

# Child poverty monitoring and evaluation - framework for policy evaluations



**PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES**

# Evaluation Framework on Child Poverty

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This paper establishes the shared evaluation framework which will play a role in supporting consistent evaluations around the impact of Scottish Government policies on child poverty.

The framework was a key commitment made in the revised [evaluation strategy](#) as part of the [second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#). It is intended to be an open source that can be used by policy areas delivering interventions which will help to reduce child poverty. Ongoing reviews will take place to ensure that this document continues to fit into policy development as new initiatives or policies are developed and delivered.

## Why this Framework has been developed

Over the life of [‘Every Child, Every Chance’ \(2018-22\)](#) we noted a need for improving the consistency of data and evidence collection across the various policies which form part of our overarching approach to tackling child poverty. This base data is important for monitoring policy performance.

In addition, although plans are in place to evaluate policies to see if they are fulfilling their own objectives, they may need adapting to understand the contribution they are making to child poverty. There are a number of reasons why this might not be happening:

- Policies which relate to large system changes take time to implement. For several policies, implementation had only just started when the pandemic hit impacting both policy delivery and the collection of monitoring data.
- There can be challenges for policy implementation agencies to collect additional information, especially if it is confusing their policy narrative, or adding burden to service providers or clients/beneficiaries. For example, a key message of Early Learning and Childcare is that it is about children’s development and that placements are, of course, not conditional on the parent being in, or taking up, work. Asking parents about work can confuse this message.
- It is not always possible or proportionate for specific policy evaluation to consider the wider factors which may be relevant to enabling some low income families to enhance their interaction with wider drivers of child poverty reduction. For example, provision of childcare may enable parents to engage in employment support. However, other barriers may persist which restrict their ability to access or progress in employment.
- For households in poverty, or with multiple adversities, data collection can feel overly intrusive, affecting response rates and learning. It also often does not fit with a more dignified experiential approach. Sometimes, detailed characteristics information cannot be collected.

Bearing all this in mind, we need to get better at:

- Understanding and articulating the importance of child poverty alongside other primary policy outcomes for each policy.
- Identifying how and why policies are working and/or the barriers to their effectiveness – both overall and for priority families.
- Articulating and understanding how policies are working together to improve the lives and outcomes of families. For example by increasing a parent / carers ability to participate in employment, education or training.
- Ensuring that evaluations consider not just effectiveness but scalability. For example, a policy that gets 100 parents into work could be effective on its own terms but this needs to consider whether it can be scaled up in a cost-effective way.
- Ensuring that evaluations increasingly contain economic considerations.

## What this framework is about

**This framework sets out to create a shared understanding of how we measure the impact of individual policies on child poverty.** Namely, around:

- ✓ setting common definitions
- ✓ identifying child poverty outcomes
- ✓ setting the rationale for data collection
- ✓ presenting options for measuring impact



While successful evaluations will provide important contextual information, the framework is not about:

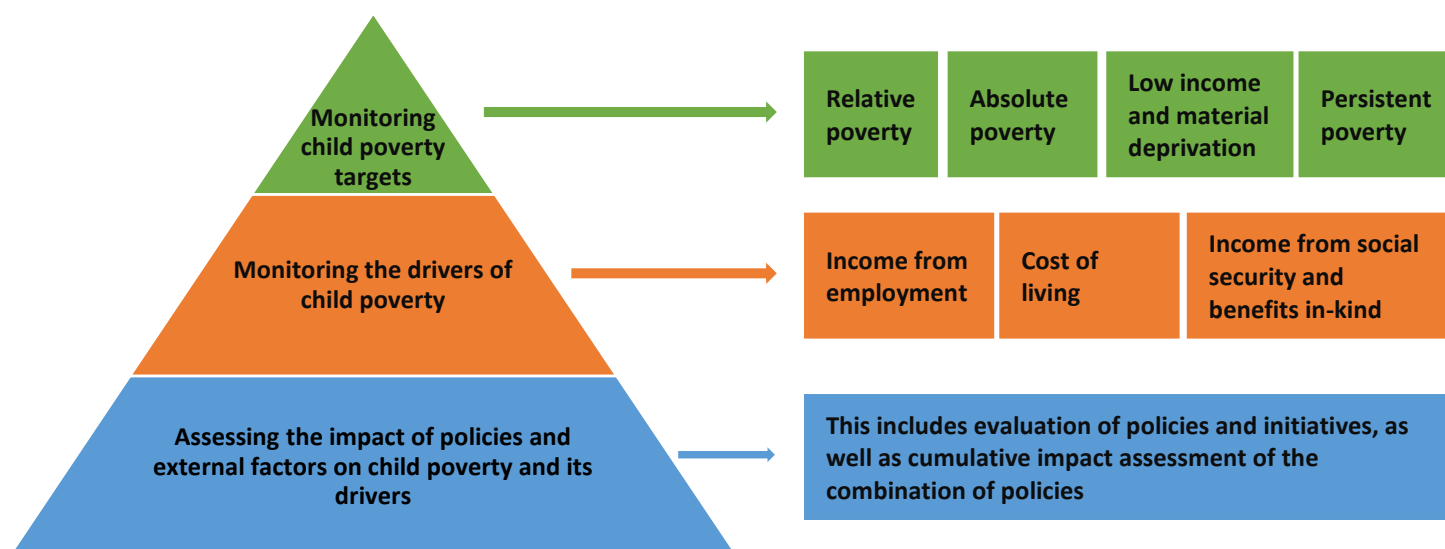
- ✗ cumulative impact assessment. The [cumulative impact of the package of policies](#) on targets is estimated separately via UKMOD. It is used to model the impact of any moderate to large scale policy that has an impact on household incomes or housing costs. It is also used to project the child poverty rate forward to future years.
- ✗ systems evaluation. This is a separate stream of work which explores how the system is working for families. This includes, how well the policies have been designed, and whether they are being implemented as a coherent package. See [Annex B](#) for further details on this work.

