

OUTER HEBRIDES ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY 2024-2026



INCORPORATING THE

LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2024



Compàirteachas Plana
Coimhearsnachd
Innse Gall



**Outer Hebrides
Community Planning
Partnership**



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



**Eileanan Siar
Western Isles**

Ro-innleach na h-Innse Gall an Aghaidh Bochdainn 2024-2026

a' toirt a-steach

Aithisg-gnìomh Ionadail Bochdainn Cloinne 2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Through the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) a Strategic Anti-Poverty Steering Group was established in late 2023 to provide strategic direction for the addressing of issues of poverty in the Western Isles and leadership and direction for the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plans.
- 1.2 Parallel to this, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act (2017) includes a local reporting duty, which from 2019 requires local authorities and health boards to work together to report annually on what they are doing to tackle child poverty, as detailed in the appendices to this report. This is also being addressed through the Anti-Poverty Steering Group, with NHS Western Isles and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as leads.
- 1.3 To address both the needs of a refreshed OHCPP Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2026 and the Outer Hebrides Local Child Poverty Action Report 2024-25, it was agreed that all strategic planning to address poverty in our area would be managed within one merged document. The Strategy reporting period now aligns with Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 'Best Start, Bright Futures' reporting to 2026.
- 1.4 The refreshed strategy and action plans seek to describe current aspects of poverty in the Outer Hebrides. It provides an overview of the work which OHCPP partners are taking forward to address poverty and identifies areas where partners have identified opportunities for improved joint-working. The next strategy will align with the development of the next OHCPP Local Outcome Improvement Plan that also reports from 2027. The LOIP states that part of the vision for partners in the OHCPP is to work towards, *"an increase in average household income and a reduction in poverty and health inequalities"*.
- 1.5 Over this term of the strategy our priorities are to tackle the levels of poverty and mitigate the effects of poverty by efforts that link to the three drivers of poverty set out below. These reflect what the Scottish Government have identified as the three main drivers of child poverty reduction, and provide a helpful framework for identifying the factors which impact on disposable income among households and individuals:

1. Income from Employment

2. Costs of Living

3. Income from Social Security and Benefits in Kind

2. What is Poverty?

- 2.1 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines poverty as:
“when a person’s resources are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society.”
- 2.2 Measuring poverty accurately is difficult due to the factors that can impact on individual circumstances. However, a commonly used definition in Scottish and UK Government Policy is that:
“someone is living in poverty when they live in a household with less than 60% of median income, adjusted for household size and type.”
- 2.3 Rates of poverty vary between different groups and there are some segments of the population that are more vulnerable than others. In Scotland, poverty is significantly highest among families with children. Mitigating the impacts of this and improving long term outcomes for these children, particularly in respect of educational attainment, is critical in addressing future levels of poverty. Within this, certain families are more at risk of poverty, such as families with a disabled child or adult, lone parents, young mothers, larger families, and/or minority ethnic families.
- 2.4 The risk of poverty is much higher among people living in workless households than those where one or more adults are in work. Paying for housing, whether rent or mortgage payments and heating fuel costs are the largest costs for many households, having a significant impact on the resources that people have left over to meet their other needs.
- 2.5 Being in work is, however, no guarantee of protection from poverty. Many families in poverty are working, the issue being the scope to access employment which offers a sufficient income to meet the needs of the family. Subsequently foodbanks are reporting increased use by working families.
- 2.6 While economic factors are often the primary determinant of individual or household poverty, these can also be underpinned or exacerbated by other dimensions of social inequality, such as differences in power and opportunities, level of education, as well as discrimination on the basis of gender, race, disability, age, sexuality or religion.
- 2.7 There are also complex but clear links between poverty and poor health outcomes. Health inequalities exist to varying degrees throughout Scotland. Health inequalities are differences in people’s health across the population and between specific population groups, that are systematic, avoidable, and unfair.
In the most affluent areas of Scotland, people live longer in good health, compared to those living in deprived areas. For men, this is 25.8 years longer and 25.7 years for women. Over the last ten years inequalities in death rates have increased both in Scotland and the rest of the UK, (Public Health Scotland 2025).
- 2.8 For many people, good health is difficult to achieve due to a range of factors. Some of these are out-with their control, with experiences and deprivation in early years persisting into adulthood. Nonetheless, behaviour change interventions, aligned to local interventions and supported by policy, can impact upon population health; for example, smoking interventions. Many of these programmes operate across the whole population but, where appropriate, the scale or intensity of those actions should be proportionate to need or disadvantage.

- 2.9 The "[fundamental causes](#)" of health inequalities are [inequalities in income, wealth and power between social groups](#). They underlie all the inequalities effects.

The austerity policies in the UK and elsewhere, negatively influenced the trends in health inequalities over the past decade. These policies affected fundamental causes by [reducing the value of social security benefits and causing cuts in many public services](#). The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the [cost-of-living crisis](#) further exacerbated these trends. Locally, significant progress on improving living conditions and energy efficiency of homes is necessary to combat the high rates of fuel poverty.

3. Poverty in the Outer Hebrides

- 3.1 The Outer Hebrides is an economically fragile area relatively reliant on primary industries (including crofting, fishing and agriculture) Human health and social care, Wholesale, retail and repairs and the public sector. Public Sector employment is 10% above the Scottish average. SMEs are critical to the economic base, accounting for 79% of private sector employment compared to 51% nationally.

- 3.2 Some key indicators for the Outer Hebrides are shown in the table below:

Indicator	Scotland	Outer Hebrides
GVA per job, 2024 (£)	£52,000	£40,900
Employment rate, 2024 (%)	74.5	76.6
% of 16-64 year olds with SCQF 7-12	42.5	42.0
Healthy Life Expectancy at birth (ALL) Male and Female	76.5, 80.6	77.1, 81.2
Median gross weekly Earnings - full-time employees (£) – April 2024 by place of work	£739.70	£730.40
SHCS Local Authority Analysis Tables of Fuel poverty 2017-2019 (% of households).	24.6	40.0
The Energy Advisory Service (TEAS) of Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) undertook a study into the affordable warmth of homes in the Western Isles in 2023, and found that 57% of homes are estimated to be experiencing fuel poverty and 44% in extreme fuel poverty.	34.0	57.0
Children in relative low-income families local area statistics FY ending 2024 (%)	15.39	13.2
Children in Families with Limited Resources After Housing Costs 2023 (%)	23.0	19.7
% of LA datazones within Scotland's 20% most deprived (SIMD 2020)	20.0	0.0

- 3.3 It is worth noting that while the employment rate is higher in the Outer Hebrides, GVA and wages are lower than Scottish average, along with a much higher proportion of homes in fuel poverty and which demonstrate low levels of energy efficiency.
- 3.4 The Outer Hebrides has the lowest population density alongside Highland (9 per kilometre square, mid 2023) of all the local authorities in Scotland. This is an important consideration in the delivery of, and access to services, particularly for the most vulnerable. As shown above, the Outer Hebrides has no 'datazones' or geographical areas within what are defined as

Scotland's most economically deprived. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is used to target interventions and tackle the effects of socio-economic inequalities in communities across Scotland. However, there are difficulties in using the SIMD in rural areas. Areas such as the Outer Hebrides are sparsely populated, socially heterogeneous and less sensitive to area-based measures such as the SIMD which also has not been island proofed. This can lead to a situation where households in rural areas are omitted from policy and targeting by national interventions designed to address poverty and inequalities.

- 3.5 Some areas of the Outer Hebrides do have higher levels of poverty than others. The OHCPP has developed a locality planning approach for two areas in the islands which tend to perform less well than other areas in a range of outcome measures: Benbecula and North Uist, and Stornoway North.
- 3.6 In the Outer Hebrides, inequalities are more easily identifiable at an individual level than by geography, though as indicated above some communities do have poorer outcomes than others. Anecdotal evidence from front-line services is that poverty in the Outer Hebrides has increased significantly since Covid, with changes to benefits through Welfare Reform and in work poverty exacerbating the situation. The Outer Hebrides has an increasing number of foodbanks which are being used as people struggle to make ends meet on reduced incomes.

Cost of Living

- 3.7 It is important to factor in higher living costs to an understanding of poverty in the islands. Poorer households in the islands are likely to be significantly worse off financially than an equivalent earning mainland household because of the higher cost of living.
- 3.8 Recent research on behalf of Scottish Government concluded that the budgets required by households to meet a minimum acceptable standard of living in the islands are between approximately 14% and 30% more than in urban parts of the UK. The report also highlighted that the cost of living on the Scottish Islands was higher than any other remote rural areas on mainland Scotland and UK. Island households face increased cost of living resulting from:
 - higher prices for food, clothes and household goods
 - considerably higher household fuel bills, influenced by climate, fuel sources and systems
 - longer distances that people have to routinely travel, particularly to work

Accessibility – Transport and Childcare

- 3.9 The nature of the geography of the Outer Hebrides can present difficulties in terms of accessing education, training and employment. Public transport can be sporadic and does not always fit in well with an individual's requirements. There are ongoing reliability matters regarding ferry services particularly in Uist and Barra. The Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020 to 2030 is relevant to addressing these issues.
- 3.10 In terms of childcare, there has historically been limited provision in the more peripheral areas, with accessibility, affordability and transport being major challenges. The rate of all ELC places per 100 population in 2023, is 15 (lowest in Scotland, followed by Orkney at 16.9), and nationally the rate is 24.3. Transport is critical to improving access to employment, education and services and can also be a significant factor contributing to higher transport costs; Sustrans have identified that Eilean Siar Transport Poverty is the highest in Scotland.
- 3.11 The provision of quality childcare services in island rural areas requires high levels of support, and as stated where there is reliance on public transport, issues of access (timetabling) to fit

in with provision which is often centralised, can cause barriers to employment, education or training. Lower income households are likely to be more dependent on public transport and therefore more affected by bus accessibility. The Scottish Access to Bus Indicator (SABI) gives a score for the accessibility of bus services in each data zone. SABI scores data zones from 1-10 based on the frequency of bus services within 400m of each datazone. A score of 1 indicates low accessibility and 10 high accessibility. All of Outer Hebrides datazones are at a score 1, except 9 zones, where 6 are rated 2, and 3 are rated 3 (in Stornoway, Point and Broadbay).

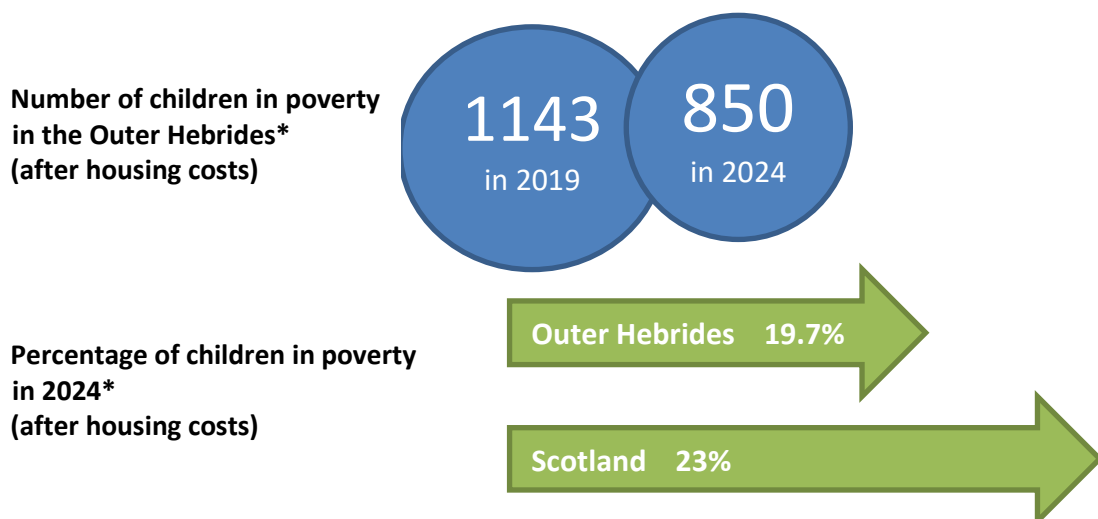
- 3.12 An Early Learning and Childcare Consultation closed mid-June 2025, aiming to target those who have previously used ELC, those who currently use ELC and those who will use it in the future, will provide useful feedback. A number of factors contributing to the challenges of service provision in rural and island communities are captured in reports including HIE's Childcare Evidence Report requested by Ministers and led by HIE, and has been endorsed by HIREP and CoHI. The Evidence Report has been received by Ministers and Scottish Government officials and further information is awaited. The Improvement Service have also undertaken a Childcare Challenge Project (following on from a Kickstart Paper on Childcare in Remote and Rural Settings), and the final report will reference lived experience.

Fuel Poverty

- 3.13 The Outer Hebrides faces the highest levels of fuel poverty within the UK and there are three main elements which contribute to this: low incomes, high fuel bills and poor energy efficiency. Locally, this is exacerbated by a high population of elderly people, extreme weather conditions, many low-income families and 42% in single occupancy, second in Scotland to Aberdeen at 43%. In addition, the lack of mains gas, high proportion of older houses and detached houses (leading to higher heat loss) all increase the prevalence of fuel poverty whilst also placing a burden on local health services. A recent report to the Sustainable Development Committee highlighted that increasing numbers of homelessness are presenting due to housing previously in receipt of improvement grants in the 1990's now reaching an uninhabitable state.
- 3.14 Tighean Innse Gall 'Affordable Warmth at Home in the Western Isles' fuel poverty report included adjustments using the averaged Consumer Price Index (CPI) that increased the estimation to 60% for fuel poverty and 52% for extreme fuel poverty, highlighting the potential impact of escalating costs during the cost-of-living crisis. Single pensioners faced the highest risk, with 65% categorised as fuel poor. Families with children followed at 56%, while pensioner couples followed at 47%.
- 3.15 The latest Winter Heating payment tables indicate payments made from 2022-23 to 2024-25 at a total of £72.27m Scotland wide, from which the Outer Hebrides received £319.5k or 0.4% of the allocation despite the extremity of fuel poverty and Remote Rural Remote Small Towns and Island Areas uplift and care/disability benefits provisions included in the legislation.
- 3.16 The Winter Heating Payment Island Communities Impact Assessment reported as being unable to identify evidence that the introduction of the WHP would directly or indirectly discriminate against those that live in island communities. Child winter heating payments over 2022-23 to 2024-25 have increased in number from 55 to 80 and value from £11k allocated in 2022-23, £15k in 2023-24, and £20k in 2024-25.

4. Poverty in the Outer Hebrides – Child Poverty Indicators

- 4.1 The following information provides a summary of high-level data evidencing poverty factors in the Outer Hebrides and, where possible, contextualises that with regional or national data. Further narrative regarding local data is provided in Appendix 1. Devolved policies such as the Scottish Child Payment have contributed to overall lower levels of poverty across Scotland, as compared to the rest of the UK, although more than one in five children remain in poverty.

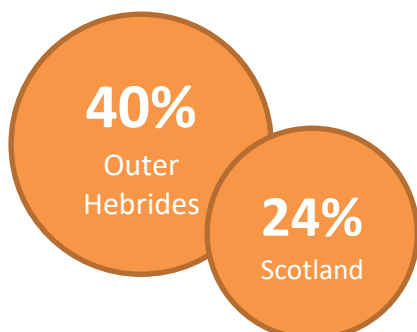


* Modelled data from www.endchildpoverty.org.uk based on demographic analysis. Does not represent direct count of children in poverty in the identified area

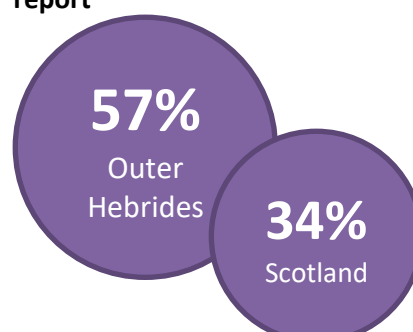
Median full-time gross weekly earnings (2024)



Total percentage of homes experiencing fuel poverty (2019)



Total percentage of homes experiencing fuel poverty (2024): TIG report



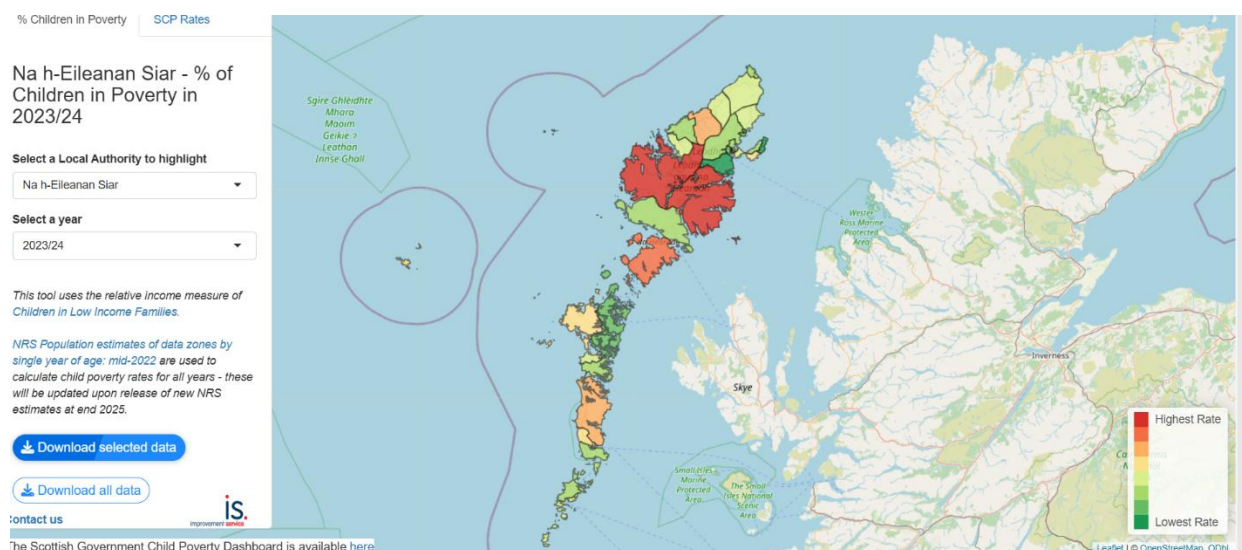
- 4.2 Data produced by Energy Action Scotland (EAS) and published in 2023 in a Changeworks report on fuel poverty in rural Scotland provides fuel poverty levels by local authority as of 1 April 2022. These estimates extrapolate the 2019 SHCS local authority level fuel poverty data using an uplift percentage estimated by the Scottish Government. The uplift sought to illustrate the

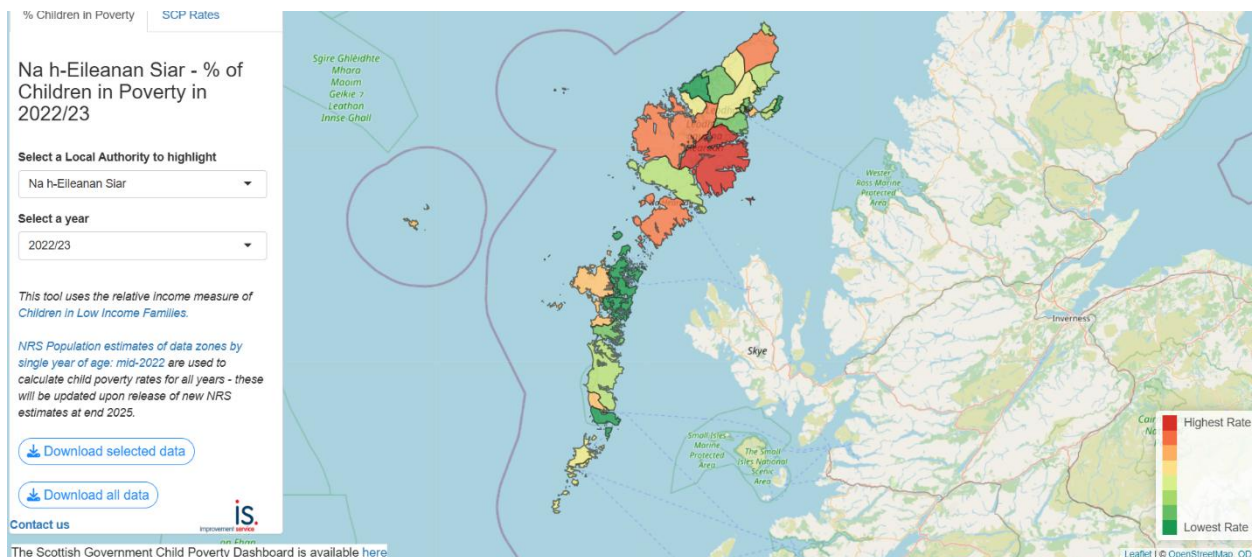
impact of the energy price cap increase in April 2022. It should be noted, however, that this data is not as reliable as the outputs from SHCS. Several rural local authorities have fuel poverty rates which are considerably higher than the Scottish average of 36%. Na-h Eileanan Siar had the highest fuel poverty rate, at 56%.

