

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 27 August 2024

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: East Lothian Poverty Plan 2024-2028

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Council approval of the East Lothian Partnership's Poverty Plan 2024-2028.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council approves the East Lothian Poverty Plan 2024-2028, including the outcomes and actions contained within the Plan.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2010 set targets for the reduction of child poverty by 2030 and places duties on Scottish Ministers to prepare delivery plans regularly, and report annually on progress. Local authorities and health boards must produce annual reports on progress towards these targets and activities related to the key outcomes:
- helping people into fair, well-paid jobs
 - supporting people with the cost of living
 - increasing awareness and uptake of social security benefits
- 3.2 Since the East Lothian Poverty Commission in 2016, East Lothian Partnership have been working strategically to address the drivers of poverty and pave sustainable routes out of poverty. The first plan in 2017 set out our approach based on the Poverty Commission's report recommendations. 2020 brought the unforeseen impacts of COVID-19

and cost-of-living crisis and our 2021-2023 Plan balanced addressing the short-term impacts of these crises with the long-term drivers of poverty.

3.3 Poverty in East Lothian is rising at a time of reduced resources. We know that:

- Since our last Poverty Plan in 2021, East Lothian Foodbank use has increased by 99%. This makes it the fifth busiest foodbank in Scotland.
- 21% of children in East Lothian live in relative poverty.
- 393 households were in temporary accommodation in 2022-23, including 150 children.
- 1908 pensioners claim Pension Credit.

3.4 Following a review of the East Lothian Poverty Plan 2021-2023 that found that 12% of actions had been completed, 82% of actions were in progress with work continuing beyond the life of the plan, and 6% of actions had been deprioritised or delayed. A new plan was developed through:

- Initial engagement with the public across all six areas of the county.
- Focus group sessions with statutory and third sector partners at two Network for Change meetings and at the Network for Change Conference.
- Poverty self-assessment in partnership with the Improvement Service to identify areas for improvement in our approach to tackling poverty. Initial in-person session was followed by an online survey. Results were analysed by the Improvement Service and in two further sessions looked at the actions needed to make these improvements.
- Thematic sessions on gender, disability, climate change, childcare and crisis support took place based on gaps identified in our approach as well as equalities planning.
- Lived experience groups were consulted across the development period. The Working for Change Collective, Growing and Changing youth group, S2 School consultation group were specifically engaged.
- An online consultation on Consul ran, giving members of the public an opportunity to influence the plan. In-person consultation sessions were organised for internal colleagues and externally for members of the public and the third sector.

3.5 **The East Lothian Poverty Plan Key Outline**

3.5.1 East Lothian Partnership's plan to tackle poverty focuses on 4 key objectives that focus on getting more cash in people's pockets, living in resilient communities that are ready for the future. In line with Scottish legislative requirements, we will focus on:

- Good quality jobs that pay fairly, where we support people to gain the skills and training needed to find and maintain work, in secure, flexible jobs that pay fairly.
- Enough money from benefits: our social security system should provide people with a fair income, but millions of pounds go unclaimed each year. We will support people to claim the income that they are entitled to and provide support with the cost of living.
- A good life with access to the essentials: housing, good health, quality food and a resilient community are part of our human rights. We will take a preventative approach to homelessness, hunger and health inequalities caused by poverty.
- Climate change ready: climate change will impact vulnerable and low-income communities the hardest. We will take preventative action to protect and support these communities from the effects of climate change.

3.5.2 The way we will work will promote these outcomes:

- Making sure that poverty is everybody's business, and that actions to tackle poverty are part of every service plan. We will make sure that those making budget decisions understand how poverty affects people in East Lothian.
- Working in a way that is person-centred and stigma- and trauma-informed. We have heard very clearly that stigma is preventing people from reaching out for support. We will make sure that our services are approachable, discreet and offer dignity and choice. We will help our workforce understand the impact of trauma and poverty.
- Working effectively as a partnership, we will build on our existing strong partnership in East Lothian. We will share resources and knowledge more effectively, using shared data to identify tailored solutions, and work towards a collective vision for East Lothian.

3.5.3 We want to make sure we are doing all we can, as effectively as we can. As part of the development of this Plan we assessed our approach to tackling poverty using the Improvement Service's self-assessment and identified key areas for improving our approach. This will be underpinned by specific improvements we need to make to our current ways of working.

- Improve our ability to use data and intelligence from across the partnership to identify and reach low-income families who might otherwise be hidden.
- Improve our engagement and quality of relationship with a wide range of low-income households to better understand and act upon what they tell us.
- Support access to affordable housing through increase of supply across all tenures.