## Introducing the child poverty evaluation strategy

To set the context, this framework presents first the [overarching evaluation strategy](#) on child poverty. This is relevant because the same hierarchy of evaluation will be used at an individual policy level. The overarching evaluation approach consists of three key elements.

1. First, **monitoring the progress** on the [four child poverty targets](#): relative poverty, absolute poverty, low income and material deprivation, and persistent poverty.
2. In order to understand **how** the targets are (or not) moving in the right direction, the [measurement frameworks](#) looks at the **drivers of poverty**: income from employment, cost of living, and income for social security and benefits in-kind.
3. And to uncover **why** the drivers are moving we aim to monitor the impact of policies and external factors on child poverty and its drivers.

Figure 1: Child poverty evaluation strategy

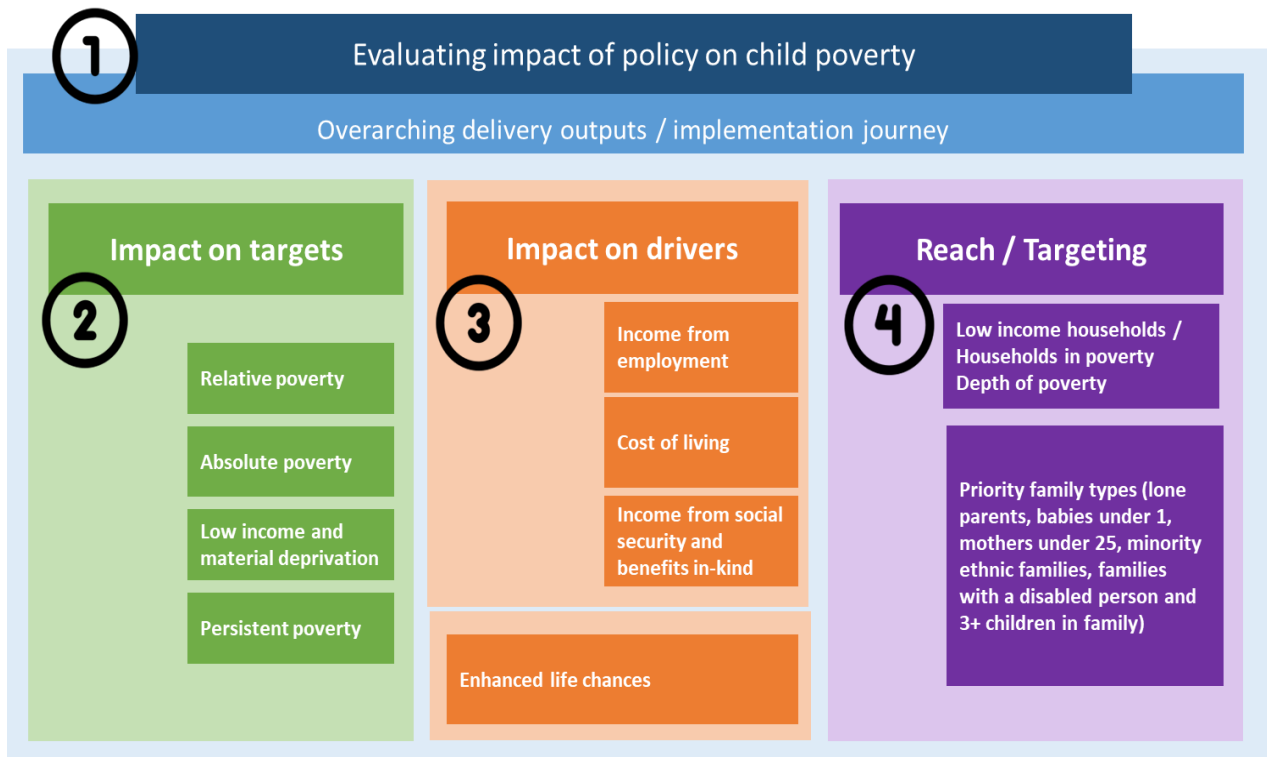


This framework concentrates on how to assess the impact of policies on child poverty and its drivers - that is the **bottom or blue section** from Figure 1 as shown above.

This framework splits the approach into four themes (see also Figure 2).

- **Theme 1. Evaluating the impact of policies on child poverty.** Identifies the main outcomes of the policy and the link between policy outcomes and child poverty outcomes.
- 
- **Theme 2. Impact on targets.** Sets out the rationale, and potential approach, to identifying which target of poverty the policy is likely to impact and how to assess progress against it.
- 
- **Theme 3. Impact on drivers.** Helps to understand how the targets will be influenced. This entails clearly establishing the link between the policy and which driver of poverty it is likely to influence. This theme is divided into three sections which relate to each of the drivers.
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- **Enhanced life chances.** In addition, there are some policies that aim to enhance life chances for individuals or families – with the ultimate aim of impacting on one of the drivers of poverty.
- 
- **Theme 4. Reach / targeting.** Sets out how to define and identify the key target audiences likely to benefit from policies that tackle child poverty.
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Figure 2. Themes on child poverty evaluation



The key evaluation questions for each theme are set out below.