Number and percentage of children in relative poverty (before housing costs), where at least one adult works: In 2019-20 there were 609 or 80% in working families, and in 2023-24 this has reduced to 499 and 79%; this is the second highest in Scotland where Orkney is indicated at 82% in 2023-24. The Scottish average is 66% in 2023-24, and was 68% in 2019-20. (*DWP: Children in low-income families local area statistics*).

Children in Poverty at Datazone Level

- 4.3 The below maps from the Improvement Service indicate the levels of poverty at datazone level where South Lewis 01 is at 33.61%, Stornoway West 03 at 32.88%, Stornoway West 02 at 30.23%, and indicates lower levels of datazone poverty at 6.9% in Point 02, and 7.14% in Barra and South Uist 03.
- 4.4 Overall, the relative poverty rate has increased from 2022-23 to 2023-24 as follows: – number and % of children in 2022-23 was 437 (11.1%), and in 2023-24 was 507 (13.2%) based on the UK Government Department for Work & Pensions Children in low-income families: local area statistics measure. However, the rate has decreased from 2019-20 where the data indicated 608 children (15.68%).





The Two-Child Benefit Cap and Child Poverty in Local Areas

4.5 Larger families are especially vulnerable to poverty, not just because they have higher overall costs, but due to restrictions on access to social security that affect these households in particular. For out-of-work families, the benefit cap places a limit on how much most working-age people can receive in benefits. The policy restricts eligibility for means-tested benefits to the first two children in a family, for children born after April 2017. It is widely acknowledged that many households are living below the poverty line as a direct consequence of the policy, a high proportion of whom (60% in April 2024) are already in work, with limited scope to increase their incomes. The Scottish Government has called on the UK Government to end the two-child cap and has committed to effectively scrap the impact of the two-child limit from 2nd March 2026 meaning 20,000 fewer children will be living in relative poverty in 2026-27 (representing an impact of two percentage points on the relative child poverty rate) according to Scottish Government's own [modelling](#), and that by the end of 2024-25, the two-child limit will have withheld an estimated cumulative total of £377 million from Scottish households since it was introduced (£424 million in 2024-25 prices). The End Child Poverty coalition indicates that 80 households are affected (Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit) in Na h-Eileanan an Iar where the total number of children in these families is 280, and that 100 of these children is a third or subsequent child. The percentage of all children in the area living in a family affected by the 2-child limit is 6%. The Institute for Government estimates impact per annum at £3,455, therefore total annual impact is £345,500, and over the 8 years (introduction in April 2017) the total impact is £2,764,000. The value of Na h-Eileanan an Iar Universal Credit deductions in 2022, was £22,000 at an average deduction of £56. (Source: FOI requested from DWP in 2022)

Child Poverty Index

4.6 The purpose of the Child Poverty Index (CPI) is to provide additional insight into Child Poverty in Na h-Eileanan an Iar. The CPI was developed by Scottish Borders Council and is a tool to help inform the Local Child Poverty Action Report. It was also created to work alongside the

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The SIMD provides a way of looking at deprivation in an area, covering the whole population and does not specifically reflect child poverty.

4.7 The CPI is a summary of four components which are:

- Children in Low Income Families (CiLIF) - Source is DWP/HMRC. Relative low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. The CPI uses the most recent available year's data from 2023/24.
- Free School Meals (FSM) - Source is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, provided in June 2025. The proportion of pupils recorded as in receipt of Free School Meals as a proportion of all children aged 10 to 18 in the council.
- Clothing Grant (CG) - Source is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, provided in June 2025. The proportion of pupils recorded as in receipt of a Clothing Grant as a proportion of all children aged 5 to 15 in the council.
- Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) - Source is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, provided in June 2025. The proportion of pupils recorded as in receipt of EMA as a proportion of all children aged 16-18 in the council.

Table 1: Child Poverty Index Component Values

Child Poverty Index Components	Component Scores
Children in Low Income Families - CiLIF	13.2%
Free School Meals - FSM	9.9%
Clothing Grant - CG	11.5%
Educational Maintenance Allowance - EMA	3.0%

4.8 The table below shows the score that an area will receive based on the result for each component. The CPI allows for an area to have a score ranging from 0 to 20, where 0 indicates no element of child poverty and 20 the highest levels of child poverty.

Table 2: Scores allocated to each component

Children in Low Income Families	Free School Meals	Clothing Grant	Educational Maintenance Allowance
0: None	0: None	0: None	0: None
1: Under 10%	1: Under 5%	1: Under 5%	0.5: Under 5%
2: 10% to Under 20%	2: 5% to Under 10%	2: 5% to Under 10%	1.0: 5% to Under 10%
3: 20% to Under 30%	3: 10% to Under 15%	3: 10% to Under 15%	1.5: 10% to Under 15%
4: 30% to Under 40%	4: 15% to Under 20%	4: 15% to Under 20%	2.0: 15% to Under 20%
5: 40% or More	5: 20% to Under 30%	5: 20% to Under 30%	2.5: 20% to Under 30%
	6: 30% or More	6: 30% or More	3.0: 30% or More

Note that EMA scores are half the other components reflecting the population size.

Child Poverty Index Components

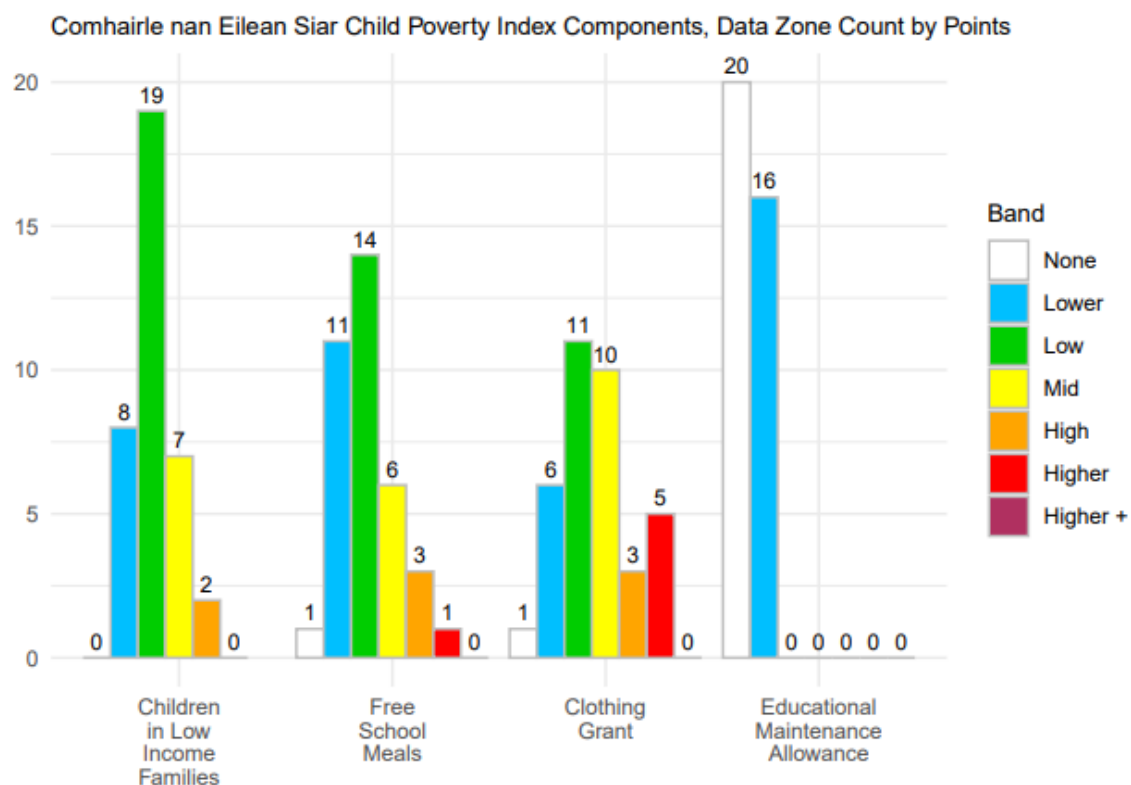
- 4.9 The tables and graph below show the allocation of data zones in Na h-Eileanan an Iar for each of the components. It is interesting to note that for each component, except for Children in Low Income Families, there is at least 1 data zone that does not have that specific component.
- 4.10 For the Children in Low Income Families component, the largest percentage (52.8%) of data zones fall into the Low band. For the Free School Meals component, the largest percentage (38.9%) of data zones fall into the Low band. For the Clothing Grant component, the largest percentage (30.6%) of data zones fall into the Low band. For the Educational Maintenance Allowance component, the largest percentage (55.6%) of data zones fall into the None band.

Table 3: Count of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Data Zones by CPI score for each component:

CPI Scores by DZ	Children in Low Income Families	Free School Meals	Clothing Grant	Educational Maintenance Allowance
None	0	1	1	20
Lower	8	11	6	16
Low	19	14	11	0
Mid	7	6	10	0
High	2	3	3	0
Higher	0	1	5	0
Higher +		0	0	0
DZ	36	36	36	36

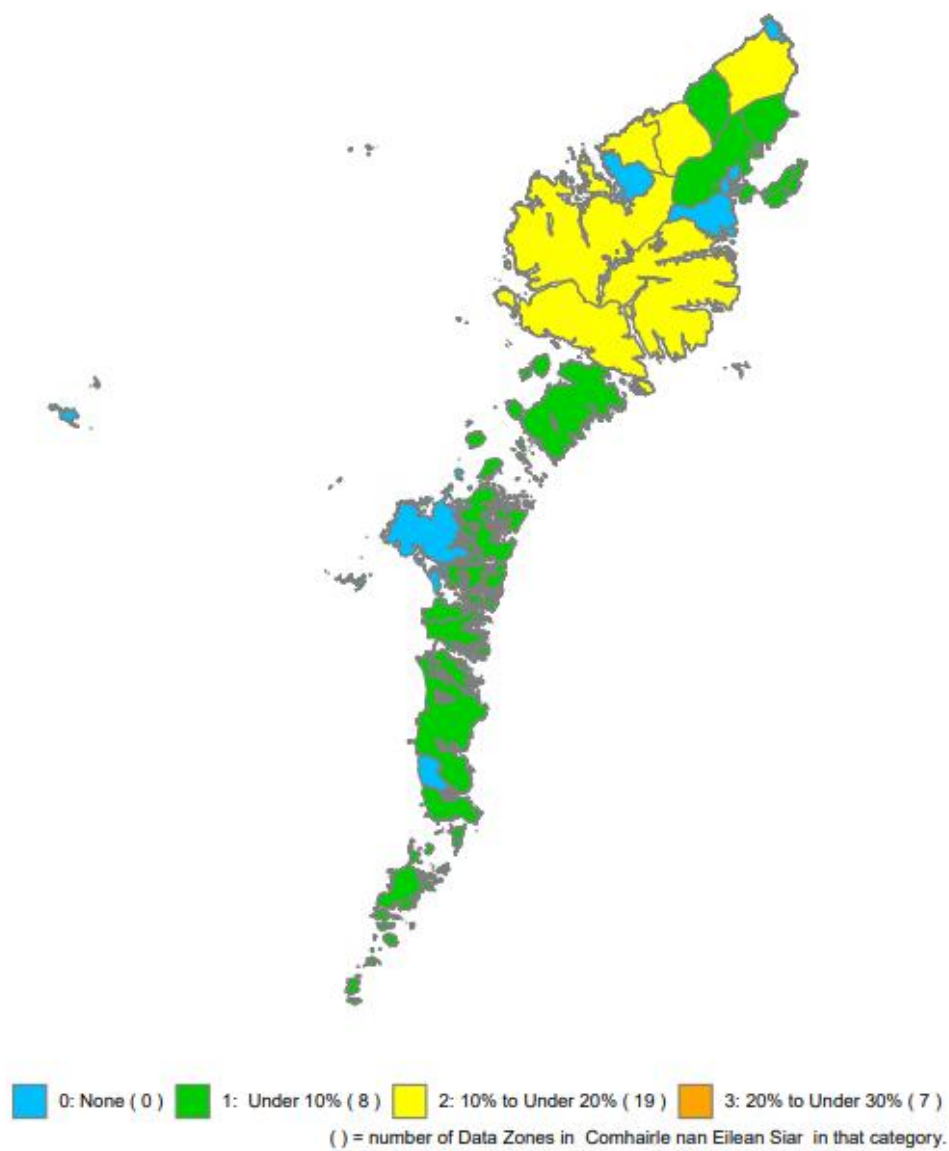
Table 4: Percent of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Data Zones by CPI score for each component

CPI Scores by DZ	Children in Low Income Families	Free School Meals	Clothing Grant	Educational Maintenance Allowance
None	0.0%	2.8%	2.8%	55.6%
Lower	22.2%	30.6%	16.7%	44.4%
Low	52.8%	38.9%	30.6%	0.0%
Mid	19.4%	16.7%	27.8%	0.0%
High	5.6%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
Higher	0.0%	2.8%	13.9%	0.0%
Higher +		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
DZ	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

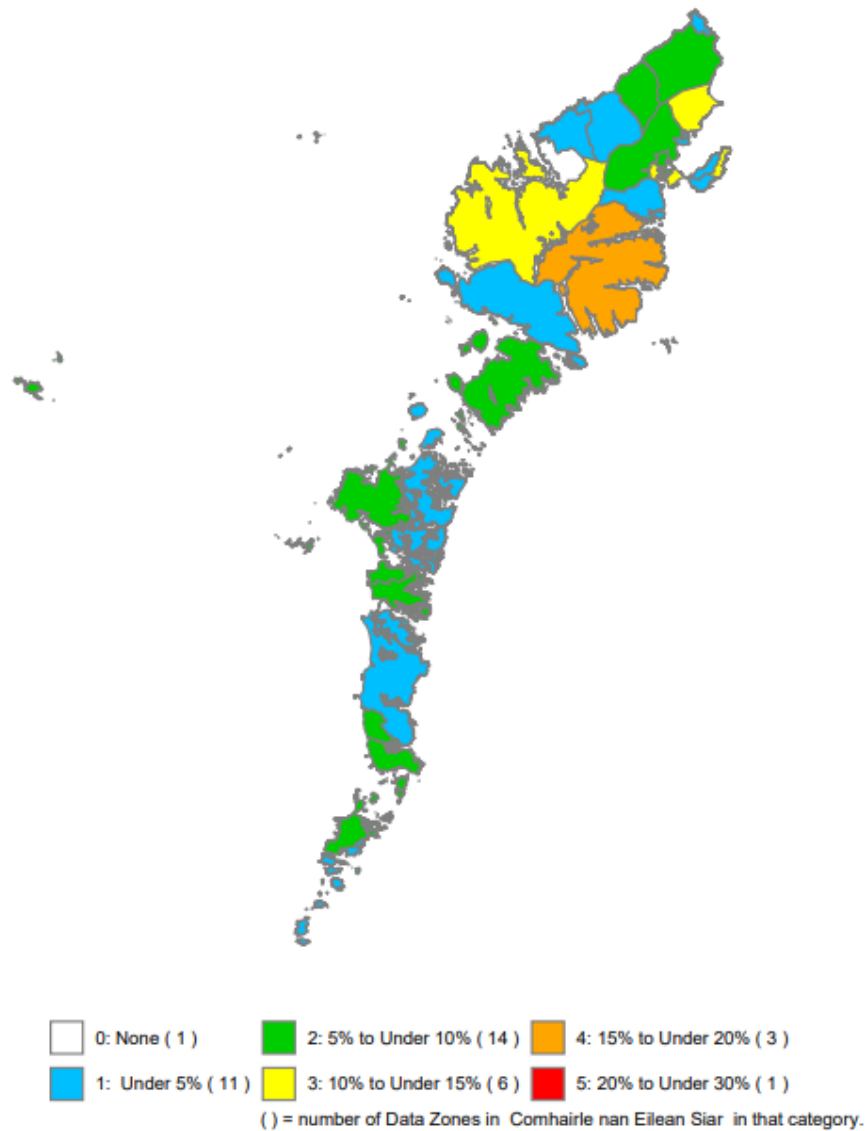


4.11 Below are the maps for each component, showing the results for each of the 36 data zones in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

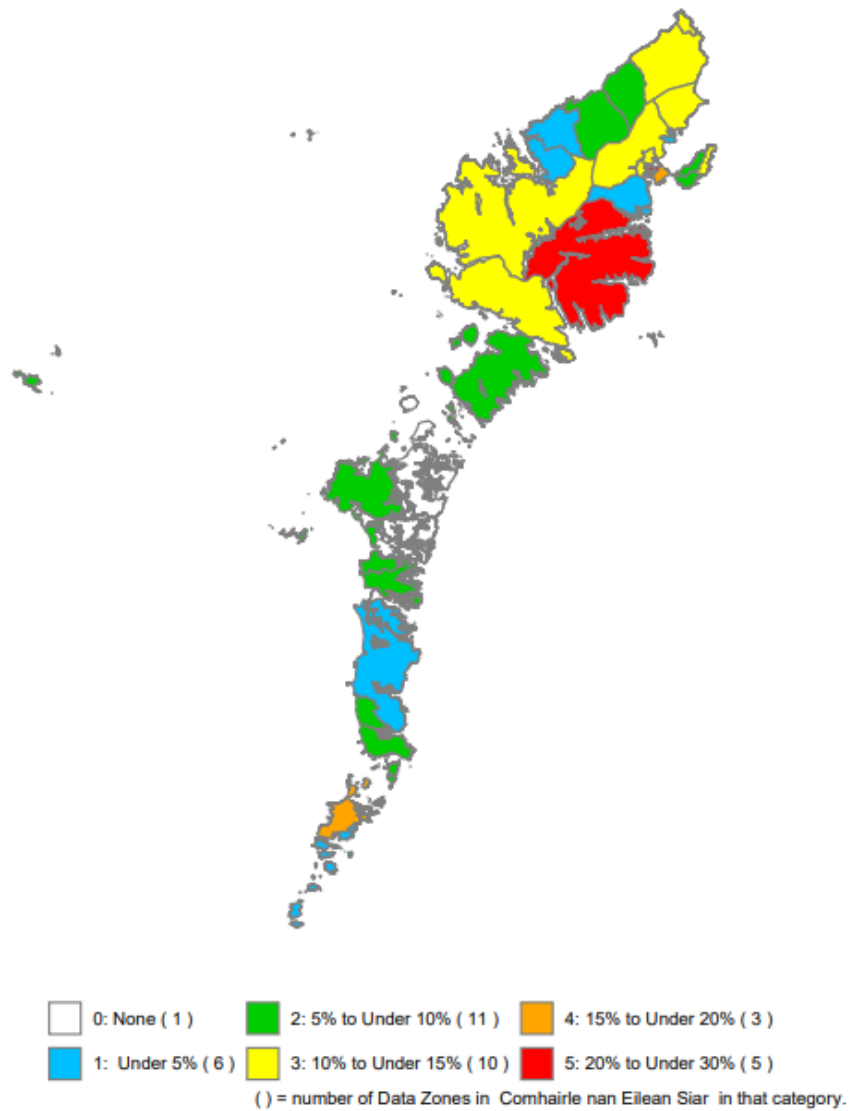
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Child Poverty Index Children in Low Income Families, Data Source: DWP/NRS



