



SCOTTISH BORDERS

LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2024/25

AND INCLUDING

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE 23/24 PLAN



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Foreword and Introduction

This report covers progress made in tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders in 2023/24 and sets out planned actions for 2024/25.

Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Community Planning Partners, and the partnership Child Poverty Group recognise the importance of tackling child poverty, and are determined to make a difference to children, young people, and families in the Scottish Borders.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out the Scottish Government's statement of intent to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030.

The Act requires that Local Authorities and Health Boards jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report and an Annual Progress Report. The reports should describe measures taken to contribute to meeting child poverty targets and proposed measures for the purpose of contributing to meeting the targets. It should also describe any income maximisation measures taken to provide pregnant women and families with children with information, advice and assistance about eligibility for financial support and assistance to apply for financial support.

This Plan sets out our strategic approach and commitment to undertake priority areas of work and key actions to alleviate child poverty. We will work with partners at both a national and local level as we take action throughout 2024/2025.

Child Poverty levels in the Scottish Borders continue to be challenging, for example:

- **19.7%** of our children still live in poverty (before housing costs)
- **23%** of our children still live in poverty (after housing costs)
- **8.2%** of our children in P7 to S6 state that they always or often go to bed feeling hungry.

However:

- The regional pay gap between the Scottish Borders and Scotland has greatly improved since 2021 for workers who live in the region. In 2023, the median gross weekly pay (residence based) was £673. This is £29 below the £702 for Scotland.
- There is an improving trend in the percentage of school leavers from quintile 1 (the most deprived areas) entering positive destinations after leaving school in the Scottish Borders. In 2018/19, 87.18% of quintile 1 school leavers entered a positive destination. This figure has steadily increased each year, reaching an impressive 97.65% in 2022/23.

We continue to align to Scottish Government's tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#). This sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty. It is a plan for all of Scotland and recognises the contribution that all parts of society must make to deliver the change needed for children and families. Another important national plan is [The Promise](#). Poverty is one of the five fundamentals contained in The Promise plan and organisations must be able to demonstrate how they are playing their part in mitigating the impacts of poverty. We continue to align with the Promise.

We recognise that partnerships are key to the achievement of the outcomes we plan for our children, young people and families in the Scottish Borders and thank the Child Poverty Group and the Community Planning Partnership for their contributions to the Plan.

Councillor Caroline Cochrane – Chair of Community Planning Partnership

David Robertson – Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council

Ralph Roberts – Chief Executive, NHS Borders

National Context

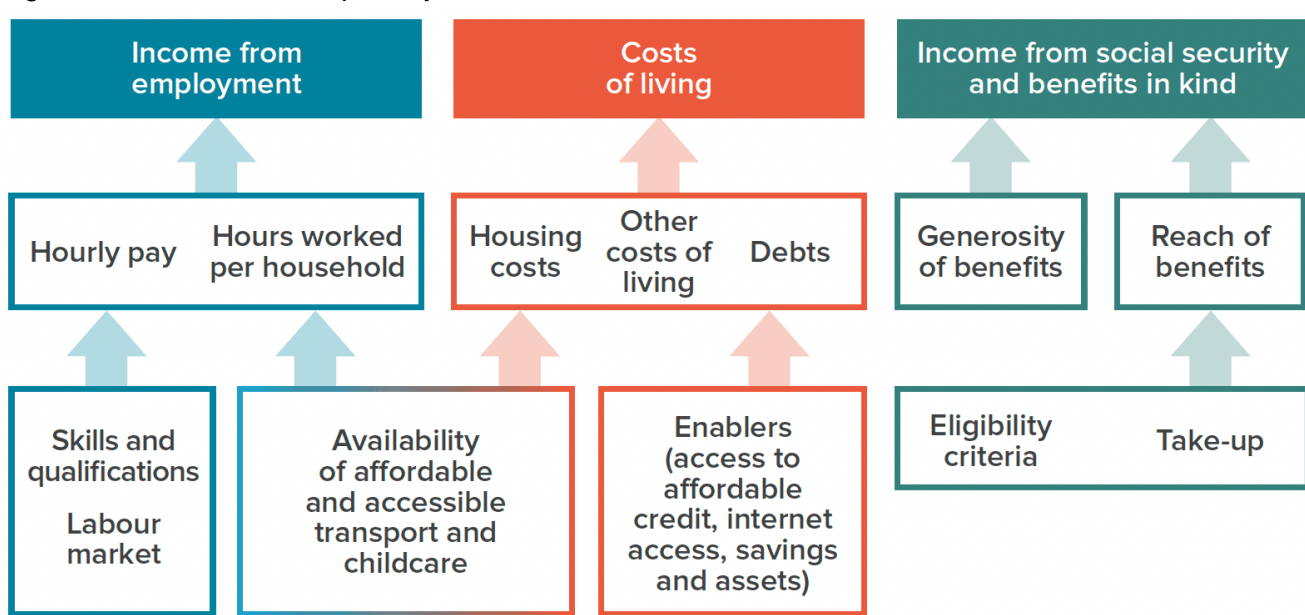
Best Start Bright Futures

Scottish Government's tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland's national mission to tackle child poverty.

Drivers of Child Poverty

The direct drivers of poverty fall into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. We remain focused on actions around these themes, as summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Drivers of child poverty



Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty (the Duty) places a legal responsibility on named public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay **due regard**' to) how they can **reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions**. Therefore, it is crucial that public bodies consider the impact that their decisions have on socio-economic disadvantage and the inequality of outcome that both adults and children may experience as a result.

Families at greatest risk of poverty

The national Child Poverty Delivery Plan continues to focus on supporting the six priority family types. Almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within these six priority family types. We remain focused on actions to help these families.

1. Lone Parents
2. Families where a member of the household is disabled.
3. Families with 3 or more children
4. Minority ethnic families
5. Families where the youngest child is under 1.
6. Mothers aged under 25.

Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Local Context

What do we know about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders

The headlines below show that we face significant challenges in the Scottish Borders.

- Our children in low-income families (before housing costs) has **risen** from **19.5%** in 2021/22 to **19.7%** in 2022/23.
- 23% of our children still live in poverty (after housing costs) in the Scottish Borders
- 13.8% of Scottish Borders Households receive Universal Credit.

[Appendix 1A](#) shows more detail, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups.