### **Theme 1: Policy alignment**

- 1.1 What is the policy aiming to achieve?
- 1.2 Is child poverty part of policy outcomes?
- 1.3 Is the policy delivering against expectations towards reducing child poverty?

### **Theme 2: Impact on four child poverty targets**

- 2.1 What is the potential size of impact on child poverty targets?
- 2.2 What type of impact is anticipated (direct/indirect)?
- 2.3 What is the certainty of impact?

### **Theme 3: Impact on drivers of child poverty**

- 3.1 What drivers of poverty is the policy aiming to tackle?
- 3.2 What child poverty outcomes is the policy aiming to achieve? (short/medium/long term)
- 3.3 What is the likelihood of achieving anticipated outcomes?

### **Theme 4: Reach/Targeting of policies**

- 4.1 Who is the policy aiming to target/ reach? (universal/targeted policy)
- 4.2 How many households/people living in poverty/low income is the policy aiming to reach?
- 4.3 Is the policy targeting those in poverty (e.g. those known to be in poverty or priority family types most at risk of poverty)?

Taking each of these themes in turn.

## Theme 1 – Overarching delivery outputs/implementation journey

This theme aims to establish the link between the policy outcomes and child poverty outcomes. It aims to align data collection with annual child poverty progress reports and other governance requests for information.

The questions highlighted (see Figure 4) are intended to form part of individual policy evaluations. A solid starting point is a strong logic model that links child poverty outcomes with policy activities. This can form the basis for future evaluation practices which then embed the key research questions suggested below in Figure 4.

Some good practice examples of how child poverty outcomes can be embedded in logic models:

- [Scottish Child Payment](#)
- [Disability benefits](#)
- [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#)
- [Early Learning and Childcare Expansion](#)



**Figure 4. Detailed research questions around process implementation**

**Theme 1: Policy alignment**

To understand whether a policy is delivering against anticipated outcomes (research questions 1.1 and 1.3) and what role child poverty plays in the delivery of the policy (research question 1.2)

Key questions	Rationale	Data collection
<p><b>What are the key impacts/outcomes you are expecting to achieve?</b></p> <p><b>Which of the drivers of child poverty do you expect this to impact on?</b></p>	To link policy outcomes and drivers of poverty	Through administrative data
<p><b>Is child poverty the main or secondary outcome of policy?</b></p> <p><b>What is the proportional investment of resources on low income households with children vs other households?</b></p>	Tackling child poverty is the key outcome of many policies. However, for others, it is a secondary objective. For example, the ELC expansion has a greater focus on the general wellbeing of children.	<p>Using policy’s logic model to map/embed child poverty outcomes.</p> <p>Monitor Budget / Spend on policy, and specifically the proportion spent on low income households</p>
<p><b>What are the key delivery indicator/ milestones? (KPIs)</b></p> <p><b>What is the progress against anticipated KPIs? (annual and over the years of the Plan)</b></p>	To achieve an efficient use of public resources that align with key government priorities	<p>By agreeing on KPIs (internally / externally)</p> <p>By recording progress over time ensuring that KPIs are provided for low income households with children</p>

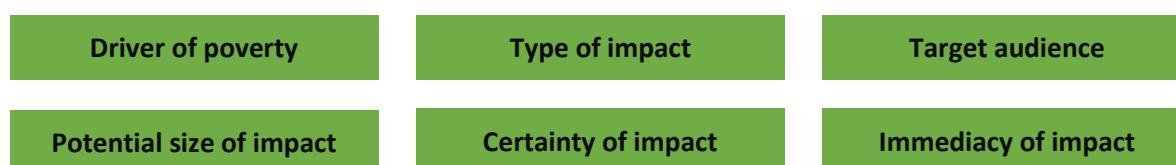
## Theme 2 – Impact on targets

As with many evaluations, measuring policy impacts can be quite complex and full of caveats. The approach taken for child poverty is no exception. We aim to continue to learn and improve as policy evolves and policies progress.

At a national level, we can track progress towards meeting the [child poverty targets with data from national statistics](#). Details on target definitions and data can be found in [Annex A](#).

However, it is necessary to understand how individual policies can support this national effort. From an individual policy point of view, you can consider the following steps which will help you ascertain the likely impact of your policy on child poverty targets. Figure 5 shows how this can be done.

**Figure 5. Estimating impact of policies on child poverty targets**



**Identify which driver of poverty** the policy is likely to impact. Will it increase income from employment, reduce cost of living or increase household income via social security or benefits in-kind? Depending on what child poverty driver your policy is tackling, the impact on the child poverty targets is likely to be different. For example, a programme that raises a family's income has the potential to improve on three income related targets (relative poverty, absolute poverty, and, depending on time scale, persistent poverty). However, a policy which minimises the costs of essential goods will impact on absolute poverty and material deprivation. Consider whether child poverty is a primary objective for your policy or whether it is a secondary objective.



**What type of impact is expected?** Will the policy have a direct impact on households for example by directly increasing their income or reducing cost of living? Or is it more an indirect impact by for example improving living conditions which could in turn reduce cost of living? Indirect impacts are harder to quantify. However, through qualitative assessment it is still possible to establish an expected contribution of the policy on people's lives. Further detail on how to further investigate indirect impacts can be found in the '[enhanced life chances](#)' section.



**Who will benefit?** Think about the characteristics of the policy's target group. The more that a policy is targeted specifically at children in poverty, the greater the potential impact of the policy on child poverty targets. The funnel approach to children in poverty is as follows.