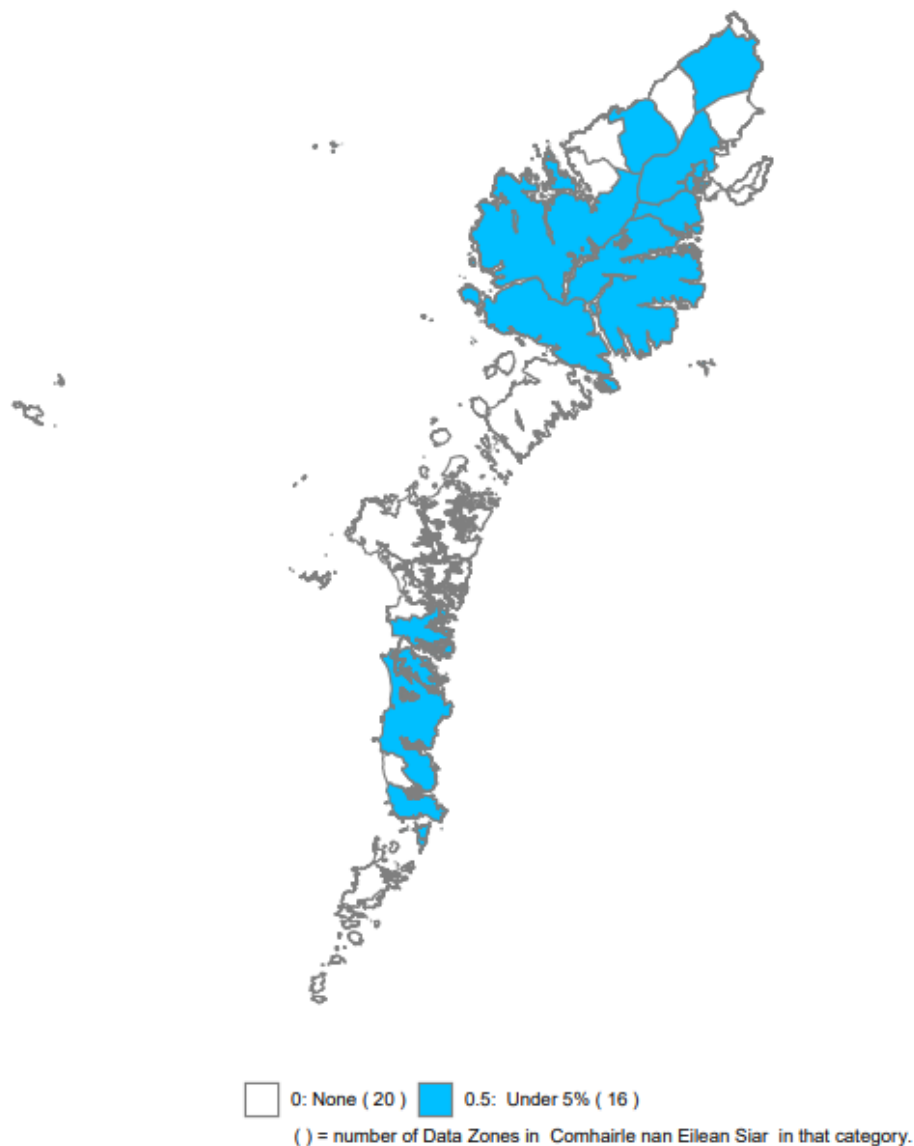
**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Child Poverty Index % Pupils with Free School Meals, Data Source:
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar council**



**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Child Poverty Index % Pupils with Clothing Grant, Data Source:
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar council**



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Child Poverty Index % Educational Maintenance Allowance Pupils Aged 16, Data Source: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

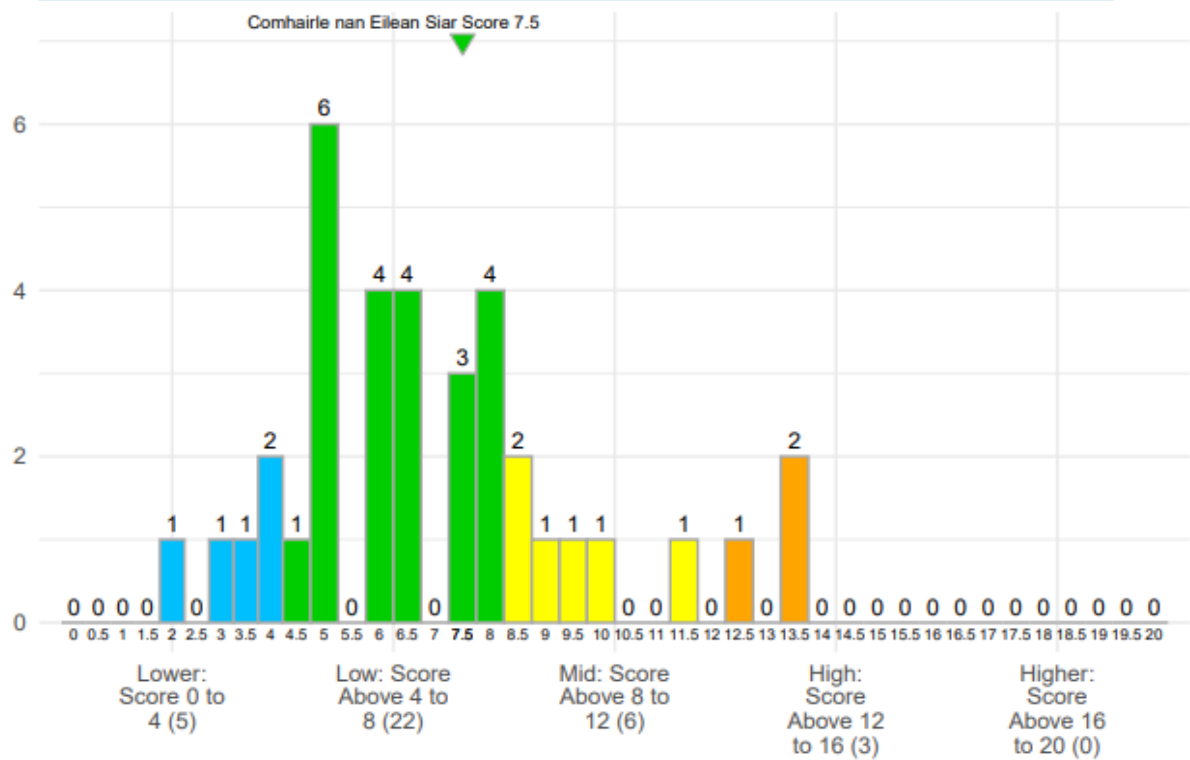


Child Poverty Index Scores for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

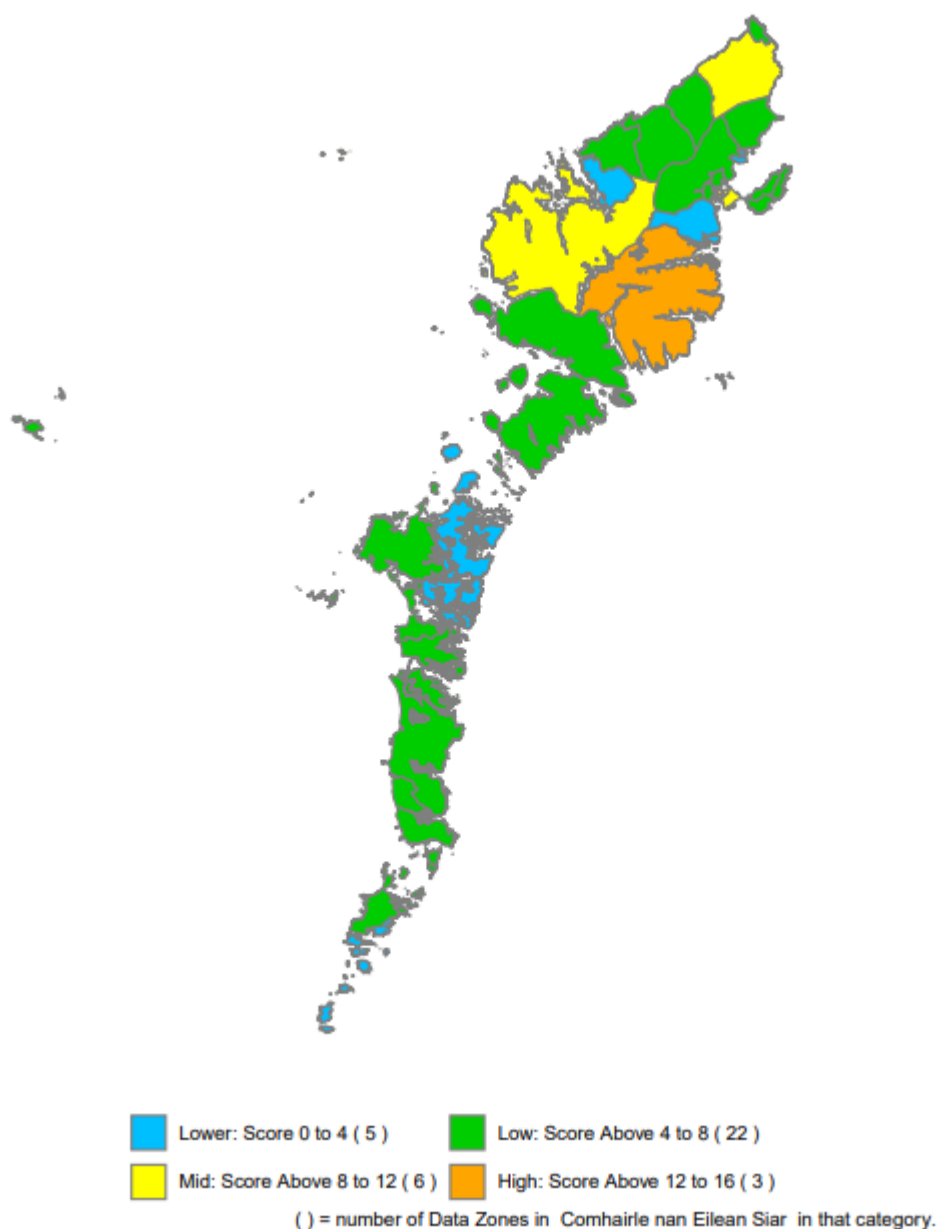
- 4.12 The graph and map below shows Comhairle nan Eilean Siar data zones based on the CPI score, grouped into levels of Child Poverty. Every data zone in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has some element of child poverty. Higher level (0 data zones) have a score of above 16 to 20; High level (3 data zones) have a score of above 12 to 16; Mid level (6 data zones) have a score of above 8 to 12; Low level (22 data zones) have a score of above 4 to 8; and Lower level (5 data zones) have a score of 0 to 4. The CPI score for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as a whole was 7.5, in the Low level.

Child Poverty Index Overall Index Score for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Data Zones by Child Poverty Index and Score



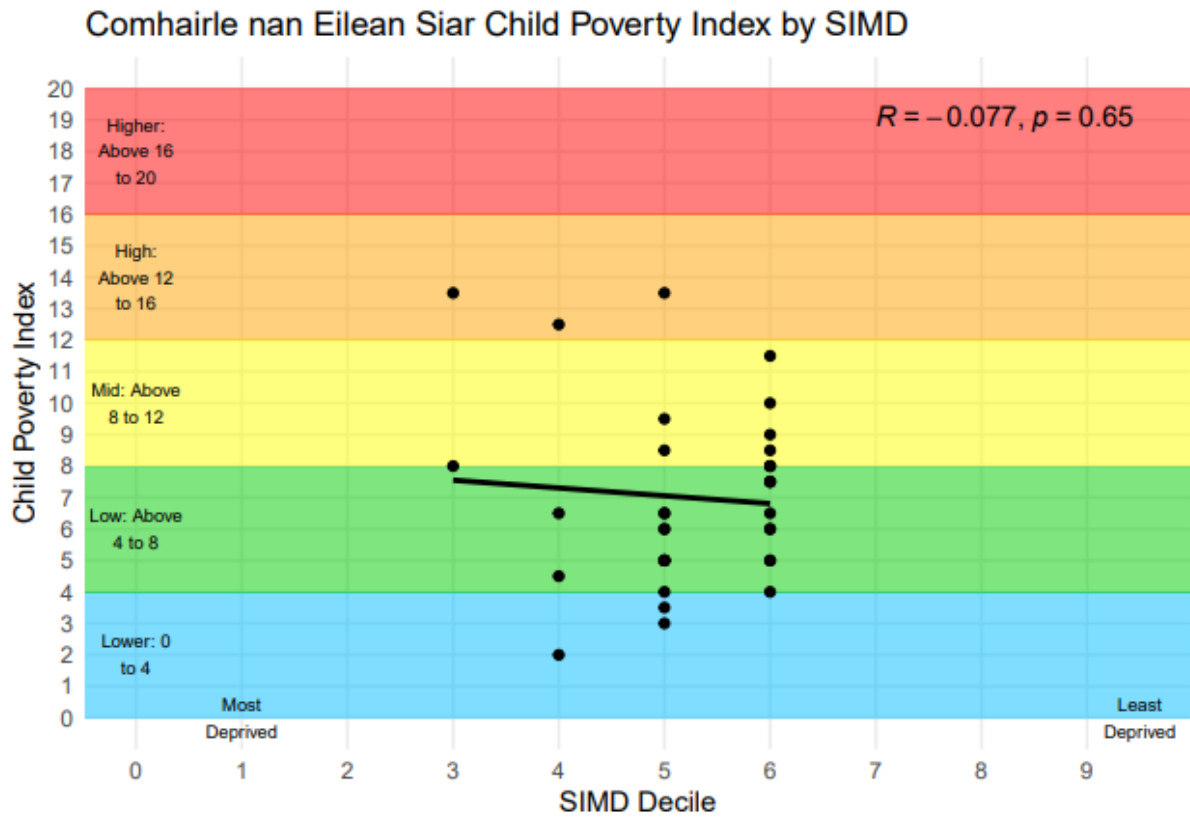
Child Poverty Index Overall Index Score for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



Comparing Child Poverty Index for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to SIMD 2020

- 4.13 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a good tool for identifying overall deprivation, however, it is not poverty specific or child focused. The CPI is a tactile index created to enable better insight into child poverty within Comhairle nan Eilean Siar datazones. The undernoted indicates a basic comparison between SIMD 2020 Decile and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar CPI score. The graph shows the 36 data zones in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar by CPI score and SIMD 2020 decile. There is a negligible relationship between deprivation and child poverty, as represented by the data zones with most deprivation having a higher level of child poverty. However, there are several areas in Na h-Eileanan an Iar where the level of child poverty is higher than expected when looking at SIMD decile. Again, it is important to remember that SIMD looks at the whole population and deprivation (not poverty only) and

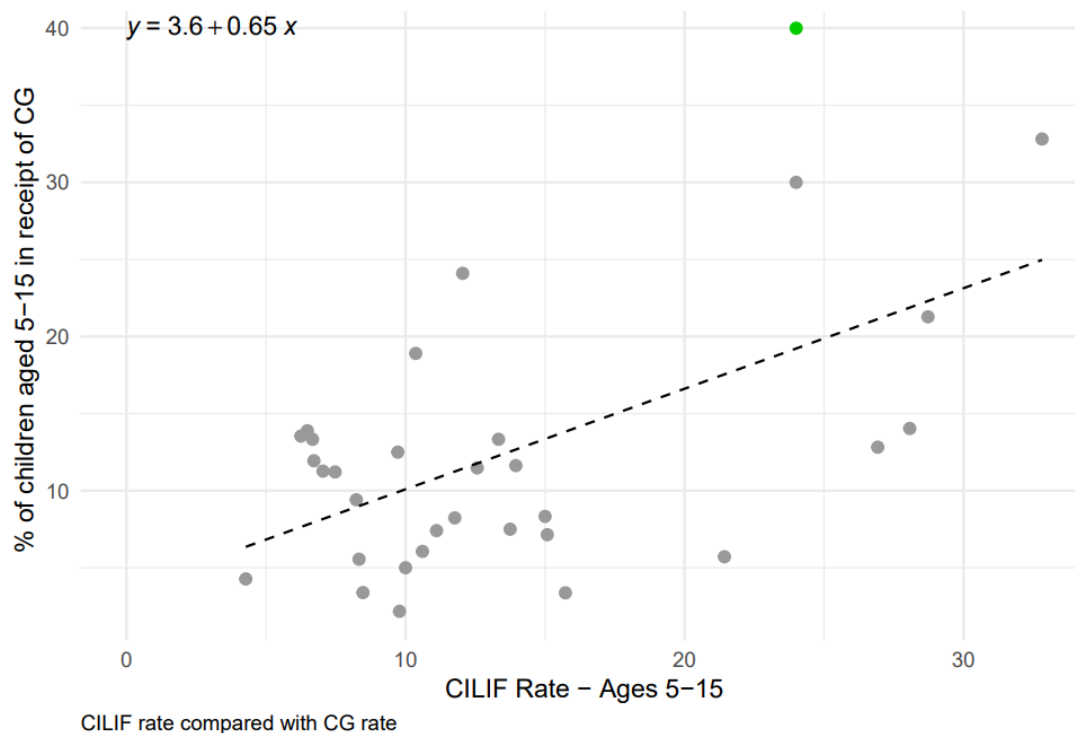
the CPI specifically focuses on children and poverty. The graph below shows that data zones with a high level of child poverty can have an SIMD 2020 decile of 5.



Child Poverty Index and Unmet Need approach and analysis

- 4.14 To understand where uptake of certain benefits may be lower than expected given the child poverty rates within the local area the analysis focuses on three benefits related to child poverty: Clothing Grant (CG), Free School Meals (FSM) and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Child Poverty rates are calculated using the DWP's Children in Low Income Families (CILIF) measure of the number of children living in relative low income families for 2023-24.

- 4.15 Clothing Grants Figure 1 shows the linear relationship between the proportion of children aged 5-15 in low-income families and the proportion of children aged 5-15 in receipt of Clothing Grants for data zones in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Data zones where the rate of Clothing Grant uptake was higher than predicted given the CILIF rate have been highlighted in green. There were no Data Zones where the rate of Clothing Grant uptake was lower than expected.

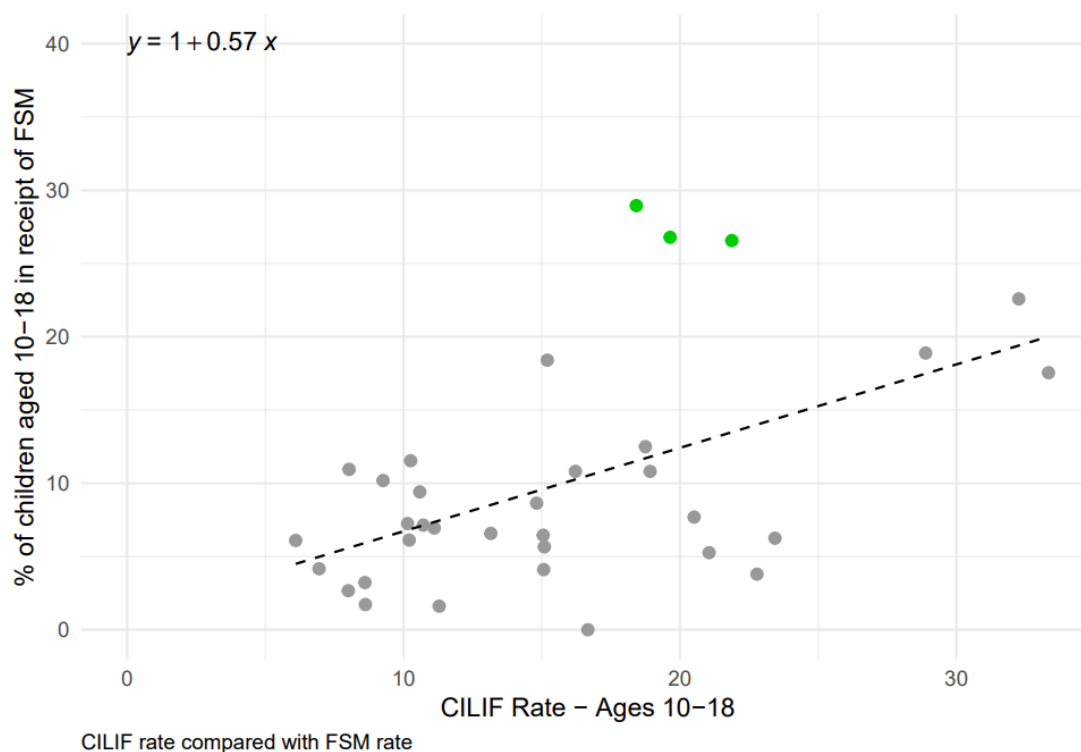


- 4.16 Table 2 provides a summary of those data zones with higher than predicted rates of Clothing Grants. There was 1 data zone with higher than predicted rates of Clothing Grants.

Table 2: DZ with Clothing Grant standardised residuals greater than 2

Data zone	% of children aged 5-15 in receipt of CG	CILIF Rate - Ages 5-15	Predicted CG values	Residuals	Standardised Residuals
S01009043	40.0%	24.0%	19.2%	20.8%	2.9

- 4.17 Free School Meals Figure 2, shows the linear relationship between the proportion of children aged 10-18 in low income families and the proportion of children aged 10-18 in receipt of Free School Meals for data zones in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Data zones where the rate of Free School Meals uptake was higher than predicted given the CILIF rate have been highlighted in green. There were no Data Zones where the rate of Free School Meals uptake was lower than expected.

