisations and services coming forward with opportunities. Next steps also involve exploring how in-work progression and skills and qualifications can be embedded in the model to ensure people on Life Chances can access more opportunities and higher paid work.

Case Study

JLF is a 28-year-old single parent. They have a disability that impacts their mental health and have transport issues. JLF was supported by a Life Chances Partnership between Fife Council, Fife Gingerbread and Fife Sports & Leisure Trust to gain a paid placement with the Trust for 16 hours per week as a receptionist.

Prior to commencing the Life Chances placement, Fife Gingerbread made a referral to Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF) for a benefit check and better off in work calculation. JLF has received supported from Fife Gingerbread throughout their placement, alongside support from a Fife Council Employability Key Worker.

JLF has worked on building confidence during the placement in a slower paced environment that suits their learning needs. Discussions with the Key Worker have focused on additional opportunities near their home, as well as setting financial goals and learning how to drive.

Direct quotes from services and participants help illustrate the impact the project has had on organisations and for the individuals who have been on Life Chances placements and have experienced the benefits first-hand.

Fife Council Education Service and Fife Gingerbread

“Working in partnership with Fife Gingerbread to support our overarching goal of tackling child poverty, Life Chances has provided eight lone parents with opportunities to gain confidence, improve their self-esteem and re-enter the workplace as Pupil Support Assistants in Schools.”

Life Chances Participant

“I felt lost and unsure of how to get myself out of the hole I had gotten myself into. I had forgotten who I was and needed a push in the right direction. When my support worker told me about this opportunity, I felt this was a good chance to get myself back into the world. Being on the placement has brought me stability, I’ve made new friends, and I feel like I’ve found myself again. I am enjoying setting myself goals to work towards.”

Part B - Income Maximisation

Fife has embedded early income maximisation activity across a wide range of community and statutory based services. In recognition of the increasing demand on services, and crossover of service users between services, work to upskill frontline staff and volunteers to give advice and support in income maximisation is increasing access to help at the earliest opportunity.

A Fife Advice framework has been developed with Citizen's Advice and Rights Fife (CARF). This is increasing the confidence of staff and volunteers to give first level advice, with benefit checks becoming embedded in services that traditionally haven't offered this kind of activity. In 2024-25, over 500 staff and volunteers were trained in first level advice giving.

Referral pathways have been developed to provide clarity for organisations supporting individuals with more complex difficulties. This embedding of advice giving into frontline delivery, is key to increasing access to early help. Having as few points to signpost and refer onto as possible helps to provide wrap around support.

Evidence is showing that targeted advice at touch points like foodbanks, schools and maternity services is also impactful. In Fife there has been a drop in the number of food parcels issued by Trussell Trust in 2024/25 with the two areas seeing the highest reduction being the areas where an advice worker is available to access at the food bank.

Total Trussell Trust Food Parcels Distributed in Financial Year

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Fife	12,451	14,689	18,606	16,332	14,866	18,108	17,119	15,683
Scotland	173,278	217,051	238,583	224,620	199,741	262,861	264,778	239,503

Cash First

Fife was awarded £151 k from the Scottish Government to:

- Improve urgent access to cash in a crisis
- Reduce the need for foodbanks, improving dignity and choice
- Better integration of support
- Develop appropriate and sustainable pathways of support

Two tests of change were delivered in Kirkcaldy and South West Fife in 2024/25 with another 4 planned. A Cash First Charter is being developed by the Poverty Alliance with those with lived experience of poverty in Fife. This will be used to support food insecurity work going forward and the work to provide early holistic support and reduce the offering of one-off transactional support.

Initial feedback from participants has been positive, with participants reporting improved confidence and mental health and that they are better able to seek advice in the future if required. Additional benefits from the South & West Fife project have included peer support and the formation of friendships and improved social connectedness.

