



SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2025/26

INCLUDING ANNUAL PROGRESS FOR
2024/25



Contents

Foreword and Introduction	3
National Context	4
Best Start Bright Futures	4
Drivers of Child Poverty	4
Fairer Scotland Duty	5
Families at greatest risk of poverty	5
Local Context.....	6
What do we know about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders.....	6
Children in Low-income Families in Scottish Borders Electoral Wards	6
Numbers of children in relative low-income families in Scottish Borders Electoral Wards	7
Households receiving Universal Credit.....	7
The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index.....	8
Understanding Child Poverty data in the Scottish Borders	9
Understanding Key Drivers and Priority Groups data in the Scottish Borders.....	10
What are we doing about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders?	11
Budgets and Funding	12
Key Areas of Work in 2024/25	12
Income from Employment	18
Parental Employability Service	18
Your Fitness Your Future: Whole family support.....	19
The Cost of Living.....	21
Child Poverty Accelerator Fund.....	21
Scottish Borders Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx)	21
Berwickshire SWAP	23
Tweed Togs	25
Income from Social Security and benefits in kind	27
Financial Inclusion	27
A Child's Journey	29
Priority Family Types	30
Other Activity During 2024/25	34
Looking Forward – Priorities for 2025/26	35
Glossary.....	36

Foreword and Introduction

This report details the progress achieved in addressing child poverty in the Scottish Borders during the 2024/25 period and outlines the planned initiatives for 2025/26.

Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Community Planning Partners, and the partnership Child Poverty Group acknowledge the significance of addressing child poverty and are committed to improving the lives of children, young people, and families in the Scottish Borders.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets out the Scottish Government's statement of intent to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030.

The Act mandates Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare a Local Child Poverty Action Plan Report and an Annual Progress Report. These reports should outline the measures implemented to help achieve child poverty targets and the proposed measures intended for this purpose. Additionally, the reports should detail any income maximisation efforts taken to provide pregnant women and families with children, information, advice, and assistance regarding eligibility for financial support and help in applying for such support.

This Plan outlines our strategic approach and efforts to address priority areas and key actions aimed at alleviating child poverty. We will collaborate with partners at both national and local levels as we implement measures throughout 2025/2026.

Child Poverty levels in the Scottish Borders continue to be challenging, for example:

- **15.9%** of our children still live in poverty (before housing costs)
- **21.5%** of our children still live in poverty (after housing costs)
- **15.8%** of Scottish Borders Households receive Universal Credit.
- The regional pay gap between the Scottish Borders and Scotland has increased since 2023 for workers who work in the region. In 2023, the median gross weekly pay (workplace based) was **£652**, for 2024 this reduces to **£632**. This is now **£108** below the **£740** for Scotland. This data comes from a national survey by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) which randomly samples 1% of PAYE registered employee jobs.

However:

- Work undertaken by the Financial Inclusion Team in 2024/25 has resulted in **£1.3 million** in financial gains for families in the Scottish Borders.
- The Annual Participation Measure (published in August 2024) shows that **94.2%** of 16–19-year-olds, in our area, were engaged in education, employment, training, or personal development. This compares to **92.7%** nationally.
- In 2024-25 The Consortium of Scottish Borders Citizens Advice Bureaux had **17,686** client contacts and achieved a client financial gain of **£4,110,734.38**.

We continue to align with the Scottish Government's tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, Best Start, Bright Futures. This outlines the collaborative efforts to address child poverty in Scotland. It is a comprehensive plan for the entire country and acknowledges the role all sectors of society must play to achieve the desired outcomes for children and families. Another significant national plan is The Promise. Poverty is one of the five key elements in The Promise plan, and organisations are required to demonstrate how they contribute to mitigating the effects of poverty. We maintain our alignment with The Promise.

We acknowledge that partnerships are instrumental in achieving the intended outcomes for our children, young people, and families in the Scottish Borders. We extend our gratitude to the Child Poverty Group and the Community Planning Partnership for their valuable contributions to the Plan.

Councillor Caroline Cochrane – Chair of Community Planning Partnership
David Robertson – Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council
Peter Moore – Chief Executive, NHS Borders

National Context

Best Start Bright Futures

Scottish Government’s tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) sets out how we will work together to deliver on Scotland’s national mission to tackle child poverty.

The Scottish Government's national child poverty targets serve as a crucial reference point and catalyst for local action within the Scottish Borders. While we align our efforts with these national objectives, we recognise that the poverty challenges within the Scottish Borders are unique to our locality. Therefore, our mitigation measures are tailored to augment national efforts and address the specific needs of our community.

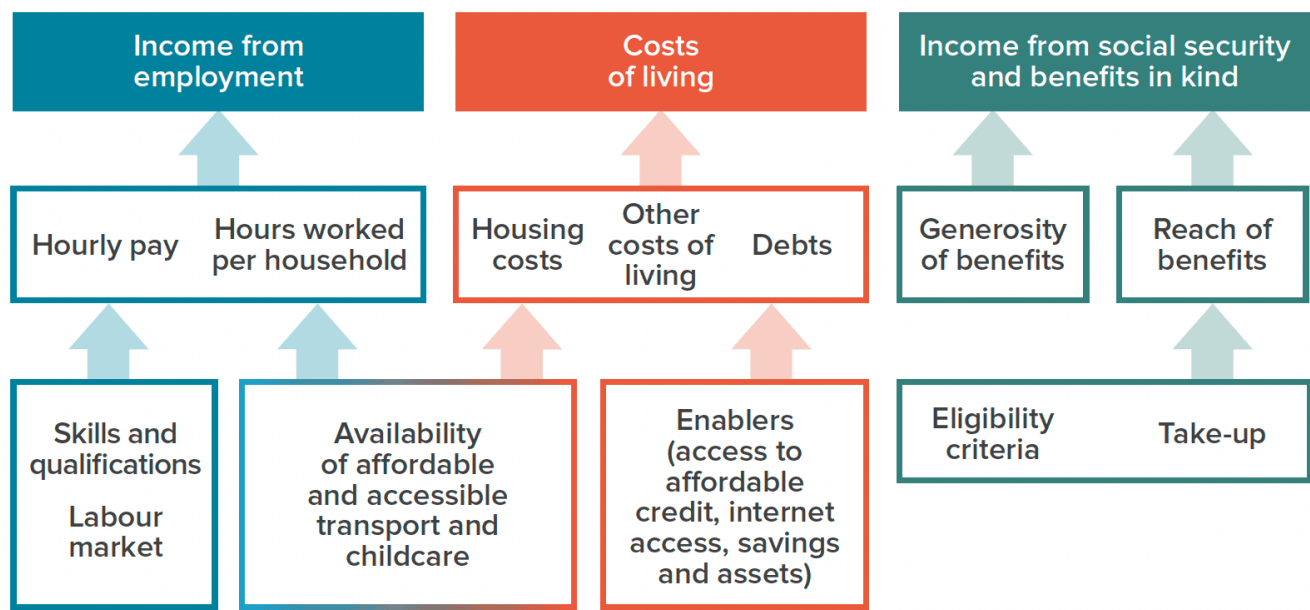
At the same time, child poverty is a complex issue composed of factors requiring both national (e.g., social security benefits) and local (e.g., local economy) interventions. National and local efforts must work in tandem to make the desired progress.

At national level, the most up-to-date figures released for the year from 2023 to 2024 show a relative rate of child poverty at 22%, while the rate of absolute poverty was 17%. Both figures are down from the previous year, but they fall short of the government's interim target of getting relative poverty below 18% and absolute poverty below 14%. Given the relationship between national and local factors in determining the levels of child poverty, it can be expected that missing the national interim targets will have a direct impact on our local progress in combatting poverty.

Drivers of Child Poverty

The direct drivers of poverty fall into three main categories – income from employment, costs of living and income from social security. We remain focused on actions around these themes, as summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Drivers of child poverty



Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Fairer Scotland Duty

The Fairer Scotland Duty (the Duty) places a legal responsibility on named public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay **due regard**' to) how they can **reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions**. Therefore, it is crucial that public bodies consider the impact that their decisions have on socio-economic disadvantage and the inequality of outcome that both adults and children may experience as a result.

Families at greatest risk of poverty

The national Child Poverty Delivery Plan continues to focus on supporting the six priority family types. Almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within these six priority family types. We remain focused on actions to help these families.

1. Lone Parents
2. Families where a member of the household is disabled.
3. Families with 3 or more children
4. Minority ethnic families
5. Families where the youngest child is under 1.
6. Mothers aged under 25.

Source: [Best Start, Bright Futures](#)

Local Context

What do we know about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders

The headlines below show that we continue to face significant challenges in the Scottish Borders.