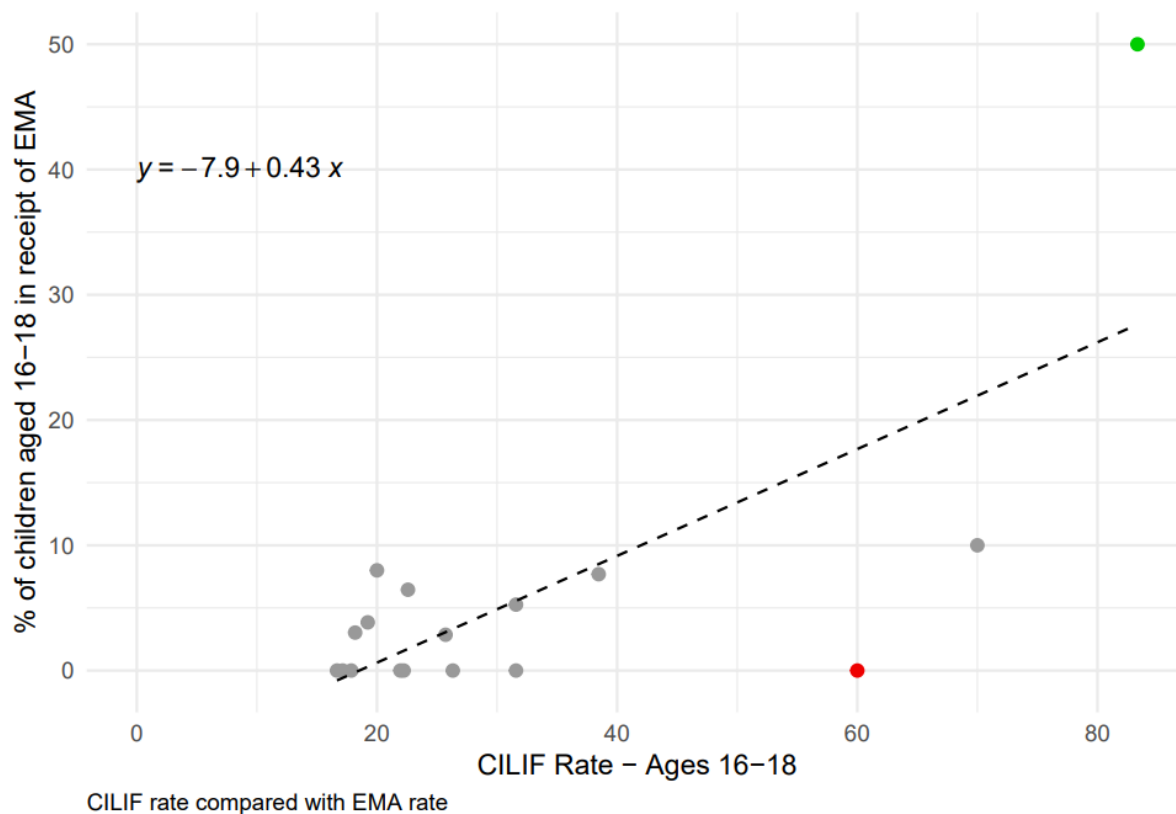


4.18 Table 3 provides a summary of those data zones with higher than predicted rates of Free School Meals. There were 3 data zones with higher than predicted rates of Free School Meals.

Table 3: DZ with Free School Meals standardised residuals greater than 2

Data zone	% of children aged 10-18 in receipt of FSM	CILIF Rate - Ages 10-18	Predicted FSM values	Residuals	Standardised Residuals
S01009039	26.6%	21.9%	13.5%	13.1%	2.0
S01009040	26.8%	19.6%	12.2%	14.6%	2.3
S01009043	28.9%	18.4%	11.5%	17.4%	2.7

4.19 Education Maintenance Allowance Figure 3, shows the linear relationship between the proportion of children aged 16-18 in low-income families and the proportion of children aged 16-18 in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance for data zones in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Data zones where the rate of Education Maintenance Allowance uptake was higher than predicted given the CILIF rate have been highlighted in green. Data zones where the rate of Education Maintenance Allowance uptake was lower than predicted given the CILIF rate have been highlighted in red.



4.20 Table 4 provides a summary of those data zones with higher than predicted rates of Education Maintenance Allowance. There was 1 data zone with higher than predicted rates of Education Maintenance Allowance.

Table 4: DZ with Educational Maintenance Allowance standardised residuals greater than 2

Data zone	% of children aged 16-18 in receipt of EMA	CILIF Rate - Ages 16-18	Predicted EMA values	Residuals	Standardised Residuals
S01009027	50.0%	83.3%	27.6%	22.4%	2.7

4.21 Table 5 provides a summary of those data zones with lower than predicted rates of Education Maintenance Allowance. There was 1 data zone with lower than predicted rates of Education Maintenance Allowance.

Table 5: DZ with Educational Maintenance Allowance standardised residuals lower than -2.

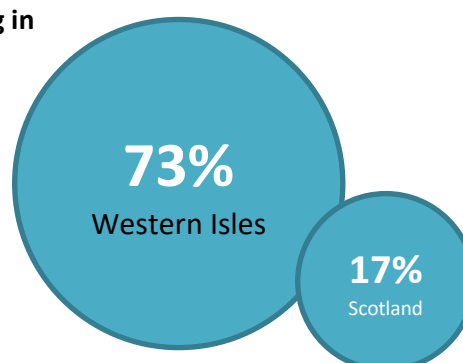
Data zone	% of children aged 16-18 in receipt of EMA	CILIF Rate - Ages 16-18	Predicted EMA values	Residuals	Standardised Residuals
S01009028	0.0%	60.0%	17.7%	-17.7%	-2.1

- 4.22 Overall, there were no data zones where uptake was lower than expected for more than 1 benefit type. However, it may still be beneficial to examine data zones where the uptake of individual benefits was lower than expected given the rate of child poverty to better understand the reasons for the lower uptake rates. Data zones where the uptake rates were higher than expected may be worth exploring to understand if there are actions that have influenced this improved uptake. Table 6 highlights the 1 data zone where uptake was higher than expected for more than 1 benefit.

Table 6: DZ with higher than predicted uptake for CG, FSM and EMA

Data zone	% of children aged 5-15 in receipt of CG	CILIF Rate - Ages 5-15	% of children aged 10-18 in receipt of FSM	CILIF Rate - Ages 10-18	% of children aged 16-18 in receipt of EMA	CILIF Rate - Ages 16-18
S01009043	40.0%	24.0%	28.9%	18.4%	NA	NA

Rurality 2022 – Percentage of population Living in Areas Classified as Rural Council Area 8-fold



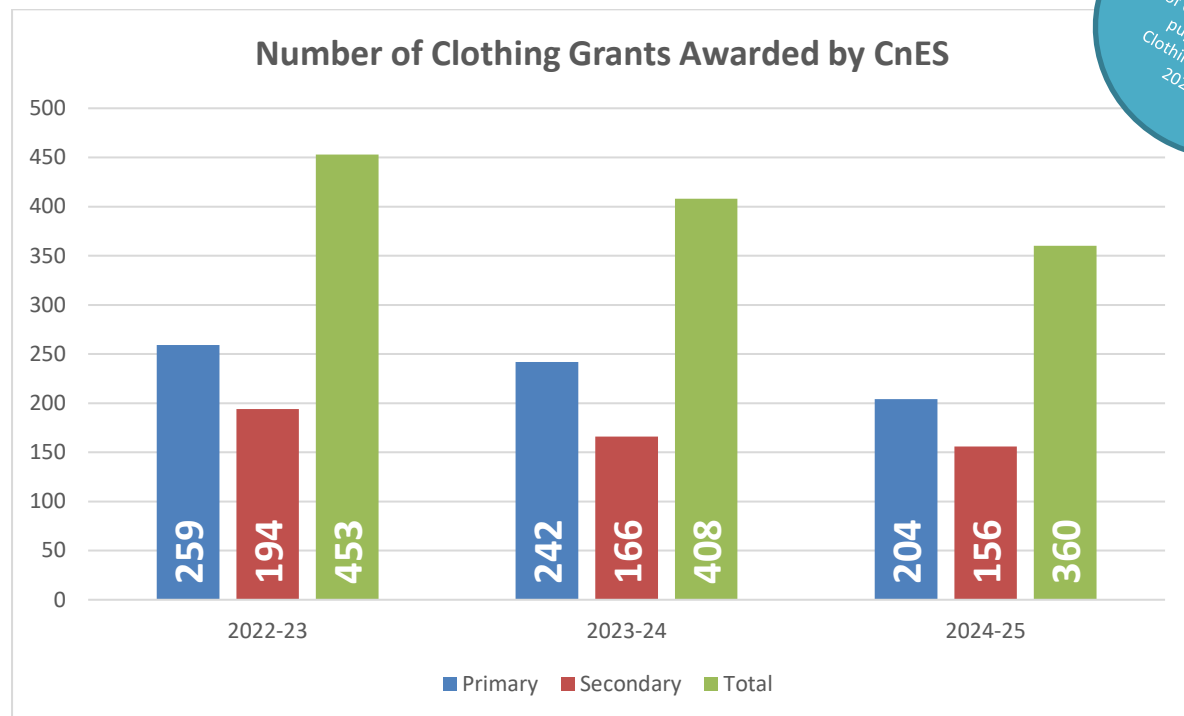
Free School Meals

- 4.23 Across Scotland, children in Primary 1-5 are universally entitled to free school meals. From P6 upwards, the entitlement is accessed through an annual application and eligibility is defined through receipt of a number of income-related state benefits. It is, therefore, considered that the uptake of free school meals in an area is an indicator of the rate of children experiencing poverty. In 2023, a total of 71% of primary children in the Outer Hebrides were registered for Free School Meals. This was the second lowest percentage in Scotland. The percentage of secondary pupils in the Outer Hebrides registered for Free School Meals was 7.3% in 2023. This was the lowest in Scotland.

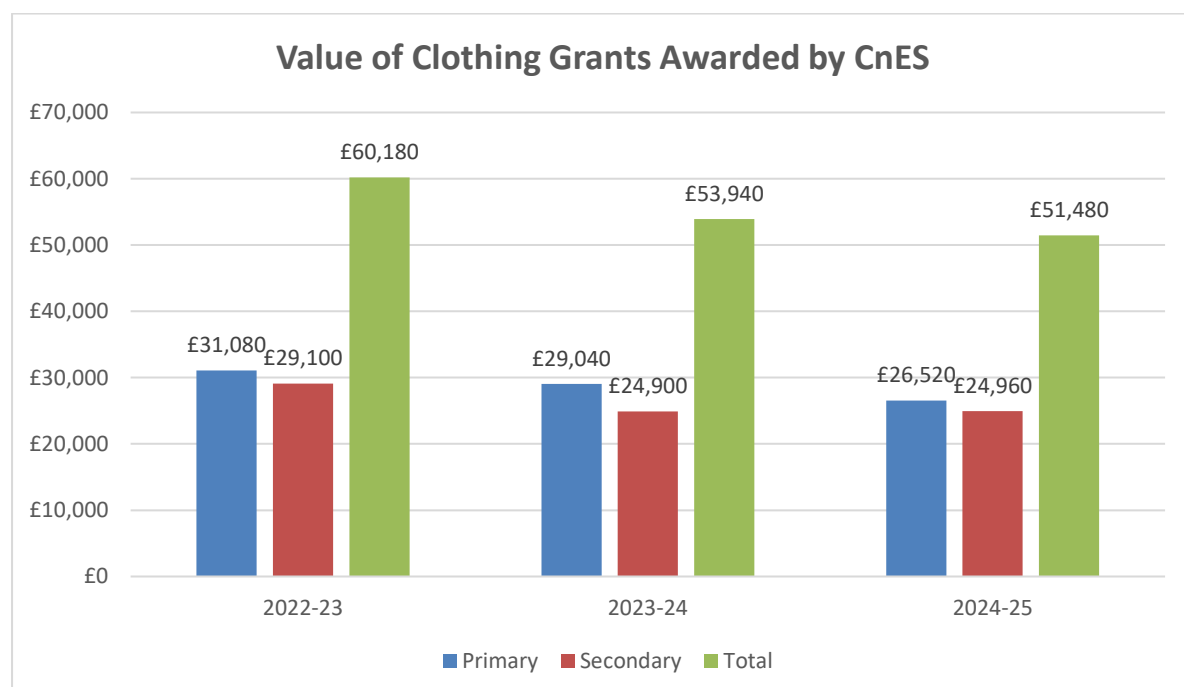
Provision and Uptake of School Clothing Grants

- 4.24 The Clothing Grant is awarded as £120 for a Primary pupil and £150 for a Secondary pupil. Additionally, most schools in the Western Isles have implemented a pre-loved uniform scheme, enabling parents to obtain uniform for their children with an optional donation.

- 4.25 The annual income eligibility upper threshold at £20,000 results in significantly more families being eligible for clothing grants than for free school meals, where the yearly take home threshold is £10,200.

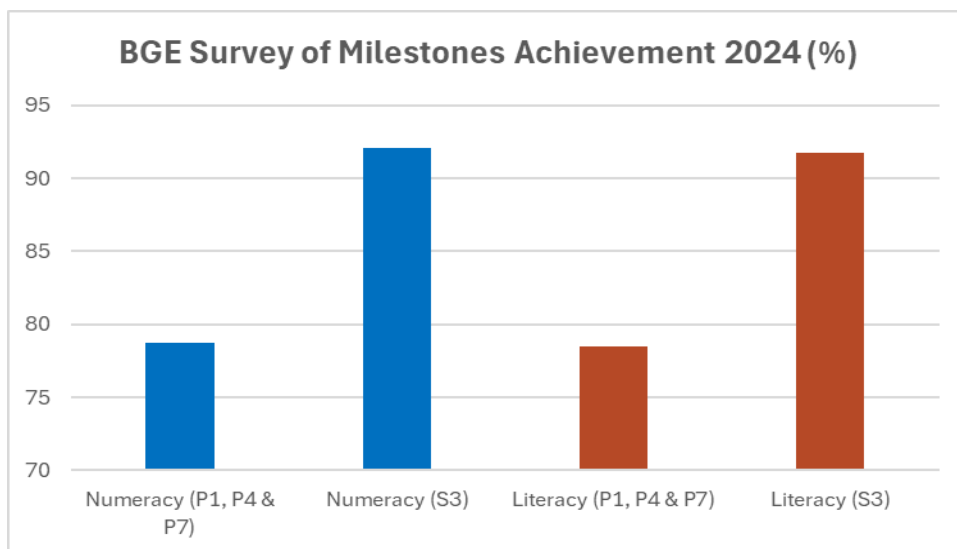


11.2%
of Outer Hebrides
pupils receive
Clothing Grants in
2024/25

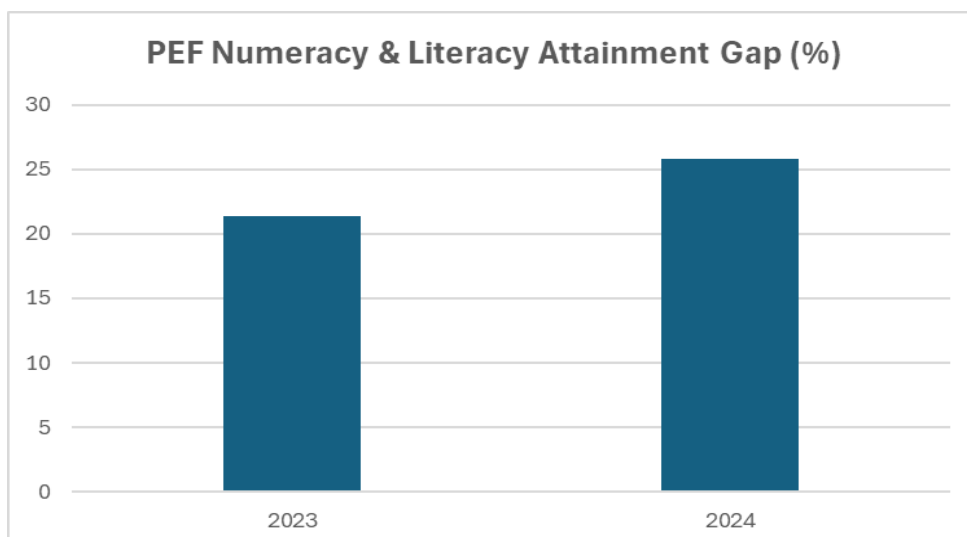


Poverty-Related Attainment Gap

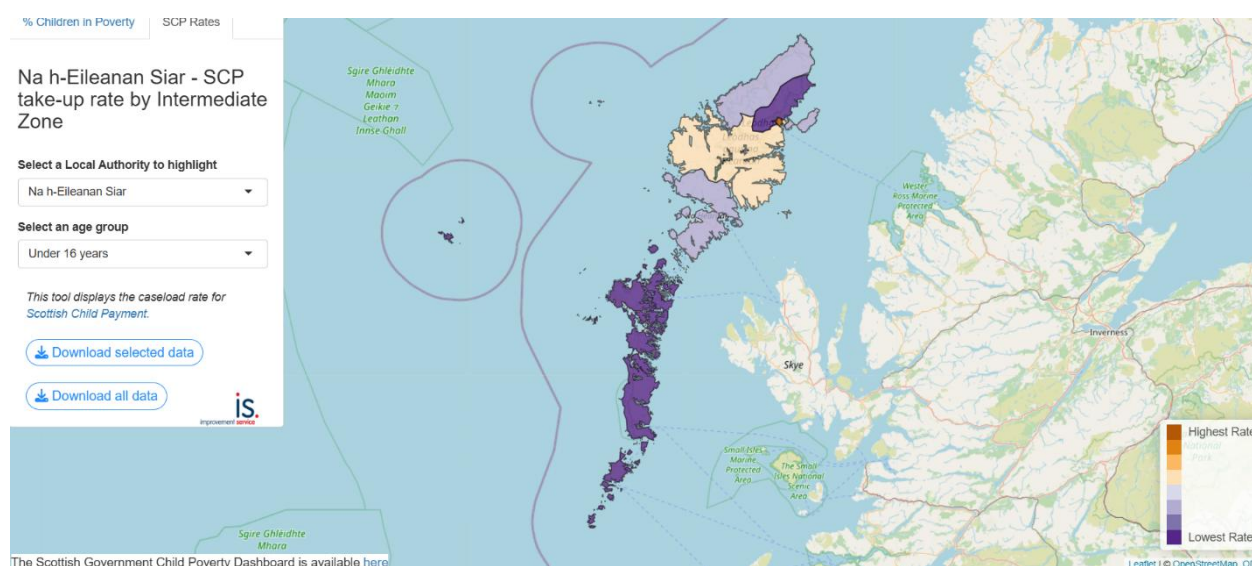
- 4.26 The poverty-related attainment gap is trackable through the administration of the Scottish Government Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). This annually-awarded fund provides a grant directly to schools based on Free School Meal entitlement. The funding must be used to support pupils identified as having a poverty-related attainment gap. Across the Outer Hebrides in 2024, 111 pupils in P1, P4, P7 and S3 were identified as being in receipt of Pupil Equity Fund support. This includes all Free School Meal registered pupils at these stages. Overall, this represents 11.1% of the pupil population at P1, P4, P7 and S3.
- 4.27 Based on the Teacher Judgement Survey of the Broad General Education (BGE) for 2024, 78.7% of learners across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected levels in Numeracy, while 92.1% of pupils in S3 achieved third level or better in Numeracy. For literacy and English, 78.5% of learners across P1, P4 and P7 achieved expected levels, while 91.7% of pupils in S3 achieved third level or better.



- 4.28 Collectively across literacy and English and numeracy, the attainment gap between learners in receipt of PEF compared to those that were not, was 25.8%. The attainment gap for 2023 was 21.4%, indicating that factors relating to poverty impact on attainment and that the gap locally has widened in the last year.



Scottish Child Payment Take Up Rate



- 4.29 The Scottish Child Payment (SCP) take up rate at Intermediate Zone level ranges from 17.61 in the Intermediate Zone for Benbecula and North Uist, to 43.15 in the Intermediate Zone for Stornoway West.
- 4.30 To March 2025, the number and value of Scottish Child Payments in Na h-Eileanan an Iar was 21,440 and £3,391,732.
- 4.31 In 2024-25 a caseload of 970 children is in receipt of the SCP, and payments allocated is 7,110, at a value of £1,365,502. In 2023-24 this was 7,195 and £1,296,405, compared to 3,915 and £561,175 in 2022-23 when the eligibility was changed in November 2022 to include under 16s in eligible families, and the value was raised to £25 per week.
- 4.32 Scottish Government modelling indicates that in 2025-26, the impact of the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) on the relative child poverty rate is estimated to be four percentage points – representing 40,000 children. This estimate is validated by the latest poverty data, covering the period 2023-24, in which the relative child poverty rate was four percentage points lower than it would have been without the SCP in place.

Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods Payments by Local Authority Area

- 4.33 To March 2025 there were 6085 payments at a value of £495,019 with the highest applications for Best start foods at 31% (£152,197) followed by BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment at 25% (£124,854), Early Learning Payments at 23% (£116,247) and School Age Payments at 21% (£101,721).
- 4.34 In 2024-25 there were 1065 payments at a value of £86,260 with the highest allocation of payments for Best Start Foods at 36% (£31,023,) followed by School Age Payments at 26% (£22,640), Early Learning Payments at 21% (£17,904), and Pregnancy and Baby Payments at 17% (£14,693).
- 4.35 In 2023-24 there were 1030 payments at a value of £90,818, with Best Start Foods Payments at 28% (£23,353), Pregnancy and Baby Payments at 26% (£23,561), Early Learning Payments

at 25% (£22,899), and School Age Payments at 21% (£19,005). In 2019-20 there were 395 payments at a value of £66,273 with the highest number of payments for Early Learning Payments at 37% (£24,250) followed by Pregnancy and Baby Payments at 31% (£20,400), then School Age Payments at 22% (£14,500), and Best Start Foods at 11% (£7,123).