Households receiving Universal Credit

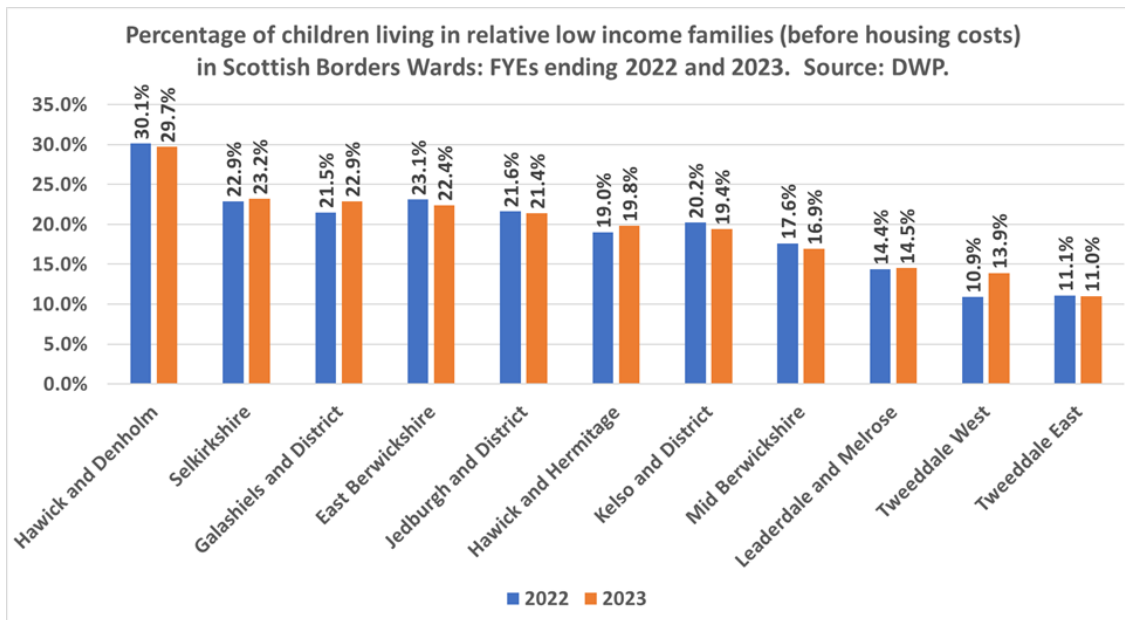
The table below shows the number and proportion of households in the Scottish Borders receiving Universal Credit (UC) compared to Scotland. Overall, the Scottish Borders has a lower proportion of households receiving UC (13.8%) compared to 17.1% for Scotland. In the Scottish Borders there were 3,233 households claiming the 'Child Entitlement' or 5.8% compared to 6.9% for Scotland.

Universal Credit Households November 2023 (provisional figures)	Scottish Borders No of Households	% of All Occupied Households	
		Scottish Borders	Scotland
All Occupied Households	55,858	100%	100%
All Universal Credit Households (UCH)	7,709	13.8%	17.1%
UCH with Children	3,427	6.1%	4.6%
UCH claiming Child Entitlement	3,233	5.8%	6.9%
UCH Lone Parent	2,390	4.3%	5.5%
UCH with 3+ Children	686	1.2%	1.4%
UCH with Child Under Age 1	263	0.5%	0.5%
UCH with Children - Child Disability Entitlement	348	0.6%	0.9%
UCH with Children - Adult limited capacity for work entitlement	566	1.0%	1.3%
UCH with children - adult carer entitlement	505	0.9%	1.2%
UCH with children with a UC entitlement due to disability or incapacity of a family member	1419	2.5%	1.1%

Source: DWP/NRS

Children in Low-income Families in Scottish Borders Electoral Wards

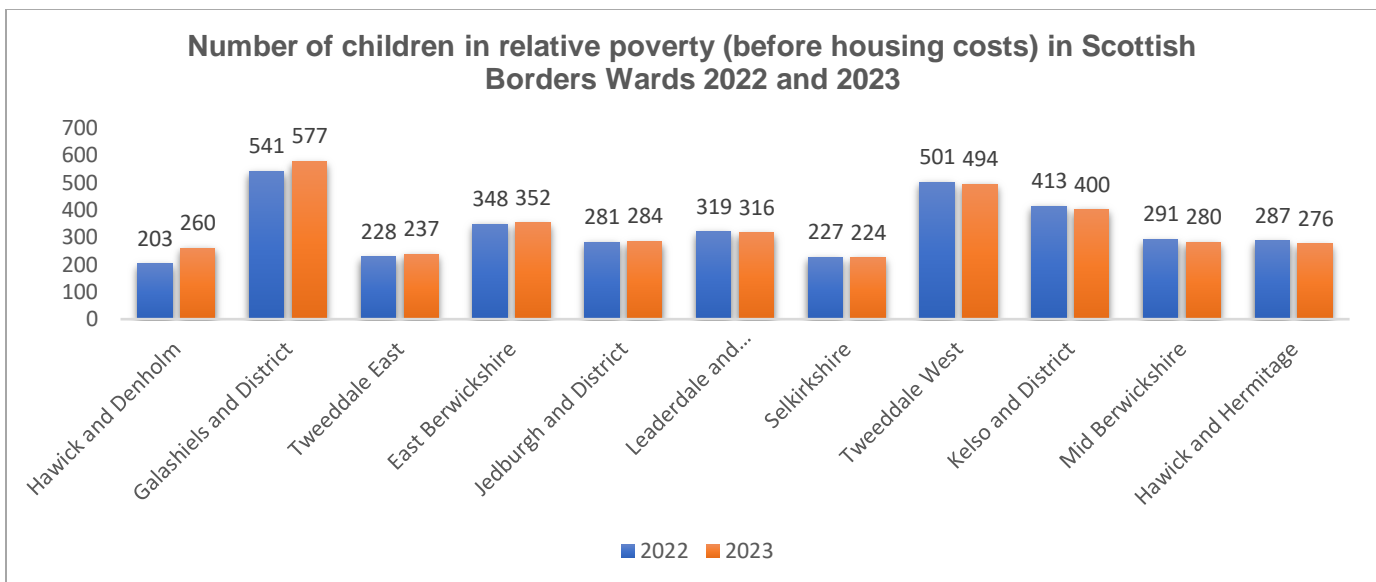
The chart below shows the Relative Child Poverty data at Scottish Borders Electoral Ward level for the financial years ending 2022 and 2023.



Child poverty is highest in the Hawick and Denholm Ward, which contains one of the region’s areas of highest Multiple Deprivation. Selkirkshire and Galashiels and District also contain deprived areas, indicating that child poverty is strongly linked with deprivation, as we would expect.

Numbers of children in relative low-income families, Electoral Wards

The following chart gives an indication of the numbers of children who are estimated to be living in relative low-income families in the financial years ending 2022 and 2023.



The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index

The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index (SB CPI) provides additional insight into Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders. The SB CPI was created to work alongside the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD

provides a way of looking at deprivation in an area, covering the whole population and does not specifically reflect child poverty.

The SB CPI is a summary of two components, which are:

- Children in Low Income Families (**CiLIF**) – Source is [DWP/HMRC](#)¹. Relative low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. The SB CPI uses the most recent available year’s data, currently there is a one-year lag e.g., for SB CPI 2022 uses the CiLIF data for 2021-22.
- Clothing Grant (**CLG**) - Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Clothing Grant of all pupils in area for school year.

The table below shows the results for the Scottish Borders for 2017 to 2023

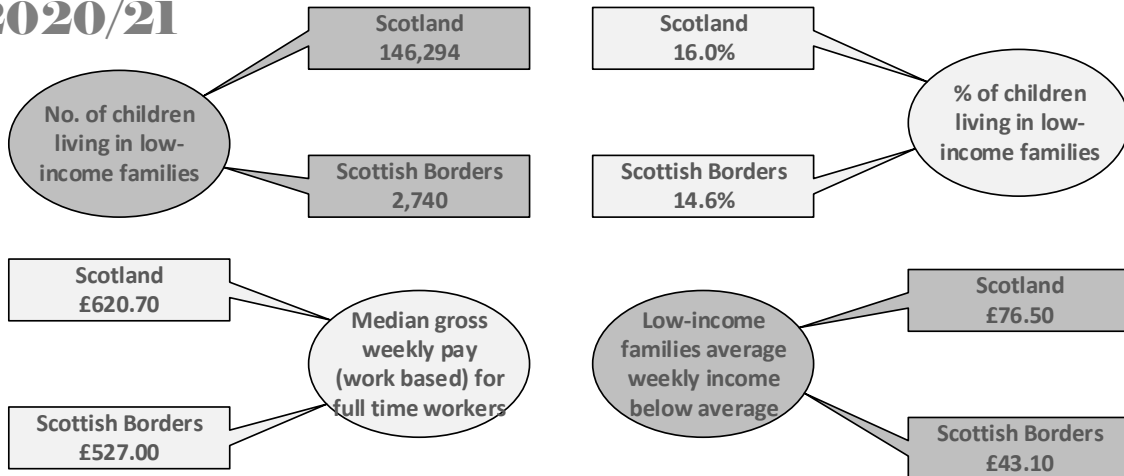
Child Poverty Index Component / Year	SB CPI 2017	SB CPI 2018	SB CPI 2019	SB CPI 2020	SB CPI 2021	SB CPI 2022	SB CPI 2023
Children in Low Income Families - CiLIF (DWP)*	19.0%	20.7%	20.5%	22.0%	18.0%	23.8%	23.9%
Clothing Grant - CLG (SBC)	14.6%	15.1%	15.2%	18.1%	18.0%	18.8%	16.7%

The impact of Covid19 and the cost of living crisis was seen in the number/proportion of data zones with Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty. In 2017, 66% of data zones had Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty. That increased to 71% in 2020 and then to 92% in 2022. However, for 2023 the proportion of data zones with Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty returned to pre-covid levels at 68%.