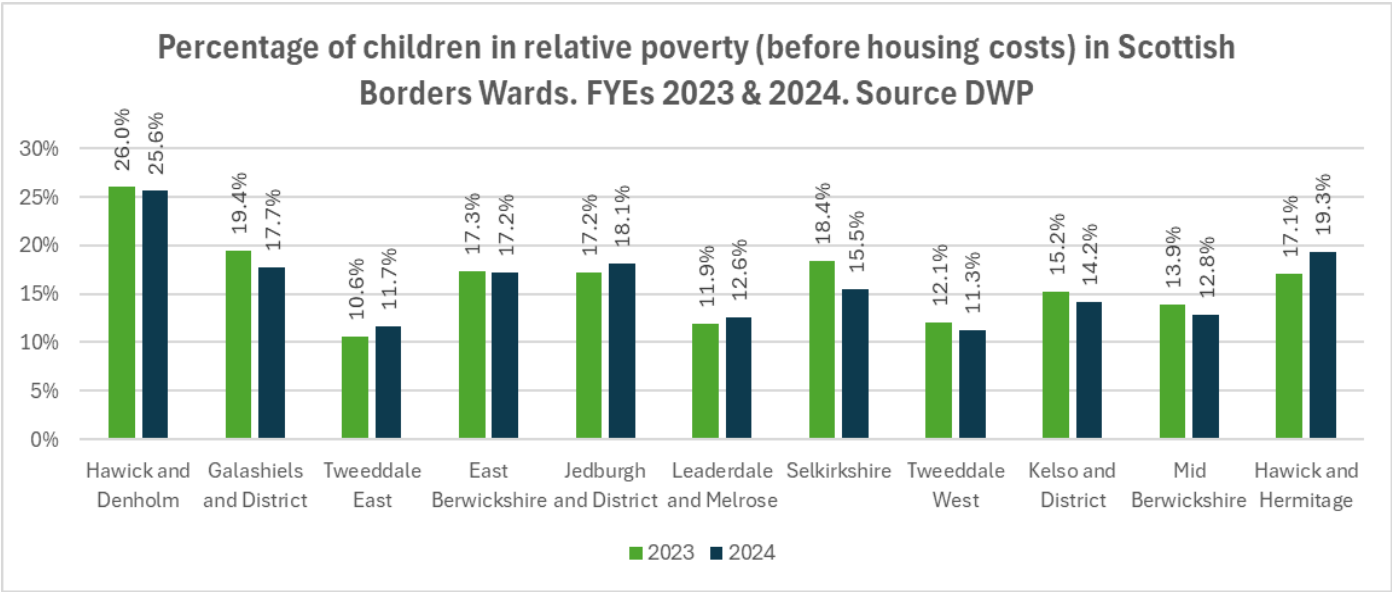
- Our children in low-income families (before housing costs) has **reduced** from **16.2%** in 2022/23 to **15.9%** in 2023/24.
- 21.5% of our children still live in poverty (after housing costs) in the Scottish Borders
- 15.8% of Scottish Borders Households receive Universal Credit.

The data presented is the most recent from available sources.

[Appendix 1A](#) shows more detail, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups.

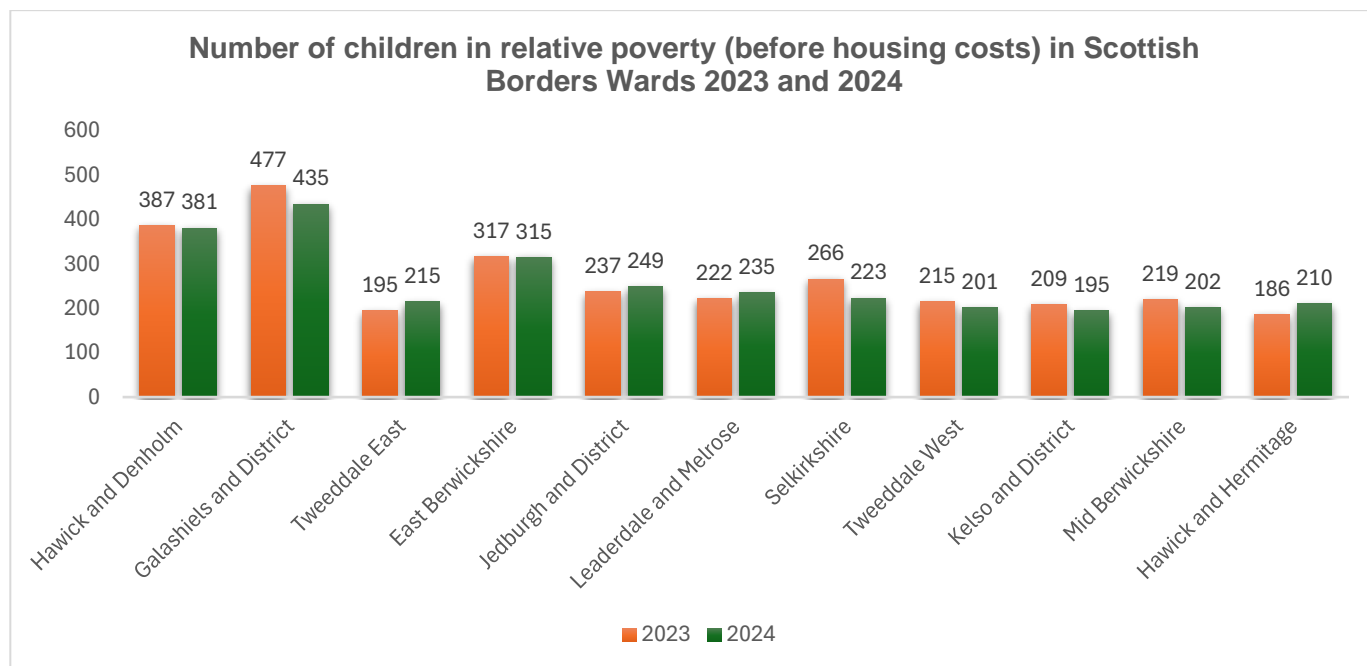
Children in Low-income Families in Scottish Borders Electoral Wards

The chart below shows the Relative Child Poverty data at Scottish Borders Electoral Ward level for the financial years ending 2023 and 2024.



Numbers of children in relative low-income families in Scottish Borders Electoral Wards

The following chart gives an indication of the numbers of children who are estimated to be living in relative low-income families in the financial years ending 2023 and 2024.



Households receiving Universal Credit

The table below shows the number and proportion of households in the Scottish Borders receiving Universal Credit compared to Scotland. Overall, the Scottish Borders has a lower proportion of households receiving UC (15.8%) compared to 18.6% for Scotland. In the Scottish Borders there were 4,156 households claiming the 'Child Entitlement' or 7.4% compared to 8.4% for Scotland.

Universal Credit Households November 2024 (provisional figures)	Scottish Borders No of Households	% of All Occupied Households	
		Scottish Borders	Scotland
All Occupied Households	56,030	100%	100%
All Universal Credit Households (UCH)	8,829	15.8%	18.6%
UCH with Children	4,156	7.4%	8.4%
UCH claiming Child Entitlement	3,938	7.0%	7.9%
UCH Lone Parent	2,390	7.4%	8.4%
UCH with 3+ Children	881	1.6%	1.7%
UCH with Child Under Age 1	277	0.5%	0.5%
UCH with Children - Child Disability Entitlement	669	1.2%	1.6%
UCH with Children - Adult limited capacity for work entitlement	803	1.4%	1.7%
UCH with children - adult carer entitlement	838	1.5%	1.9%
UCH with children with a health-related UC entitlement	2,310	4.1%	5.2%

Source: DWP/NRS

The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index

The Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index (SB CPI) provides additional insight into child poverty in the Scottish Borders. The SB CPI was created to work alongside the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD provides a way of looking at deprivation in an area, covering the whole population and does not specifically reflect child poverty.

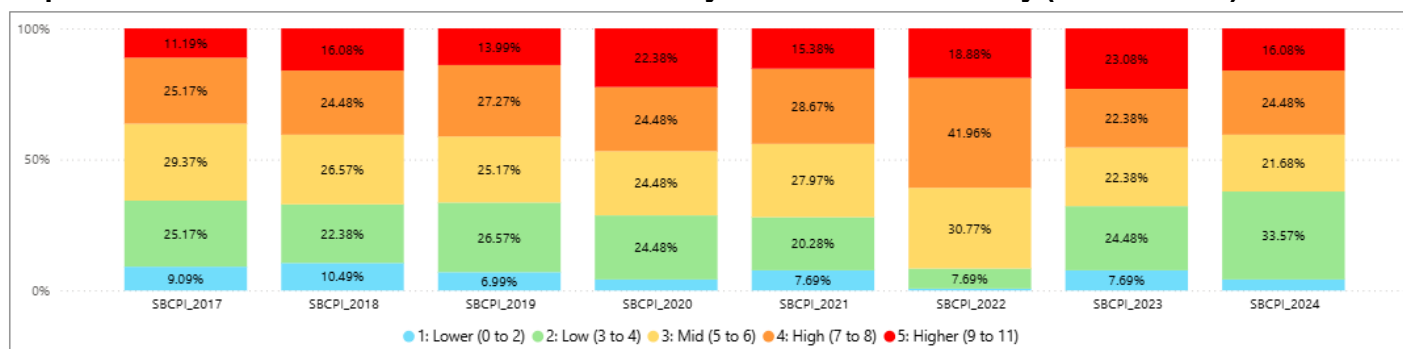
The SB CPI is a summary of two components, which are:

- Children in Low Income Families (**CiLIF**) – Source is [DWP/HMRC](#)¹. Relative low-income is defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of contemporary median income. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions. The SB CPI uses the most recent available year's data, currently there is a one-year lag e.g. for SB CPI 2025 uses the CiLIF data for 2023-24.
- Clothing Grant (**CLG**) - Source is SBC. The proportion of pupils recorded for Clothing Grant of all pupils in area for school year.

[Appendix 1A](#) shows more detail, including data relating to the nationally identified high priority family groups.

The graph below shows the proportion of data zones by each level of child poverty from 2017 to 2024. The impact of Covid19 and the cost-of-living crisis can be seen in the number/proportion of data zones with Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty. 66% of data zones had Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty in 2017. That increased to 71% in 2020 and then to 92% for 2022. In 2023 the proportion of data zones with Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty return to pre-covid level with 68%. Then for 2024 the proportion of data zones with Mid/High/Higher levels of child poverty reduced further to 62%, with a marked increase in the data zones in the low group.