NHS Western Isles

- 4.36 Evidence shows that children born to younger mothers, especially those aged under twenty, are more likely to be born into and remain in poverty. It is therefore important that we provide excellent support for these young mothers whilst also encouraging family spacing and delaying pregnancy until their twenties. Over the past 10 years the rate has halved in the Outer Hebrides, and is significantly lower than the average for Scotland. Households with children or pregnant women in temporary accommodation, has decreased from 15 in 2020 to 10 in 2024. The Western Isles has the lowest level of adults meeting recommended regular physical activity levels (60%) in Scotland, significantly below the national average (67%). Proportions meeting the activity guidelines are lower for females (56%) compared to 66% for males (6% below Scottish levels for males and females).
- 4.37 To support the local foodbank, NHS Western Isles provided a capital grant to enable purchase of a new van for food collections and deliveries. A donation of £12,000 enabled the club to purchase a foodbank van, to ensure food is available to those that are struggling. The foodbank project at Stornoway Golf Club commenced at the very start of the pandemic. In collaboration with the local Salvation Army and the local Citizen Advice Bureau, club management and staff assisted these agencies to establish a drop-in supermarket style foodbank along with a food distribution network for pre-packed boxes to all communities the length and breadth of the Western Isles. Image of van below © Intermedia Services (Stornoway) Ltd 2013 – 2025.



Western Isles Citizens Advice Service

- 4.38 The draft statistics report indicates for 2024-25 that despite reduced staffing during a period of recruitment, client numbers remained high. In total 1,115 clients supported over 3,423 contacts, and 4,016 notifications of advice given to clients. Of the clients supported in 2024-25, 460 clients were new to the service. In terms of the top advice areas, 40% of all advice was related to benefits, 14% of all advice was related to accessing finance and charitable support (including food banks), 11% of all advice was related to debt, and 11% of all advice was energy advice. The current total client financial gain recorded for the year is £830,234, and where £539,978 gain related to benefits, £122,761 gain to energy advice, and relationship matters a gain of £58,353.
- 4.39 In 2023-24 WICAS client numbers have remained high assisting 1,978 clients with 7,834 issues. With total client contacts reaching 4,336, indicating that a number of clients are returning to WICAS or require frequent visits with their particular enquiry, mainly due to the increased complexity and urgency of their needs. It is good to see 629 new clients using the service. Client Financial Gain for the year was £1,262,397. This means for every £1 of core funding received WICAS regenerated £5.47 back into the local community. The real CFG figure is anticipated to be in excess of this amount, as not every financial gain is able to be captured. In terms of interventions 57% related to benefits and 21% to debt.
- 4.40 WICAS dealt with 2,236 clients who raised 3,724 issues during 2019-20. This is approximately 10% of the total population. Client Financial Gains (CFG) is money gained by the client. This is achieved with the involvement of Advisers and confirmed by several means such as the paying

authority or by the client. The known total gained over the year was £581,775 although not all clients report back on what they received. In terms of interventions 44% related to benefits, and 17% to debt.

HI-Scot Credit Union

- 4.41 HI-Scot has no external shareholders. HI-Scot aims to ensure that members do not take on a level of unmanageable debt.
- 4.42 In 2019-20, the number of loan applications approved from the postcode areas HS1-HS9 was 205, and a total sum of £907,696.55 was issued. In 2023-24, the number of loan applications approved from the postcode areas HS1-HS9 was 137 and a total sum of £846,113.69 was issued.
- 4.43 In 2024-25, the number of loan applications approved from the postcode areas HS1-HS9 was 151 and a total sum of £880,572.13 was issued. This represented an increase of 11% in the number of approved loans from HS1-HS9 and an increase of 4% in the overall amount issued for the area from 2023-24 to 2024-25. In 2024-25 HI-Scot declined 36 applications totalling £234,290.87 from postcode areas HS1-HS9.

Scottish Welfare Fund

- 4.44 Funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) is allocated to local councils, based on local poverty levels set out in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Comhairle SWF spend in 2024-25 was £108,004 (18%), comprising £82,314 Community Care Grants and £25,690 Crisis Grants. The SWF 2024-25 budget of £593,103 comprising the 2024-25 increased allocation of £214,290, and a carry forward underspend from previous years of £378,813, resulting in an underspend of £485,099.
- 4.45 Community Care Grants in 2024-25 comprised 55 accepted, and 55 rejected (50% accepted), and spend in year of £82,314 with an average award of £1,555. Spend in 2023-24 was £106,386.
- 4.46 Crisis Grants in 2024-25 comprised 210 accepted and 85 rejected (71% accepted) and a spend of £25,690 with an average award of £120, and in 2023-24 there were 185 awards, and a spend of £19,381, with an average award of £105.
- 4.47 In 2023-24 the SWF allocation was £143,290, and allocation plus underspend was £504,581, with a £125,767 spend (25%), comprising £106,386 for Community Care Grants and £19,381 Crisis Grants, and resulting in an underspend of £378,813.
- 4.48 In 2022-23 the SWF allocation was £153,362, and allocation plus underspend was £492,513, with a spend of £131,223, resulting in an underspend of £361,291.
- 4.49 In 2019-20 the SWF allocation was £141,247, and allocation plus underspend was £272,978, with a spend of £93,561, comprising £77,515 for Community Care Grants and £16,045 for Crisis Grants, and an underspend of £179,417. There were 75 Community Care Grants awards made in 2019-20 and there were 200 Crisis Grants awards made in 2019-20.
- 4.50 Nationally, urban local authorities have been urgently seeking more funding as they are only able to pay the highest most compelling cases and run out of money quickly in year, and for the Comhairle the position is one of paying out medium risk level awards and continuation of underspends. The large underspend is cumulative since 2013, and annual Scottish Government allocations are not reduced to reflect underspend, allowing carry over of previous year underspend to be added to the annual allocation. In 2024-25 all local authorities received extra funding and despite contacting other authorities to learn what they were doing whilst remaining within the rules of the scheme, spending was difficult. Consequently, the level of Crisis Grant funding has been increased beyond the national guidance level to account for Eilean Siar's higher energy costs, and extended the maximum number of awards to four in a 12-month period rather the three as stated in the guidance.
- 4.51 Our main users of the Community Care Grants tend to be people moving from temporary accommodation to a more permanent home. Numbers of these cases have reduced in the last year which may account for the reduction in spend.

Discretionary Housing Payment applications and awards 2024-25

- 4.52 Bedroom Tax mitigation estimated funding is £282,498 and 85% of funding spent. The Benefit Cap funding is £14,470 and there was no spend. The Local Housing Allowance estimated funding is £5,435 with no spend. The Core Non Welfare Reform estimated funding is £12,250 with no spend. Therefore, total estimated funding is £314,653 and a spend of £239,232 representing 76% as the total of funding spent from the total estimated funding. DHP Applications, Determinations and Awards indicates an average award value of £741 in 2024-25 and an award rate of 100%, and nationally this is £629 and award rate of 95%.

Financial Inclusion Service

- 4.53 Delivery of the Comhairle Financial Inclusion project is ongoing. In 2024-25 there were 203 referrals in Lewis and Harris achieving financial gains of £497,321, and 8 households included children; 2 families with children did not engage. In Uist and Barra, there were 67 referrals achieving financial gains of £370,885, where 14 households included children. Macmillan Benefits referrals totalled 194 in 2024-25 and £1,040,555 in financial gains achieved.

Action for Children

- 4.54 The Action for Children (AfC) bi-annual report 2024-25 indicates that AfC have worked directly with 460 children and young people across the Outer Hebrides. Over and above this there has been direct contact and observations with 816 young people within the Weekend Service.
- 4.55 AfC have had amazing support over the period from the local community through donations and support from The Co-op Toy Appeal, The Original Factory Shop, Traigh Mhor Pony Trekking, Eilean Siar Foodbank, GA Barnies, NHS HR Department, BASF Pharma Callanish Ltd, BT Openreach, UHI, Tesco, the SNP Hub, the 65th School Reunion Committee, Nicolson Institute 6th Year Dinner Dance Committee, Heb Celt team. The Action for Children staff team fundraised for a week in July which was also very successful.

Community Power Outer Hebrides (CPOH)

- 4.56 Community Power Outer Hebrides (CPOH) led and facilitated by Community Energy Scotland, is a consortium of six community generators operating wind turbines in the Outer Hebrides set up in November 2015, representing the UK's largest community energy sector, with a total of 23.5MW of community-owned renewable generation. Members include Horshader Community Development, Point and Sandwick Trust, Galson Estate Trust, Tolsta Community Development Ltd, Barra and Vatersay Community Ltd, and Storax Uibhist. Updates provided on relevant community impact/activities to and in 2024-25 are below, and impact in alleviating poverty in the communities.
- 4.57 Horshader Community Development Trust - Lunch Club (125 meals/yr over 6 years) and Community Minibus Service (circa 600 trips per year including daily school transport, prescription collection service, and community hire), Fuel Poverty Initiative (Connecting Households in fuel poverty with Warm Works (16 registered), Winter Fuel Payments (from 2019 there have been 436 households assisted, total funding of £196k), Hardship Fund, Driving Lessons, Bursaries (from 2019 is £66k).

- 4.58 Point and Sandwick Trust - Fuel Poverty Relief via Energy Support Unit (160+ individuals supported and £250k disbursed at £1k/household, energy savings average £362k), Fire Alarm Scheme £111k, Community Plan Projects including job creation/training/cultural marginalisation/youth and disadvantaged groups (£1.16m, revenue grants £686k, capital projects £2.1m from 2016 to 2025), Bethesda Hospice (support cancer care/other care) via £55k annually, and £605k to 2025 from 2015.
- 4.59 Galson Estate Trust - Information and energy efficiency measures in c.300 households on the West side of Lewis delivered, Hardship Fund funding of £2.2k to date, Food Bank (208 parcels), Sunnd Programme over winter (low cost access to healthy activities, 1979 attendees), Community Investment Fund (£32k in 2024-25 to poverty related projects), Children's Activities (£27.9k saved by families), Over 60s Lunches (168 residents, and 63 delivered to housebound), Heated Blankets for elderly/health condition (300 delivered), Travel Fund, Shopping Vouchers (£32k for fuel, £21k for food in 907 households), Helping Heat Homes Project In partnership with Muirneag Consulting, WICAS, Storax Uibhist, and the Comhairle funded fuel poverty grants of £19.5k, supporting 23 family and 10 adult households, where the average fuel poverty depth was 11%.
- 4.60 Tolsta Community Development Ltd - Housing Minor Works Scheme vulnerable elderly (50+households), Student Bursaries supporting barriers to education (56), Driving Lessons to enable employment (14), Air Fryers (100+households), Christmas Voucher Scheme of £350 to all households.

Community Land Outer Hebrides (CLOH)

- 4.61 The Outer Hebrides has an active and vibrant community land ownership sector, with over 75% of the population living on Community owned land. Over recent years land trusts have been sought out to represent the community sector on a range of different forums and groups to support wider community planning and development. CLOH Members seek to increase community benefit schemes to families experiencing poverty through subsidy schemes introduced during the cost of living crisis being maintained and expanded, to cover for example, the cost of kids clubs and over 60's lunches. Winter hardship funds, warm hubs, healthy activity and lunch programmes are available, and a number of projects have been delivered across community owned estates in the Outer Hebrides such as a grant giving project to families living in fuel poverty where £39k was allocated to 64 families in fuel poverty, and 950 households received £60 local shopping vouchers during the cost-of-living crisis. The extension of community energy schemes to other Outer Hebrides land trusts led to the establishment of West Coast Community Energy to deliver a 43MW fully community owned windfarm and will expand the benefit of community owned energy to two further community owned estates benefiting a further 1000 households, and this is due for completion in 2035.

Home Energy Scotland Update 2024-25

- 4.62 Radio teleswitch (RTS) electricity meters replacement by 30 June has not been met; the energy supply industry, Ofgem and the Government have agreed a revised phased process. Further details [here](#).

- 4.63 The eligibility criteria for Warmer Homes Scotland have been adjusted and now include Council Tax Band G properties and the Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance (SA DLA) as an eligible benefit. Partners can refer households to Home Energy Scotland using the referral portal or invite people to complete the Warmer Homes Scotland [self-assessment tool](#).

The recent event *Heat in the Highlands: Demystifying & Inspiring Heat Decarbonisation in the Highlands and Islands*, hosted by BE-ST at UHI Inverness was an opportunity to highlight the significant progress made in Highlands and Islands and to [share experience and future plans for place-based approaches and supply chain development](#).

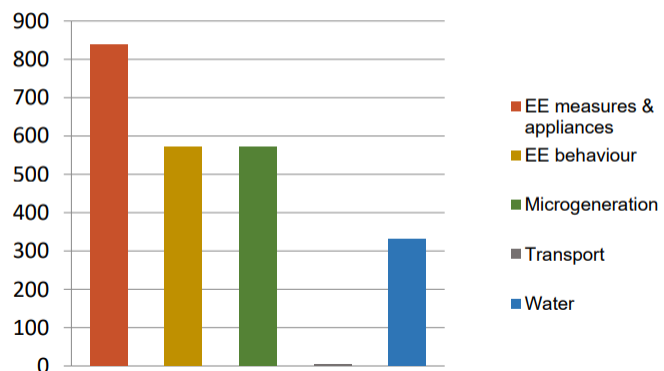
Advice requests – numbers of households

Interactions with 930 households compared to 1,203 households for the same period in 2023/24 (1,358 in 2022/23)

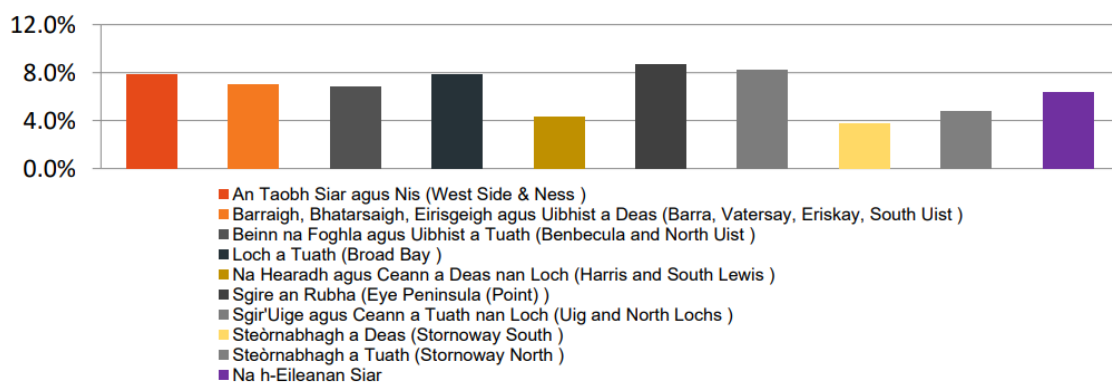
388 of these are HEEPS households – they have trouble heating their home or with paying their fuel bills

The largest numbers are from previous contacts, word of mouth and search engine results. Local contacts were mainly prompted by the Council and local partners like TIG, Citizens Advice Bureau, Macmillan.

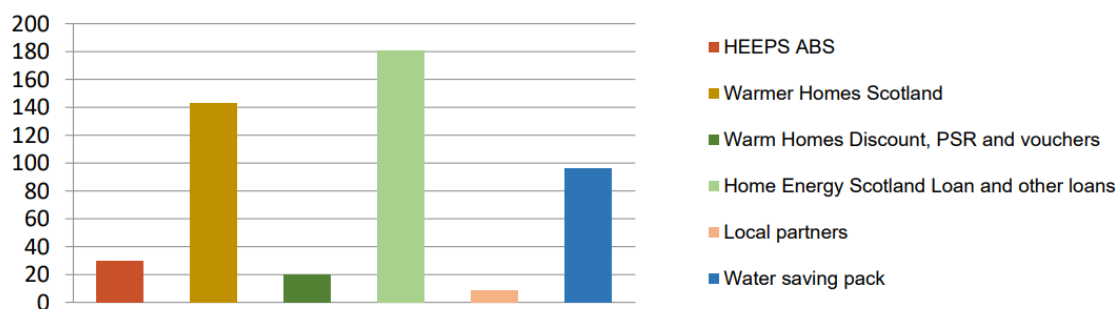
The suspension of paid for advertising at the end of Q2 has impacted household numbers. We have developed alternative approaches that are starting to work well.



Households advised (% of households in area)



Referrals – 479 across all schemes



Warmer Homes Scotland – measures installed

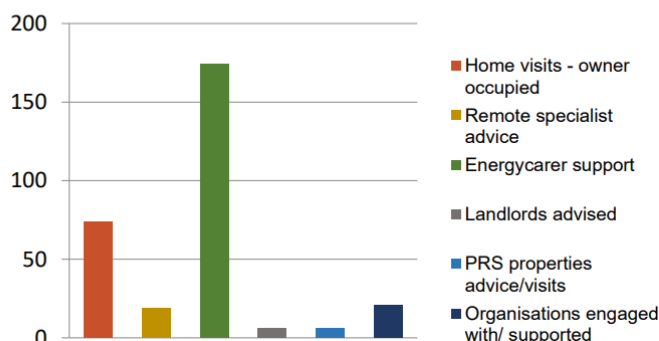
Measures installed	Total	Measures installed	Total	Measures installed	Total
Loft Insulation	4	Air source heat pump	15	Central heat pipe enclosure	-
Cavity Wall Insulation	2	Electric Storage Heaters	8	Secondary Pipework Radiators and TRV Repairs	-
Floor Insulation	-	Electric load upgrade	1	LED light bulbs	6
External Wall Insulation	-	Gas Fired Condensing Boilers	-	Smoke Alarm	24
Internal Wall Insulation	-	Heating Secondary Systems	15	CO Detector	8
Flat Roof Insulation	-	Solar PV	19	Cavity Wall Insulation Extraction	-
Heating System Insulation	13	Domestic battery storage	17	District Heating Connection	-
Draught Proofing	-	Hot Water Systems	18	Gas Connection	-
Energy Efficient glazing/doors	5	Heating Hot Water and AC Controls	18	Asbestos removal	-
Smart Ventilation Systems	3	Hot Water Systems	-	Thermal Storage System	2

HES Grant and Loan – measures installed

Fabric upgrades	Total	Renewables measures	Total	Other measures	Total
Loft Insulation	-	Air Source Heat Pump	47	High Heat Retention Storage Heater	-
Cavity Wall Insulation	-	Air Source Heat Pump (Hybrid)	1	EPC Assessment	-
Internal Wall Insulation	1	Ground Source Heat Pump	1	District Heating Connection	-
External wall insulation	-	Replacement Heat Pump	-		
Room in Roof Insulation	-	Biomass Boiler or Stove	-		
Floor insulation	-	Solar Water Heating	-		
Flat roof insulation	-	Solar PV	9		
Double Glazing	-	Electric Battery	9		
Secondary Glazing	2				
Insulated door	-				

Home Energy Specialist support

The Home Energy Specialist role covers a range of activities from in-home visits where direct advice is given to a property owner or tenant through to activities with longer term goals that are focused more on building links with, and supporting, organisations in Na h-Eileanan Siar.



5. Strategic Context

Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027

- 5.1 The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 placed a legal duty on Community Planning partners to demonstrate that they are making a significant impact on the achievement of outcomes as a result of partnership working. In doing so, Community Planning Partnerships were required to prepare and publish a Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), by October 2017, which sets out the priority local outcomes it proposes to improve.
- 5.2 The OHCPP has set out its strategic priorities within its Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), developed following extensive public consultation throughout the islands early in 2017 using the Place Standard Tool. It states that *'Our vision for the Outer Hebrides is of a place where all people can prosper'* and that, *'As part of this vision we are committed to working towards an increase in average household income and a reduction in poverty and health inequalities'*. This strategy reflects the LOIP priorities and the actions agreed by partners within the OHCPP.
- 5.3 The LOIP has three priorities, which are that:
1. The Outer Hebrides retains and attracts people to ensure a sustainable population.
 2. The Outer Hebrides has sustainable economic growth and all our people have access to appropriate employment opportunities.
 3. The Outer Hebrides offer attractive opportunities that improve the quality of life, wellbeing and health for all our people.
- 5.4 The LOIP contains particular areas of focus under each of these strands, a number of which are relevant to anti-poverty efforts:
- There is housing across the islands which meets the needs of all of our people and is affordable to them to heat and maintain over the life of their home.
 - The Outer Hebrides is an area of innovation and investment which secures a sustainable and vibrant job market with well-paid opportunities.
 - Support the expansion of access to childcare to enable parents to access employment, training and education.
 - Communities will have access to a range of innovative transport solutions which reduce isolation and increase access to services.

