

Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (CPAF)

Island Communities Impact Assessment

February 2024

Background and Purpose

The purpose of the Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (referred to as “the Fund” in this assessment) is to support and strengthen local action to tackle child poverty. This is in line with the Scottish Government’s Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) 2022-26 (referred to as “the delivery plan” in this document) and the [Scottish Government’s Equality Mission](#) to tackle poverty and protect people from harm. Appreciating the different experiences of child poverty in island communities, the delivery plan was published alongside an [Island Communities Impact Assessment](#).

As set out in the delivery plan we are committed to delivering place-based projects, testing different approaches to how we provide person centred solutions particularly for [priority families](#)¹.

That is why we are seeking to work in partnership with a small number of geographical areas to deliver accelerator projects, trialling and evaluating new ways of working to overcome known challenges in tackling child poverty and sharing the learning from these projects to inform national policy and practice.

The fund aims to enhance an area’s approach to tackling child poverty and ultimately, drive progress towards the statutory [child poverty targets](#). It will support small scale projects to generate evidence on a known problem, adapt a promising approach from elsewhere to work in an area, or re-design a service or services to deliver greater impact on child poverty.

The fund aims to deliver on the priorities set out below:

- Tackling one or more of the three key drivers of child poverty
- Prioritisation of one or more of the six priority family groups at greatest risk of child poverty
- Engagement with people with lived experience of poverty in project design and implementation
- Potential scalability/sustainability of the project, if successful
- Enhancing local partnership working
- Generating evidence through rigorous evaluation, building the local and national evidence base
- Innovation to accelerate practice to tackle child poverty

Applications to the fund will be assessed on these priorities. Successful bids to the fund are required to monitor and evaluate their project and will be supported by a national monitoring and evaluation coordinator. This is to ensure rigorous evaluation of projects so that we capture and share learning across Scotland to inform local and national policy and practice.

Intended impacts and outcomes of the fund are the same for island and mainland communities. However, we recognise that island communities face unique challenges and bring unique assets to bear on tackling child poverty. The fund is

¹ [Tackling child poverty priority families overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

open to all local authorities and health boards and supports local solutions to tackling child poverty, and as such is designed to respond to the unique challenges and assets in island communities and generate evidence and practice relevant to those contexts.

Data and Consultation

Consultation on the fund

The fund was designed in close consultation with external stakeholders including the Peer Support Network of child poverty leads from local authorities and health boards (including island local authorities and local authorities containing islands) and the Local Child Poverty Co-ordination Group, consisting of national partners supporting local action on child poverty. Internal stakeholders were also consulted, including rural and islands policy colleagues.

Stakeholders have welcomed the initiative as a means to accelerate progress on challenges that are shared across areas, but which require additional expertise or coordination to overcome, and in particular have welcomed a focus on testing and evaluating approaches to improve our collective evidence base.

Consultation indicated a need for support to identify and evaluate practice focused on overcoming the barriers faced by priority families, and on routes to earlier interventions with families not currently well served by mainstream provision. There was also eagerness to test approaches to data sharing to better identify and target families, and to explore options to greater evidence the impact of other sectors on the drivers of child poverty.

Through consultation with local authority and health board child poverty leads, it was highlighted that smaller authorities/boards – including islands – could be at disadvantage in terms of capacity to complete bid-in applications. Recognising this, the application process was designed in consultation with stakeholders to ensure it was light touch and joined up with other funds. Similarly, reporting requirements will be accomplished largely through minuted meetings to avoid disproportionate reporting.

Evidence on tackling child poverty

As tackling child poverty is a critical mission of the Scottish Government, cross-government work and stakeholder engagement is ongoing and the government's approach is informed by a wealth of evidence on child poverty.

Evidence on [what works](#) in tackling child poverty highlights the need for a person-centred, holistic approach, within a framework of understanding structural barriers, in order to maximise the effectiveness of policies and avoid perpetuating stereotyping and stigma.