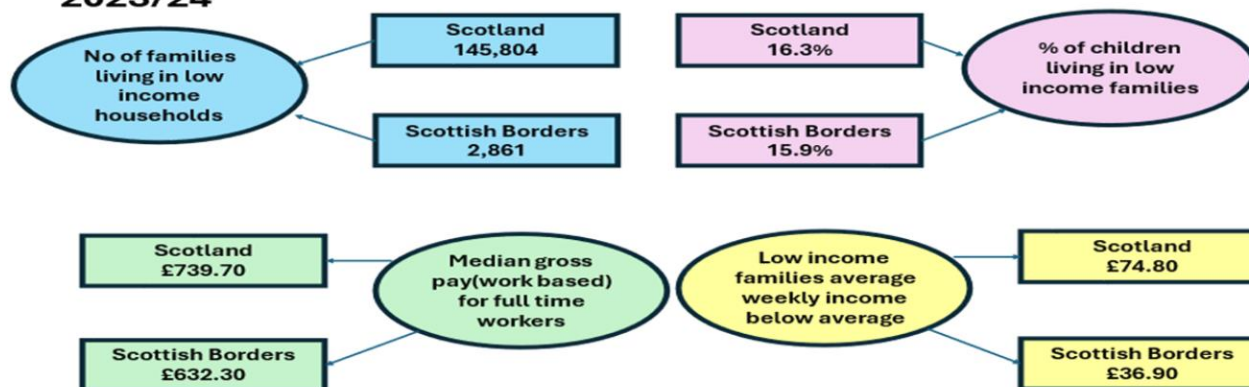
Proportion of Data Zones in the Scottish Borders by Level of Child Poverty (2017 to 2024)



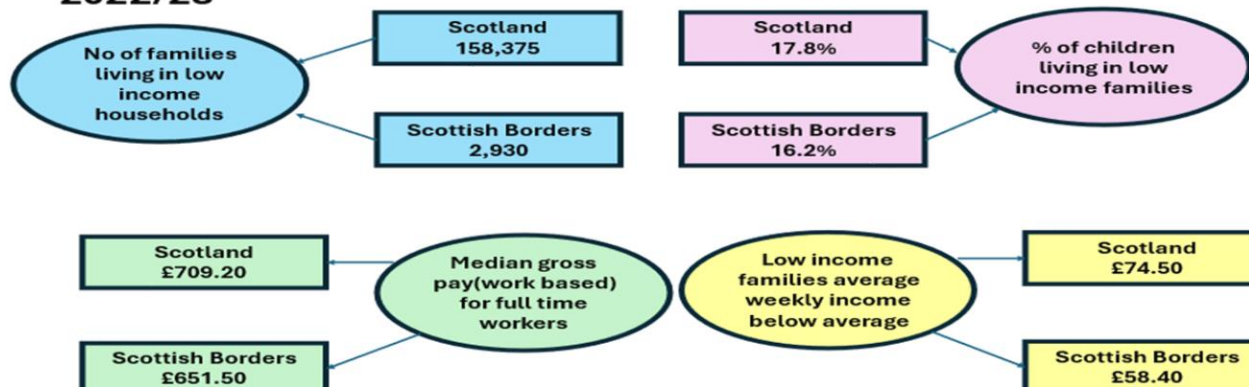
¹ *The calculation of proportion of Children in Low Income Families for the purpose of the Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index differs to 'official statistics' due to the availability of the data from Stat-Xplore. The children in Stat-Xplore are defined as dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged government training. (Not just those aged under 16 – unable to group into age bands). The figure for all children is then expressed as proportion of those aged 0 to 15 as published by NRS. It is recognised that this calculation is imperfect, but practical for the purpose of the SB CPI.

Understanding Child Poverty data in the Scottish Borders

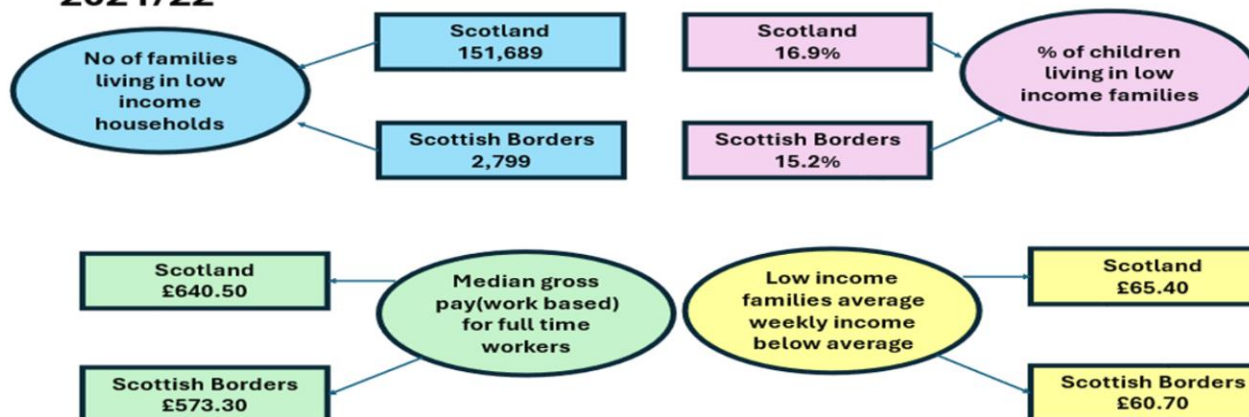
2023/24



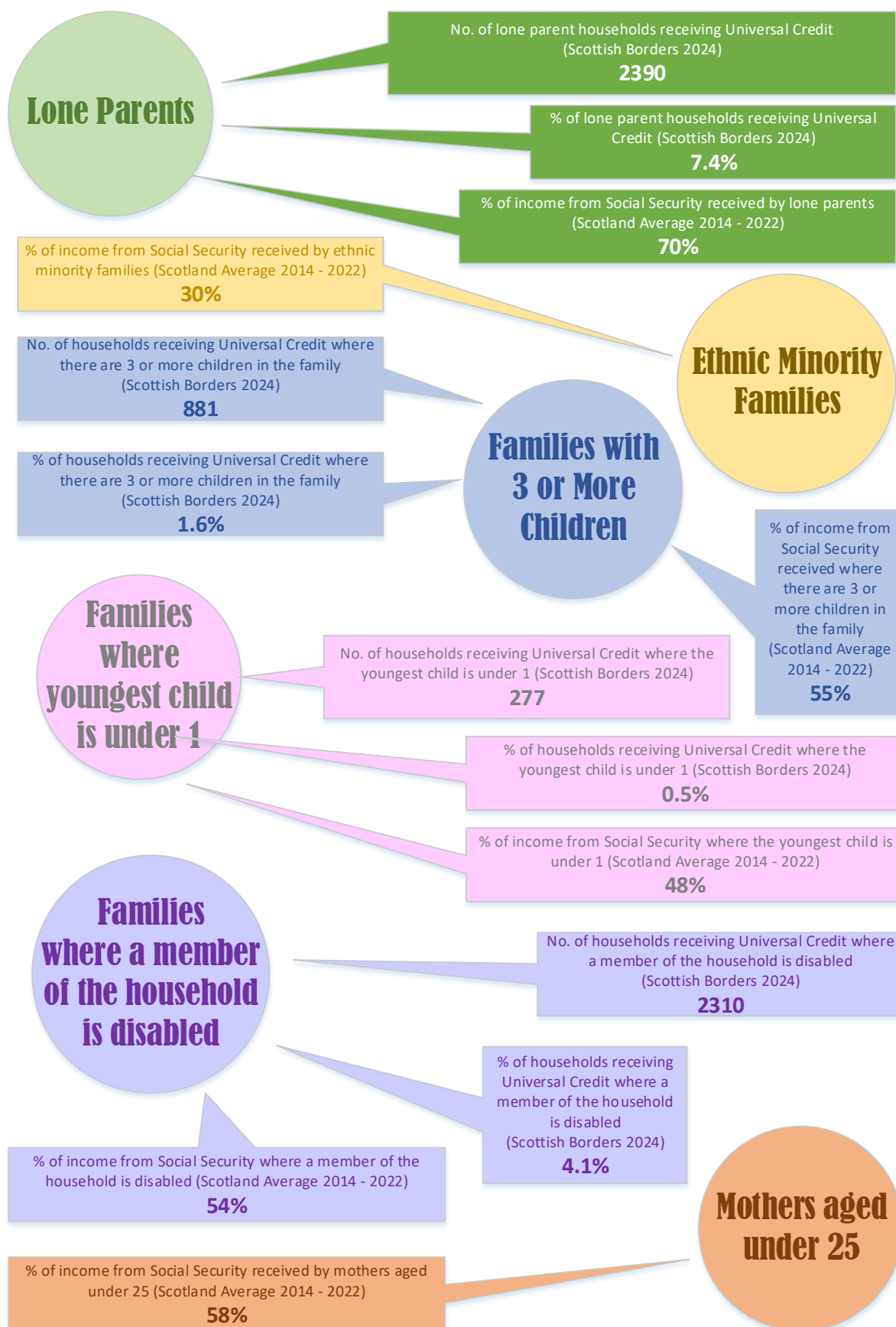
2022/23



2021/22



Understanding Key Drivers and Priority Groups data in the Scottish Borders



What are we doing about Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders?

Child poverty initiatives in the Scottish Borders are managed through the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The CPP oversees and approves the Local Child Poverty Report and Action Plan but assigns the implementation to the Child Poverty Group. The Child Poverty Group consists of representatives from Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, and other key partners. They convene to discuss local strategies and address national developments as necessary.

Local Plans outlined below all contribute to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders Council Plan

The [Council Plan](#) from April 2025 sets out a strategic framework for Council decision-making and operations.

Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2029

The Scottish Borders [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) sets out the way in which the Council and its partners will aim to work together to help reduce poverty across the region and recognises that Child Poverty is included in this aim.

Children & Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026

Child Poverty features as a priority within the [Children & Young People's Services Plan 2023-26](#). The whole family support network outlined in the Plan works with the Child Poverty Group towards the following aim: *Reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of living in poverty on families. Ensure that children and their families are given the opportunity to contribute to shaping local policy and actions to reduce the social and economic impact of poverty.*

Scottish Borders Community Plan

'Working together with our communities and through targeted partnership action, will enable all people in the Scottish Borders to live their lives to the full.' The [Scottish Borders Community Plan](#) works with four priority themes to support communities. These themes support our child poverty agenda.

T.H.I.S Borders (Tackling Health Inequalities in the Scottish Borders 2024-2030)

[This report](#) describes systemic differences in people's health that are thought to be avoidable and unjust and outlines how these can be tackled in practice.