The refreshed OHCPP Hebrides Anti-Poverty Strategy reporting from 2024-2026 (incorporating the 2024-25 Local Child Poverty Action Report) enables alignment with the development of the next LOIP, and with the next national Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

Outer Hebrides Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026

- 5.5 The Integrated Children's Services Plan (ICSP) 2023-2026 sets out the vision for children, young people and their families in the Outer Hebrides in order to plan and deliver services that meet their needs and improve outcomes. The vision of the ICSP is *'Journeying with children and families to reach their full potential.'*
- 5.6 The ICSP acknowledges that child poverty is an important factor to consider in terms of meeting the needs of children and young people locally. It recognises that in spite of increasing levels of financial support available to families in the forms of benefits, grants and crisis support, the percentage of children and relative and absolute poverty has remained stable. Using data available at the time of its publication, it notes that the Western Isles has seen the increasing impact of poverty due to *'the general elevated costs of living compared to mainland Scotland, the prevalence of fuel poverty, challenges in accessing good, affordable and insulated housing, and the challenges of seeking and accessing support in close-knit communities.'*
- 5.7 A number of actions in the ICSP Implementation Plans have relevance to addressing child poverty, including:
- Creation of a mental health and wellbeing subgroup, to ensure those in poverty can access the wellbeing support needed.
 - Reduced financial barriers for children with ASN in education by providing school equipment, breakfast clubs, etc.
 - The recruitment of a CAMHS nurse to support our most vulnerable young people.
- The ICSP primarily focuses on ensuring that services are meeting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of its users, that approaches are holistic in nature and that services are connected at all levels.

Comhairle Corporate Strategy 2022-2027

- 5.8 The Comhairle's Corporate Strategy sets the strategic direction of the Comhairle. The next Corporate Strategy is to align with the development of the LOIP, and its vision is stated as: *"To have socially and economically thriving communities with a focus on sustaining our quality of life, natural heritage, and Gaelic language and culture"*.
- 5.9 The overarching strategic priorities within the Corporate Strategy are:
- Strengthen the local economy
 - Support children, families and young people
 - Support resilient communities and quality of life
 - Be a sustainable and inclusive council
- 5.10 Within the Strengthen the local economy priority, the following actions are relevant to this strategy:
- Increase the percentage of homes accessing home internet and improve the speed of broadband.
 - Increase the percentage of households with home internet access.
 - Increased Gross Weekly Earnings and Employment Rate.

- Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce, particularly through apprenticeships and employability programmes.
- 5.11 Within the support children, families and young people priority, the following actions are relevant to this strategy:
- Implement the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan in order to meet the Scottish Government’s policy aim of 1,140 funded hours for 3-5 year olds and eligible 2 year olds.
 - Provide additional support to childminders in rural areas to support families with easier access to affordable childcare for children under 3 years.
 - Continue to work closely with multi-agency colleagues to improve outcomes for young children and young people.
 - Attainment rates in primary and secondary continuously improve.
- 5.12 Within the support resilient communities and quality of life priority, the following actions are relevant to this strategy:
- Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities – transport and housing
 - Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient, with reduced fuel poverty
 - Homelessness is reduced including amongst our young people
 - Decreased percentage of children living in relative poverty, after housing costs

NHS Western Isles Public Health Strategy 2025-2026

- 5.13 Public health focuses on preventing disease, extending life, and enhancing health through organized community efforts. The Western Isles has the oldest and fastest-declining population in Scotland, presenting significant public health challenges. These challenges are intensified by various geographic, social, and economic factors. Therefore, we must shift our focus from merely treating illness to actively creating and maintaining good health, as well as preventing health issues before they arise. This approach requires us to prioritize individuals at greater risk of poor health and wellbeing. We aim to identify existing inequalities and embed steps to reduce them in all our initiatives. Research indicates that many aspects of a person's health and health-related behaviours are influenced by their circumstances and environment. At the same time, we should support those who have the resources and ability to make positive health choices for themselves and their families.

The Public Health Strategy is structured around the Population Health Framework for Scotland and five key pillars of health and wellbeing. The strategy has been informed by the NHS Western Isles Health Needs Assessment, which serves as its evidence base. The Health Needs Assessment provides information on the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the population of the Western Isles. The five pillars of health and wellbeing are:

- Social and Economic: Factors including income, early childhood development, education, housing, and transportation.
- Places and Communities: Areas where people live and their access to essential services.
- Healthy Living: Encompassing health promotion, diet, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, as well as purpose and social connections.
- Equitable Health and Care: Focusing on early intervention and disease prevention.

- Prevention Focused System: Focusing on a whole system approach.

The health and care system plays a pivotal role in illness prevention. The accessibility and quality of healthcare significantly influence the overall health of the population. A health and care system focused on early intervention, health promotion, and disease prevention fosters better health outcomes. Unfortunately, inequalities persist in access and outcomes throughout our system, highlighting the necessity for easy access to preventive services, screenings, vaccinations, and treatments for all—especially for those facing barriers.

The Health Needs Assessment for the Western Isles provides a comprehensive range of data that describes the health status of the population. This assessment will aid in establishing strategic priorities across NHS Western Isles and partner organizations, guiding the development and targeting of services and interventions, while also serving as a benchmark to evaluate the impact of future initiatives.

National Performance Framework & National Strategy for Economic Transformation

5.14 The Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework outcomes describe what they want to achieve over the ten years, in order to *‘make Scotland a better place to live and a more prosperous and successful country’*. These national outcomes include the following aspirations for Scotland’s people:

- are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

5.15 The National Strategy Economic Transformation ambition for 2032 is for Scotland to be successful through a strong economy where good, secure and well-paid jobs and growing businesses have driven a significant reduction in poverty and, in particular, child poverty. The vision is to create a wellbeing economy: a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places, while respecting environmental limits. Delivery of five bold new policy programmes of action will:

- establish Scotland as a world-class entrepreneurial nation founded on a culture that encourages, promotes and celebrates entrepreneurial activity in every sector of our economy;
- strengthen Scotland's position in new markets and industries, generating new, well-paid jobs from a just transition to net zero;
- make Scotland's businesses, industries, regions, communities and public services more productive and innovative;
- ensure that people have the skills they need at every stage of life to have rewarding careers and meet the demands of an ever-changing economy and society, and that employers invest in the skilled employees they need to grow their businesses;
- reorient our economy towards wellbeing and fair work, to deliver higher rates of employment and wage growth, to significantly reduce structural poverty, particularly child poverty, and improve health, cultural and social outcomes for disadvantaged families and communities.

Leading Quality Health and Care for Scotland: Our Strategy 2023–28

- 5.16 The Healthcare Improvement Scotland Leading Health and care for Scotland Strategy makes a clear commitment to focus strengths and resources on addressing challenges to secure positive, sustainable change in the health and care system where:

- people can access safe, effective, person-centred care when needed
- services are informed by the voices of people and communities and based on evidence about what works.

Meaningful engagement matters because it leads to services which are person-centred, high quality, safe and improve outcomes for communities. The pandemic has highlighted, and in some cases led to greater health inequalities and it is essential that there is a sustained effort to design and deliver person-centred care.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

- 5.17 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act sets out four ambitious headline targets for 2030 that establish in Scotland the meeting of statutory income targets on child poverty. The Act sets out four statutory, income-based targets (all after housing costs), to be achieved by 2030:

- Less than 10% of children are in relative poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in absolute poverty
- Less than 5% of children are in combined low income and material deprivation
- Less than 5% of children are in persistent poverty

- 5.18 From June 2019, each local authority and health board are required to prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Report describing the measures taken within the area to meet Scotland's child poverty targets.

- 5.19 The Scottish Government's second 4 year Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26, "Best Start, Bright Futures" aims to support progress towards the identified three drivers of poverty reduction. Ten key actions have been identified, and local authorities and health boards will be involved in many of these. The Scottish Government identifies 3 main drivers of child poverty reduction, which are helpful in identifying what contributes to poverty in families. These are: Income from employment, Costs of living, and Income from social security and benefits in kind.

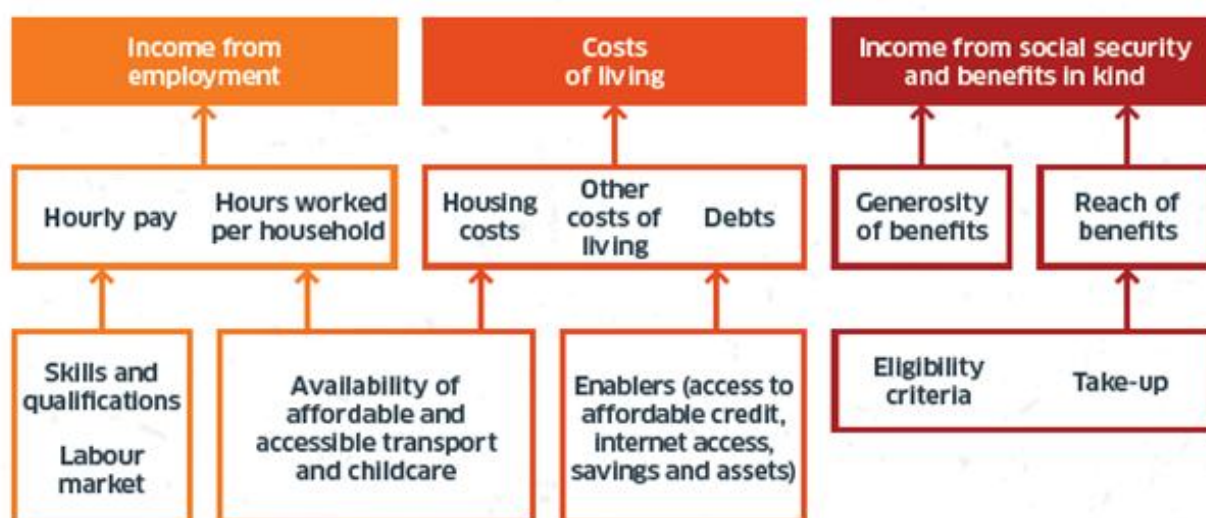


Figure 1 – National drivers of child poverty reduction and contributing factors

When documenting current and future actions in our Local Action Report consideration to the three drivers has been given and direct reference of them has been made in the plans included in the appendices.

- 5.20 As well as the above drivers, national data indicates particular characteristics of families that are most at risk of experiencing poverty and there is a significant relationship between poverty and equity dimensions such as age, gender, disability and ethnicity. It is important that these characteristics inform our local planning as well as other known local factors such as degrees of rurality and language.

Lone Parents 38% of children in relative poverty	Disabled 29% of children in relative poverty	3+ Children 32% of children in relative poverty	Minority Ethnic 38% of children in relative poverty	Youngest Child Aged <1 34% of children in relative poverty	Mothers Aged <25 55% of children in relative poverty
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Figure 2: Priority families, children in relative poverty

- 5.21 The Number and percentage of children in relative poverty living in lone-parent households in Na h-Eileanan an Iar in 2023-24 was 289 or 45.7%, and this was the second lowest in Scotland, which was 56.9%. The number and percentage of single adult households with children in receipt of Universal Credit, as at March 2025 is 432 and 27%, second lowest in Scotland where the proportion is 32%.
- 5.22 The Number and proportion of households claiming Universal Credit, with a child disabled element or when the adult has limited capacity to work in Na h-Eileanan an Iar in 2024 was 630 or 27.1%, and this was 35.3% in Scotland.
- 5.23 The Number and proportion of large families in receipt of Child Benefit in Na h-Eileanan an Iar in 2024 was 295 families with 3 or more children, and a proportion of 13.2% of families with 3 or more children in receipt, versus 11.7% in Scotland.
The Number of families claiming Universal Credit by family size in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, as at March 2025 is 285 families with one child, 235 families with 2 children, 95 families with 3 children, 37 families with 4 children, and 15 with 5 or more children, totaling 662 families.

- 5.24 The Number and proportion of school pupils who are from minority ethnic groups, assessed or declared as having a disability, or asylum seekers or refugees in Na h-Eileanan an Iar in 2024 indicated that there were 103 pupils from a minority ethnic group from a total number of 3139 pupils, and 41 were assessed and/or declared as having a disability. The Rate assessed and/or declared as having a disability per 1,000 pupils was 13, and this was among the lower rates in Scotland, substantially lower than Orkney and Shetland at 132, and 28 respectively.
- 5.25 Children aged under one year living in relative poverty has decreased from 53 in 2019-20 to 19 in 2023-24.
- 5.26 The Number of babies born to mothers under the age of 25 in Na h-Eileanan an Iar rate in 2023 was the lowest in Scotland at 6.7%, decreasing from 7.6% in 2019.

6. Priority Areas

- 6.1 Over the strategy term the priorities for the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be to tackle levels of poverty and mitigate the effects of poverty by efforts to:

1. Increase Income from Employment
2. Reduce Costs of Living
3. Maximise Income from social security and benefits in kind.

- 6.2 The National Strategy for Economic Transformation sets out the priorities for Scotland's economy as well as the actions needed to maximise the opportunities to achieve Scottish Government's vision of a Wellbeing Economy. However, it is proposed that indicators detailed in the table below, where there can be a lag in the Outer Hebrides compared to the Scottish average, be used to assess high-level progress in tackling poverty in the Outer Hebrides.

Indicator	Scotland	Outer Hebrides
GVA per job, 2024 (£)	£52,000	£40,900
Median weekly Earnings - full-time employees (£) - 2024 (place of work)	£739.70	£730.40
Households in Fuel poverty SHCS 2017-2019 (% of households)	24.6	40.0
Children in Families with Limited Resources After Housing Costs (%)	23.0	19.7
% of dwellings in classed as 'not energy efficient' bands EPC D-G, 2023	51.8	77.5

- 6.3 Poverty is multi-faceted. Many of the contributory factors are inter-dependent and cannot be addressed in isolation. Aspects of living in the Outer Hebrides can interact to increase the cost of living, income poverty and fuel poverty as well as reducing economic activity. The strategy focuses on activities that increase household income be this through income from work or benefits (direct or indirect). This recognises that poverty is an issue both for people in and out of work. Improving housing stock is an essential tool in overcoming poverty and child poverty in that it achieves three things. Firstly, it reduces running costs and therefore increases disposable income. Secondly, it creates a warmer living environment which improves quality of life and wellbeing. Finally, this helps engender a better environment at home so that reading, homework and exploration can flourish. There is a particular focus on supporting children from low-income households improve life chances and close the attainment gap. This

will include efforts to narrow the attainment gaps and improve early access to learning. Improved opportunities for parents to be economically active through expansion of affordable and high-quality early learning, childcare and out of school care are a priority given the challenges of accessing these services in rural communities. Hebrides Housing Partnership (HHP) does have a housing initiative for key workers to address recruitment challenges in the Western Isles, so as to attract and retain vital workers, such as care workers. HHP may offer a range of housing solutions, potentially including rentals or homeownership schemes, to support key public sector employees to live in the community.

- 6.4 Recent joint working through the OHCPP has seen efforts to co-ordinate support for those affected by welfare reforms and facing poverty. This included an awareness raising campaign, in the form of the 2024 Winter Campaign Against Poverty, to help raise awareness of a range of financial and other interventions available to help reduce the cost-of-living effects over the Winter period. The Strategic Anti-Poverty Group (SAPG) developed a dedicated [webpage](#) and resources in the form of leaflets for partner distribution to highlight available support, [OHCPP Winter Campaign Against Poverty Leaflet \(print and display as a poster\)](#); [OHCPP Winter Campaign Against Poverty Leaflet \(print and fold\)](#).

The SAPG had also recently allocated funding of £257k through the Scottish Government's Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund (ICCEF) where an annual allocation based on population has been made to the Comhairle since 2022-23. The ICCEF helps partners deliver more direct support locally, to those in need including a focus on child poverty in 2024-25. A further allocation of £257k in ICCEF funding has been made available for 2025-26.

- 6.5 The OHCPP's Strategic Anti-Poverty Steering Group established in December 2023 and has a remit to provide Leadership and Direction for the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plans, direct resources at appropriate services and projects, work collaboratively to improve opportunities for individuals and families in the area, and to improve communication and partnership working across agencies, third sector organisations and communities to tackle poverty.

The appendices detail a suite of actions, both current and proposed, that aim to address the drivers of poverty in our community. Given the close links between household and child poverty, this also acts as the Child Poverty Action Report 2024-25 and Action Plan framework.

7. Our Guiding Principles

The approach of OHCPP partners to delivering the actions to address and mitigate levels of poverty will be underpinned by the following principles.

Respect

Treating everyone with dignity and valuing every contribution.

Resilience

Helping individuals and households to manage their own affairs and make informed choices and decisions about their lifestyle; building resilience in people and communities.

Person Focused

Tailoring services and support to the different types and places of poverty and the different needs and characteristics of all our communities and identities, acknowledging that one solution does not suit all.

Fairness

Removing barriers that prevent some people from taking part in life, socially and economically. Promoting a society in which individuals and groups are treated fairly and receive a just share of the opportunities that our region has to offer.

Sustainable

Plan our actions for the long term, in an ongoing discussion with our communities. Designing and building services, infrastructure and organisations that are affordable and accessible.

Shared

Making sure there is a joint understanding of the issues around poverty in our region and working together in partnership.

Communication

Listening to and involving our communities, understanding their experiences and using their advice.

8. Anti-Poverty Strategy - Delivery and Monitoring

It is proposed that overall responsibility for the Anti-Poverty Strategy will sit within the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP). NHS Western Isles and CNES will work jointly to co-ordinate monitoring and yearly reporting of progress to the OHCPP. The Local Child Poverty Action Report will be reported on annually to Corporate Management Team of NHSWI, to CNES and to the OHCPP Board before being forwarded to the Scottish Government.

The Early Years Collaborative is a partnership between, CNES, NHS WI and the Third sector. The collaborative plans include a section on Child Poverty which links closely to the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026 with associated multi-agency monitoring.

The Local Child Poverty Action Report is designed to identify lead agency responsibility. It is important to note that many of the actions are interdependent upon each other and are implemented through close partnership working and inter-agency collaboration.

Appendix One – Outer Hebrides Child Poverty Data

Children Living in Low Income Households

A1.1 The End Child Poverty statistics in 2023-24 for child poverty (After Housing Costs) in the Outer Hebrides show that 850 children in the area (19.7%) are in low income households, versus 23% in Scotland. Although overall, levels of child poverty in the Outer Hebrides are among the lowest in Scotland, there is evidence of areas with a concentration of child poverty. The Scottish Government predicted that child poverty will rise as a result of UK Government cuts, primarily the benefit freeze and the two child limit on tax credits.

The below table indicates the Number and Percentage of Children (under 16) in the Outer Hebrides living in Relative and Absolute low income families Before Housing Costs, FYE 2024 versus rates of 16.3% and 13.2% in Scotland:

Children in poverty, FYE 2024	Relative low income families BHC		Absolute low income families BHC	
	No. of children	%	No. of children	%
Local Authority and wards*				
Outer Hebrides	507	13.2%	424	10.8%
Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh	26	9.8%	26	9.8%
Uibhist a Deas, Eirisgeidh agus Beinn na Faoghla	70	13.8%	53	10.4%
Uibhist a Tuath	16	8.7%	18	9.8%
Na Hearadh	30	12.7%	30	12.7%
Sgìr'Uige agus Carlabhagh	24	10.3%	23	9.9%
Sgìre nan Loch	43	16.9%	36	14.1%
Sgìre an Rubha	25	8.6%	20	6.9%
Steòrnabhagh a Deas	79	14.5%	62	11.4%
Steòrnabhagh a Tuath	95	16.3%	84	14.4%
Loch a Tuath	48	9.9%	35	7.2%
An Taobh Siar agus Nis	51	13.8%	37	10.0%

Source: Children in Low Income Families: local area statistics, United Kingdom, financial years ending (FYE) 2015 to 2024, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

SLAED Indicators Framework Report 2023-24

There are a number of indicators for the Comhairle and as below several are referenced:

Indicator	Period	Comhairle	Scotland
Gross Value Added per Capita	2022	£38,416	£47,925
Employment Rate	2023-2024	80.3%	74.2%
Business Survival Rate (3 Year)	2020-2023	61.5%	56.0%
Claimants in Receipt of Out-of-Work Benefits	2024	2.0%	3.1%
GVA per job filled	2022	£42,218	£55,432
Percentage of Participation in Education, Employment &	2024	96.8%	92.7%

Training by 16–19-year-olds			
Percentage of Premises Able to Access Full Fibre Broadband	2024	5.5%	49.9%
Housing Affordability Ratio	2022	6.7	8.6

Of note amongst the Scotland wide indicators is that the Comhairle has the lowest percentage of premises with access to Full Fibre Broadband at 5.5%, followed by Shetland Islands Council at 7.9%, and Orkney Islands Council at 9.7%.