Benefit Take Up Campaigns

There has been a rolling programme of benefit take up campaigns run throughout the year. A campaign to increase awareness of help with childcare costs saw 360 new families accessing and using Tax Free Childcare Accounts, saving each 20% of their total childcare costs. Fife also delivered a benefit take up campaign covering health related benefits. This achieved an increase of 540 new claims for Child Disability Payment worth at least £805,896 and nearly 7 million in financial lifetime gain has been achieved from the 3 pension credit campaigns run since 2023.

Enhanced Statutory Provision

Food Poverty

The Scottish Government funds direct payments to families in receipt of free school meals during the school holidays, at a rate of £2.40 per child per day. Fife Council extends holiday hunger provision through 'Cafe Inc' - providing families with access to free meals throughout the school holiday period.

In 2024/25, 171,541 meals were served. And, from 1 April, The Financial Wellbeing and Revenues team has been ensuring access to free school meals is awarded automatically to those entitled including, for example those in receipt of clothing grants.

This is an extra step to ensure families can access the support they are entitled to, and entitlement checks will be carried out throughout the year to ensure any change in people's circumstances can be picked up as early as possible.

School Clothing Grants

Changes to Fife Council policy and eligibility criteria has ensured no parent loses their clothing grant when moving from Tax Credits - as part of the UK Government's move to migrate legacy benefits - over to Universal Credit.

Universal Credit has a much higher threshold for school clothing grant than the Tax Credit system, potentially leaving up to 300 families ineligible when they move system.

Fife Council has increased this threshold protecting those most at risk.

Debt Write off

Fife wrote off £39,864.31 of council tax debt through the council tax allowance policy and £45,837 in school meal debt in 24/25.

Housing Support

A wide range of work is under way in Fife to improve access to affordable, healthy and sustainable accommodation and to address fuel poverty. This includes work to eliminate the need for children to be living in temporary accommodation, promoting rapid rehousing and supporting families presenting as homeless to transition from temporary accommodation into settled permanent homes.

Fife is looking at providing furnished tenancies, given the challenges around people being able to afford to carpet and furnish their homes (especially after relationship breakdowns). Recognising the particular challenges of rural poverty, we are exploring opportunities for affordable housing for key workers and their families in rural parts of Fife.

In 2024/25 the average number of days a homeless household spent in temporary accommodation reduced from 139 to 134. The number of children in temporary accommodation also reduced from 387 to 342.

Poverty Priority Groups	Advice Work	Change
Disabled household members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fife benefit Checker used by 3,109 people where a disabled adult resided in the household. ● 740 disabled children featured within the benefit checks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % increase on the volume of adults featuring within the benefits check compared to previous financial year ● 60% increase in the volume of disabled children featuring within the benefit checks compared to the previous financial year. ● An increase of 540 new claims for Child Disability Payment worth at least £805,896.
Households with single parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Benefit take up campaign covering health related benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 1,342 Lone Parents received advice and assistance from CARF
Minority ethnic families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 183 Minority Ethnic families ● 600+ preferred not to disclose ethnic background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support and advice accessed by minority ethnic groups
With a child aged under one, or a mother aged under 25.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A dedicated maternity services project in Fife assists pregnant mothers and those with children under 3, mainly with income maximisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2024/2025 the project assisted a total of 333 clients. ● Of these, 186 households secured a combined client financial gain of £543,311.74 ● 93 lone parent families accessing this project received advice on Child Maintenance issues. · ● 173 families where the mother is under 25 years of age were assisted by CARF.

Cost of Living Programmes

The Council has delivered Cost-of-Living support programmes to help individuals and families manage through the cost-of-living crisis and as part of Fife's recovery from pandemic. We have developed a wide range of targeted support to help individuals and families navigate the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. For example, in 2024/25, our successful Café Inc programme provided over 171,000 meals during school holidays, and more than 11,500 families received help with the cost of school clothing.



Fuel Poverty

Through 2024/25, Fife Council worked closely with the UK Fuel Bank and Cosy Kingdom (third sector) to deliver crisis and early intervention support.

40% of those supported with fuel bank vouchers were families (and over 80% of those families were single parent households).

