



The Scottish  
Government

# Tackling Child Poverty in Scotland: Join the Debate



Your views can make a difference



2010  
European Year  
for Combating  
Poverty and  
Social Exclusion

# join the debate...

## page 4

what is child poverty?

## page 7

how will the new strategy help?

## page 8

what's already being done to tackle child poverty in Scotland?

## page 16

your views can make a difference



# our vision is for a Scotland where no children are disadvantaged by poverty – and we're working hard to achieve it



Over the last 10 years, child poverty levels have fallen significantly. But with around 210,000 children in Scotland still living in poverty, more can and needs to be done. This is why the UK Child Poverty Act was passed, which commits governments across the UK to end child poverty by 2020, and to be transparent about what they are doing to make this happen. Our new strategy will explain what the Scottish Government and its partners will do to tackle child poverty – and we'd like your help in developing this.

## How you can help

This booklet provides a summary of what is being done to tackle child poverty in Scotland. By reading this booklet and telling us what you think of the work we're doing already, you can help us to make the new strategy even better. Simply answer the questions at the back of this booklet and return to us FREEPOST at the address given.

# what is child poverty?

Poverty is a complicated issue, which has lots of different causes and effects.



Living in poverty can mean going without the basic necessities in life: nutritious food, warm clothing, decent housing, heating and a good education.

It can also mean missing out on birthday celebrations, school trips and family outings – the sorts of things many other families take for granted.

Growing up in poverty can put children and young people more at risk of:

- Poorer health
- Leaving school with fewer qualifications and skills
- Expecting less out of life
- Being unemployed or low paid
- Becoming dependent on benefits
- Exposure to substance abuse and crime
- Being stigmatised or discriminated against.

# how do we measure child poverty?

The UK Child Poverty Act sets targets for the eradication of child poverty by 2020. These targets are based on four different measurements of child poverty:



**Relative poverty** - where a child lives in a household earning less than 60% of the average UK family income.

**Material deprivation and low income** - where a child lives in a household earning less than 70% of the average UK family income and lacks many of the basic necessities of life.

**Absolute low income** - where a child lives in a household earning below a fixed level of low income.

**Persistent poverty** - where a child has lived in a low-income household for long periods of time.

# it's a global problem...

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement to protect children and young people's rights in a variety of ways – including the right to a decent standard of living, free from poverty.

Our work to tackle the problem in Scotland has, and will continue to, support the key goals of the UNCRC.



# how will the new strategy help?

Developing a new strategy gives us an opportunity to look at what we are already doing – and where we could do better. We can then include these improvements in our future work to make greater progress, faster.

## The new strategy will have two main aims:

1. Lifting families out of poverty by helping them to increase their income and reduce their household expenses
2. Improving children and young people's wellbeing and chances later in life

It will also set out how we will:

- Strengthen local communities and improve physical environments
- Deliver the strategy by working with the rest of Scottish society to make it happen

## It's important to remember...

Some decisions that affect children and young people living in Scotland are still made by the UK Government who will be developing their own strategy.

Our new strategy will focus on what can be done in Scotland by the Scottish Government and its many local partners, including local councils.

# what's already being done to tackle child poverty in Scotland?

The main policies of national and local government in Scotland to tackle child poverty are:

**Achieving Our Potential: A Framework to Tackle Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland.** This is a strategy to help more people out of poverty – for example, by supporting people to get and keep jobs, and to help those who cannot work make their money go further.

**The Early Years Framework.** This aims to give all children in Scotland the best start in life and sets out the steps that the Scottish Government and its partners need to take to achieve it.

**Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Health and Inequalities.** People living in poverty in Scotland are more likely to have poor health. The measures set out in *Equally Well* aim to help improve health, especially for people living in deprivation.

**Getting it Right for Every Child.** This puts children and young people's needs first and encourages a more co-ordinated approach by everyone who can help them.

# three core beliefs shape everything we do

## We believe that:

- 1.** The earlier we can help a child the more we are likely to be able to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place – or to stop an existing problem from getting worse.
- 2.** Focusing on the capabilities and potential that families *have* rather than concentrating only on what they *don't have* will help them manage better in the long term.
- 3.** If we put children's needs first and all work together to ensure they are met then Scotland's children will get the help they need when they need it.



The earlier we can help a child the more we are likely to be able to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place



# our current approach to tackling child poverty

We are already working hard to tackle child poverty in Scotland. This is a brief summary of the main areas we are working on.

1

## Making it easier for more parents to get – and keep – a job

We are:

- Helping parents to get the skills and training that today's employers are looking for
- Continuing to work with NHS Boards, Skills Development Scotland, Community Planning Partnerships, Third Sector and Jobcentre Plus to provide support and create jobs for those who need them the most
- Supporting the work of bodies like Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to boost Scotland's economy and create new jobs
- Providing extra support to people who find it especially difficult to find work
- Helping those currently out of work due to health problems to get back to work
- Making affordable and good quality childcare available to parents that work or study
- Encouraging more employers to offer more family-friendly workplaces and working hours



2

## Helping parents manage their money

We are helping parents by:

- Supporting information and advice agencies, and ensuring that parents know who to ask for help with money matters
- Giving them better information in order to help with money management, making better financial decisions and avoiding getting into debt
- Offering help to make more informed decisions about things like loans, budgeting, savings and insurance

3

## Helping to increase families' incomes and to reduce the pressure on household budgets

We are:

- Helping families access the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to
- Continuing to press the UK Government on the importance of supporting families in poverty through the welfare system
- Taking action to reduce pressure on household budgets, for example by getting rid of prescription charges and offering free school meals to children in low-income households
- Making good quality, affordable housing more widely available

# 4

## Creating safe, happy home environments for children

We are:

- Supporting parents to form strong bonds with their children – for example, by promoting good parenting and helping families through times of crisis
- Supporting parents to interact positively with their children through learning and play
- Helping parents to provide a good home environment for their children and to help their children learn and develop



# 5

## Supporting children and families at risk

We are:

- Working to ensure that Scotland's most vulnerable children and families – for example, those with disabled children or parents, those facing problems such as homelessness, substance abuse, domestic abuse or violence, and children who offend – get the help that they need, when they need it
- Working with local partners to ensure a more joined up approach to caring for children
- Delivering new guidance on child protection



We are delivering new guidance on child protection



6

## Improving the health of Scotland's poorest families

We are:

- Working to improve the health of children and families, through policies such as *Equally Well*, *Better Health*, *Better Care* and the *Early Years Framework*
- Focusing on improving the care infants and children receive in their earliest years – including making it easier for lower income mums-to-be to receive the antenatal care they need
- Strengthening the role of NHS maternity care in giving all children the best start in life

7

## Creating opportunities for children and young people to learn and thrive

We are:

- Continuing to help every child, regardless of background, achieve their potential through getting the right opportunities – including getting the learning experiences that are right for them and their needs
- Working to ensure that free pre-school education and affordable childcare are more widely available
- Reducing class sizes to help improve the quality of children's learning experiences
- Fulfilling our duty to make sure that children with additional support needs get the help they need, as promised in the Additional Support for Learning Act
- Making sure that young people get positive opportunities to learn and thrive in their communities, for example through youth work, culture and sport

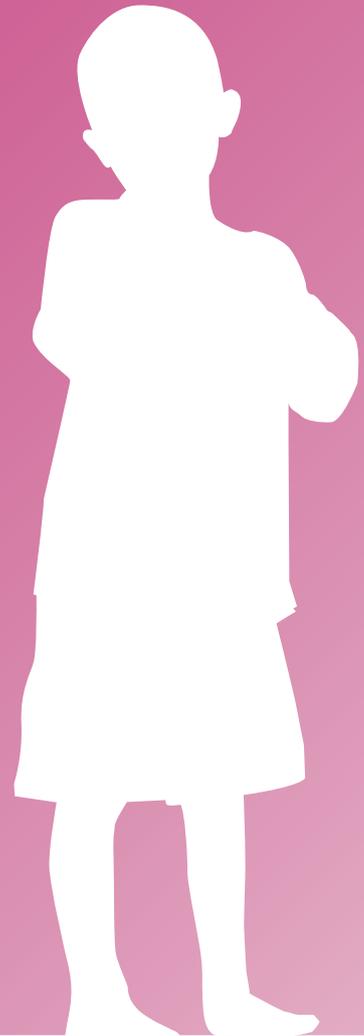
## 8 Supporting young people into adulthood

We are:

- Helping more young people gain the skills and qualifications they need for learning, work and life
- Ensuring that young people are receiving the right support at school and giving them a clear pathway into learning post-16 through *More Choices, More Chances* – a plan for young people who need extra support to stay, or get back into learning, training or employment
- Making learning more affordable for 16-19 year olds by offering Educational Maintenance Allowances
- Improving careers information, advice and guidance
- Working to make quality vocational education and training opportunities available to young people, including modern apprenticeships



We are improving careers information, advice and guidance



9

## Making sure that all children grow up in safe, strong communities

We are:

- Working to ensure that low-income communities have the facilities they need, such as play areas, recreation facilities, transport links and access to good, affordable food
- Supporting low-income families to be involved locally in decisions that affect them, and empowering communities to make things happen on their own terms
- Creating safer, stronger communities, reducing anti-social behaviour and crime, and promoting positive behaviour



We are investing in affordable housing

10

## Improving housing and the physical environment

We are:

- Investing in affordable housing
- Working to reduce and prevent homelessness
- Making it easier and cheaper for families to heat their homes
- Working to protect existing green spaces and play spaces, and to promote better opportunities for recreation and play

# your views can make a difference

We'd like to know what you think of our current approach to tackling child poverty in Scotland and what we should be doing in the future. This will help us to ensure that we get our individual policies right and make our overall strategy as effective as possible.

If you would like to know more, a more detailed version of this document is available at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/childpovertydiscussionpaper](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/childpovertydiscussionpaper)

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below then return to:  
Myra Watson, Employability and Tackling Poverty Division, Area 2-E (South)  
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ or e-mail [Myra.Watson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Myra.Watson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)



Do you think our current approach is targeting help where it's needed most – or do you think there are any areas we've not covered?

---

---

---

---

**Q2**

What do you think can make the biggest difference to (i) reducing child poverty and (ii) reducing the impact poverty has on children's well-being and life chances?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q3**

What are the biggest challenges that (i) the Scottish Government and (ii) its local partners (such as local authorities and the NHS) face when tackling child poverty?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q4

We believe that focusing on the capabilities and potential that families *have*, rather than only concentrating on what they *don't have*, will help them manage better in the long term. Do you agree with this, and if so, how do you think families can be better supported to make the most of their potential?

---

---

---

---

Q5

What help can the Scottish Government provide to the people tackling child poverty in local communities?

---

---

---

---

Q6

Can you think of any good examples of things people are doing in your local area to tackle child poverty?

---

---

---

---

# Q7

If we would like to ask you more about your views on child poverty and our approach for tackling it, would you be happy for us to contact you? If so, please provide an email address, home address or phone number.

---

---

---

---

## thank you...

for taking the time to read this booklet and tell us what you think of the work we're doing to tackle child poverty in Scotland. Your feedback can make a difference!





The Scottish  
Government

© Crown copyright 2010

ISBN: 978-0-7559-9711-4

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Published by the Scottish Government, November 2010

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS10824 (11/10)

w w w . s c o t l a n d . g o v . u k