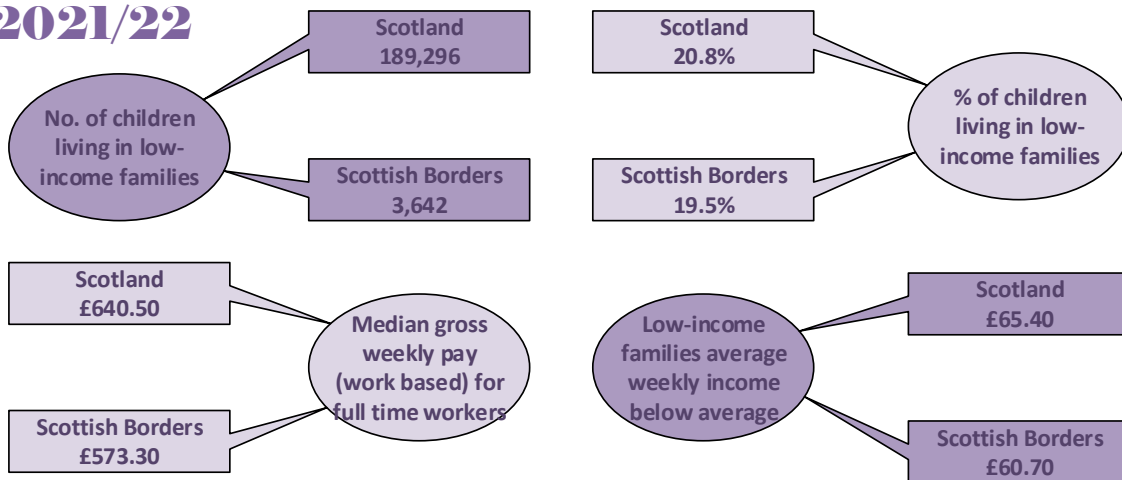
Understanding Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders

¹ *The calculation of proportion of Children in Low Income Families for the purpose of the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index differs to ‘official statistics’ due to the availability of the data from Stat-Xplore. The children in Stat-Xplore are defined as dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training. (Not just those aged under 16 – unable to group into age bands). The figure for all children is then expressed as proportion of those aged 0 to 15 as published by NRS. It is recognised that this calculation is imperfect, but practical for the purpose of the SB CPI.