Children's Rights

Our [Children's Rights Report 23-26](#) reports on the steps we have taken to fulfil the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Equity Strategy

Our [Education Equity Strategy 2021-2026](#) has been developed to ensure increased excellence, accelerated progress and embedded equity in our schools and settings to reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people (CECYP). The strategy coordinates the Attainment Scotland Funding streams; Pupil Equity Funding, Strategic Equity Funding and CECYP Funding to ensure maximum impact.

Local Housing Strategy

The [Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) 2023-2028](#) is the key strategic document for housing in the region. The LHS sets out how we and our partners plan to address housing and housing related opportunities and challenges in all tenures over the five-year period.

Budgets and Funding

Significant Scottish Borders Council budgets and funding are attributed to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders. The table below sets these out for 2025/26. Additional child poverty funding streams are also expected, as set out in Best Start, Bright Futures, for No one left behind, employability projects, reducing barriers and tackling child poverty by increasing parental and household income from employment.

Budget/Funding	2025/26
Crisis grants	£187,000
School clothing grants	£406,663
Free sanitary products in schools	£34,000
Free sanitary products in public bodies	£60,000
Educational Maintenance Allowance*	£238,744
Pupil Equity Funding*	£1,947,630
Strategic Equity Fund*	£670,901
Care experienced Children and Young People Fund*	£124,133
Whole Family Wellbeing Fund	£669,000
TOTAL	£4,338,071

*based on 2024/25 funding

Scottish Borders Council is proud to be an accredited real Living Wage employer (current rate £12.60 per hour), and they remain committed to encouraging the wider adoption of the real Living Wage by partners, local employers, and suppliers. The Council has adopted the *Scottish Government Best Practice Guidance on Addressing Fair Work Practices*, including the Real Living Wage in Procurement for relevant contracts.

Key Areas of Work in 2024/25

During 2024/25, child poverty partners have been involved in several key areas of work that have had a significant effect on tackling child poverty and making a difference for children and their families.

The following areas of work sit alongside the three drivers of poverty and the six high risk priority family groups. We believe that they are important and make an over-arching contribution to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

Housing

SBC declared a Housing Emergency on 30th May 2024. This followed on from a report to the Executive Committee which outlined the significant challenges that the Council and partners have been experiencing in ensuring residents have access to a home which meets their needs.

As a result, a Housing Emergency Action Plan has been developed, and the Strategic Housing Forum has been established. The new Strategic Housing Forum will effectively act as a Housing Emergency Programme Board, discussing key strategic housing issues, monitoring delivery against the actions set out in the Housing Emergency Action Plan and agreeing key priorities and actions in response to the Housing Emergency.

Progress in 2024/25:

- As of March 2025, over 100 empty homes being brought back into use through officer support. This includes 17 brought back into use in 2024/25.
- The Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched in 2022 and secured further funding in October 2024 to extend the allocation for the duration of the current LHS – ending in March 2028. The scheme has

supported 19 projects to date, with 13 being made available for affordable rent. There has been a total grant allocation of £467,244 which has unlocked investment of over £1.4m.

- 88 affordable homes were delivered during 2024/2025. 72 of these were new supply affordable homes. 4 homes were for particular needs housing.
- The SHIP 2025-2030 was approved in October 2024 and proposed an ambitious potential delivery of 1,050 new affordable homes underpinned by an estimated investment of £261m.
- South of Scotland Community Housing are working with Community groups across the Borders to support them to potentially deliver their own housing developments.
- EES:ABS continues to be delivered across the Borders, reflecting our committed focus to the introduction of renewable technologies for the region, as well as retrofit insulation that suits common wall construction. SBC were awarded £1.827 from Scottish Government for 2024/25 for energy efficiency measures.
- Estimated measures installed in 2024/25 include - Solar PV & Battery: 50 completions, Air Source Heat Pumps: 20 completions and Internal Wall Insulation: 45 completions.
- The SBHA Warm and Well Service was established in 2019 and extended the service to Borders Housing Network partners in 2023-24 and in 2024-25, through the Scottish Borders Cost of Living Fund. Since April 2023 financial support has been provided to over 3,700 social housing tenants across the Scottish Borders, with total funding distributed and household savings identified of £765k. - an average benefit of £200 per household. The service has a 100% satisfaction rating. The Social Value impact of the service (using the HACT Social Value Bank) is that the project has a social value return of £7.1m - that is £19 on every £1 spent.
- Key worker housing has been provided in Galashiels for NHS & SBC Social Care staff.
- Regional research on Key Workers has been commissioned in collaboration with South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Futures Trust and Dumfries and Galloway Council and is due to complete by April 2025. This is being undertaken by South of Scotland Community Housing and to examine demand for key worker housing in the South of Scotland. Two workshops were held in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway in February 2025.
- Expansion of Homes for Good into the South of Scotland.
- Introduction of the licensing of Short Term Lets. Analysis of short term let licenses, and second homes is being undertaken with a view to identify any areas suffering from housing pressure.
- Increased proportion of RSL lets to Homeless households (target 50%; currently 43%).
- Assisted by a small fund from wider R RTP grant has enabled the set-up of a deposit guarantee scheme to assist access and uptake into private rented tenancies where this is a suitable sustainable option for the household.
- SBC's Crisis and Homeless Intervention Funds are two discretionary funds aimed at preventing homelessness for households in rent arrears, as well as promoting tenancy sustainment. Through these funds SBC have assisted 29 households and spent £35k.

Whole Family Support Service

The Whole Family Support Service is a new service for the Borders which aims to work with families who have multiple needs, on an intensive and holistic basis. The service will use a strength-based approach with families at the centre. It is a partnership approach and works with a number of services to provide wraparound support to families. These services include Live Borders, Stable Life, Children 1st, We are with you, Meeting of Minds and Reconnect.

The service approach consists of the following key features:

- ❖ a whole family approach including strengths-based family assessments
- ❖ a multi-agency team around the family to minimise duplication and maximise impact
- ❖ an assertive and supportive worker role
- ❖ low case load
- ❖ robust family agreements and support plans

Focus sessions were held in Langlee, Burnfoot and Eyemouth Early Years Centres to explain how the service can support local families. These sessions also explored the individual needs of each community and how 1:1 support can support this through joint group delivery.

Feedback from the parents highlighted that they wanted support to complete forms and ensure they receive all appropriate benefits. Whole Family Support Workers attend drop-ins where parents are supported with the potential of an Income maximisation assessment.

Families supported at greatest risk of poverty:

❖ Children in Lone Parent Families	45
❖ Families with a Disabled Person	22
❖ Household 3 or more Children	25
❖ Household Youngest Child under 1	28
❖ Minority Ethnic Group	9
❖ Mother Under 25	18

Closing the Poverty Attainment Gap

The Poverty-Related Attainment Gap (PRAG) is a critical educational issue in Scotland and beyond (Mowat, 2017), impacting the lives of many children and families. It's a gap that significantly affects their opportunities and future. Recognising this challenge, an ambitious and strategic initiative was undertaken to address the poverty related attainment gap in Scottish Borders through the use of Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding.

Over the last 2 years in SBC, we have made significant progress in closing the poverty related outcomes in attainment, attendance and positive destinations. The [empowered approach](#) to SAC funding in SBC will enable communities to take ownership of approaches to accelerate the pace in closing the gap in their context.

Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF)

Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) of £1.9m is devolved directly to almost all Scottish Borders Council schools to address the poverty related attainment gap at local level. Schools submit carefully considered plans, based on local needs analysis of demographic and education data. Outcomes and measures are developed for targeted interventions in schools which include support for literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, attendance, readiness to learn, addressing cost of the school day, and providing opportunities.

Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) of £670k in 2024/25 has been used in two distinct ways to address the poverty related attainment gap in SBC.

Firstly, to enhance leadership at our 3 primary schools with the highest proportion of children living in SIMD Quintile 1 by appointing an additional Depute Headteacher. Since this funding was put in place in 2022/23, each of these schools' attendance has risen each year by between 1.6% and 3.8%. Literacy and numeracy rates in P1, P4 and P7 have risen in each school consistently year on year by as much as 20%.

Secondly, funding is devolved to clusters based on Children in Low Income Families data. Clusters submit plans based on robust guidance (similar to PEF plans) to demonstrate how funding will be used to tackle the poverty related attainment gap at a cluster level. This has allowed clusters to be more creative in how schools collaborate in the cluster. Interventions have included the appointment of additional staff such as home school link workers who work with children and families to ensure barriers to attainment and attendance are addressed.

Clusters have consulted widely with partners and families to ensure that interventions meet the needs of children and young people. An example of practice using SEF which has been shared nationally is the establishment of the Teviot and Liddesdale Together Hub. The hub is overseen by a Cluster Wellbeing Lead who coordinates with schools, partners and families to put supports and interventions in place. This has helped parents back into employment and allowed children and young people to attend school.

The Teviot and Liddesdale Cluster Approach Example

- ❖ The Context (January 2024)
 - 1990 learners in the cluster
 - 37.6% Quintile 1 learners across all cluster schools
 - Cluster attendance rate of 91.65%. Attendance gap between Q1 and Q4 of 3.2%
 - Recognition of national trend around attendance being mirrored in our cluster.
 - Highly effective Early Years Centre supporting families up to age 8
 - No coordinated support for families as children and young people move through Primary and Secondary.
- ❖ The Approach
 - Create a system for tracking, monitoring, promoting and celebrating positive attendance (Hawick HS)
 - Create a service focussed on providing holistic support for whole families from P1 through to the end of Secondary
 - Provide a 'one-stop shop' for parents/carers to access support
 - Provide support for parents/carers as well as children and young people
 - Coordinate resource across the cluster to avoid duplication
 - Use a 'neutral' space to encourage engagement with harder to reach families
- ❖ The Actions
 - Hawick HS Attendance Officer's relentless focus on attendance.
 - Celebration of attendance developed (see the photo below)
 - Teviot and Liddesdale (T&L) Together - employed a HSLW and seconded a PT Pastoral to lead and develop the service. SEF funding devolved to Cluster to allow this to happen.
 - Referral system from schools with informed consent
 - 1:1 and small group support for parents and carers and for children/young people
 - Partnership visits and support from other sectors e.g. Social Work, Borders Additional Needs Group, Financial Inclusion Team, immediate referral to support for mental health
 - Cluster-wide commitment to embed NHS Borders 'Creating Hope' culture and practice – tackling mental health barriers in parents/carers and young people.



