

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on wavy lines representing water. The bottom-right quarter shows a crowned eagle with spread wings. Above the shield is a crown with four floral motifs. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 5

Poverty in Falkirk

Falkirk Council

Title: Poverty in Falkirk
Meeting: Executive
Date: 22 February 2022
Submitted by: Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on the potential impact of the recent changes to Universal Credit following the Executive meeting on 30 November 2021. At that meeting the Executive agreed that a report on this issue would be presented to the Executive, the Education, Children and Young People Executive and to Council. In light of the full information presented in this report and that this would be replicated in further reports to the Education Children and Young People Executive and Council, the Executive is asked to agree that it is not necessary to further submit this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:-
- (1) notes the update for members of the likely impact of the changes and the work underway to tackle poverty in Falkirk; and
 - (2) agrees that consideration of the report at this meeting is sufficient to satisfy the reporting requirement agreed by the Executive.

3. Climate Change Implications

- 3.1 The recommended decision does not give rise to any material implications for the Council's climate change targets and obligations. Officers' assessment is that the policies and procedures detailed in this report will not lead to changes in service provision or the deployment of resources that would increase or decrease the emission of carbon.

4. Background

- 4.1 In March 2020 the UK Government temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance by £20 per week (£1,040 per year). This provided support to those facing the greatest financial disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase ended on 6th October 2021.

- 4.2 On the 24 November 2021, the Universal Credit earnings taper rate reduced from 63% to 55%. The taper rate is the amount your Universal Credit payment reduces by when you receive income from employment. For every £1 earned, Universal Credit decreases by 55p, compared to a 63p reduction previously. This means that people who are working and on Universal Credit will have a greater income than previously. Claimants who benefit from this change will receive an average of £1000 more per year.
- 4.3 Alongside the changes in Universal Credit, costs of living and particularly costs of energy are increasing. It is expected that average household fuel bills will increase from £1 277 a year to between £2 100 and £2 400 by October 2022¹. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimate that, after April, low income households will be spending, on average, 18% of their income (after housing costs) on energy bills and this figure rises to 54% for single adult households on low incomes (compared to 33% in 2019-20). It is therefore likely that an increasing number of households in the UK will experience poverty and those already experiencing poverty will be pushed further into poverty.

5. Impact on people in Falkirk

- 5.1 The changes to Universal Credit will impact an estimated 12 763 households in the Falkirk Council area². Whilst all lose the £20 uplift, roughly one third will benefit from the changes in taper rate³. The overall impact to the Falkirk Council area will be a reduction in household income of around £8.8m.
- 5.2 The following diagram was adapted from a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁴. It shows the monthly income of a single parent (30 years old) with two children (1 and 3 years old). They are not working, and Universal Credit does not expect the main carer of a child under three to work. Even with the £20 uplift to Universal Credit in 2020/21 this household was below the poverty line and well below the Minimum Income Standard (the standard of living we agree as a society we should all be able to expect). The 2021/22 section shows the impact of the removal of the Universal Credit uplift alongside the addition of the Scottish Child Payment.

¹ CIPFA Directors of Finance Monthly Briefing - January 2022

² Falkirk Council Lift Dashboard – August 2021

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1000-boost-for-nearly-2m-working-households-on-universal-credit>

⁴ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-scotland-2021>



Level of poverty

- 5.3 Latest figures from 2019/20 show that after housing costs, 6980 children in the Falkirk area are living in poverty. This increased from 6691 children in 2018/19. More detail including a breakdown by ward is included in the briefing note attached as Appendix 1.

Unemployment

- 5.4 The claimant count in the Falkirk Council area is shown on the table below.