- Prioritise fair work and job creation, capitalising on community wealth building and the role of anchor institutions to support households experiencing poverty.
- Provide awareness raising and anti-stigma training for staff and elected members at all levels.
- Ensure we have a framework that makes responsibilities clear and highlights how individual and joint actions are contributing to poverty outcomes.
- Improve our approach to holistic rather than siloed evaluations so we understand the true impact of our actions on households, communities, and East Lothian as a whole.
- Ensure a wide range of third sector voices are given an equal voice in discussions around child poverty policy and the delivery of services.
- Explore place based, whole family, collaborative approaches to supporting low-income families. Work in spaces that people feel comfortable in, and where they can access a range of services and information at the same time. These spaces are free from stigma and trauma-informed.
- Support the work of the Raising Attainment Strategy in closing the poverty related attainment gap in East Lothian schools, including the work around the cost of the school day.
- Communicate clearly about our services across multiple platforms and formats that our audiences use. Create child- and community-friendly versions of reports when it is appropriate to do so (for example when the content pertains to them).
- Ensure that we are using all levers available locally to make our childcare offer flexible and affordable, providing parents the right support at the right time.
- Improve staff and volunteer wellbeing through better support for our workforce experiencing burnout.
- Use our experience of delivering services and the experiences of our communities to make the case to UK and Scottish Governments to make the changes required to tackle systemic poverty and inequality.
- Ensure our transport system supports our partnership approach to tackling poverty and is adaptive to the needs of our communities.
- Embed human rights (and children's human rights) within our approach to tackling poverty, ensuring progressive realisation for rights holders.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The East Lothian Poverty Plan 2024-2028 includes actions that the Council and the East Lothian Partnership can put in place to contribute to reducing inequalities and breaking the cycle of poverty in East Lothian.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - the Plan requires decision makers to consider the implication of funding decisions on our ambitions to tackle poverty and wherever possible protect early intervention and prevention work.
- 6.2 Personnel - the Plan will require staff from the different partners to work together to deliver outcomes and improvements.
- 6.3 Other – none identified.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 East Lothian Poverty Plan 2024-2028

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DATE	8 th August 2024

East Lothian Partnership Poverty Plan

Priorities for Tackling Poverty 2024-2028



Picture source: Over 60's Christmas Lunch



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East Lothian Partnership Poverty Plan

I've been eating toddler portions to make sure my kids have enough. The kids laugh but I don't. Nothing is easy and nothing is spared, even the bath water has to last for all of us.

Member of the Working for Change Collective

Executive summary

East Lothian Partnership's plan to tackle poverty focuses on **4 key objectives** that focus on getting more cash in people's pockets, living in resilient communities that are ready for the future. These focus on:

- **Good quality jobs that pay fairly**, where we support people to gain the skills and training needed to find and maintain work, in secure, flexible jobs that pay fairly.
- **Enough money from benefits**, our social security system should provide people with a fair income, but millions of pounds go unclaimed each year. We will support people to claim the income that they are entitled to and provide support with the cost of living.
- **A good life with access to the essentials**. Housing, good health, quality food and a resilient community are part of our human rights. We will take a preventative approach to homelessness, hunger and health inequalities caused by poverty.
- **Climate change ready**, climate change will impact vulnerable and low-income communities the hardest. We will take preventative action to protect and support these communities from the effects of climate change.

The way we will work will promote these outcomes.

- Making sure that poverty is **everybody's business**, and that actions to tackle poverty are part of every service plan. We will make sure that those making budget decisions understand how poverty affects people in East Lothian.
- Working in a way that is person-centred and **stigma- and trauma-informed**. We have heard very clearly that stigma is preventing people from reaching out for support. We will make sure that our services are approachable, discreet and offer dignity and choice. We will help our workforce understand the impact of trauma and poverty.
- Working effectively as a **partnership**, we will build on our existing strong partnership in East Lothian. We will share resources and knowledge more effectively, using shared data to identify tailored solutions, and work towards a collective vision for East Lothian.

This will be underpinned by specific **improvements we need to make** to our current ways of working. These include actions around our housing, transport, childcare, and economy. It will require changes in the ways we work with people with lived experience of poverty, how we evaluate our projects, share our data and shape our places. It will also shape how we deliver our services, communicate about our work, and advocate for East Lothian residents.

We believe everyone in East Lothian deserves to live a life free from poverty. We will strive to make sure that people have the opportunities and support needed for long term financial stability, and be able to afford a decent standard of living.

5,801 households in East Lothian used East Lothian Foodbank in 2022-23. 13,927 people were fed.

Since 2012, Foodbank use has increased by 200%



Introduction

Poverty is about more than a simple lack of money. It is forced upon people through complex circumstances.

Poverty has a significant, negative impact on people's wellbeing, confidence, and sense of worth.

Poverty is never a choice. It is a human rights issue. People have a right to an adequate standard of living, to feel included and able to participate in their community.

East Lothian is an attractive place to live and work. We are proud to be surrounded by rich landscapes and history, and benefit from our proximity and ties to Edinburgh. But East Lothian is not an easy place to be poor, with significant inequality between and within our communities.

East Lothian Partnership is committed to tackling poverty and inequality in our communities. Since the **East Lothian Poverty Commission** in 2016, we have been working to address the drivers of poverty and pave sustainable routes out of poverty. The first plan in 2017 set out our approach based on the Poverty Commission's report recommendations. 2020 brought the unforeseen impacts of Covid-19 and cost of living crisis and our 2021-2023 Plan balanced addressing

the short-term impacts of these crises with the long-term drivers of poverty.

The Partnership has achieved a great deal in the last 8 years, but economic and environmental uncertainty remain. Those already experiencing poverty are facing ever starker choices. Since our last Poverty Plan in 2021, East Lothian Foodbank use has increased by 99%. Since it opened in 2012, usage has increased by 200% making it the fifth busiest Foodbank in Scotland.ⁱ

Rising hunger and hardship have a devastating impact on people's physical and mental health. Those living in the richest areas of East Lothian will live up to 9 years longer than those living in our most deprived communities.ⁱⁱ Because of poverty, more of these years will be impacted by poor health.

The next 3 years are going to be a very challenging time. Deep poverty and destitution are rising, and many are facing poverty who have not experienced this level of hardship before.