❖ Emerging Impact

- 15 families currently supported – 46 young people across these families
- High uptake of Raising Children With Confidence from parents in the referral group
- Parents and carers are beginning to network and support one another to get their children to school
- Early indications of improvement in attendance across the schools of referred families (1.7-4.7%)
- Rise in Q1 attendance of 1.8% (Sept 23 V Sept 24)
- Whole cluster focus on improving attendance and engaging with the new SBC Attendance Policy

❖ Family Feedback

- *It's great getting access to support to help my children at school and life*
- *The centre's not in a school so I am much more comfortable coming in without people thinking there must be a problem*
- *Knowing there are people there to support me, listen and not feel judged*
- *A warm, supportive atmosphere, learning techniques and skills to be a better parent and help my children grow and be happy*

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland offer career information, advice, and guidance across all 9 of our secondary schools, supporting young people from S3 upwards through personalised guidance at key transition points. The targeted approach is based upon characteristics related to poverty, with pupils identified in partnership with school. Post-school support is offered, through one-to-one coaching, employability advice and referrals to further training and education for those young people not in school. Support is available 24/7 via My World of Work alongside the SDS National Careers Helpline.

MyBnk is a new initiative that has been delivered in 2024/25, through partnership with SDS, DYW and Education to every S4 young person, within our 9 High Schools in the Scottish Borders. Young people learned about minimum wage, payslips, tax, budgeting, and household costs. Planning is underway to deliver this initiative in 2025/26.

The Annual Participation Measure (published in August 2024) shows that 94.2% of 16–19-year-olds, in our area, were engaged in education, employment, training, or personal development. This compares to 92.7% nationally.

97% of school leavers, in our area, were in a positive destination, compared to 95.7% in 2023/24. Initial destinations for those in the 20% most deprived quintile, was 97.4%. This compares to 93.6% nationally.

An 80.8% achievement rate for Modern Apprenticeships indicates successful skill development leading to employment opportunities.

Transport

Concessionary Travel

The Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme launched in January 2022.

All young people and children aged 5-21 years can apply for a card to access the Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel Scheme.

The scheme was introduced in January 2022 with the main objective of making public transport more affordable and accessible to Scotland's young people. Access to free bus travel can improve opportunities in various areas, such as education, leisure, and work. Free bus travel also enables young people to travel more sustainably.

More than 200 million free bus journeys have now been made by children and young people since the Scottish Government introduced free bus travel for under 22s three years ago.

The scheme continues to help eradicate child poverty, help people take climate action and grow the economy by providing free access to education, employment, and leisure.

Since being introduced, it continues to encourage the early adoption of bus travel among children and young people. It has expanded access to social, education and employment opportunities and it has reduced travel costs for families and young adults. Through the 2025-26 Budget, the Scottish Government will provide £409 million for concessionary bus travel, providing access to free bus travel for almost 2.3 million people.

Over the next few pages, we have set out some examples of the work undertaken to demonstrate how we are making a difference in the areas that are considered the key drivers for tackling child poverty.

Income from Employment

Parental Employability Service

Parental Employability Support (PES) uses a holistic keyworker approach to upskill and/or re-train, increasing family income, lifting themselves and their family out of poverty. PES workers provide personalised support for parents who face barriers to progressing in their careers.

Working with parents and families, we have engaged with partners in the local community to ensure our service is well known. We have engaged with a number of organisations such as Schools, Colleges, the NHS, and other local authority services to ensure families are referred to us who are in poverty and are looking for solutions to improve their position financially. We also engage with our 3 local job centres to ensure staff are referring customers who are parents to Parental Employment Support (PES).

Using marketing via leaflets and social media has also been a good way of informing parents who can benefit from PES about our service and in the last year 44 parents have benefitted from this.

We have worked with several of our partners, including Community Learning & Development, Abundant Borders, Borders College, Scottish Borders Councils Education Department and Borders Children's Charity, to be able to support and deliver the following interventions to parents and families:

- **79** parents supported in total in 2024/25.
- **44** new parents supported in the last 12 months.
- **20** families have been supported to access Cash for Kids Financial Hardship payments.
- **4** families have been supported to access Borders Children's Charity Grants for children with Additional Support Needs to purchase specialist equipment.
- **12** Parents have completed a 6-week course, working with Abundant Borders where they were able to learn cooking skills on a budget and obtain a food hygiene certificate which will assist them when applying for jobs in hospitality.
- **10** Parents have commenced our Work, Learn, Grow programme. This has seen them start to undertake a 12-week paid work experience placement for 10 hours per week. They are also attending College for 4 hours per week, completing 3 SQA level 5 units in Safeguarding, Children's Communication and Play. This programme has given them extra money and increased future employment prospects.
- **27** Parents have taken part in Drive to Success. This has seen us support them to obtain their Driver Theory Test.
- **6** parents have gone on to have funded driving lessons and 3 have passed their driving test during this period giving them great access to jobs and more mobility.



Second up this morning was Courtney who passed her driving test with only 2 d/f, fantastic result Courtney, well done, safe driving 🚗🚗

Your Fitness Your Future: Whole family support

Parental emotional wellbeing and self-esteem, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety and poor mental health was identified as a barrier to considering entering into future learning and/or employment at a recent parental engagement event within the Philiphaugh Early Years Centre. These feelings left them unable to consider future learning/and or employment as they didn't have the confidence to be in a different environment. The Child Poverty employability coordinator, Early Years Team and Parental Employability Support staff supported these parents in the discussion.

“I’m just a mum”

The groups “ask” to us was to create and run a supported program and learning to improve physical and emotional wellbeing and be able to work towards recognised qualifications.

In continued conversations with the parents the agreed outcome for this program was to:

- improve physical and emotional wellbeing
- to improve self-esteem and confidence
- to offer the opportunity to continue the journey of wellbeing as a whole family
- to be supported in additional learning and achievement in mental health and employability learning
- to be offered the support from our PES team to take next steps into volunteering/employment
- to increase the household income.

In partnership with Live Borders and Scottish Borders Councils employability training team, an 8-week supported fitness and learning program was created which started in January 2025.

The 8-week physical activity sessions were designed to be accessible, social, and enjoyable, making them perfect for those who are new to exercise or returning after a break. Activities and pace were designed on individual needs, helping build a routine that made physical activity a regular part of the parents week. On completion of the 8-week program a complimentary 12-week membership was awarded to the whole family, to allow them to continue their journey of wellbeing together.

In addition to enhancing their fitness, we offered a blend of certificates designed to help build confidence and employability prospects. The courses included the Wellbeing Award and Employability First Steps, both

accredited by SQA. These units focus on recognising, utilising, and developing skills to help our parents to become the best version of themselves.

- ✓ 6 parents within our priority family groups joined us, these families included single parents, families with more than 3 children, mum under the age of 25 and disabilities with the household
- ✓ 3 of our parents were actively being supported by PES at the start of the program. 3 of our parents were not currently working with PES at the start of the program.
- ✓ 5 parents engaged in both physical engagement and learning (1 parent was active in Aquafit at the Leisure Centre at the beginning of the program, this was to support a member of the family – this continued, rather than taking part in the supported fitness element).
- ✓ 1 parent engaged in learning only
- ✓ On completion of the 8 weeks all 6 parents completed the work to achieve the Employability First Steps unit. This is given at SCQF level 4 and is an introduction into the employability award. This unit looks at past and present experiences, what skills and qualities individuals have and how they got them. It explores how they can be positively used in future both for employment and personal opportunities.
- ✓ Additionally, two of the parents achieved their Understanding Mental Health Unit, also awarded at SCQF Level 4.
- ✓ All of our parents made improvements in both their physical and emotional wellbeing, within the 8-week program.
- ✓ 2 parents gained employment with continued support from the PES worker whilst in the program.
- ✓ 3 parents accepted referrals into PES to explore next steps into employment.
- ✓ 1 parent continues to be supported by their PES worker

The Cost of Living

Child Poverty Accelerator Fund

Following a successful application to the Scottish Government Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund, Scottish Borders Council were awarded funding in late 2024. The project was established in January 2025 and will continue until December 2025. Working in partnership with the three Scottish Borders Citizens Advice Bureau's (CABx) funding was awarded to provide specialist holistic budgeting advice, throughout the Scottish Borders, via a variety of different channels including face to face, online and telephone.

There is a demand for budgeting advice which is likely to increase as vulnerable families move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit and the change from weekly to monthly income. Outreach work in the 5 highest areas of deprivation i.e. Galashiels, Hawick, Eyemouth, Walkerburn and Selkirk are included in the trial. The service is being delivered in the CABx office network and across a number of outreach establishments ie. Health Centres, Early Years Centres, hospitals, local village halls, food banks, warm spaces and schools.

CAB Outreach and drop-in services are provided in Hawick, Eyemouth, Lilliesleaf, Langlee Early Years Centre, Newtown St Boswells, Selkirk, Lauder, Philiphaugh, Ettrickbridge Walkerburn and West Linton.

Effective partnership working has resulted in efficient referral processes and a smoother client journey, with advice being targeted to those most in need.

Since the project started in January 2025:

- **171** client advice contacts have been made
- Client financial gains of over **£50k** have been realised in the first quarter
- Of these referrals, approximately **30%** are Registered Social Landlords (RSL) tenants, **18%** had children in their household, **50%** have health conditions or a disability, and **12%** have caring responsibilities.

Scottish Borders Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx)

In 2024-25 The Consortium of Scottish Borders Bureaux had 17,686 client contacts and achieved a client financial gain of £4,110,734.38.

They provide advice, information, and support to all 16+.

Advice offered as standard includes:

- Comprehensive benefits check and support with any relevant applications
- Action on any benefits that can be claimed or debts outstanding
- Identification and assessment of eligibility for grants and other one-off support
- Exploration of any issues relating to energy costs or energy efficiency measures and support to access fuel vouchers and crisis support
- Holistic advice on other matters of concern
- Budgeting advice and support
- Pathway to comprehensive advice provided by specialist advisers

They also offer advice on most other areas including debt & money, housing, health, pensions and family concerns.