Significant delivery areas have been:

- Financial crises support through the provision of Fuel Bank vouchers
- Support given to those repaying fuel debt to manage current consumption
- Home energy advice delivered in residents' homes or by telephone
- Service and agency workers capacity built to provide clients with first level energy advice. Most have also been given Benefit Checker training and offer income maximisation support alongside energy advice.
- Energy saving measures installed in homes through Cosy Kingdom's 'Handy Service'
- Low-income owner occupiers supported with boiler repair or replacement
- 2,742 crisis Fuel Bank vouchers were awarded to 1109 households

An assessment of the Social Return on Investment for the Handy Service and Energy Advice provision calculated that for every £1 of investment the benefits to the customer were £34.

Survey findings and feedback indicates impact:

'You have made me and my little girls home so much cosier and removed so much extra stress from my life'

Advice and support

23,613 clients

supported by Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF)

Financial gain - £9.4m



235 families

supported by CARF Community Advice Workers

Financial gain - £247,000

186 clients supported by Maternity Services Advice Worker

Financial gain - £543,211

Campaigns

Almost £7m

in financial gain from

3 Pension Credit campaigns

£1.9

in financial gain

from Carer support benefit campaign



Home

£1.66m on school clothing

for 11,562 children



597 households supported

by Handy Service from Cosy Kingdom help

Fuel

2,742 fuel top ups

awarded

totalling **£139,560** of support from Fuel Bank



89 Warm Places

616 temporary accommodation

top ups totalling **£53,141**

474 damp and mould awards made to **427 households**

434 frontline workers trained to give energy advice.

38 households benefited from Boiler Repair Scheme, with a spend of **£50,082**.

Money

8,001 completed benefit checks

The Our Fife/Get Help website had **32,179 views**



£39,864.31

of Council Tax Allowance debt written off

£2.34m awarded through Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Awards

29,948 awards averaging **£78.00**

Food

171,541 meals

were provided in the school holidays by Cafe Inc



Auto enrolment to free school meals serving around **11,000 children**

Case Study - Maternity Services Advice Pathway

Young person, 19 years old, was referred to the service for Income Maximisation following her 20 weeks scan where twins had been identified. Client was concerned about the financial implication of having twins and although living with parents, was concerned about how they were going to manage as she would be expected to also contribute to the household budget going forward.

The adviser explained that the client could apply for The Best Start Pregnancy and Baby Payment at 24 weeks gestation and since this was a multiple birth, she would receive £ £754.65 for the first child, £377.35 for the second child and £377.35 multiple birth supplement (total being £1509.35) one off payment.

The adviser signposted the client to support groups of breastfeeding and young parent clubs in her local community as well as TAMBA (Twin and Multiple Births Association).

Client Financial Gains:

- Best start Pregnancy and Baby Payment: £1509.35 One off Payment
- Best Start Foods: £ 1017.60 for the first year
- Child Benefit: £ £1405.35 for the first year
- Scottish Child Payment: £2776.80 for the first year
- Universal Credit child Element added to claim: £3455.04 (for the first 6 months)
- **Total: £10,164.14**

Case Study - Lone Parent

Client was referred through Barnardo's Stronger Families (Fife - Stronger Families Service | Barnardo's) project to support them with Income Maximisation.

Family consists of single parent and 2 children. Parent also has regular access to another child, usually a few nights per week. Parent has never been in full control of their own money due to previous domestic and financial abuse therefore was unsure of how to manage this well or pay priority bills.

Once the Universal Credit issues were resolved, the parent's income increased by £575.84 per month.

Client Financial Gains:

- Child Benefit: £2,212.60
- Scottish Child Payment: £2,776.80
- School Meals & Clothing grant: £ 744
- Best Start Foods: £ 1,102.40
- Best Start grant: £ 319.80
- Universal Credit Increase: £ 7,726.08
- Crisis Grant: £ 230
- **Total: £15,111.68**

Case Study - Disabled Young Person

Client was referred through a Mental Health and Wellbeing Service project to support them with maximising their income. Client is single, age 16 and estranged from parents. They were homeless and struggling with their mental health when first seen.