Our Partnership faces significant funding challenges at the same time as we adapt to a fast-growing population. Since the last Census in 2001 our population has grown by 25% and will continue to grow in future. This change is happening across all age groups including children and older people. These are two groups who are particularly vulnerable to poverty and through this Plan we will ensure we are able to remain responsive to growing or changing needs.

East Lothian Council faces an estimated recurring financial gap of over £70 million over the next five years. Third sector partners continue to be impacted by short-term funding cycles that restrict their strategic planning.

Poverty in East Lothian is not new, and through this plan we will take an early intervention, preventative, long-term approach to tackling it. Our plan will be flexible and responsive, set within the context of what we can influence at a local level. No single agency or service can end poverty alone, we will work in partnership towards a shared vision of equality and equity.

We will continue to adapt to the needs of our communities and the voice of lived experience as we work towards our vision for everybody in East Lothian to live a life that is free from poverty. A human rights approach will continue to underpin our approach to addressing poverty and will be embedded in the Partnership response. We will ensure the Partnership are committed to maximising available resources and progressive realisation of rights.

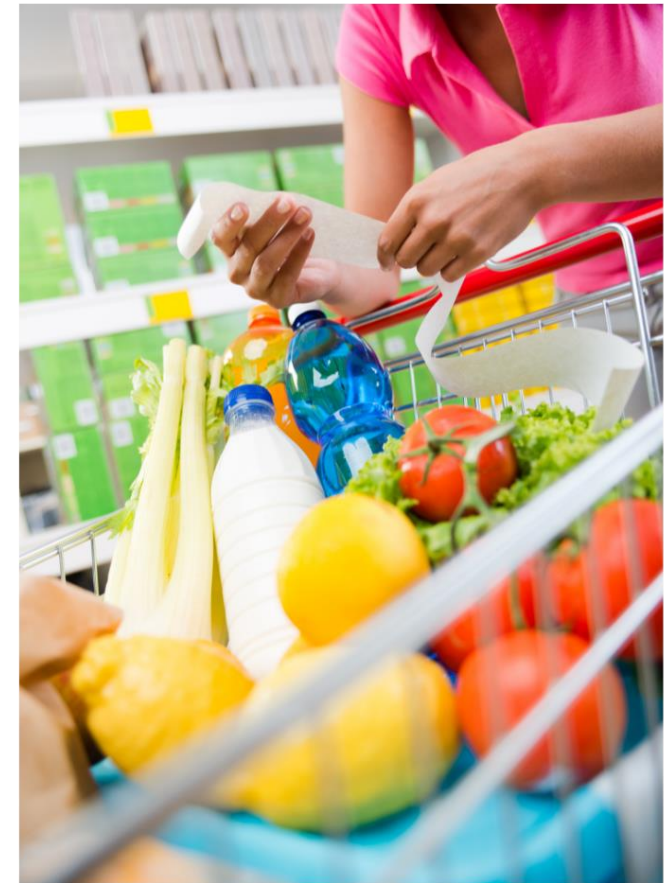
A partnership action plan will be developed and published separately. Progress towards both will be reported on annually.

I log onto Facebook and the first thing I see is someone complaining about people on benefits. We get accused all the time that we're lazy or scroungers, or that we're having the time of our lives on benefits.

I wish they could see the reality. You're constantly jumping through hoops, constantly feel like you're being judged and that they're trying to take something away.

I'm glad I can work but the restrictions are awful.

Member of the Working
for Change Collective



Poverty takes away people's choices. Through this strategy and action plan we will endeavour to give individuals these choices back.

East Lothian data trends

The population in East Lothian is changing, and so is the experience of poverty.

Children

- 21% of children are living in relative poverty.
- 4,877 children and young people under the age of 16 were fed by East Lothian Foodbank in 2022-23 (36% of households accessing the Foodbank).
- 150 children were in temporary accommodation in 2022-23.



393 households were in temporary accommodation



population increase since 2001 Census



of children are living in relative poverty



increase in East Lothian Foodbank use since 2012

- East Lothian's population is growing rapidly. It is estimated that in 2023 there were 48,440 households in East Lothian. This is the second highest increase in Scotland.¹
- East Lothian has 13 data zones which are in the 20% most deprived in Scotland. The most deprived areas are in Tranent, Wallyford and Macmerry, Prestonpans and Musselburgh, which are all in the west of the county.
- 1,532 people were receiving Universal Credit and searching for work in East Lothian in 2022-23.
- The mean household income in East Lothian in 2020 was £45,105. However, there is significant variation between quintiles. Median lower income ranges from £23,471 in Preston Seton Gosford, to £34,598 in North Berwick.
- During 2022/23, East Lothian Foodbank provided food parcels for 13,656 people, (25% increase from 2021-22). Of those fed 4,877 (36%) were under the age of 16.

Adults

- Universal Credit (UC) claimants increased from 5,842 (Feb 2020) to 9,786 (Feb 2024) – an increase of 67.5% (41% men 59% women). 8.3% of working age population in North Berwick Coastal ward claim UC, compared to 16.9% in Tranent, Wallyford, Macmerry and 18.3% in Musselburgh wards.
- 393 households were in temporary accommodation in 2022-23.
- The Full Time median hourly pay for people living in East Lothian in 2023 was £17.71 compared to the Scottish average of £18.10.

