



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

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Via email only

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Dear Convener

Inquiry into Child Poverty: Parental Employment

I am writing to make you aware that the Social Justice and Social Security Committee has started its inquiry into Child Poverty: Parental Employment. The Committee has agreed the remit for its inquiry into parental employment:

To consider how the Scottish Government is working with local authorities, employers and other partners at a local level to tackle child poverty through improving employability. The inquiry will consider the broad range of interconnected policies required and the plans for delivery of the 'parental employment offer' announced in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan. In particular, it will consider to what extent local approaches are targeted on the 'priority groups' in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

The inquiry will be carried out in a phased approach over the coming year. The first step will be information gathering. The Committee would be keen to learn about any relevant work you've undertaken, or are planning to do, in this subject area or child poverty more generally. I'd also like to gauge your Committee's interest in being involved with this inquiry.

Background

Over the last year the Committee has been scrutinising the Scottish Government's progress in addressing child poverty by holding topical one-off sessions and through its budget scrutiny. Child poverty will continue to be a significant focus for my Committee throughout the remainder of the session, and we hope other committees will take the opportunity to scrutinise child poverty aspects within their remits.

The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) sets statutory targets which:

- help focus efforts to tackle and ultimately eradicate child poverty
- help monitor progress
- are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The targets state that by 2030, of children living in Scottish households:

- less than 10% should be living in relative poverty (how many families are on low incomes compared with middle income households)
- less than 5% should be living in absolute poverty (how many low income families are not seeing their living standards improving over time)
- less than 5% should be living with combined low income and material deprivation (how many lower income families cannot afford basic necessities)
- less than 5% should be living in persistent poverty (how many families live on low incomes three years out of four)

Interim targets are due to be met by the end of the financial year 2023, though we won't know whether this has been achieved until 2024. The Act requires Scottish Ministers to publish child poverty delivery plans at regular intervals, with annual reports to measure progress. The Scottish Government [updated the Parliament](#) on its final/fourth report on the first delivery plan on 29 June 2022. The second delivery plan, [Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026](#) (second Delivery Plan) runs during this Parliament.

The First Minister declared that tackling child poverty is a national mission for this Scottish Parliamentary session for the Government and that it is committed to mobilising all of Scotland to work with it to deliver the change needed.

The Resource Spending Review also establishes the Scottish Government's long-term ambitions, one of which is tackling child poverty (alongside transitioning to net zero, growing a stronger economy, and improving public services), which impacts future spending decisions in Scottish Budgets up to 2026-27.

Stakeholders have expressed concerns that the 2030 targets will not be met.

Approach to the inquiry

It is noted that social security plays an important role in supporting parents out of poverty, though a sustainable approach to tackling child poverty requires other

actions. Parental employment is one of the key approaches set out in the second Delivery Plan.

The Committee is currently seeking written evidence (see the annexe to this letter) from the 32 [local employability partnerships](#) and hopes to be in a position to analyse this information by October.

Thereafter, the Committee will be undertaking fact-finding visits. This will be followed by a national call for views, based on the Committee's initial findings and will be launched at the beginning of 2023, with oral evidence being heard during late spring onwards. The aim is to report after summer recess 2023.

Other committees' involvement

Due to the broad cross-cutting subject matter of child poverty and the infrastructure needed to help parents into employment (e.g. childcare, transport and digital connectivity), several committees may have a specific interest in addressing child poverty, parental employment or both.

There would be scope to include committees with this work, as planning is still at an early stage, for example, members may committees wish to attend evidence session or consider aspects as part of its ongoing work.

The Committee would very much welcome:

- a note of any work your Committee has undertaken relevant to child poverty
- whether in the next year your Committee will be undertaking work on parental employment/child poverty
- your Committee's views on its involvement with this inquiry and whether there is interest in participating in a committee debate.

A response by 30 September would be appreciated to help the Committee plan for the subsequent stages of its inquiry and to ensure your committee is included in further correspondence or kept aware of developments, as appropriate.

Yours sincerely



Elena Whitham MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Evidence sought from local employment partnerships

Overview

The Social Justice and Social Security Committee is holding an inquiry into addressing child poverty through parental employment.

We are interested in partnership work on employment and employability support provision that aligns to the Scottish Government's aims to tackle child poverty.

We want to learn more about the services offered in your area and the projects you support that would help meet this aim.

We would also particularly like to hear about work that is aimed at groups who we know are at higher risk of poverty:

- mothers aged under 25
- minority ethnic families
- lone parents
- parents whose youngest child is under one
- parents with three, or more, children
- disabled family members

Background

The Scottish Government is required to publish three delivery plans under the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#). '[Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026](#)' is the second of these.

There is a big emphasis in this plan on fair work as a route out of poverty. The Poverty and Inequality Commission highlighted that improving income from employment could help to reduce poverty:

“The Scottish Government should invest in employability and skills, and work with employers to address the barriers to work faced by some parents, particularly disabled parents.”

Income from work is one of the three 'key drivers' of child poverty which both the first and second Delivery Plans address.

The first Delivery Plan included '[Fair Start Scotland](#)' and the [Parental Employability Support Fund](#).

Part A of the second plan focuses on employability. It has “stretch” aims of:

- supporting up to 12,000 parents into work
- helping up to 3,000 in-work parents increasing their earnings

The Government has said it can achieve this by:

“Developing a new offer to parents providing access to holistic support through a dedicated employability keyworker with local employability partnerships providing access to upskilling and supported opportunities.”

The Government has also outlined changes to infrastructure to help parents into work, including:

- extending funded childcare (including for one and two years olds, school age childcare and holiday childcare)
- expanding Connecting Scotland to bring 300,000 people online by 2026
- improving transport – including supporting local authorities to improve availability of public transport.

Key questions

- What employability services are there in your area that currently provide support targeted at parents, particularly parents in the ‘priority groups’ set out in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan?
- How do these projects link to other relevant services, for example, local childcare providers, local training providers, and local employers?
- What specific challenges does your local employability partnership face, for example, because of geographic area or levels of poverty?
- How do you expect employability service delivery in your area will change in response to the second Child Poverty Delivery Plan?
- How will you integrate the requirements of the Child Poverty Delivery Plan into your broader approach to employability?
- What support does your employability partnership need from the Scottish Government to implement the second Child Poverty Delivery Plan?
- What does your data collection tell you about what is needed in your area to support employability amongst the priority groups set out in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan?

We hope to visit local projects as part of this inquiry. We’re particularly interested in projects that focus on the priority groups. Please let us know if there is a suitable project in your area that you think we might be able to visit.