The Cost of Remoteness: Reflecting Higher Living Costs in Remote Rural Scotland when Measuring Fuel Poverty 2023 Update

The Report produced on behalf of the Scottish Government by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) Loughborough University was published in March 2025. The Scottish Government commissioned CRSP to undertake research in remote rural Scotland to identify what is needed for a minimum socially acceptable standard of living in these areas, and to determine where there are different and/or additional needs and costs compared to urban UK. This ongoing research and analysis is needed as the MIS income benchmarks are key to the Scottish fuel poverty calculation detailed in the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019. The research established a baseline of minimum needs for these areas and used these to calculate a percentage ‘uplift’ to be applied to the MIS benchmarks in the Scottish fuel poverty calculation. The CRSP report sets out the impact of inflation on remote rural Scotland minimum budgets, and consequently on the minimum budget uplifts for 2023, set out below.

2023 remote rural Scotland minimum budget uplifts

	Mainland	Island
Family with children, rounded uplift (based on couple with two children)	14%	14%
Working-age rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	26%	30%
Pensioner rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	23%	24%

In summary, Table 4 indicates the uplifts by household type that should be applied in the calculation of fuel poverty in 2023.

Table 4 Summary of uplifts, 2023

	Mainland	Island
Couple with two children	14.2%	13.9%
Family with children, rounded uplift (based on couple with two children)	14%	14%
Single working-age adult	26.4%	29.5%
Couple working-age adult	26.5%	31.2%
Working-age rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	26%	30%
Single pensioner	28.3%	25.0%
Couple pensioner	17.6%	22.7%
Pensioner rounded uplift (based on average of single and couple)	23%	24%

Educational Attendance & Attainment

- A1.2 Schools in the Outer Hebrides have seen the second largest decline in rolls in Scotland with a drop of 5.72% in the period from 2019 to 2024. Since 2019, school attendance rates have declined (per 100 pupils) from 94% to 91.5%, however this is higher than the Scottish average of 90.3%. The average attendance for Primary Schools was 93.6%, against a National average of 92.5%. The average attendance for Secondary Schools was 88.6% against a National average of 87.6%. Attendance rates have also declined per 100 Looked After Pupils from 90.9% in 2019 to 74.4% (maybe as a Covid effect), and this is lower than the Scottish average of 84.4%.
- A1.3 Exclusion data is published bi-annually and there was no collection for 2023-24 therefore the latest date is based on academic year 2022-23. The Outer Hebrides has the third highest rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils in Scotland despite having the fifth lowest number of cases. In 2018-19, 26 pupils were excluded from schools in the Outer Hebrides and in 2022-23 this had increased to 57 pupils being excluded. The number of exclusion incidents have increased from 40 in 2018-19, to 88 in 2022-23.
- A1.4 The Improving Attainment for All tariff scores indicate that the performance of the lowest 20% of pupils in Na h-Eileanan Siar is higher than the National Establishment but marginally below the Virtual Comparator. The performance of the middle 60% and highest 20% of pupils in Na h-Eileanan Siar is marginally below that of the Virtual Comparator and National Establishment.
- A1.5 The Attainment versus Deprivation data for 2023-24 indicates that in SIMD deciles 3 (10 pupils), 4 (28 pupils) and 6 (139 pupils), learners' performance in relation to total tariff points is greater than the National Establishment.
- A1.6 The Early Years developmental overview is passed over to the school when the child goes into P1 as part of their transition report. Early Years have identified a gap in data collection and are developing collation of this data for the next session. The Number and proportion of all 3- and 4-year-olds registered in 2024 for funded Early Learning and Childcare is 266 and 76% (lowest in Scotland), and nationally is 95%.
- A1.7 In 2024, 70.8% of school leavers attained 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5. 46.7% of school leavers in receipt of FSM attained 5 or more passes at SCQF level 5. In 2024, 90.6% of school leavers attained one or more passes at SCQF level 5. 60.0% of school leavers in receipt of FSM attained one or more passes at SCQF level 5. The local authority is on track to meet the stretch aim trajectory for attainment for all. Although not on track to meet poverty related attainment gap measure, the attainment gap has decreased by 0.8pp. It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 5.6% of leavers in 2024. This has an impact on the percentage variation that one learner can bring to the dataset.
- A1.8 In 2024, 36.7% of school leavers attained 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6. 20.0% of school leavers in receipt of FSM attained 5 or more passes at SCQF level 6. In 2024, 70.8% of school leavers attained one or more passes at SCQF Level 6. 46.7% of school leavers in receipt of FSM attained one or more passes at SCQF level 6. The local authority is on track to meet the stretch

aim trajectory for attainment for all. Although not on track to meet poverty related attainment measure, the attainment gap has decreased by 4.7pp. It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 5.6% of leavers in 2024. This has an impact on the percentage variation that one learner can bring to the dataset.

- A1.9 In 2023-24, the Overall Average Tariff Score for Na h-Eileanan Siar was 837. Na h-Eileanan Siar outperformed the other Authorities in its LGBF Family Group in 2023-24.

Pupil Profile

- A1.10 All P1 to P5 children are registered for Free School Meals. In 2023, 71% of Primary children in the Outer Hebrides were registered for Free School Meals. This was the second lowest percentage in Scotland. The percentage of secondary pupils in the Outer Hebrides registered for Free School Meals was 7.3% in 2023. This was the lowest in Scotland.
- A1.11 In 2023, 32.5% of primary pupils in the Outer Hebrides were identified as requiring Additional Support Needs (ASN) and the Scottish average was 30.4%. There was a 38.5% identification for secondary pupils. In 2024, 95.8% of School Leavers with an Additional Support Need achieved a positive initial destination, outperforming both the national average, the Northern Alliance and the Virtual Comparator.
- A1.12 In 2024, the percentage of leavers in Na h-Eileanan Siar attaining in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 4 was marginally lower than the Virtual Comparator. The percentage of leavers attaining in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 5 was 74.55 which was higher than the Virtual Comparator. 53.3% of school leavers in receipt of Free school meals attained in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 5. Although not on track to meet poverty related attainment gap measure, the attainment gap has decreased by 19.4pp. It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 5.6% of leavers in 2024. This has an impact on the percentage variation that one learner can bring to the dataset.
- A1.13 In 2024 the rate per 1,000 population aged 0-15 who were on the Child Protection Register in the Outer Hebrides stood at 1.8 which was the lower than the Scottish rate of 2.1. In 2024-25, the proportion of Child Protection re-registrations within 18 months was 7.1%, higher than the Scotland average of 5.8%.
- A1.14 In 2023 the Outer Hebrides had a ratio of 6.9 Looked After Children per 1,000 children. Orkney Islands had a ratio of 7.6, Shetland had a ratio of 12.9 and Highland had a ratio of 8.0.
- A1.15 An audit of Vulnerable Person Disclosure (VPD) forms received during the period August 2024 to July 2025 highlights the main areas of concern as Other/ Psychological Harm/ Child Victim/ Violence used. *(Data based on a local extraction, and does not constitute official Police Scotland Statistics)*
- A1.16 The Outer Hebrides has one of the lowest rates of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police in 2023-24 per 10,000 population at 47 against a Scottish average of 116.
- A1.17 In 2024-25 the rate of referrals to the Children's Reporter per 1,000 under 16-year-olds stood at 19.2 in the Outer Hebrides. This rate had been decreasing since 2013-14, however, the rate

remains higher than Orkney (9.5), Shetland (11.8), Highland (14.9), and the Scottish average (10.9). This is largely due to a recent increase in the number of children being referred on offence grounds: an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy to tackle this has gone out for public consultation.

Child Health & Wellbeing

- A1.18 Youth Mental Wellbeing:** Mental health problems are strongly linked to health and social inequalities. A person's position in society plays an important part in their mental health, with less advantaged people having greater experience of poor mental health. As measured for S2 and S4 schoolchildren in the Western Isles the SALSUS survey includes a measure of 'Strengths and Difficulties' (using questionnaire on scales on emotion, contact, hyperactivity, peer relationships and pro-social behaviour) and of Mental Wellbeing (based on Warwick and Edinburgh MWB scale). For 'strengths and difficulties' 13 year olds indicated slightly lower overall scores than the 2013 survey and lower than national level, but for 15 year olds while the results were in line with national levels there was a recorded significant rise of 13% of those with borderline/abnormal scores, with the main area of change being in the domain of emotional symptoms (+16% on 2013). In terms of mental wellbeing Western Isles pupils gave a generally positive mean MWB score of 45% which is slightly below the Scottish level for 13 year olds by 3%, and equivalent to Scotland for 15 year olds. The Warwick and Edinburgh MWB Scale range is from a score of 14 to 70.
- A1.19 Child Development 27-30 Month Review:** 93.8% of eligible children in the Outer Hebrides received a Child Development 27 – 30 Month Review in 2023-24 against a Scottish average of 89.1%. The review assesses the child's development in the following domains; Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Attention, Speech Language & Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Vision and Hearing. Of those in the Outer Hebrides receiving a review, 17.3% had a concern in at least one domain against a Scottish average of 16.7%. This was also greater than the percentage in both Orkney and Shetland. The percentage of those with a concern in at least one domain has dropped from 22% in 2016-17.
- A1.20 Breastfeeding:** The number of babies being exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks is 40.3% and significantly above the Scottish average of 32.3%. The Orkney Islands report 55.8% of babies exclusively breastfed, and Shetland Islands at 50.4%.
- A1.21 The proportion of babies who are small for gestational age:** In 2019-20 there were 4% indicated and in 2023-24 there were 2.3%. For Scotland this was 5.3%, and 5.1%.
- A1.22 Teenage Pregnancies:** In the Outer Hebrides, the rate of teenage pregnancies has halved in the past 10 years to 14.8, and is significantly lower than the average for Scotland at 23.6.
- A1.23 Homelessness:** Presentations have remained relatively steady for the past 5 years although the overall trend has been slightly downwards. A similar trend has been witnessed in those aged 16-24. However, 2024-25 saw the highest number of 16-17 year olds presenting for nine years with seven applications being made. The number of 16-24 year olds presenting as homeless has declined from 32 in 2019-20 to 27 in 2024-25. The percentage of 16-24 year olds presenting as homeless in relation to the overall number of households presenting homeless

has also decreased from 21% in 2019-20 to 19% in 2024-25. The total number of homeless applications has decreased from 153 in 2019-20, to 139 in 2024-25.

- A1.24 **P1 Children in Eilean Siar Clinically Obese & Severely Obese:** In 2019-20 there was a rate of 7.5% of children indicated and this was above the Scottish average of 6.7%, and in 2023-24 there was a rate of 8.4% and this was above the Scottish average of 6.9%.
- A1.25 **Percentage of P1 children in the Outer Hebrides with no obvious decay experience:** In 2024 73.1% of P1 children in the Outer Hebrides had no obvious decay experience. This was below the Scottish average of 73.2%. In 2020, 73.4% had no obvious decay experience and this was below the Scottish average of 73.5%. In 2016, 79% of P1 children in the Outer Hebrides had no obvious decay experience, and this was above the Scottish average of 69.4%.
- A1.26 **Number and proportion of all 2-year-olds utilising ELC entitlement, and proportion of all eligible 2-year-olds taking up ELC, 2024:** 2-year-olds must meet the statutory eligibility criteria (looked after children, children in kinship care and those with a parent-appointed guardian) and in for those on qualifying benefits. The Number of 2-year-olds registered for funded ELC is 15, and the Percentage of eligible 2-year-olds (%) is 56, and this is 7% of all 2-year-olds. The Scottish percentage of eligible 2-year-olds is 59% and as a percentage of all 2-year-olds is 13.

Outer Hebrides Poverty Strategy Action Plan

Current Actions to Mitigate Poverty in the Outer Hebrides 2024-25

Appendix Two

Action	To be carried out by	Resources Allocated	Related Poverty Drivers	How Impact is Assessed	Target Group
Education					
Increase Free School Meal uptake through promotion and direct distribution of forms	ES&CS Resources	Existing Resources	Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	Promotion Activity undertaken each year in the Summer holiday. 3% increase in uptake of FSM	Families of school-age children 5+
Increase the uptake of the universal P1-5 Free School Meal offer and to those in receipt of Scottish Child Payment	ES&CS	Existing Resources	Cost of Living	95% uptake from P1-5 pupils and to those in receipt of Scottish Child Payment (since February 2025)	Families of P1-5 age children and to those in receipt of Scottish Child Payment
Increase uptake of clothing grants through promotion and direct distribution of forms	ES&CS Resources	Existing Resources	Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	Promotion activity undertaken each year in the Summer holiday. 5% increase in grants distributed	Families of school-age children 5+
Home to School Transport Policy 2024 - if a charging scheme is introduced, there would be regard to the financial circumstances of the parents, and if the charges would cause undue hardship	ES&CS Resources	No additional resources	Cost of living	No families in receipt of Clothing Grant will be charged for use of a vacant seat under this policy	Families in receipt of Clothing Grant
Availability of apprenticeships and local applied learning pathways linked to local economic demand	Accredited Training and Skills	SDS/No One Left Behind/UKSPF	Income from employment and cost of living	Increase in the number of people engaged in a local modern apprenticeship	All age service
Delivery of Pupil Equity Fund to target the poverty related attainment gap	Schools	Annual resource of £259,395 (fixed across the four years from (2022-2026)	Cost of Living	Progress towards Scottish Attainment Challenge Stretch Aims. LA and School Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels. Individual school data detailing impact of interventions on progress and achievement of targeted group. Feedback from pupils and their families. % participation in holiday activities	Children and young people in receipt of PEF

Provision of holiday meals and activity programme via Pupil Equity Fund (PEF)	Education Attainment Team in partnership with schools and CLD	PEF allocation for 2024-25	Cost of Living	Feedback from pupils and their families. The % participation in holiday activities including priority groups who may face disadvantage	Children and young people in receipt of PEF
Provision of a Young Mothers Support Group principally aimed at vulnerable young mothers	CLD	Existing Resources	Community Engagement	% uptake and stay-on rate	Young mothers, especially those that are vulnerable
Establishment of Hotspot Intervention Teams (HIT) in two island communities with higher rates of poverty to provide resources and increase engagement	CLD	External grant funding	Community Engagement	% uptake by children and young people and stay-on rate for activities	Children and young people in the target communities
Free access to sports facilities for care-experienced young people	ES&CS Resources	Funded from current resources	Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	Uptake data from scheme – N/A in terms of individual visit numbers	Carers and looked-after children
Provide Funded nursery places for two-year olds from low-income families – DWP, Nursery staff and EYSO's assist in identifying placements	Early Years Service	Existing Resources	Cost of Living, Income from employment	Uptake vs expected eligibility of total no of 2-year-olds each year	Parents of 2yr old children
Increase access to nursery provision for full day and during school holiday periods	Early Years Service	ELC Expansion Funding	Cost of living	Increase in no of nurseries offering flexible, extended hours. All nurseries offer a minimum of 1140hrs ELC, 8 settings are open 8.30-5.30 and 7 settings offer full year childcare, including 2 with provision for 0-3's.	Parents of pre-school children
Provide free nursery lunches to those meeting eligibility criteria	Early Years Service	ELC Expansion Funding	Cost of living	Increase in uptake of free nursery lunches	All children eligible for ELC funding including funded 2's provided with free lunch/snacks throughout the day

Provide free transport to and from nursery for vulnerable families	Early Years Service	Existing Resources	Cost of living	Appropriate service provided to referred families: transport/cost of transport can be provided in certain circumstances.	Parents of pre-school children
Support families to access FSM and clothing grant	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing resources	Cost of living, Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	No. of families Client financial gain	Households with school age children in the Outer Hebrides
Health					
Direct patients to access foodbanks through distribution of vouchers	NHS Health Visiting	Existing Resources	Costs of living	% uptake of vouchers to foodbank	Expectant mums and babies up to the age of 6 months
Advice and leaflets on baby boxes at 24 weeks	NHS WI Midwifery	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Monitoring of % uptake; 100% uptake	All expectant mums throughout Outer Hebrides
Referral to WICAS/Financial Inclusion for financial health check at 28 weeks or earlier	NHS WI Midwifery NHS Health Visiting	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Number of referrals made, data analysis of advice given and uptake from agencies	Expectant mums and babies up to the age of 6 months
Provide access to Best Start Grant by distributing information and contact details at 24 weeks	NHS WI Midwifery via SSS	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	% Increase in uptake of Best Start Grant from Social Security Scotland monitoring report	Expectant mums and babies up to 6 months
Signpost families to relevant agencies for benefits advice and provide information on Best Start Grant at 24 weeks	NHS WI Health Visiting	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Number of referrals and % increase in uptake of Best Start Grants	Families with children 0-5 yrs old
Pastoral visits into the community leading to referral to services.	NHS WI Chaplaincy Service	Existing Resources	Income from social security	Records of patient consultations/discussions	All residents of the Outer Hebrides

Signpost families in need to relevant agencies			and benefits in kind	Through the Specialist Spiritual Care Patient Related Outcome Measure (PROM) Qualitative surveys on effectiveness of service	
Raise awareness of poverty: Provide training to 30 front line staff. Poverty sensitive practice training piloted	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept.	Existing Resources	Costs of living Reach of benefits and take up	No of participants No of training sessions.	Front-line staff throughout the Outer Hebrides
Health literacy resources developed and sent to GP practices. Suite of add on topics developed in various formats. Challenge poverty week campaigns, cooking on a budget resources and myth busting bookmark developed	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept.	Existing Resources	Costs of living Income from social security and benefits in kind	No of resources produced and distributed	All residents of Outer Hebrides
Availability and access to healthy, affordable fresh produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy eating on a budget workshops: run 4 workshops with a focus on adopting a healthier diet/ budgeting Community growing projects: encourage groups/communities to grow their own fresh fruit and vegetables 	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept.	Existing Resources	Costs of Living	4 workshops throughout Outer Hebrides: 2 in Lewis and Harris, 2 in Uists and Barra. 40 people are made aware of how they can budget and eat healthier. Healthy eating on a budget' workshops have been delivered twice a year in Uist & Barra. HENRY Training delivered regularly island wide	Unemployed, single parents, low income, refugees

Raise awareness of Get Heard Hebrides toolkit with CPP partners for use in community.	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept	Existing Resources	Community Engagement	4 meetings and feedback on action plan	Residents in poverty
Developed and ran pilot financial inclusion referral tool to enable all front-line staff to sign-post families in need to appropriate services	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept.	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Referral rates by the maternal and infant nutrition group to income maximisation services	Frontline agencies
Attend Poverty Alliance Scotland meetings: participation ensures the Western Isles are represented at national level and also ensures a rural perspective is considered when lobbying Scottish Government on issues relating to poverty	NHS WI Health Promotion Dept.	Existing Resources	Networking and policy	Rural consideration in PAS plans	OHCPP
Assist patients to understand their rights and responsibilities, including help with complex patient travel claims	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	PASS Patient Advice and Support Service	Cost of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of patients helped, Client financial gain	WI NHS patients
Housing & Energy Costs					
Delivery of affordable housing through the Local Housing Strategy.	CNES	Existing Resources	Cost of Living	No. of new affordable housing units per annum. Building to high standards of energy efficiency.	All residents of the Outer Hebrides
Provision of housing for 2500 properties and tenants across the Western Isles.	Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP)	Existing Resources	Costs of living – housing costs	Fuel poverty surveys Rent affordability surveys Annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator. Continued investment in energy	All social housing tenants throughout the Outer Hebrides

				measures including renewable heating systems, insulation, LED lighting, window and door replacements.	
Support to vulnerable tenants e.g. personal budgeting, agency referrals, basic fuel poverty advice and referrals to appropriate agency.	Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP)	Existing Resources and continue to pursue external funding sources.	Income from social security and benefits in kind – Reach of benefits and take up	Fuel poverty surveys Rent affordability surveys Annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator.	All social housing tenants throughout the Outer Hebrides
Promotion and referral of Warmer Homes Scotland scheme Delivery of free impartial energy efficiency advice to Western Isles Householders	Home Energy Scotland	Existing Resources	Costs of living	Impact Measurement – Number of heating and insulation measures installed.	Fuel poor households
Offering access to Home Energy Scotland interest free loans and grant schemes, for energy efficiency measures and renewables for homeowners	Home Energy Scotland	Existing Resources	Costs of Living	Uptake of schemes	Grant and loan schemes are open to everyone, customer eligibility for relevant funding checked
Advice and information on energy supplier switching and dealing with high energy costs.	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG)	Existing Resources	Costs of living	No. switching through TIG switching support. % households in Fuel Poverty according to Scottish House Condition Survey.	All residents of the Outer Hebrides, particularly elderly and low-income households
Private sector housing improvements	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG)	Existing Resources	Inability to afford major refurbishment	Home equity pilot – KPI outputs	Private sector households
HEES:ABS	CnES and delivered by WarmWorks	Existing Resources	Poor energy efficiency of housing stock. Cost of living.	No. of measures carried out. Energy Performance Certificates assessed % households in Fuel Poverty according to Scottish House Condition Survey.	Fuel poor in the private sector households
Outreach work - Energy/Fuel poverty	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) / The Energy Advisory	Existing Resources	Poor energy efficiency of housing stock. Cost of living.	No. referrals for measures Savings made	All Outer Hebrides households