At that time the client was only receiving £89 UC per month.

New entitlement on Universal Credit is £311.68 per month.

The client was supported with opening their own basic bank account to ensure full financial control of their own money.

Client Financial Gains:

- Universal Credit Increase: £2,672.16
- Crisis Grant: £120
- Food Bank voucher: £24.48
- **Total: £2,816.64**

Case Study – Fife Equalities Centre

Client received support from the Over 60 project within Fife Equalities Centre. After meeting client, it became apparent that client was also in need of some income maximisation regarding benefits. There were some health issues that were adding to the financial pressures, as the client could not work for a long period of time. This added to the overall stress for the family.

Outcome

Estimated Financial Gain for Client following Intervention:

- Adult Disability Payment = £68 per week
- Carers Allowance = £76 per week
- Council Tax Reduction = £12 per week
- Total weekly financial gain = £156
- **Total yearly financial gain = £8,112**

Smoking Cessation

Smoking remains a major public health issue in Scotland and is recognised as one of the most preventable causes of ill health and premature death in Scotland. Smoking is strongly linked to a variety of comorbidities; these can include cardiovascular diseases, respiratory illnesses like COPD and asthma, and cancers. Additionally, smoking can exacerbate existing conditions and increase the risk of adverse outcomes from other illnesses. Associated risks fall substantially when someone stops smoking, even if they have been long-term smokers.

In 2018, smoking rates among adolescents were higher in Fife than the national average, with 2% of 13-year-olds and 8% of 15-year-olds smoking.

In 2024, women in Fife reported smoking tobacco in 10.2% of pregnancies with a known smoking status; this is higher than the rate seen for Scotland at 8.2%.

Overall, in the most deprived areas of Scotland, 35% of people are smokers, while in the least deprived areas, 10% are smokers. Children born in the most deprived areas are significantly more likely to grow up around people who smoke and to go on to start smoking themselves, so smoking cessation initiatives are important in breaking cycles of deprivation and health inequality.

Quit Your Way services are available Fife wide, and Community Pharmacies are key partners in widening access to the Quit Your Way service. Tobacco education programmes are provided to S1 & primary 5/6/7 school children.

Case Study – Smoking Cessation

Participant and husband are both unemployed and receiving UC, Child Benefit, PIP, Kinship for their grandchild and the Scottish Child Payment. It was identified that the participant was in rent arrears and a successful DHP application was made and backdated.

Participant engaged with Kingdom Community Bank (Credit Union) with regards to budgeting. Participant was in shock with how much they spent on Cigarettes. Participant decided to attend the Smoking Cessation at the Pharmacy and has now been stopped for 5 weeks. And although her husband has not stopped, he has cut down and they are saving £25 a day. Participant is attending smoking Cessation in the Community Centre for support on a weekly basis. Participant has fed back how this extra money from the Safe Project has allowed her to buy a variety of fresh fruit, veg and meats, which she would not have considered before.

Community Support

Community support plays a vital role in building community resilience, helping communities and individuals to adapt to, and recover from challenging circumstances.

Strong social networks, and access to resources are key components. The development of community responses to the provision of warm places in Fife are helping to do this.

Working with communities to create welcoming places that provide wrap around advice and support.

Kincardine Soup and a Roll

Grow West Fife

Bricks at Six - provided by BRAG (Benarty Regeneration Action Group)

Bricks at Six is a weekly session where young people can attend to enjoy building Lego in a friendly and welcoming environment. Sessions support family activity and bonding, alongside socialisation opportunities between peers and families. It operates at 6pm, allowing families to attend and take advantage of free food and drink at the session. It is provided by BRAG (Benarty Regeneration Action Group). There are a number of other support services offered by BRAG and the organisation is well connected to Fife Council and other supports, being a member of the Poverty Action Group within the area. Staff at BRAG ensure that families are aware and connected with support services including their pantry, benefit checks, referrals to CARF and have the opportunity to engage with a number of employability programmes. These sessions have been well attended and embraced by the local community, which sits within the top 10% of SIMD. STEM opportunities to further develop learning are being explored, which includes access to virtual reality equipment and robotics.