	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020	Dec 2021
Claimant Rate Total	3%	3.2%	5.7%	3.7%
Number of claimants	3060	3264	5814	3820
			Jun 2020	Dec 2021
Claimant Rate 16-24 year olds			10.1%	6.1%

- 5.5 The claimant count is higher for people aged 16-24 years. However youth unemployment rates have improved month on month both locally and nationally (Falkirk Council area: Aug 21 - 975, Sep 21 - 885). Whilst this is partly due to businesses opening again after the pandemic restrictions, it is also due to targeted youth unemployment initiatives including the Young Persons Guarantee, funded by Scottish Government and the Kickstart Scheme funded by UK Government.
- 5.6 Whilst the claimant rate decreased between December 2020 and 2021, child poverty has increased over the same period. This suggests that in work poverty remains an issue for many local families.

6. Impact on demand for Falkirk Council services

- 6.1 As the number of people experiencing poverty and the level of hardship for those already experiencing poverty increases, there will be increased demand for support services. This is already being experienced and demand for support will continue to increase in coming months.
- 6.2 We are already seeing an increase in enquiries about fuel costs and the difficulties that people are having meeting these. Additionally, feedback from community food providers indicates they are seeing increased demand for support, particularly over the festive period.
- 6.3 We saw an increase in people requiring debt and welfare benefits support in 2021 compared to 2020:
- Debt Advice service in 2021
 - supported 756 clients (627 in 2020)
 - negotiated £5.6m of debt (£3.9m in 2020)
 - Welfare Benefits service in 2021
 - supported 2994 clients (2250 in 2020)
 - client financial gain £5.9m (compared to £7.2m in 2020)
- 6.4 In contrast to the above applications for Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants have reduced in recent years. By January 2022 we had received 3728 applications, compared to 5083 in 2020/21. Feedback from a national Scottish Welfare Fund network meeting highlighted that Crisis grant applications have decreased across all Scottish Local Authorities in 2021/22. It is thought that the Scottish Child Bridging payments and the Universal Credit £20 uplift and Covid related tenant protections have suppressed Crisis Grant applications.
- 6.5 The recent financial pressures experienced by tenants and residents in Falkirk will impact on their ability to sustain rent or mortgage payments. This will result in additional homeless presentations and further demand on Falkirk Council housing.
- 6.6 In the last three months, compared to the same period in 2020, homeless presentations increased by 5.5% and demand for Housing Advice increased by 13.9%. This demand is difficult to manage as no additional resources are available, impacting on staff health and wellbeing. In addition, the increased demand prolongs the wait for appointments and reduces the time staff can spend with applicants.
- 6.7 We have already seen an increase in waiting time to access social housing. Those who are homeless now wait approximately a year to be rehoused, placing pressure on temporary accommodation and increasing the time spent in temporary accommodation.

- 6.8 There is a lack of affordable accommodation in the area, as the cost of most private rented accommodation is greater than the Local Housing Allowance. This means people in receipt of benefits do not receive enough housing allowance to cover the cost of their rent. Alongside reduced turnover of social rented properties due to Covid, this further increases demand for social housing, lengthening the time people spend homeless and adding more pressure on services.
- 6.9 Engagement with the Employment and Training Unit increased by 33% in 2020/2021. The Covid restrictions reduced face to face activity as well as the number of local vacancies available within our communities. Additional local and National investment has increased blended delivery of provision whilst increased employment recruitment incentives helped progress participants into supported employment opportunities as restrictions eased and the economy and local labour market recovered. However financial hardship experienced during the pandemic resulted in people seeking employment in sectors and roles that often lead to 'in work' poverty. The Employment and Training Unit is working with partners and stakeholders to target and support low-income families in this situation. Helping them to improve their skills and career prospects can help increase overall household income.
- 6.10 Evidence shows poverty is often linked to other inequalities such as poor mental and physical health, attainment, breakdown of relationships and domestic abuse. These issues also increase demand on Council services. Not addressing poverty is a failure of early intervention, increasing demand and cost on public sector services such as Health and Social care in future years.