This difference is due to a substantially lower rate of pay for females. The median for males is £18.82 (Scottish median of £18.17) whereas for females the median is £16.88 (Scottish median of £18.00).

- Estimates show that up to half of East Lothian residents commute from the county for employment, many to take up higher paid jobs in Edinburgh. Approximately 12% of the total working-age population are registered as self-employed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Older people

- 1,908 pensioners claim Pension Credit in East Lothian.
- Living in poverty decreases average life expectancy by 8 years.

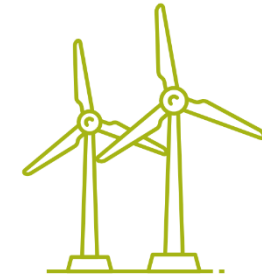
2022-23 Achievements



**£360,000 top up
of Scottish Welfare Fund**
£180,000 as cash payments



£3,694,913
Debt handled for 475 clients
(East Lothian Advice
Consortium)



1,428 people
£798,535.94 awarded
Supported through
Community Windpower funding



£5,164,016.45

Financial gains achieved
through Finance
and Advice Services



£1,021,291

Provided as cash first support



13,927 fed

by East Lothian Foodbank,
from 5,801 households

What we mean when we say...

Poverty

Poverty means different things to different people. It can mean going to bed instead of turning the heating on. Or splitting a tin of beans over several days. Poverty is the tough choices people have to make because of their low income.

We measure poverty in two ways:

Relative low income: This refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median¹ in that year.

Absolute low income: This refers to people living in households with income below 60% of median income in a base year, usually 2010/11. This allows us to compare levels over time.

Stigma

Stigma is the feeling of disapproval or shame that people can feel (or be made to feel) when they reach out for support.

This can be caused by internal feelings of pride, fear, or external factors like negative coverage in the press or by politicians.

Stigma can impact how people experience support, and when we talk about being stigma-informed we are referring to how we will change, adapt or dismantle the way we do things to make sure that people do not feel frozen by shame or disapproval when they speak to us.

We cannot change what is happening inside for people, but we can make sure that we are approachable, personable, and patient.

Trauma

Trauma can describe a one-off event or series of events in someone's life which is painful or distressing, and which can result in lasting mental or physical, social, and spiritual side effects.^{iv}

Exposure to traumatic events is common. It affects the people we work with every day. This includes, our colleagues, the people we work with in the community, use the services we offer and come to us for help.

People with lived experience

People with lived experience are people with direct first-hand experience of poverty. This could be something they experienced today or 20 years ago. We are seeking to learn from their experience.

Poverty has long-term and wide-ranging impacts on a person's life. We seek to understand the broad range of experiences so that we can design better services that are person-centred

¹ Median income is the point at which half of households have lower income and half have higher income.

What our local community has told us...

I've been eating toddler portions to make sure my kids have enough. The kids laugh but I don't. Nothing is easy and nothing is spared, even the bath water has to last for all of us.

Why do people have to hit rock bottom again and again before they get any support?

I only shower once a week now and it feels like it is back to my youth when we had a bath one a week in a tin bath in front of the stove in the living room because the house was so cold.

Families that are just on the threshold of not being able to claim benefits are worst hit especially with children. All children should be receiving free school meals and uniform unless parents are making extraordinary amounts of salary. Something needs done for these families. There are lots of benefits being put in place for people on UC and in my post I see this money being wasted day in day out with families who qualify and large families getting enough to live on. I think more advertising needs to be put in place for people to know what's out there.

I live in a council house as a single person with children at college. I earn a decent salary that's nowhere near minimum wage. I have no money left for half the month after all my bills and living costs come off. I don't have my heating on much I have cut all bills back as much as I possibly can. This is no way to live and I know many people will be worse off than me.

I despair at what the cost of childcare will rise to next.

Currently it is so challenging to put one child through nursery, however can you imagine how tough it is when you need to support two or more due to multiple births on top of supporting any other children whom you might have.

It is something which keeps me awake at night and each time I look at my twins and eldest I feel like I will let them down because ultimately I cannot afford their childcare and if I leave my job then this will have a huge impact on me gaining employment at a later stage.

I will lose my home as my husband's income will not be enough to support a remortgage next year and I am trying so hard to see a solution out with leaving work however to be honest I cannot no matter how much I try.

The truth is my wage is £2,700 a month and childcare costs will be between £3,200 - £3,700 in total a month.

Understanding events which can move people into poverty.

Events that erode people's income and other stability increases the risk of experiencing poverty or moving people further into it.

We understand that these common drivers may trigger the need for support.

Job loss / reduced earnings

Job loss or reduced hours have a clear negative impact on household finances. We are seeing the rise of in-work poverty with the increase of zero-hour contracts which reduces job and income stability. Other changes like becoming self-employed can also increase someone's risk of experiencing poverty.

Relationship breakdown or bereavement

Changes in your relationship either through bereavement or separation can have a very serious impact on the risk of experiencing poverty. It can often mean a change in housing, income, and support. For people escaping a domestic abuse/violence situation, this risk increases. Financial or economic abuse is often used as a control tactic by abusers, withholding household funds or preventing their partner from having paid employment. This increases people's vulnerability to poverty when they leave, and many rely on friends, family, or credit to survive.

Change in health

Changes to your physical health and mobility can have an immediate impact on your ability to earn. For many, the immediate aftermath of an accident, diagnosis or long-term health condition are made worse by stress about money. These changes can also impact the finances of family members, for instance if they have to reduce their working hours in order to provide extra care.

