

## Stage 2 Evidence Gathering and Consultation

<b>A. Title of Proposal:</b>	Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-29
<b>B. Service Area: Department:</b>	Resilient Communities
<b>C. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)</b>	Janice Robertson, Strategic Planning & Policy Manager
<b>D. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)</b>	Multiple – these are cross-partnership Reports incorporating partners from Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and the third sector.
<b>E. Date(s) IIA completed:</b>	May 2024 September 2024

## Section 1 Data and Information

### A. What evidence has been used to inform this proposal?

(Information can include, for example, surveys, databases, focus groups, in-depth interviews, pilot projects, reviews of complaints made, user feedback, academic publications and consultants' reports).

Data taken from the reports and policies as listed in IIA Stage 1, 'Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance', Section 2. These reports and policies provide both Local and National statistics. The Scottish Borders Picture of Poverty provides data and statistics as evidence also.

Information and data provided by agencies, partners and organisations, e.g. NHS Borders, SBC Local Area Coordination Team, Financial Inclusion Team, Communities and Partnerships Team, and Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Team.

The strategy details input from those with lived experiences via case studies and quotes provided by Borders Community Action, SBC Communities and Partnerships Team, SBC Financial Inclusion Team, SBC Employability Service, and NHS Pathway Initiative.

### B. Describe any gaps in the available evidence,-then record this within the improvement plan together with all of the actions you are taking in relation to this (e.g. new research, further analysis, and when this is planned)

Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group, working with Anti-Poverty Data Group, will identify key collaborative priorities throughout the year.

Work to consolidate partner actions to align more closely with Anti-Poverty drivers continues.

These actions will help to highlight any gaps in our approach to Anti-Poverty.

## Section 2 Consultation and Involvement

### A. Which groups are involved in this process and describe their involvement

Various multi-agency partners were involved in the process and development of the report. Consultations with the following internal and external teams and organisations informed the content of the report.

#### **Scottish Borders Council Teams:**

Communities and Partnerships  
Local Area Coordination  
Financial Inclusion  
Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Team  
No One Left Behind  
Employment Support Services  
Environment & Infrastructure  
Education Services  
Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group

#### **Other Partnerships and Agencies:**

Scottish Government  
Community Planning Partnership  
NHS Borders  
Home Energy Scotland  
Skills Development Scotland  
Citizens Advice Bureau  
Borders Community Action  
Changeworks

The review of strategy will be ongoing, and all groups and agencies will be involved in this as we monitor and evaluate it's effectiveness and provide periodic progress reports.

**B. Describe any planned involvement saying when this will take place and who is responsible for managing the process**

Ongoing communication with partner organisations to encourage collaborative partnership working and positive outcomes in reducing poverty.

**C. Describe the results of any involvement and how you have taken this into account.**

Any involvement from the SBC teams and partners listed above is included in the strategy and both directly and indirectly impacts the overall structure of the strategy.

## Stage 3 Summary and Next Steps

### Section 1 Summary

**Summarise what you have learned then develop this further.**

(Describe the conclusion(s) you have reached from the evidence, and state where the information can be found.)

**Please consider the following:**

**What have you learned from the evidence you have and the involvement undertaken? Does the initial assessment remain valid?**

**What new (if any) impacts have become evident?**

**Is the proposal not to proceed because of a disproportionate impact on equality or Fairer Scotland characteristics?**

From the evidence gathered and the involvement of key stakeholders, several critical insights have emerged that validate and shape the Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-29:

#### Key findings from evidence:

- The fuel poverty rate remains a significant challenge, affecting approximately 35% of households. This highlights the need for continued focus on addressing high energy costs, particularly in rural areas.
- Income maximisation efforts, such as benefits advice, have proven successful, with Citizens Advice Bureau helping to secure £3.6 million in financial gains for families.
- The strategy's positive impact on employment outcomes for young people, particularly those from deprived areas, is evidenced by the rising percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations (from 87.18% in 2018/19 to 97.65% in 2022/23).