All households > All households with children > All low-income households with children

Further, we know that there are certain household types most at risk of being in poverty. So, consider if you have more detail about your target group – do you know their characteristics. If your policy targets these groups, the likelihood of the policy’s impact on child poverty is greater. Examples of these groups are: households with a baby under one, households with three or more children, lone parent households, minority ethnic households, households with a disabled adult or child, households where the mother is 25 or under. More detail on [Theme 4 – Reach / Targeting](#).

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**Think about the potential size of the impact.** That is, the anticipated scale of the policy. This can take the form of anticipated number of people reached or a monetary amount (be it through increase in household incomes or reduction in cost of living).

Targeted policies have more direct action but large scale policies with broader reach may still have beneficial impacts. For example, an employability programme aiming to get 100 parents into work will be more effective in reducing child poverty than an employability programme aiming to get 100 adults into work. However, an employability programme aiming to get 1,000 adults into work might be more effective than a smaller programme targeted at parents, especially if it is well linked to other services such as childcare.

Set out data collection from the start so that you can measure how many people are reached and, of those, how many have children and are in poverty or on a low income. Be as specific as possible to provide the best estimate of the anticipated scale of impact on one of the following metrics:

- Number of children in poverty / low income expected to benefit
- Number of parents who are in poverty / low income expected to benefit
- Number of households who are in poverty / low income expected to benefit

Where possible, we will help you model the child poverty impacts of policies, and include these into cumulative impact assessments. However, this will not always be possible. The larger the scale of the policy – and the more detail you provide around the anticipated size and characteristics of the target group, and the impact on the child poverty drivers – the more likely we will be able to model the policy.

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**How certain is the impact on child poverty?** This looks at how confident you are that the policy, on its own, will have an impact on one or more of the target measures and the certainty that the scale will be.

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**When is the policy likely to have an impact?** Consider the immediacy of your policy. That is, how soon will low income families be able to benefit from the policy, but also how long do you estimate it will take for any benefit to be translated in potential improvements to child poverty targets. For example, while the Scottish Child Payment puts money into families’ pockets straightaway, the additional income provided will take time to be reflected in annual household income.



Individual policy actions will probably not be sufficient on their own to lift families with children out of poverty. Rather, it is a package of policies that will be required. In order to understand how policies work together, cumulative impact work is critical.

In this space, [quantitative cumulative impact assessment](#) estimates the impact of a package of policies on child poverty targets. The quantitative modelling can tell us the theoretical impact of policies. However, how they are realised depends on how much friction there is in the system. As such, we are currently developing a qualitative systems evaluation that examines how well the system is working for families and whether current policies in this space are improving life outcomes for families in poverty.

## Theme 3 – Impact on drivers

In the previous Theme 2, you will have identified which driver or drivers of poverty your policy is likely to impact. With that clarity, you can now focus on the specific drivers relevant to you. The questions in this theme allow for a more nuanced understanding of how the driver is moving (or not) and how it is impacting (or not) on drivers of poverty and potentially targets.

This theme will take each of the three drivers of poverty in turn. That is, income from employment, cost of living, and income from social security and benefits in-kind.

Your policy may also have a system-change element with the aim of changing the child poverty support system and creating better join up between support services. We are developing an evaluation to examine how well the system is working for families living in poverty. Further information about this work and its associated research questions can be found in [Annex B](#).

## Income from employment

The following questions have been taken from the [employability evaluation framework](#). This is to ensure that we maximise consistency in evaluation efforts.

**Intended Outcome:** income from employment for low income families is maximised

**Evidence to understand:** what specific outcomes relate to increasing income from employment (research questions 3.1) (short/medium/long terms, research question 3.2) and what is the likelihood of achieved said outcomes (research question 3.3)

Key questions	Rationale	Data collection
<b>Are people progressing, if so, in what way? Covering both progression towards employment as well as in employment</b>	<p>Understanding the distance travelled and progression whilst receiving employability support.</p> <p>Understanding in-work progression</p> <p>There will be policies which are providing the infrastructure to allow people get closer to the labour market. For example, childcare interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recording income information</li> <li>Recording how many people enter employment / progress in the pay scale</li> <li>Record programmes that support parents to prepare themselves for employment</li> <li>Record successful entrants into labour market</li> </ul>
<b>Are people's goals/milestones being achieved within the expected timeframe?</b>	<p>Ensuring that, as far as possible, we're supporting people to work towards and achieve their aspirations. The need for an expected timeframe is driven by the experience of some users that get "stuck" in a cycle of particular support with no forward progression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting specific goals and tracking progress over time.</li> <li>Combination of administrative data and research</li> </ul>
<b>Are people entering and sustaining employment, training, and education?</b>	<p>Ensuring that policies do focus on long terms improvements on people's lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management information from services</li> </ul>
<b>For those policies increasing job supply/creation, are these developing focusing on reducing child poverty?</b>	<p>For example, are jobs created focusing on low income parents? That is considering the location, recruitment practices, flexibility, offering real living wage, etc...?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour market analysis</li> </ul>
<b>What is the value for money of our investment?</b>	<p>Considerations of value for money need to take account of wider societal impacts on our services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach to this work will be driven by existing approaches (e.g. Social Cost Benefit Analysis used in the Fair Start Scotland Economic Evaluations)</li> </ul>

## Income from social security and benefits in-kind

**Intended outcome:** income from social security and benefits in-kind for low income families is maximised

**Evidence to understand:** What specific outcomes relate to increasing income from social security and benefits in-kind (research question 3.1) (short/medium/long terms, research question 3.2) and what is the likelihood of achieved said outcomes (research question 3.3)

The following questions have been taken from the [Devolution of disability benefits: evaluation strategy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) and the [Social Security Scotland - Charter Measurement Framework](#). The rationale for these questions is underpinned by the [Benefits take up strategy](#) to maximise consistency in evaluation efforts.

