

EX114. Poverty in Falkirk

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided information on the potential impact of the recent changes to Universal Credit. The Executive had requested the report at its meeting of 30 November 2021. At that meeting the Executive agreed that the report would also be presented to the Education, Children and Young People Executive and to Council. In light of the full information presented in the report the Executive was asked to agree that it was not necessary to further submit the report.

Changes to Universal Credit would impact an estimated 12,763 households in the Falkirk Council area. Roughly one third would benefit from the changes in taper rate. The overall impact to the Falkirk Council area would be a reduction in household income of around £8.8m. Latest figures from 2019/20 showed that after housing costs, 6,980 children in the Falkirk area were living in poverty.

As the number of people experiencing poverty and the level of hardship for those already experiencing poverty increased, there would be increased demand for support services. There was already an increase in enquiries about fuel costs.

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%. There was a lack of affordable accommodation in the area, as the cost of most private rented accommodation was greater than the Local Housing Allowance.

Addressing poverty and inequalities was a priority in Falkirk Council's corporate plan which aimed to make sure everyone had an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and build sustainable communities. 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 would continue to increase.

Work on the 2022 Falkirk Child Poverty Action Plan was underway. Underpinning the year 4 plan was the collection and analysis of local data on the impact that Covid-19 had had on priority groups affected by poverty and the inclusion of lived experience into our work. By March 2023, children and young people in Falkirk would be empowered participants at the heart of the democratic decision-making processes of Falkirk Council, partners and third sector organisations. This was in line with the UNCRC incorporation into Scots Law.

The Executive:-

- (1) noted the update on the likely impact of the changes and the work underway to tackle poverty in Falkirk, and**

- (2) agreed that consideration of the report at this meeting was sufficient to satisfy the reporting requirement agreed by the Executive.**