#### Involvement and feedback

- Input from partners such as Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership and Citizens Advice Bureau has shaped initiatives like the Warm Welcome Spaces, ensuring they address the social and recreational needs of vulnerable groups.

- Engagement with families and communities through programs like Your Family Your Voice has provided valuable insights into the real-world needs of individuals facing poverty, particularly regarding issues like fuel debt, childcare, and local benefits advice.

### Impact on specific groups

- Low/no wealth individuals benefit from income maximisation strategies and financial inclusion efforts.
- Carers and looked after children are supported through wellbeing initiatives and financial inclusion programs.
- Vulnerable populations, such as those involved in the criminal justice system or affected by addictions and homelessness, are directly supported by organisations such as Recovery Coaching Scotland (Borders In Recovery) and indirectly supported through health, housing, and community-based initiatives.

### **Does the initial assessment remain valid?**

The initial assessment of the Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy remains valid based on the evidence gathered and the involvement undertaken:

- The strategy's focus on income maximisation, housing support, employment, and digital and transport connectivity continues to be highly relevant, addressing the core challenges identified, such as fuel poverty, employment barriers, and socio-economic inequality.
- The strategy's objectives align well with the needs highlighted by stakeholders and the evidence gathered. Initiatives targeting rurality, financial inclusion, and health and wellbeing are directly responding to the unique challenges of poverty in the Scottish Borders.
- The strategy appears comprehensive in its coverage of the major issues impacting those in poverty, particularly in rural areas. The focus areas remain critical, and there are no significant gaps identified that would undermine the validity of the initial assessment.

### **What new (if any) impacts have become evident?**

Several new impacts have become evident since the strategy's development, particularly due to changing socio-economic conditions and evolving community needs:

### Emerging impacts

- Digital exclusion has emerged as an ongoing barrier, particularly in remote areas with limited broadband access, affecting education, employment, and access to services.
- Mental health challenges, particularly among carers, individuals with addictions, and those involved in the criminal justice system, are becoming more prominent. The need for integrated mental health and addiction support has become more apparent as a factor in addressing poverty and re-offending.

### Community-driven impacts:

- The Warm Welcome Spaces initiative has revealed a strong need for community engagement and social support, particularly for those experiencing social isolation, such as unpaid carers and individuals struggling with addictions. These spaces are providing more than just recreational activities - they are fostering community cohesion and informal networks of support.
- The worsening cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated financial pressures on vulnerable groups, making the strategy's focus on financial inclusion, income maximisation, and housing support even more critical. Rising inflation and energy costs are putting additional strain on low-income households, and the strategy's response to these pressures is vital.

### **A. Please indicate if the proposal will proceed**

- Yes, please see below section 3 for next steps
- No, the proposal will not proceed based on disproportionate impact on equality or Fairer Scotland characteristics

## Section 2 Sign Off

<b>Signed by Lead Officer:</b>	Janice Robertson
<b>Designation:</b>	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager
<b>Date:</b>	October 2024
<b>Counter Signature Director:</b>	Jenni Craig, Director Resilient Communities
<b>Date:</b>	October 2024



## Section 3 Monitoring and Review (complete if relevant, remove if not)

**B. State how the implementation and impact of the proposal will be monitored, including implementation of any amendments? For example what type of monitoring will there be? How frequent?**

The Anti-Poverty Strategy will be monitored annually, and a progress report produced to update Council officials, officers, and partners.

The report will make use of key partner plans and strategies set out in the strategy, along with other performance indicators and economic indicators

**C. What are the practical arrangements for monitoring? For example who will put this in place? When will it start?**

Monitoring the strategy will be carried out by the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group who meet to give guidance on the implementation of the strategy

**D. When is the proposal due for review?**

An annual report will be due at Council in October 2025

**E. Who is responsible for ensuring that this happens?**

The Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group, supported by SBC Officers.

**F. Please indicate if you have developed an Action Plan to take forward any remaining actions**

- Yes, please see attached on final page  
 No, no further actions required