Key questions	Rationale	Data collection
<b>Who is eligible? Are there any gaps in eligibility? (This links to Theme 4, targeting)</b>	Ensuring that social security and benefits in-kind can support children in families in poverty and identify any gaps in provision	Measuring eligibility of income-related benefits is established through the <a href="#">Benefits take up strategy</a> .
<b>What is the take up of social security payments / benefits in-kind? What are the factors influencing take up?</b>	Under the provision of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, Scottish Ministers are committed to promoting take-up of Scottish benefits.	Based on the <a href="#">Benefits take up strategy</a> . Take-up refers to the extent to which people receive benefits they are eligible for. This is the number of benefit recipients divided by the number of people eligible to receive the benefit.  Qualitatively could explore: experience of stigma, application process, awareness and understanding of eligibility.
<b>Is the policy reducing financial pressure on households?</b>	Tackling both the affordability to pay bills and the stress or worry associated with paying these.	Some examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records of what people spend the money on</li> <li>(Qual) reductions in financial stress/worry</li> <li>Relevant questions from client survey, e.g. ‘How much did the benefit payment a) help you to pay for what you needed? And b) help make a difference to your life?’ ; scale of 0-10, not at all to a lot).</li> </ul>
<b>Are clients achieving financial resilience or reductions in financial insecurity?</b>	Longer-term security including reducing the need to enter into further debt.	Relevant question from client survey. For example, ‘How much did benefit payment help you to control your finances?’ (scale of 0-10, not at all to a lot)

**Who is eligible? Are there any gaps in eligibility? (This links to Theme 4, targeting)**

Ensuring that social security and benefits in-kind can support children in families in poverty and identify any gaps in provision.

Based on the Benefits take up strategy. Take-up refers to the extent to which people receive benefits they are eligible for. This is the number of benefit recipients divided by the number of people eligible to receive the benefit.

Qualitatively could explore: experience of stigma, application process, awareness and understanding of eligibility.



## Reducing cost of living for low income families

The following questions have been developed to produce a generic framework on what to consider when measuring impact on cost of living.

Importantly, this should be done in the context of your target audience and for universal or wider reach policies, highlighting the specific impact for families living in poverty or on a low income.

**Intended outcome:** cost of living for low income families is minimised

**Evidence to understand:** What specific outcomes relate to decreasing cost of living (research question 3.1) (short/medium/long terms, research question 3.2) and what is the likelihood of achieved said outcomes (research question 3.3)

Key questions	Rationale	Data collection
<p><b>How is the cost of living changing for low income families?</b>  <b>How, and by how much, will your policy reduce the cost of living for low income families?</b>  <b>How are low income families specifically supported to reduce their cost of living relative to other families?</b></p>	<p>There are various ways policies can reduce the cost of living for families, be it by providing benefits in-kind or by directly giving money out to families to cover living costs.</p>	<p>Calculate value of benefit provided.</p> <p>As part of the overarching child poverty measurement framework, indicators track cost of transport, childcare, food insecurity and fuel poverty.</p>
<p><b>How is the policy increasing accessibility to financial stability? (i.e. access to affordable credit, increase in savings, reducing unmanageable debt)</b></p>	<p>In what ways is your policy aiming to alleviate the poverty premium of low income families and increase financial stability to allow for longer term planning.</p>	<p>Calculate savings achieved for families.</p>
<p><b>How is the policy increasing access to affordable transport, childcare, housing or energy?</b></p>	<p>Sometimes, policies are focus on improving infrastructure to improve people's opportunities.</p>	<p>Quantify how access has been increased or improved (e.g. transport links established, new childcare settings opened/expanded, housing provided, increases in energy efficiency or access to digital connectivity/devices).</p> <p>Measure reach and/or take up of new services</p>

## Enhancing life chances for households with children in poverty

The following questions have been developed to produce a generic framework on what to consider when measuring long term policies that aim to enhance life chances for people in the context of child poverty. These questions support the understanding that firstly, poverty is not a fixed state, and secondly that there are various conceptual layers of poverty that require a variety of support. (See [Annex C](#) for the Conceptual layers of poverty).

**Intended outcome:** enhanced life chances for individuals or families, with the ultimate aim of impacting on one of the three drivers of poverty (income from employment, cost of living, and/or income from social security)

**Evidence to understand:** What specific outcomes relate to enhanced life chances (research question 3.1) (short/medium/long terms, research question 3.2) and what is the likelihood of achieving said outcomes (research question 3.3)

Key questions	Rationale	Data collection
<p><b>Is the policy supporting improvements in wellbeing outcomes? And how are these improvements achieved?</b></p> <p><b>Is the focus on parents or children or both?</b></p>	<p>Analysis of wellbeing outcome indicators to capture poverty-related evidence on longer term preventative action and to get early warning of potential adverse impacts from policies.</p>	<p>The <a href="#">Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework</a> core wellbeing indicators can be used as the basis for data collection/monitoring.</p> <p>Further work to be developed to consider how to widen understanding of parental wellbeing.</p>
<p><b>Is the policy building capabilities for individuals/families or for organisations?</b></p> <p><b>Are the capabilities linked to driving income from employment, reducing cost of living, or increasing income from social security?</b></p>	<p>There are policies with wellbeing and capabilities at the core of their delivery. This is particularly important and necessary for those deepest in poverty and to ensure long term benefits for families and individuals.</p> <p>(see Annex C: Conceptual layers of poverty for detail as to what areas are included in the concept of capabilities)</p>	<p>Clear understanding of what capabilities policies are aiming to build.</p> <p>Link capabilities with drivers of child poverty, while still long term, measure whether anticipated progress is achieved in line with expectations.</p>
<p><b>Is the policy supporting a systems change with a focus on reducing child poverty?</b></p>	<p>There are a range of interacting factors that influence child poverty. A number of different forms of support are needed to help people move out of poverty. A joined-up approach between and within policies at national and local levels is needed to facilitate life for families.</p>	<p>Based on research questions developed for 'systems evaluation', see <a href="#">Annex B: Evaluating the effectiveness of system-change initiatives</a></p>

