

Why is this issue important?

Growing up in poverty can have long-lasting effects on a child's health, development, education and lifetime opportunities. The relationship between growing up in poverty and outcomes in adulthood is complex. Families living in poverty are at increased risk of adversity as well as having reduced access to resources to counteract the effects.¹ While many children growing up in disadvantaged circumstances do well,² living in poverty can have harmful impacts on a child's social, emotional and behavioural development.

The association between living in poverty and poor educational outcomes starts before children begin school and persists throughout schooling.³ Educational attainment determines future employment prospects and is associated with many health conditions in adulthood.⁴

After many years of falling, the rates of child poverty have begun to rise. Between 2014 and 2017, nearly one in four children were living in relative poverty each year after housing costs were taken into account. Two-thirds were living in households where at least one adult was working.⁵

A number of different local estimates of child poverty are available. The sources, which have different strengths and limitations, are summarised on the **Scottish Government website**.

Are there inequalities to consider?

Children who are exposed to the following circumstances are at increased risk of living in poverty and their experience of poverty tends to be more severe:⁶

- living in lone parent households
- being disabled
- having disabled parents
- are in or are leaving the care system
- having a parent in prison
- are carers
- are from families who are asylum seekers/refugees or travellers/gypsies.

Challenges and solutions

At a local level, approaches to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty include:⁶

- the provision of benefit advice and support to encourage the uptake of benefits
- encouraging employers to pay the Living Wage
- discouraging the use of zero-hours contracts
- ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible, and links people to employment, education and training opportunities
- guaranteeing access to flexible and affordable high-quality childcare to help mothers to access employment, training, education and skills development opportunities
- poverty proofing the school day
- encouraging and supporting parents/carers to apply for Healthy Start vouchers, free school meals, clothing grants and the Educational Maintenance Allowance.

Examples of positive action

- The **Healthier Wealthier Children** project in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde aimed to develop robust referral pathways between the NHS Early Years workforce and money advice services to help pregnant women and families with young children maximise their income. Using learning from this

project, NHS Health Scotland is working with partners to develop a national strategy for the delivery of financial inclusion services to this vulnerable population group.

- The **Cost of the School Day** project in Glasgow and the **1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty** project in Edinburgh were set up to improve the understanding of the causes and impact of child poverty. They also looked at what changes schools could make to better support children from low-income families, especially in terms of reducing school-related costs. Resources have been developed by incorporating ideas and suggestions from staff, parents, carers, and children and young people.
- **Healthy Start** is a UK-wide food and vitamin voucher scheme for low-income pregnant women and families, and pregnant women under 18 years old regardless of financial circumstances. Around one-quarter of eligible pregnant women and families with children miss out on vouchers. Improving uptake of the vouchers was the focus of the **Early Years Collaborative Leith Pioneer project** in NHS Lothian.

Main indicators[†]

- Children in low-income families (CYP).
- Young people living in the most income-deprived quintile (CYP).

Linked indicators

Poverty impacts on all aspects of child health and wellbeing.

Resources

- NHS Health Scotland. **Child poverty, health and wellbeing e-learning**.
- NHS Health Scotland. **Child poverty**.
- What Works Scotland. **Tackling child poverty: Actions to prevent and mitigate child poverty at the local level**; 2017.
- NHS Health Scotland. **Financial inclusion referral pathway toolkit**; 2016.

[†] The letters in brackets indicate the profile the indicator can be found in. CYP = children and young people's profile; HWB = health and wellbeing profile.

- Glasgow Centre of Population Health. **Learning from the cost of the school day project. Briefing paper 49**; 2016.
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland. **School costs**.
- Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland. **Fact sheets**.
- Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland: **Resources for schools**.
- National Parent Forum of Scotland. **Cost of the school day toolkit for parent councils**.
- Cooper K, Stewart K. **Does money affect children's outcomes? A systematic review**. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 2013.
- Cooper K, Stewart K. **Does money affect children's outcomes? An update**. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion; 2017.
- Scottish Government. **Building the evidence base on tackling poverty**; 2017.
- Scottish Government. **Local area poverty data; a summary of sources of local authority level poverty data**.
- ScotPHO. **Children and young people: key points**.

References

¹ Macdonald W, Beck S, Scott E. **Briefing on child poverty**. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland; 2013.

² Kiernan KE, Mensah FK. **Poverty, family resources and children's early education attainment; the mediating role of parenting**. British Educational Research Journal 2011;37(2):317–36.

³ Sosu E, Ellis S. **Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education**. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 2014.

⁴ Wickham S, Anwar E, Barr B, Law C, Taylor-Robinson D. **Poverty and child health in the UK: Using evidence for action**. Archives of Disease in Childhood 2016; 101: 759–66.

⁵ Scottish Government. **Poverty & income inequality in Scotland: 2014-17**. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government; 2018.

⁶ Treanor MC. **Actions to prevent and mitigate child poverty in south Ayrshire community planning partnership**. Edinburgh: What Works Scotland; 2017.