Home-Start Levenmouth

Home-Start Levenmouth provide support and positive experiences and connections for families with children under 8 years old. They have been essential to supporting the recent improvements to local amenities through the development of their Letham Glen Hub.

They have been able to offer a warm welcome and activities for 957 visitors across Winter 2024/25 in the area. The team provide a variety of groups, learning, preventative support and activities across the week including valuable weekend family learning sessions along with lunch and refreshments.

“Feels like a home from home, all staff are so nice and make everyone feel welcome. My son loves visiting and doing the different crafts they always have prepared and help him with. He loves the toys and enjoys playing away independently which he doesn't do most places”

Priorities for Part B 2025/26

Learning from the large-scale cost of living support programmes delivered over the last 3 years, has influenced the setting of several priorities to guide the move from a temporary high level of crisis support to a sustainable mainstream provision. These are to:

- Maximise household income through benefits and financial advice
- Help people to better manage including initiatives around energy efficiency
- Bring people together, reduce isolation, improve connectedness and provide a basis for support and advice
- Enable voluntary and community initiatives to develop and maintain local support
- Enable key and front-line workers to work effectively together

Part C - Supporting the next generation to thrive

Education, health and children's services play a vital role in shaping a thriving future for the next generation by creating inclusive, nurturing environments where every child feels seen, supported, and inspired. Through early intervention, targeted support, and collaborative working across agencies, our services can break cycles of disadvantage and champion equity. By embedding wellbeing, creativity, and voice at the heart of learning, and linking families to practical help—from food to emotional support—we are laying foundations for confidence, resilience, and lifelong opportunity.

Improving our Whole System Approach

Whole Family Wellbeing

The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is helping Fife provide holistic support to children and families at an earlier stage, and to break cycles of deprivation. It has been particularly helpful to have investment over a number of years, rather than year on year.

In Fife, progress to transform and redesign services is captured in annual reports to Scottish Government on Whole Family Wellbeing and in the Children's Services Plan Annual report.

WFW funding has supported No Wrong Door developments, enabling the local model to be informed by learning nationally and the development of infrastructure - a new community information database - to support better coordination of resource at a local level.

A number of tests of change have informed service redesign within the Children & Families Social Work Service. Early Help and Support Teams will soon be in place across Fife's seven localities. Comprising Social Work and Family support staff, the teams will offer earlier advice and help for children whose wellbeing is impacted by a range of adversities. This will be a whole family approach, offering a family decision making approach, group work, one to one support and working collaboratively at a local and school level with key partners.

Supporting the development of workforce, leadership and culture, Practice Development Sessions have been held across all seven localities. Simplifying local structures to support a more joined up/ flexible and collaborative approach is a key next step.

Whole Family Wellbeing - High Five

Five Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings successfully completed a Quality Improvement (QI) programme aimed at enhancing early language and communication, particularly for children affected by poverty. Ten children were identified for targeted support, with staff testing and measuring the impact of specific strategies.

Seventeen staff members embedded the Communication High 5 approach into daily routines, enriching language interactions for all children. This led to notable gains in staff confidence:

- Face-to-face strategies: 69.3% to 100%
- Thinking time: 53.9% to 100%
- Turning questions into comments: 46.2% to 62.5%
- Using WOW words: 61.6% to 100%
- Supporting language needs: 54% to 75%, with 25% confident with support

The programme has enhanced communication-rich environments and empowered staff to better support children's language development. It highlights the value of early intervention in addressing the effects of poverty on language and communication. Using targeted support, collaborative leadership, and evidence-based strategies like Communication High 5, participating Early Learning and Childcare settings have made measurable progress in improving outcomes for children at risk of language delay. This work is a vital step toward breaking the cycle of poverty by promoting early language equity—ensuring all children, regardless of background, have the communication foundations needed to reach their full potential.