## Theme 4 – Reach / Targeting

An important element of any policy evaluation is understanding who are the intended beneficiaries of the policy and whether they are being reached. This theme of the framework looks at the characteristics of the policy’s target group. This should be considered early on as part of the policy design stage to ensure effective implementation and optimal impact.

### Who is the policy aiming to reach?

Generally, consider the remit of your policy and the characteristics of your beneficiaries. Then, consider how your policy links to child poverty. The more that a policy is targeted specifically at children in poverty, the greater the potential impact of the policy on child poverty targets. Remember the six priority family types more likely to be in poverty, and ensure that your policy thinks about reaching the wide variety of families in poverty.

The funnel approach to children in poverty is as follows:



Below are a list of options for identifying low-income households. This may be helpful in various situations such as:

- when designing research and you need to identify ways of recruiting respondents
- or when using already established datasets and you need to know how to query the data

Depending on the policy, the required information may already be collected as part of the policy delivery process. Otherwise, new information could be collected.

Option	Rationale
Ask banded income question	<p>There is no single definition for identifying low income households. In the context of designing research approaches, low income households could be defined as having a household income of between 60-70% of the UK median income. Alternatively, if working on income deciles, low income households could be defined as the two or three bottom deciles.</p> <p>However, this definition is quite broad as this analysis will not account for household composition and size. If possible, the identification of low income households would combine those who are struggling financially through additional questions.</p>

Question wording suggestions are:

**Income question. Harmonised question details [here](#).**

**Question: What is your household's total income from all sources over the last 12 months?**

Count income from every person included in the household. This would include:

- All earnings (include overtime, tips, bonuses, self-employment)
- All pensions
- All student grants and bursaries (but not loans)
- All benefits and tax credits (such as child benefit, income support or pension credit)
- All interest from savings or investments
- All rent from property (after expenses)
- Other income (such as maintenance or grants)

Do not deduct taxes, National Insurance contributions, Health Insurance Payments, Superannuation payments.

Answers:

Per week: 1. Less than £100, 2. £100 to £199, 3. £200 to £299, 4. £300 to £399, 5. £400 to £499, 6. £500 to £699, 7. £700 to £999, 8. £1,000 to £1,499, 9. £1,500 or more

Per year: 1. Less than £5,200, 2. £5,200 to £10,399, 3. £10,400 to £15,599, 4. £15,600 to £20,799, 5. £20,800 to £25,999, 6. £26,000 to £36,399, 7. £36,400 to £51,999, 8. £52,000 to £77,999, 9. £78,000 or more

**Question wording suggestion for “struggling financially”**

Which of these phrases best describes how you and your household are managing financially these days? Answers: Manage very well, Manage quite well, Get by alright, Don't manage very well, Have some financial difficulties, Are in deep financial trouble, Refused, Don't know.

Option	Rationale
Receipt of income-related benefits	<p>Qualifying benefits require applicants to demonstrate a low income, as such there is a greater likelihood that those in receipt of benefits are in poverty or close to the poverty line. However, the take up rate of benefits is not 100%, meaning that some people who are entitled to benefits do not apply or receive them.</p> <p>Question wording suggestion:  <b><i>Are you at present receiving any of the following state benefits, either for yourself or for any children you have?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Child Payment</li> <li>• Universal Credit</li> <li>• Working Tax Credit</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit</li> <li>• Best Start Foods</li> <li>• Best Start Grant</li> <li>• Council Tax Reduction</li> <li>• School Clothing Grant</li> <li>• Education Maintenance Allowance</li> <li>• Free School meals (on the basis of low income)</li> <li>• Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance</li> <li>• Housing Benefit</li> <li>• None of these</li> <li>• Don't know</li> <li>• Refused</li> </ul>
Characteristics linked to a high poverty risk	<p>If you do not know or cannot collect data on income, you might know other characteristics of the policy beneficiaries. The following characteristics are known to be linked to a high poverty risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- households with disabled household members</li> <li>- lone parent households</li> <li>- households with 3 or more children</li> <li>- minority ethnic household</li> <li>- households with a baby aged under 1</li> <li>- households with a mother aged under 25</li> </ul> <p>There are other groups such as social renters or those unemployed or economically inactive households that also have a higher risk of poverty.</p> <p>Examples of question wording are in the section that follows, 'Identifying specific characteristics of your target audience'.</p>

Option	Rationale
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)	<p>Where policies target areas rather than individuals, an area-based measure such as SIMD can be used.</p> <p>In order to know a beneficiary's SIMD it is necessary to collect postcode data. All the necessary information and supporting documentation can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.scot">Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a></p> <p>However, there are households living in poverty who live in affluent areas and, similarly, those who live in deprived areas but are not on a low income or living in poverty.</p>

## Identifying specific characteristics of your target audience

This section focuses on how to broaden understanding of the impact a policy can have on child poverty. If you do not know or cannot collect information on household income, you might know other characteristics of the policy beneficiaries.