7. What are we doing

Strategic approach to addressing poverty

- 7.1 Addressing poverty and inequalities is a priority in Falkirk Council's corporate plan which aims to make sure everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and build sustainable communities.
- 7.2 Within Falkirk Council two plans provide the strategic direction for our work to tackle poverty:
- Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024
 - Falkirk's Child Poverty Action Plan 2021
- 7.3 Both of the above were approved by the Community Planning Partnership and report back to that board. Moreover, anti-poverty work is also a feature of many other strategies across the Council and Community Planning Partnership, including our Economic Strategy 2015 to 2025, our Integrated Children's Services plan and our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- 7.4 Our recent plans considered the global pandemic, its ongoing effect on the most vulnerable families in Falkirk and the expectation that the number of people living in poverty will continue to increase.

7.5 During the community engagement for the Falkirk plan, people told us that they were concerned about poverty; it was the second most talked about issue overall. The new Falkirk Plan 2021-2030 includes addressing poverty as a key theme and the following outcomes have been identified:

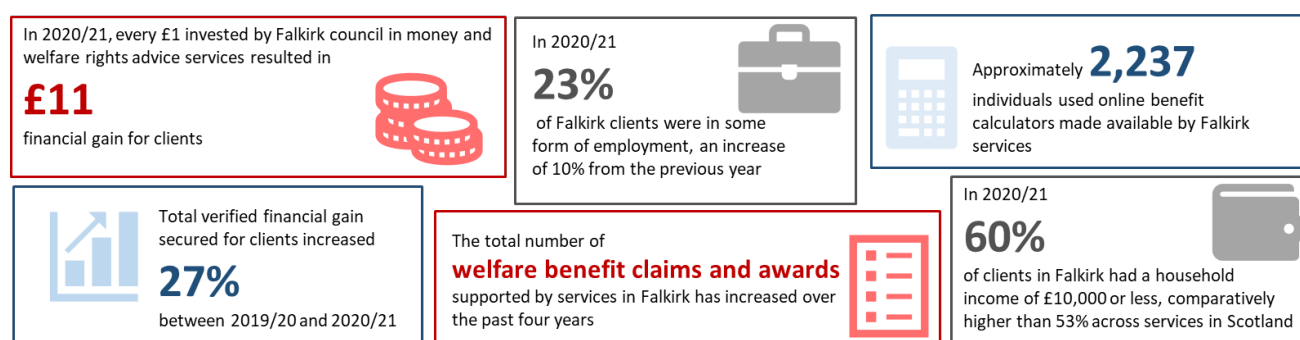
- People of all ages have equal opportunity to access digital services and have the skills and confidence to safely participate online.
- Children and young people have equal access to participate.
- Individuals and families affected by poverty have access to joined-up, multi-agency support services, and know how and where to access them.
- Fewer people struggle with the costs of food, fuel, and transport.

7.6 The Fairer Falkirk Partnership brings together public and voluntary bodies in the Falkirk area to work together to address issues to tackle poverty. Partners work with each other and their communities to identify and target the causes as well as the consequences of poverty and inequalities. Going forward the Fairer Falkirk Partnership will focus on addressing the poverty outcomes in the Falkirk plan.

Improvements and actions to tackle poverty now

7.7 Achievements so far in 2021/22 are detailed in the briefing note provided in Appendix 1.

7.8 The Improvement Service gather information on the provision of Money Advice Services across Scotland and recently provided the following summary for Falkirk's provision, which includes the Council's Community Advice Services and the three area Citizens Advice Bureaux⁵.



7.9 Falkirk Council was recently allocated a further £672k to support households experiencing financial insecurity over Winter 2021-22. The purpose of this funding is to enable local authorities to support wellbeing by preventing and responding to financial insecurity. The funding has been allocated as detailed below, building on support already in place:

⁵ Improvement Service Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework Summary 2020/21