TD1 Youth Hub

TD1 Youth Hub have been working in partnership schools for over 8 years and throughout that time they have developed a really strong partnership and work tirelessly to improve the lives of the young people they work with.

The significance of youth workers based in the school cannot be overstated due to the impactful relationships they have with many pupils within school. A significant proportion of their work in school is providing 1-1 support to students which allows them to address the individual needs and concerns of a pupil.

An example of this work in action involved 'A', who was in S2 and had a troubled start to life at high school. School attendance was a problem, they had a high number of behavioural issues in school, a number of charges in the community for anti-social behaviour and a refusal to engage with other services. Fortunately, 'A' had a good relationship with TD1. They needed extra support to unpick some of the issues they were facing so they could be supported to do better in life.

Working with 'A' we began to uncover a young person who was clearly very able and clever, however they were more interested in practical things and were very sporty. It was clear they also had a real lack of confidence and self-esteem. We started to understand that whilst home life provided a warm and loving environment, there was real poverty in the house. That impacted on the things 'A' had in their life compared to their friends, e.g., not being able to have the right clothes or shoes to fit in with their friends. This increased their lack of confidence and self-belief as they felt judged and struggled to find peers who were like them. This in turn encouraged them to act out, often in anger and frustration.

It was through the additional 1-1 support provided to 'A' that we were able to build up that trusting relationship. It took time to unpick the things in their life they found difficult and challenging and to identify the barriers to them being able to achieve. TD1 Youth Hub worked with 'A' to find out the things they enjoyed doing. TD1 Youth Hub were able to form groups doing activities 'A' liked with different friends who also enjoyed doing those things.

They removed the barriers for 'A' that poverty had put up, such as having the right shoes for sports, providing them with lunches and dinners, providing the funding for taking part in sports clubs, getting them outdoors and providing opportunities to take part in activities they wouldn't ordinarily get to take part in.

Throughout this process TD1 Youth Hub worked with 'A' and others in their life i.e. parents, teachers, youth justice worker and social worker, to be his advocate and get them the understanding, time and space they needed to make the changes they needed to make in their life.

Through participation in activities and the extra support, 'A' began to make positive choices, their attendance increased by 10%, the charges for offences stopped, they started taking up a new sport and they reported an increase in confidence from 2 out of 10 at the start to 8 out of 10 by the end.

'A' said, "the support I got from my TD1 worker really helped me as I didn't like being bad and I knew I was always getting in trouble and stuff. It upset my mum and a lot of other folk at school wouldn't spend time with me as their mums told them to keep away from me cos I was a bad kid. Now I have some new friends and that's because TD1 helped me find things I like to do and I was able to work with others who enjoyed those same things. The biggest thing is I just ain't angry and raging at everyone all the time, I am a lot more chill."

'A's school recently said, "We have seen a marked change in 'A's behaviour and attitude, they have really matured and now they communicate with us far better than before, meaning we can create a plan that suits 'A's needs. This change has undoubtedly been down to the intensive support offered by TD1".

'A's mum said, "I was at my wits end with 'A.' I felt like I was losing my child and feared the worse. I can't express how much of a relief it is to know that 'A' was somewhere safe and had someone to talk to."

Berwickshire SWAP

In the last financial year Berwickshire Swap held over 45 swaps and mini swaps events throughout the Scottish Borders. Many of the events were held in areas with a high percentage of children living in relatively low-income families. A conscious effort is made to consider areas that are in high deprivation, as per the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Initially the events held were large swap events but there are now more in smaller communities too. Mini swaps started in January 2025. These swaps are held at local baby and toddler groups throughout the Scottish Borders, private baby groups often held in local churches and Scottish Borders Councils Early Years Centres, which are proving to be a great success.

The events are proving to be beneficial for those who need to access this service financially and others who are environmentally conscious. Volunteering opportunities are open to everyone, most of them are pregnant or have young children, they see volunteering as a safe space where they can come, get a hot drink, a biscuit and talk to other families in the same situation.

Berwickshire Swap delivers Emergency parcels. This is a referral-based service, families are referred from official bodies such as schools, health visitors, midwives etc. Children are provided with 7 days' worth of seasonal appropriate laundered clothing with new pants and socks. All clothes that are donated are used and in great condition. Prams, cribs and toys can also be provided, and parcels are delivered across the entire Scottish Borders.

At the 45 events, 1675 people (attendees / swappers) signed in from all localities of the Scottish Borders. These attendees were swapping for 2085 children.

Swaps at Philiphaugh Community Centre are held in partnership with Philiphaugh Early Years Centre, SBC CLD, the Child Poverty Coordinator (employability), and Sustainable Borders

December 2024 Swap	March 2025 Swap
42 attendees signed in from 9 different postcode areas	50 attendees signed in from 7 different postcode areas
Attendees were swapping for 68 children	Attendees were swapping for 102 children
52.4% of attendees were from the TD7 postcode (where the event was held)	50% of attendees were from the TD7 postcode (where the event was held)
Of this 52.4%, 73% that signed in had NOT been to a swap before.	68% had been to a swap before 32% had not been to a swap before.
Up until this point we only had 4 swaps where TD7 signed in out of the past 24 swaps.	

Quotes from families who have come along to the Swap events:

"Berwickshire Swap have created a whole community as well as easing the financial burden on parents"

"The sorting days have a lovely atmosphere where you meet other parents"

"You can take whatever you need and you are not judged"

"It's a great way to top up on my kids wardrobes during hard times"

"My children have been able to access more books than I'd ever be able to buy which has hugely helped their development"



Quotes from Practitioners:

Kerry, Health Visitor Duns

"Without access to Berwickshire Swap families would experience inequalities regarding basic items vital for survival and development, clothing, equipment and toys.... The service is easy for Health Professionals and families throughout Berwickshire to access due to the numerous events held throughout the region. Berwickshire Swap continues to be an essential service for our local families."

Sandra, Health Visitor Eyemouth

"Many of the community in Eyemouth and surrounding area find themselves in financial hardship; some because of mental health preventing the ability to hold down work, others have been made redundant or single parent families, who struggle to afford childcare so choose not to work to look after their children."

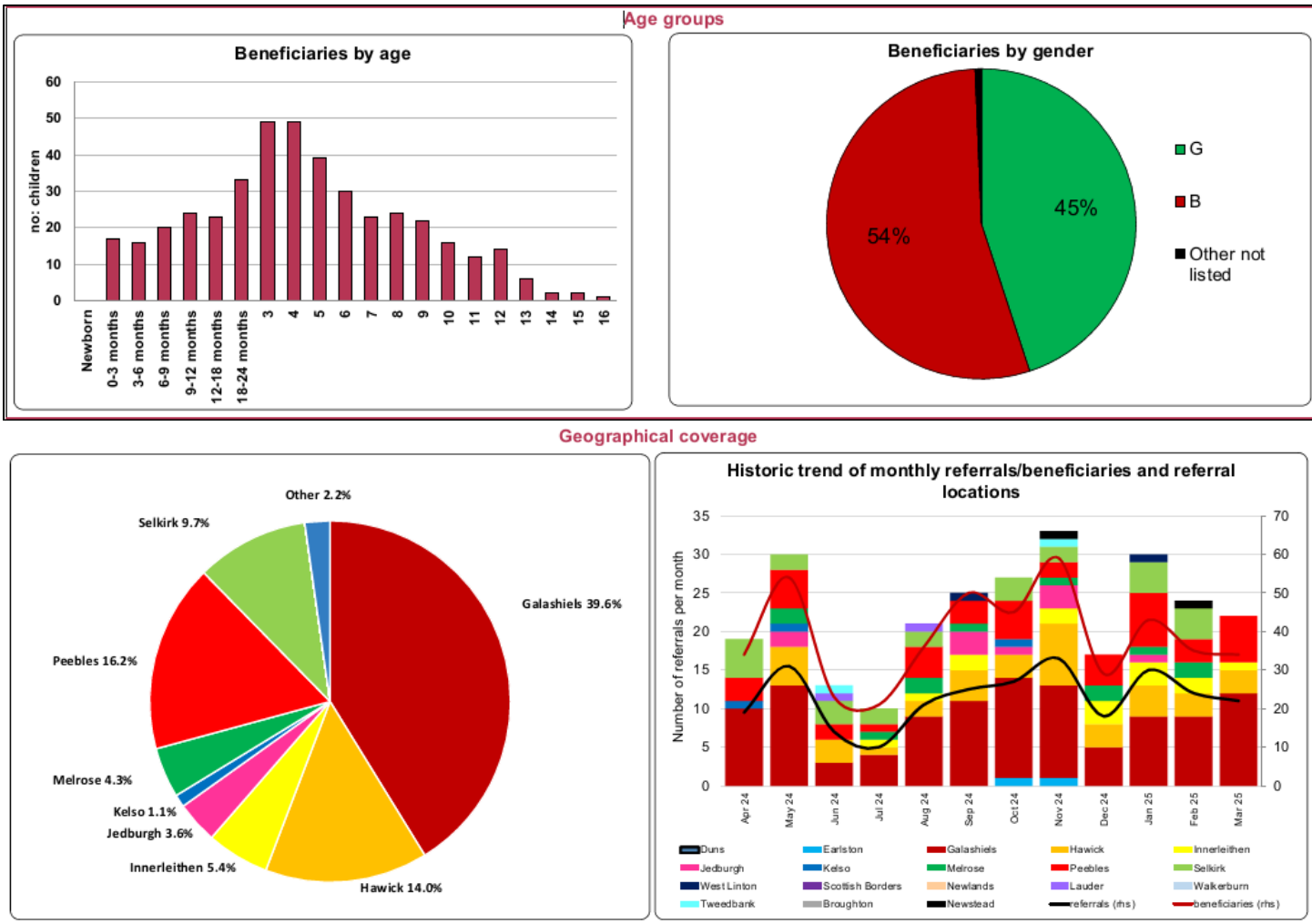
The families have been very vocal in showing their appreciation for the Berwickshire Swap and highlighting the reduction in the pressure they are often subjected to, to buy new clothing for their children, who grow so quickly and clothes then become too small.