We know that there are certain household types most at risk of being in poverty. If your policy reaches any of these groups, the likelihood of impact on child poverty is greater. These are:

Minority ethnic families	Mothers under 25	Baby under 1
Lone parents	Disabled adult or child	Three or more children

However there is also a need for more nuanced consideration of the significant intersectionality within the groups, so it is often helpful to think of them as a lens rather than a discrete group. Families with experience of multiple disadvantage are often among those deepest in poverty and who face particularly challenging journeys to get out of poverty. Most of these families will also fall into at least one of the priority family groups. This matters to child poverty because the barriers they face and the support they need will be significant and highly specific.

There are other groups such as students, social renters, unemployed or care leavers where prevalence of poverty is often higher. Depending on your policy aims, you may want to identify your beneficiaries differently.

Collecting demographic information can be quite sensitive or add an extra layer of complexity to administrative process. Professional judgement should be used as to whether it is possible and sensible to collect demographic information. It is worth to consider at what stage of the policy delivery process or evaluation stage it makes more sense to collect demographic information.

To support standardisation of data collection, below are some example question wording for collecting demographic information that allows identification of families most at risk of poverty.

Classification	Suggested wording	Notes
Gender	<a href="#">Sex, gender identity, trans status - data collection and publication: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	While only one priority family type specifically identifies women (i.e. mothers under 25), evidence shows that women are more likely to be the main carer amongst lone parent families, disabled families and families with a baby under 1.
Age	<a href="#">Data collection and publication - age: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	
Parental status	To identify whether parents are living as a couple or the household is a lone parent.	
Number of dependent children in the household	To identify households with children. Depending on the scope of the research, you may have to ask broadly whether there are any children at all in the household.	For official statistics, a dependent child is defined as a person aged 0-15, or a person aged 16-19 and: not married nor in a Civil Partnership nor living with a partner, and living with their parents, and in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training.
Age of youngest dependent child	<a href="#">Data collection and publication - age: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	
Disabled person in the household	Two part question. <a href="#">Data collection and publication - disability: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	Ideally, information will be collected as to whether it is the adult or the child who is disabled
Ethnicity	To identify minority ethnic groups. Details: <a href="#">Data collection and publication - ethnic group: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>	Ethnicity is a complex issue. There is no consensus as to what constitutes an 'ethnic group'. Research shows that it can mean different things to different people. It encompasses aspects of identity, race, ancestry, history, culture. It is very diverse.  Guidance suggests which groups to include in the minority ethnic category. This will incorporate some white minority ethnic groups.



## Annex A: Child poverty data

### What are the child poverty targets?

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The Child Poverty (Scotland) 2017 Act includes four income based targets to be met by 2030 and interim targets to be met by 2023. These are:

- **Relative poverty.** This is the proportion of children living in households with equivalised incomes below 60% of the median UK income in the current year. This target measures low income relative to the rest of society. Interim target 18%. Final target of 10% by 2030/31.
- **Absolute poverty.** This is the proportion of children living in households with equivalised incomes below 60% of the median UK income in 2010/11 adjusted for inflation. This target provides an overview of low living standards relative to 2010/11 when the first UK poverty act came into force. Interim target of 14%. Final target of 5% by 2030/31.
- **Low income and material deprivation.** This is the proportion of children in households with equivalised incomes below 70% of the median UK income and going without certain basic goods and services. Interim target of 8%. Final target of 5% by 2030/31.
- **Persistent poverty.** This is the proportion of children who have lived in relative poverty in three or more of the last four years. The target measures those who are in poverty for several years. The interim target is 8%, with a final target of 5% by 2030/31.

### Where can I find the latest data?

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Annual child poverty statistics are published on the [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2018-21 - analytical report \(data.gov.scot\)](#). Due to the impact of COVID-19 on data collection [data for 2018-21 is not reliable](#). The latest update refers to 2017-20 and is available on [Child poverty summary \(data.gov.scot\)](#). The next update is anticipated in March/April 2023.

The main poverty data source, the Family Resources Survey, provides information at a national level only. If it is necessary to look at poverty rates at a local level, the first alternative data source partially comparable to the national-level statistics is the Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland annual publication. These statistics are available for a range of local areas including local authority, ward and data zone level. [Children in low income families: local area statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

### In what ways can policies impact on targets?

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The child poverty targets are all income based. This means that policies that support changes to household incomes are likely to have an impact on the targets. For example, this could be by increasing income from employment, reducing cost of living or increasing income from social security and benefits in-kind.

Specifically, policies that are highly targeted at households in poverty, are likely to support relative poverty and, in the longer term, persistent poverty. Policies that are highly focused on reducing cost of living, are likely to have an impact on low income and material deprivation. But this can have a positive effect on other targets only where policies reach those who are below the threshold for relative poverty. For example, if a policy was to reduce costs of living for all, it could end up doing that primarily for middle income families and, therefore, the overall impact on relative and persistent poverty could be regressive.

## Annex B: Evaluating the effectiveness of system-change initiatives

Evidence has shown the wide range of interacting factors that influence child poverty, and that a number of different forms of support are likely to be needed to help people move out of poverty - in different combinations, for different family circumstances. Child poverty support systems (i.e. the range of services that play a role in addressing child poverty) are often complex and can be hard for individuals to navigate, due to the opacity of the system - with complex eligibility requirements and entry routes.

The evaluation strategy for the second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan aims to support greater understanding of how different policies are linked up together by undertaking a **'system evaluation' of the implementation and impact of the package of policies**. Rather than understanding the impact of individual policies, the aim of the system evaluation is to understand the impact of policies in combination and how well they work together in practice.