	Service SCIO (TEAS SCIO)				
Debt alleviation	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG)	Subject to ongoing funding	Low income, Cost of living	No. of debt alleviation and savings	Fuel poor in the private sector households
Debt alleviation	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing Resources	Low income, Cost of living	No. of debt cases, Measures of debt relief	All residents in the Outer Hebrides
Energy advice incl. efficiencies, tariffs, schemes	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Project funding	Low income, cost of living	No. of Energy cases, Client financial gain	All residents in the Outer Hebrides
Outreach work – Financial Assistance for Fuel poor homes	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) / The Energy Advisory Service SCIO (TEAS SCIO)	Subject to ongoing funding	Low income. Cost of living.	No. of households provided with financial assistance	All homes in the Outer Hebrides
Employment					
Delivery of economic growth strategies with a focus on increasing opportunities in key sectors and increasing wage levels	Economic Development, CNES	Existing resources	Income from Employment	Increase in GVA and average earnings in line with Scottish average	Business Sector
Outer Hebrides Skills Investment Plan 2019-2024	Skills Development Scotland	Delivery through Outer Hebrides LEP	Income from Employment	Increase in GVA and average earnings in line with Scottish average	Colleges and Business sector
Outer Hebrides Local Employability Partnership (LEP)	CNES – lead partner, CNES Accredited Training, (delivery and coordination)	No One left Behind/UKSPF	Income from Employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	Increase access to sustainable employment through apprenticeships, sector-based training, and parental support services, supports digital access and remote learning, reducing travel and childcare costs, signposting and financial inclusion efforts	Support for parents, young people, justice-involved individuals, e-Sgoil enables remote learning reducing geographic barriers, employer

					engagement ensures local job creation aligns with community needs and wage improvements
Hosting regular 'hub' sessions with involvement from partners who are available on the premises for instant referral	DWP	Existing resources	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No of referrals to agencies in 'hub'	Partner Agencies and people in receipt of benefits
Working alongside employers to maximise job opportunities and earning potential for those currently on benefits to move them forward	DWP	Existing resources	Income from employment, Costs of living	No of clients securing job opportunity and increased earning potential	Employers
In-work benefit checks and 'what-if' benefit checks, and support with payslip issues and tax allowances	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing Resources	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of eligibility checks and cases, Client financial gain	Working age residents in the Outer Hebrides
Information & Advice					
Support community groups to own, control and benefit from local renewable energy resources, control and reduce their energy costs & generate income for their communities	Community Energy Scotland	Existing Resources	Costs of living, income from benefits in kind.	Energy savings/income generated by local community groups (£) - over last 20 years, 40 communities supported; overall monitoring due to lack of CES resource has not been possible	All residents of the Outer Hebrides - savings or incomes generated are often reinvested in diverse ways, not exclusively targeted at reducing poverty

Increase community benefit schemes to families experiencing poverty: for example via winter hardship funds, healthy activity and lunch programme	Community Power Outer Hebrides (CPOH) members	CPOH members funds	Cost of Living	No of households and amount of benefit	Families within CPOH Board areas
Benefit checks, Benefit appeals Debt advice, Energy advice Budgeting and banking support Accessing charitable support Pensionwise: Pensions advice	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing Resources and project funding	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	Number of clients Client financial gain received	All residents of the Outer Hebrides.
Delivery of Financial Inclusion project offering advice and information on benefits and other entitlements	CNES	Project funding	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Project monitoring. No. of clients. Estimates of Client financial gain	Clients accessing advice through Financial Inclusion Project
Promote uptake of Credit Union Services	Hi-Scot Credit Union	Existing Resources	Cost of living - debt	Increased number of loans issued	No. of credit union members in the Outer Hebrides

New and Future Actions to Mitigate Poverty in the Outer Hebrides 2025-26

Appendix Three

Action	To be carried out by	Resources Allocated	Related Poverty Drivers	How Impact is Assessed	Timescale	Target Group
Education						
Continue payments of FSM for each day of school holidays during each year. Note Child Poverty Index (CPI) outputs	ES&CS Resources	Existing resources	Cost of living Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	Payment of full entitlement of FSM to all eligible families	Ongoing since 2022/23	FSM registered families. CPI to target unmet need
Provision of holiday meals and activity programme via Pupil Equity Fund (PEF)	Education Attainment Team in partnership with schools and CLD	£18,000 PEF allocation for 2025-2026	Cost of Living	Feedback from pupils and their families. The % participation in holiday activities including priority groups who may face disadvantage	March 2026	Children and young people in receipt of PEF
Home to School Transport Policy 2024 - if a charging scheme is introduced, there would be regard to the financial circumstances of the parents, and if the charges would cause undue hardship	ES&CS Resources	No additional resources	Cost of living	No families in receipt of Clothing Grant will be charged for use of a vacant seat under this policy.	Ongoing since 2024	Families in receipt of Clothing Grant
Development and implementation of a Cost of the School Day policy with associated training, linked to baseline survey.	ES&CS Education	No additional resources	Cost of Living	Decrease in pressures of school costs. <i>Survey indicates 10% decrease (Baseline comparison)</i>	By August 2026	Families of school-age children
Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) support worker in place to support the inclusion, attainment and	CECYP support worker	£22,785 CECYP grant	Cost of living Income from Social Security & Benefits in Kind	Progress towards Scottish Attainment Challenge Stretch Aims. LA and School	By August 2026	Care experienced children and young people

achievement of vulnerable children and young people				Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels for care experienced learners. Individual school data detailing impact of interventions on progress and achievement of CECYP group. Feedback from pupils and their families. % participation in holiday activities. Bi-annual CECYP report. All schools to have achieved The Promise Award.		
Improve information for parents through nurseries at Open Days etc: supports/entitlements and increase engagement with advice services. Promote funded 2yr old places to Health Visitor to then inform parents	ES&CS Early Years Service. Family Support team	Existing resources	Income from employment – labour market.	Free nursery meal data Funded 2-year-old placement data	Ongoing	Low-income families with children aged under 5
Raise early years staff awareness of family entitlements and referral routes	ES&CS Early Years Service	Existing resources	Costs of living	Staff attended DWP sessions regarding benefits information, and have a 'Financial Help leaflet' with links and information.	Ongoing	Low-income families with children aged under 5
Continue to develop flexible and increased childcare services to support working families.	ES&CS Early Years Service	ELC Expansion Funding	Costs of living – availability of affordable and accessible transport and childcare.	Reporting by parents and staff of increased awareness of benefits & entitlements	Ongoing	All children eligible for ELC and able to access their full 1140 hrs. Parents informed about tax free

						childcare at enrolment. Families referred to EYS by Partner agencies can receive financial support to help with cost of Nursery (criteria may apply)
Provide Financial support for new childminders in remote and rural areas. Child Protection training at no cost to the Childminders once a year - induction, 3 CPL eLearning's, one to one support, strong foundations pack, access to various support materials and first-year membership with SCMA including public liability insurance	ES&CS Early Years Service	Existing resources, ELC Expansion Funding. Training Unit.	Costs of living Income from social security and benefits in kind	Reporting by parents and staff of increased awareness of benefits & entitlements	Ongoing	All childminders. Financial support- £250 start up grant. Grant of up to £500.00 per year for resources post one year trading.
Expansion in Employability offer to meet all ages and stages to support individuals to achieve their Employment potential	Accredited Training and Skills	No One Left Behind/UKSPF Grant Funding	Income from employment and cost of living	5% increase in the number of all people participating in Employability Programmes	Ongoing and April 2027	All age service
Support for EYC projects through the Child Poverty workstream to increase referrals to Financial Inclusion Service, Babybank etc	Early Years Collaborative – Family Support Team	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Family Support team carry out Financial wellbeing checks, and share financial support leaflet. Increase in referral numbers to advice services. Use of Babybank.	Ongoing	Low-income families with children aged under 5

Improve information sharing amongst agencies re: the variety of support available to families – through website, directory, group meetings	All Partner Agencies	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	Monitoring of range and extent of information	CNES website - Winter 2024 Cost of Living Crisis Campaign	Families with low income
Engage with schools and nurseries to raise awareness of services with parents and with school leavers	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	To be identified	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of engagements No. of engagements with families or school leavers	Ongoing	Outer Hebrides households with school age children

Health						
Continue to Promote Best Start Scheme	NHS WI Maternity and Health Visiting	Existing resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind – reach of benefits and take up.	Uptake of Best Start: no. of beneficiaries Meetings with Social Security Scotland	Ongoing	Outer Hebrides wide
Distribution of baby boxes - Continue to be delivered by courier	NHS WI Midwifery	Existing Resources	Income from social security and benefits in kind	100 % uptake – 1281 boxes delivered to date	Ongoing	Expectant mums
Grassroots engagement workshops (GHH): work with people and communities experiencing poverty to help them to challenge poverty	NHS WI Health Promotion	Existing Resources: '5Ways' and Participatory Appraisal approaches	Costs of Living	GHH feedback forms submitted to Poverty Alliance Scotland for annual GHS report. Growing projects as education, and designed to encourage communities to grow fresh affordable fruit and vegetables.	Ongoing	Stornoway West North Uist

Budget and diet workshops - Delivered twice a year in Uist & Barra	WI NHS Health promotion	Existing resources	Cost of Living	No of participants (4 'Healthy eating on a budget' workshops	Ongoing	Parents
Improve access to affordable, fresh locally grown produce - Delivered twice a year in Uist & Barra	WI NHS Health promotion	Existing resources	Income from employment	Establish 2 community growing projects – Community Garden and use of Taigh Ceilidh facilities to encourage and enhance access	Ongoing	Parents
Implement Maternal and Infant Nutrition Plan - Promotion of Breast-feeding friendly initiative across all Islands	WI NHS	Existing resources	Cost of living	Increased Breastfeeding rates - Western Isles in line with national average and sits midway range of all Scottish health board areas	Ongoing	New mums
Influencing policy and practice: support development of policies and practices that promote social justice and combat poverty	WI NHS	Existing Resources	Networking and policy	No. of Poverty Alliance meetings and rural/island sensitive policy	Ongoing	OHCPP
Promote options for people in debt and with Mental Health issues	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing resources	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of Debt and Mental Health cases Client financial gain	Ongoing	Outer Hebrides residents who have debt and Mental Health issues
Housing						
Raising awareness of poverty issues e.g. 8 Toolbox talks	Hebridean Housing Partnership	Existing resources	Costs of living	No of toolbox talks held and no of participants.	Ongoing	HHP social housing areas throughout the Outer Hebrides
Improved communication between HHP and other agencies: contributions to		Existing resources	Costs of living: Housing costs	No of CPP meetings Distribution numbers of newsletter		

newsletter, Facebook, CPP meetings Community Benefit Scheme – place a focus on child poverty.		Existing Resources Community Benefit Scheme - % of work costs	Costs of living	Facebook ‘hits’	Ongoing	HHP social housing areas throughout the Outer Hebrides with a particular focus on families and children
Employment						
Raise awareness and encourage uptake of benefits through partnership working and Outreach location	Social Security Scotland	Scottish Government Funding	Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	Uptake of devolved benefits Appointments at Outreach Location	Ongoing	Low-income families throughout the Outer Hebrides
Continue to work with all Working Age Client Group to maximise benefit entitlement and support them through their claim journey	DWP	Existing resources	Ensure people are getting the right benefit at the right time.	Feedback from Partners	Ongoing	All working age
Help maximise financial support by giving advice on benefit entitlement and signpost to partners e.g. DWP Home Visiting, Financial Inclusion, CAB	DWP	Existing resources	To ensure that people are receiving what they are entitled to maximise family income. Eg Increase in numbers of applications of DLA for disabled children.	Feedback from numbers of referrals and outcomes. Uptake of Universal Credit ‘Help to Claim’ by CAB.	Ongoing	People on a low income
Signpost separated parents to get impartial advice from Child	DWP	Existing resources	Help the parent with care of the child	Feedback from clients	On-going	Single parent families

Maintenance Options to make informed decision about their child maintenance arrangements.			increase family income			
Assist partners with the uptake of their financial initiatives e.g. free school meals; school uniform grant; funded 2-year-old childcare, Social Security Scotland Best Start etc.	DWP	Existing resources	Helping families on low income maximise financial assistance	Uptake from DWP referrals	On-going	Families on a low income
Partnership working by maximising the use of the "HUB" at the Jobcentre to improve communication and customers access to information e.g. Social Landlord, Energy Advice, Financial Inclusion, SDS	DWP	Existing resources	Making it easier for people on benefits access information from partner organisations	Referral and feedback from partners	On-going	People on low income/benefits.
Awareness raising of in-work benefits and beneficial tax allowances	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing resources	Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of cases, Client financial gain	On-going	Working age residents in the Outer Hebrides
Community Services						
Increased attendance at outreach events Develop communication strategy to increase awareness of services and run targeted campaigns	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing resources and project funding Dedicated funds and/or volunteer input to be identified	Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No of events attended No of engagements	Ongoing Ongoing	Low-income households in the Outer Hebrides
Promote partnership working with other agencies supporting low income households	Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS)	Existing resources	Income from employment, Costs of living, Income from social security and benefits in kind	No. of engagements with community partners, No. of referrals to and from partner agencies	Ongoing	Low-income households in the Outer Hebrides

Extension of community energy scheme to other land trusts in the Outer Hebrides	Community Land Outer Hebrides	Establishment of West Coast Community Energy	Costs of Living	Deliver a 43mW fully community owned windfarm to expand the benefit of community owned energy	Due for completion in 2035	Reduction in energy costs for 1000 households in two community owned estates
Energy efficiency outreach programmes / face-to-face independent, expert energy advice	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) / The Energy Advisory Service SCIO (TEAS SCIO)	CnES, Robertson Trust and ongoing fundraising	All fuel poor homes	No. of households supported. No. of measures installed.	Reviewed annually	Those defined as being in fuel poverty.

Proposed Longer Term Actions to Mitigate Poverty in the Outer Hebrides

Appendix Four

Action	To be carried out by	Resources Allocated	Related Poverty Drivers	How Impact is Assessed	Timescale	Target Group
Education						
Full implementation of automatic payment of Free School Meals, Clothing Grants and EMAs, if Improvement Service (SAVVI) project enables this	ES&CS Resources	Costs to be confirmed	Income from social security and benefits in kind – take up	100% successful payments to all eligible applicants	Ongoing	Eligible low-income families
Increase number of schools offering breakfast clubs and create associated growth in uptake	ES&CS Education	Costs to be confirmed	Income from social security and benefits in kind	20% increase in young people accessing breakfast clubs	Ongoing	Eligible low-income families
Continue the aim to minimise the waiting time at the end of the school day for those pupils who live more than twenty miles from their school by prioritising their bus services over other services, and continue provision and marketing of NEC card	ES&CS Resources	Existing resources	Cost of Living – availability and affordability of transport	Limit effects of rurality, and increase in FSM eligible children from rural areas accessing clubs	Ongoing	Eligible low-income families living in rural areas of the Outer Hebrides
Increase access to technology for FSM pupils to allow for more equitable access to digital learning	ES&CS Education	Costs to be confirmed	Cost of living	All learners able to access digital learning as required	Ongoing	Low-income families with limited access to technology
Continued increase in availability of apprenticeships and local applied learning pathways linked to local economic demand	Accredited Training and Skills	SDS/No One Left Behind/UKSPF Grant Funding	Income from employment, and cost of living	5% increase in the number of people engaged in a local modern apprenticeship	April 2027	All age service
Expansion in Employability offer to meet all ages and stages to support individuals to achieve their Employment potential	Accredited Training and Skills	No One Left Behind/UKSPF Grant Funding	Income from employment and cost of living	5% increase in number of all ages participating in Employability Programmes	April 2027	All age service

Health						
Implementation of a Youth recruitment strategy and modern apprenticeship scheme, youth work experience opportunities	NHS WI Health Promotion and HR	Existing resources	Income from employment	Strategy in place has dedicated Employability strand and focus on school pupils and underrepresented groups. No. of apprenticeships continue to increase. Demographic of workforce	Ongoing	Youth and parent workforce
Coordination of named person provision to provide single service access for vulnerable families	NHS WI Delivered through Public Protection Team	Existing Resources	Costs of living and benefits	Access and referral to agencies System established, records available	Ongoing	Vulnerable children
Use of Badgernet patient portal to upload local information including referral mechanisms	NHS WI Midwifery	Existing Resources	Costs of living and benefits	App updated	Ongoing	All expectant mums
Representation on the LEP alongside the NHS Organisational Development & Learning Strategy, facilitates access to Occupational and other support services for employability and maintenance of work for parents in poverty	NHS WI HP and HR	Existing resources	Income from employment	Dedicated offer of what NHS WI can offer in terms of placements provided to the LEP, with their reach and access to those in Long Term Unemployment, Parents in poverty	Ongoing	NHS employees and business sector
Implement a Database and tracking system for referrals to financial inclusion services	NHS WI	Existing Resources	Increase in social security and benefits	System in place	Ongoing	Vulnerable families in receipt of benefits or assistance

Access to Laundry Provision and other estate functions	NHS WI	Existing resources	Cost of Living	Quantity and number of uses	Ongoing	Vulnerable families in receipt of benefits or assistance
Food vouchers or subsidised food in statutory agency canteens and food outlets. Increase local procurement.	NHS WI and CPP agencies	Existing Resources	Cost of Living	Quantity and no. of use	Ongoing proposals. Local procurement ongoing	Vulnerable families in receipt of benefits or assistance
Enable parents to remain physically active and able to perform at work	NHS WI HP	Existing resources	Income from Employment	No. of participants in community activity programme - Walk on Hebrides workplaces promotion, and Mum and baby walk groups	Ongoing	Parents in Outer Hebrides
Enable parents to improve mental wellbeing and ability to maintain employment	NHS WI HP	Existing Resources	Income from Employment	Healthy Working Lives – positive mental wellbeing campaigns/training session offered to workplaces. Scottish mental healthy workplace and Scottish mental health first aid now being rolled out across workplaces	Ongoing	Parents in Outer Hebrides
Transport links and other digital methods of attending appointments	NHS WI Digital Healthcare	Existing Resources	Cost of Living	No of journeys avoided - Near me appointments offered where possible	Ongoing	Parents in Outer Hebrides
Promote options for people in debt and with Mental Health issues	NHS WI Mental Health	Existing Resources	Cost of Living	No of people assisted	Ongoing	People in debt and with Mental Health issues
Community and Partnership						

Quality Assured Local Poverty Database and Needs Assessment to inform our decisions around targeting of resources	All partners	To be identified	Information to inform decision making	Systems in place and reporting mechanism	Ongoing - work being developed by the Improvement Service e.g. SAVVI Project and Child Poverty Index	Vulnerable individuals and families
Early identification of ACEs. A trauma informed approach by agencies. ACEs is embedded into Keeping the Promise Award	All partners: Education staff, and delivered through Child Protection Training	Existing resources	Safe, secure responsive adult relationships	Systems of routine enquiry, agency capacity to respond	Ongoing	Vulnerable individuals and family
Ensure maximum uptake of benefits and promotion of appointment service at the Outreach Location	Social Security Scotland	Existing resources	Income from social security	No.of appointments and uptake of benefits	Ongoing	Eligible families, and benefits applicable to those that are working i.e. Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Adult Disability Payment (not income related, can be working full time and eligible for this payment
Free Slainte Mhath: Active schools for vulnerable families, Foster care membership, Resettlement Programme, Social work referrals.	CNES	Existing resources	Cost of Living	No.of discounted members	April 2022 and ongoing	Vulnerable Families
Raise community awareness of impact of poverty	All partners	Existing resources		Training Programme, Community Awareness Programme	Ongoing programme	Community
Implement Alcohol & Drug Partnership Strategy 2020-25, plan new strategy to report from 2026. Redesign and relaunch Alcohol and Drug Partnership website.	ADP	Existing Resources	Cost of living	Includes whole family recovery system Transport vouchers.	Ongoing	Alcohol and Drug clients and their families

Work in partnership to identify, mitigate and prevent alcohol and drug related harms				Improved access to information and awareness of alcohol and drug services, leading to better health outcomes.		
Living wage in CPP members	CPP	Existing Resources	Income from Employment	No of CPP accredited to the Living Wage Scotland Programme	Ongoing programme	All CPP Partners
Increase community benefit schemes to families experiencing poverty for example, hardship funds, warm hubs. Subsidy schemes introduced during the cost-of-living crisis maintained and expanded to cover the cost of kids' clubs, and over 60's lunches.	Community Land Outer Hebrides	CLOH Funds	Cost of Living	No of families and amount of benefit	Ongoing support	Families within CLOH areas
Improved living conditions and reduced running costs for extreme fuel poor households	Tighean Innse Gall (TIG)	Ongoing fundraising	Cost of Living, Fuel poverty	Reduction in fuel poverty levels	March 2026	Fuel poor households

Appendix Five

Early Years Child Poverty Driver Diagram