Based on the evidence, the delivery plan promotes a person-centred, whole systems approach. This recognises the interconnected pieces which need to work together to effectively tackle child poverty – e.g. transport, childcare, employability.

The delivery plan was produced in consultation with a range of stakeholders including island representation from local authorities and local child poverty leads.

Evidence on child poverty in island communities

[‘Improving our understanding of child poverty in rural and island Scotland’](#) published in 2022 explored existing data on child poverty in rural and island communities. Key findings include:

- It is estimated that 15% of rural residents in Scotland (170,000 people) are in relative poverty, compared to 20% (850,000) of urban residents. There are lower levels of child poverty in rural areas compared to urban areas, with 19% of rural children living in relative poverty, compared with 26% of urban children (Scottish Government, 2021a). [p7]
- Rural employment rates often compare favourably with urban areas, although it is well-known that rural incomes can be volatile and precarious, with unpredictable incomes from seasonal/casual work and zero-hours contracts characteristic not only of land-based and tourism employment but extending across many sectors of rural economies. [p7]
- Part-time work tends to be low paid and below workers’ skill levels and qualifications, with under-employment and limited opportunities for career progression (McKendrick et al, 2011; Shucksmith et al, 2022). [p8]
- This volatility of rural incomes presents a range of challenges for those who need to claim welfare support, including payment delays and overpayments, distances to travel for medical assessments and feelings of stigma (Shucksmith et al, 2022). These and other factors lead to lower claimant rates in rural areas. [p8]
- A lack of local and flexible childcare is a well-documented barrier to rural parents looking for employment (particularly lone parents), which can make the cost of childcare unaffordable for those who find work (Glass et al, 2020; Scottish Government, 2021b) [p8]
- Additional minimum living costs for households in remote rural Scotland typically add 15-30% to a household budget, compared with urban areas of the UK (Scottish Government, 2021c). Additional costs are even higher in some areas, with significant impacts on financial and psychological wellbeing in Shetland, for example (Stone and Hirsch, 2020). [p8]

Lived experience data is particularly important to understanding island child poverty due to its hidden nature. Lived experience data has highlighted issues around stigma, lack of extracurricular activities and limited resources in rural schools, seasonality of work and distance to school/services. [p21]

The report also highlights that there are gaps in our understanding, and calls for more rigorous evaluation of employment, childcare, transport, cost of living, enablers of wellbeing (e.g. debt, savings) and benefits levels and take-up. [p22]

The ongoing evaluation of [Shetland's Anchor project](#) to understand tackling island child poverty is contributing to the evidence base. Scottish Government is working with partners to support sharing learning from this project with prospective Fund recipients.

Assessment of impact and whether a full Islands Communities Impact Assessment is required

On assessment, the fund is unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities. Therefore a full ICIA is not required.

Island communities face unique challenges and bring unique assets to bear in tackling child poverty. The fund recognises and enables this by supporting local solutions to tackling child poverty. The fund is open to island, rural and urban areas alike, with common assessment criteria, offering equal opportunity to all local authorities and health boards. Moderation will ensure that island, rural and urban areas are represented among the funded projects.

Making adjustments to your work

This assessment has reinforced the importance of testing and evaluating place-based solutions to tackling child poverty, which is central to the Fund.

The national monitoring and evaluation coordinator for the fund will publish a report on the first year of the fund and will produce a monitoring and evaluation framework to support local projects. In addition, funded projects will be required to provide progress updates and an end-of-project report detailing their monitoring and evaluation. Supported by the national coordinator, monitoring and evaluation approaches will be agreed with each project team as part of the grant offer process, to ensure appropriate and effective indicators and outcomes are included.

These reports will help to assess the impact on priority families and to identify scalable interventions that move us closer towards our ambitious child poverty targets. Evidence gathered through project evaluations in island local authorities/health boards will also serve to build the knowledge base on child poverty in island communities.

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