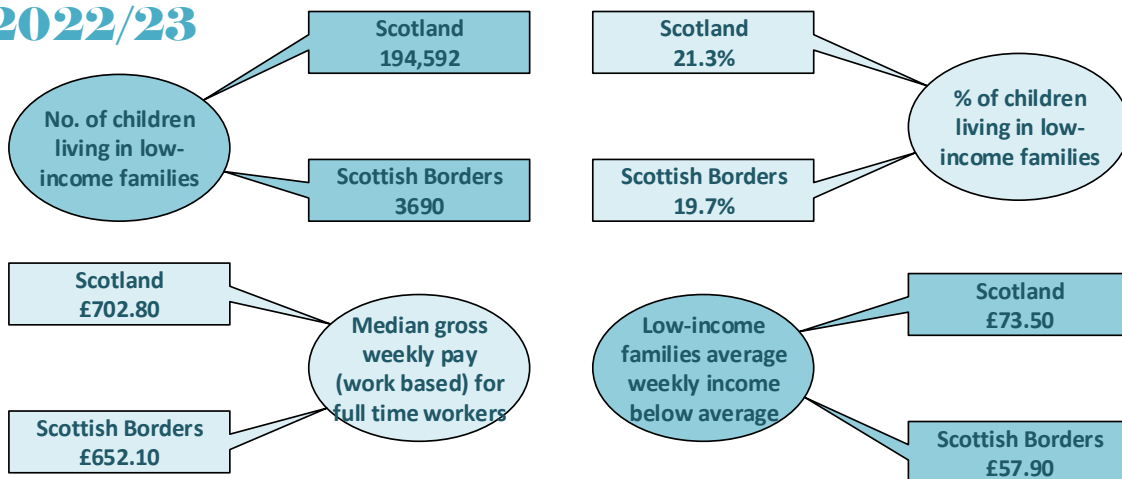
2020/21



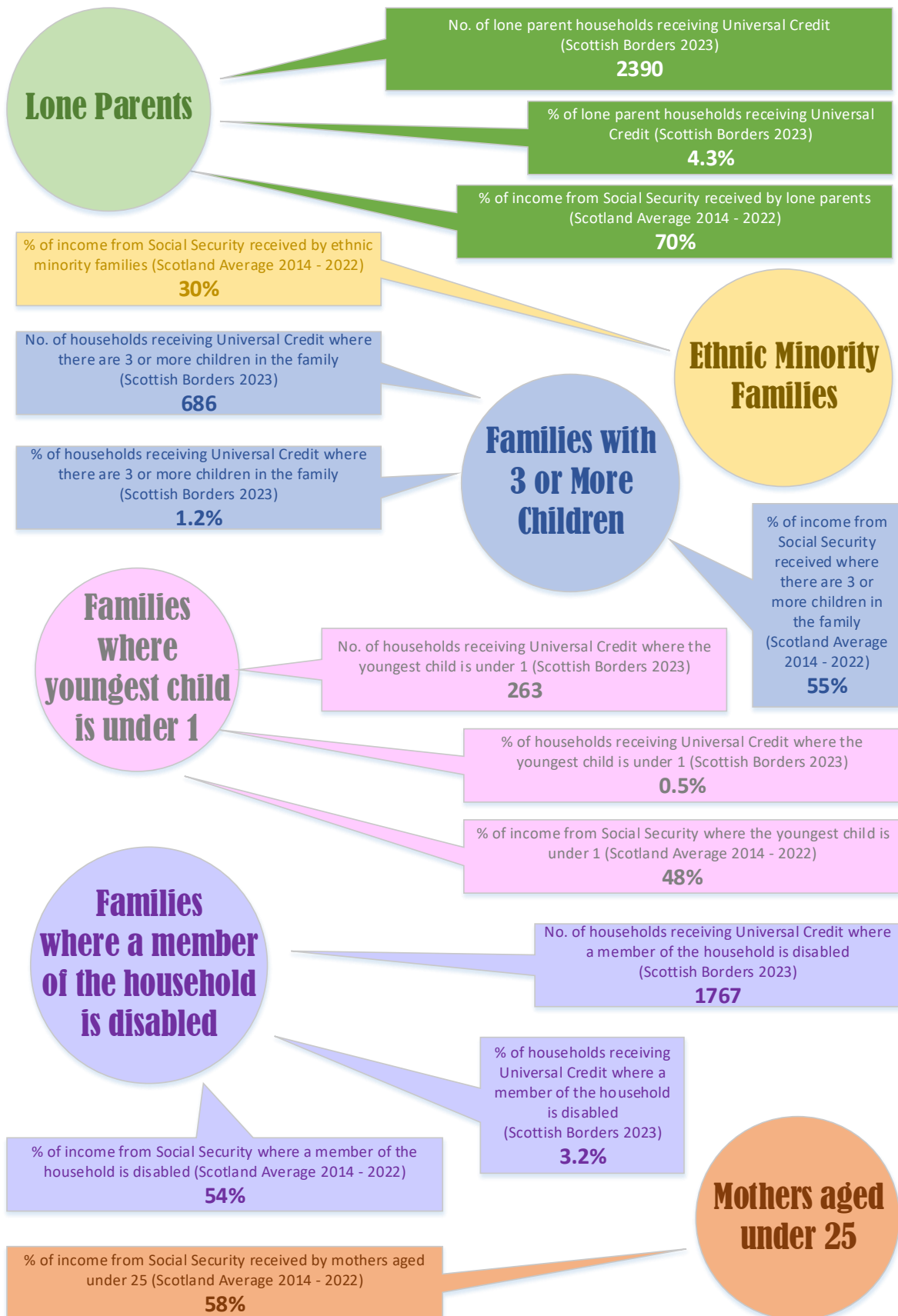
2021/22



2022/23



Understanding Key Drivers and Priority Groups data in the Scottish Borders



What are we doing about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders?

Tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders is governed through the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CPP has oversight and approval duties associated with the Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan but delegates the delivery of it to the Child Poverty Group. The Child Poverty Group is a multi-agency partnership made up of Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, and other key partners. They meet to discuss and support the local approach and respond where appropriate to national developments.

Local Plans outlined below all make a contribution to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders Council Plan

The [Council Plan](#) from April 2024 sets out a strategic framework for Council decision-making and operations.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Scottish Borders [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) sets out the way in which the Council and its partners will aim to work together to help reduce poverty across the region and recognises that Child Poverty is included in this aim.

Children & Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026

Child Poverty features as a priority within the [Children & Young People's Services Plan 2023-26](#). The whole family support network outlined in the Plan works with the Child Poverty Group towards the following aim:

- *Reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of living in poverty on families. Ensure that children and their families are given the opportunity to contribute to shaping local policy and actions to reduce the social and economic impact of poverty.*

Scottish Borders Community Plan

'Working together with our communities and through targeted partnership action, will enable all people in the Scottish Borders to live their lives to the full'. The [Scottish Borders Community Plan](#) works with four priority themes to support communities. These themes support our child poverty agenda.

T.H.I.S Borders (Tackling Health Inequalities in the Scottish Borders 2024-2030)

[This report](#) describes systemic differences in people's health that are thought to be avoidable and unjust and outlines how these can be tackled in practice.

Children's Rights

Our [Children's Rights Report 23-26](#) reports on the steps we have taken to fulfil the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Equity Strategy

Our [Education Equity Strategy 2021-2026](#) has been developed to ensure increased excellence, accelerated progress and embedded equity in our schools and settings to reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people (CECYP). The strategy coordinates the Attainment Scotland Funding streams; Pupil Equity Funding, Strategic Equity Funding and CECYP Funding to ensure maximum impact.

Local Housing Strategy

The [Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) 2023-2028](#) is the key strategic document for housing in the region. The LHS sets out how we and our partners plan to address housing and housing related opportunities and challenges in all tenures over the five-year period.

Budgets and Funding

Significant Scottish Borders Council budgets and funding are attributed to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders. The table below sets these out for 2024/25. Additional child poverty funding streams are also expected, as set out in Best Start, Bright Futures, for No one left behind, employability projects, reducing barriers and childcare.

Budget/Funding	2024/25
Crisis grants	£156,000
School clothing grants	£390,800
Free sanitary products in schools	£44,000
Free sanitary products in public bodies	£50,000
Educational Maintenance Allowance*	£237,070
Pupil Equity Funding*	£1,919,000
Strategic Equity Fund*	£448,171
Care experienced Children and Young People Fund*	£159,250
Whole Family Wellbeing Fund	£661,000
TOTAL	£4,065,291

*based on 2023/24 funding

Scottish Borders Council is proud to be an accredited real Living Wage employer (current rate £12 per hour) and they remain committed to encouraging the wider adoption of the real Living Wage by partners, local employers, and suppliers. The Council has adopted the *Scottish Government Best Practice Guidance on Addressing Fair Work Practices*, including the Real Living Wage in Procurement for relevant contracts.

Key areas of Work in 2023/24

During 2023/24, **child poverty partners have been involved in a** number of key areas of work that have had a significant effect on tackling child **poverty and** making a difference for children and their families.

Your Family Your Voice: Whole family support

Scottish Government recognised the need for a Child Poverty Employability Coordinator who could:

- Create and Adopt a Whole systems approach
- Support strong communications between relevant partners and services locally
- Identify and promote key changes to local policy and practice that will contribute to child poverty targets.
- Design referral pathways between services, or improve those already in place if they are not effective
- Link between child poverty work and other related policy initiatives
- Ensure a clear understanding of the causes and solutions of child poverty is shared and informs action undertaken within Scottish Borders
- Engage nationally to share learning and identify what works in relation to tackling child poverty through employability.

The plan to enable the aims to be met were set out in four phases:

Phase 1	Parental engagement – Your family, Your voice Practitioner engagement – Whole Family Support-Child Poverty(employability)
Phase 2	Gathering & Collation of our conversations Planning and agreed Action Plans with partners & stakeholders – How do we make a difference? Agree measurable and achievable outcomes and data capture
Phase 3	Framework to embed policy, practice and referral pathways Staff support & training Delivery

Phase 4	Measurement & reporting Reflection and review
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A number of events were held with young people, through the Cost of the School Day, Youth Voices Network, parents within Early Years Centre identified as being in the highest areas of deprivation and with Practitioners from both within and outwith the Local Employability Partnership. A total of 16 partner agencies took part in the Whole Family Approach conversations.

Conversation themes for Parents and Young People were around:

- ❖ Income
- ❖ Wellbeing
- ❖ Potential
- ❖ Attainment, (education, training, career)
- ❖ What can we do differently?

Conversation themes for Practitioners were around:

- ❖ Barriers
- ❖ Support
- ❖ Referral Pathways
- ❖ Lifespan Interventions
- ❖ What can we do differently?

From these conversations, parents and young people told us about the following areas in which services could work differently to best support their needs:

The outcomes:

Income	Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Advice around budgeting ❖ Help with fuel debt ❖ Benefits advice ❖ Income maximisation ❖ Benefits advice delivered locally ❖ Information in spoken and visual form ❖ Provide childcare for attending training etc ❖ Cost of travel options for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Create time and space to talk ❖ Book club for parents ❖ Teatime clubs for parents and children ❖ Buddy bench for parents ❖ Exercise classes – Zumba, Pilates, kick boxing (in localities) ❖ Groups for parents with older children ❖ Support with parenting techniques ❖ Taster sessions for parents
Attainment	Potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aspirational support ❖ Offer training in localities ❖ Support the whole families wellbeing ❖ Provide employability skills taster sessions ❖ CV building ❖ Support with dyslexia ❖ Provide courses that parents want ❖ Provide training mentors (local) ❖ Provide funding & technology to access online learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Funded out of school club places ❖ Support groups for parents and children ❖ Literacy support for children (no ipads) ❖ Provide learning opportunities within school times ❖ Provide flexible learning opportunities ❖ Provide learning opportunities taster session ❖ Childcare provision

Practitioners identified the following areas in which services could be delivered differently, to best support family's needs and make a difference:

❖ Improve accessibility to buildings	❖ Challenge stereotypes
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Offer locality based support ❖ Improve partnership working – in person where possible ❖ Upskilling tutors ❖ Waive college fees ❖ Tackle Mental Health needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Public sector work experiences ❖ Make the small changes early enough ❖ Earlier interventions and conversations ❖ Taster sessions ❖ More inspirational conversations with parents
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Early Years

All Early Years settings, including the Early Years Centres, have reducing child poverty embedded within their practice. The provision of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for eligible 2-year-olds and all 3-and 4-year-olds and the expansion of hours to 1140, is a key national policy driver in reducing child poverty.