Parent Feedback

“We have noticed a big difference in his speech since starting. We’ve also noticed that some of the negative behaviour he had previously shown has lessened because he is able to express himself more and he isn’t getting as frustrated when he is trying to tell you something.”

Let's Connect

Reduced access to quality play and interaction in early childhood can significantly affect a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Let's Connect (LC) addresses this by equipping early years practitioners and caregivers to embed responsive, high-quality play into daily routines through modelling and coaching. LC recognises play as essential to early development, secure attachment, and communication. The programme supports Scotland's ambition to close the poverty-related attainment gap, particularly for children under three, and aligns with national priorities on early intervention, inclusion, and children's rights. By empowering families and professionals, LC promotes a more equitable start for all children.

The Let's Connect (LC) team is now working with 66% of 2-year-old provisions in Fife, marking strong progress in embedding the approach across early years settings. Bespoke training has also been delivered to third-sector partners, including The Cottage and Gingerbread. Engagement with Health Visiting teams is ongoing, with plans to expand LC into broader family support services. A trained Early Years Officer, funded through additional support, continues to aid implementation.

Strategic oversight is provided by the LC development team, with quality assurance in place. Practitioner and leadership networks support sustainability and shared learning across settings.

Whole Family Wellbeing - Sleep Project

Children and young people with disabilities and complex health needs are disproportionately affected by sleep difficulties, impacting their well-being and that of their families. In Fife, around 6,500 children are affected by disability, with an estimated 80% experiencing sleep issues.

Sleep deprivation reduces family resilience, strains relationships, and affects mental health and financial stability. For children, it impairs learning, concentration, behaviour, and overall health.

Sleep difficulties are a significant barrier to inclusion and achieving positive outcomes, making early support essential for improving quality of life for both children and their families.

Practitioners report that sleep training has significantly influenced their work with children, young people, and families. Sleep is now routinely discussed in assessments, planning, and educational sessions, with resources shared to promote awareness. Tools like sleep diaries are used to co-create achievable plans with families. Support is delivered across universal to specialist levels, including tailored advice and structured sessions. Training has boosted practitioner confidence to address sleep issues proactively and explain sleep science clearly. Sleep support is embedded in daily practice, and ongoing reflection and team collaboration are helping sustain impact and drive new initiatives across services

"My teenager completed sleep routine, she is now calmer and she has gone twice to school as she is able to get up in the morning. I am very pleased" – Mother

"The mood and energy level of my child always improves after a good night sleep. They eat better and are more engaged in what they were doing" Parent

"Families implementing advice to improve sleep which is resulting in improved morning routines and school attendance" – Worker

Keeping the promise

The Promise is a key driver of change for care experienced young people, placing responsibility on practitioners across all disciplines to support care experienced young people to achieve good outcomes. This relates to attainment within education, having their health needs met, and access to local intensive support to enable them to remain within their wider families (Kinship Care), in the places they know, with those they love.

Over the last 6 years, the profile of care in Fife has significantly changed, in alignment with Belonging to Fife (B2F) and the national drivers, with most young people who need alternative care now being placed within kinship arrangements. This very much sets the tone and culture for supporting children and young people within their own family and community wherever safe to do so, with the right supports, to ensure they feel loved and cared for.

Some of the local successes of those who are currently cared for in Fife include:

- the National House Project successfully supported all 5 cohorts of care leavers to manage their own homes, with no experience of failed tenancy.
- Employability and Education services have embedded enhanced supports across their services and give priority to care-experienced young people, recognising their additional vulnerabilities without treating them differently from their peers.
- The school nursing service have developed a self-referral tool for young people aged 12- 19 through a QR code.

Voice of the Child

We can only keep The Promise in Fife if we continue to listen to those with lived experience. Our online feedback tools were evaluated in 2024. The use of these was low in comparison to the overall looked after community. Feedback from young people highlighted a preference to speak to key adults around them, including teachers, social workers and advocacy workers who they felt could share their views instead of using an online system. It was identified that there is a good range of options available to young people to share their views and therefore our online feedback tools were not renewed when their contract expired. Work is underway through the Children's Rights Participation and Engagement Subgroup to map all existing channels of participation to hear the voices of young people. =

The Fife Children's Rights Charter was co-produced with children and young people in Fife and launched in December 2024. A new service is also being developed within the Children and Families service, with the aim of increasing young people's participation in decision making processes.