- £23 000 to provide fuel support to
 - people residing in temporary accommodation,
 - Council tax exempt young people not supported by the leaving care team's fuel support payments, and
 - residents of the traveling person's site in receipt of Council Tax Reduction
- £45 000 Digital Exclusion Fund Round 2 supporting devices, connectivity, and support (top up to £65k allocated in May 2021 - £100k in total)
- £150 080 to provide December Scottish Child Bridging Payments to parents/carers of pupils entitled to clothing grants but not free school meals therefore not covered by Scottish Government Funding
- £272 000 to cover the shortfall in free school meals for 2021/22 enabling payments to be made to full cohort of pupils and to continue at £3.50 per day
- £175 000 for a household support fund – providing low-income households with additional funding to support essentials such as food, fuel and connectivity costs. Payments will be made to eligible households referred by Council services, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Registered Social Landlords. This will provide a cash first response whilst encouraging uptake of support around income maximisation, money and debt advice and employability.
- £6 920 to support winter weather placements for people who are homeless

7.10 The spend against the above allocations will be closely monitored and reallocated across the various elements of support for those experiencing financial insecurity depending as needed to maximise impact.

7.11 The above is in addition to the support already in place for those experiencing financial insecurity, supported by additional Covid-19 funding as detailed in the report to the Executive in May 2021. Whilst the briefing note in Appendix 1 provides more detail, by the end of January 2022 we had supported low-income households to self-isolate through:

- Proactive contact to 17 991 individuals to check if they need support to self-isolate
- 3 174 Self Isolation Support Grants of £500 where people lost income due to self-isolation
- 1 888 payments in lieu of free school meals for pupils required to miss school due to self-isolation (total £26 141)
- 190 payments of £75 to low-income households to help with fuel costs during self-isolation

- 7.12 To provide the best support to those who really need it, we will commission an independent review of our face-to-face service provision, with a particular focus on the services provided in the Advice and Support Hubs. This work aims to understand how customer needs have changed over the pandemic and support service redesign to meet these needs. This will make sure we invest in service delivery that maximises support to help people improve their circumstances and provides a fully rounded service.
- 7.13 We are reaching out to support households in or at risk of poverty. We have invested in a data tool that allows us to identify households on a low income, where expenditure is likely to exceed income or where there could be additional benefit entitlement. We will use this information to target households, inviting them to engage with our Advice Hubs team for a financial health-check.
- 7.14 The value of linking our Advice Hubs into our Education establishments is also being tested with a particular emphasis on early years families. Assigning a named multi-skilled advisor to a school nursery should build up trust within that establishment and the families who attend it, encouraging take up of advice and support to reduce child poverty.
- 7.15 We are developing Prevention Strategies including a bespoke prevention team to stop households becoming homeless in the first place. We continue to review our housing support provision to ensure that support offered meets the needs of our customers. We know how valuable early intervention strategies are in stopping the cycle of debt and homelessness and we continue to work with partners to identify opportunities for these. We work closely with partners at NHS Forth Valley and have a Community Psychiatric Nurse located within the Housing Needs team.
- 7.16 The Employment and Training Unit are working with local parents to co-design employability support services. This will make sure that services meet their needs and will improve the financial stability for the whole family. We work with partners to provide workshops within communities that encompass financial advice, childcare advice, health and wellbeing and employment and skills development advice and guidance. The Parental Employment Support programme supports people in precarious and low paid employment as well as those currently unemployed progress in the labour market.
- 7.17 The Young Person's Guarantee supports young people to secure employment and Modern Apprenticeships in sustainable industries locally. Employer recruitment incentives have enabled many small businesses to support young people to gain vital skills and experience whilst building back businesses after the Covid restrictions.