The Early Years Centres have a particular role in enabling families to be supported in maximising their income. An additional Early Years Centre has been opened using Mental Health and Wellbeing Funding. This Centre is in Kelso (chosen based on data from the NHS 27-30 Month Check). It is open part time during term time and data on its use and outcomes for families will be available for next year's report.

Equity and Excellence Leads play a critical role in supporting children to close the poverty-related outcomes gap by being an additional resource over and above usual staffing for a setting.

- Equity and Excellence Leads placed in settings with high deprivation (SIMD data) and lower attainment to plan interventions and support high quality pedagogy and practice.
- Impact of EE Lead role tracked and monitored over year by QIO and EYISO team.
- Additional SEYOs with Equity and Excellence remit placed in priority quintile 1 settings to plan and lead interventions to target identified cohort/individuals with gaps in learning and /or development
- All EE Leads work collaboratively with partners to support families to access benefits and support the actions of the SBC Child Poverty Action plan.
- EE Leads are all trained in Psychology of Parenting Programme (PoPP) and delivering to targeted groups of parents in areas of deprivation.

Housing

Housing Emergency – The Scottish Government declared a national housing emergency in May 2024. In May 2024 Scottish Borders Council considered a report which outlined the significant challenges that the Council and partners are experiencing in ensuring residents in the Scottish Borders have access to a home which meets their needs. It was agreed that SBC should consider declaring a local 'Housing Emergency' and a report will be brought to Council for further consideration.

The provision of new homes - the programme has delivered 183 general needs homes in 2023/24 and 38 of these were particular needs homes.

Homelessness – over the past 18 months SBC homeless service has been experiencing unrelenting demand from applicants – particularly from the private rented sector. This has increased the demand for temporary accommodation. There is a shortage of new build private supply, few starter and smaller homes for purchasing or downsizing and little opportunity for family accommodation. The lack of supply is increasing the demand on the service.

Demand for homes – the demand for homes over the past few years has increased significant with many contributing factors:

- Supply of homes cannot keep pace with demand;
- There has been a significant increase in property values, at a rate well above national and local wage inflation;
- There is a smaller percentage of housing stock available as socially rented accommodation;

- Construction prices have increased significantly since 2021;
- The latest Scottish Government Quarterly Housing Statistics publication highlighted the lowest level of site starts in the social new build programme across Scotland since 1988.

These issues have a direct impact on property prices, rental levels, and general housing availability which contributes to wider economic and social challenges. We are seeing the demand in all sectors of housing:

- The average number of bids per available social rented property has doubled over the last 5 years – particularly in large family homes. For example, SBHA ‘s new homes in Kelso this year had 100 bids for 5 family size homes.
- More people are staying in their current homes. The number of RSLs let available has continued to decrease – meaning less availability of homes.
- Shortage in private new build. Over recent years there has been limited appetite from market house builders to develop in the Borders.
- Despite successful delivery of the Strategic Housing Investment Programme over recent years and delivery of affordable housing, it remains challenging to deliver new build social rented stock at the necessary volume. The Borders is faced with high construction costs, often significant infrastructure requirements, labour and contractor shortages and increasing finance costs. The Affordable Housing Supply Programme Funding allocation for the Borders has been reduced by 26% for 2024/2025 which will have a detrimental impact on the delivery of new affordable homes.

It is important to note that notwithstanding the issues and challenges highlighted above, a significant amount of progress is already being made. Some examples include:

- The Council’s empty homes service has expanded to bring disused properties back in to use.
- The Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched in 2022 is currently supporting 20 empty homes to be brought back into use. 13 of these homes will be made available for rent at an affordable level.
- The demolition phase for Upper Langlee is complete and Phase 1 of delivery started in early 2024.
- 221 affordable homes were delivered during 2023/2024. 177 of these were new supply affordable homes.
- South of Scotland Community Housing are working with Community groups across the Borders to support them to potentially deliver their own housing developments.
- £1.8m in 2022/23 invested in improving private housing stock energy efficiency with a further £1.8m in 2023/24. Measures installed included - Solar PV & Battery: 50 completions, Air Source Heat Pumps: 10 completions and Internal Wall Insulation: 25 completions.
- There have been 5,444 referrals and interactions with households through Home Energy Scotland
- Key worker housing has been provided in Galashiels for NHS & SBC Social Care staff.
- Expansion of Homes for Good into the South of Scotland.
- Introduction of the licensing of Short Term Lets.
- Increased proportion of RSL lets to Homeless households (target 50%; currently 41%).
- Established the Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers

Below we have set out some examples of the work undertaken to demonstrate how we are making a difference in the areas that are considered the key drivers for tackling child poverty.

Income from Employment

Positive Destinations

Data shows an improving trend in the percentage of school leavers from quintile 1 (the most deprived areas) entering positive destinations after leaving school in the Scottish Borders. In 2018/19, 87.18% of quintile 1

school leavers entered a positive destination. This figure has steadily increased each year, reaching an impressive 97.65% in 2022/23.

Several initiatives have contributed to this success, including targeted support for young people, close collaboration with partners such as Skills Development Scotland, employability services, Developing the Young Workforce, and Borders College. We have also focused on enhancing the curriculum to expand opportunities for students, including more work-based learning and courses. The established 14+ partnership, where schools and partners work together to plan supports for young people transitioning from school to their chosen destinations, has been instrumental in this progress. Furthermore, setting ambitious local stretch aims as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge has driven positive change.

Meanwhile, the rate for quintile 5 leavers (the least deprived areas) has remained consistently high, hovering around 97-99% over the past 5 years. In 2022/23, 95.77% of quintile 5 leavers entered a positive destination. Notably, the gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 positive destination rates has significantly narrowed over time in Scottish Borders. In 2018/19, there was a 12.12 percentage point gap between the two quintiles. By 2022/23, not only had this gap closed, but quintile 1 actually surpassed quintile 5 by 1.88 percentage points (97.65% vs 95.77%).

This remarkable progress demonstrates the effectiveness of the targeted initiatives and strong partnerships in Scottish Borders aimed at improving outcomes and opportunities for school leavers from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The concerted efforts of schools, the council, and various partners have created a supportive ecosystem that enables young people, regardless of their background, to transition successfully into positive destinations such as employment, further education, or training after completing school.

Parental Employability Service

Parental Employability Support (PES) uses a holistic keyworker approach to upskill and/or re-train, increasing family income, lifting themselves and their family out of poverty. PES workers provide personalised support for parents who face barriers to progressing in their careers. PES are currently supporting 135 parents within the Scottish Borders.

The Intensive Family Support (IFSS) takes a holistic whole family approach to working with families, supporting each individual within the family to progress as well as implementing whole family activities that build a support network. IFSS aims to improve family dynamics to enable families to provide effective support for each other. IFSS are currently supporting 29 families within the Scottish Borders.

