Universal Vs targeted services
Universal services are considered more efficient, cheaper to administer and less stigmatising than targeted services. However, an argument can also be made for targeting resources at those who are most in need so as not to fund those who could easily fund themselves. A more balanced approach is to use a blend of universal and targeted services, depending on the service in question for example:

- Targeting free breakfast clubs at the poorest is not considered the best use of resources when there could be a universal service with a sliding scale of fees that would encourage wider use, double up as pre-school childcare and eliminate the stigma of having to be fed by the council.
- A service to build the social capital of lone parents living in poverty, however, should be targeted in order to reach those most in need of the service.

By considering every initiative through the lens of poverty-proofing, minimising stigma and maximising engagement, the CPP could make their decisions on a case by case basis.

### Actions the CPP can take to prevent and mitigate poverty in their local area:

- **Income maximisation**: Increase uptake of benefit entitlements; provide accessible money advice services; prevent or mitigate the effects of benefit sanctions; address the poverty premium; review policy on economic development to ensure good quality and family friendly employment; and ensure their own locally-administered benefit systems are working well, with minimal delay, error and maladministration.
- **Education**: Encourage take up of free school meals and school clothing grants, investigate which costs of the school day could be abolished, and build positive relationships with parents so that they feel comfortable accessing available supports.
- **Childcare**: Take steps to improve current provision by assessing whether there is sufficient childcare available for working parents; exploring funding models that use a sliding scale; and supporting voluntary, community or parent-led providers of childcare, and ensuring provision is of high quality.
- **Support for lone parents**: Take account of the needs of lone parents across council services of work, support, childcare and education.

### Strategic steps to begin poverty mitigation and preventing

- Ensure everyone across the entire CPP has ownership over the local approach to tackling child poverty.
- Involve local people living in poverty in discussions and planning (coproduction).
- Keep awareness raising and stigma reduction at the core of services.
- Implement evidence-based practice.
- Provide ongoing education and training of CPP members and relevant staff.

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**Acknowledgements**

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**References**

Full references can be found in the report at www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk

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**About this briefing**

This briefing summarises a review of evidence commissioned by South Ayrshire local authority to support its Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to:

1. Identify factors that may mitigate the effects of child poverty.
2. Make suggestions on how the local authority can act to prevent child poverty occurring.
3. Identify early trigger signs that may suggest an increased risk of poverty.

The full evidence review contains further findings, signposting, talking points, references and details of how the research was carried out. See www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk to download the full report.

The evidence review and briefing were produced by What Works Scotland’s Evidence Bank for public service reform. The Evidence Bank provides appraised, accessible and action-oriented evidence reviews and other resources for those involved in public service delivery including CPPs, policy-makers, local authorities and third sector organisations.

**Summary points**

- Local authorities have a duty to improve the health and wellbeing of children living in poverty under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the broader social policy framework of the Scottish Government. The 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill places a requirement on local authorities and health boards to prepare and publish a local child poverty action report.
- Local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) do not have control over the macro-economic or political factors that drive the incidence and prevalence of child poverty. They can, however, harness their resources to the prevention and mitigation of child poverty locally, and exert their influence on Scottish and UK policies to support them.
- The causes of child poverty are often confused with its consequences. Child poverty is not caused by individual behaviours but by a complex blend of structural issues relating to macro-economic and political factors governing the labour market, employment and social security. Social factors make particular groups especially vulnerable to poverty, e.g. children, lone parents, disabled people and BME groups.
- It is important to address the misunderstandings of the causes and consequences of child poverty among CPP staff and take steps to reduce stigma for those living in poverty, to counter the confusing narratives that blame families for their own poverty.
- While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, there are gaps in the research in relation to income maximisation, education, childcare and lone parenthood.
- Key strategies to identify when people are at risk of, or have recently fallen into, poverty and prevent it can be taken up by CPPs.

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*Grey literature refers to documents that are not found through publishers or databases, such as reports published by not-for-profit organisations and conference reports.*
The evidence review adopts the definition used by Townsend, 1979: 31, which portrays the causes and consequences of child poverty as the consequences of living in poverty, including health, mobility, education, and area regeneration. The evidence review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. Current portrayals of the causes and consequences of child poverty are considered too broad to be included in the review. While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, the review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. A multitude of quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to understand the landscape of education, health, and the social and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. While the evidence review covers the topic of child poverty, it does not cover the topic of poverty in general, with a particular focus on child poverty.

Defining child poverty

Child poverty is caused by a complex blend of structural issues: child poverty is defined as the consequences of living in poverty, including health, mobility, education, and area regeneration. The evidence review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. Current portrayals of the causes and consequences of child poverty are considered too broad to be included in the review. While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, the review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. A multitude of quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to understand the landscape of education, health, and the social and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. While the evidence review covers the topic of child poverty, it does not cover the topic of poverty in general, with a particular focus on child poverty.

Finding the evidence

Linking awareness of entitlements is one of many reasons why poor children are more likely to have difficulty in finding work, reducing their ability to secure a better income and benefit entitlement. The evidence review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. Current portrayals of the causes and consequences of child poverty are considered too broad to be included in the review. While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, the review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. A multitude of quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to understand the landscape of education, health, and the social and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. While the evidence review covers the topic of child poverty, it does not cover the topic of poverty in general, with a particular focus on child poverty.

Evidence from the evidence

Child poverty is caused by a complex blend of structural issues: child poverty is defined as the consequences of living in poverty, including health, mobility, education, and area regeneration. The evidence review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. Current portrayals of the causes and consequences of child poverty are considered too broad to be included in the review. While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, the review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. A multitude of quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to understand the landscape of education, health, and the social and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. While the evidence review covers the topic of child poverty, it does not cover the topic of poverty in general, with a particular focus on child poverty.

Conclusion

The evidence review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. Current portrayals of the causes and consequences of child poverty are considered too broad to be included in the review. While the topic of child poverty is covered extensively in the academic and grey literature, the review identifies gaps in understanding among those who can help mitigate its effects. A multitude of quantitative and qualitative research is necessary to understand the landscape of education, health, and the social and economic outcomes for children living in poverty. While the evidence review covers the topic of child poverty, it does not cover the topic of poverty in general, with a particular focus on child poverty.