During this year, the service has increased their partnership working and are forming close links with others to allow for the delivery of services to the right people at the right time.

Tweed Togs

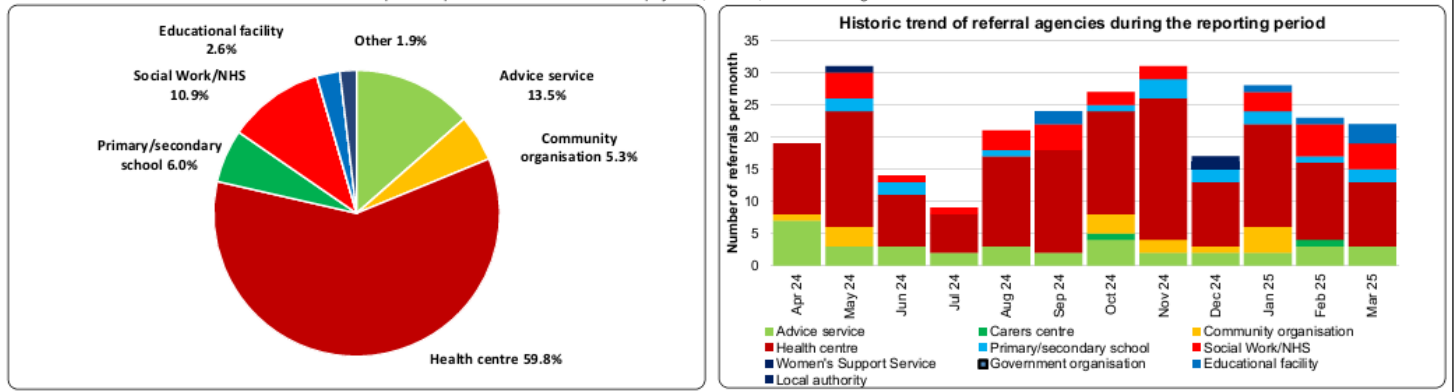
Tweed Togs is a registered charity who assist families in need of a little extra support by gifting bags of recycled, preloved clothes which have been generously donated by the local community. They provide for children from birth to twelve years of age and aim to provide around a week's worth of clothing including a jacket, new underwear and PJs. Their impact report for 2024/25 is shown below.

During this period, Tweed Togs received 274 referrals from organisations throughout the Scottish Borders. They delivered 460 packs comprised of around 1380 gift bags full of hand-picked, age appropriate clothing, carefully laundered and packed. They have 49 volunteers who help process and pack the gift bags, in an average turnaround time of 14 days.



Referrer network

We work with qualified professionals who serve the physical, mental, social and cognitive health needs of children and families.



Feedback:

"I would like to email to say how wonderful the service is from Tweed Togs. As a health visitor working with vulnerable families this service has provided countless support over the years. This allows families to have weather appropriate and age appropriate clothing that is in great condition and money can be prioritised elsewhere. Additionally, the team that runs the service is time sensitive and very accommodating, making liaising with the service a pleasure. Without this service children would most definitely suffer."

"Clothing is an essential for us all and the bags provided to these families meet these children's needs and beyond. I recently took some to a family where the recipient immediately opened the bag and smiled with delight at her lovely new clothes. Her Mum shared that knowing the clothes were coming had taken a big weight of her mind as she hadn't known how she could afford to get the next size clothing for her daughter without this support. Thank you for all you do, it is very much appreciated."

"Tweed Togs is an ESSENTIAL lifeline to many of our families who are living in poverty or come into difficulty through no fault of their own- eg we have helped families fleeing war in Ukraine, families fleeing domestic abuse situations, and families who have been moved hundreds of miles from their home town to the Borders due to lack of housing. Most of our referrals are from families who regularly attend... for emotional, parental, and financial support. These families are mostly lone parents, they have very limited income, and they rely on support to ensure their children (and they) have the most basic essentials such as food and clothing."

"When receiving Tweed Togs our families are always extremely overwhelmed by the amount of clothing in the parcels, they are thankful for the parcels and say they are a lifeline. The children are also very complimentary of the clothing and thankful too, on more than a few occasions I have been walking through the centre and had a child stop me excitedly to show me the jumper or coat they got in their Tweed Tog parcel."

"This charity is honestly a HUGE help for so many people. As an organisation we couldn't possibly provide the amount of clothing they do for the amount of families who need it."

Income from Social Security and benefits in kind

Financial Inclusion

A dedicated resource is now part of the Financial Inclusion Team supporting the Employability and Community Learning Teams at Scottish Borders Council. Benefit checks and advice are now available for parents who are looking to maximise their income or improve their employment prospects. Along with staff dedicated to Early Years Financial Inclusion (who already have strong links with SBC's Early Years Service, NHS Health Visitors and Midwives), they will provide an increase in support to a wider group of families in the Borders.

The work undertaken by these staff resulted in £1.3 million in financial gains for families in the Scottish Borders during 2024/25.

The Financial Inclusion Team, along with the Digital Innovation and Systems Team, have developed a new case management system which will improve reporting and day-to-day case management. It will offer improved reporting to monitor demand, identify trends and influence future take-up campaigns. The team will also use Council data to maximise free school meal and clothing grant eligibility as well as encourage take up of Scottish Child Payment.

Post COVID and cost-of-living issues were less relevant within referrals in 2024-25, however there were more residence related issues reflecting an increase in job seekers arriving from overseas, many of whom had no "access to public funds" and therefore unfortunately no rights to benefits.

The case studies outlined below clearly demonstrate the immense value that the joint SBC referral system and NHS Pathway Initiative bring to young families in the Borders. The support provided by Financial Inclusion staff can significantly increase the income of families, but the positive outcomes can extend much further than just an increase in income:

Case 1

The Welfare Benefits Assistant (Employability) received a referral for a benefit check from a Kinship Carer who had applied for Child Benefit but was refused. As a result, they were not only losing out on Child Benefit but other benefits such as Scottish Child Payment, which requires proof of Child Benefit to demonstrate that the parent is the primary carer for that child.

A Mandatory Reconsideration request was sent to HMRC along with a supporting letter from a Social Worker. After the reconsideration, the carer received confirmation that they had been approved for Child Benefit but there was a backlog of 16 weeks before making the first payment. The Welfare Benefits Assistant (Employability) escalated the case. Child Benefit was awarded which also gave entitlement to Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grants. The backdated payment of benefits totalled over £3,700 and the increase in weekly benefit income was over £190.

Case 2

Families who receive means tested benefits are receiving Universal Credit (UC0 migration notices). Their legacy benefits will end in around 3 months after receiving the notice, so they need to apply for UC or potentially lose out.

The Welfare Benefits Assistant (Employability) received a referral from a single parent who was getting Income Support and received a migration notice. They were worried about a potential reduction in income and moving to monthly payments. After a benefit check, it became known that the parent would be £46 per week worse off,

but as long as they claimed Universal Credit before the migration deadline date, she would be entitled to Transitional Protection to top up her award. That means it would match their previous benefit award so they would be no worse off by claiming Universal Credit.

There was also a discussion about deciding the best date to apply for Universal Credit, because typically it will be five weeks later when the first payment is received, and all further payments are made around the same date every month.

Housing Benefit and Income Support are paid for a further two weeks after the application for Universal Credit is made, which helped make the transition a little bit easier. During the benefit check, it also came to light that the parent wasn't receiving Council Tax Reduction or Discretionary Housing Payment for a shortfall in their rent. Applications were submitted for both which reduced rent and Council Tax payments meaning the parent was better off by over £35 per week.

This case highlights the importance of a benefit check and getting good advice about applying for Universal Credit before the deadline date, particularly if their Universal Credit forecast shows that their entitlement is going to be lower than their award of legacy benefits.

Case 3

The Early Years Financial Inclusion Assistant helped a single parent with disabilities, who had a disabled child and recently separated from their partner. They were unsure about the benefits which might be available to them. They discussed the individual's circumstances and gave advice about the range of benefits available from DWP and Social Security Scotland.

Their total benefit package which included Adult Disability Payment, Child Disability Payment, Carers Allowance, Best Start Foods, Scottish Child Payments and increased Universal Credits came to over £2,100 per month which made a huge impact on their life and wellbeing.

Case 4

The Early Years Financial Inclusion Assistant helped several families moving to this area from south of the Border. They were unfamiliar with the Scottish benefits system and unsure about what help is available.

They were amazed at the additional benefits in Scotland but equally important to them was the high quality of support available to them by everyone involved in the benefit process from the Heath Visitor through to Scottish Borders Council and Social Security Scotland. They felt they had been treated with a kindness, patience and respect that they had not previously experienced.

Navigating benefits system for parents can be difficult because they may potentially have to deal with three different bodies administering the support (DWP, Social Security Scotland and local authorities). It's important that they are made aware of any potential entitlement and signposted to them as soon as possible.

A Child's Journey

Together with all of the partners within and supporting Child Poverty in Scottish Borders we have created an information resource that shows what supports are available, to support a child and their family from pre-birth up to the age of 18 years old, and other family supports beyond, this includes:

Financial Support

Health

Early Years

Emotional Wellbeing

Food & Fuel Poverty

Help in other circumstances

Foster & Adoption Support

Education & training

Clothing & additional misc items to support a child & their family

Employment

Transport

Childcare

The resource is shown in ages and stages and is designed to capture milestones and transition periods of a child's life. Once complete, the infographics will be shared with practitioners to assist them in supporting children and families. The work will be published so that families can also benefit from it. To be able to showcase one of the stages the infographic below has been created.



Priority Family Types

The following case studies relate to the priority family types as set out below. A family can fall into one or more categories; therefore, we have chosen not to label the case studies.