Within the Scottish Borders PES and IFSS work together to ensure that all referred families and parents can identify their barriers and holistic support to reach their potential. Below is a case study from a Parent who has received tailored support from both services, and it showcases the work delivered by both teams and positive outcomes achieved through the support.

Bogdan moved to the Borders from Romania in 2019. He met his partner in 2020 and they moved in together 2021. His partner was referred to IFSS in 2021 whilst pregnant due to social isolation, financial hardship and health issues. He had limited English with no permanent employment, unstable housing and poor living conditions. Bodan and his partner hoped for financial stability, a secure and safe home and permanent employment.

Support Pre-Employment Financial Stability

- Register with Universal Credit
- Apply for Child Benefit
- Apply for Scottish Child Payment

Secure and Safe Home

- Register with Social Housing, SBHA, Waverley and Eildon, contact Housing Officers to discuss family needs

- *Contact current landlord regarding poor living conditions*
- *Apply for Community Care Grant including removal costs*
- *Apply for Fresh Start pack*
- *Liaise with Housing Officer to secure social housing tenancy*
- *Discretionary Housing Payment Application to cover dual rent*

Permanent Employment

- *Enrol on ESOL course at Borders College*
- *Connect Scotland Device and MiFi Device*
- *Register on My World of Work*
- *Create CV*
- *Register on My Job Scotland*
- *Support Bogdan to apply for jobs*
- *Contact SBC re Modern Apprentice Positions and ask that Bogdan be considered*
- *Support Bogdan to interview location*
- *Assist with pre-employment checks*

The family are now living in a SBHA tenancy, which is fully furnished. The family are in receipt of child benefit, Scottish Child Payment (and Universal Credit pre permanent employment) Bogdan has gained employment on a 4-year Mechanic Apprenticeship with SBC, earning the living wage and his English has improved.

Quote from Bogdan:

'I could not do it alone without your help

Thank you for everything, I will not forget all the things you do to help us'



The Cost of Living

Holiday Provision

The partnership offered funding for holiday programmes in 2023/24.

Live Borders

Through the summer holiday period of 2023 (1st July – 16th August 2022), Live Borders worked in partnership with Scottish Borders Council and other key providers to deliver the “Summer 2023” Holiday Activity Programme. Live Borders delivered a comprehensive programme of sport, physical activity, and cultural opportunities and continued to offer free places for identified children through discount codes and in some instances, making whole offers free of charge.

Activities included a variety of holiday camps in all school clusters (multi activity and sport), a Family Activity Pass for families referred by professional staff, free cinema access for targeted individuals, a range of museum and galleries activities, library workshops, and a partnership disability camp with a local third sector group. Key findings from the programme are as follows:

- Over **3500** visits made by children and young people to Live Borders activities.
- Activity camps (all) averaged **92%** occupancy with **52%** of places free of charge for targeted children and young people.
- 542 families accessed activity camps. 182 families were identified as low income and in need of targeted support.
- **47%** of children reported an increase in their resilience when having to deal with day-to-day problems through the summer holiday programme.
- **44%** reported an improvement in their self-confidence through participation in the summer programme.
- **61%** reported that they were more likely to be active in the future as a result of holiday activity participation.
- **82%** reported that they had greater confidence to attend further sport and physical activity opportunities in their schools and wider communities.

Children & Young People feedback

- 97% of children and young people reported having fun at holiday camp activity.
- 59% of children and young people felt that they had made new friends as a result of their involvement through the summer programme
- 64% stated that they had learned new skills.
- 57% reported that they were interested in new things.
- 27% reported that they had reduced their feelings of loneliness as a result of their participation in the summer programme.

Parents

Following the camps, parents were e-mailed an online survey to obtain feedback and further evidence the impact that the programme has had:

- *“My daughter is from Ukraine, and despite little practice of English, she felt very comfortable. Every day she wanted to run to the camp. We would like to thank everybody from the Live Borders team”.*
- *“Thank you. So rare for her to come home raving about going back. Well done!”*
- *“We REALLY appreciated the support and opportunity offered to SEN children. This made the difference between attending or not. Please provide more activities with your wonderful staff”.*
- *“My two had such an amazing time when they were there, and it made their summer 1000 times better”.*

- *“As a parent, to watch him grow in confidence through the week as he told me stories of new friends made and activities he had enjoyed was positive to see and hear”.*

Youth Borders

A total of **1,141 young people directly benefitted** from Summer 2023 funding by attending **285 youth work activities**. Young people enjoyed **2,924 snacks and 1,599 meals** during these summer activities. 22 YouthBorders members organisations delivered this programme.

People living in households on low incomes, young people undergoing transitions, followed by larger families were the top three factors targeted by YouthBorders member organisations.

Specific Households / Families	No.
People living in households on low incomes	539
Children undergoing transitions	238
Larger families (3+ children)	205
Children with a disability or ASN	185
People living in households with a disabled family member	85
Children supported by a child's plan	85
Minority Ethnic Families	75
Children under 1	49
Mothers under the age of 25	44
Children in need of protection	42
Young Carers	33

Family Tea Group

Working with partners in Burnfoot Community Futures, our Community Learning and Development (CLD) team identified a need for families to work and have fun together and be fed to reduce rising costs in fuel and food costs. They planned and delivered a 6-week block of family fun/teatime activities for families who they were aware of in the community who would benefit from this intervention. Different family groups, single parents, large families, dads and kids, teenagers and high school families attended.

Activities included art and crafts, cooking, board games, junk modelling, gardening, STEM activities and the last session delivered party food and time in soft play (whatever the age).

Funding was provided through Burnfoot Community Futures (Bring Back Better Borders) and the CLD budget.

Families learned to work together, had the opportunity to play games together and value quality time together. Families were fed, thus reducing household costs in heating and food. Recipes were shared so that families were able to make affordable meals at home.

Families accessed wider support through conversations with CLD/Hub and were signposted to local services and support where relevant/required e.g., housing, access to Councillors, foodshare, etc. Adults from each group progressed into volunteering in the community garden, or further CLD learning opportunities and felt more able to participate having had the opportunity to build relationships and trust in this group in the first instance.

Cyrenians

Cyrenians are a charity who tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness. The first cook club and pantry in the Borders was set up in May 2023, closely followed by 3 others. They are currently operating in the following locations:

- Cheviot Youth, Kelso
- Oakwood Park, Galashiels
- Philiphaugh Community Centre
- Walkerburn Public Hall

The aims of this project are to get good, affordable food into communities that may be experiencing food insecurity and to bring the community together over food. They do this by using a dignified, community focused approach.

Uptake has been good and people are enjoying both the pantries and the cook clubs. Between May and October 2023, they had 86 people signing up for a pantry membership and the pantries were used a total of 1,149 times. They also distributed 7,765kg of food from Fareshare, equating to around 18,500 meals.

The pantry at Walkerburn is currently at full capacity and there are a few people on the waiting list. The Philiphaugh Pantry is also often at capacity and Kelso has a good uptake, identifying that there is a real need in these areas.

"The pantry has been very helpful, great choice, friendly staff and helpful. Appreciate the support during these difficult times"

"The pantry helps me and my wee boy immensely. The staff make me feel really welcome and we get a good chat too, which helps a lot being a single parent. The food really helps me out as I have to budget my food shop. Great service!"

