Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

West Lothian Council Child Poverty Index

SPIRU
SCOTTISH POVERTY & INEQUALITY
RESEARCH UNIT

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

- Initial Idea
- Early Development of the Project
- Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users
- Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty
- Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working
- Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements
- Funding
- Staffing and Resources
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Reach and Impact
- Learning from Experience

Title	West Lothian Council Child Poverty Index.
Organisation	West Lothian Council, Economic Development & Improvement Service.
Category	Emerging.
Poverty Impact	Prevention., Reduction.

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Introduction to the Project
The Child Poverty Index (CPI) is designed to provide additional insight into child poverty in the West Lothian Council (WLC) area. Specific data on the different types of poverty is limited and most services tend to rely solely on SIMD data which lacks specificity. The CPI was originally developed by the Scottish Borders Council and is now being undertaking in WLC as part of a national pilot scheme with the Improvement Service (IS). By utilising data from partners, WLC will be able to provide a more comprehensive picture of gaps and identify areas of low and high uptake of benefits.

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	
The Scottish Borders Council.	
How did the idea for the project come about?	
The CPI was originally developed by the Scottish Borders Council and is now being undertaken in WLC as part of a national pilot scheme with the IS in response to actions from the Rural Child Poverty Report and Intelligence Sprint held in 2022. The project began around May 2023 when the IS first presented the CPI to the Anti-Poverty Service. To establish how best to proceed, research was conducted on how other local authorities had utilised similar data. Education benefits were identified as a good starting point as it was data WLC could access easily. WLC started this exercise by providing education benefits data to IS to match with the CPI – our economic development colleagues were able to look at the data provided by the IS and identify areas of higher and lower uptake of education benefits which could be targeted first.	
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	
Data from the Rural Child Poverty Report and data from the Intelligence Sprint shaped the initial thinking.	
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
WLC received support from colleagues in Economic Development. They were able to collectively identify what data could be used to support the CPI which WLC then provided to the IS. They were then able to incorporate the data into the existing CPI so they could get a wider picture of how education benefit take-up measured against child poverty levels in West Lothian.	
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
No.	

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Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No		**Yes**	XXX

Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No		**Yes**	

Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	Not specified.
Facilities / Workspace	No.
Equipment	No.
Local Knowledge	Consulted local networks and spoken to different Working Groups such as the Child Poverty Reference Group.
Food and Drink	No.

What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?

There have been some hurdles in relation to what information can be shared due to GDPR barriers. However, data WLC currently have is a strong foundation and has enabled them to identify areas for targeted work which they can continue to build on in the future.

What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?

A partnership developed between the Improvement Service, Anti-Poverty Service and Economic Development has been helpful as it has brought together all the information needed to build the WLC CPI to the level it is currently at.

How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?

WLC began work in West Lothian a year after the initial Intelligence Sprint in 2022.

Who made the decision to introduce the project?

The service manager at the Anti-Poverty Service.

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?		
	No	
	Yes, a pilot project	XXX
	Yes, a feasibility study	
What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?		
Scottish Borders Council piloted the project first and WLC have replicated it.		
Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?		
West Lothian Council with Scottish Borders Council involvement.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?		
No	**Yes**	XXX

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the pilot project or feasibility study.	
Which organisation provided funding?	West Lothian Council
How much was required?	Costs absorbed by West Lothian Council and included in staff remuneration.
What was the specific source of funding?	N/A
Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?	
No	XXX
Yes	

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Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?		
No		
Yes	XXX	
Data from the Scottish Borders CPI has improved understanding of child poverty in the Scottish Borders and has since informed council services, particularly in education.		
Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?		
The Improvement Service and WLC.		
Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?		
The Scottish Borders CPI has informed the WLC CPI to a great extent, providing WLC with a foundation to adapt to West Lothian.		