Growing family

Additional household costs come at the same time as reduced household income for many new or growing families. The cost of childcare is a huge issue for many working families despite policies like 1140 hours. Parents of multiple births (for example twins) face significant barriers to remaining in work because of the cost of childcare, with many families unable to continue to work.

Poor mental health

Poverty causes poor mental health and poor mental health can cause poverty. Once in poverty, people with poor mental health are more likely to fall behind with essential costs and can find it harder to reach out for support, to find and sustain work or training, and are more likely to be socially isolated.

Rising housing / living costs

Rising living costs means that people are not able to adjust to make savings, but instead face deepening poverty. Housing costs in East Lothian are high and downsizing is not always a feasible option within our housing stock.

Any of these life changes can cause a huge amount of stress, but **financial support is available**. We will make information about this support accessible and easy to navigate, promoting tools like our free, confidential online benefits calculator. We will also train more frontline staff to support people through this process.

Who is most likely to experience poverty in East Lothian?

The Scottish Government have identified the following household types as being at greater risk of poverty:

- Lone parent families:
36% of children in relative poverty
- Minority ethnic families:
37% of children in relative poverty
- Families with a disabled adult or child:
30% of children in relative poverty
- Families with a mother aged under 25:
44% of children in relative poverty
- Families with a child under one:
32% of children in relative poverty
- Larger families (3+ children):
30% of children in relative poverty^v

In addition, we know that the following individuals are more likely to experience poverty or hardship:

- Care-experienced young people
- Pensioners / Older people
- Young people transitioning into adulthood
- People who are just above the threshold for financial support or benefits
- Women
- Parents of multiple births
- Gypsy/Traveller communities
- Carers (including Young Carers)

Identifying with one or more of these groups increases your risk of experiencing poverty. For example, a single parent of a disabled child is more likely to experience poverty.



Our key objectives



Improve access to good jobs that pay fairly.

Work offers a sustainable route out of poverty: fairly paid, flexible employment enables people to be connected to their community, with an income that supports their lifestyle.

We will provide support and opportunities for people to gain the skills needed to enter and sustain employment, including accessible and flexible childcare options.

We will tailor this support based on people's needs, and target groups who will need more support.



Increase income maximisation for those who need it most.

Benefits should provide a social security net for households in East Lothian. We will make sure that people are informed about the income they are entitled to, and we will make sure that this process is as straightforward as we can make it.

We will provide advice and support to those who are struggling with high living costs. This includes advice on budgets, debt, and safe credit.

We will work with partners to raise awareness of the financial support available and direct households to the correct place to apply.



Improve quality of life through access to the essentials.

Our housing, access to healthcare, good quality food and a resilient community are a core part of our human rights and are essential to our quality of life.

Through this objective we will take a preventative approach to homelessness, hunger and health inequalities caused by poverty, helping communities to thrive not just survive.



Protect vulnerable groups from the effects of climate change.

Climate change will impact vulnerable and low-income communities the hardest. We will take preventative action to protect and support these communities.

Through the creation of new 'green' jobs, tackling fuel poverty, improving our transport links and our housing stock.

A move to a circular economy can transform current inequality and inequities.

Ways we will work



People with lived experience of poverty have told us how stigma has made it painful to reach out for the help they needed. Not being able to afford to socialise led people to turn inward.

We will work to understand how people experience stigma and with them redesign our services where needed. We will make it easy to turn outward.

As a partnership we will develop trauma-informed approaches that will see a more understanding and compassionate workforce and volunteer-force who understand the impact poverty has on a person or family.



We will continuously improve our partnership approach to tackling poverty. This will include how we collect, share and use data so that we can all understand how poverty is changing in areas.

We will work as equal partners, acknowledging that statutory and voluntary organisations are working towards the same objectives: a better life for everyone in East Lothian. We will develop tools that everyone can use, and pathways to support that everyone feels confident using.



Tackling poverty is everybody's business. We will make anti-poverty activities mainstream for every service that we provide. This isn't just an issue for Foodbanks or social services, this is an issue for everyone.

We will make sure that tackling poverty is a priority in all statutory plans. In a time of cuts, we will ensure decision makers protect vulnerable people from their impact.

The Council Plan prioritises poverty and we will make sure this happens. We will use all the tools at our disposal and create new tools if the old ones aren't working.

Improvements we will make

We want to make sure we are doing all we can, as effectively as we can. As part of the development of this Plan we assessed our approach to tackling poverty and identified key areas for improving our approach.



These improvements include actions around our housing, transport, childcare, and economy.

It will require changes in the ways we work with people with lived experience of poverty, how we evaluate our projects, share our data, and shape our places.

It will also shape how we deliver our services, communicate about our work, and advocate for East Lothian residents.

These improvements work across agendas and will improve a broad range of our partnership services.

1. Improve our ability to **use data and intelligence** from across the **partnership to identify and reach** low-income families who **might otherwise be hidden**.
2. Improve our **engagement and quality of relationship** with a wide range of low-income households to **better understand and act upon** what they tell us.
3. Support **access to affordable housing** through increase of supply across all tenures.
4. Prioritise **fair work and job creation**, capitalising on **community wealth building** and the role of anchor institutions to support households experiencing poverty.
5. Provide **awareness raising and anti-stigma training** for staff and elected members at all levels.