"The pantry has been great in the community. It is very helpful feeding a large family. It has helped to save on cost considering inflation in supermarkets etc. Very grateful. Thank you"

The Cook Clubs see regular multi- generational audiences and each venue has its own characteristics based on the people who attend:

- Oakwood Park in Galashiels works with a teenager with an absent parent who is not attending school who comes to join this group each week.
- Kelso has a group of young adults with learning difficulties who seek the skills to live independently. Our users are supported to gain skills for healthy eating, managing food to reduce waste and associated cost and being able to afford to feed themselves independently. The cross over with Local Area Coordinators (LAC) has been very positive here.
- The Walkerburn group has as many as 25 attending, 12-15 of which are children. This is a loud and social environment and they sit down to eat the meal together at the end. Everyone is involved in preparation, laying the table, serving and clearing away. A relationship with the Citizens Advice bureau has been established at Walkerburn and this offers an invaluable opportunity to offer services to people who would otherwise find it impossible to access the advice and support they need.

Warm Welcome Spaces across the Borders

The cost-of-living crisis continued to have a negative impact on our rural communities in 2023/24. This issue becomes more exacerbated in the winter months when opportunities for social connections are reduced and the cost to eat and heat homes increases.

Funding of £40,000 was awarded from the National Lottery Community Fund and Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership to Borders Community Action who created a joint approach to support local communities, and the idea of Warm, Welcome Spaces emerged. The grant benefitted a wide range of community groups and organisations across the Scottish Borders with a varied spread across the 5 localities. It is estimated that a total of 3,900 people benefitted from activities, such as arts and crafts, food, cafes, games and youth activities.

Feedback was positive:

It helped me make new friends within our village

It's hard for my mum at home, free food on Friday evening's is a real help

Things like this make a big difference to me

I lost my Young Scot card and haven't eaten since breakfast (boy aged 13)

Can we come along just for food? (boy aged 14, family now connected to foodbank)

Food / Breakfast

Jedburgh Grammar Campus offers:

- The Filling Station (breakfast club before school) for targeted young people in primary and secondary
- Snacks for break in all primary classrooms, the Pupil Support Base and Science
- Prelim breakfasts for senior pupils offered by Home Economics staff

In Secondary: Young people experiencing poverty have the option to attend each morning. The aim is for every child to start the school day having eaten a healthy breakfast so that they...

- Have increased focus.
- Have higher energy levels.
- Are ready to learn.
- Can develop their social skills.
- Can make friends.
- Arrive in good time.

There is also a box of food in the Pupil Support Base and Science department which can be accessed by any young person who is hungry at any time of the school day.

In Primary: There is a Breakfast Club Supervisor. Children are referred via regular Health and Wellbeing Partnership Meetings. The Filling Station provides a nurturing and supportive environment for some of our more vulnerable children to check-in each morning. There is also a P4-7 Soft Start intervention group each morning for 5 primary pupils in this area and they have a healthy breakfast which helps them to be ready to learn. A 'Wee Filling Station' is in each learning area for children who need a snack at break. While we target those children experiencing poverty, any child can access a snack if they are hungry.

Funding has come from book sales in the community, donations from local supermarkets, a donation from Jedburgh Rotary, funding application and the PEF fund. PEF Youth Worker *'The children in Soft Start don't get breakfast at home due to family circumstances. It's a healthy start to the day as the food on offer meets the guidelines and the breakfast gives them energy for learning.'*

Bumps, Babies and Toddlers Breakfast Club

A number of parents identified the need for a Group that could be held at their local community centre. It was imperative that the Group could accommodate pregnant women, those with babies and those with toddlers. They had already connected to other parents in the community who agreed that they would like to go ahead but needed support from CLD to make this happen. From these conversations, Langlee Bumps, Babies and Toddler Group was born.

CLD met with NHS Borders Joint Health Improvement Team (JHIT) to request their involvement for the provision of breakfast given prior knowledge of families and their circumstances i.e., the impact of the cost living crisis. CLD were aware of the various stages of pregnancy of some of the parents.

Aims and Objectives:

Provide a bumps, babies and toddlers group for the local community in response to their need

Provide a nutritious breakfast and raise awareness of good nutrition

Provide information and signpost families to relevant organisations

Emphasise the need for bonding, routine, boundaries, nurture and play

Peer learning and support

Work in partnership with Borders Community Action to build capacity of the parents by encouraging and supporting them to become a sustainable, funded community-led group

What We Did:

A mapping exercise was facilitated with parents to find out what they would like on the programme of activities. Key partners were contacted to see if they were willing to provide an input, and from there a 12-week pilot was

developed and delivered and subsequently extended. Key partners positively engaged with parents: Weaning, Infant Nutrition, Social Security Scotland, DWP, Multiply, Social Work
A nutritious breakfast was provided reflecting the EatWell Guide
Resources were shared resources on behalf of key partners, including Money Worries App, 6 ways to be well and PND information booklets, healthy eating guides and recipes
A safe space was provided for parents to bond with their child through free play, nursery rhymes and stories and engage in peer learning and support
Applied for funding to extend the sessions for 1 year and worked with parents to set up a committee – this learning is ongoing

Outcomes:

Partnership team successfully met all of our aims and objectives
Parents have improved knowledge and clearer understanding of weaning and infant nutrition organisations available to support nutritious breakfast options and the benefits to their child(ren)'s development
Parents have a clearer understanding of bonding, routine, boundaries, nurture and play and can link these to their child(ren)'s positive growth and development
Parents have developed a network for peer support and feel better connected to their local community

The parents attending reported that the Group has had a positive impact on them and their children. It is hoped that the Group will become sustainable, grow and develop with the parents at the helm. This work has now taken place and a committee has been formed. CLD applied for funding, and this was awarded to the Group through the Cost-of-Living Fund (SBC) following this successful 12-week pilot. The funding will provide breakfast for the group for the next year and by then the hope is that the group will be self-sustaining.

Closing the Poverty Attainment Gap

Over the last 2 years the local authority has made progress in narrowing poverty-related outcomes in attainment, attendance and positive destinations. Locally designed approaches to addressing the gaps are being designed and implanted in Clusters. The cluster model in the Scottish Borders is a commitment to working across a range of services, including third sector organisations and community partners working together with families, maximising local resources. This initiative aims to empower communities to take ownership of change, enabling them to adapt and thrive. The focus is on collaboration, consultation, and shared responsibility among stakeholders. This work is also a key part of the SBC Equity Strategy.

Clusters have adopted a range of approaches. For example, one cluster has employed a home school link worker with a focus on improving levels of engagement, attainment and attendance with targeted families. Another cluster has created a Wellbeing Team and a Family Wellbeing Hub which will deliver universal and targeted wellbeing activities for families.

Cost of the School Day

The local authority is making good progress in building a framework to ensure a consistent approach to tackling the costs associated with school. The community of practice (CoP) has received support from Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland and Education Scotland. Partners from educational psychology, Citizens Advice Service, Quarriers mental health service, Social Security Scotland, CPAG Scotland, NHS Borders, Community, Learning and Development (CLD) and employability services have been included in the CoP. A 'champion' from each cluster has been identified who will have a lead role in gathering and sharing examples of effective practice. There is recognition that some schools and settings have already taken significant action in reducing costs to families so a collation of case studies from the within the local authority will be gathered and highlighted locally and shared with CPAG Scotland.

Pupil Equality Funding (PEF)

PEF funding was used to create a "Snug" within Wilton Primary School. The Snug was to be used as a space to nurture young people identified as displaying increased distressed and deregulated behaviours, that were having a negative effect on their attainment and achievement especially in reading, writing and numeracy.

A junk room space in the school was given a makeover and a local supplier provided the furniture at generously reduced prices. The parents at the school also volunteered to help makeover the space.