Other forms of support

Childcare

Fife Council's Childcare Services Team is contributing to a Scottish Government funded Early Adopter Community (EAC) project. The EAC project is now in year 2 – the delivery phase.

Three Fife-based Out of School Clubs—Methilhill Community Children's Initiative (MCCI), Mountfleurie, and Kennoway—have expanded inclusive childcare options. MCCI, a registered charity, now offers 32 weekly 'Pay What You Can' sessions at its Outdoor Adventurer After School Club and has transitioned to Care Inspectorate registration, enabling access to childcare subsidies. Children receive food and outdoor play, with wraparound support including emotional care, free baked goods and donations, Café Inc holiday meals, benefit checks, and a Community Café.

Mountfleurie Out of School Club, launched during this phase, runs Breakfast, After School, and Holiday Clubs, serving nearby schools with walking taxi transport and child-led nutritious meals. The club offers fee-paying and funded spaces, with families supported via benefit checks and signposting to job clubs, budgeting, and more.

Kennoway Out of School Club also provides funded places and mirrors Mountfleurie's holistic family support model.

Levenmouth EAC has collaborated with support agencies and internal colleagues as referral partners to allocate subsidised or fully funded after-school places. These partners already work closely with vulnerable families, including those affected by child poverty, and are well-placed to identify those meeting our eligibility criteria. This targeted approach ensures that existing support networks help direct families most in need to the available provision, strengthening access to childcare and enhancing wraparound support.

Increase in breastfeeding levels in Fife

There is evidence of a variety of benefits of breastfeeding to the health of both mother and baby so encouragement of breastfeeding has been a focus for investment in Scotland in recent years.

As a result, the rate of any breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks in Fife has increased from 33.7% in 2012 to 44.6% in 2024.

However, there continues to be a significant drop from the number of women who start breastfeeding to those who remain breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks, with the highest rates of drop off being seen in the most deprived areas. It is vital that women can access timely, skilled support and advice to continue to improve this situation in Fife and move towards a local culture where breastfeeding is normalised and widely supported.

NHS Fife has been “Baby Friendly” since 2014. Available services include access to breastfeeding support and advice from midwives, health visitors (or family nurses), the breastfeeding support team or infant feeding advisors. Fife has a dedicated team of experienced breastfeeding support workers who can provide early personalised support to those wishing to breastfeed. A recent training programme has also enabled 24 mums to complete training in breastfeeding peer support to further strengthen the role of volunteers in running breastfeeding groups across the area.

Having stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2024 has also seen the return of antenatal parent education infant feeding

sessions in Fife. These sessions provide breastfeeding advice alongside information on when to offer solids and signs of readiness, how to access best start foods and safe formula feeding.

Priorities for 2025-26 include:

- Supporting targeted Community-Based initiatives with the aim of reducing 6–8 week breastfeeding drop off rates, focusing on SIMD 1 and 2.
- Further supporting antenatal colostrum harvesting pilot to enhance early breastfeeding initiation.
- Ongoing development of breast milk bank provision to ensure equitable access to donor milk where clinically indicated.
- Community-based support groups offering baby massage, feeding support, and play opportunities for siblings.

Childsmile - Supporting early oral health

Children from more deprived areas experience higher levels of tooth decay compared to those from less deprived areas. While there has been improvement in overall dental health since the early 2000s, inequalities persist, with the gap between the most and least deprived widening in some cases.

64.7% of P1 children in Fife had no obvious sign of dental decay compared to the national average of 73% - indicating that 35.3% children had decay experience.

The Childsmile Toothbrushing Programme helps children build lifelong oral hygiene habits. **In Fife, 93% of nurseries and 31% of P1/P2 classes support daily toothbrushing.** Children receive dental packs - including a toothbrush, fluoride toothpaste, and oral health messages - on at least six occasions by age five. Health visitors also provide free-flow feeder cups in infancy.