6. Ensure we have a **framework** that makes **responsibilities clear** and highlights how individual and joint actions are **contributing to poverty outcomes**.
7. Improve our approach to holistic rather than siloed **evaluations** so we **understand the true impact of our actions** on households, communities, and East Lothian as a whole.
8. Ensure a **wide range of third sector voices** are given an **equal** voice in discussions around child poverty policy and the delivery of services.
9. Explore **place based, whole family, collaborative approaches** to supporting low-income families.



10. Work in **spaces** that people feel comfortable in, and where they can access a **range** of services and information at the same time. These spaces are free from stigma and trauma-informed.
11. Support the work of the **Raising Attainment Strategy** in closing the **poverty related attainment gap** in East Lothian schools, including the work around the **cost of the school day**.
12. **Communicate clearly** about our services across multiple platforms and formats that our audiences use. Create **child- and community-friendly versions** of reports when it is appropriate to do so (e.g. when the content pertains to them).
13. Ensure that we are using **all levers available locally** to make our childcare offer flexible and affordable, providing parents the right support at the right time.
14. **Improve staff and volunteer wellbeing** through better support for our workforce experiencing burnout.
15. Use our experience of delivering services and the experiences of our communities to make the case to UK and Scottish Governments to make the changes required to **tackle systemic poverty and inequality**.
16. Ensure our **transport system supports our partnership approach to tackling poverty** and is adaptive to the needs of our communities.
17. Embed **human rights** (and children's human rights) within our approach to tackling poverty, ensuring **progressive realisation for rights holders**.

How we will measure success

This plan will be accompanied by a set of actions that will set out the specific activities that we will be working on. We will monitor our progress using the measures set out below, as well as targets that are set nationally by Scottish Government.

We will publish an updated East Lothian Poverty Data Profile bi-annually in July and December.

Annual action plan and reporting

As well as long-term objectives, our short-term actions will be reported and monitored as part of an annual action plan. This reporting will form part of our Local Child Poverty Action Report, which East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian are required to jointly produce every year.

Our key outcomes



The way we will work



Improvements we need to make



Performance indicators

Local indicators

- Numeracy and literacy in East Lothian pupils
- East Lothian Works uptake
- Number of people in work
- Increase in lower quintile household income
- Take up of benefits
- Financial Inclusion team statistics
- East Lothian Advice Consortium statistics
- Number of staff trained in financial inclusion
- Number of services co-delivered in community spaces
- Number of affordable houses delivered
- Energy advice accessed
- Number of staff trained to Level 1 & 2 Wellbeing and Trauma Skills
- Poverty and Equality Indicators

These local indicators will provide East Lothian Partners with a broad overview of how our work is impacting communities.

Specific indicators will be developed alongside the action plan that will monitor success.

It has been so powerful to share my experiences and feel like I'm shaping things so what has happened to me does not happen again. It gives me hope that mistakes won't be repeated, and people will have a better time from now on.

Member of the Working
for Change Collective

National indicators

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out four ambitious targets to reduce child poverty. We will report annually against these targets through the Child Poverty Action Report. These measures focus on family income and each Report covers our activities to increase employment, access to benefits, and cost of living support.

After household costs...	2023 interim targets	2030 targets	East Lothian levels 2021-22
Children living in families in relative poverty	18%	10%	21.1%
Children living in families in absolute poverty	14%	5%	12.4%
Children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation ^{vi}	8%	5%	-
Children living in families in persistent poverty ^{vii}	8%	5%	-



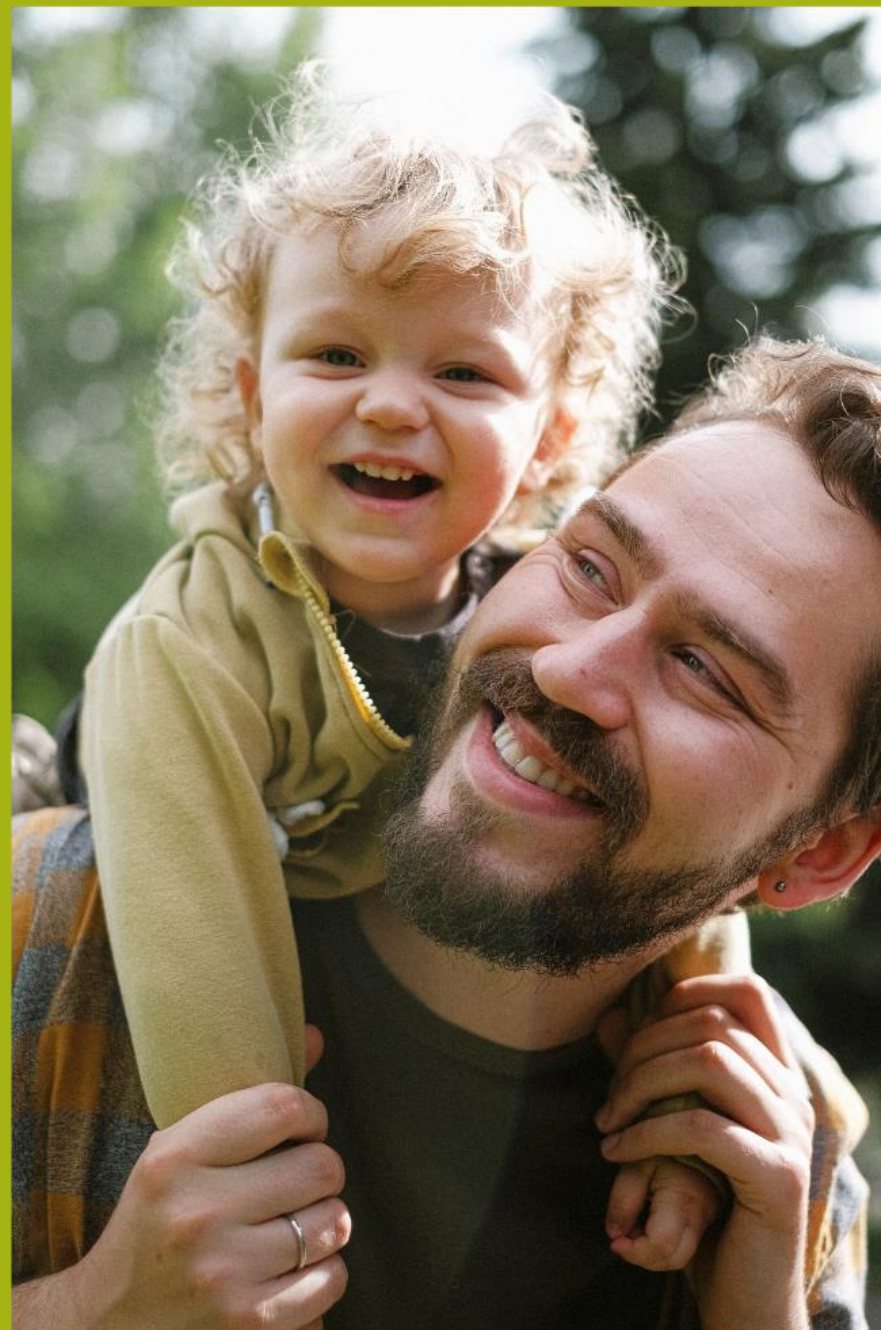
I am a proud and strong woman who has come through all of this but ashamedly I cannot find a solution to affording childcare no matter how hard I try. This makes me incredibly sad because I want to work and be a role model for my children.