- 7.18 The Local Employability Partnership has agreed a proportion of the Young Person's Guarantee funding will be used to commission resources to work across the partnership. This will ensure those currently disengaged from employment, education and/or training will be supported to re-engage with the appropriate support provider, improving their career prospects. This targeted resource will address the current disparity of positive destination between the most and least deprived areas in Falkirk
- 7.19 Employment and Training Unit participants continue to be supported through the distribution of digital equipment and connectivity, dedicated financial advice services, health and wellbeing provision, access to training and skills programmes and employability support, advice and guidance. In addition, participants are supported to gain appropriate interview and workwear, reimbursed travel expenses and provided with discretionary transitional support payments to support childcare and other costs between last benefit payment and first wage.
- 7.20 In 2022/23 Scottish Attainment Challenge funding will change, with local authorities receiving three pots of funding to reduce the attainment gap and accelerate learning for those living in areas of deprivation. These funds will be set for four years to allow greater planning, programme provision and targeted support. The three funding streams are:
- Children in Low Income Families (education central fund): £332,745 (2022/23 allocation)
 - Pupil Equity Funding (schools fund): £4,401,541*
 - Care Experienced PEF (social work central fund): £298,800*
- *estimated based on previous year amount*
- 7.21 Each school and service will create a strategic plan outlining their challenges, based on data and evidence. The plans will outline their programmes for improvement and create tools to continuously assess and evaluate outcomes to ensure that funding is spent effectively and efficiently.
- 7.22 A 'Think Poverty' workshop has been developed to help staff better understand how poverty impacts on people and their everyday life. This workshop can be undertaken by a team without a need for a trained facilitator and generates discussion on the challenges that people living on a low income experience. The purpose of the toolkit is to improve awareness and understanding of poverty across our organisation from senior management to frontline staff. This will help staff to consider the needs of people experiencing poverty as they design and deliver services. The workshop is currently undergoing final testing before wider roll out.

8. Considerations

- 8.1 Work on the 2022 Falkirk Child Poverty Action Plan is underway. Underpinning the year 4 plan is the collection and analysis of local data on the impact that Covid-19 has had on priority groups affected by poverty and the inclusion of lived experience into our work.
- 8.2 By March 2023, children and young people in Falkirk will be empowered participants at the heart of the democratic decision-making processes of Falkirk Council, partners and third sector organisations. This is in line with the UNCRC incorporation into Scots Law. Our authority's vision is the same as that of the Scottish Government. We aim for Falkirk to be the best place to grow up; for our children and young people to be safe, loved and respected so that they can fulfil their potential in every way. To ensure that this vision becomes our reality, in 2020 we consulted with over 200 of our children and young people. They identified the following UNCRC articles as their current priorities.

Most important top five:



74%

Article 28:
I have the
right to an
education



70%

Article 12:
I have the
right to be
listened to
and taken
seriously



62%

Article 6:
I should be
supported to
live and grow



62%

Article 27:
I have the
right to a
proper house,
food and
clothing



60%

Article 31:
I have the
right to relax
and play

- 8.3 Our change processes will be built around the foundations defined by our children and young people. Children and young people in Falkirk will become empowered participants operating at the heart of our democratic decision-making processes.

9. Implications

Financial

- 9.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. As poverty increases, demand for services will increase impacting on budgets.

Resources

- 9.2 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report although increasing demand for support services increases pressure on available resources.

Legal

- 9.3 The Fairer Scotland duty requires public bodies, including the Council, to consider how they can address poverty across all strategies and services. As we set budgets and redesign services we need to actively consider if we can make things better for people who are in or at risk of poverty as part of our decisions.

Risk

- 9.4 No new risks have arisen from this report. The Council's risk register includes a risk that we fail to monitor, measure, manage, and mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform and Poverty, with substantial assurance that appropriate actions are in place.

Equalities

- 9.5 There are no new equalities issues from this report.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 9.6 There are no new environmental or sustainability issues from this report.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 Tackling poverty is a priority for Falkirk Council and structures and plans are in place to address and mitigate poverty where possible. There is established positive joint working across the area and positive achievements have been delivered in the last year. The long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains to be seen and there is a commitment to understanding this in more depth across partner organisations to inform our work and help vulnerable people living in poverty in 2022.
- 10.2 In addition to directly supporting people in or at risk of poverty as described above, we need to continue to consider how we might make things better in the longer term for people in poverty. This should include considering how we might address poverty across the design and delivery of all services, in line with the requirements of the Fairer Scotland duty.

