



Child poverty



Why is it important?

Although lower than in the UK overall, child poverty rates are high in Scotland with an estimated 210,000 children (22%) living in relative poverty in 2013/14.

In some areas, the percentage of children living in poverty is even higher. For example, across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board, there are six local authorities with wide variations in child poverty rates between them. In Glasgow city, 33% (more than 36,000) of children lived in poverty in 2013 and in some areas of the city, it was as high as 48% of children.

Child poverty is currently at the centre of several Scottish Government policies, and approaches to address child poverty include the [Early Years frameworks](#), the [GIRFEC approach](#) and the work of the [Early Years Collaborative](#).

Are there inequalities to consider?

There is evidence that children living in Glasgow's poorest neighbourhoods can expect to [live 14 years less](#) than those in wealthier areas of the city.

The longer-term harmful [costs of child poverty](#) for families, neighbourhoods and wider society extend

beyond poor life expectancy and include relationships, education, employment, income, and assets.

For example, in terms of educational attainment, [the gap](#) between children from low-income and high-income households starts early. By age five, it is 10-13 months. Lower attainment in literacy and numeracy is linked to deprivation throughout primary school. By age 12–14 (S2), pupils from better-off areas are more than twice as likely as those from the most deprived areas to do well in numeracy.

Challenges and solutions

Predictions from 2014 showed that child poverty levels were set to increase due to the UK Government's welfare reforms, and an additional 50,000 children in Scotland would be living in poverty by 2020 (Scottish Government, 2014).

The nature of poverty is also changing, with a rise in 'in-work' poverty and in lone-parent households, both of which will have an impact on children.

Therefore, co-ordinated action across the social determinants of health is vital. GCPH has been involved in action to reduce child poverty in the form of: (1) work to maximise the income of pregnant women and families with young children at risk of or experiencing poverty, (2) a project to increase understanding and promote action to address the financial barriers preventing children from fully participating at school and (3) the introduction of universal free school meals by the Scottish Government.

Examples of positive action

1. The Healthier, Wealthier Children (HWC) project

The [HWC project](#) developed referral pathways between early years health service and money advice services for pregnant women and families with young children who were experiencing or at risk of child poverty. It has been operational since October 2010 across NHS GGC. It has been fully evaluated, with proven benefits of this approach to addressing child poverty.

The [final project report](#) and [evaluation report](#) are available to download. The project continues to be monitored through NHS GGC reporting systems.

2. The Cost of the School Day

This study was carried out in Glasgow and involved an in-depth evaluation of the cost barriers and burdens that school can place on families and how these can exclude young people from participating in the school experience. Schools participating in the [Cost of the School Day](#) (CoSD) have already made a range of

simple no-cost changes based on the concerns of their pupils. [The evaluation report](#) has recommendations on how to include all school pupils

As a result of the CoSD project, detailed recommendations have been developed. Guidance for schools was published by Education Services at Glasgow City Council in response to the CoSD findings.

Additionally, in the new Scottish Government 'Fairer Scotland' action plan, there is a commitment to explore ways in which the learning from the Cost of the School Day can be spread more widely across Scotland – see their [action plan](#).

3. Free School Meals policy

A recent Scottish Government policy is the introduction of universal free school meals (UFSM) across Scotland for all children in the first three years of primary school. The new policy aims to support child development, tackle poverty and improve educational attainment. Reported outcomes, particularly in the most deprived schools, include increased FSM uptake, including among those previously entitled but not taking them, greater levels of nutrition, reduced risks of stigma and a welcome benefit for families that were struggling before the introduction of UFSM. For information, see McAdams R. Monitoring changes in school meal uptake following the introduction of Universal Free School Meals for P1–P3 pupils in Scotland. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland; 2015.

Links to other resources

See the [Child Poverty Action Group](#) website for a description of the issues implicated in child poverty and suggested actions needed.

Glasgow city's [Poverty Leadership Panel](#) (PLP) works to tackle the [high levels of poverty](#) across the city, through an action plan covering areas such as: involving people with experience of poverty; challenging stigma; responding to the impacts of welfare reforms, reducing child poverty, and tackling credit and debt.