Consultation respondent

Links to other key strategies

Tackling poverty needs to be embedded within everything we do. To make the best use of resources, actions within the following plans will contribute to our overall mission to tackle poverty in East Lothian.

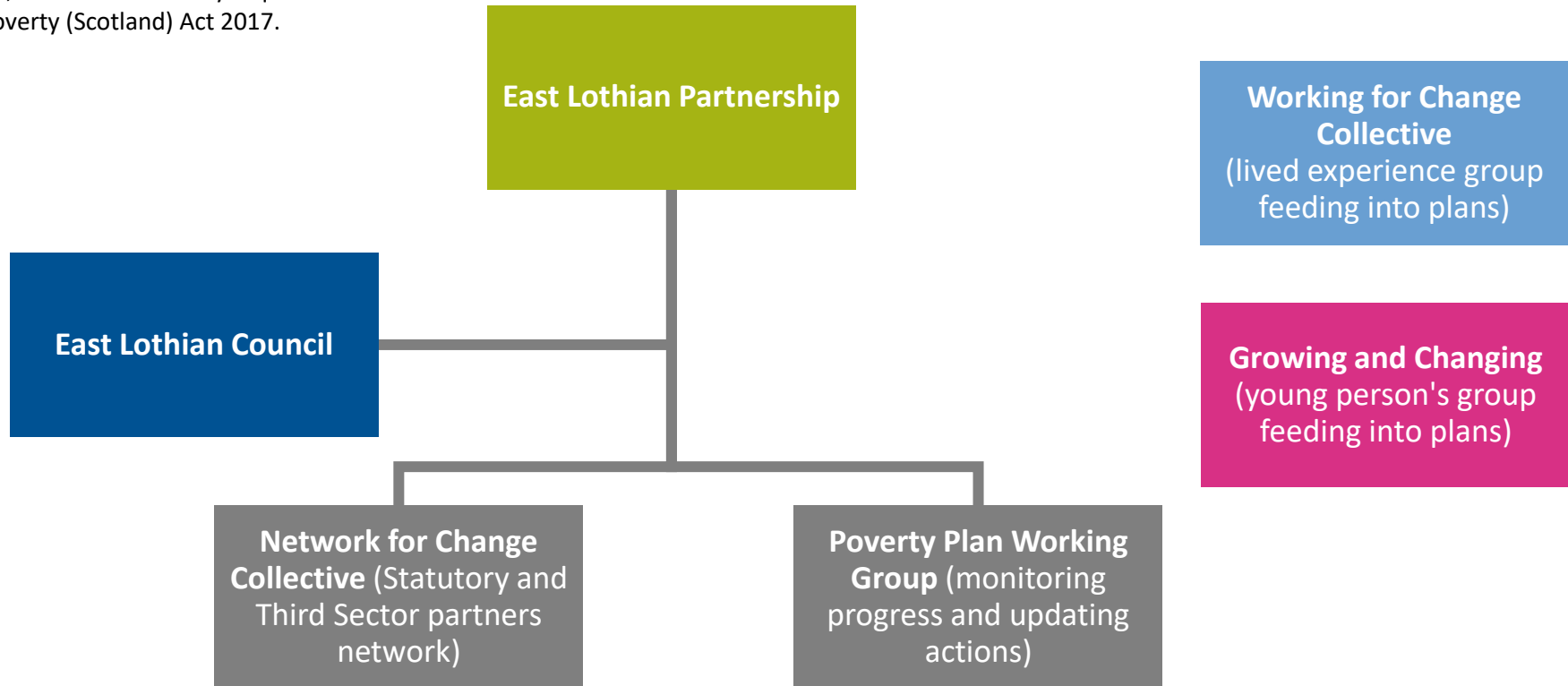
- *Local Development Plan*
- *Local Housing Strategy*
- *Integrated Joint Board Strategic Plan*
- *Climate Change Strategy*
- *Local Economy Strategy*
- *Council Plan 2022-27*
- *Local Outcome Improvement Plan*
- *Equality Plan*
- *Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-23*
- *Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan*
- *Community Learning and Development Plan*
- *Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-25*
- *Education Improvement Plan*
- *Volunteering Strategy*
- *Area Partnership Plans*
- *Raising Attainment Strategy*