Director of Corporate & Housing Services

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Date: 11 February 2022

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Tackling Poverty Briefing Paper

List of Background Papers:

[The Falkirk Plan 2021-2030](#)

[The Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021](#)

[Covid-19 Support for People Funding May 2021](#)

Appendix 1: Members' Briefing – December 2021

Tackling Poverty in Falkirk

This report provides a summary of information for elected members on poverty and the actions taken to tackle this following the Council Executive meeting on 30th November 2021.

Background

Poverty is at the core of inequality and deprivation. In order to tackle inequality, there is a commitment to make Falkirk a fairer place to live, so people can participate in life and achieve their goals.

We have two principal plans that provide the overall strategic direction for tackling poverty in Falkirk, namely our antipoverty strategy 'Towards a Fairer Falkirk 2019-2024' and Falkirk's Child Poverty Action Plan required annually by the Scottish Government. Additionally the new Falkirk Plan 2021-2030 addresses poverty as a key theme. Moreover, antipoverty work is also a feature of many other strategies across the Council and Community Planning Partnership.

Throughout the development of our recent plans we have considered the global pandemic and its ongoing effect on the most vulnerable families in Falkirk. Our ambition is to ensure that the detrimental effects of poverty, and particularly child poverty are diminished. During our community engagement for the Falkirk plan, people told us that they were concerned about poverty; it was the second most talked about issue overall.

The evidence suggests that child poverty in Scotland is driven by structural or institutional factors. These include:

- **Income from employment**, influenced by the availability of jobs, hours and the level of earnings, and barriers to taking up that work, such as childcare responsibilities; plus qualifications and skills, which can influence both current and future child poverty;
- **Costs of living**, including housing, food and fuel costs, the poverty premium, the costs of the school day, and the extra, unavoidable costs of disability or living in a rural area
- **Income from social security and benefits in kind**, influenced by: - design and generosity of the benefits system, sanctions and recovery of advance payments, hardship payments and third-party debts, as well as barriers to accessing financial support (including child maintenance).

Considerations

On 19 May 2021, the End Child Poverty coalition released new research showing the reality of child poverty in the UK, and what has changed over the last five years. The research was carried out by the Centre for Research in

Social Policy at Loughborough University. The report, [*Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2019/20*](#), covers the five-year period from 2014–15 to 2019–20. Latest figures from 2019/20 show that **after housing costs, 6980 children** in the Falkirk area are classed as living in poverty – or 1 in 4. In 2018/19 there were 6691 children living in poverty after housing costs (23.8%) and this increased in 2019/20 to 6980 children living in poverty after housing costs (24.8%).

Highlighted below is the number of children living in low-income families (before housing costs) in the Falkirk area. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.

Local Authority	Number					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Grangemouth	542	499	446	499	491	541
Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst	515	458	418	429	447	514
Falkirk South	377	308	327	367	371	361
Bo'ness and Blackness	415	340	373	375	406	375
Upper Braes	472	403	395	464	443	492
Falkirk North	751	711	650	838	822	855
Denny and Banknock	557	477	496	495	499	608
Bonnybridge and Larbert	354	354	338	337	314	365
Lower Braes	317	328	316	284	316	360

The Falkirk Plan identifies four outcomes to be addressed under the Poverty theme:

- People of all ages have equal opportunity to access digital services and have the skills and confidence to safely participate online.
- Children and young people have equal access to participate.
- Individuals and families affected by poverty have access to joined-up, multi-agency support services, and know how and where to access them.
- Fewer people struggle with the costs of food, fuel, and transport.

The priority groups that we identified previously for the Local Child Poverty Action Plan remain the same and are:

- Young people (16-19 or 16-24)
- Care Experienced,
- Young People,
- Large families (3+ Children)
- Lone parents.