The Snug has been running since April 2023. In just under a year, the Snug has run a number of groups, supporting over 60 children.

All of the children complete the Glasgow Motivation and Well-being questionnaire twice over the course of the academic year. Once in October and again in April. The data from the questionnaire is analysed, and then discussed with class teachers. From this Snug groups are formed.

The children are in groups of no more than eight. The school runs two sessions a day, four times a week and the sessions are now run by two Additional Needs Assistant's (ANA's).

The Snug has been such a success that the school are now supporting young people from other schools within the Hawick cluster. It is truly becoming a shared resource. The school have also had professionals from outside agencies and from other schools across the Borders observe the nurture groups in the Snug.

The model is working well and the ANA's have been upskilled and trained using the Nurture groups in School Principles and Practice. They have also worked closely with Speech therapists, CAMHS and Education Psychologist to meet the needs of the pupils.

- Outcomes:
- 100% of the children made improvements in both developmental and diagnostic strands.
 - 98% of children improved their attendance as a result of attending the Snug.
 - 100% of class teachers noticed a positive change in behaviours, relationships, communication and regulation.
 - Parents and carers have been very supportive of their children attending the Snug, with 100% of them agreeing to their children being selected for a nurture group.

Income from Social Security and benefits in kind

Financial Inclusion

A dedicated resource is now part of the Financial Inclusion Team supporting the Employability and Community Learning Teams. Benefit checks and advice are now available for parents who are looking to maximise their income or improve their employment prospects. Along with staff dedicated to Early Years Financial Inclusion (who already has strong links with SBC's Early Years Service, NHS Health Visitors and Midwives), they will provide an increase in support to a wider group of families in the Borders.

The work undertaken by these two staff resulted in over £1 million in financial gains for families in the Scottish Borders during 2023/24.

The Financial Inclusion Team, along with the Digital Innovation and Systems Team, have developed a new case management system which will improve reporting and day to day case management. It will offer improved reporting to monitor demand, identify trends and influence future take up campaigns. The team will also use

Council data to maximise free school meal and clothing grant eligibility as well as encourage take up of Scottish Child Payment.

Post COVID and cost-of-living issues were less relevant within referrals in 2023-24, however there were more residence related issues reflecting an increase in job seekers arriving from overseas many who had no “access to public funds” and therefore unfortunately no rights to benefits.

The case studies outlined below clearly demonstrate the immense value that the joint SBC referral system and NHS Pathway Initiative bring to young families in the Borders. The support provided by Financial Inclusion staff can significantly increase the income of families, but the positive outcomes can extend much further than just an increase in income:

Case 1 A referral was received for a young person after concerns were raised by a key worker. This led to a conversation with their parent who was struggling to support the young person and their two siblings. After a benefits check was completed, Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Council Tax Reductions, Child Benefit, Universal Credit and Carers Allowance were awarded. The young person was awarded Educational Maintenance Allowance and the support provided an increase of over **£7,000** per year in additional household income.

Case 2 A single parent lived with their teenage child in a poorly maintained private let. They had not worked for over 8 years and was offered a job but were concerned about losing their benefits. They received support from the team to apply for Universal Credit, Scottish Child Payment and Discretionary Housing Payment which meant they would be over £100 per week better off. Once the parent settled into the post, they received advice which led to them working overtime and starting a second job. They were also signposted to support regarding their tenancy which led to several repairs being carried out on the property.

Case 3 A single disabled mother with two disabled children was living in a very rural area in the Borders. A Health Visitor immediately recognised that the family were living in extreme poverty and had never claimed any benefits so contacted the Early Years Financial Inclusion team. A full benefits package was immediately arranged including many disability elements for both the mother and the children. In the end this amounted to an increase in income of over **£20,000** a year and the family were able to enjoy a much more fulfilling life.

Case 4 A single parent with two children had their benefits cancelled by HMRC and ordered to pay back over £30,000. Her physical and mental health deteriorated, and she was encouraged by her Health Visitor to get assistance. The Early Years Financial Inclusion team provided support, and the benefits were eventually reinstated resulting in the overpayment being cleared and a backdated payment of over **£8,000** being made.

Case 5 concerned a young mother with two young children who had failed to escape from an abusive relationship with her husband. This was found to be an extreme example of coercive control and she thought that because of this she would not be entitled to any support from the authorities. The health visitor reported that the mother was understandably terrified to leave her husband with no money and no alternative accommodation. In a joint effort with the Parental Employment and Homeless Teams they managed to find her alternative accommodation, a full benefit package and not least a small part time job and she and her children were finally able to safely move away from her abusive husband. This was an excellent outcome and a great example of joined up working.

Case 6 involved a couple with 6 children where the Health Visitor reported that she had been dismayed at the condition the family were living in. The Financial Inclusion team visited them and were very concerned to discover that the unemployed father was in fact claiming all the benefits and using the money to host drug parties with his friends leaving his own family in an almost destitute condition. The Child Protection Team were made aware of the situation and subsequently they involved the police who took the necessary action to remove the father. In the meantime, all of the benefits were transferred to the mother and the homeless team managed to get her alternative accommodation in another area of the Borders. All this took a while, but the mother reported later to the health visitor that she had never been happier.

At the time of referral, the incomes of each family were well below the Scottish Governments guide on poverty

levels. On completing the referrals, all of them were over these limits so every family had been effectively lifted out of poverty following the health visitors and Financial Inclusion Team’s intervention.

Other Activity During 2023/24

Throughout 2023/24 Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Community Planning Partners, and the Child Poverty Group have progressed a significant range of activity geared towards tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

Detail on that activity can be found in [Appendix 1B](#).

Looking Forward – Priorities for 2024/25

Our priorities for 2024/25 are set out below in four key themes. These themes have been identified by the Child Poverty Group Partners and demonstrate a commitment to working together to deliver differently in order to tackle child poverty going forward. A workshop is planned for the summer whereby Partners will work together to create specific actions for these priorities.

Understanding local need
Develop a shared data and intelligence resource across services, departments and organisations so that there is a more in-depth understanding of the drivers and impact of poverty in the Scottish Borders
Develop our work with people with direct experience of poverty so that they are meaningfully involved in service development and delivery. Ensure that membership of the Child Poverty Group reflects the voices of those who have experienced poverty and those who work closely with low-income families.
Use of policy levers and resources
Use a whole systems approach to poverty reduction and prevention, including high level strategic engagement from housing, economic development, transport and childcare in the child poverty agenda.
Ensure that our pathways are simple and intuitive so that families at risk of financial crisis are supported in a timely and dignified way.
Increase our focus on engagement in the early years so that low-income families receive the wrap-around, whole family support they need.
Understanding our progress
Create a shared outcome framework for child poverty, which allows all local partners to understand their progress towards shared goals in the short, medium and long term. This should include understanding the impact of key interventions on priority families.
Ways of working
Build stronger, clearer relationships between the Child Poverty Group, the CYPPP and ultimately the CPP. Ensure that the Child Poverty Group is empowered and resourced to take a strategic role in action to tackle child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

Glossary

CECYP	Care Experienced Children and Young People
CILIF	Children in Low Income Families
CLD	Community Learning and Development
CLG	Clothing Grant
COP	Community of Practice
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
IFSS	Intensive Family Support Service
JHIT	Joint Health Improvement Team
NIF	National Improvement Framework
NRS	National Records of Scotland
PEF	Pupil Equity Funding
PES	Parental Employability Support
PND	Post-natal Depression
SB CPI	Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index
SB	Scottish Borders
SBC	Scottish Borders Council
SBHA	Scottish Borders Housing Association
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
UC	Universal Credit
UCH	Universal Credit Households
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child