The Community and Practice Programme addresses oral health inequalities by embedding Dental Health Support Workers in disadvantaged areas. These workers offer tailored support through home visits and community initiatives, helping families overcome barriers to good oral health and access dental services.

The Fluoride Varnish Programme targets schools with higher levels of disadvantage. **Currently, 31% of schools and all five ASN schools participate.** This will reduce to 19% in 2026/27, though ASN schools remain included. Schools exiting the programme will be encouraged to implement whole-school toothbrushing.

EMERGE (Post 16)

In collaboration with Fife College this is a course designed by Fife College and undertaken with the schools/college partnership which offers high school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have indicated that they are interested in careers within the health service, but who are facing attainment challenges, the opportunity to study an SVQ5 level qualification whilst undertaking simulated, hands-on experience and access to NHS environments. The pilot, with pupils from Levenmouth Academy and Viewforth High School.

Pupils have reported an increase in confidence, reduction in anxiety along with an increase in knowledge and awareness of careers within the health service and pathways to qualification.

Priorities for Part C 2025/26

As highlighted in the Introduction, work to Support the Next Generation to Thrive is supported by the Children's Services Plan. This addresses barrier to life outcomes arising from poverty and individual support needs, both of which require:

- **Improving initial assessment and early help and support.**
This is being addressed through ongoing development of the No Wrong Door model. A key priority is the redesign of Children and Families Social work to Early help and support teams and Enhanced teams which aim to deliver services that are accessible at the right time, build capacity and resilience in families, are co-produced, reduce the need for crisis intervention, are budget efficient and have a skilled and confident workforce with a “can do” approach.
- **Better understanding how specific individual circumstances** (including different types of additional support need) can adversely affect life outcomes. This is being addressed by the risk-based analysis of data being developed within the Children's Services Partnership. This understanding is also informing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for children and young people in Fife, which will be used in updating both the Fife Children's Services Plan (in 2026) and the Plan for Fife (in 2027).
- **More effective tracking and monitoring of the improvements seen for children and young people** receiving support by a range of partners. This is being addressed via development of a Whole System Framework for children's services partnership approach; this is a systems-based framework, being developed with the support of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

Priorities for 2025/26 Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis

Tackling Poverty work in Fife has, over the last three years following the COVID pandemic, had a focus on supporting low-income households impacted by the rises in the cost-of-living. There is significantly less funding available to support mitigating work from 25/26, but Fife is managing despite this, to focus on preventative measure especially around income maximisation.

The learning from the last three years delivering the cost-of-living programmes suggests that a more integrated neighbourhood-based approach to support helps people access assistance early and in ways that contribute to more positive outcomes. The updates in this report for 2024/25 are another step towards that, however, funding challenges and uncertainty, coupled with the need to support people from crisis towards stability, calls for a new model. Development work on that through No Wrong Door is underway.

Our overall planning and strategy around the national strategy on Child Poverty is fragmented across different partnership groups and a priority going forward will be to look to pulling this together.

Background Papers

- **Fife's previous annual Tackling Poverty report**
[Tackling Poverty report 2023-24](#)
- **Latest report on Fife's work to address the cost-of-living crisis**
[Cabinet Committee - 12 September 2024](#)
- **Help with the cost of living**
our.fife.scot/gethelp
- **Current Fife Children's Services Plan**
www.fife.gov.uk/FifeCSPlan2023
- **The most recent Annual Report on the work within the Children's Services Plan**
www.fife.gov.uk/CSReport25

If you would like any further information about this report or the work of the Fife Partnership please at our.fife.scot or email: fife.partnership@fife.gov.uk



Alternative Formats

Information about Fife Council can be made available in large print, braille, audio CD/tape and Gaelic on request by calling **03451 55 55 00**



British Sign Language

Text (SMS) 07781 480 185



via **contactSCOTLAND-BSL**
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People with a hearing loss:

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BT Text Direct:

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