The evaluation is currently under development. The work consists of two phases. Phase one consists of developmental and set-up work to identify and understand the implementation of system change initiatives. Phase two consists of collating and synthesising evidence and learning from across the range of initiatives focused on system change.

The research questions are:

#### **Implementation and delivery questions**

1. How successfully have actions to achieve system change been implemented?
2. What are the enablers that have facilitated system change and the challenges that have been experienced, and how have challenges been overcome?
3. What have been effective and ineffective ways of reaching intended beneficiaries?
4. What contextual factors have influenced the implementation and how?
5. What lessons for successful implementation can be drawn for other areas and for wider policy development?

#### **System change outcomes**

1. To what extent have system-level outcomes been achieved?
2. How have system-level outcomes been achieved?
3. What are the range of contextual factors that influence this? What has prevented system outcomes from being achieved?
4. How have service users, service providers and wider stakeholders experienced the systems change?

#### **Impact on child poverty**

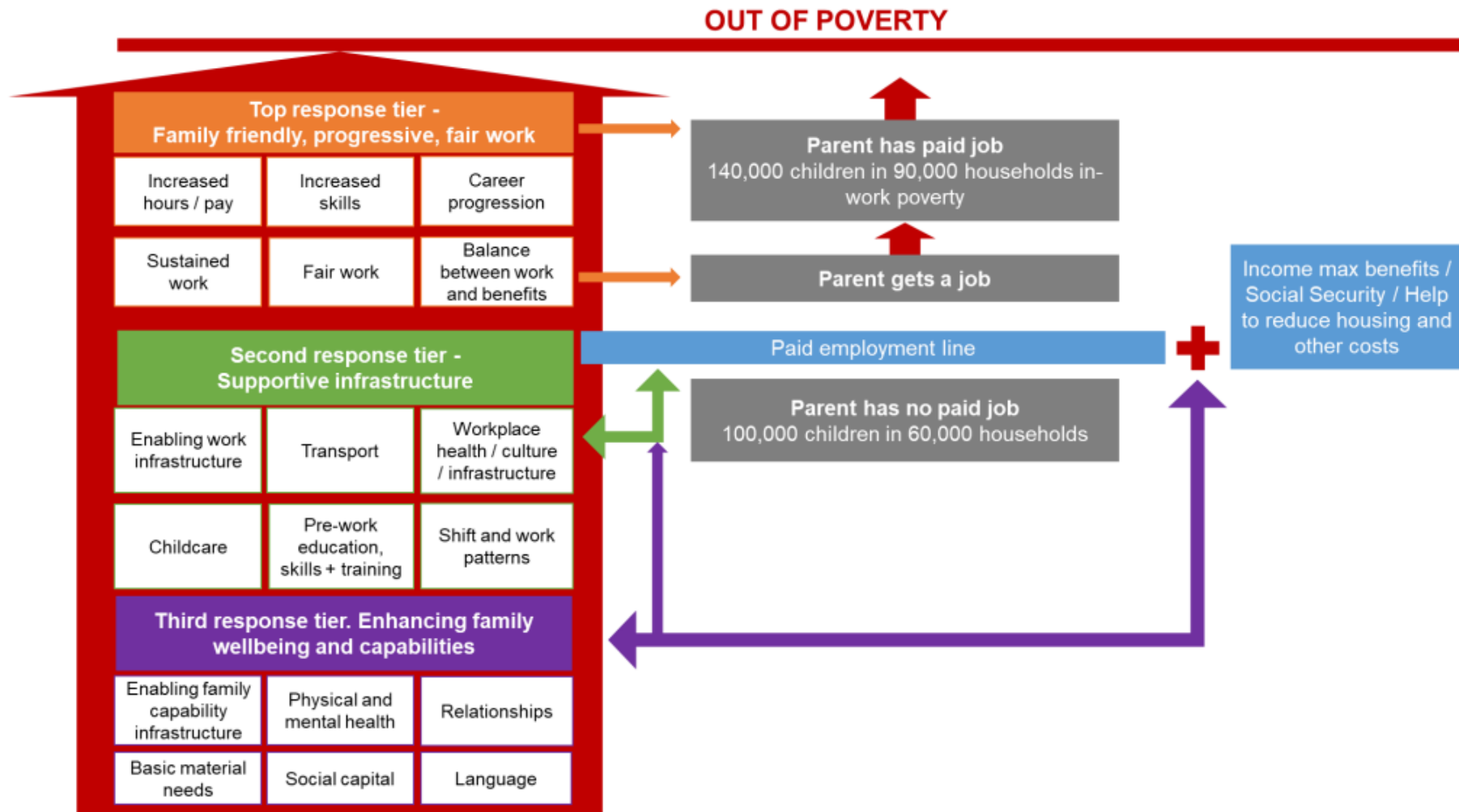
5. Has the initiative resulted in a reduction in child poverty?
6. Has the initiative resulted in an impact on the child poverty drivers (i.e. increased income from employment or from benefits or reduced cost of living for families in poverty)?
7. To what extent have impacts varied for different groups of beneficiaries (e.g. priority family groups, depth of poverty, equality groups)?
8. What are the pathways by which system change contributes to a reduction in child poverty?

#### **Costs and benefits**

1. What have initiatives cost to deliver? What are the unit costs?
2. What are the monetisable benefits of the initiative and has there been (or is there a potential for) a return on investment?

## Annex C: Conceptual layers of poverty

Further detail explaining the conceptual layers of poverty can be found in the [evaluation strategy \(see pages 6-8\)](#).





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