We work jointly with a range of partners to tackle poverty in Falkirk. Our Fairer Falkirk Partnership sets the strategic direction for poverty in Falkirk and has representatives from NHS Forth Valley, Voluntary Sector and Falkirk Council. Furthermore we have a Child Poverty Working Group which co-ordinates actions for our Local Child Poverty Action Report and identifies future priorities and actions. Representatives on this group include Managers from Falkirk Council including the Employability and Training Unit, Welfare Benefits and Advice, Children's services, NHS Forth Valley Public Health and Barnardos. Updates for the Child Poverty report are collated quarterly to monitor progress.

The following are some of the achievements we have delivered so far in 2020/2021 to tackle poverty

- Supported 99 young people onto the young person's guarantee scheme
- Reduced the percentage gap of school leavers from the most deprived and the least deprived areas entering a positive destination such as employment
- Supported 44 parents from our priority groups in parental employment support tackling in-work poverty.
- Delivered an online event to 55 managers at Falkirk Council to enable them to better support their lower paid staff
- Improved the uptake among families of eligible 2-year olds for early learning and childcare including through a targeted social media campaign.
- Secured an increase in the uptake of free school meals entitlement by 25% on the previous year.
- Directly supported 1136 households struggling with their fuel costs
- Supported 717 individuals/households with the costs of staying connected during the Covid restrictions addressing digital exclusion
- Set up a referral process for Health Visitors in NHS Forth Valley to refer to Welfare Benefits team to make sure that young parents are receiving all the benefits they're entitled to
- Supported 1713 digitally excluded households with devices, connectivity and support to get online since the start of the pandemic
- Supported Community Food providers to address food insecurity on a regular basis for ~800 households with food
- Provided a dedicated Income Maximisation officer in Brae High School to help families in need

- Gathered lived experience of people receiving help from the voluntary sector and fed into our plan
- Supported people to maximise their income through benefits advice with benefit gains of £47,844.39 via Community Advice Services and £2,602,502 benefit gains via the Citizen's Advice Bureaux
- Provided 2758 customer orders online of Free Period Products
- Supported community organisations to promote a cash first approach via the 'Worrying about Money' leaflet
- Provided 69 grants to organisations to support provision of food and activities during school holidays
- Supported pandemic payments/Scottish Child Bridging payments and payments in lieu of free school meals to 938 pupils from low income households but not entitled under national criteria.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set stretching targets for child poverty reduction. The Scottish Government published a Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan in 2018, setting out policies and programmes to support progress towards reaching the child poverty targets. The Scottish Government is currently in the process of developing the next Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, which is due to be published in March 2022. The scale of the challenge is significant, and the 2022-2026 delivery plan will be crucial to achieving both the interim and final targets.

Work begins in the New Year on the fourth Falkirk Child Poverty Action Plan. A significant piece of work to underpin the year 4 plan is the collection and analysis of local data on the impact that Covid-19 has had on priority groups affected by poverty. Moreover plans will get underway to develop the inclusion of lived experience into our work in 2022.

Arrangements for the delivery plan for the Falkirk plan are to be agreed in the New Year and the Fairer Falkirk Partnership will play a key role in overseeing and co-ordinating action to achieve the outcomes in the plan.

Conclusions

Poverty is a key priority for Falkirk and structures and plans are in place to meet key outcomes set for the region. There is established positive joint working in the area and positive achievements in the last year to tackle poverty. The long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains to be seen and there is a commitment to understanding this in more depth across partner organisations to inform our work and help vulnerable people living in poverty in 2022.

In addition to directly supporting people in or at risk of poverty as described above, we need to continue to consider how we might make things better for people in poverty across the design and delivery of services, in line with the requirements of the Fairer Scotland duty. An example of this was the redesign of our face to face services which resulted in the move from One stop shops to our Advice Hubs. The Advice Hubs are focused on supporting those most in need and provide a rounded service, encouraging people to take up

additional support as appropriate to their individual circumstances. This includes income maximisation support to make sure people are claiming the benefits they're entitled to and money and debt advice to help people make the most of their income. Going forward we need to make sure we actively consider how to improve things for people living on a low income across all Councils services.

List of Background Papers:

[The Falkirk Plan 2021-2030](#)

[The Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021](#)