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?	
No	XXX
Yes	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?		
Anti-Poverty Service, Economic Development & Improvement Service.		
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
	Yes	
	No	XXX
Both Anti-Poverty and Economic Development & Improvement services have a range of responsibilities related to poverty, economic development, and improvement in Scotland. For example, the aim of the Anti-Poverty Service is to address the increasing cost of living through supporting customers to maximise their income from social security and employment, whilst ensuring they receive access to appropriate debt and energy advice from informed and dedicated advisors.		
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
WLC CPI have a Data Working Group.		

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	XXX
The findings from the data will be used to develop actions for WLC's Tackling Poverty Strategy 2024/25. WLC's access to customer data through the Anti-Poverty Service allows them to identify where a more targeted approach can be made to ensure early identification of people in crisis. A more co-ordinated network of advice and data-sharing amongst local and national partners going forward will help to support the development of the CPI. This will allow WLC to target their support at a more granular, local level.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	XXX
Part of the WLC's Tackling Poverty Strategy is also incorporated into the WLC LCPAR.	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	XXX
Yes	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Additional funding and grants have been applied for: Status of outcome as yet unknown.		
Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Work on the project is included in existing staff remuneration.		
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?		
No	**Yes**	XXX
Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?		
Equipment	Improvement Service use a data analysis tool called Advice Pro.	
Local Knowledge	Council systems data and partner data.	
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	
The data informs WLC where there is high or low uptake and they can then compare actions taken to improve upon this.	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?	
Data is taken from the most recent available year's data. Data is currently collected from DWP/HMRC & WLC Education benefit data.	
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?	
There is an update within a quarterly report based on Welfare Reform which is then sent to a Policy Development Scrutiny Panel.	
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
WLC aim to use the data to better understand the uptake of benefits at a local, postcode level. This allows them to identify where uptake is higher or lower than expected which they can then use to inform where to target resources and support.	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	XXX
Yes	
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	XXX
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	
Making progress toward meeting Aims	XXX
Not making progress	
The initial project of incorporating education benefits has worked well and has allowed us to carry out targeted work within schools. This success has encouraged us to include further datasets to widen the project and to work in collaboration with partners.	

What difference has the project made?
The IS has produced an up-to-date CPI incorporating all available data. WLC have been able to identify data zones with both higher and lower levels of education benefit uptake throughout West Lothian. For example, 4 data zones had lower than predicted rates of School Clothing Grant take-up and 9 data zones with higher than predicted take-up. 6 data zones had lower than predicted rates of Free School Meals take-up and 6 data zones with higher than predicted take-up. 2 data zones had lower than predicted rates of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) take up and 7 data zones with higher than predicted take up. This information has allowed WLC to make an informed decision on where they could carry out targeted door-knocking to support residents and inform where additional outreach provision might be a worthwhile option.

Has the project changed through time?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
What changed	More partners have become involved.	
Why has it changed	Project awareness.	

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Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	
No	XXX
Yes	
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	
No	
Yes	XXX
WLC think it will allow them to target resources where they are most needed in specific communities. They are hoping that this model will be able to be replicated nationally.	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
Having regular catch-ups with partners for progress updates and to ensure that the project is moving in a positive direction.
What, if anything, is working less well?
There is an overwhelming amount of data available. WLC want to ensure that this data complements the existing data set to give an accurate picture.
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?
Coordination and working in partnership are key to the success for a project like this.
As there were numerous people involved in collecting data, it's important to keep on track with each partner and what they are doing to ensure it can be moved to the next stage.
Regular meetings and catch-ups are important to monitor progress.
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?

	No	
	Yes	XXX

Going forward WLC are looking at incorporating wider WLC teams and partners' data to look at other areas such as housing, arrears, food insecurity and uniform uptake. They are currently looking at available data from Social Security Scotland in relation to Scottish Child Payment uptake rates. In-work poverty is also a huge issue. WLC are looking at ways to use DWP/SSS data as well as more local partner data to identify families in need of support.
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?
WLC were able to replicate the structure that had been built by the Scottish Borders. They acknowledge that it is helpful to have a team that is comfortable with data collection and analysis to be able to get the most from the tool.

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