Lone Parents
Families where a member of the household is disabled
Families with 3 or more children
Minority ethnic Families
Families where the youngest child is under 1
Mothers aged under 25

Waverley Housing - Making Memories

Waverley Housing have continued to expand the capacity of their Building Memories programme by improving social inclusion and providing an Easter/Spring provision for family holidays.

Some of the local businesses involved are; Bowhill, Abbotsford, Cheeky Pandas, Jacksons at Jedburgh, Out There Artisan, Stable Life, Witch Corner, Pavilion Cinema, Trimontium.

The programme aims to achieve the following:

- Create positive core memories for children & parents, building inclusion and sense of belonging within the wider Borders community
- Provide access to venues & experiences which would normally be seen as unachievable to some tenants.
- Remove social barriers, and perceived exclusion. All funds have been spent locally within local businesses.
- Partner with local businesses, and in all cases they have supported us with preferential rates or free access.
- Actively working together to include tenants as “regular” guests and prevent any stigma of social housing.
- Build on social inclusion and positive impact.

Over 300 Memories made, 300 tenants uplifted, 300 neighbours finding inclusion in local communities.



Making Memories quotes:

"Thank you so much for making our trip to Abbotsford possible, It was a nice holiday treat which we wouldn't have been able to manage within the Making Memories project"

"Thank you ever so much for your kindness, our kids first ever trip to the cinema"

Own a Pony

This event was organised as part of our **Making Memories project**.

Families were identified, who had no other summer holiday plans, and who were struggling to provide entertainment to their families over the school holidays due to financial constraints. In most cases this was the only event the families took part in away from their home neighbourhoods.

We had 12 families in attendance, only 1 child had any prior experience with horses, and all unanimously described the day as a hugely positive experience for both children and adults alike, and a chance to spend time together as a family in a new environment with different people and experiences.



The work of the Whole Family Support Service

We helped a mother by talking through and giving advice on her daughter's behaviours at home. This reinforced her belief that her concerns about her daughter were valid. Her daughter was referred to Stable Life to help regulate her emotions and we supported the mother with her decision to move her daughter to a different school.

1:1 support was also provided by Resolution Mediation Scotland, to the mother, to help her mental health and to enhance her resilience. They provide person-centred support focusing on trauma and the impacts of this on an individual's daily life. They aim to provide support when someone feels stuck in difficult circumstances and is struggling to make plans for the future.

The mother was also referred to Children 1st to help them identify their strengths and where they feel they are doing well, to understand what they are struggling with and where they feel they need support. An action plan was then agreed with the family. In addition, it was identified that the family house is overcrowded, and the service is working closely with their housing association to help support the family move to a different property.

Through regular meetings with the mother, the service has watched her grow in confidence, especially regarding her strengthening resilience. She attended the Drive to Success classes and passed her theory test and is due to sit her driving test soon. These were both funded through IFSS and PES funding applications to the Local Employability Partnership (LEP).

Berwickshire Swap Case Study

An urgent request was received from a Health Visitor for a young mother under the age of 25 who was fleeing domestic abuse. She had two small children, one of whom was disabled and had left home with nothing for them. The service was asked to provide what we could for the family. In a few days they had gathered together everything the children would need to start again. This consisted of 98 pieces of equipment, including a pram, beds, toys, walker, bath, changing table, highchair etc. Plus 142 items of washed, ironed clothing, full set of baby and infant clothing plus the next size for them to grow into. They were very grateful for this support as it would be very expensive, time-consuming, and stressful for them to source it themselves.

TD1 Youth Hub

Early Steps is a group of young parents ages 16-26 years old that come together twice each week. There are currently 12 young parents registered and attending, of which 25% identify as Black and Asian Ethnic Minority (BAEM) and 50% are classed as living in poverty. Sessions are focused on socialisation, supporting and learning from each other. This can be through sharing their own experiences of rearing and nurturing their child or their life experiences. The programme offers activities and topics of discussion based on the expressed needs of the parents, for their own development and well-being.

Free activities are offered over school holiday periods and every session there is a small foodbank of which parents can take home items.

Some Quotations from Parents:

- *"I was very nervous to come in, but you made me feel so welcomed & my child really came out of her shell"*
- *"I was having too much fun doing arts and crafts, didn't even go out for a fag!"*
- *"TD1 Early Steps programme had immensely helped me with my postpartum depression. It's got me out of the house and I'm now more confident. My daughter loves the sensory room."*
- *"My boy loves coming to TD1, every session is different so offers a great variety of activities to suit every child. We also spend a lot of time playing in the sensory room which I love too! So far on our TD1 journey my boy absolutely lit up when Santa came to visit, and he was especially delighted he even got an early gift!"*

TD1 Youth Hub delivers 6 Drop in Evening Food sessions a week, including 2 on a Friday half day. In 2024-25 there were over 200 young people attended a drop-in session. Each evening drop in session is free of charge and we provide meals and snacks at every session. We estimate that we have provided over 5,000 meals in the year. Whilst exact figures are hard to ascertain in a drop-in, we estimate that approximately 70% of the beneficiaries would be classed as living in poverty.

Over 100 young people benefited from free activities TD1 Youth Hub ran over the school holiday periods. In the summer over 30 days away for young people were organised. These were free of charge and the young people were also fed at each session. Of these 75% were young people classed as living in poverty.

Community Learning and Development (CLD)

Lone parents:

The CLD service works with a number of lone parents in various programmes and also signposts to the Parental Employability Team for support to gain employment and therefore increase income. Some work with this group is budgeting and cooking on a budget.

Families with 3 or more children:

There are no barriers to families taking part in organised activities. These range from family fun sessions to PEEP (supporting parents and children to learn together) which is accredited in Burnfoot.

Ethnic Minority Families:

Our ESOL (English Speakers of other languages) programme supports families of other nationalities to learn English and brings them all together for walks, cooking, outdoor learning, and fun sessions. The programmes on offer also support integration into our communities. Our ESOL basic English participants learn basic language skills and have the opportunity to move on to Borders College to gain accredited learning.

Families where youngest child is under 1:

The CLD service offers courses such as PEEP (supporting parents and children to learn together) babies, family fun sessions and families learning together. Volunteers carry out reading sessions for younger children and babies. The service can and does signpost families to other services to help them maximise income, gain employment and access any other supports deemed necessary.

Families where a member of the household is disabled:

CLD provide support and signpost where appropriate for this group.

Mothers aged under 25

The service provided learning for 47 adults under 25 in the last year. They took part in activities such as Mother and Toddler groups, PEEP babies and some were supported by the PES.

Scottish Borders Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx)

- In 2024/25, the Borders Consortium CAB helped **546** local clients who were identified as belonging to the priority family types. Each of these clients was a representative of a different family unit, so the total number of people in poverty indicator groups - and the impact of the advice given - will far exceed these base numbers.
- *Single Parent Families* and *Families where a member of the household is disabled* were the largest overall groups of priority clients with more than **250** of each, but Borders CAB saw significant levels of *Large Families* and *Ethnic Minority Families* with over **50** of each.
- The intersecting nature of the poverty indicator clients can be demonstrated by the fact that **202** of the clients identified above (**37%**) of total priority group clients fell into more than one of the indicator groups, compounding the need that many of these groups face in daily life.

- This work for those in the poverty indicator groups represents **12.2%** of the total clients helped by Borders CAB in 24/25.

Other Activity During 2024/25

Throughout 2024/25 Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Community Planning Partners, and the Child Poverty Group have progressed a significant range of activity geared towards tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

Details of these activities can be found in [Appendix 1B](#) (available on SBC Website)

Looking Forward – Priorities for 2025/26

Our priorities for 2025/26 are outlined below in four key themes. These themes were identified by the Child Poverty Group Partners for the period of 2024/25 to 2025/26. They reflect a commitment to collaborating on approaches to address child poverty. The Child Poverty Group convenes regularly to discuss these themes and the associated actions. Progress highlighted for 2024/25 indicates that partners are working towards these goals.

Understanding local need
Develop a shared data and intelligence resource across services, departments and organisations so that there is a more in-depth understanding of the drivers and impact of poverty in the Scottish Borders
Develop our work with people with direct experience of poverty so that they are meaningfully involved in service development and delivery. Ensure that membership of the Child Poverty Group reflects the voices of those who have experienced poverty and those who work closely with low-income families.
Use of policy levers and resources
Use a whole systems approach to poverty reduction and prevention, including high level strategic engagement from housing, economic development, transport and childcare in the child poverty agenda.
Ensure that our pathways are simple and intuitive so that families at risk of financial crisis are supported in a timely and dignified way.
Increase our focus on engagement in the early years so that low-income families receive the wrap-around, whole family support they need.
Understanding our progress
Create a shared outcome framework for child poverty, which allows all local partners to understand their progress towards shared goals in the short, medium and long term. This should include understanding the impact of key interventions on priority families.
Ways of working
Build stronger, clearer relationships between the Child Poverty Group, the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPPP) and ultimately the CPP. Ensure that the Child Poverty Group is empowered and resourced to take a strategic role in action to tackle child poverty in the Scottish Borders.

Glossary

ASF	Attainment Scotland Fund
BAEM	Black and Asian Ethnic Minority
CABx	Citizen's Advice Bureaus
CECYP	Care Experienced Children and Young People
CILIF	Children in Low Income Families
CLD	Community Learning and Development
CLG	Clothing Grant
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CYPPP	Children and Young People's Planning Partnership
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DYW	Developing the Young Workforce
EES:ABS	Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes
ESOL	English speakers of other languages
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HSLW	Home School Link Worker
IFSS	Intensive Family Support Service
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
NHS	National Health Service
PAYE	Pay as you Earn
PEF	Pupil Equity Funding
PES	Parental Employability Support
PRAG	Poverty Related Attainment Gap
PT	Principal Teacher
PV	Photovoltaics
RRTP	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge
SB CPI	Scottish Borders Child Poverty Index
SBC	Scottish Borders Council
SBHA	Scottish Borders Housing Association
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SEF	Strategic Equity Fund
SHIP	Strategic Housing Investment Plan
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
UC	Universal Credit
UCH	Universal Credit Households
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child