Governance of the Plan

Governance of the Plan will be overseen by East Lothian Partnership.

East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian will jointly publish annual progress reports incorporating our Child Poverty Action Plan Report, which is a statutory requirement under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.



The challenges we face

As we emerged from the Covid-19 economic downturn and lockdowns, inflation started to rise influenced by consumer spending and global shortages. The war in Ukraine accelerated this as fuel and wheat prices were affected by the invasion. Inflation peaked at 9.6% in October 2022 and has fluctuated since.

Rising inflation has meant that many have had to make changes to their spending habits. For those who didn't have enough to begin with, and were already making their money stretch as far as possible, further cuts has become a choice between heating or eating, and sometimes skipping both.

This has been set against a decade of low income growth, with a further decade of slow income growth predicted because of the impact of Brexit. Brexit and climate change are expected to have long term impacts on food prices, with fewer migrant workers supporting harvests, and greater volatile weather impacting on crops.

Fuel costs are expected to remain volatile with political unrest and overseas conflicts having a long-term impact. Changes to renewable energy and local sources may reduce this impact.

East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, and our third sector partners, all face challenging funding situations. East Lothian Council must make £60 million worth of cuts over the next five years. Through our approach to make poverty everybody's priority we will protect and mitigate the impacts of any necessary cuts on vulnerable households.

The Third Sector in East Lothian have shown exceptional resilience in challenging funding environments, but staff and volunteer wellbeing are a rising concern in the sector in the face of rising need and diminishing resource. Trauma-informed approach and commissioning reviews are part of the activity to mitigate these risks.

Out of 160 council tenants surveyed, 53% report that their mental health has suffered because of the cost of living. 50% are struggling with anxiety, stress or depression. 40% could not sleep at night.

■ Growing population

East Lothian's population has had the biggest rise of any local authority area. Our population is expected to continue to rise consistently over the next 10 years. Unlike other regions, both our children and young people and older people population groups will increase. Both groups are vulnerable to poverty.

■ Financial pressures on services

A growing population will increase statutory costs, particularly our older care services. Because of the number of people moving into the county we do not know the needs of our growing population.

■ Complexity of cases

Prolonged hardship has had a significant impact on people's mental health and resilience. We are seeing a rise in complex cases, with a wider range of support needed. This results in longer time working with an individual or household. We will take a prevention and early intervention approach to supporting people, embedding our services in community spaces where people feel comfortable, and where multiple supports can be accessed.

■ Climate change

It is likely that the next decade will require radical lifestyle changes for everyone. People who are living with poverty are likely to already be living a low carbon lifestyle, but have fewer resources to make bigger changes that may become expected. We must target climate adaptations with low-income households in mind.

How we developed this plan

- **8 Community engagement sessions** in June 2023 (in Musselburgh, Prestonpans, Tranent, North Berwick, Haddington and Dunbar) listening to people's broad experiences of poverty and how they want to see services developing in East Lothian.
- **3 Network for Change development days** bringing together third sector and statutory partners to develop their key themes and requirements for the poverty plan.
- **3 Poverty self-assessment sessions** identifying areas for improvement in the partnership approach to tackling poverty. An online survey hosted and analysed by the Improvement Service guided this work.
- **Thematic sessions on gender, disability, climate change, childcare, crisis support and housing.**
- **Working for Change Collective conversation cafes** at which people with lived experience of poverty were encouraged to feed into the process.
- Young people were consulted through the **Growing and Changing lived experience group** (15-18 years olds) and **S2 Consultation Group** (12-13 year olds). Family feedback was input through the **Families Together East Lothian group**.
- Online consultation with in-person drop-ins.

For any questions on the plan please contact policy@eastlothian.gov.uk



References

ⁱ Trussell Trust <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/mid-year-stats/>

ⁱⁱ 75.8 (Haddington South) to 83.6 (North Berwick North) for males, 87.3 (North Berwick South) to 78.9 for females (Wallyford and Whitecraig). Source: https://scotland.shinyapps.io/ScotPHO_profiles_tool/

ⁱⁱⁱ East Lothian Council, 2024. East Lothian Poverty Profile.

^{iv} SAMHSA 2013 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides the definition of trauma as the result of “an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

^v Improvement Service, 2023

^{vi} The Scottish Household Survey children in families with limited resources measure is a rough approximation of the official material deprivation measure. This uses three years’ worth of data to get local authority breakdowns. The 2020 survey was affected by the pandemic restrictions, and so this measure will not be updated until the 2023 data become available.

^{vii} The persistent poverty data comes from the Understanding Society longitudinal study which cannot be broken down to a sub-Scotland level.